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**"They are poor and violent":  
Stereotypes and the Ibadan urban motor park space**

**Abstract:** In this paper, we are interested in finding out how, and why, the interplay of poverty and violence – the park stereotypes – has problematised the motor park space, and consequently the culture that has evolved from that space. Of great concern to us are the origin and the operation of the park; the existence of these stereotypes, how, if ever, they relate and the implication of the interplay on the organization, operation and representation of the space vis-à-vis its relationship with the general public and government in Oyo State. Using Victor Turner's concept of social drama, we hope to provide explanations for ruptured social relations on the park and answer why the public is so imbued with the stereotypes that they have refused to appreciate the internal mechanisms for resolving the 'constant' conflicts.

**Key words:** poverty, motor park, stereotype, violence, social drama

**The park as a stereotyped space**

Stereotype can be described as a social phenomenon that involves oversimplified, preconceived and generalized beliefs about individuals, groups and organizations in the society (World Encyclopedia 2002, 299), that has nothing to do with the culture but only with the opinions or prejudices of those who create them (World Encyclopedia, 2002:60). It is a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality (Oxford Dictionary 2002, 165). It is also a symbolic act that is part of negotiations about group boundaries and membership, and about sometimes contradictory and sometimes overlapping social models. The dangers inherent in stereotyping will be better appreciated if one considers the fact that it "involves the reduction, digitalizing and domestication of a relatively unknown which goes a long way in colouring both the interpretation of the past and the anticipation of the future" (Anderson 1991, 201).

The stereotype problem can be political, cultural, social or economic, and has been of interest to anthropologists for decades not just because of its often perceived

damaging effect but because it is capable of undermining the very basis of our social relationships and of beclouding our sense of social and developmental responsibilities. Anthropological works such as that of Morris (1977), Michael (1981), Douglas (1981), Chock (1987), Lewis (1991), and Anderson (1991) have all been interested in stereotype studies from various angles, namely, on the Nuer and the Saamis, among others. Not just because stereotypes are capable of fragmentizing and engendering discrimination, as is the case with the caste system in India and the Osu caste in Igbo land in Nigeria, but also because of the fact that they can induce a sense of helplessness, that is, a parochial thinking pattern that nothing can be done to salvage a particular situation.

The nature of stereotype creation is such that the less is known of an individual or group, or the more seemingly mysterious an individual or group, the easier it is to stereotype. Stereotyping therefore compounds and amplifies the insidious simplification that accompanies classification. Hence, its condensation creates in minds and in socio-scopes, boundaries or marked figures, on similarly uncritical, though marked, grounds.

One space in Nigeria today that is battling to survive amidst stereotypes is the motor park space, a unique geographical location that services the transportation, market, social and cultural needs of the people. This space is stereotyped with two vices, namely, poverty and violence. Here, the activities and the living conditions of the human agents of the motor park, which created the 'stereotypes', have undermined the significant role of the space in the social, political and economic well-being of the Nigerian society.

This stereotype did not emerge overnight; rather it evolved and developed over time with increase in the park-public interaction. In fact, as Anderson (1991) explains, such stereotypes as this are

....self-organized evolutionarily in open systems, replete with serendipity and surprise, and they emerge developmentally in more limited systems permitting of some prediction, thereby engendering suspense. (Anderson 1990, 204)

The perception of the park has gotten so skewed today with the stereotype of violence and poverty, that only the human agents of the park themselves could be aware or sure of the 'true' image, or notice how skewed the image was and is. Again, only they could present a true image, as opposed to the marked image of the public, which has been influenced by the: (i) normative or 'natural' standard against which the marked is marked, (ii) the default category assimilating the marked category, (iii) the frequency or numerical prevalence, and (iv) the historical and autogenetic precedence of the marked (Chock 1987, 48). It is these criteria that the marker of Nigeria's motor park, the public, used in stereotyping the space as one of poverty and violence; indeed, the 'markedness' of the park has heightened to the level that violence is perceived today as, barring any other indicator, synonymous with the motor park.

## Defining poverty and violence

Bearing in mind the wide scope of the variables we shall be dealing with, most importantly poverty and violence, it is imperative that we clarify the meaning in which we are using them in this study.

Let us start with poverty. Poverty is a problematic concept that has no one-fits-all definition. In fact there are as many definitions as there are theorists on the subject, even though there are similarities in the elements of the definitions that show the true nature of the concept as "a universal and at the same time culture-bound phenomenon" (Øyen 1996). Let us explore some of the definitions.

Poverty, according to Ogwumike, is

a state in which an individual or household is unable to meet the basic needs of life (food and non-food) considered as minimum requirements to sustain livelihood in a given society (Ogwumike 1987, 12).

It can also be described as that condition of living which is characterized by

deprivation of common necessities that determine the quality of life, including food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water, and may also include the deprivation of opportunities to learn, to obtain better employment to escape poverty, and/or to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens (Wikipedia 2008, 2).

What is noticeable in these definitions is that one is an improvement on the other. While Ogwumike's definition is income-based, the Wikipedia definition is more comprehensive, or broader as Thomas Pogge (2003) describes it, for it encompasses economic as well as non-economic aspects of human deprivation. The second definition can therefore be seen as compliant with the United Nations Development Programme 1998 Report that suggests that "poverty must be seen far beyond economic lack to include the denial of choices and opportunities for a tolerable living" (UNDP 1995, 3).

Adas (1989), however, reminds us that we should not be blinded by this plethora of definitions and the counter-definitions proffered to amend them, for they are all products of the 1949 World Bank study in Colombia and other attempts at globalizing poverty. In his words, "every culture and all societies of the world have developed ways of defining and treating poverty that accommodate visions of communities, frugality and sufficiency" (this is prior to what Hayter (1981) and Escobar (1995) called the creation and popularization of global poverty by the West at the end of World War II in 1942).

