

EDITORIAL COMMENT

It is with considerable pleasure that we present Volume 14, Number 1, 2026 of the *Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts (ZAJOLA)*, a collection that once again affirms the vitality and range of humanistic inquiry at the Faculty of Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and among our growing community of contributors drawn from universities across Nigeria. The twenty-one papers assembled in this issue traverse archaeology, history, philosophy, linguistics, literature, French studies, and theatre and performing arts. Read together, they offer more than a miscellany of disciplinary specialisms; they constitute a sustained conversation about how societies make meaning, transmit knowledge, and negotiate change, whether through a pot fired in *Badeggi*, a name given to a Bade child, a garment worn in Ibadan or Kano, or a play staged in Samaru. This editorial comment attempts to draw out the threads that bind this diverse offering and to situate the issue within the broader mission of the liberal arts as a space for critical, comparative, and culturally grounded scholarship.

The volume opens fittingly with two contributions that root the humanities in material evidence. Abubakar A. Muhammad's ethnographic study of Nupe pottery-making at *Badeggi* employs the chaîne opératoire framework to trace the full production sequence, from clay acquisition to firing and use, revealing pottery as a repository of indigenous technical knowledge rather than a static craft awaiting obsolescence. The paper's attention to gendered labour, in which women and children dominate production while men participate marginally, adds a valuable dimension to our understanding of how craft knowledge is organised and transmitted across generations, even as plastic and metal substitutes encroach upon traditional markets. In a complementary register, Lawal and colleagues offer a catalogue of archaeological sites in Southern Katsina, consolidating dispersed reconnaissance data, oral tradition, and GIS documentation into a single descriptive baseline. Such cataloguing work, though modest in rhetorical ambition, performs an indispensable scholarly service: it makes visible a landscape of settlement and craft production that has long been overshadowed by better-documented northern districts of the Katsina Kingdom, and it lays the groundwork for the chronological and heritage-management work that must follow.

Bashir Sani Mohammed's history of labour migration in Funtua between 1903 and 1945 extends this material and spatial concern into the domain of political economy. By tracing how colonial land and labour policies, together with the establishment of firms such as John Holt, P.Z., and Miller Brothers, drew fortune-seekers and displaced populations into the town, the paper demonstrates how a once traditional economy was absorbed into the world capitalist system and transformed into a receiving society for labourers, ultimately becoming what the author terms a semi-urbanised city within Katsina Province. The paper's use of archival and secondary sources situates it within a well-established tradition of colonial economic history in Northern Nigeria, while its local focus on Funtua contributes a case study that enriches our understanding of urbanisation patterns beyond the more frequently studied colonial centres.

A substantial cluster of papers in this issue examines language not merely as a communicative tool but as a technology of cultural transmission, cognition, and identity. Abdulmalik Aminu's morphological study of derivation in Fulfulde demonstrates, through careful comparison of affixation and compounding strategies, that affixation is the preferred and more economical process among competent native speakers, while compounding tends to signal a speaker's incomplete command of derivational morphology. Adamu Ago Saleh's linguistic analysis of fifty-one Bade personal names, grounded in Morphosemantic and Referential theories, reveals a striking

correlation between structural transparency and semantic motivation: descriptive, event-motivated names remain overwhelmingly transparent in form, whereas classificatory names, particularly those marking twin status, persist as an opaque, memorised sub-lexicon. This finding is a valuable reminder that naming practices are not simply linguistic curiosities but condensed cultural texts, encoding circumstances of birth, kinship, and cosmology in forms that a purely synchronic grammar cannot fully explain.

Salisu Garba and Hauwa Muhammad Bugaje turn attention to orthographic standardisation in Hausa, arguing that a unified writing system is indispensable to research, pedagogy, and the intergenerational transmission of the language, and cautioning against the neglect of this foundational task. Complementing these language-internal studies, two papers address the place of Arabic in Nigerian public and educational life. Abubakar Salih and Abdulwahab Salahuddeen diagnose the pedagogical weaknesses undermining the teaching of Arabic grammar in Damaturu's secondary schools, tracing poor learner performance to rote instructional methods, inadequate teacher training, and unsuitable curricula, while proposing analytically grounded remedies. Bashir Ahmad Al-Zabawi's broader historical and sociological account of Arabic in twenty-first-century Nigeria traces the language's centuries-long role as a vehicle of Islamic learning, literary production, and scholarly authority, while candidly acknowledging the pressures it faces from English-medium education, globalisation, and institutional weakness, and proposing curriculum modernisation and digital engagement as paths forward.

