



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Imagining a new postcolonial world order: the celebration of Pan-African culture at FESTAC '77

Martens, Joris

Citation

Martens, J. (2022). *Imagining a new postcolonial world order: the celebration of Pan-African culture at FESTAC '77*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master thesis in the Leiden University Student Repository](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3454011>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Imagining a new postcolonial world order: the celebration of Pan-African culture at FESTAC '77



Name:	Joris Martens
Studentnumber:	s2297078
Supervisor:	Dr. Vineet Thakur
Date:	24-06-2022

Inhoud

Introduction	2
Literature Review	6
Postcolonial imaginaries.....	6
The Festivals of Black Arts and Cultures.....	9
Research objectives and methods.....	12
Chapter 1: A history of the Pan-African festivals: competing conceptions of Pan-Africanism and envisioned world orders	15
PANAF and the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto	16
FESTAC and Nigeria's vision for the postcolonial world	18
Chapter 2: Oil-boom and civil war: the troubled run-up to the 1977 festival	23
Questions of participation	26
Rift between Senegal and Nigeria over the North-African countries.....	28
Chapter 3: FESTAC and a new role for Nigeria in African affairs	31
An active and assertive role for Nigeria.....	32
International recognition of Nigeria's power	34
Conclusion.....	37
Bibliography.....	39

Introduction

On 15 January 1977 inside the National Stadium in Lagos, Nigeria, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture was inaugurated. Black and African artists, musicians, dancers, performers, writers and intellectuals from all over the world gathered in Nigeria for a month-long celebration of music, art, literature, drama, dance and religion.¹ With 17,000 participants from over fifty countries and an estimated 500,000 spectators, it was one of the biggest cultural events on the African continent during the twentieth century.² The grandiose festival celebrated Black and African culture through performances and exhibitions and involved significant intellectual deliberations in which roughly 700 intellectuals participated.³ On the basis of culture and heritage, the festival sought to forge links between the continent and diaspora and redefine the role and place of Africa in the world. As such, the festival, also known as FESTAC '77, performed an 'African Renaissance' and gave tangible expression to Pan-Africanist ideals that had been popular in the era of decolonization.⁴

Indeed, FESTAC '77 was part of a global Pan-African movement spanning from the early 1900s to the late 1970s. In this period, several intellectual, cultural and political conferences, as well as festivals informed by Pan-African ideals, were held.⁵ The Pan-African festivals held in Dakar (Senegal) in 1966 and in Algiers (Algeria) in 1969, which preceded the 1977 festival, marked a clear break from previous Pan-African conferences and congresses.⁶ These gatherings had taken place during the colonial period and were primarily intellectual in character.⁷ In contrast, these postcolonial festivals helped shape and capture the highly optimistic early years of independence, celebrating Black and African cultures and their contributions to world civilization. Partially coinciding with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, self-apprehension and self-appreciation laid at the heart of the festivals, marked by Pan-Africanist ideas of historical retrieval and cultural revival as well as a profound

¹ Alex Poinsett, 'Second world Black and African festival of arts and culture draws 17,000 participants to Lagos', *Ebony Magazine* (May, 1977).

² Arthur Monroe, 'FESTAC '77: the second world Black and African festival of arts and culture: Lagos, Nigeria', *Black Scholar* 9/1 (1977), pp 34-37, 34; Toyin Falola, *Key Events in African History: a reference guide* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 281.

³ David Murphy, 'Performing global African culture and citizenship: major pan-African cultural festivals from Dakar 1966 to FESTAC 1977' *Tate Research Publication* (2018), (no page numbers available); Etienne Locke, 'The intellectual dimension of the second world Black and African festival of arts and culture (FESTAC 1977) and its relevance today' *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (2021)pp. 1-16, 15.

⁴ David Murphy, Martin Munro, Tsitsi Jaji, 'The performance of Pan-African identities at Black and African cultural festivals', *Interventions* 20/7 (2018), pp. 947-951, 948.

⁵ Murphy, Munro, Jaji, 'performance of pan-African identities', 948.

⁶ For example, the First Pan-African Conference in London, 1900, the First Pan-African Congress, in Paris, 1919, the Second Pan-African Congress, in London, 1921, the Third Pan-African Congress in London, 1923, the Fourth Pan-African Congress in New York, 1927 and the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, 1945.

