

# **Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts (ZAJOLA)**

*Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

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## EDITORIAL POLICY

*Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts* (ZAJOLA) is a peer-reviewed journal, published bi-annually by the Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. The journal welcomes manuscript of original articles, from scholars around the globe, in the various areas of Liberal Arts. The articles may be product of descriptive or analytical research, field research notes, reviews of publications and printed materials, drawn from, but not limited to Languages and Linguistics; Law; Environmental Sciences, Education; Management Studies; Cultural and Literally Studies; Theatre Arts; Philosophy; Religion; History and Strategic Studies; Archaeology and Heritage Studies; Developmental Studies and Social Sciences.

All manuscripts submitted for publication should adopt APA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition Style of referencing. The manuscripts should be typed double-spaced with sufficient margins and should count between 4,000 and 6,000 words, including the abstract, references, and appendices. The Manuscripts should not be under consideration for publication in any other research outlet.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

This Edition of *Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts* marks the end of the year 2023. In this Edition, there are twelve well written articles by distinguished scholars.

The Edition opens with Ibrahim Muhammad Abdullahi's article on the implications of the New Normal on 21<sup>st</sup> century African novel and the impact of ICT. In a related study, Saleh Ahmad Abdullahi explores a semiotic approach of Emoji characters as used in WhatsApp chat messages. Through Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* and Fosudo's *Another Episode of Trauma*, Oladolapo Ojediran and Olayinka Magbagbeola interrogate enraged voices and social realities in Nigeria.

In linguistics, Hassan Usman Gadaka carries out a morphological analysis of Polar tone in Gudi and Yaya dialects of Ngamo language while Abdulrahman Umar works on the semantic aspects of repudiation in Basa language.

Ezekwesiri Okebugwu Nwosu, Nwaoha Chimaroke Chizoba and Tobeckukwu Odunze are concerned about the attack on Igbo indigenous religion. To them, this act can be defined as imperialism while Azuka Felix God's presence and Emily Oghale God's presence are concerned with the issues and perspectives in teaching and learning in urban society with the integration of multimedia, developmental and career guidance.

In his article on archaeology, Ogunlade Simeon Oluwole assesses some potential heritage sites in Nigeria. Following this is the article of Eraye Chistopher Michael and Jimoh Buhari Edun. The two scholars examine the implications of forest crime on socio economic development in Boki local government area of Cross River State. Alawode Musa Ajibola, on his own, examines the ideological nexus between Zaria and Ife Art schools.

In French studies, Tajudeen Abodunrin Osunniran and Hannah Kojusola Kuponiyi bring out the linguistic characteristics and discursive functions of filler words in French and Yoruba films. In a related field, Aliyy Abolaji Abdulrazaq carries out a reflection of lexical gaps in some translation works by Yoruba translators.

It is important to note that the view and opinions presented in these articles are solely those of the authors. Happy reading.

**Prof. Abubakar Sule Sani**

Editor-in-chief

30<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

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## An Examination of the Ideological Nexus between Zaria and Ife Art Schools

Alawode, Musa Ajibola

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the ideological connection between Zaria and Ife Art Schools in a comparative milieu. In doing this, it chronicles the development of both Zaria and Ife Art Schools through the adoption of qualitative research design that relies on historical and descriptive approaches. It was discovered that the concept of Natural Synthesis emerged in Zaria Art School to critique the Western colonial hegemonic dominance in visual art rendition in line with the Pan-African School of Thought. It was further discovered that the concept of Natural Synthesis was later appropriated by the graduates in Ife Art School under different names which eventually culminated in the emergence of Onaism and Araism ideological concepts. The formation of Onaism and Araism was to decolonise the Eurocentric art education that was hitherto taught. This paper found out that the concepts of Natural Synthesis, Onaism and Araism encourage the synthesis of Euro-American and African art styles to create a novel art work that allows the adaptation of indigenous African art style, theme, technique, and media.*

**Keywords:** *Natural Synthesis, Onaism, Araism, art schools, ideologies.*

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### Introduction

Ideology is just like a thread that links the three major art schools in Nigeria namely: Zaria, Ife and Nsukka, although visual art and ideology are inseparable, they are intertwined. For instance, the art produced during the pre-colonial era in Africa are ideologically inclined, which made traditional African artists to render their works in abstraction. It was because of ideological belief of the African artists that made them to depict the heads of human figures bigger than other parts of the body (popularly known as hierarchical scaling): African artists are of the view that head is the seat of power (where human brain is located) hence, it should be depicted bigger.

