

A CRITIQUE OF THE CHARACTER INTERPRETATION OF JEDIDAH IN *A TRIBE CALLED JUDAH* (2023) AND YEJIDE IN *A BATTLE OF BUKA STREET* (2022)

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Abstract

This study critically analyses the character interpretation of Jedidah in A Tribe Called Judah (2023) and Yejide in Battle of Buka Street (2022), both portrayed by Funke Akindele. The purpose of the study is to explore how each character's portrayal showcases distinct acting techniques. This study is significant due to its contribution to Nollywood film analysis as it emphasizes the importance of cultural authenticity and the actor's role in embodying these elements. The theoretical framework employed in the study is Constantin Stanislavski's method, which focuses on emotional memory and the given circumstances that drive character portrayal. The methodology employs qualitative analysis, using film review and textual examination to dissect the characters' personalities and acting styles. Findings reveal that Funke Akindele, in her portrayal of Jedidah and Yejide uses contrasting acting techniques, internalized, emotionally reserved for Jedidah, and more dynamic and expressive for Yejide. These styles are enhanced by cultural elements such as language, attire, and community interactions, making both characters highly relatable to their respective audiences. The study recommends that future Nollywood productions maintain cultural integrity while encouraging diverse acting techniques that reflect both traditional and modern values. This approach can enhance character depth and audience engagement, fostering a more refined portrayal of indigenous stories on the global stage.

Keywords: Nollywood, Acting Styles, Character Interpretation, Funke Akindele, Stanislavski's Method.

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, commonly known as Nollywood, has garnered international recognition as the world's third-largest producer of films. Despite this significant achievement, Nollywood has been consistently critiqued for its variable film quality, particularly concerning technical execution and acting. While the quantity of film production is impressive, the quality of acting, in particular, has often fallen short of professional standards. Ekwuazi (1991, as cited in Abunike & Arinze-Umobi, 2022) argues that Nollywood is arguably Africa's first widespread cultural phenomenon enjoying widespread popularity and cultural influence across the continent. Buttressing this point, Ugwushi submits that:

The emergence of the Nigerian video film industry is a cultural phenomenon and Nigerian movies serve as a representation of Nigerian culture, which has revealed the uniqueness of video films as popular culture that impacted Nigerian and other African cultures, the viewers and the continent. They can help to better understand our own lives, the lives of those around us and even how our society and culture operate. It has provided a platform for Africans to tell their own stories and it is about the best organized group that has put Nigerian culture beyond our national boundary (2015, p.97).

However, Nollywood has also been criticized for its tendency to misrepresent the people whose stories it aims to tell (Asogwa, Onoja & Ojih, 2015). Additionally, the film industry has been accused of inadvertently promoting cultural imperialism, as its representations of indigenous realities sometimes embody Western cultural biases (Omijie, 2015). This misrepresentation and cultural bias further

highlight the need for a deeper analysis of character portrayal and character interpretation in Nollywood, ensuring that actors can deliver authentic and culturally resonant performances.

Character interpretation describes the primary duty of an actor in relation to a performance script. It is the fulfillment of this act by an actor alongside other production elements that gives life to a script. Acting is great only if it produces a reasonable effect upon a given audience (Asigbo & Ugbor, 2024). The art of acting involves more than just memorizing lines and delivering them on cue; it encompasses the creation of a believable character through the actor's body and voice. Acting is the art of interpretation; thus, the actor is essentially engaged in role interpretation. To act is to create a character in performance. This process involves a significant amount of preparation, including studying the script, researching the character's background, and understanding the context of the story. The actor must also be able to use their voice, body language, and facial expressions effectively to convey the character's emotions and intentions. This level of dedication and skill is what separates a professional actor from an amateur.

In Nollywood, the portrayal of characters frequently suffers due to several factors, including the lack of formal training and inadequate understanding of film-making principles among actors. This results in performances that lack depth, realism, and emotional resonance, which are crucial for engaging and impactful storytelling. Many actors, despite their ambition, enter the industry without substantial practical or theoretical knowledge of acting, leading to suboptimal portrayals and a general decline in the industry's artistic standards. Despite the industry's impressive output, Nollywood films frequently suffer from poor technical quality and substandard acting. This issue is exacerbated by the influx of untrained yet ambitious individuals who portray themselves as actors, contributing to the overall lack of professionalism and skill in the industry.

Research Methodology

This study aims to critically analyze the character portrayal of Jedidah in *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023) and Yejide in *Battle of Buka Street* (2022). The study also documents the acting styles employed for both characters and explores the cultural factors that enhance their realism and relatability. The primary data includes the two selected films, focusing on key scenes, dialogues, and character interactions that highlight the acting techniques and cultural authenticity. Supplementary data was drawn from journal articles, books, and reviews that explore acting techniques and Nollywood's cultural representations. Textual analysis was employed to examine how acting techniques, cultural elements, and emotional depth were integrated into the character portrayals.

