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**CROSS-CULTURAL FEATURES OF CONTEMPORARY GRAPHIC
DESIGN IN NIGERIA**

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The article examines how contemporary Nigerian graphic design is transformed under the influence of globalization. Particular attention is paid to the reinterpretation of traditional visual systems, vernacular typography and street visual culture in contemporary design practices. The article argues that local cultural codes are not displaced by global visual standards, but serve as a basis for shaping postcolonial visual identity. The findings may be relevant to studies of visual culture, graphic design and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Nigeria; graphic design; visual culture; national identity; typography; globalization.

Introduction. Contemporary Nigerian graphic design is developing at the intersection of local artistic traditions, postcolonial cultural experience and global media processes. The expansion of digital platforms, transnational music culture and online image circulation has changed the conditions in which graphic design is produced, distributed and perceived in Nigeria. Under this influence, traditional visual forms are increasingly reinterpreted in contemporary design practices.

Nigerian creative industries have become an important factor in the country's international cultural visibility. Analytical reports describe Nigeria as a regional creative hub, particularly due to the global influence of music, film, fashion and online media [10]. For graphic design, this means that promotional materials participate in a broader system of cultural representation and contribute to the formation of recognizable national imagery.

The relevance of this topic is determined by the fact that Nigerian graphic design reflects cultural processes associated with globalization and intercultural communication. Of particular importance is the way designers refer to local sources while working within global formats of branding, typography, illustration and digital media. This approach makes it possible to examine Nigerian graphic design not as a peripheral imitation of international standards, but as a field where local and global elements interact and produce new forms of expression.

The aim of the article is to identify the features of contemporary Nigerian graphic design under the conditions of globalization. To achieve this aim, the article examines the historical basis of Nigerian image culture, analyses the reinterpretation of traditional graphic systems, considers vernacular typography as a form of national expression and determines how local cultural codes contribute to the formation of postcolonial identity.

The study is based on an interdisciplinary methodology combining graphic analysis, case study and historical-cultural analysis. Graphic analysis is used to examine selected examples of Nigerian design, including typefaces, album covers, digital illustrations and design projects. The case study method makes it possible to consider representative practices of contemporary Nigerian designers, while historical-cultural analysis is used to contextualize Nigerian traditions such as Nok sculpture, Benin bronze art, Nsibidi and Uli.

The empirical basis consisted of 144 English-language publications indexed in Scopus. The dataset was retrieved using the search query "NIGERIA AND DESIGN" in titles and keywords. This corpus was used to identify the general structure of research on design in the Nigerian context. The study was supplemented by books on African art and Nigerian modernism, publications in professional design and cultural journals and materials presenting the works of contemporary Nigerian artists and designers.

Historical Basis of Nigerian Graphic Culture

Nigerian graphic culture has deep historical roots. The Nok culture, usually dated to the first millennium BCE and the first centuries CE, is known for expressive terracotta sculpture and is often considered one of the early examples of complex artistic production in West Africa [4]. An example of this tradition is presented in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. – Nok sculpture

The Kingdom of Benin later developed a technically sophisticated tradition of bronze sculpture. Today, Benin bronzes are discussed both as works of art and as objects associated with colonial removal, museum collections and cultural restitution [5]. Yoruba and Igbo communities created rich symbolic traditions that formed an important basis for the region's image culture [6, 15].

Two graphic systems are particularly important for contemporary Nigerian design: Nsibidi and Uli. Nsibidi is an ancient ideographic system associated with the Cross River region and used for communication, ritual practice and the transmission of socially significant meanings. Uli is a linear tradition of the Igbo people, historically used in body and wall painting. It is characterized by asymmetry, improvisation, rhythmic line and a close connection with everyday and ritual culture [11, 15].

In traditional contexts, these forms did not function as autonomous art in the modern European sense. They performed communicative, social and ritual functions. For this reason, their contemporary use in graphic design should not be interpreted as simple decoration. It represents a complex process of cultural translation in which traditional signs acquire new meanings in digital and global contexts.