⁷ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

utopianism.⁸ In addition to these rather abstract ideals, the festivals also served as sites and moments that “facilitated concrete encounters between Africans and members of the African diaspora.”⁹

In many ways, FESTAC can be considered the apotheosis of the Pan-African festivals of the 1960s and 1970s. The host country Nigeria embarked upon the project of organizing a monumental Pan-African festival with its newly attained oil money, which resulted in a festival of unprecedented scale, producing a spectacular display of Black and African culture.¹⁰ However, the festival also took place in the twilight of the era of decolonization, as the dreams of independence had slowly turned sour. The optimism of the early years of independence had made way for more pessimist views on African political affairs. Continued economic dependency and often violent political events plagued the continent.¹¹ This was evident in the Nigeria of the 1960s and 1970s. The country was divided by a bloody civil war from 1967 to 1970, and after several violent coups in the 1960s and 1970s, it was ruled by an authoritarian military government under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo. This government organized the festival in 1977 after being postponed no less than three times.¹²

The festival and its extravaganza epitomized the realities and paradoxes of Nigeria in the first two decades after independence, as the country aimed to achieve meaningful independence but was confronted with new problems. For the ruling Federal Military Government of Nigeria, as a contemporary critic noted, the festival sought to repair the national image after the Nigerian Civil War, distract the Nigerian people from domestic problems, and legitimize and add to the prestige of the military government.¹³ Moreover, the public arguments between famous Nigerians such as Wole Soyinka and Fela Kuti and the ruling military government highlight the national tensions and discontents with the lavishly spending governmental elite.¹⁴ However, the festival not only encapsulated domestic dynamics but

⁸ Murphy, Munro, Jaji, ‘performance of pan-African identities’, 948.

⁹ *Ibidem.*, 948.

¹⁰ Andrew Apter, *The pan-African nation: oil and the spectacle of culture in Nigeria*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 15.

¹¹ Femi Osofisan ‘FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity’, In: Oyeleye Oyediran (eds.) *Survey of Nigerian Affairs 1976-1977* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1981), pp. 32-46, 33.

¹² Sylvia Moore, ‘The Afro-Black Connection: FESTAC ’77’ *Report for the Dutch Ministry of Culture* (April, 1977), 5.

¹³ Morgan Kulla, ‘The politics of culture: the case of FESTAC’, *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 7/1 (1976), pp. 166-192, 169.

¹⁴ Uchenna Ikonne, ‘FESTAC 77’, *Red bull Music Academy Paper* (May, 2017) accessed on 23-4-2021 at <<https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2017/05/festac-77-feature>>

revealed different conceptions of Africanness and accompanying political outlooks rooted in competing ideologies of Négritude and Pan-Africanism.¹⁵

With a radically ambitious Pan-African agenda supported by oil revenues, FESTAC '77 mirrored Nigeria's changed outlook and position in Africa and on the world stage in the late 1970s. Nigeria envisioned a new world order by channeling its energies through various initiatives and organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as through the spectacle of culture presented at FESTAC.¹⁶ On the basis of Pan-African ideals, the festival looked to forge and imagine new transnational identities and communities in an attempt to reckon with the shared colonial past, give tangible expression to self-determination, and challenge the existing world order.¹⁷ The significant cultural production undertaken at FESTAC through performances, exhibitions and intellectual deliberations reveal the complexities of different conceptions of Pan-African presents, pasts and futures. Moreover, the festival illuminates debates on the postcolonial state and its imaginaries, as well as questions of history, culture and identity in the postcolonial world.

Despite its unprecedented scale and significant cultural production, the legacy of FESTAC '77 is somewhat tainted, as most accounts have focused on the influence of the Nigerian military government, the legacy of the civil war and the influx of the enormous oil revenues.¹⁸ Notwithstanding that these issues are essential to grasp the festival, this research offers an alternative reading of the festival. After the civil war and oil-boom, Nigeria changed from a conservative neocolonial power to a progressive and assertive power in Africa and the world. As an oil-producing country, Nigeria saw its (economic) power increase and, as it joined OPEC in 1971, adopted a new and more assertive attitude. Within the OAU, Nigeria took a stronger stance against colonialism and Apartheid, as it provided financial and material support to different African liberation movements.¹⁹ Through different initiatives, most notably the New International Economic Order (NIEO), Nigeria pushed for a more fair and just world order, particularly “relating to developing countries and the export of raw materials.”²⁰

¹⁵ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

¹⁶ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 15.

¹⁷ David Murphy, 'Introduction: the performance of Pan-Africanism: staging the African renaissance at the First World Festival of Negro Arts', In David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 1-42, 11.

