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Yorùbá Studies Review (YSR)

The *Yorùbá Studies Review* is a refereed biannual journal dedicated to the study of the experience of the Yorùbá peoples and their descendants globally. The journal covers all aspects of the Yorùbá transnational, national, and regional presence, both in their West Africa's homeland and in diasporic spaces, past and present. The journal embraces all disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and the basic /applied sciences in as much as the focus is on the Yorùbá affairs and the intersections with other communities and practices worldwide. The journal will foster and encourage interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches dealing with a wide range of theoretical and applied topics including, but not limited to: cultural production, identities, religion, arts and aesthetics, history, language, knowledge system, philosophy, gender, media, popular culture, education and pedagogy, politics, business, economic issues, social policy, migration, geography and landscape, environment, health, technology, and sustainability.

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A Survey of Audience Reception of *Atóka*, A Yorubá Photoplay Magazine

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Abstract

Atóka is a Yorubá photodrama magazine produced in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria from 1967-1991. Published by West African Book Publishers (WABP) and printed by their sister company, Academy Press, *Atóka* was a bi-monthly magazine which, while it lasted, hit the stands fortnightly. Extensive works have been done on Yorubá drama by several scholars. While some looked at specific theater companies, some studied the selected plays of particular companies, and some others examined the production of certain organizations at a particular phase. Despite these myriad of works, some other production media, particularly the stage, celluloid film, and home video film, have gained the attention of researchers extensively but photoplay in particular, and radio, television, and the phonograph-disc have not been so lucky. Apart from some works (Ogúndeji 1981, Aróhunmólaṣe 1982, Adéoye 1984, Bólájí 1985, Adéléke 1995, and Akangbé 2014) that referred to and passed comments on Yorubá photoplay, no one has carried out a seminal study on the history, production, and content of *Atóka* photoplay magazine. None of the aforementioned endeavors focused on the audience reception of *Atóka* photoplay magazine. By implication, there are very scanty works on the photoplay genre and virtually none on audience reception of Yorubá photoplay magazine. It is this yawning gap that this study intends to fill by studying the peculiarities of the readers of *Atóka* photoplay magazine. This paper is divided into nine parts, namely: Abstract, Introduction, Overview of Yorubá

photoplay magazine, Reception theory, Methodology, Data analysis, Discussion of findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations.

Introduction

Yorubá theater emanated from the traditional festivals, ancestral cults, and rituals. *Yorubá* theater is a masque theater and a courtly form of entertainment characterized by song, dance, lavish costume, and extraordinary spectacle. *Yorubá* traditional theater emerged from three developmental phases which are ritual, festival, and theater (Ogunbiyi, 1981: 5). Logically speaking, modern popular *Yorubá* drama was an offshoot of ritual, festival, and particularly the *eégún aláré* drama. Ogúndeji (1985) identified four distinct kinds of *Yorubá* drama which are sacred drama, the *eégún aláré* drama, the Ogunde dramatic tradition, and the written drama. The first two constitute the traditional while the last two are modern. It is incontestable that Ogunde dramatic tradition evolved out of the *eégún aláré* tradition. Its rise and development, according to Ogúndeji (1985:5), “include trends such as western general literary and dramatic traditions, politico-historical, cultural and religious factors such as colonialism, nationalism, Christianity and independence.” Oḃáfẹ̀mí (1996:13) also states that, “the works of the practitioners of this theater are both products of colonial experience (through education and the Christian religion), and the practitioners’ cultural background. Similarly, the popular nature of their theater facilitates the rooting of their dramaturgy in the oral tradition of their people. What results is the synthesis of cultures in their dramatic works.” This implies that the modern *Yorubá* drama is a blend of the new and the old.

Media of performance constitutes a significant trend in the operations of Ogunde dramatic tradition. The media are products of different technological age and awareness. The *Yorubá* dramatists employed the media as they arrived and gained prominence in the society. The first media to be introduced is the radio. The radio is a significant medium, and a series of drama have been produced at different times by different theater troupes. Radio is followed by television, and according to Olúsoḃá (1981: 371-372), the first television performance by the *Yorubá* theater practitioners was between 1959 and 1960 on Western Nigerian Television (WNTV). Dúró Ladipo’s *Oba Ko So* and *Eḃá* appeared on phonograph-disc in 1964. The era of phonograph-disc was followed by photoplay magazine (*iwé eré oní fòtó*), and the first *Yorubá* photoplay magazine known as *Atòka* also started with Ogunde’s topical political play *Yorubá Ronú* in 1967 (Ogúndeji, 1985: 9). Celluloid film, which followed the era of photoplay, is another important type of media. This media debuted with *Ajaní Ogun*, which starred the late Dúró Ladipo and the late

Adé Afoláyan (a.k.a. Adé Love) in 1976 while the latest of these media is the famous home video film. Our attention in this study however is on photoplay magazine.

Yorubá photoplay magazine was a periodic publication that was meant for dramatic entertainment of its consumers. It was a major era and the only print media adopted by the Yorubá theater practitioners. Therefore, unlike all the other media which were either listened to (radio and phonograph-disc) or watched/viewed (stage production, television, celluloid films, and home video), photoplay publications were meant to be read so readers constituted the audience. The readers were diverse and scattered across Nigeria and beyond. The readers, who were primarily native speakers of Yorubá language or those who adopted Yorubá language as a second language, possessed some attributes and shared certain characteristics which granted them access and enabled them to comprehend the content of *Atóka* publications. The basic and most vital of these attributes was literacy. The ability to read and write, at least to some extent, particularly in the Yorubá language, was primary.