Postcolonial Identity and Natural Synthesis

The colonial period had a contradictory impact on Nigerian artistic culture. On the one hand, it was associated with the removal of cultural objects and their inclusion in European museum collections [5]. On the other hand, African sculpture influenced European modernism, including the development of Cubism and related artistic movements. After Nigerian independence in 1960, the search for a new cultural identity became especially significant.

The Zaria Art Society and Uche Okeke played an important role in this process. The idea of Natural Synthesis proposed a conscious combination of African traditions and modern artistic techniques [11-13]. This approach challenged the dominance of Eurocentric models and created a basis for a modern Nigerian design language rooted in local culture.

Materials connected with the Zaria Art Society and Uche Okeke's work are shown in Fig. 2. They illustrate how the synthesis of local tradition and modern artistic form was realized as both a theoretical concept and a design practice.

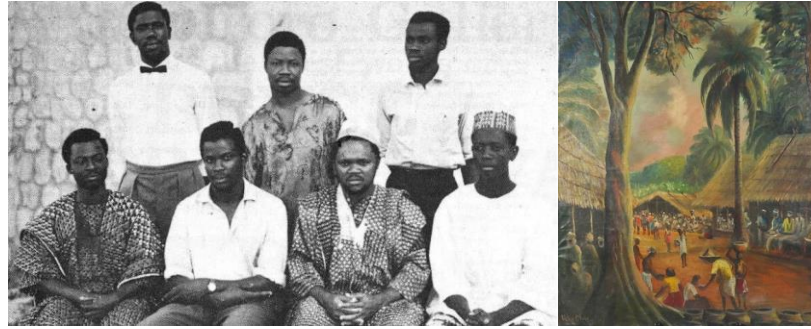


Fig. 2. – Group portrait of Zaria Art Society members and Uche Okeke’s ‘Village Scene’

From the 1970s onward, graphic design in Nigeria became an important instrument of cultural and political expression. A significant example is the work of Lemi Ghariokwu for Fela Kuti. His album covers combined illustration, collage, satire and social criticism, transforming record sleeves into a form of political commentary [16]. This line was later developed in Afrobeats-related graphics, where album covers, stage materials and promotional images became part of the global image of contemporary Nigeria.

Vernacular Typography and the Danfo Typeface

Since the 1990s, digital technologies and global platforms have accelerated the hybridization of Nigerian graphic design. Contemporary Nigerian design exists simultaneously in local and global dimensions. It combines international design principles with African ornamentality, Lagos street culture and professional branding practices. Vernacular typography, expressive colour, dynamic composition and the reinterpretation of traditional symbols are among its most visible features.

One of the most distinctive directions in contemporary Nigerian design is vernacular typography. This term refers to type and graphic systems that emerge directly from local environments. A representative example is the Danfo typeface, created by Nigerian designer Seyi Olusanya under the Afrotape brand [1-2]. The name refers to the yellow danfo minibuses of Lagos, whose surfaces are often covered with hand-painted inscriptions created by local street lettering artists. This spontaneous and expressive lettering tradition became the basis for a professional digital typeface.

From a formal point of view, Danfo preserves the features of street lettering: uneven stroke rhythm, expressive serifs, asymmetry and a sense of handmade energy. At the same time, it functions as a professional digital product suitable for contemporary typography. The typeface therefore exists in two registers: as a document of local memory and as an instrument of global communication. This transformation is illustrated in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3. – Danfo typeface by Seyi Olusanya, Afrotape

Semantically, Danfo carries several layers of meaning. On the surface, it refers to the urban environment of Lagos, with its transport graphics, hand-painted signs and dense public communication. At a deeper level, it legitimizes vernacular culture as a source of professional design and challenges the hierarchy in which Western typographic standards have traditionally been treated as dominant. In terms of Homi Bhabha's theory, Danfo may be interpreted as a product of the 'third space', since it is neither purely traditional nor simply Western. It produces new meaning at the intersection of different symbolic systems [3].

The international visibility of Danfo confirms that local graphic experience can enter global design discourse without losing cultural specificity. In this sense, the typeface is not only a typographic product, but also a cultural statement about the place of African graphic traditions in contemporary design.