However, what is known today as modern art of Nigeria was pioneered by Aina Onabolu (1881-1963) who rendered his paintings in naturalism. The artists (Akinola Lasekan (1921-1972), Justus Akeredolu (1915-1983), among others) who followed him also rendered their works in naturalism. The trend of naturalistic rendition of artworks in Nigeria continued till 1928 when the Nigerian colonial master employed Kenneth C. Murray (an expatriate art teacher) to teach Fine Art in some secondary schools in Lagos where he encouraged his students to look inward into their respective cultures and fuse its characteristic features into their artworks. This produced hybridity in visual art. Hybridity means when elements from two or more cultures are merged together to produce a work of art. This is quite obvious in the works of one of Murray's students, Ben Enwonwu

(1921-1994). For instance, in *Anyanwu* (*Awakening*) executed by Enwonwu, one can see hybridization of style, which is merging of naturalism and abstraction to produce the work.

Moreover, around 1950s, when formal art schools were established in Nigeria, the students of these schools were taught to render their works in naturalism. This was as a result of the nature of their instructors/teachers who were predominantly Europeans. It was towards the end of 1950s when Nigerians were preparing for their independence that some students of Zaria Art School started to question the relevance and validity of this type of Eurocentric art. As a result, Uche Okeke, one of the students from Zaria Art School propounded the concept of 'Natural Synthesis' which implies, the merging of indigenous art style, form and idea with the Western ones. This culminated into the execution of hybridized art form. This trend continued until 1967 when Nigerian civil war broke out and those Zarianists (students of Zaria Art School) who were of Igbo extractions were moved to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka with Zaria ideology of natural synthesis and this gave birth to Nsukka Art School. It is pertinent to note that, the students of Zaria Art School who were of Igbo extractions left Zaria for Nsukka Art School because of the fear of being killed and also, the northerners who were in the Eastern part of Nigeria left for the north so that they would not be killed too. Kasfir (1999) sheds more light on this by stating that:

In the early 1960s, the new University of Nigeria at Nsukka, in northern Igbo country, had adopted an American style curriculum as an alternative educational model to the British one, but the pogroms of 1966 forced Igbo students studying in Zaria to return to the safety of Nsukka, while non-Igbo teachers and students at Nsukka did the opposite and returned to their home regions. This quickly 'Igbo-ized' what had been American-style art department and also brought the 'Natural Synthesis' ideology from Zaria to it. The northern massacres and then the bombing raids by federal planes forced these artists, along with everyone else, to come to term with their Igbo identity.

Between 1970 and 1986, the exploration of the philosophy of 'Natural Synthesis' became more prominent, most especially during the re-emergence of Uche Okeke as Head of the Fine and Applied Arts Department of University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Ikhwemesi, 2010). The author states further that:

In the immediate post-war period and in the 1980s, the Nsukka artists were engulfed by the natural synthesis philosophy as espoused by Uche Okeke, through appropriation of the Igbo Uli symbology and other cultural heritage in painting,

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sculpture, textile, and other graphic works. The experimentations gave rise to what is called Nsukka School.

The emergence of ideologically inclined art in Ife Art School is different from that of Nsukka Art School. In Ife Art School, the emergence of ideologically inclined art was tied to a number of factors such as the composition and the background training of their lecturers, the location of the school, among other factors, while Nsukka Art School emerged primarily from the experience had by their lecturers who were students in Zaria during the formation of the concept of 'Natural Synthesis' and the outbreak of Nigerian civil war helped to spread the ideology to the school which metamorphosed to *Ulism*.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is qualitative in nature and explored both historical and descriptive approaches in its analysis. The historical approach was adopted to unravel the history behind the formation of the concepts of Natural Synthesis, *Onaism* and *Araism* while the descriptive approach was used to describe the ideological connection between Zaria and Ife Art Schools. However, the study equally relied on secondary source of data collection, which includes the textbooks and journal articles in both hard and electronic copies. The secondary data used were primarily based on their relevance to the topic.

### **Zaria Art School**

The Fine Art Department of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria otherwise known as Zaria Art School was established in 1953 at Ibadan as Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology (NCAST), and it was moved to Zaria in 1955. With the establishment of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1962, NCAST was subsumed into its newly created Department of Fine Art. Initially, it was affiliated with Slade School of Art, London and the Goldsmith College, London (Samuel, 2006). Fine Art was being offered at Diploma level, and three major fields were also being taught: painting, sculpture, and commercial design (graphics and textile design) (Mount, 1973).