Overview of Yorubá Photoplay Magazine

Photoplay magazine, which was the only print media adopted by the Yorubá theater practitioners, was a popular media in the trend of Ogunde dramatic tradition. All others, apart from the stage, were electronic media-oriented. The first Yorubá photoplay magazine was *Atóka*, which came into being in 1967 with Ogunde's controversial political play *Yorubá Ronú*. Photoplay magazine was employed as a secondary media of dramatic performance by Yorubá theater practitioners. It was an ancillary media. This is because photoplays were usually produced as a supportive measure of generating additional income. As Akangbe (2014:19) maintained, "there was barely any play that was solely written for photoplay magazine. This is because income generation was relatively low, physical involvement was high, more time was expended and remuneration was on commission basis."

As Lére Paímó reveals to Adéoye (1984:17), he (Lére Paímó) "is discouraged about *Atóka* photoplay because much energy and time is wasted and less amount is realized. The group received commission on the number of copies of magazine sold." Lére Paímó stated further that *Atóka* took more effort, its production was slow and time consuming. Indeed the production of photoplay magazine is very cumbersome. As Ogundeji (1985:23) gathered from Mr. Èniolá Adéyemí, the editor of *Atóka* in July 1981, "when photoplay magazine started, the dramatic dialogue was usually recorded on a tape while the play was being shot and it was later transcribed and slotted into proper positions

when coordinating the pictures. Nowadays, the dramatists are made to present a properly scripted play before the play can be shot.”

Ogúndéji (1981: 8-12) highlights the limitations of *Atóka* photoplay magazine. The editor can interfere with the structure of the play and may decide to even change the title of the play. He cites the example of Oyin Adéjòbí's *Ekuró Olója*, which is published under the title *Eniyan Šoro*. Lére Paímó also said that his play *Idájó*, a stage play, became *Olúesan* in *Atóka*. As part of the unlimited license the editor enjoys to tamper with photoplay, Mr Oyewólé Olówómojuóré (a.k.a. Kengbe Oṛo), one time editor of *Atóka* photoplay magazine and *Ibukún Aláwada* photoplay magazine, reveals to Ogúndéji, in the same interview cited earlier, that “it is also possible for the editor to alter or even reconstruct the dramatic dialogue to suit his own purpose, though this is applicable to all print media.” From this editorial confession, one can submit that due to the nature of photoplay, a lot depends on the creative ingenuity and craftiness of the editor ranging from selection of title to composition of dialogue, speech balloons, thought bubbles and capital prints. The editor also determines the length of the play by deciding on the number of parts a title will have.

In the view of Adéléke (1995: 23-24), the idea of photoplay is both lofty and laudable as it requires less mental effort in the reading since it is pictorial, which aids the understanding of the non-literate audience. For this reason, photoplay was able to penetrate the villages and hamlets where there were no theater halls. It served as vacuum-filler between the audience and the dramatist. This is a pointer to the fact that photoplay truly lived up to its essence.

Reception Theory

This study adopts the Reception theory. Reception, or Reader-Response criticism, is a collective term that describes a series of critical theories which emerged since the 1960s. These theories have a varying focus on the responses of the reader rather than on the text itself as the source of meaning in literary work. According to Morner and Rausch (1997:181), “in reader-response criticism, literature, rather than being considered a fixed and stable entity with a single ‘correct’ meaning, is viewed instead as an activity or process that goes on in readers’ minds. This process evolves as readers experience anticipation, frustration, retrospection, and reconstruction. In a sense, the literary work has its existence in the mind of the reader, not on the printed page, so that the reader participates in its ‘creation’.”

All the Reader-Response theories come with their different perspectives of reading and comprehension but they all seem to be unanimous, though in varying dimensions and differing degrees, that the individual reader creates

or produces the meanings of a text and as such there is no one correct meaning for a text. In other word, meaning resides in the reader. The critics however occupy different standpoints on how readers in fact read, what factors influence readers' responses, and the point of influence the text occupy in shaping those responses.

Reception implies the response of audience to a work of art. The work of art in this context is the *Atóka* photoplay magazine, and the audience is the reader. *Atóka* is the text which the audience read and there was bound to be a varied response from the diverse readers. Response may be in terms of how teeming the number of readers is, that is the level of acceptance by the people. Readers' response may also register itself in terms of likeness or preference for certain theater companies as compared to others. Some plays: historical, political, romantic, religious, etc. may be particularly enjoyed and patronised by readers than others. It is also not impossible that a particular play, irrespective of its type or the theater company that produced it, may receive a wide acceptance than others. Readers' response may also be conceived as the comments, attitudes or feelings of the audience towards the artiste's works. Response may be seen as criticism of an artiste's plays or one particular column or the other in the magazine either by way of commendation or condemnation.