Theoretical Framework

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938), a Russian actor, director, and co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, transformed acting with his revolutionary method known as "The Stanislavski System" or "The Method." His approach emphasizes realism and authenticity, shifting the focus from external, exaggerated performances to internal psychological processes. Stanislavski believed that actors should deeply immerse themselves in their characters' emotions, thoughts, and motivations, creating truthful and believable performances.

The term truth is usually used in the 'sense of truth on stage' and Stanislavski defines this by describing the sense of truth as:

The best stimulus to emotion, imagination, creativeness... At the base of every art is a reaching out for artistic truth. The actor must believe in everything that takes place on the stage and most of all... in what he himself is doing and one can believe only in the truth (Stanislavski, 1963, p.126).

Without this internalized truth, Stanislavski suggests, the actor cannot fully immerse themselves in their role, nor can the audience believe in the world created on stage. Central to his system is the concept of "truth in acting," which involves achieving emotional and psychological authenticity that resonates with the audience. Stanislavski argued that actors must fully believe in the circumstances of the play and

their own actions on stage. This belief is rooted in understanding "given circumstances" of the play, including its plot, setting, and character dynamics.

Key principles of his method include the "magic if" and "emotional memory." The "magic if" prompts actors to ask, "What if I were in this situation?" to connect personally with their character while using imagination to fill in gaps. Emotional memory involves drawing on personal experiences to evoke emotions required for a character, blending memory and creativity to enhance authenticity. Stanislavski's lifelong dedication produced seminal works such as *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, and *Creating a Role*, which remain foundational texts for actors.

An Overview of the Character of Jedidah in *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023).

Jedidah, the central character in *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023), is a complex and multi-dimensional figure who embodies strength, resilience, and vulnerability. As a single mother of five children, each fathered by different men, she faces significant challenges in a society that judges her harshly for her circumstances. Despite the judgment she faces from her community and her own father, a reverend, who disowns her, Jedidah demonstrates remarkable resourcefulness and independence.

Jedidah's resilience is evident in how she takes on the responsibility of raising her children on her own, running a small business that includes operating tricycles "keke-napep" to make ends meet. Her determination to provide for her family despite societal stigma underscores her role as a provider and protector. The film portrays her as a mother who, despite her personal struggles, tries to instill discipline and values in her children, even when they often stray from the right path. Stanislavsky's use of emotional memory is central to understanding Jedidah's character. The method asks actors to draw from their own experiences to evoke genuine emotions that their character might feel. In Jedidah's case, her personal struggles, such as raising children alone and facing societal judgment, require the actor to connect with feelings of isolation, determination, and perseverance.

For example, when Jedidah says, "It's the truth na, it's not that me Jedidah I just open and close everywhere for different man" (00:08:29), the actor used emotional memory to tap into the emotions of being misunderstood, judged, or marginalized. This line reflects Jedidah's defiance and her refusal to let societal stigma define her, and an actor using emotional memory could recall similar personal feelings to give an authentic performance.

Stanislavski's concept of given circumstances refers to all the facts of the world within which the character exists in time, place, social context, and personal history. Jedidah's role as a single mother running a business while facing societal stigma is a clear reflection of her given circumstances. Her responsibility for her children and her efforts to run a small business, like operating tricycles (keke Napep), create the backdrop that informs her resilience.

Understanding the economic and social challenges faced by Jedidah can help the actor to deeply engage with her character's struggles, reflecting the realism Stanislavski emphasized. This helps the actor to portray a character who, despite the odds, remains determined to provide for her family. However, Jedidah is not without her moments of vulnerability. She carries the emotional scars of being disowned by her father and judged by society. The film highlights her internal struggles as she deals with the wayward behaviour of her children, particularly her sons, who engage in crime and delinquency. In a scene, she defends her son who was almost burnt to death by angry mob for stealing.

Jedidah:	Eh, Omo mi Pere, Peree! Omo mi oh,
Mummy Michael:	Kiloshele
Jedidah:	Una go burn me here today
Angry Mob:	This boy na thief

Mummy Michael: Thief for where? Kamaru
Pere: Mummy I didn't steal anything
Angry Mob: He steal one girl wallet
Mummy Michael: Which Girl?
Pere: Mummy I didn't steal anything
Mummy Michael: Where is the girl, Onidafu ehh, Oya ebota (*A tribe called Judah*, 00:08:29).