Nsikak Bernard Amos extends the language-and-cognition conversation into psycholinguistics, arguing that structured multilingual education, extending beyond the mother tongue and English to include French and Arabic, can measurably enhance memory, attention, and cognitive flexibility in young children. The paper's policy recommendation, that Nigeria's National Policy on Education move from token bilingualism to deliberate structured multilingualism, resonates with the volume's broader interest in how linguistic diversity, so often treated as an administrative inconvenience, might instead be harnessed as a developmental and cognitive asset.

Two papers in philosophy approach questions of gender and value from markedly different angles. Fatimah Remilekun Durojaye's comparative study of Yoruba and Hausa fashion traditions argues persuasively that dress in both cultures is a philosophical system rather than mere adornment, grounded respectively in the Yoruba maxim *iwa l'ewa* (character is beauty) and the Hausa dictum *kyaun hali ya fi kyaun kama* (good character exceeds physical appearance). The paper's tracing of how garments such as the *agbada* and *babban riga* now circulate in hybridised forms across ethnic and global boundaries offers a compelling account of fashion as an archive of ethical reasoning and cultural negotiation under conditions of urbanisation and globalisation. Bolaji O. Akanni's reading of Simone de Beauvoir, meanwhile, revisits *The Second Sex* through a self-described methodological potpourri that combines political critique, phenomenology, and literary analysis to show how existential concepts of freedom, embodiment, and situated choice illuminate the social and moral construction of woman as Other. The paper's ambition to position this synthesis as a resource for decolonial feminist theory and feminist phenomenology invites readers to consider how canonical Western philosophy might be productively reworked from within postcolonial and African intellectual contexts, a question that resonates with Durojaye's indigenous aesthetic frameworks.

The literary contributions in this issue are united by a shared preoccupation with how narrative, whether written, oral, or graphic, processes historical trauma and contests colonial representation.

Kayode Omoniyi Ogunfolabi rereads Mongo Beti's *Mission to Kala* as a parody that destabilises colonial fantasies of an authentic, unchanging Africa, showing how the novel's satirical hybridity undercuts the metropolitan desire for exotic, pristine native subjects. Oyetunde Julius Oluwafemi, Dongmo Adelaide Keudem, and Ismail Abdulmalik offer a Freudian psychoanalytic reading of Emmanuel Dongala's *Johnny chien méchant*, arguing that the young protagonist's dissociation and aggression dramatise war as a collective and individual trauma that fractures the structures of Id, Ego, and Superego, positioning the novel as both testimony and a symbolic space for narrating otherwise unspeakable violence.

Osakue Stevenson Omoera and Grace Ito Ibanga bring a deconstructionist lens to Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *The Last of the Strong Ones*, using the two novels to interrogate contemporary anxieties about the erosion of women's traditional social contributions and to argue for pedagogical approaches grounded in African values rather than imported feminist paradigms, a position that readers will want to weigh against Durojaye's and Akanni's contributions and that itself testifies to the plurality of feminist thought represented in this issue. Harmony Ezinne Okoro and Richard Oko Ajah apply Bakhtinian chronotope theory, together with trauma studies and conceptual metaphor and metonymy, to four Central African and Rwandan graphic narratives, demonstrating how the interplay of image and text in these works represents the historical realities of war and genocide with a specificity that panel-layout-centred approaches to graphic narrative have tended to overlook. Isah Ibrahim closes this cluster with a study of Alembong's poetry collection *Green Call*, reading its ecological imagery as both therapeutic and anthropomorphic, and using it to challenge the Eurocentric assumption that tropical nature is inhospitable to the pastoral or the meditative, in contrast to its temperate counterpart.