The reading process is fundamental to literature, and without reading or readers there would be no such thing as literature. As McQuillan (1999:139) puts it, "books which are not read are merely ornaments on a shelf made from paper and ink.... A text only becomes meaningful when it is read, when a reader interacts with the words on the page to produce meaning." The reader is very central to reception, hence the Reader-Response theory, a branch of literary theory, which preoccupies itself mainly with the role of the reader. The Reader-Response theory is an amalgam used to capture heterogeneous theoretical approaches which is called Reader-Response theory and sometimes Reception theory. To McQuillan (1999:144), "very often, Reader-Response theory is a catch-all term for a collection of writings about reading (most of which are either opposed or contradictory) which is used more for ease of categorisation than to express the force of a distinctive theoretical approach." This is understandably so because the idea of the reader is of significance to all the literary theories and it is of varying degree of importance in different theories. When considered therefore as a theory which implies a unified body of knowledge that produces a general set of rules, practices and prescribed formulae which will operate consistently all the time, Reader-Response theory is not full-proof. There are different Reader-Response theorists with different standpoints and approaching the issues of reader and reading from different perspectives, notable among who are Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, David Bleich, and Stanley Fish. It is instructive to note that there is a form of

Reception theory called Reception History which is quite suitable for dissecting historical events. Reception History is the study of the history of meanings that have been imputed to historical events. It traces the various ways in which participants, observers, historians, and other retrospective interpreters have attempted to make sense of events both as they unfolded and over time since then, to make those events meaningful for the present in which they lived and live. Reception History as a branch of Reader-Response theory is especially considered suitable as a tool for diagnosing the reception of *Atòka* photoplay magazine which was an historical text of historical import.

Jauss (1988: 222), in his essay “Literary history as a challenge to literary theory,” attempts to bridge the gap between literature and history, and between historical and aesthetic approaches contrary to the positions of the Marxist and Formalist schools. As he puts it, “...The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its addresses. For it is only through the process of its mediation that the work enters into the changing horizon-of-experience of a continuity in which the perpetual inversion occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production that surpasses them.”

Here, Jauss places emphasis on history in the construction of literary meaning and the conditioning of a reader’s response to a text. His argument is that the relationship of literature and reader has aesthetic as well as historical implications. The aesthetic implication lies in the fact that the first reception of a work by the reader includes a test of its aesthetic value in comparison with works already read. The historical implication of this is that the understanding of the first reader will be sustained and enriched in a chain of receptions from generation to generation.

Jauss listed seven major theses on how literary history can be methodologically grounded and written anew. He is emphatic in submitting that a new literary work is not entirely new to a reader in that the work is not interacting in an informational vacuum but rather predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics and allusions. In other words, the reader is equipped with what he called “horizon of expectations” and rules familiar from earlier texts which are rightfully applied to aid reader’s reception.

Wolfgang Iser in his “Indeterminacy and the Reader’s Response” maintained that a text can only come to life when it is read and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader. In describing the relationship between text and reader, he maintained that the text contains different degrees of what he called “indeterminacy.” He identified two types of texts: ordinary text and literary text. Literary text is a performative utterance

in that “there is no concrete object corresponding to them in the real world, although of course they constitute their objects out of elements to be found in the real world...” Iser talked of the gaps of indeterminacy which he said can be filled by referring the text to real, verifiable factors. A reader can counter-balance indeterminacy by reducing a text to the level of his own experience. The act of reading therefore, according to Iser, “is a process of seeking to pin down the oscillating structure of the text to some specific meaning.” To do this successfully, a reader actualizes what he calls “schematized views” which are a series of possible interpretations that are inundated with gaps. These gaps however give the reader a chance to build his own bridges which conveys him to his semantic destination. Thus a reader’s participation is invited by every literary text and indeterminacy is the fundamental precondition for reader participation.

To Bleich (1988:231), interpretive knowledge which is different from formulaic knowledge of the physical sciences is quite essential for critical interpretation. As he puts it,

“Interpretive knowledge is neither deduced nor inferred from a controlled experience. Rather, it is constructed from the uncontrolled experience of the interpreter, and the rules of construction are only vaguely known by anyone observing the interpreter.” Interpretive knowledge does not follow a set rule or finite set of possible logical events. The principle of interpretive knowledge is infinite and is determined only by the number and kind of people responding to it. The implication of this therefore is that interpretive knowledge is “subjective” and is not based on some unchanging “objective truth” but the motivated construction of someone’s mind. In other words, the only way a work of literature has consequential meaning is as a function of the mind of the reader. Though the work of literature is an object, yet it is a symbolic object and “a symbolic object is wholly dependent on a perceiver for its existence. An object becomes a symbol only by being rendered so by a perceiver.”

Stanley Fish, another critic in his essay of 1970 “Literature in the reader: Affective Stylistics,” emphasized that the meaning of a literary text cannot be divorced from the reader’s experience of it. In his “Interpreting the *Variorum*” (1988: 235-240), he argued that totally subjective responses are impossible since they cannot exist in isolation from sets of norms, systems of thought, etc. which are inter-subjective. He maintained that there are no pure subjects and no pure objects and as such the subject-object dictionary breaks down. He expatiated that the object, including the literary text, is always a construct by the subject or a group of subjects. This group of subjects is what Fish called an

“interpretive community.” To buttress this, he puts forward two facts of reading where (1) the same reader will perform differently when reading two different texts; and (2) different readers will perform similarly when reading the “same” text. His answer was that the stability of interpretation among readers and the variety of interpretation in the career of a single reader are functions of interpretive strategies rather than of texts. In other words, as he puts it: Meanings are not extracted but made and made not by encoded forms but by interpretive strategies that call forms into being. It follows then that what utterers do is give hearers and readers the opportunity to make meanings (and texts) by writing them to put into execution a set of strategies (1988: 240).

Reception theory is a scion of three notable literary fields which are history, hermeneutics and structuralism, but its indebtedness is not limited to these three, hence its varied interpretation and application by different scholars and critics.