Adas' observation, to us, is jejune as it underscores the fact that although all human societies share similar thoughts on the nature and meaning of 'Poverty', each of them has a unique approach and diverse explanations of this problem. So, for the benefit of this study, we briefly examine the

understanding of poverty among the Yorubas of southwestern Nigeria, the ethnic group that the majority of residents in our study area belong to.

Poverty, among the Yorubas, is called '*ise*', and is considered an amalgam of diseases, human and extra-terrestrially induced; it is characterized by four 'human' existential factors, namely,

1. *airije*, meaning lack of food
2. *airimu*, lack of what to drink, or simply lack of access to water
3. *airina*, lack of sufficient income to cater for responsibilities or non-availability of what to spend
4. *airilo*, lack of materials that could make one fit into the society.

(Field 2008)

In the Yoruba language, 'ai', means 'lack or deprivation' and it serves as the prefix for all the four identified human existential factors agreed to characterize '*ise*'. Hence, *ai-ri-je*, in polysyllabic breakdown, means 'lack access to-see/discover-eat/food'. This is not radically different from our earlier meaning which defines '*ai-ri-je*' as 'lack of food'. Rather it goes further to show the socio-linguistic origin of the word. This means that 'lack of food' could be a result of the limit of one's sight of/discovery of access to food or one's inability 'to see' how one could obtain food. So, implicit in this meaning of '*ai-ri-je*' is the human and social factor for men by virtue of our social living could either discover access to food individually or be led to see or discover the access by others. This explanation also applies to other factors such as '*ai-ri-mu*' (lack-see/discover-drink).

Violence can be described as "the unlawful use or threat of force" (Tamuno 1991). Wilkinson (1977), in his own contribution, defines violence as the "illegitimate use of coercion resulting, or intended to result in the death, injury, or intimidation of persons or the destruction or seizure of property". For Ted Honderich (see Albert 1994), "an act of violence is a use of consideration or destroying force against people or things, a use of force that offends against a norm". From these definitions, one could move on to say that violence has to do basically with the use of force to access what the other party will not willingly let go. The exerted force, be it covert or overt, is meant to intimidate, subdue and, if necessary, destroy in order to achieve a set aim.

There are three basic dimensions of violence. These are:

1. Psychological, involving irrational and murderous use of force, like robbery, thuggery, among others
2. Ethical, involving the vandalism of a neighbour's property or an abuse of his liberty, and
3. Political, involving forceful seizure of power or the illegitimate use of political power. (Domenach 1978)

The above three dimensions can be subsumed under two different types of violence, namely, individual or interpersonal and group or mass violence. While the former consists of violent acts such as murder, robbery, street fighting etc. between individuals (Albert 1994), the latter refers to the type of violence resulting from mass action, riots, demonstrations, etc. We shall be considering both views, i.e. inter-personal and group violence.

What is noticeable in our elucidations above is that, unlike poverty, which requires culture-based explanation, violence, as a concept, is less 'controversial', as most of the explanations and classifications discussed above serve the same purpose in almost all societies of the world.

### The poverty-violence nexus

The saying "a hungry man is an angry man" epitomizes the conviction of scholars such as Galtung (1969), Lewis (1961), Lipset (1959) and Miller and Reissman (1961), who all believed that being poor is conducive to violence susceptibility (i.e. poor people cannot but be susceptible to violence because of their condition). Their positions have, however, been variously attacked. The position of scholars like Goodhand (2001) that violence could induce poverty has gained huge acceptance not because it sounds more reasonable but because evidence abounds of family breadwinners who have been killed during outbreaks of violence and whose deaths have adversely affected countless households (see Goodhand 2001; DFID 2001; Donna 1999).

Evidence provided by 'poverty-induces-violence' scholars include:

- evidence to show that the poor tend, on the whole, to be more authoritarian than the prosperous
- the poor are more given to intolerance and prejudice
- the poor are more given to black-and-white thinking
- they are more anti-intellectual
- the poor are more inclined to action and less to contemplation
- they are more inclined to personal and concrete than to impersonal and abstract thinking
- more given to resignation and fatalism
- more subject to announce
- more inclined to a concrete and marginal emphasis on religion
- more provincial and locally oriented in attitudes and opinions
- more distrustful of governmental authority
- more suspicious and hostile towards the police
- less developed in imaginative and logical powers
- more given to economic liberalism
- more unclear in non-economic matters and

- less eager to preserve civil liberties if they themselves are not members of a minority group (Olomola 2003)

Many of these observations which lay the blame for violent acts on the poor are baseless and unfounded, racial, and are personal opinions rather than products of objective research. Therefore, in order to explain the link between poverty and violence, two suppositions are further examined here, namely that:

1. Marginalization and socio-economic exclusion leads to frustration and then aggression.
2. Aggression leads to violence.

On the first supposition, the explanation is often that since uneven processes/social-spatial interactions lead to inequality, exclusion and poverty, frustration is generated. The frustration generated then contributes to growing grievance particularly when poverty coincides with ethnic, religious, or regional boundaries and affiliations. This situation of frustration can make people do the unexpected, either by themselves or acting for others. What this means is that poverty and/or perceived injustices cause grievances which then create group alliances and allegiances to overcome the frustration and aggression of certain individuals, which then induces them to violence. According to Dollard (1990, 71) "frustration is the interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal response at its proper time in the behaviour sequence". Frustration, therefore, becomes "both a necessary and sufficient condition of aggression", which in most cases erupts in diverse types of violence, ethical, political and psychological.

