Antrocom 2010, vol. 6, n. 2 | 115-133

Cultural Anthropology

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

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Abstract

In this work, 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 evolved from the 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 a vis its relationship with the general public and governance in Oyo State. Using Victor Turner's social drama, we hope to provide explanations for ruptured social relations on the park and why the public is so imbued with the stereotypes that they have refused to appreciate the internal mechanism to redress the 'constant' conflicts.

Keywords: 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 (W.E. 2002:299), that has nothing to do with the culture but only with opinions or prejudices of those who make them (W.E. 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 relationship and becloud our sense of social and developmental responsibilities. Anthropological works such as that of Morris (1977), Kenny Michael (1981), Johnson Douglas (1981), Chock (1987) Susan Lewis (1991), and Anderson (1991) among others have all been interested in stereotype studies

from varied angles, namely, on the Nuer, the Saamis, among others. Not just because it is capable of fragmentizing and engendering discriminations, as it is the case with the caste system in India and Osu caste in Igbo land in Nigeria, but for the fact that it could spur a sense of helplessness, that is, a parochial thinking pattern that nothing could 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 becomes 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, in similarly uncritical, though marked, grounds.

One space in Nigeria today that is battling to survive amidst stereotypes is the motor park space', which is 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 condition 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 overtime 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, in violence and poverty, today that only the human agents of park themselves could be aware or sure of the 'true' image or noticed 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 were 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. It is these criteria that the marker of the Nigeria 'motor park, the public, used in stereotyping the space with 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 especially poverty and violence, it is imperative that we clarify the sense(s) within which we are using them in this study.

Let's start with poverty. Poverty is a problematized 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's 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 encompassing, or broader as Thomas Pogge (2003) describes it, for it encompasses economic as well as non-economic aspects of human deprivations. The second definition can therefore be seen as compliant with the United Nation 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 these plethoras 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 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 Teresa Hayter (1981) and Escobar (1995) called the creation and popularization of global poverty by the West at the end of the World War II in 1942).

Adas' observation, to us, is jejune as it underscores the fact that although all human societies share similar thought on the nature and meaning of 'Poverty', yet 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 majority of residents in our study area belong.

Poverty, among the Yorubas, is called '*ise'*, and is considered as 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 fits into the society.

(Field, 2008)

In 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*, would 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 as a result of the limit of one's sight of/discovery of access to food or one's inability 'to see' how one could access food. So, imbued in this meaning of '*ai-ri-je*' is the human and

social factor for man 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), among others.

Violence can be described as the "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". To Ted Honderich (See Albert, 1994), "an act of violence is a use of consideration or destroying force against people or things, a sue of force that offends against a norm". From these definitions, one could glean the fact that violence has to do basically with the use of force to access what 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 viewing 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 property or an abuse of his liberty and;
3. Political, involving forceful seizure of power or the illegitimate use of politics power. (Domenach, 1978)

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

What is glaring from our elucidations above is that unlike poverty that 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 general saying "an 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 anecdote to violence susceptibility (i.e. poor people can't but be susceptible to violence because of their condition). Their positions have however being variously attacked. The position of scholars like Goodhand (2001) that violence could induce poverty gained huge acceptance not because it sounds more reasonable but because evidences abound of family breadwinners who have been killed during violence outbreaks and whose deaths have affected countless households adversely (see Goodhand, 2001, DFID, 2001, Donna, 1999).

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

1. evidence to show that the poor tend on the whole to be more authoritarian than the prosperous.
2. the poor are more given to intolerance and prejudice
3. the poor are more given to black-and-white thinking
4. they are more anti-intellectual
5. the poor being more prone to action and less to contemplation.
6. being more induced to personal and concrete rather than impersonal and abstract thinking.

7. more given to resignation and fatalism.
8. more subject to announce.
9. more induced to a concrete and marginal emphasis on religion.
10. more provincial and locally oriented in attitudes and opinions.
11. more distrustful of governmental authority.
12. more suspicious and hostile towards the police
13. less developed in imaginative and logical powers;
14. more given to economic liberalism
15. more reactioning in non-economic matters and
16. less eager to preserve civil liberties if they themselves are not members of a minority group (Olomola, 2003).

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

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 as proxy to others. What this means is that poverty and/or perceived injustices cause grievances which then create group alliances and allegiances to overcome frustration and aggression of certain individuals which then induces them to violence. According to John 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 versions of violence, ethical, political and pschological.
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 lead 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 for response displacement), physical or ideational, conscious or unconscious, external or internal. Whatever forms of aggression that occurs 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 with the amount of frustration (created by 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 frustration

(Megargee 1970:29)

But, if through prior learning the frustrated individual associates 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 the external agent.
Away from the theoretical jargons; 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 blamable on the perceived economic injustices that have perpetuated him or her in poverty. Our explanations have been directed at explaining the causal and symptomic 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 we submitted earlier as been synonymous with lack), that has over time led to frustration, later to exacerbated grievance and then aggression (in form of violence of varied degrees).