Her pain and desperation, as seen when she cries out “*Eh, Omo mi Pere, Pereee! Omo mi oh,*” (*A Tribe Called Judah*, 00:08:29), can be enriched by the actor's use of emotional memory, ensuring that her portrayal resonates with authenticity. The sense of helplessness and fear for her son's life is a deeply emotional moment, and by drawing on personal memories of fear or loss, the actor can convincingly express Jedidah's vulnerability. Stanislavski's magic if is a tool actors use to put themselves in their character's shoes by asking, “What if I were in this situation?” In this scene, the actor playing Jedidah could ask themselves, “What if my son were about to be killed by an angry mob, and I believed he was innocent?” This hypothetically allows the actor to engage with the emotional and psychological stakes of the situation, making Jedidah's fear and vulnerability more visceral.

Jedidah's health problems, particularly her chronic kidney disease, serve as a physical manifestation of the emotional and financial toll her life has taken on her. Stanislavski's concept of psychophysical unity emphasizes the connection between physical and emotional experiences. Jedidah's chronic kidney disease serves as an external representation of her internal struggles. The actor playing Jedidah used physicality to communicate this, showing subtle signs of fatigue, pain, or discomfort throughout her performance. These physical signs served as visual markers of the character's internal pain and struggles as it could be seen in the delivery.

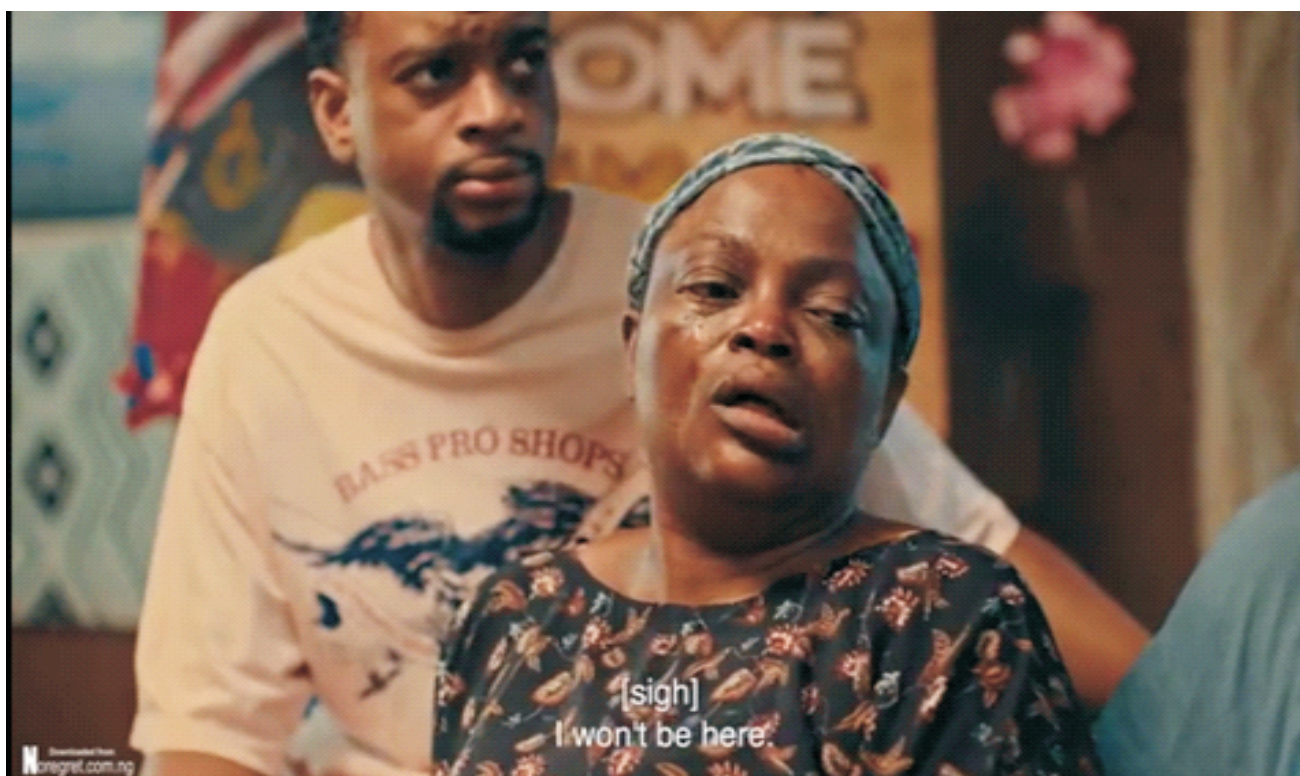


Plate 1: Jedidah depicting realism with her ill health.