Following from the first supposition, the second supposition suggests that the occurrence always presupposes the existence of frustration, and that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. With this, the stage is then set for violence displays. In the opinion of John Dollard (1990), this catalytic

... Aggression (which) could be overt or non-overt, direct or indirect (in the latter case involving object and response displacement), physical or ideational, conscious or unconscious, external or internal. Whatever forms of aggression occur are functions of a complex interplay between the strength of instigation to aggression and the frustration of the acts of aggression.

(Dollard 1990, 63)

It is pertinent to note at this juncture that the strength of instigation to aggression varies directly in proportion to the amount of frustration (caused by the unavailability of economic opportunities and means of meaningful livelihood).

This is a function of three factors:

- a. strength of instigation to the frustrated response
- b. degree of interference with the frustrated response
- c. the number of response sequences of frustration

(Megargee 1970, 29)

But, if through prior learning, the frustrated individual links punishment with certain acts committed against certain objects, then, depending upon whether the weight comes down more on one side than the other in the instigation-to-aggression/anticipation-of-punishment relationship, he/she may be inhibited or deterred from behaving in certain ways toward certain objects.

This 'interference' with an instigation-to-aggression process sets up further frustrations (in addition to the original frustrations) which can fuel frustration-aggression and thus generate more frustration, which can only be managed through object and/or response displacement. The frustrated individual can substitute targets and/or means in his/her attempts to reduce the instigation to aggression, and to experience catharsis. Depending on circumstances, object displacement may include self-aggression, which is stronger when the individual believes himself (rather than an external agent) to be responsible for the original frustration and when direct aggression is restrained by the self rather than an external agent.

Moving away from the theoretical jargon, what we are trying to establish is how a frustrated 'self' who is in poverty could move from frustration to aggression, which might result in violence, in the bid to vent the bottled anger caused by the perceived economic injustices that have perpetuated his or her poverty. Our explanations have been directed at explaining the causal and symptomatic connection between poverty and violence; most especially, the exposition on the frustration-grievances-aggression theory. Underpinning "anger" as explained is the feeling of *deprivation* (which, as we suggested earlier, is synonymous with "lack"), that over time leads to frustration, later to exacerbated grievance and then aggression (in the form of violence of various degrees).

### Study area/Case study

Ibadan, our study area, is located on the coordinates of  $7^{\circ}\text{N } 23^{\circ}\text{E}$ , 23 of the Equator. Etymologically, the name, *Ibadan*, was coined from the phrase 'eba odan', which means 'that which was found near the savannah'. History has it that 'eba odan' was founded by a group of warriors led by Lagelu. It was originally founded as a place of refuge, on neutral ground, a kind of no man's land serving as an informal boundary between the inhabitants of the savannah (*Odan*), who were the Oyo people, and the forest (Igbo) dwellers, the Ijebu and Egba (Layonu, Okosun, Kehinde and Ishola 2008, 18).

The inner Ibadan city, often referred to as 'Ibadan metropolis', comprises 5 radial local government areas, while the outer rings comprise six local governments (Fabiye 2007). During the colonial era, Ibadan was made an administrative centre of the old Western Region in Nigeria, and today it is the capital of Oyo state (see Figure 1). These, among other factors, can be adduced to explain its rapid development as one of the major trading centers in the country, as this among other factors has attracted people of diverse cultures to the city (Wikipedia 2008).

Today, one can say unequivocally that Ibadan has indeed developed into a city, with many schools, several hospitals, two universities (one public, the other private), two polytechnics (one public, the other private), dozens of traditional and modern markets and shopping plazas and arcades, and numerous entrepreneurial projects. The residents of Ibadan are involved in numerous income-generating businesses and jobs such as farming, civil service, and private practices. Transportation within the city is usually by buses (Bolekaja and Danfo), taxis and motorcycles, which are now of two types, namely keke NAPEP (meaning the National Poverty Eradication Programme tricycle), and the commonplace motorbikes, locally known as Okada. A designated location where these means of transportation can be boarded is usually called the 'park' or 'garage'.

There are motor parks or 'garages' in almost every community in Ibadan, including its rural semi-urban ones. But as Lawuyi (unpub.) posits, "the intensity of conduct of economic and communicative affairs, the vastness of the space the garage occupied and the political structure and roles that transport plays" differentiate an urban from a rural motor park space. And based on this indisputable difference, it is incontrovertible that it is the complex nature of the urban motor parks within Ibadan which makes them susceptible to all manner of violence-related activities, as Lawuyi observes. To us, this complex nature is the harbinger of the stereotypes, hence our decision to choose an urban motor park for our case study.

The Ojoo motor park space, in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, is a prototype of a unique and all-segment urban motor park space with its complex organization and structure, namely, transport (intra-city, intra-state, inter-state, motorbike and the trailer section) and component groups/unions, among others.

Ojoo, by the way, is one of the communities that make up the entity called Ibadan. The name is derived from the word "Ojo ro", which means "the day has come to its suspension" (Pre-Field 2008). The community is popular, among other reasons, due to its cosmopolitan nature, not just for the spread of residents but also the hospitality of the Ibadan people.

Ojoo is located in the Akinyele Local Government area of Oyo State. It is notable for the role of its market, which shares the same spatial location with the motor park, in serving as the link between the rural farmers, who want to

sell their farm-products, and the wholesalers, retailers and final consumers. There are two versions of the Ojọọ market, the nine-day cyclical version and the daily version. The major difference is that the space is more intense and chaotic during the nine-day market when traders from different parts of the state/nation converge to buy and sell.