Study Area/Case study

Ibadan, our study area, is located on the coordinates of 7^0N 23^0E/7, 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 a neutral ground, a kind of no man's land serving as an informal boundary between the inhabitants of the savannah (*Ọdan*) 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 of 5 radial local government areas, while the outer rings comprise of six local government (Fabiyi, 2007). During the colonial era, Ibadan, was made an administrative centre of the old western Region in Nigeria and presently it is the capital of Oyo state (See Figure 1). These among other factors can be adduced as some of the factors that led to its rapid development as one of the major trading centers in the country, as this among other factors has attracted people of diverse culture into the city (Wikipedia, 2008).
Today, one can say unequivocally that Ibadan has developed into a city indeed, with many schools, several hospitals, two universities (one public, the other private), two polytechnics (one public, the other private), tens of traditional and modern markets and shopping plazas

and arcades, and numerous entrepreneurial projects. 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, (Bọlękaja and *Danfo*), taxis and motorcycles, which are now of two types, namely kękę 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. 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 as a case study.

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

Ọjọọ, by the way, is one of the communities that made up the entity called Ibadan. The name was derived from the word "Ộjọ rọ" which means 'the day has come to its suspension' (Pre-Field, 2008). The community is popular, among others, for its cosmopolitan nature, not just for the spread of residents but ever welcoming character of the Ibadan people.

Ọjọọ is located in 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 Ọjọọ 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 part of the state/nation converge to buy and sell.

The Ọjọọ Motor Park is a unique and all-segment urban motor park space. The uniqueness can be found in the levels and classes of popular road transport sector that it contains, namely, the intra-city, intra-state, inter-state, motorbike/Okada and the trailer section (which adds the 'uniqueness' to it for there is hardly any other urban or rural motor park in Ibadan that has higher numbers of trailers or a virile standing union). Also outstanding is the nature of its market constituent: the Ọjọọ Motor Park market serves as a rallying/selling point for urban secondary/processed items and food items being 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 directly sometimes to the consumers at the Ọjọọ motor park.

Theoretical framework: social drama

We are guided in this work by Victor Turner's social drama theory (SDT). Unarguably "one of the most creative thinkers in British-American social anthropology" (Moore, 1981), Victor Turner's work is dense, complex and of enormous value especially in explaining conflicts situations which arose out of social interactions. Rejecting the popular functionalist view of that time, which is nested on the idea of an organic analogy, Turner prefer to view

the nature of change as hidden, dynamic yet present in social structure. The various pre-arranged states, in his view, are what grew or developed overtime into the complex structure. Put more succinctly, Turner explains:

> *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).

Victor Turner's uniqueness is particularly relevant, as could be gleaned from the foregoing, in explaining post modern theatrics that is more processual and dynamic than 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 Victor was writing his dissertation. Hence, its uniqueness, just like that of its conception, lies in its understanding of social life as "an a harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations" (Turner 1974:37). To Turner, therefore, social drama can be defined as:

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

Like we noted earlier, Victor Turner's conception of social drama is distinct from that of Burke and Goffman. For whereas for Burke and Goffman the entire world is a theatre stage; for Turner, it is "meta-theatre". Meta-theatre, in his view, is the communication about the communication process, where spectators and actors reflect upon how the actors do what they do on stage. To buttress further, while the drama is about the actors and the message they intend to pass across, 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-theater 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 reflexivity 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 in understanding its true nature in order to afford redressing, if need be.

Meta-theatre reenacts 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 are 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 fora, 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 legitimating 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 to understanding the origin and extent of a ruptured social relations, the other two, the third and fourth phases, offer, as the names suggest, a 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, that has marked the park with poverty and violence, and the motor-park agents, who see the public as objects that cannot but bows to its whims and caprices.

Methodology

A case study research strategy is adopted for this study. This is to enable us carry out in-depth study of a given social unit (Ukpokolo, 2002).The case study approach afford 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 a high number of motor-parks in Ibadan, a simple random (multi-stage) selection was adopted in affirming our choice of Ọjọ́ọ́ Motor Park. Sixty key informants were interviewed for the purpose of data collection. They constituted the sample size. Using snowballing method, made it quite easy to interview these informants, who are selected from the list of population. The selection is distributed among the seven identified segments of the Ọjọ́ọ́ 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 Police, 4; the commuters, 15; and an *Ifa* scholar.