Jedidah's relationships with her children are central to the narrative. She is a nurturing but firm mother who does not hesitate to confront her children when they go astray, as seen when she deals with Ejiro's involvement in street begging and other illicit activities.

Ah, Ejiro, what is good in the afternoon, you came and stand at somebody door, and be doing nonsense, You want to kiss?..... Testimony Abi? If you want your testimony to be permanent, don't disturb my son again, stay away from him (*A tribe called Judah*, 00:22:19).

Stanislavski's emotional memory is useful in portraying Jedidah's balance of nurturing care and firm discipline. Jedidah's role as a mother, particularly when confronting Ejiro.



Plate 3: Yejide worried about the competition.

Plate 2: Jedidah walks in on Ejiro and Testimony in a compromised position

Her sense of responsibility extends beyond her family, as she also intervenes in community conflicts, such as her attempt to mediate a dispute between Linda and her husband. Despite her struggles, Jedidah's strength and love for her family shine through, as she ultimately becomes the unifying force for her children. The climatic events of the film, including her children's desperate attempts to raise money for her dialysis, highlight her importance to the family and the sacrifices they are willing to make for her.

An Overview of the Character of Yejide in *A Battle of Buka Street* (2022)

Yejide, portrayed by Funke Akindele, is one of the central characters in *Battle on Buka Street* (2022). The film's plot revolves around her longstanding rivalry with her half-sister, Awele, and their fierce competition in running food businesses on Buka Street. Yejide is depicted as a strong-willed, determined, and resilient woman, driven by both personal and familial pride.

Yejide's character is deeply rooted in a complex family history. Born to Asake, Mazi Maduka's Yoruba wife, Yejide grows up in a competitive household, where her mother's rivalry with Ezinne, Mazi's Igbo wife, creates tension between the two families. Yejide inherits this competitive spirit and channels it into her food business. Throughout the film, she is portrayed as a shrewd businesswoman who fiercely guards her success.

Yejide: Awele Took the shop in front of me, mummy!

Asake: And so?, is it the first time someone is owning a shop in front of yours? And have you not seen or heard this before?

- Yejide: Mummy, competition will start
 Asake: Competition ke? Is it today they started competing with us? Have they not been competing with us since wen you got married, didn't ezinne make sure they git married on the same day as you? And since they have been competing, are they ahead of us? Answer me?
 Yejide: Rara mummy *in Yoruba* (No mummy) (*A Tribe called Judah*, 00:14:40).

Stanislavsky's emotional memory helps an actor tap into personal emotions and experiences to realistically portray a character's feelings. Yejide's internal struggles, stemming from the rivalry between her mother, Asake, and her father's other wife, Ezinne, drive much of her motivation. The actor



Yejide's lines, "Mummy, competition will start," and Asake's response, "Competition ke? Is it today they started competing with us?" (*A Tribe Called Judah*, 00:14:40), show that competition is ingrained in her from childhood. The actor can use personal memories of competitiveness or familial tension to fuel Yejide's determination and frustration. This emotional undercurrent makes Yejide's competitive spirit believable and relatable to the audience.

Yejide's ambition is a core aspect of her character. The given circumstances surrounding Yejide's ambition are crucial to understanding her character. Yejide's rivalry with Awele is fuelled by the long-standing tensions between their mothers, Asake and Ezinne. Both women have passed down their competitive natures to their daughters, who now fight for dominance on Buka Street. She strives to outperform her half-sister Awele, who also owns a food business on Buka Street. The rivalry between them is intense, with both women resorting to various schemes to outdo each other. Yejide is often depicted as cunning, using tactics like sending rats to sabotage Awele's business through her daughter.

Her competitive nature also extends beyond the business. For instance, when her son Ademide travels to Lagos, Yejide exaggerates the trip, telling her neighbours he is going abroad to provoke jealousy. This constant need to be seen as superior reflects her deep-seated desire for validation and victory. However, she also does not want anything Awele does to surpass hers:

- Ezinne: Tell them that Ezinne granddaughter oh, has gone to Canada
 Awele: You know Canada is by far better than any other place
 Ezinne: Canada Ndi better
 Yejide: Mummy, it could be true oh, you know Ifunanya is very intelligent
 Asake: Intelligent what, what are you talking about?
 Shebi you go to school more than me, is it easy to go to Canada just like that?
 Yejide: Mammy, maybe they have been planning it in silence oh (*A Tribe called Judah*, 00:43:43).