The Ojọọ Motor Park is a unique and all-segment urban motor park space. The uniqueness is to be found in the levels and classes of popular road transport sectors that it contains, namely, the intra-city, intra-state, inter-state, motorbike/Okada and the trailer section (which contributes to its 'uniqueness', for there is hardly any other urban or rural motor park in Ibadan that has higher numbers of trailers or a powerful standing union). Also exceptional is the nature of its market: the Ojọọ Motor Park market serves as a rallying/selling point for urban secondary/processed items and food items brought directly from the rural areas/villages around Ibadan and even far beyond. Unlike other motor park markets that sell such products through the secondary sales line, the urban traders, *Oloja Igboro*, the farmers themselves, *Oloko*, or their wives or representatives, market their products sometimes directly to consumers at the Ojọọ motor park.

### Theoretical framework: Social drama

We are guided in this work by Victor Turner's concept of social drama. Unarguably "one of the most creative thinkers in British-American social anthropology" (Moore 1981), Turner's work is dense, complex and of enormous value especially in explaining conflict situations which arise out of social interactions. Rejecting the popular functionalist view of that time, which was based on the idea of an organic analogy, Turner preferred to view the nature of change as hidden and dynamic, yet ever present in social structure. The various pre-arranged states, in his view, are what grew or developed over time into the complex structure. Put more succinctly, in Turner's own words:

... with my conviction as to the dynamic nature of social relations, I saw movement as much as structure, persistence as much as change, indeed, persistence as a striking aspect of change. I saw people interacting, and, as day succeeded day, the consequence of their interactions. I then began to perceive a form in the process of social time. This form was essentially *dramatic* (Turner in Moore 1997, 230).

Turner's uniqueness is particularly relevant, as could be gleaned from the foregoing, in explaining postmodern theatrics that is more processual and dynamic than the dramaturgical theories advanced by Burke and Goffman.

For in Turner's view the

social dramas were recurrent units of social life, and although each society's social drama could be expected to have its own style, there were sufficient similarities for comparison without erasing social actors, eliminating temporal depth, or making the organic assumptions of Radcliffe-Brown (Moore 1997, 231)

The story of the conceptual birth of 'social drama' is itself intriguing, having been pontificated over some bottles of beer in a pub, when Turner was writing his dissertation. Hence, its uniqueness, just like that of its conception, lies in its understanding of social life as "an harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations" (Turner 1974, 37). For Turner, therefore, social drama can be defined as:

an eruption from the level surface of ongoing social life, with its interactions, transactions, reciprocities, its customs making for regular, orderly sequence of behavior (Scotts 2008, 2).

As we noted earlier, Turner's conception of social drama is distinct from that of Burke and Goffman. Whereas for Burke and Goffman the entire world is a theatre stage, for Turner it is "meta-theatre". Meta-theatre, in his view, is communication about the communication process, where spectators and actors reflect upon how the actors do what they do on stage. Further, while the drama is about the actors and the message they intend to convey, the analysis of what has taken place and the need to *redress* it is essentially the problem of both the spectators and the actors. The ultimate goal in understanding the meta-theatre is how to mediate in a troubled pattern of interactions. Explaining further, Turner says that for him,

dramaturgical analysis begins when crises arise in daily flow of social interaction, thus if daily living is a kind of theatre, social drama is a kind of meta-theatre, that is, a dramaturgical language about the language of ordinary role-playing, and status-maintenance which constitutes communication in the quotidian social process (Turner 1985, 181).

Inferable from the foregoing is the fact that meta-theatre is a reflection by everyday actors about the communication system, through which they consciously show spectators what they are doing, or their message meta-theatre builds on the idea of meta-commentary, which means 'a story a group tells itself about itself'. It can also be described as 'a play a society acts about itself' that serves as a mirror for understanding its true nature in order to provide redress, if need be.

Meta-theatre re-enacts conflicts giving them contextualization so that with meta-commentary, all facets of the conflict are illuminated and made accessible for remedial action, which can then, through multiple reflections, provoke spectators to initiate transformations in everyday life. Victor Turner's social drama's meta-theatre is illuminated via its four phases:

1. The Breach Phase: illuminates norm-governed social relations that have luminal characteristics; a kind of luminal between more or less stable social processes;
2. The Crisis Phase: during which there is a tendency for the breach to widen into public form, representatives of order are dared to grapple with it;
3. The Redressive Action Phase: ranging from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery as a way to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to the performance of public ritual; and
4. The Reintegration Phase: of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of the irreparable schism between the contesting parties, wherein a step is taken to settle and rework a ruptured social relation or social relations.

While the first two phases present a mirror for understanding the origin and extent of a rupture in social relations, the other two, the third and fourth phases, offer, as the names suggest, redressive and reintegrative solutions.

Our study adopts the social drama theoretical perspective in analyzing our data because it is our belief that its meta-commentary will illuminate the pattern of social interaction within the park and how to redress or re-integrate the public, which has marked the park with poverty and violence, and the motor-park agents, who see the public as objects that cannot but bow to its whims and caprices.

## Methodology

A case study research strategy is adopted for this study. This is to enable us to carry out an in-depth study of a given social unit (Ukpokolo 2002). The case study approach affords the researcher the opportunity to carry out a thorough investigation in the chosen area, just as Malinowski and Mead did when they studied the Trobriand Islanders and the Samoans respectively. Due to the high number of motor-parks in Ibadan, a simple random (multi-stage) selection was adopted in affirming our choice of Ojọ Motor Park. Sixty key informants were interviewed for the purpose of data collection. They constituted the sample size. The snowballing method made it quite easy to interview these informants. The selection is distributed among the seven identified segments of the Ojọ motor park as follows: drivers and union officers, 15; market men and women, 15; local government officials, 2; bus conductors and other menial park staff, 8; members of the Nigerian Police Force, 4; commuters, 15; and an *Ifa* scholar.