¹⁸ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

Thus situating the 1977 festival in the twilight of the era of decolonization and Nigeria's emergence as a leader in the postcolonial movement in Africa and the world, it contributed to cultural, political and economic third-world-ism and Pan-Africanism. As a result, the festival offers appealing subject matter to examine the following themes. Firstly, the festival is situated in the history of the Pan-African festivals of the 1960s and 1970s, aiming to establish how the idea for a Pan-African festival was born as well as how the festival's conception of Pan-Africanism differed from earlier iterations. Secondly, to fully grasp how the festival came to be, the festival is embedded in its national and international contexts to establish to what extent external events shaped the organization, mandate and proceedings of the festival. Finally, as a moment in the continent's history, the festival epitomized the realities of many African states after independence. At the same time, with its new-found oil wealth, Nigeria found itself in an exceptional position to give shape to a new vision for the continent and the contours of a new world order. Therefore, the main research question can be stated as follows, how does the festival fit into the history of the continent, i.e. is the festival representative of that particular moment in the history of the continent, or does it a historic moment, oppose it, helping shape the contours of a new order.

In order to examine these themes, this research is structured as follows. First, an extensive literature review explores the literature on postcolonial imaginaries, Pan-Africanism and Pan-African festivals. Second, chapter one aims to situate FESTAC in the history of the Pan-African festivals of the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter, the intricate connections between the different festivals and their guiding cultural philosophies are examined to understand Nigeria's vision for continental unity, transnational solidarity and the postcolonial world at large. Chapter two explores the troubled run-up to the festival in reference to the oil-boom and the Nigerian Civil war on the festival and Nigeria's outlook on Africa and the world. In addition, it elaborates on the public quarrels between prominent Nigerian artists and how the competition between Nigeria and Senegal coincided with the festival's organization. Lastly, the third chapter explores how the spectacle of culture presented at FESTAC was connected to Nigeria's more assertive role on the continent and beyond.

Literature Review

Postcolonial imaginaries

Various authors such as Gary Wilder, Frederick Cooper, and Joseph Hongoh have explored the multiple and competing imaginations of political solidarity and community before and during the decolonization process in Africa as well as Asia. Posing the post-war period as a world-historical opening, the colonized peoples of the world looked to liberate themselves from colonialism, while the configuration of the post-war international order was not yet set. Despite the pressures of anti-colonial nationalism, European neocolonialism, American globalism, and UN internationalism, Gary Wilder has shown that the envisioned postcolonial worlds did not necessarily embrace the primacy of the nation-state and territorial sovereignty.²¹ Therefore, the quest for self-determination was also an attempt to transform the international order “in ways that were sensitive to the common moral obligations that victims of colonialism owed to one another, regardless of their particular geographical location.”²²

The roots of the imaginations of a postcolonial world outside the straightjacket of territorial sovereignty and the nation-state can be traced to the inter-war period or what Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zachariah, have called the internationalist moment.²³ This moment was defined by anti-colonial internationalisms and, as Joseph Hongoh has argued, was based on “ideas about self-determination, transnational solidarity and the need for moral transformation of the international order.”²⁴ In this moment, the diverse political philosophies and conceptions of solidarity extended well beyond nation-state spheres, promoting different forms of political organization inspired by mutualist socialism, cooperative federalism and cosmopolitan internationalism.²⁵ In Africa and amongst the peoples of the African diaspora, the internationalist anti-colonial politics of solidarity, self-determination and order-building were given expression in the Pan-African movement.²⁶ The movement, initially consisting of intellectuals, religious figures and artists from the diaspora, evolved as a reaction against the oppression of Africans and people of African descent in the Americas.²⁷

²¹ Gary Wilder, *Freedom time: Negritudé, decolonization and the future of the world* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 1.

²² Joseph Hongoh, ‘The Asian-African Conference (Bandung) and Pan-Africanism: the challenge of reconciling continental solidarity with national sovereignty’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70/4 (2015), pp.374-390, 375.

²³ Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zacharia (eds), *The internationalist moment: South Asia, worlds and worldviews 1917-1939* (Sage Publications: New Delhi, 2015).

²⁴ Hongoh, ‘Bandung and Pan-Africanism’, 376.

²⁵ Wilder, *Freedom time*, 9.

²⁶ Hongoh, ‘Bandung and Pan-Africanism’, 377.