The actor could reflect on personal experiences where they felt the need to prove themselves or outshine others. This emotional recall would allow them to portray Yejide's ambition with a sense of authenticity, showing how deeply her need for validation drives her actions. In the dialogue between Yejide and her mother Asake, we see this need for validation manifesting when Yejide hesitantly admits, "*Mummy, maybe they have been planning it in silence oh*" (*A Tribe Called Judah*, 00:43:43), hinting at her fear of being outdone by Awele's daughter going to Canada. Stanislavski's technique of subtext helps uncover the hidden fears beneath Yejide's competitive exterior. On the surface, Yejide appears confident and cunning, sending rats to sabotage Awele's business and bragging about her son's trip.

However, beneath this bravado lies a deep fear of being outdone by Awele and her family. The scene where Yejide reluctantly acknowledges the possibility that Ifunanya, Awele's daughter, could indeed be going to Canada, reveals this subtext. While she outwardly dismisses it, saying, "*Mummy, maybe they have been planning it in silence oh*" (*A Tribe Called Judah*, 00:43:43), her hesitation shows a fear that Awele's family might surpass hers. This underlying fear drives Yejide's ambition and constant scheming, making her actions more complex than simple rivalry. The actor can use this subtext to bring a layer of vulnerability to Yejide's character, showing that her ambition is fuelled by the fear of losing her position of superiority.

Yejide's life is not without challenges. She navigates multiple personal battles, from managing her business to dealing with the fallout of her strained relationship with her imprisoned husband, Lanshile. Despite these challenges, Yejide's resilience shines through. When faced with setbacks in her business, such as losing customers to Awele, she devises new strategies to bounce back. She would intercept any plot to take her customers by Awele, as depicted in this scene:

Fadeke: Mummy, have you forgotten that today is the day Mr. Uchenna's wife came back with a new baby
 Yejide: And so? Is it the first time we have had baby in Otanwa, is that why you put powder on your face like masquerades, you scared me na
 Fadeke: But mummy that is their culture na, I saw people doing it and decided to join them (*A Tribe Called Judah*, 00:45:02).

After realizing Awele is there celebrating too

Fadeke: Even aunty Awele, Ifunanya's Mummy is there too
 Yejide: Come here, did you say Awele, is where, my customer, Mr. Uchenna is doing something, ehh, iro! (Runs out to join in) (*A Tribe Called Judah*, 00:45:50).

In this scene, her competitiveness is evident as she rushes to Mr. Uchenna's event upon hearing that Awele is present. Yejide's reaction reveals how her rivalry with Awele permeates every aspect of her life, including social gatherings. For the actor, understanding these given circumstances, the cultural significance of customers and the competition on Buka Street. Her struggle is not only with external competition but also internal conflicts. The arrival of her estranged husband, who escaped from prison, complicates her life further. Yejide's emotional burden is evident when she lashes out at her son Ademide for disrespecting his father, revealing the emotional complexity of her character.

Yejide is also portrayed as a devoted mother. Her relationship with her children, especially Ademide and Fadekemi, is central to her character. While she pushes her children to excel, her actions are often driven by her desire to protect and provide for them. However, this also brings out her controlling and overbearing side, particularly when she forces her son to keep a low profile after his father's prison break, an effort to shield him from further stigmatization.

The film also explores Yejide's spiritual journey. In her quest for dominance, she turns to spiritual

solutions, embarking on a physically demanding ritual to seek divine intervention in her feud with Awele. This shows another dimension of her character, her belief in tradition and spiritual warfare as a means to secure victory.

Acting Styles Employed for Jedidah in *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023) and Yejide in *Battle of Buka Street* (2022).

Both characters, Jedidah from *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023) and Yejide from *Battle on Buka Street* (2022), were portrayed by Funke Akindele, showcasing her versatile acting talent. While the two characters inhabit different narratives and settings, they share common threads in the intensity of their emotions, leadership roles, and struggles with societal and personal issues. However, Akindele employs distinct acting styles for each character, reflective of the unique demands of each role.

1. Jedidah in *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023)

Character Overview

Jedidah is a complex character in *A Tribe Called Judah*, who navigates personal, cultural, and spiritual challenges within a deeply religious and communal setting. The character is one of conviction, responsibility, and a central leader guiding the titular tribe through conflict and transformation.

Acting Style:

Funke Akindele employs an internalized acting style for Jedidah, one that focuses on subtle emotional shifts rather than overt expressions of emotion. Her facial expressions, controlled gestures, and the pacing of her dialogue reflect a measured and thoughtful character who often contemplates before reacting. This approach is fitting for a character in a spiritual and leadership role, where patience and wisdom are paramount.

Akindele also maintains a posture of poise, often standing still or making slow, deliberate movements. This gives Jedidah a sense of calm authority. Her reactions to conflict are controlled, relying on nuanced shifts in her tone of voice, body language, and eye contact to communicate underlying tensions.