Methodology

In this section, I will discuss the response of the audience to *Atóka* photoplay magazine. The research instrument on the audience study was a questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on the Audience of *Atóka* Photoplay Magazine” (QAAPM). The questionnaire was of two types—one was in the Yorubá language, which was the medium of expression employed by *Atóka*, and the second was in the English language, which is the medium of this study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Section A and Section B. Section A—which had eight items—was on the demographic profiles of the respondents, while Section B—with nineteen question items—was basically on audience acceptance of *Atóka*. The questionnaire was vetted by four experts in the field of Yorubá literature to validate its content while a pilot study was also carried out on selected respondents among the researchers’ colleagues who were also experts in Yorubá studies to measure its reliability level. The population of the study was the entire readers of *Atóka* from age 30 years and above. The scope of the study covered the *Atóka* readers who were the consumers and audience of the magazine with a sole objective of finding out the various ways by which *Atóka* impacted on the readers and the society as a whole. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were administered, out of which one hundred and eighteen (118) were retrieved. This translates to a 79.0% response rate.

This audience study was quite significant as its findings would serve to authenticate the values derivable from *Atóka*, among others. The method of analysis adopted was simple percentage and frequency. A modest number of

tables were employed in our analysis to avoid undue replication and overuse of tables.

Data Analysis

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the data collected for the study.

Section A: Demographic Variables

Section A generated items on demographic variables like sex, age, marital status, educational level, occupation, nationality, state of origin and native language. Each of these variables was quite significant to measuring the extent and manner of audience acceptance of *Atóka* photoplay magazine.

Sex

There were a total of 118 respondents with 63 males and 55 females. The data collected showed that the males which constituted 53.3% were more than the females which were 46.7%. This is represented graphically in the Table below:

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	63	53.3
Female	55	46.7
Total	118	100.0

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Table 1 shows that majority 63 (53.3%) of the respondents were male while the remaining 55 (46.7%) were female. It can be deduced from the result above that there were more male readers of *Atóka* than females.

Age

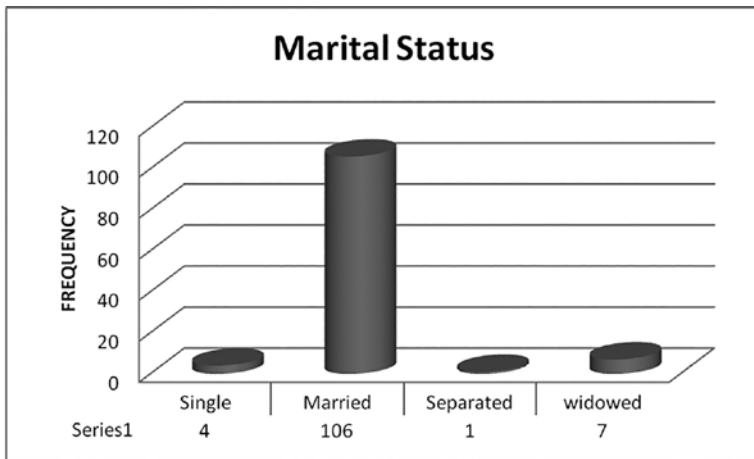
There were four age groups in the questionnaire with thirty years as the least. Since *Atóka* went out of print in 1991, which was twenty seven years, over a quarter of a century ago, it is presumed that the youngest reader of the magazine would be, at least, between the range of three to ten years old as at the time of its demise as illustrated in Table 2 below:

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
30 – 40	4	3.4
41 – 50	58	49.2
51 – 60	45	38.1
61 – 70	11	9.3
Total	118	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Age

The frequency of response showed that the highest age range of the readers of *Atọ́ka* were between 41 to 50 years. Respondents in this age category were 58 in number, which translated to 49.2 percent. This was followed by 51 to 60 years which had 45 respondents that constituted 38.1 percent. Age range of 61 to 70 years had 11 respondents with 9.3 percent while the least was age range of 30 to 40 years which was only 3.4 percent. Age 41 – 50 years recorded the highest readers thus implying that twenty-seven years ago, this group were adolescents and youths of ages 14 to 23 years in the active days of *Atọ́ka*. The least group was the age range of 30 – 40 years who were of the age range of 3 to 13 years when *Atọ́ka* was still on the newsstand.

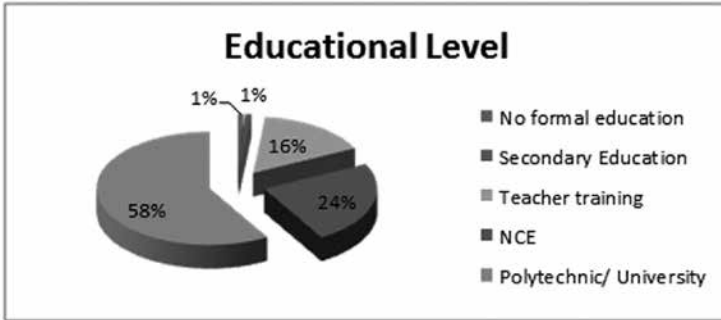
Marital Status



The trend of response on marital status as shown in Figure 1 revealed that there were more married 106 (89.9%) people reading *Atọ́ka*. Others were the widowed 7 (6.0 %); the singles 4 (3.4%); while 1 (0.8%) was separated.