Research Findings

a. Poverty on the Ọjọọ motor park

The Ojoo motor park park environment was rather unclean. Dirt of all shades, sachet water nylon, butts of cigarettes, among others littered the space. The most gaily dressed are the commuters. And this is essentially because most of them were going on long journeys. The appearances of most of the drivers do not depict riches of any sort. Many of their clothes were dirty. Even when clean, they lack any dress sense. The officials in white and green uniform, those that collect the union's daily rates, are usually well dressed, mostly very early in the morning. But within three hours of rates' collection, the sweat and scuffle with the bus-drivers would have made them look very dirty. In fact, the white shirt would in most cases have changed to off-white or brown. After two weeks of close observation, we decided to interview some of the park agents.

We commenced 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 Ọjọọ motor park, section II (very close to the Ogbomoso/Oyo taxi park). Her stall was usually our cool spot after roaming the park for hours. On this fateful day we lured her into discussing 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 asked if she thinks there are traces of poverty on 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 submission was simply that poverty is pervasive on the Ọjọọ motor park based on the reasons she cited. Food or access to food, in her view 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 Oke-Ogun area of Oyo state. He pastors a church in Ibadan before he decided to take a few months theological certificate. He travels to and from Ibadan and Ogbomoso once in 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 common place 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 that 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 on this park* (Field, 2009)

The summation of most respondents, majority of them, was that poverty is visible on the Ọjọọ motor park.

Discussion:
One potent fact that many of my informants, except the officer of the Union Alhaji Alimi, took for granted was if it is only on the park that people search for daily bread. Don't other peopled sectors move disorderly in their quest for daily bread? Moving around Ibadan metropolis, 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. 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, these 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 left the park.
Again, to say poverty exist on 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 rung 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.

b. ***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. 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 paper (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 'out casts' '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 do 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 are handled (Field, 2009). He did not deny the fact that the park agents are constantly involved in fights, his grouse with the public, the government and the press is that they are biased in their reportage of their crisis.

Mr Chuks, an elderly market man in the Ọjọọ 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 the 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 will have to eat unless government can do something about it* (Field, 2009).

The clashes over space acquisition for control purpose in the view of Ms Tam, is the major cause of violence. As we discovered through our interactions with the people, the situation is more tensed 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 can siphon or mismanage the union's funds alone or with only a few executive members and still be pardoned, such will not be tolerated again.

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 to mismanage the union's fund, the first thing is for you to step-down from your post* (Field, 2009).

We then asked what happens if such person refuses to step-down. Without mincing words, Alhaji Bash replied "of course, we are not expecting many of them to willing surrender. We know how to handle many of such persons" (Field, 2009). Although he refused to agreed that such persons are forcefully removed from their post, an event we witnessed on 13th January 2009 revealed how people like that are handled. On that fateful day, unwitting of what the day holds for him, the Unit Chairman, Onimaalu Unit resumed to the park amidst salutes of the rate officers. Having eavesdrop about the Chairman's likely removal, we were already hiding somewhere near the unit's office. Within 20 minutes of his arrival, ten buses arrived from Ọjọọ Central Motor Park filled with members of the union brandishing cutlasses and knives of diverse shapes and sizes. Within a tinkle of an eye, the group loyal to the to-be-removed chairman surrounded the unit's office battle ready to defend their "territory".

Seeing that tempers have risen more than expected we eased ourselves out of the danger zone. Only to return thirty minutes later to discover patches of blood on the floor and a new set of people being congratulated as Acting-Chairman and executives. The sanest question to ask anyone around would have been where is the Chairman? But the need for that seems needless as the new Chairman has been accepted into his new role. Such is the level of guerilla warfare that the park often found itself. 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, over stepping of/or encroachment of assigned space and over leadership as was the case with the Ọjọọ 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 oppositions. Many of these violence have root cause in power seeking, in the quest to amass material wealth so as to rise above the others, to create identity that would be respected and of course for the sake of status change.

Discussion

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 accusing fingers have also been pointed at the park agents' unions as having one or two questions to answer in such cases.

Violence is not in the domain of just a group of people. All humans are capable of exhibiting violence if and when pushed to the walls. To imagine that the motor park is the first place in Ibadan that many of my informants can think in terms of violence, means there is more to it. What about the University of Ibadan where students are readily on rampage? What about the political rallies where members of the ruling People's Democratic Party and the All Nigerian Peoples Party easily engaged one another in open fights. Or shall we concur with Chief Labi that there is more to the eye that could be seen on one surface of this crisis?

c. *Orita, Omo-ita* and the public marking of the Ọjọ́ọ motor park space

The Ọjọ́ọ motor park came into existence sometimes in late 1960s (Pre-field, 2008). Like many other park or 'garage', it's been surviving amidst markings of diverse sort since its establishment. In fact, its very location, *Orita* is believed to be one of its first marking that created the first stereotype.