In 1958, the students of Zaria Art School formed an association called Zaria Art Society and disbanded in 1961. They propagated the concept of "Natural Synthesis". It is pertinent to note that, the merging of indigenous art traditions did not start from them; they only complemented the foundation laid by Ben Enwonwu. They went against naturalism, and they were later known as "Zaria rebels" due to their radical approach to the new art (Kasfir, 1999). The members of the society comprised Uche Okeke, Yusuf Grillo, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Demas Nwoko, Simon Okeke, Emmanuel Odita, Felix

Ekeada, Oseloka Osadebe and O. Nwagbara. Oloidi (2008) observes that, “the society was formed so as to challenge the colonial extrinsically parasitic nature of their curriculum and instruction at the school, which they considered as unrealistic to the Nigerian situations”. However, the students revolted against the teaching, which alienated their culture from what they were learning. Okeke in Duniya (2010) provides a more illuminating explanation on the emergence of the concept of Natural Synthesis by stating that;

Two factors were responsible for the emergence of the concept of Natural Synthesis, first, there was a socio-political ferment which preceded the end of the colonial period in 1960, and secondly, there were people created by the predominance of British art lecturers in the college. These, and the fact that the art they were practising did not reflect their socio-cultural environment and backgrounds, made them to question its relevance to their immediate environment.

Jari (2008) observes that, what is known today as Zaria Art School was founded by a group of students in the school. He further states that these students propagated a philosophy that favoured the reliance on the indigenous motifs in contemporary art expression. Most members of Zaria Art Society travelled to many places where they could learn more about Nigerian traditional culture like museums. Today, Zaria is known for its concept of Natural Synthesis.

There are other art ideological movements in Zaria Art School, which are; The Eye Society and Nough Nough. The Eye movement was formed in 1992 in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The membership of this movement is some artists who were members of staff of the Department of Fine Art, and they included Gani Odutokun, Jerry Buhari, Jacob Jari, Matt Ehizele and Tonie Okpe. The group published journal of contemporary art of Africa called ‘The Eye’. They staged art exhibitions, organised workshops, conferences, symposia, among others. On the other hand, Nough Nough means waste is good. Members of this group (such as Lamidi Lasisi, Mu’azu Muhammed Sani, among others), who were mostly members of staff of Zaria Art School, were basically concerned with elevating waste to the position of prominence (Jari, 2008). The philosophy of this group is that anything could pass for art, which made their media to include worn out slippers, broken bottles, soiled sanitary towels and condoms, human hair, food remnants, among others. It is important to note that Zaria Art School has produced a lot of ideologically conscious graduates who founded different ideological art schools in Nigeria. Examples of such members that founded ideological art schools in Nigeria were Yusuf Grillo whose art activities are well

known in Yaba Art School, Uche Okeke who integrated *Ulism* into the art curriculum of Nsukka Art School, among others.

### **Ife Art School**

The University of Ife, Ile-Ife was established in 1962 as recommended by a commission set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1959, under the chairmanship of Sir Eric Ashby, to examine the needs of post-secondary and higher education in Nigeria for the period of twenty years (Obafemi Awolowo University, 2017). This led to the establishment of the University of Ife by the Government of the then Western Region of Nigeria. The planning of the University was assigned to two committees, and one of them was a University Planning Committee that was to advise the government on the planning of the University, and in effect took care of the preparatory work connected with the establishment of the University before the provisional council of the University was set up. The second committee was University Parliamentary Committee, which served as advisory to the Minister of Education. However, on 8th June, 1961, the law providing for the establishment of the Provisional Council for the University, was passed by the Legislature of the then Western Region, and on 26th of the same month, Provisional Council of the University was formally inaugurated under the chairmanship of Chief Rotimi Williams (BlackPast.org, 2017).