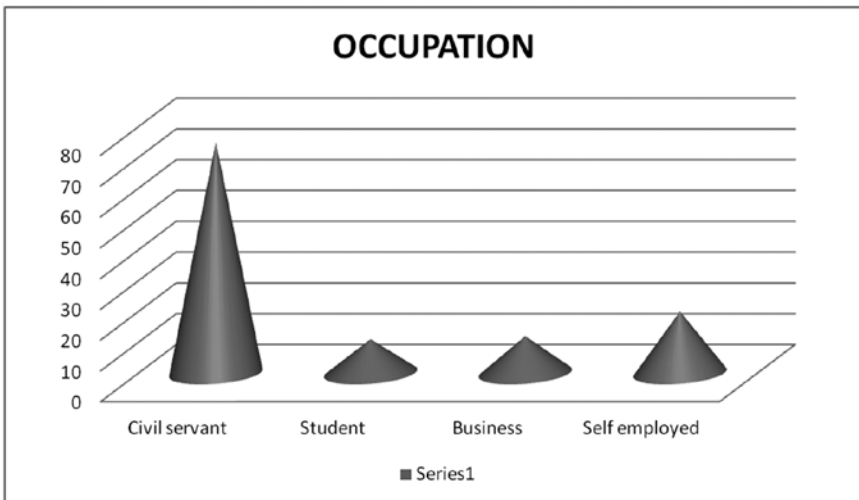
Educational Level

It is our assumption that education is a potent correlate of audience ability to access and comprehend the content of *Atọ́ka* photoplay magazine. Hence there are five different categories of the readers based on their educational status as shown in Figure 2.



The study revealed that the highest concentration of *Atóka* readers had tertiary education, in that 69 of the respondents had polytechnic/university education. This was followed by the Nigeria Certificate in Education with 28 respondents. These translated to 58.5% and 23.7% respectively. Teacher Training College had 19 respondents which was 16.1%. Only 1 (0.8%) respondent had secondary education while another 1 (0.8%) had no formal education. This trend of response shows clearly that the *Atóka* audience was highly elitist, as a total of 82.2% of the respondents had higher education certificates be it university, polytechnic or college of education. It must be noted however that the educational status of these readers only appreciated years after the demise of the magazine. As a matter of fact, we can deduce that these respondents with tertiary certificates today were in either primary or secondary schools in the hey-day of *Atóka*.

Occupation



The highest numbers were civil servants while the least were students. Seventy five respondents, which constituted 63.6%, were civil servants and 11 respondents—which amounted to 9.3%—were students. Other groups were the self-employed with 20 respondents and business men/women with 12 respondents; these translated to 16.9% and 10.2% respectively. It must be emphasized that these results are reflectors of the status of the readers. Again, the respondents in the category of students were in tertiary education, some are actually pursuing postgraduate degrees which implies that they were also gainfully employed in one respect or another.

Nationality

On nationality, all the respondents indicated that they were Nigerians, hence a 100% response as indicated in Table 3.

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Nigerian	118	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents by Nationality

States of Origin

The data collected showed that all the respondents were Nigerians but they belonged to different states, as Table 4 shows.

State	Frequency	Percentage
Ekiti	18	15.3
Lagos	14	11.9
Ogun	15	12.7
Ondo	22	18.6
Osun	21	17.8
Oyo	28	23.7
Total	118	100.0

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents by States of Origin

The respondents captured by the study were from six different states of the federation namely: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oşun, and Oyo. Oyo State had the highest number of respondents with 28, while Ondo and Oşun States followed with 22 and 21 respondents, these amounted to (23.7%), (18.6%), and (17.8 %) respectively. Others were Ekiti State with 18 (15.3%), Ogun State with 15 (12.7%), and Lagos State with 14 (11.9%).

Native Language

Native language is another index that elicited a unanimous response from all the respondents as they all indicated that their native language was Yoruba. This is shown in Table 5.

Native Language	Frequency	Percentage
Yoruba	118	100.0

Table 5: Distribution of the Respondents by Mother Tongue

Section B: Research Questions

Section B of the questionnaire contained items number 8 to 27 which centred specifically on the various aspects of audience reception of *Atóka*. The data collected showed that 108 out of the 118 respondents i.e. 91.5% could speak and understand Yoruba, while 10 respondents (8.5%) did not give any response. In the same vein, an overwhelming 99.2% indicated that they could read and write in the Yoruba language while only 1 (0.8%) was silent. On the awareness of the existence of *Atóka* photoplay magazine, 111 respondents (94.1%) picked 'Yes' while 7 (5.9%) did not give any response. 117 (99.2%) respondents answered in the affirmative that they have read *Atóka* while 1 (0.8%) was silent. The response to the question "Where were you dwelling when you were reading *Atóka*?" had a fair distribution with 55 (46.6%) respondents living in urban area, 35 (29.7%) in semi-urban area, and 25 (21.2%) in rural area. There were 3 respondents who did not select any option. To the question "Where were you residing then?" 111 (94.1%) respondents were residing in the South-West Nigeria, 1 (0.8%) in the South-East while 6 (5.1%) abstained. This showed logically that *Atóka* was more widely read in the Southwest where it was produced than elsewhere.

On the issue of the period when the audience was reading *Atóka*, four time ranges were given thus: 1967 – 1972, 1973 – 1978, 1979 – 1984, and 1985 – 1991. Of the four periods, 1973 – 1978 recorded the highest response of 86 (72.9%). This was followed by 1979 – 1984 with 22 respondents (18.6%). The next was 1967 – 1972 with 4 respondents while the least was 1985 – 1991 that recorded only 2 respondents. These two translated to 3.4% and 1.7% respectively. This is shown in Table 6.