## Research findings

### *Poverty on the Ojoo motor park*

The Ojoo motor park environment is rather unclean. Dirt of all shades, sachet water nylon, cigarette butts, among other things litter the space. The most gaily dressed are the commuters. And this is essentially because most of them are going on long journeys. The appearance of most of the drivers does not suggest wealth of any sort. Many of their clothes are dirty. Even when clean, they lack any dressing sense. The officials in white and green uniform, those that collect the union's daily rates, are usually well dressed, mostly (at least) very early in the morning. But within three hours of collecting rates, the sweat and scuffle with the bus-drivers makes them look very dirty. In fact, the white shirt will in most cases have changed to off-white or brown. After two weeks of close observation, we decide to interview some of the park agents.

We commence with Mrs. Oye. She was born in Beere area in 1973. She has been married for fifteen years and has four children. She sells groceries like biscuits, butter, shaving sticks, etc. at the Ojoo motor park, section II (very close to the Ogbomoso/Oyo taxi park). Her stall is usually our cool spot after roaming the park for hours. On this particular day we induce her to discuss poverty. Here are some of her views:

Poverty is when one cannot feed himself or herself and her/his family. When one is called from home to cater for responsibilities and one cannot; when one cannot afford to move with one's friend because of shame.

(Field, 2008)

With her views on poverty, we ask if she thinks there is any poverty in the park.

Yes o, my brothers. Many people here are suffering; they do not have food to eat. Many of them cannot cater for their families. And they do not have work. This park is filled with many poor people (Field, 2008).

Her admission is simply that poverty is pervasive on the Ojoo motor park based on the reasons she cited. In her view, food or access to food is the major concern of the people on the park. Hear her:

"Oun ti a ma je, ni every body n wa"

(It is what to eat that every one of us is searching for here).

Everyone, drivers, market women and men as well as the urchins and the commuters boarding the buses are all moving from one place to another in search of daily bread.

To Ari A., who frequents the park, the existence of poverty on the park is not debatable. Ari is a student at the Ogbomoso Baptist Seminary. He is a native of Oke-Iho in the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo state. He pastors (at the time

of the interview) a church in Ibadan before he decides to take a few months long course for the theological certificate. He travels to and from Ibadan and Ogbomoso once a week, or once in two weeks when his assistant Pastor can comfortably stand-in for him at the Ibadan church.

Ari is of the view that:

Poverty is quite expedient and commonplace here. Look at the environment, the drivers, the urchins and even the so-called market women. What are they selling? What is the total worth of what they are selling? But they do not have a choice, at least they are able to make some money for continued survival here. Otherwise, I want to believe I will meet the same set of people day in, day out in this park

(Field, 2009)

The conclusion of the majority of our respondents is that poverty is very visible in the Qjọọ motor park.

One potent fact that many of my informants, except the officer of the Union Alhaji Alimi, take for granted is the biased view of the park's agents as disorderly and the park as irredeemably dirty. Don't other peopled sectors move in a disorderly way in their quest for daily bread? Moving around Ibadan metropolis, the Mokola area and to some extent even Jericho industrial area, one would discover that there are people who share some of the characteristics earlier mentioned. The majority of the commuters interviewed, however, spoke extensively as if all the characteristics highlighted were purely found on the motor-park (even though the Ibadan metropolis is as dirty as the park). And the people, this same set of people, are those that will be dispersed into different areas of Ibadan later in the day. One can only wonder if those people will be tagged as 'poor' when they leave the park.

Again, to say poverty exists in the motor park is to belabour the obvious; after all, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) document shows that 70% of Nigerians "are living below the poverty line" (NEEDS, 2005). The motor-park with its human agents who mostly belong to the lower rungs of the economic ladder cannot, therefore, be expected to be insulated from poverty. But as Mrs. Oye observed earlier on poverty within the park, it is not about 'riri-mu' (what to drink), 'ririna' (what to spend) rather it is about 'ririje (what to eat). This constituted the bulk of the essence of their daily struggle.

#### *Violence, the park and the park agents*

One Yoruba word that has close affinity with violence is '*jagidijagan*'. It is often attached to people's way of addressing issues. The majority of those addressed as "*onijagidijagan*' or 'violent people' are usually non-educated,

poor people. The educated or rich yet seemingly destructive people are not violent but *'alagidi'* or stubborn people. Such is the belief among the Yoruba as explained by Chief Labi, a key informant. In his opinion:

What we often call violence or what papers (newspapers) carry as headlines are nothing but usual fights among groups as a result of a ruptured relationship. But because many of our members are perceived as 'outcasts' 'omo-ita' 'omo-garage' and 'no-do-gooders', all shades of minor fights are blown out of proportion (Field, 2009)

We then asked him if the park does not witness violence at all. Chief Labi replied "do not get me wrong. I did not say we do not fight. Rather what annoys me is how news of our minor fights is handled" (Field, 2009). He did not deny the fact that the park agents are constantly involved in fights; what he resents is that the public, the government and the press are biased in their coverage of these crises.

Mr Chuks, an elderly market man in the Ojoo daily market, who has been trading on the park for close to three decades, believes that the park cannot be saved from continued violent clashes:

Last week, we witnessed a clash between members of the Association of Commercial Motor-cycle Operators of Nigeria and Okada section of the National Union of Road Transport Workers over space. Their constant clashes over space snatching and control of units will continue as long as they have to eat unless the government can do something about it.