Obafemi Awolowo University (2017) states that, “The University formally took off in October 1962 with an initial enrolment of two hundred and forty-four students”. The University temporarily took off on the site of the Ibadan branch of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology (the present site of The Polytechnic Ibadan), after the college had been moved out of Ibadan. Obafemi Awolowo University (2017) reports that, “The teaching, administrative and technical members of staff either transferred from the Nigerian College of Art, Science and Technology, or were newly recruited from abroad, were about eighty” However, an edict known as the University of Ife now Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife Edict 1970, was promulgated on 11th June, 1970 by the then Government of the Western Region, and it replaced the Provisional Council Law of 18th June, 1961. This edict had since been amended by the University Amendment Edict No 11 of 1975. This new Decree also affected the take-over of the University by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. However, the University of Ife was renamed Obafemi Awolowo University in 1987 to

immortalise its founder, late Chief Obafemi Awolowo (the former Premier of Western Region of Nigeria) who died in the same year.

Furthermore, with the establishment of the University in 1962, the Institute of African Studies was established along with the University to actualise the aspect of culture, as reflected in the University's motto "For Learning and Culture" (Ademuleya, Ajiboye and Folaranmi, 2005). The Institute became a centre where artists, scholars and researchers conducted researches in all facets of African culture, such as art, literature, music, dance, drama, languages, among others. Art and Art History section was established in the Institute of African Studies in 1969, and it started offering service courses in 1968/69 to programmes in the Faculty of Education, later in the Faculty of Art. Adepegba (1995) and Banjo (2013) observe that it was Ori-Olokun Art Workshop that metamorphosed to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. It is certain that, there are cultural nexus between the Department and Ori-Olokun Art Workshop.

The first set of Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fine Art/Education graduated in 1974, under the Art section of the Institute of African Studies. In 1976, it developed to a full-fledged Department under the Faculty of Arts. It was later moved to the Faculty of Environmental Design and Management, where it is today. Ademuleya, Ajiboye and Folaranmi (2005) posit that, "the Department was established to provide the students with practical and academic training in all aspects of Visual Arts, also to meet the manpower needs of Nigeria, and the Department was equally to conduct research into all aspects of indigenous, traditional and contemporary art". As a result of this, the Department encourages its students to make use of traditional African forms and symbols, and at the same time it encourages its students to develop their own modes of expression. Filani (2013) observes that, Ife Art School development was based on the culture oriented philosophy of the Fine Art Department of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife

The Department offers the following courses; Ceramics, Graphics, Painting, Sculpture, Print Making and Illustration, Textiles, Drawing and Art History (Banjo, 2013). "Elective courses are taken from the humanities starting from 100 level up to 300 level, so as to have a sound footing in concept development" (Akintonde, 2013). At 300 level, students specialise in their chosen art fields. The postgraduate programme in the Department commenced in 1985/86 session.

Lawal in Akintonde (2013) states the objectives of the Department was; "to produce students with strong practical training in Fine Arts, while at the same

time, giving them broad background in the humanities, and also, to stimulate in students the spirit of individual creativity and its relevance to the social, cultural and industrial development of Nigerian society”. Looking at the objectives of the Department, one can infer that they were anchored on the Philosophy of Nigerian Education.

In 1989, however, the graduates of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife declared the Department as “Ife Art School” after their yearly exhibition tagged “The Best of Ife”, and the *Ona Art Movement* was formed. *Ona Art Movement* is also known as *Onaism*, and it was formed by five graduates of the Ife Art School: Moyo Okediji, Kunle Filani, Babatunde Nasiru, Tola Wewe and Bolaji Campbell. The members of *Onaism* explore the Yoruba art forms through adaptation of Yoruba cultural motifs, themes, styles and techniques into their contemporary art practice. It was created so as to serve as a platform where intrinsic Yoruba creative culture would be interrogated. Oyelola in Duniya (2010) buttresses this point by stating that, “*Ona* group of artists, which crystallised in Ile-Ife were united by the aim to incorporate traditional Yoruba decorative motifs into an art of social comment”.

*Araism* is another movement that emerged from Ife Art School, and it can be seen as an offshoot of *Onaism*. Its members also adopted Yoruba artistic philosophies into their works. *Araism* as a movement was launched on 22 July 2006 with an exhibition of paintings of *Araism* by Mufu Onifade and his followers. *Araism Art Movement* has the following as members; Olaniyi Omojuwa, Tope Oguntuase, Oludotun Popoola, Akande Abiola, Jonathan Ikpoza, Abolore Awojobi and Oluwanbe Amodu (Sowole, 2011). The works of members of *Araism* are distinct and individualistic, their paintings have crackle effects which make them resemble Yoruba *adire* cloths (tie and dye cloths).