²⁷ Vincent B. Thompson, *Africa and Unity: the evolution of Pan-Africanism*, (London: Longman Group, 1969), 24; Olayiwola Abegunrin, *Origins of Pan-Africanism* In: Olayiwola Abegunrin (eds.), *Pan-Africanism in modern times: Challenges, concerns and constraints*, (London: Lexington Books, 2016), 1; Pakiso Tondi, ‘Pan-African

Pan-Africanism can be considered a vast and complex historical movement, as Anthony Bogues has argued, as a result the movement is “embedded in the contingencies of historical periods, and therefore time and space.”²⁸ However, central to Pan-Africanism is the idea that Africans and peoples of African descent were victimized by racism in the form of slavery and colonialism. Therefore, regardless of their locations and nationality, African peoples shared a historical and cultural heritage rooted in the African continent. Consequently, Pan-Africanists maintained that Africans and the peoples of the African diaspora should be free and united.²⁹ Owing to its various iterations, Bogues asserts that “Pan-Africanism should be studied as a consciousness, as an ideology with a complex of political ideas, that are attempts by African people not only to construct identities, but also a political programme for ending white domination in its various guises across national boundaries.”³⁰

Most authors agree that Pan-Africanism as a more coherent ideological movement started with the reasoned arguments against the domination and subjugation by the West.³¹ From 1900 onwards, the Pan-African movement had been gaining momentum and demands for human rights and equality as well as an end to colonial rule and racial discrimination, which led to the organization of several Pan-African congresses. Mainly scholars from the African diaspora in the Caribbean and Americas, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Sylvester Williams, and Marcus Garvey took a leading role in organizing these congresses. In particular, W.E.B. Du Bois made an everlasting impact on the movement, reflecting the anti-colonial internationalism of the time. Du Bois proclaimed that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.”³² Thus, early Pan-Africanism as reflected in the congresses from 1900 to 1927, was primarily influenced by thinkers and activists from the African diaspora.

thought and practice’, *Alternation* special edition 2 (2005), pp. 301-328, 301; Samuel Oloruntoba, ‘Pan-Africanism, knowledge production and the third liberation of Africa’, *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 10/1 (2015), pp. 7-24, 7; Mark Malisa and Phillippa Nhengeze, ‘Pan-Africanism: A Quest for liberation and the Pursuit of a United Africa’, *Genealogy* 2/3 (2018), pp. 1-15, 3.

²⁸ Anthony Bogues, ‘C.L.R. James, Pan-Africanism and the Black radical tradition’, *Critical Arts* 25/4 (2011), pp. 484-499, 486.

²⁹ Oloruntoba, ‘Pan-Africanism, knowledge production’, 10; Malisa and Nhengeze, ‘Pan-Africanism: A Quest for liberation’, 2; Thompson, *Africa and Unity*, xxi.

³⁰ Bogues, ‘Pan-Africanism and the Black radical tradition’, 487.

³¹ Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, (London: Methuen & co, 1974), 229; Malisa and Nhengeze, ‘Pan-Africanism: A Quest for liberation’, 5.

³² W.E.B. DuBois in Tondi, ‘Pan-African thought and practice’, 301.

After 1945, the epicenter of Pan-Africanist thinking gradually moved to Africa, as Adi, Oloruntoba, Malisa and Nhengeze have shown.³³ Before 1945, the Americas and Britain had been the center stage of the Pan-African movement. In particular, the imperial powers attracted activists from the colonies in the Caribbean and Africa. Primarily in the capitals, activists came together to forge links between the diaspora and create avenues for collective action, challenge colonialism and lobby for the rights of colonized peoples.³⁴ These efforts eventually culminated in the Pan-African Conference in Manchester in 1945, where the future leaders of the African nationalist movements, such as Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah, attended. Afterward, the focal point of the Pan-African movement moved to Africa. Whereas young, elite men dominated the Pan-African movement, Keisha Blain has highlighted the crucial role women from the diaspora and Africa played in shaping and organizing the Pan-African Movement.³⁵

After the independence of Ghana in 1957, Pan-Africanism moved from the realm of ideas toward the realm of practical politics.³⁶ Ghana, as a sovereign state under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, proved to be a valuable foothold to further expand Pan-Africanism in practical terms. Nkrumah saw the independence of his own country as meaningless as long as other African nations still suffered under colonial rule. He maintained that “Africa as the center of the African world and the root of the diaspora should be the focal point of Pan-African unity. It remained only for the form of that unity to be debated.”³⁷ In 1958, Ghana organized two Pan-African conferences for the independent states of Africa, where policies were harmonized and further liberation strategies laid out. Moreover, the idea of a ‘United States of Africa’ was put forward, leaving the intellectual character of earlier Pan-African congresses behind.³⁸ As colonialism slowly diminished, newly independent African states were determined to recast African societies on their own history and culture, while at the same time incorporating modern ideas and rejecting Western supremacy.