(Field, 2009)

Clashes over space acquisition and control, in the view of Ms Tam, are the major cause of violence. As we discovered through our interactions with the people, the situation is more tense now because the park's governing slogan has changed from "chop alone, die alone" to "chop alone, go away".

What this change means is that unlike before when one could siphon off or mismanage the union's funds alone or with only a few executive members and still be pardoned, such practices will no longer be tolerated.

As Alhaji Bash (Branch Treasurer, NURTW, Akinyele Local Government) observes:

Now, it is the era of 'chop alone, go away'. Once you are caught or suspected of mismanaging the union's funds, the first thing is for you to step down from your post. (Field, 2009)

We then asked what happens if such a person refuses to step down. Without mincing words, Alhaji Bash replied "of course, we are not expecting many of them to willingly surrender. We know how to handle such persons" (Field, 2009). Although he refused to admit that such persons are forcefully

removed from their post, an event we witnessed on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009 revealed how people like that are handled. On that fateful day, not knowing what the day held in store for him, the Unit Chairman of Onimaalu Unit, arrived at the park amidst salutes from the rate officers. Having heard rumours about the Chairman's likely removal, we were already hiding near the unit's office. Within 20 minutes of his arrival, ten buses arrived from Ojoo Central Motor Park filled with members of the union brandishing cutlasses and knives of diverse shapes and sizes. In the twinkling of an eye, the group loyal to the to-be-removed chairman surrounded the unit's office, ready to defend their "territory" in battle.

Seeing that tempers had risen more than expected we eased ourselves out of the danger zone, only to return thirty minutes later to discover bloodstains on the ground and a new set of people being congratulated as Acting-Chairman and executives. The most reasonable question to ask anyone around would have been: Where is the Chairman? But that seemed needless as the new Chairman had been accepted in his new role. Such is the level of guerilla warfare that the park often finds itself in. Most of these are products of representation and competition for space to control. What happens after this breach, which has resulted in crisis? We shall discuss this later on in the chapter.

The market men and women sharing the park also fight over such issues as customer snatching, overstepping of/or encroachment of assigned space, and leadership, as was the case with the Ojoo Igbo Trade Association. It is the drivers' inter-union clashes and intra-union problems that, however, often involve the psychological, ethical and political aspects of violence. In some cases, it often involves murder, gruesome killing of opponents. Much of this violence has its roots in power seeking, in the quest to amass material wealth so as to rise above the others, to create an identity that would be respected and of course to change one's status.

Obviously, it is not only on the park that people kill to get power. News abounds in the media of the activities of the political gladiators who kill their opponents in their quest for power. But what is incontestable is the fact that an accusing finger has also been pointed at the park agents' unions as having one or two questions to answer in such cases.

Violence is not characteristic of just a group of people. All humans are capable of exhibiting violence if and when pushed to the wall. To imagine that the motor park is the first place in Ibadan that many of my informants think of in terms of violence, means there is more to it. What about the University of Ibadan where students are always ready to riot? What about the political rallies where members of the ruling People's Democratic Party and the All Nigerian People's Party easily engage each other in open fights? Or shall we concur with Chief Labi that there is more to this crisis than meets the eye?

*Orita, Omo-ita and the public marking of  
the Ojoo motor park space*

The Ojoo motor park came into existence some time in late 1960s (Pre-field, 2008). Like many other parks or 'garages', it has survived amidst markings of diverse sorts since its establishment. In fact, its very location, *Orita*, is believed to be one of its first markings that led to the creation of the first stereotype.

The Ojoo motor park is located at *Orita* Ojoo, at the intersection of the roads from Iwo, the University of Ibadan and Moniya. *Orita* in Yoruba mythology is the home of two ministers of Olodumare (God) believed to be very powerful and dangerous, *Esu* and *Ogun*. "Shrines and sacrifices of all sorts are placed at the *Orita* because of the ubiquitous and wandering nature of these divinities" (Field, 2009).

*Ogun* is widely praised as "

Olomi ni le fe je we,  
O la sho nle fifi mo  
Ki mo bora

(He that has a house filled  
with water; yet chooses to  
bathe with blood; He that  
has so many clothes, yet  
chooses to cover his body with palm fronds)

(Field, 2009).

He is feared for his propensity to induce violence and cause deaths when provoked. Besides, *Ogun* is the divinity in Yoruba cosmological myth to whom belong,

iron and steel and therefore any implements and tools made from them. All who make use of these tools and implement therefore depend upon him and owe him tribute .... it is a consequence of this belief in his lordship over iron and steel that he is acknowledged as the divinity of war and warriors; mechanics, all engine drivers and in fact all who deal in anything made of iron and steel. Such people are said to be under obligation to worship or propitiate him

(Bolaji Idowu 1996, 85)

*Esu*, on the other hand, is widely regarded as "*onile orita*" (he who owns the crossroads). The attitude of the Yorubas to *Esu* is generally one of dread; for he is believed to hold the power of life and death by virtue of his office as

an intermediary between the other divinities and Olodumare. No other divinities accept any sacrifice without requesting that that of *Esu* be removed first. Hence the saying:

Bi a rubo; ki a mu t'Esu kuro  
(When sacrifices are offered, the portion which belongs to *Esu* should be set aside for him).