Period	Frequency	Percentage
1967 -1972	4	3.4
1973 – 1978	86	72.9
1979 – 1983	22	18.6
1985 – 1991	2	1.7
No Response	4	3.4
Total	118	100.0

Table 6: Period When *Atọ́ka* Photoplay Magazine was Accessed

The trend of the response shows that many of the readers did so between 1973 and 1978 implying that they were predominantly between 40 and 45 years. This, to a great extent, corroborates the response on age where the highest number of respondents was of between ages 41 and 50 years.

The question on different titles of *Atọ́ka* plays was appreciably answered as respondents were able to recall some of the notable plays performed in the photoplay magazine by the different theater companies, though some of them confessed that they have completely forgotten. Some of the plays mentioned included *Akowé Elépo*, *Aláafin Aganjú*, *Aşírí Babá Ibeji*, *Başorun Gáa*, *Beyíí o se*, *Fárioro*, *Ilekun Aşejú*, *Iyá Aláduúra*, *Iyako Aberó*, *Oba Mọro*, *Obinrin Asiko*, *Yorubá Ronú*, etc. On the theater companies that performed these plays, 96 (81.4%) respondents picked ‘Yes’, testifying that they remembered some of the troupes while 9 (7.6%) answered ‘No’. 13 (11%) respondents did not attempt this question which was a prelude to the next, which requested them to mention five notable troupes. Some of the troupes mentioned were *Kọlá Ogúnmołá*, *Akin Ogúngbe*, *Hubert Ogunde*, *Lére Paímọ*, *Işolá Ogúnşolá*, *Duro Ladipo*, *Adébayo Faletí*, and *Babá Salá* (Moses Oláiya).

On how readers obtained copies of *Atọ́ka* to read, many of the respondents indicated ‘buying copies’ as the source of their access to the magazine. Forty-seven respondents picked ‘buying’, 39 picked ‘borrowing’, while 32 picked ‘through my parents/uncle/brother/friends’. These translated to 39.8%, 33.1%, and 27.1% respectively, as indicated in Table 7.

Means of Access	Frequency	Percentage
Buying	47	39.8
Borrowing	39	33.1
Through parents/uncle brother/friends	32	27.1
Total	118	100.0

Table 7: Readers’ Means of Access to *Atọ́ka* Photoplay Magazine

On how frequent the audience read *Atóka*, 50 respondents which were 42.4% indicated that they were reading *Atóka* bi-monthly, 24 respondents which translated to 20.3% were reading the magazine monthly while 11 others which amounted to 9.3 % were reading it quarterly. 18 responded that they never read *Atóka* while 15 were silent on the question. These translated to 15.3% and 12.7% respectively. This is illustrated in Table 8.

Frequency of reading <i>Atóka</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	24	20.3
Bi – monthly	50	42.4
Quarterly	11	9.3
Never	18	15.3
No response	15	12.7
Total	118	100.0

Table 8: Readers' Frequency of Reading *Atóka* Photoplay Magazine

The response showed clearly that 50 (42.4%) respondents were keeping faith with West African Book Publishers every fortnight when the new editions of *Atóka* were released. There was an overwhelming clamor for resuscitation of *Atóka* photoplay magazine as 98 respondents which were 83.1% wanted the magazine back fortnightly on the newsstand. It was a paltry 7 (5.9%) respondents who kicked against renewing its production. Several reasons were adduced for the resuscitation clamor. One hundred respondents which were 84.7% were unanimous that *Atóka* helped to promote culture. Other derivable benefits put forward if *Atóka* was resuscitated were promotion of Yorubá customs, promotion of writing and reading of Yorubá language, and projection of Yorubá history. It is impressive that the audience realized the significance of the magazine to the society hence their love for its restoration.

The plays in *Atóka* were broadly categorized into historical, mythical, love, religious and political plays. Historical plays were the most popular with the *Atóka* audience as 63 (53.4%) respondents indicated their preference for it. Next were mythical plays with 24 (20.3%) respondents while 11 (9.3%) respondents preferred plays that centered on love. None of the respondents expressed interest in political plays and religious plays while 20 respondents did not pick any of the options. This is reflected in Table 9.

Reader's Interest	Frequency	Percentage
Historical	63	53.4
Mythical	24	20.3
Love	11	9.3
No response	20	16.9
Total	118	100.0

Table 9: Readers' Interest in Types of Plays in *Atọ́ka* Photoplay Magazine

Regarding whether the *Atọ́ka* photoplay magazine promoted the Yorubá language and culture or not, the entire 118 respondents answered in the affirmative and supported their standpoint with different reasons. One hundred and eleven (94.1%) respondents believed that *Atọ́ka* popularized the reading of Yorubá language; 80 (67.8%) stated that *Atọ́ka* popularized the writing of Yorubá language; 65 (55.1%) believed that *Atọ́ka* projected different aspects of Yorubá belief system, and 91 (77.1%) affirmed that the magazine projected different aspects of Yorubá customs and tradition. Other means specified by the respondents by which *Atọ́ka* photoplay magazine was promoting Yorubá language and culture included projection of Yorubá history, 66 (55.9%) respondents; and provision of avenue for entertainment, 59 (50%). This trend of response affirmed strongly that *Atọ́ka* photoplay magazine was a catalyst for promotion of Yorubá language and culture. It was equally of immense benefit to the entire Yorubá society.