However, as more countries reached independence, the differences between African countries also became more pronounced. Oloruntoba has shown that more radical and socialist countries, known as the Casablanca Group, eagerly supported ideas of Pan-African unity.³⁹ In

³³ Oloruntoba, ‘Pan-Africanism, knowledge’, 11; Malisa and Nhengeze, ‘Pan-Africanism: A Quest for liberation’, 5; Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787*, (London: Routledge, 2003), xi.

³⁴ Keisha Blain, *Set the world on fire: Black nationalist women and the global struggle for freedom*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 2018), 146.

³⁵ Blain, *World on fire*, xx.

³⁶ Thompson, *Africa and Unity*, 126.

³⁷ Kwame Nkrumah quoted in Thompson, *Africa and Unity*, 126.

³⁸ Oloruntoba, ‘Pan-Africanism, knowledge’, 11.

³⁹ The most prominent members of this group were Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Algeria and Egypt.

contrast, the more conservative African countries or Monrovia Group, such as Liberia, Nigeria, and much of Francophone Africa, favored a ‘gradualist approach’ to Pan-African unity.⁴⁰ Both groups eventually compromised, leading to the creation of the OAU in 1963. However, the organization proved unable to promote greater integration. When more African countries reached independence, the strong political, ‘federalist’ Pan-Africanist ideology lost its power. Different nationalist ideologies replaced the Pan-African idea, which promoted continental unity as an alternative form of political community. As such, as Hongoh has shown, the Pan-African movement, which entertained new forms of political solidarity to achieve “meaningful freedom, self-determination and the clamour for a just world, was lost when the context of realizing these goals shifted from continental and transnational spheres to the self-contained nationalist and sovereign territorial spheres of the nation-state.”⁴¹

The Festivals of Black Arts and Cultures

The organization of the different Pan-African festivals in the 1960s and 1970s can be seen as emblematic of the shift from political Pan-Africanism to cultural Pan-Africanism, argues leading scholar on Pan-African festivals, David Murphy. When the first African countries became independent, Pan-Africanism as a political project lost its power and gave way to what has been called by Shepperson “small P” or cultural pan-Africanism.⁴² To be precise, this shift is located in the second half of the 1960s, as Murphy has shown that with the ousting of Nkrumah in 1966, shortly before the Dakar festival, “Pan-Africanism as a political project lost ground to Pan-Africanism as a cultural project.”⁴³ However, the Pan-African festivals of the 1960s and 1970s were not devoid of politics. On the contrary, as Katharina Schramm emphasizes, in the context of self-determination, the festivals “had to be streamlined with the political agenda of the new states.”⁴⁴

Murphy's work has explored how the political agenda of Senegal influenced the First World Festival of Negro Arts (FESMAN '66 or FESMAN) held in Dakar in 1966. In his research, he explored the ideological differences between Senghor's conception of Négritude and Pan-Africanism. Despite significant ideological differences, Murphy maintains that

⁴⁰ Olonruntoba, ‘Pan-Africanism, knowledge’, 11.

⁴¹ Hongoh, ‘Bandung and Pan-Africanism’, 375.

⁴² George Shepperson quoted in: Tsitsi Jaji, *Africa in stereo: modernism, music, and Pan-African solidarity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

⁴³ Murphy, ‘Global African culture’.

⁴⁴ Katharina Schramm, ‘Chapter Eight: The re-emergence of African civilization – Uniting the African family: claiming a common heritage in PANAFEST’, In: Katharina Schramm, *African homecoming: Pan-African ideology and contested heritage*, (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010), pp.175-211, 182.

FESMAN was truly Pan-African as it was the first festival where Black artists from African countries and several countries with African diasporic populations came together. As Ratcliff observes, Senghor's commitment to building a transnational community by focusing on culture was commendable. It offered a chance for Africans to highlight their rich and unique culture and set aside the "trials and tribulations of nation-building."⁴⁵ As such, FESMAN set the template for major Pan-African cultural festivals in the following decade, modeled on diverse ideas and theories of cultural renaissance.⁴⁶