*Esu*, according to Fatade Ade, an Ifa scholar, is believed to be capable of causing crisis; of turning very close friends and allies into enemies, causing husband and wife to quarrel, and making antagonists of even father and children (Personal Communication, 2009). In fact, *Esu* is believed to be the master of mischief and a trickster. Although he is not the biblical devil, *Esu* is predominantly associated with *things evil*. The unruly, the headstrong, the ones prone to evil-doing, the wicked ones, are all considered to be *omo-Esu*.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that any activity carried out on *orita*, which is believed to be home to these divinities, cannot be expected to be devoid of rancour, violence and death. Hence, the first stereotype or marker of the motor-park is its proness to violence, rancour, chaos and deaths. In fact, the fact that *orita* usually served as a battle ground during inter-communal wars in past centuries makes the violence stereotype of the space stronger. From this, it was discovered that many of the activities associated with *orita* or crossroads are never considered as good ventures or worthy of pursuit by 'omo luwabi' (a very good person). So, most violent, rancorous and unruly persons are then easily identified with *Esu*, and the bloodthirsty with *Ogun*. As a result they are then referred to as *omo ita*.

Our observation shows that the attributes of 'omo-garage' are not that different from 'omo-ita' for both are markers used to stigmatize and distinguish the 'good children' from the 'bad children'. From the space and the activities of the divinities associated with the space originated the marker by which 'omo-ita' (the wicked and unruly one) is separated from "omo-ile" (the good child). Certain standards of conduct are then set for both. The 'omo-ita,' who is a no-good, is expected to be involved in marked jobs like driving, bus conducting, and park rate collecting; while 'omo-ile' is expected to be the scion of hope in the society. He is expected to govern, lead others, and make decisions, among other things.

The 'omo-ita', apart from being excluded, is also determined by the society to be a source of strife and crisis. The kind of job he/she is expected to be involved in is low-level jobs. They are never expected to be capable of governing and managing the affairs of others. If one looked closely, one would discover that the kind of jobs that an 'omo-ita' is expected to be involved in are the jobs typical in the motor-park space. Hence, it is striking that the space is not just stereotyped as the abode of violence, rancour and

deaths, but the human agents are expected to be agents of violence, rancour and deaths.

This marking makes it difficult for the 'marked space' and the 'stigmatized' to be integrated into the society. They are held at arm's length and any happenings resembling the attributes associated with them are easily assigned to such a space and agents, even when they are not circumstantially involved.

### Violence incidents as mere social drama, not poverty induced

The public is so imbued with the stereotyped image of the park that it has refused to recognize the fact that like any other social relations, the motor park relationships are bound to involve conflict. But as Victor Turner posited, it is not the absence of conflicts that marks a peaceful socio-spatial interaction, rather it is how people are able to manage the breach that results; the ensuing integration will then guarantee the continued existence of the group. The uniqueness of Turner's social drama, just like that of its conception, lies in its understanding of social life as "an harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations" (Turner 1974, 37).

We witnessed several incidents during this study that convinced us that indeed the park patterns of ruptured social interactions are not dramatically different from that of any other group on separate spaces. We were offered a glimpse of one of them, the "Onimaalu Motor Park Take-over", but what we have not yet discussed is how the matter was eventually resolved. We intentionally saved the details to enrich this analysis, for each highlights a phase of the social drama that plays itself out in any social space.

Of course, a narration of the "Onimaalu Saga" might give the impression of lawlessness and disorganization, yet in fairness to the drama, the event did not just happen. Like most organisations, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) has a guiding document which prescribes how disciplinary matters are to be resolved, the NURTW Constitution.

Mr. Bad S, branch Vice-Chairman of the Inter-State Unit, who has been involved in similar 'take-overs', explains:

We don't just take over any park. First, drivers in such parks must be our members. They must be organized as a unit with their own officers; participate in the group's activities, pay their dues regularly, remit a certain sum to the local government branch, which will in turn register them as a unit at the state level. When there is a crisis at any of these registered parks, we wade in after receiving an official complaint from any of the parties to the conflict. We might invite them or send in our intervention team. If the

matter is not resolved at the level of the committee charged with such responsibilities, we convene a full branch meeting with all the parties involved in attendance. In most cases, seemingly difficult matters are often resolved at this level, because even the godfathers of some of the parties to the crisis are often invited to defuse whatever tensions have arisen. But if after the general meeting the matter remains unsolved, the recommendation at the branch level is forwarded to the state for redressive action. If the State Chairman or his proxy is unable to solve the matter or seen to be partisan, the matter is forwarded to the National office in Abuja. As you can see, we are mindful of the possible emergence of unforeseen 'ruptured social relations', as you said. The case in question here, Onimaalu, was a case decided at the branch general meeting and the parties to the crisis agreed to the terms of the agreement, but the incumbent, despite losing the people's confidence as well as the support of 7 out of his 10-member executive, refused to leave. We did not go to the park to attack him, but because of his guilty conscience he used hired thugs to attack us. We have, however, since called a stakeholders' meeting and resolved the case. Both aggrieved members and their supporters are back together on a power-sharing agreement.

(Field, 2009)

Mr. S was right because when we returned to the park two days after the incident, parties to the crisis were seen discussing how to address cases of drivers' tickets evasion and how to mobilize their members to take part in a non-governmental organization's road safety enlightenment project. One of the parties to the crisis later informed me that "like Tsvangarai and Mugabe (political leaders in Zimbabwe), we are back in the same government for the sake of peace and the welfare of our members". Peace, he admitted, is vital to the success of business as well as their relationship with the public. What is deducible here is that NURTW, like many other associations, has a way of redressing crisis and that their effective use of the integrative tools has kept the association functional to date.