The Ọjọ́ọ motor park is located at *Orita* Ọjọ́ọ, at the intersection of roads coming from Iwo road, U.I and Moniya. *Orita* in Yoruba mythology is the home to 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
> bath with blood; He that
> has so much 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. Beside this, Ogun is the divinity in Yoruba cosmological myth to whom belong,

> *iron and steel and therefore any implement 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 infact 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, is widely regarded as "*onile orita*" (he who owns the cross roads). 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 making enemies of very close friends and allies, 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 making and a trickster. Although he is not the biblical devil, *Esu* is predominantly associated with *things evil*. The unruly, the headstrong, the one 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 maker of the motor-park is its proness to violence, rancour, chaos and deaths. In fact, the fact that *orita* usually serves as battle ground during inter-communal wars in early centuries makes the violence stereotype of the space stronger. Premised on these, it was discovered that many of the activities associated with *orita* or cross roads 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 blood thirsted 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 delineate the 'good children' from the 'bad children'. From the space and the activities of the divinities associated with the space originated the marker with 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-do-gooder is expected to be involved in marked jobs like driving, bus conducting, and park rate collecting, among others; while '*omo-ile*' is expected to be the scion of hope in the society. He is expected to govern, lead others, and take decisions, among others.

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 are low-level jobs. They are never expected to be capable of governing and managing the affairs of others. If one could look closely, it will be discovered that the kind of jobs expected an '*omo-ita'* to be involved in are the typical jobs commonplace on the motor-park space. Hence, it is glaring that the space is not just stereotyped as abode of violence, rancour and deaths, but the human agents 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 apportioned to such space and agent, 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 be in conflict one with another. But as Victor Turner posited, it is not the absence of conflicts that mark a peaceful socio-spatial interaction, rather it is how people are able to manage the breach that results; the integration there from, 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 a 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 have offered a glimpse into one of them, the "Onimaalu Motor Park Take-over", what we did not discuss was 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 on any social space.

Of course, narration of the "Onimaalu Saga" might depict 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 certain amount 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 saddled 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 douse whatever tension that have risen. But if after the general meeting the matter remains unsolved, the recommendation at the branch level is forwarded to the state to 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 like 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 which the parties to the crisis agreed to the terms of the agreement only for the incumbent, despite losing the people's confidence as well as the support 7 out of his 10-member executive, he refused to leave. We did not go to the park to attack him, but because of the guilt hunting him hence his use of rented 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 road safety enlightenment project of a non-governmental organization. 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 welfare of our members". Peace, he submitted, 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.

A similar incident to the "Onimaalu Saga" was the scuffle among the traders for space close to the road that almost degenerated into Igbo-Yoruba, ethnic, free for all. The incident which started as a minor exchange between traders over a small piece of land took another dimension late January, 2009 when similar incident happened some five minute walk from the first spot. Like the first incident, it was the Yoruba trader that attempted to take over a small portion 'allocated' (in quote because we were unable to ascertain the truth of the claim) to an Igbo trader. So, the Igbo Marketers Association simply pieced the two incidents together as an attempt by the Yoruba traders to send them off 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 was 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 led to the destruction of goods that worth hundreds of thousands of naira and 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 Ọjọ́ọ́ monarch and active involvement of the Chairman of the drivers' union, the matter was resolved amicably late February. Aggrieved parties had since returned to their business, "happy to live in peace with one another once again".

Deducible 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 has 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 *stereotyper* and the *marked* or the stereotyped, the park and its human agents, in the sustenance of the skewed violent image of the Ọjọ́ọ́ motor park. We have been able to do all these 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 have been done in remedying the situation because the public are imbued with a kind of feeling that nothing could be done to salvage the situation: 'the park because of its poor human agents can't but be involved in violence' attitude. This has made them to impose the

stereotypes on the space.

In order to rise above the public's marked level/acceptability, we observed that, the human agents of the park have involved themselves in various activities in their search for daily bread and power to influence change of attitude towards them. This has led to clashes of struggles which have in turn created tensions in the motor park. The tensions have in turn resulted into violence of diverse magnitudes. But as we observed, this does not warrant the need for stereotypification of the space with violence, for most of the park's incidents of 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 the stereotypification of the urban motor park is unwarranted, prejudiced and, hence, needs reconsideration.

Note: All the informants' names in this work are not real names of our participants.

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