### **The Ideological Nexus between Zaria and Ife Art Schools**

The ideological connection between Zaria and Ife Art Schools is ‘Natural Synthesis’ but it is called different names in Ife, *Onaism* and *Araism*. The philosophy behind the adoption of the concept of ‘Natural synthesis’ in both Zaria and Ife is the same but under different nomenclatures. The philosophy is to synthesize or merge African art styles, forms and ideas with the Western ones so as to decolonise the already colonised art practice. This made the artists involved to revisit African culture for possible adaptation of themes, styles, techniques, media, among other things into their contemporary art rendition, which has made

their works to appear distinct and most at times, characterised with angularity of forms (Alawode, 2019).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the theory of 'Natural Synthesis' spread to other art schools in Nigeria from Zaria Art School, and this was done through the recruitment of the graduates of Zaria Art School by the newly emerged Departments of Fine and Applied Arts. Moreover, the adaptation of concept of Natural Synthesis in Ife Art School was possible due to the efforts of its pioneer lecturers who were not only from the Zaria Art School but from other art schools in Nigeria and abroad. Their orientation in their various art schools also informed the type of art education being imparted on their students at Ife Art School. For instance, Ben Enwonwu was a graduate of Slade and Goldsmiths School of Fine Art, London, while Solomon Irein Wangboje was a graduate of Zaria Art School. However, Babtunde Lawal, a graduate of Nsukka Art School and Jacob Olapade, a graduate of Zaria Art School manned the Graphics Section, while Abiodun Rowland and John Rowland Olufemi Ojo graduated from Zaria Art School and lectured Painting. Moyo Okediji and Bolaji Campbell, graduates of Ife Art School were later employed to teach Painting. Stephen Folaranmi, a graduate of Ife Art School was equally employed to teach painting, while Paxton Sholademi Olabisi Aremu, a graduate of Zaria Art School lectured Textile Design. Agbo Folarin, a graduate of Yaba Art School, and Lamidi Fakeye, a product of Oye-Ekiti Art Workshop were the Sculpture lecturers in the Department. Eben Sheba, a graduate of Ife Art School was appointed to teach Graphics in the Department in the early 1990s. Wole Famule, Dupe Bejide, Theasy Ogunsiakin and Jide Makinde who also are graduates of Ife Art School were employed to lecture Ceramics, Graphics and Textiles respectively. Umaru Aisha, Segun Ajiboye and Ijisakin (they are all graduates of Ife Art School) were equally employed in 2003 to lecture Ceramics, Painting and Sculpture respectively. Babasehinde Ademuleya, a graduate of Ife Art School was later employed to teach sculpture.

According to Oloidi (2008) the efforts of the pioneer lecturers of the Department such as Babatunde Lawal, Rowland Abiodun and Irein Wangboje, Ife suddenly metamorphosed into an aggressive, ideologically prolific or casual arena, vibrating very provocatively but with refreshing ease the intellectuality and creative virility and immaculacy of *Ona*, the Yoruba concept of creation and means of interaction between the physical and the spiritual; between the known and the unknown.

Looking at the above quotation, one can infer that Zaria Art School played a prominent role in the emergence of ideologically inclined art in Ife Art School because majority of the pioneer lecturers of Ife Art School were trained in Zaria. Based on this, there was a conscious attempt to impart the skills of producing ideologically inclined art to their students who replicated it when they were employed in Ife and other art schools in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Conclusively, the paper has analysed the ideological connection between Zaria and Ife Art Schools and it could be observed that both schools are interrelated. Although Zaria served as a catalyst for the emergence of *Onaism* and *Araism* in Ife and the reason for this is not so far fetch, after Yaba Technical Institute, Zaria is the second oldest art school in Nigeria where many of the earliest contemporary Nigerian artists were trained and it was after their training that these individual artists started establishing other art schools. Also, Zaria was the first art school to develop an ideological concept called 'Natural Synthesis' before spreading to other art schools through their graduates.

It is the conclusion of this paper that Zaria Art School has a great influence on the emergence of *Onaism* and *Araism* ideological concepts in Ife Art School, and it did not only influence Ife ideologically, its ideology serves as a template for the formation of ideologies in other art schools in Nigeria. It is pertinent to note that both Zaria and Ife Art Schools developed their ideologies primarily to decolonise the Eurocentric art inherited from their colonisers and to project Africa to be at the same level with other countries in the world.

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