An incident similar to the "Onimaalu Saga" was a scuffle among traders for space close to the road that almost degenerated into Igbo-Yoruba, ethnic, free-for-all. The incident which started as an altercation between traders over a small piece of land took another dimension late January, 2009 when a similar incident happened some five minutes' walk from the first spot. Like the first incident, it was the Yoruba trader who attempted to take over a small portion 'allocated' (in quote here because we were unable to ascertain the truth of the claim) to an Igbo trader. So, the Igbo Marketers Association simply lumped the two incidents together as an attempt by the Yoruba traders to drive them away from the area to a less lucrative space, far from the buses and commuters. Attempts by the officers of the Central Market Union to resolve the crisis were rebuffed by the Igbo Traders Association based on the allegation that "the CMU is in the know of the take-over plan".

Several meetings were called and held without achieving any meaningful success. A free-for-all fight broke out in early February of 2009 which resulted

in the destruction of goods worth hundreds of thousands of naira and the eventual arrest of some of the gladiators of the crisis. Although the arrested marketers were unconditionally released by the Police, the free-for-all marked the beginning of the resolution of the crisis. On the orders of the Ojoo monarch and active involvement of the Chairman of the drivers' union, the matter was resolved amicably by late February. The aggrieved parties have since returned to their business, "happy to live in peace with one another once again".

What can be deduced from these two incidences is the fact that regardless of the precarious condition of the human agents of the park, and the level of rupturedness in their social relations, there is an internal mechanism through which the breaches and the crisis are redressed. And if one is not prejudiced but fair, one will discover that it is the redressive activities and integrative mechanism of the park agents that have sustained the park to date for the sake of continuity, peace and progress, and that these have nothing to do with the economic status.

## Conclusion

So far, we have attempted to show the effect of stereotype on the Nigerian urban motor park space. We have highlighted the role of the public, who are the *marker* or the *stereotyper*, on the one hand, and the *marked* or the stereotyped, the park and its human agents, on the other, in the perpetuation of the skewed violent image of the Ojoo motor park. We have been able to do all this with the aid of data collected using direct field observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The constant eruption of violence on our urban motor park space, we noted, has been of concern to both the government and the general public. The study concludes that not much has been done in remedying the situation because the public are imbued with a feeling that nothing can be done to salvage the situation, as if taking the 'the park because of its poor human agents can't but be involved in violence' attitude. This has made them impose the stereotypes on the space.

In order to rise above the public's marked level/acceptability, the human agents of the park, as we observed, have involved themselves in various activities in their search for daily bread and the power to influence a change of attitude towards them. This has led to clashes and struggles which have in turn created tensions in the motor park. The tensions have in turn resulted in violence of diverse magnitudes. But as we have observed, this does not warrant the production of stereotypes of the space as violent, for most of the park's incidents and violent events are not peculiar to the space.

The cosmological origin of the park, though vital to the understanding of its historical antecedent, has nothing to do with the current park crisis. The

competition for resources and power as well as the struggle to represent various interest groups are discovered as mere attempts geared towards possible access to "food" or access to influence that would grant access to "food".

Finally, we conclude that the inability of the public to acknowledge the existence of an internal mechanism through which the park's ruptured social interactions or social drama are managed shows that imposition of violence and poverty stereotypes on the urban motor park is unwarranted, prejudiced and, hence, needs reconsideration.

**Note: All the informants' names in this paper are invented names.**

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Adeyemi Johnson Ademowo

"Oni su siromašni i nasilni":  
Stereotipovi i gradski prostor motor parka u Ibadanu

U ovom radu pokušaćemo da otkrijemo kako i zašto interakcija siromaštva i nasilja, nekih od stereotipova koji se vezuju za prostor *motor parka* (koji je mešavina parkinga, garaže i stanice), proizvodi problem tog prostora i kulture koja iz njega proističe. Posebno nas interesuje poreklo i funkcionisanje motor parka; potom interesovanje usmeravamo na postojanje tih stereotipova, na njihov odnos kao i uticaj koji njihova interakcija ima na organizaciju, funkcionisanje i predstavljanje tog prostora, te konačno koji efekat ti stereotipove imaju na javnost i autoritete države Oyo. Oslanjajući se na koncept socijalne drame Viktora Tarnera, nadamo se da ćemo uspeti da objasnimo poremećene društvene odnose vezane za prostor motor parka i da odgovorimo na pitanje zašto je javnost toliko natopljena stereotipima odbijajući da uzme u obzir unutrašnji mehanizam koji bi mogao da pomogne u rešavanju konflikta.

*Cljučne reči*: siromaštvo, nasilje, prostor motor parka, stereotipi, društvena drama

Adeyemi Johnson Ademowo

"Ils sont pauvres et violents":  
Les stéréotypes et l'espace de stationnement urbain d'Ibadan

Dans ce travail, nous nous efforçons de découvrir comment et pourquoi l'interaction de la pauvreté et de la violence, un des stéréotypes sur les parcs de stationnement, a posé le problème de l'espace de stationnement, et par conséquent de la culture qui en découle. Nous nous intéressons particulièrement à l'origine et au fonctionnement des parcs de stationnement ; puis nous nous interrogeons sur l'existence de ces stéréotypes, sur leur rapport éventuel ainsi que sur l'impact de leur interaction sur l'organisation, le fonctionnement et la représentation de l'espace, enfin sur l'attitude du grand public et des autorités dans l'État d'Oyo face à ces stéréotypes. En recourant au concept de drame social de Victor Turner, nous espérons fournir des explications sur les relations sociales rompues dans les parcs de stationnement et répondre à la question pourquoi le public est si imprégné de stéréotypes qu'il a refusé de se rendre compte du mécanisme interne pouvant remédier à des conflits 'constants'.

*Mots clés:* pauvreté, parc de stationnement, stéréotype, violence, drame social

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