As Jedidah navigates both personal and collective spiritual dilemmas, Akindele utilizes an introspective acting technique that brings forth a sense of internal struggle. There are moments of silent reflection where her emotions are conveyed through minimalistic movements—a slight bowing of the head, a pause in her breathing, or a deep, reflective gaze. This portrayal emphasizes the weight of her spiritual responsibilities and emotional burden. Akindele's portrayal of Jedidah relies heavily on moments of silence or minimal dialogue to express strength. When confronting opposition or guiding her tribe, her quiet demeanour contrasts with the loudness of conflict around her, giving her character an authoritative presence without the need for heightened vocal expression.

Influence of Cultural Setting:

Given the film's focus on community, tradition, and spirituality, Akindele tailors her performance to reflect cultural and religious customs. Her gestures, including traditional greetings and movements during rituals, show sensitivity to the customs embedded in the narrative. This physical embodiment of the character adds authenticity and gravitas to her role as a leader.

2. Yejide in *Battle on Buka Street* (2022)

Character Overview: Yejide is a bold, determined, and fiercely competitive woman who runs a food business on Buka Street, locked in a heated rivalry with her half-sister Awele. Her character is more extroverted, loud, and confrontational, reflecting the high-stakes tension of running a business in a competitive market.

Acting Style:

For Yejide, Akindele uses a much more expressive and exaggerated acting style. This character is emotionally volatile and deeply invested in her rivalry, so her movements are more pronounced, and her expressions are vivid. Yejide's outbursts of anger, joy, frustration, and pride are conveyed through broad gestures, exaggerated facial expressions, and a dynamic use of space.

Yejide is loud, assertive, and commanding in her dialogue delivery. Akindele uses varied tones of voice to reflect the character's fluctuating emotional states, often raising her voice to convey anger, frustration, or dominance. In scenes where Yejide is scheming or plotting, her tone shifts to a lower, more deliberate timbre, adding layers of manipulation and strategy to the character's persona. Akindele's portrayal of Yejide includes elements of physical comedy; a style she is well known for in Nollywood. Her movements are sharp and energetic, and she uses her entire body to communicate the intensity of her emotions. This comedic aspect provides relief in a film driven by conflict, as Yejide's dramatic and sometimes outrageous actions bring levity to the narrative.

Influence of the Marketplace Setting:

The marketplace environment in *Battle on Buka Street* (2022) is chaotic, and Akindele adapts her acting style to this fast-paced, bustling setting. Her performance is more dynamic and physical, with Yejide constantly moving, gesturing, and reacting to the people around her. This adds energy to the film and grounds the character within her community.

Yejide's actions are deeply influenced by her cultural context, particularly the Nigerian tradition of fierce competition in local markets. Akindele uses her voice and body to reflect the intensity of these market rivalries, incorporating local slang, gestural communication (like pointing, wagging fingers, and traditional greetings), and the dramatic flair typical of Nollywood market scenes.

Contrasts Between the Two Roles:

While Jedidah is emotionally restrained, often relying on subtle shifts to convey deep feeling, Yejide is overtly expressive and quick to anger or excitement. Jedidah's internalized emotions reflect her spiritual and leadership roles, while Yejide's more explosive style highlights her role in a heated competition within a bustling, everyday marketplace.

Jedidah's movements are slow, deliberate, and purposeful, emphasizing her calm and authority. In contrast, Yejide's body language is energetic and impulsive, reflecting her competitive spirit and fiery temperament. Both characters are shaped by their cultural contexts, but Jedidah's cultural expression is rooted in tradition and spirituality, while Yejide's is driven by the vibrant, aggressive culture of the Nigerian marketplace. Akindele adapts her style to fit each of these cultural contexts, using different vocal, physical, and emotional techniques.

Cultural Factors that Contribute to the Realism and Relatability of the Characters.

Cultural factors play a big role in making the characters in a story feel real and relatable to the audience.

Language and Dialogue

When characters speak in a way that reflects their culture, using local phrases, slang, or accents, it makes them feel more authentic. For example, characters that use common expressions from Nigerian Pidgin or Yoruba are more relatable to Nigerian audiences.

The Character of Yejide and Jedidiah utilizes the Yoruba language. Dairo (2021) noted that various historical constructions trace the origin of Yoruba people to Ile Ife, a city in Osun State which has been referred to as the cradle of Yoruba land and the origin of all human life. Depending on the location and sub-groups, Yoruba people speak various dialects, for example, the Ijesha's speak Yoruba Ijesha, while the Ijebu's speak in their Ijebu dialect. The Yorubas are also popular for their greetings which are tailored

Cultural Practices and Traditions

Characters that follow local traditions or customs, like celebrating festivals or observing certain rituals, seem more realistic. These cultural details make the characters' lives and actions feel more genuine and rooted in real-life experiences.