In the data collection instrument, series of options were put forward to respondents as causative factors for the demise of *Atọ́ka* such as economic downturn, poor patronage, reduced interest in the print media, lack of interest by the theater companies to produce for *Atọ́ka*, and shift of interest to electronic media.

Causes of demise	Frequency	Percentage
Economic downturn	10	8.5
Poor patronage	31	26.3
Reduced interest	25	21.2
Lack of interest	3	2.5
Shift of interest	44	37.3
No response	5	4.2
Total	118	100.0

Table 10: Reasons for the Demise of *Atọ́ka* Photoplay Magazine

As indicated in Table 10, the frequency of response shows that economic downturn had 10 (8.5%) respondents, poor patronage had 31(26.3%) respondents, reduced interest had 25 (21.2%) respondents, lack of interest by theater companies to produce for *Atóka* had 3 (2.5%) respondents and shift of interest to the electronic media had 44 (37.3%) respondents. The response trend shows that the greatest cause of the death of *Atóka* was the electronic media particularly the film and the home video while the least were lack of interest by the theater companies to produce for *Atóka*.

The demise of *Atóka* had a lot of disadvantages for the readers and the society. The readers identified different benefits they have lost due to the stoppage of *Atóka* photoplay production. One hundred and eleven respondents which were 94.1% pointed at ability to read and write in Yorubá language as a major loss they experienced. Other losses included lack of access to different aspects of Yorubá belief system, Yorubá history, Yorubá customs and tradition, and avenue for entertainment.

Discussion of Findings

Arising from the analysis of the data collected, it is indubitable that *Atóka* was well received by its teeming readers. One remarkable finding is that males were reading *Atóka* more than their female counterparts. This is understandably so because in the dispensation of *Atóka*, there were more educated males than females in the South-west Nigeria where *Atóka* was domiciled since it was not so popular to educate female children then. It was unlike now when the society is relatively better disposed to girl-child education. The societal attitude to educating the girl-child could better be imagined some five decades ago when *Atóka* was born. The predominant age of *Atóka* readers were youths as reflected in the data collected. Age range of 41-50 years recorded the highest frequency. This age category was actually between 19 and 28 years in the days of *Atóka*. This group was predominantly students who eventually graduated in later years to take up government appointments. This is corroborated by the data collected on the occupations of respondents where 75 percent indicated that they were civil servants.

A further proof of the youth-dominated audience of *Atóka* photoplay magazine is the *Oré Okeere* (pen-pals) column where a majority of the friend-seekers were mostly in the age range of eighteen and twenty-eight years. For instance, in *Iya'kò Aberó* by Aro-Ọlọwẹ Ariyọ Volume 89 Number 3 page 15, the age range of the friend-seekers was 18 to 28 years. Of the twelve requests, Akandé Adékunlé, a male student of Alhaja Abíbatu street, Sógúnlẹ, Lagos State; Ganiyú Kóláwólé Okunọlá, a male tailor of Lagos Street, Kaduna; and Kíkẹlọmọ Şangólade, a female student of P.O. Box 64, Agege, Lagos State;

were all eighteen years and the youngest while Báyo Olátínwó of W.A.B.P. Limited in Lagos, a male driver aged 25 years was the oldest. The trend was the same in *Iyá Aláduúra* written by Oyewòlè Wúraqlá and produced by Qranmíyan Theater in Volume 87, Number 2, page 10. Of the twelve pen-pal requests, Ísíáka Akangbé, a male mechanic of 4/5 Oja Igbó, Ibadan was 18 years and the youngest while Joshua Akanfé, a male driver of E7/455D, Odeajé, Ibadan was the oldest at 29 years.

On marital status, the readers were predominantly married from the data gathered, though a majority of them were bachelors and spinsters in the real sense of it in the *Atóka* days. In the same vein, though the data reflected that currently they were predominantly NCE, Polytechnic and University graduates, in the actual sense, they were primary pupils and secondary school students two and a half decades ago. All the readers of *Atóka* were Nigerians and they all hailed from the core Yoruba speaking Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Oşun, Ekiti and Lagos States, based on the data gathered. This was so because the questionnaire was administered in Oyo and Ogun States, if the administration has had a wider spread, definitely other states, particularly where the Yorubá speakers have significant presence like Kwara, Kogi and Edo, would have possibly made their impacts.

It is remarkable that *Atóka* was well circulated. Its distribution was all over Nigeria and across the West African Coast, though an overwhelming number of its readers dwelled in the Southwest. It is also impressive that the circulation and consumption of *Atóka* was not restricted to cities and urban areas alone. It registered its presence solidly in urban areas as well as semi-urban areas and rural areas.