Nsibidi, Contemporary Illustration and Postcolonial Expression

Another important direction is the reinterpretation of ancient graphic systems, especially Nsibidi, in contemporary artistic and commercial contexts. Victor Ekpuk works with Nsibidi as a starting point for his own abstract graphic system, which connects signs, writing and contemporary art [7-8]. Uzo Njoku and Karo Akpokiere use colour, ornament, digital tools and storytelling to create works situated between local cultural codes and global graphic practice [9, 14]. Examples of these approaches are presented in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4. – Works by Uzo Njoku, Karo Akpokiere and Victor Ekpuk

These practices indicate that traditional symbols may function not as museum fragments, but as active elements of postcolonial expression. Their inclusion in posters, illustrations, digital compositions and commercial graphics creates a dialogue between precolonial communication systems and contemporary design discourse. This approach turns traditional signs into aesthetic and political instruments of postcolonial expression.

Afrobeats and the Global Circulation of Nigerian Design

The global popularity of Afrobeats has become a powerful factor in the development of Nigerian image culture. Music-related design forms a coherent language in which expressive colour, dynamic composition and local patterns interact with international media production standards. This field is particularly significant for the global circulation of Nigerian aesthetics, because Afrobeats brings Nigerian graphic culture to audiences far beyond Africa [10, 16]. Examples of Afrobeats-related design are shown in Fig. 5.



Fig. 5. – Afrobeats album covers

The significance of this segment lies in the fact that music-related graphics do not merely accompany sound. They construct recognizable images of contemporary Nigeria, participate in the branding of artists and contribute to the international visibility of African creative industries. In this context, graphic design becomes a mediator between local cultural experience and global popular culture.

Lagos Street Culture and the Movement from Street to Screen

A special place in Nigerian design is occupied by the street culture of Lagos. The public environment of the city forms a saturated urban landscape in which hand-painted signs and informal graphics create a living vernacular system. Contemporary designers actively reinterpret this environment and translate it into digital formats.

The example of the Danfo typeface demonstrates that the movement from the street to the screen is not a simple act of copying. It involves selection, reinterpretation and the inclusion of local experience into a professional design language [1-2]. In this process, the raw energy of the city becomes a conscious design strategy.

Despite significant achievements, contemporary Nigerian graphic design faces a number of challenges. These include unequal access to infrastructure, differences in the quality of design education, dependence on global platforms and the risk of losing cultural specificity under market pressure. At the same time, growing interest in African creative industries, the development of local studios and the international visibility of Nigerian designers create favourable conditions for further growth.

Conclusion. The analysis shows that contemporary Nigerian graphic design represents a dynamic synthesis of tradition and global technologies. Its practices function as mediators between local identity and global cultural structures. In the age of networked hybridity, Nigerian designers demonstrate that globalization does not necessarily erase difference. On the contrary, it may create conditions for a more complex and visible expression of local identities.

Nigerian graphic design forms an independent language based on the reinterpretation of traditional codes in contemporary media environments. The analysed cases demonstrate different ways in which local traditions enter global design discourse. The Nigerian case also shows that cultural specificity and global communicability are not mutually exclusive, but may coexist within contemporary design practice.

Further research may compare Nigerian graphic design with other African practices, analyse the role of social platforms in the international visibility of African designers and examine local type systems as instruments of national identity.

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КРОСС-КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ СОВРЕМЕННОГО ГРАФИЧЕСКОГО ДИЗАЙНА НИГЕРИИ

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В статье рассматривается трансформация современного графического дизайна Нигерии в условиях глобализации. Особое внимание уделяется тому, как традиционные визуальные системы, вернакулярная типографика и уличная визуальная культура переосмысливаются в современных дизайнерских практиках. Показано, что локальные культурные коды не исчезают под влиянием глобальных визуальных стандартов, а становятся основой формирования постколониальной визуальной идентичности. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы при изучении визуальной культуры, графического дизайна и межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: Нигерия; графический дизайн; визуальная культура; национальная идентичность; типографика; глобализация.