Community and Setting: The environment where characters live is deeply influenced by their culture. A setting that feels familiar to the audience because it reflects everyday life helps make the characters more believable. This technique is utilized in several scenes in the movie. For instance, Yejide is directed to meet a prophet who instructs her to embark on a spiritual journey crossing seven mountains and a river. The terrain used for the spatial mise-en-scène vividly depicts the Western terrain of Nigeria, characterized by mountain views and houses nestled along the slopes. This authentic representation of the landscape not only enhances the visual storytelling but also grounds the narrative in a specific cultural and geographical context, making the characters' experiences more relatable and immersive for the audience.



Plate 4: Yejide downing white attire on the mountain.

to suit almost any occasion or event, and their values for respect are evident in these greetings. Also, another cultural element synonymous with the Yoruba language is the use of proverbs which was predominantly used in conversations amongst characters in the film.



Plate 5: Yejide on her Iro and Buba and Gele (Battle of Buka Street)

In *Battle of Buka Street*, the character Yejide is depicted wearing the Iro, Buba, and Gele, which vividly illustrates the cultural realism of Yoruba fashion. This choice of attire adds authenticity to the character and also helps viewers connect with the cultural context of the story even if a word is not spoken, the dressing can give the viewer a sign. The characters' clothing becomes a visual representation of their cultural heritage. It demonstrates how traditional garments are used to convey identity, status, and cultural pride within the narrative.

Stanislavsky's Method stresses the importance of actors deeply internalizing their characters' emotions and experiences. This aligns well with incorporating Indigenous cultural elements into character creation. For instance, in *Battle of Buka Street* (2022), the character Yejide's traditional Yoruba attire (the Iro, Buba, and Gele) provides a tangible cultural context that can deepen the actor's understanding and embodiment of the character.



Plate 6: Yejide on a native attire (Battle on Buka Street)

Stanislavski's Concept of Given Circumstances involves understanding the plot, setting, and all elements that influence the performance. Traditional attire and cultural symbols can be part of these given circumstances. For Yejide, her traditional Yoruba clothing not only reflects her cultural background but also informs the audience about her social status and personal identity without needing explicit dialogue. Hence, In Stanislavski's terms, the clothing becomes a crucial element of the “given circumstances” of Yejide's character. The accurate representation of traditional attire supports the actor in embodying the character's cultural realities and helps communicate these aspects to the audience.

Style of Greeting: Another significant cultural element visible in the film is the style of greeting, which reflects deep respect for status, hierarchy, and age. Traditional Yoruba greeting styles are prominently displayed, with women genuflecting and men prostrating themselves with their hands on the floor. These gestures are emblematic of Yoruba culture and signify respect and acknowledgment of social status.

In the 21st century, these traditional greeting styles have evolved. While the essence of respect remains, modern adaptations include variations such as semi-prostration or a slight bow of the head, depending on the context and setting. These adapted greetings bridge traditional practices with contemporary norms, illustrating how cultural customs can evolve while retaining their foundational values.

Battle of Buka Street effectively incorporates these greeting styles to enhance cultural authenticity. In one notable scene, we see Ademide and his sister prostrating to greet their father Lanshile, while Yejide stands and observes. This interaction not only showcases the traditional Yoruba greeting but also highlights the cultural dynamics within the family.



Songs: In most Yoruba films, songs are integral elements that contribute to the cultural authenticity and relatability of the characters. Okome (1995) notes that drawing from traditional theatre practices, traditional music infused in films often captivate their audience through vibrant spectacle, including dance performances, festivals, elaborate costumes, and local songs. These elements, while sometimes criticized for being extraneous to the plot, play a crucial role in creating a cultural experience for viewers.

Table 1: Soundtrack in Battle of Buka Street

Soundtracks Utilised in Battle of Buka Street		
Song Title	Artist	Language Utilized
Iya Ade Alamala	(Feat Yomi Apala)	Yoruba
O Ga Ga Amala	(Feat Adam Songbird)	Igbo
Oke Chant	(Feat Adam Songbird)	Yoruba
Family	(Feat Adam Songbird & Folajomi)	English and Yoruba and Pidgin
Kinbaia	(Feat Adam Songbird)	Yoruba
Akanchawa	(Feat Kleb Shout)	Igbo

Battle of Buka Street exemplifies the use of music to highlight cultural diversity and enhance the realism of the characters and setting. Table 1 shows some of the notable soundtracks used in the movie, showcasing a mix of Yoruba, Igbo, and English languages.