On how readers accessed *Atóka*, over sixty percent of the readers indicated that they either borrowed copies to read or collected it from their parents, uncles, brothers and friends. One can infer that these two categories of borrowers were students or apprentices in the hey-days of *Atóka*. The audience expressed a higher preference for historical plays while the least interest was in love plays. This expression of likeness for historical plays has its proof in the titles listed by the respondents. Many of the plays that the audience could recall after over two and a half decades of the demise of *Atóka* included *Aláafin Aganjú*, *Başorun Gáa*, *Qba Mórò*, *Yorubá Ronú*, etc. All these plays are either mythical or historical plays. The category of plays recalled by the audience also tallied largely with the theater companies that produced them. Prominent among the theater companies who produced these mythical or historical plays were Kólá Ogúnmólá, Hubert Ogunde, Işólá Ogúnşólá, Dúró Ladipo and Adébayo Fálétí; all of who were listed by the respondents. It is interesting that the trend of audience preference for particular kind of *Atóka* plays agreed with the findings of Adéléke (1995:118-119) in his data analysis of the

subject of interest preferred by Yorubá film audience. Adéléké has five different broad classifications of Yorubá films as follows: war, crime, death, violence, action, (*wcdva*); sex, history, culture, marriage (*hicum*); politics (*pol*); criticism of corruption in public life (*ccpl*); and juvenile delinquency (*jnd*). He reported that “the respondents seem to show preference for subjects on *hicum*, and *wcdva* which constitute 32.95% and 29.55% respectively.” In Adéléké’s grouping, mythical and historical plays fall under his “*hicum*” which recorded the highest preference. Even though sex, culture and marriage were constituents of “*hicum*”, what is clear was that history was a topical constituent of that group. This is a corroboration of our own finding in this study that *Atóka* audience had preference for mythical and historical plays.

The value of *Atóka* was well attested to by the audience, its values included the promotion of Yorubá language and culture, popularization of reading of Yorubá, popularization of writing of Yorubá, projection of different aspects of Yorubá customs and tradition, projection of Yorubá history and of course, provision of entertainment. This is in line with the position of the *Atóka* editors notably Pa. Láoye Egunjòbí,¹ Pa. Şégún Şofowótẹ² and Ọba Bólú Fátúnmişẹ.³

All these are pointers to the fact that *Atóka* Photoplay Magazine was a potent instrument of linguistic and cultural integration and promotion. It is rather painful that despite the rich qualities of *Atóka* and its educational, informational and entertainment services, it went under after surviving a quarter of a century. Its demise was precipitated by a combination of forces: economic downturn, poor patronage, reduced interest in the print media and shift of interest to the electronic media. Though *Atóka* is moribund, many still wanted it back on the newsstand. 8.3% clamored for its resuscitation on the grounds that it would help to promote Yorubá language and culture, it would enhance writing and reading, and that it would project Yorubá history and beliefs.

1 These submissions were made by Alagba Láoye Eégúnjòbí, a former editor of *Atóka* and a retired Baptist Reverend. He stated this during my first scheduled interview with him on Wednesday, October 7, 2009 in his residence at Aawẹ, Oyo State.

2 Pa. Şégún Şofowótẹ discussed extensively with the researcher how *Atóka* began, its formative experience and the role played by each of the pioneering staff. He recalled vividly the maiden production at J.K. Randle Hall. The interview was held at Grail land in Ajuwon area of Lagos on Wednesday, April 17, 2013.

3 Ọba Adébolú Fátúnmişẹ, the current Adagba of Iyanfowórogi and the proprietor of *Atóna* photoplay magazine, stated this fact on Monday, August 4, 2008 at The Roots Hotel at the Obafemi Awolowo University campus gate area, Ile-ife when I had the first interview session with him.

Conclusion

This study has examined critically the audience reception of *Atóka* photoplay magazine using the theoretical tool of Reader Response theory. The “Questionnaire on the Audience of *Atóka* Photoplay Magazine (QAAPM)” as a data collection tool has elicited responses from the readers of *Atóka* and in the process, the dispositions of the audience, though varying and diverse, have been established.

One major finding was that *Atóka* photoplay magazine, among others, promoted and projected the reading of Yorubá language through its wide readership. By so doing, *Atóka* popularised the Yorubá language and its arts and culture; enhanced literacy; provided a ready and alternative source of entertainment particularly in the rural areas where access to electricity, radio, and television was nil. It also constituted an alternative source of income for the Yorubá theater performing troupes as they were earning handsome royalty from sales of the copies of their play productions. It was also discovered that *Atóka* kept the younger generation educated and informed about Yorubá culture and history in particular as lots of historical issues, happenings, and legendary personalities were dramatised.

Recommendations

This study recommends that concerted efforts should be made to collect copies of *Atóka* photoplay magazine for storage. This is necessary because in the quarter of a century that *Atóka* existed, the West African Book Publishers (WABP) produced a total of one hundred and twenty (120) volumes which numbered four hundred and thirty (430) editions. It is however disheartening that copies of these productions are hardly available. Neither the publisher (West African Book Publishers) nor the individual performing groups whose plays were produced have a complete collection, while libraries and national archives also lack appreciable quantity in their stocks. Without mincing words, this noble publication and a significant index of a unique era in the dramatic and entertainment life of the Yorubá race is almost in extinction; hence the recommendation that a systematic collection of copies for storage should be embarked upon.

It is equally highly recommended that copies obtained should be scanned and made available in electronic format to enhance clarity, longevity, and attractive presentation. Since the available copies of *Atóka* are of age, photocopying will not be enhancing. The researcher has experimented the two options and the advantage of scanning was by far greater. In some cases, the photocopied version was nearly unreadable. Scanning will also permit the generation of soft copies. This is exceedingly advantageous because the

magazine will be available in electronic copies for duplication, reduplication, and if desirable, it could be reprinted once again, at least for academic purposes.

The production of photoplay magazine in Yorubá like *Atóka* should be resuscitated either in print or cartoon forms to bring back its social, cultural, and economic values. *Atóka* was of tremendous values in different respects; it is a goldmine of academic information which has a lot of research potentialities.

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