Two papers extend the volume's pedagogical concerns into French-language education. Paulina Oluwafunmilayo Williams-Onyeji and Simeon Olayiwola investigate the effectiveness of artificial intelligence tools, including neural machine translation and intelligent tutoring platforms, in the teaching of French as a foreign language in Anglophone Nigerian universities, reporting measurable gains in vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and reading comprehension alongside qualitative evidence of improved learner autonomy, while rightly cautioning that such gains depend on institutional policy, teacher training, and ethical safeguards. Simon Babale Amasa and Samaila Yaroson examine the learning conditions for French as a Foreign Language at a secondary school in Jos, finding that proximity to the Alliance Française and the Centre for French Training and Documentation meaningfully shapes learner interest and outcomes, and recommending more interactive and culturally immersive classroom practices. Read alongside Amos's paper on multilingual cognition, these studies collectively make a strong case that the future of language pedagogy in Nigeria lies at the intersection of technology, institutional infrastructure, and culturally responsive teaching methods.

The Issue's final cluster turns to theatre and performing arts as instruments of community engagement and environmental advocacy. David Oyinane Medugu documents the participatory turn in Ahmadu Bello University's long-running Samaru Project, arguing that the shift from a migrant, one-directional model of community theatre toward a genuinely participatory one, incorporating town-hall meetings, interviews, and communal song, has strengthened the relationship between the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts and its host community. Munachiso Onuzo-Iyanam Adetona, Emmanuel T. Gana, and Victor Ihidero examine Participatory

Learning and Action as a communication strategy in the Makilolo-Okomu creek community of Edo State, showing how structured techniques such as community mapping and pairwise ranking enabled residents, previously excluded from decisions shaped by extractive industry and conservation authorities, to develop collective agency and evidence-based advocacy. Franklin Pyokpung Zaure and Prince Nathan Kure round out this cluster with a study of eco-scenography in the staging of Elaigwu Ameh's *Climate of Change*, demonstrating that the use of renewable, locally sourced, and repurposed set materials can advance both the aesthetic and economic sustainability of Nigerian theatre production while foregrounding climate justice as a dramaturgical theme.

Several themes recur across disciplinary boundaries in this issue and deserve explicit notice. First is the resilience and adaptability of indigenous knowledge systems, evident in the Nupe potters who modify their techniques to survive competition from plastic substitutes, in the Fulfulde and Bade speakers whose morphological choices encode both linguistic competence and cultural memory, and in the fashion traditions that absorb global influences without abandoning their ethical foundations. Second is a sustained concern with participation and voice, whether of communities long excluded from environmental decision-making, of theatre audiences repositioned as co-creators rather than passive recipients, or of women whose social contributions are contested and reclaimed across differing feminist and Africanist frameworks. Third, several papers grapple directly with the afterlives of colonialism and conflict, from the labour migrations that colonial capitalism set in motion in Funtua, to the parodic unsettling of colonial ethnography in *Mission to Kala*, to the psychic and representational aftermath of war in Central Africa and Rwanda. Finally, questions of language policy and technology recur as a practical, forward-looking concern, with contributors converging on the view that Nigeria's linguistic plurality and emerging digital tools are underexploited resources for cognitive development, cultural preservation, and pedagogical innovation.

Taken as a whole, this issue of ZAJOLA reaffirms the distinctive value of the liberal arts as a space in which the granular and the general, the local and the theoretical, are held in productive tension. A catalogue of Katsina archaeological sites and a psychoanalytic reading of a Congolese war novel may appear, at first glance, to belong to separate scholarly universes; yet both are animated by the same underlying commitment to recovering and interpreting evidence, whether inscribed in soil, name, garment, or text, that dominant historiographies have too often neglected. We are grateful to our contributors for the rigour and range of their scholarship, to our reviewers for their careful and constructive engagement with each manuscript, and to our readers, whose continued interest sustains the intellectual community that this journal exists to serve. We commend this issue to you and look forward to the conversations it will provoke.

The Editorial Board

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