"Iya Ade Alamala" (Feat Yomi Apala) – Sung in Yoruba, this song reflects the everyday life and essence of Yoruba street food culture, aligning with the film's themes, characters and utilized in almost every scene that involved the Buka street kitchen.

"O Ga Ga Amala" (Feat Adam Songbird) – An Igbo song, which enriches the cultural diversity of the film, representing the intersection of different ethnic backgrounds within the story. This song is utilized in the wedding of Yejide and Awele.

"Oke Chant" (Feat Adam Songbird) – Performed in Yoruba, this chant-style song draws from traditional Yoruba musical styles, adding layers of cultural depth and enhancing the spiritual or ritualistic moments of the film, especially the scene that involve Yejide crossing the Mountain.

"Family" (Feat Adam Songbird & Folajomi) – Sung in both English and Yoruba and Pidgin, this song bridges modern and traditional elements, reflecting the characters' struggles with family dynamics and identity. This song is utilized when Ade and Ifunaya meets at Lagos and Reunite, despite the ongoing issue with their family.

"**Kinbaja**" (Feat Adam Songbird) – A Yoruba track that adds to the film's cultural texture, underscoring important scenes with rhythmic traditional beats. This is the official soundtrack utilized in the movie. From start of the film to the display of the cast at the end credit. "**Akanchawa**" (Feat Kleb Shout) – An Igbo song, further highlighting the fusion of cultures and the harmonious coexistence of different ethnicities in the film. This song is utilized when mostly at the parts of Awele at the Buka street kitchen.

These songs, infused with traditional language and cultural references, help anchor the film in a Nigerian context, making the characters more relatable and the setting more authentic. The strategic inclusion of songs from different languages also demonstrates the cultural diversity within the film, reflecting the broader Nigerian society.

Table 2: Soundtrack in *A Tribe Called Judah*

Soundtracks Utilised in <i>A tribe called Judah</i>		
Song Title	Artist	Language Utilised
Enya Judah	(Feat Abbey Wonder)	Yoruba and Pidgin
On God	Feat Mo Ezay	Yoruba and English
Olomo Kilo	Ft Abbey Wonder	Soundtrack
MAMA	Feat Mo Eazy	Yoruba and Pidgin
Judah	Feat Mo Ezy	Soundtrack
Jaiye Ori mi	Feat DHORTU	Soundtrack
Iya Ni Wura	Feat Abbey Wonder	Yoruba
Iya	Feat Olabode & Ewa	Yoruba
Aye	-	Pidgin
Owuru	Feat King Olaboda & DHORTU	

The soundtrack of *A Tribe Called Judah* blends traditional and modern musical elements, enhancing the cultural richness and emotional depth of the film. Each song plays a crucial role in connecting the audience to the characters' experiences, with a mix of Yoruba, Pidgin, and English reflecting the diverse cultural backgrounds within the story. Songs like "Enya Judah" and "On God" mix Yoruba, Pidgin, and English, offering a rhythmic connection between traditional and modern Nigerian sounds. These songs help express the characters' struggles and achievements, making their journey more relatable.

"Olomo Kilo," for example, uses Yoruba to explore themes of identity and heritage, while "MAMA" celebrates the importance of mothers and family, further deepening the emotional impact. "Judah" appears throughout the film, reinforcing key moments and drawing the story together. Other tracks, like "Jaiye Ori Mi" and "Iya Ni Wura," highlight personal growth, spirituality, and the strength of family ties, important cultural values in the film. "Aye," sung in Pidgin, adds a more grounded, everyday feel, reflecting the struggles and hopes of the characters. The soundtrack as a whole helps to make the characters and their world feel more real and connected to Nigerian culture. The music mirrors the characters' diverse backgrounds and adds to the authenticity of the film, making the cultural elements more vivid and relatable to the audience.

Conclusion

The portrayal of female characters in Nollywood, particularly through the acting of Funke Akindele in *A Tribe Called Judah* (2023) and *Battle of Buka Street* (2022), demonstrates the power of cultural context in enhancing the realism and relatability of film characters. Akindele's ability to adapt her acting style to fit different cultural narratives, from the introspective Jedidah to the bold and expressive Yejide, highlights the versatility required to bring diverse roles to life. This study also underscores the

significance of cultural factors, such as language, traditional customs, attire, and community settings, in shaping characters that resonate with audiences. By incorporating these cultural elements, Nollywood films succeed in reflecting the complexities of Nigerian society, making the characters and their experiences feel authentic and grounded in real-life contexts.

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