The fulcrum of the festival would be the establishment of a colloquium similar to the earlier intellectual gatherings, but FESMAN was expanded to encompass modern and traditional art exhibitions and performances of theatre, poetry, music and dance.⁴⁷ In contrast to the earlier gatherings which had taken place in the colonial context and were limited in scope, the novelty of FESMAN '66 was its populist, celebratory and performative character. Therefore, Melissa Reiser has argued that FESMAN can be seen as the 'optimistic premiere' of the Pan-African festivals.⁴⁸ Despite being considered a landmark event in the development of cultural Pan-Africanism, it was also heavily influenced by Senghor's philosophy of Négritude.⁴⁹ However, his more essentialist and racialized notion of Black identity was deemed by his critics as the confirmation of the Otherness that other African thinkers had tried to combat.⁵⁰

The first Pan-African cultural festival, 'PANAF,' held in Algiers in 1969, was the rebellious follow-up to the optimistic premiere that had taken place three years earlier. Dubbed the 'counter-FESMAN' by Dominique Malaquais and Cédric Vincent and a 'radical response' by David Murphy, the festival looked to turn away from Senghor's essentialist philosophy of Négritude, conservative African politics and emphasis on 'high' culture.⁵¹ PANAF followed the template set up by the first festival, evolving around three core events; a colloquium, performances and exhibitions. All the while celebrating Black and African culture to construct a imagery of Pan-African community. However, PANAF would include more popular forms of culture. More importantly, the festival was more radical and revolutionary, as amongst its

⁴⁵ Anthony J. Ratcliff, 'When *Négritude* was in vogue: critical reflections of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in 1966', *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 6/7 (2014), pp. 167-186, 172.

⁴⁶ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Melissa D. Reiser, *Music, Negritude and the "African Renaissance": performing Blackness at the World Festivals of Black Arts in Dakar, 1966 and 2010* (unpublished dissertation, university of Wisconsin, 2014), 4-13.

⁴⁹ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Dominique Malaquais and Cédric Vincent, 'Chapter ten: PANAFEST: a festival complex revisited' In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 194-202, 194; Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

participants were different anti-colonial and political liberation movements, such as the Black Panthers, Mozambique's FRELIMO, Angola's MPLA and a Palestinian delegation.⁵² As a result, linking Pan-African solidarity to the "global process of political liberation from Western rule."⁵³

The more revolutionary PANAF is thus presented in the literature as a breaking point. During the 1960s, new radical thinkers with the likes of Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral had become more important and left their mark on the envisioned Pan-Africanist and postcolonial future.⁵⁴ Noteworthy is the Second Pan-African Cultural Festival in Zaïre, 1974, which coincided with the famed boxing match 'Rumble in the Jungle' between George Foreman and Muhammed Ali. However, despite using imagery from earlier festivals, the 1974 festival was considerably smaller in scope and more locally oriented. As a result, less attention is paid to this festival in the literature.⁵⁵ In 1977, the Second Festival of Black Arts and Cultures was held in Nigeria and is widely regarded as a synthesis of the two previous large festivals, FESMAN and PANAF. Nigeria was a 'star country,' an honorary participant at FESMAN. As such, it was decided that Nigeria would host the festival's second edition early in the 1970s.⁵⁶ However, the festival was postponed several times due to the political instability in Nigeria in the late 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁷

Whereas the Pan-African conferences have been presented in the literature as important moments in African history and the decolonization of Africa, the legacy of the festivals and FESTAC '77 in particular is somewhat tainted. The shift from political to cultural Pan-Africanism and failed attempts to foster meaningful unity led Oloruntoba to conclude that African leaders only paid lip service to Pan-Africanist ideas.⁵⁸ As for FESTAC, Apter has argued that the new 'petrol-state' and its military government spent 'lavishly' while Nigeria was confronted with new problems following independence.⁵⁹ However, in recent research by Murphy and Jaji, the legacies of the festivals are somewhat altered, as they take a bottom-up approach and argue that the festivals created platforms where Africans and people of African descent came together and contributed to the reevaluation and re-creation of an African community and identity based on their shared past.⁶⁰

⁵² Malaquias & Vincent, 'Festival complex', 197.

⁵³ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Malaquias & Vincent, 'Festival complex', 194.

⁵⁶ Kulla, 'Politics of culture', 168.

⁵⁷ Locke, 'The intellectual dimension', 7.

⁵⁸ Olonruntoba, 'Pan-Africanism, knowledge', 12.

⁵⁹ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 54.

⁶⁰ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

Research objectives and methods

This research looks to build on recent initiatives, add to the growing body of literature of Pan-African festivals, and explore the position of FESTAC'77 in these histories. The Pan-African festivals are “increasingly recognized as significant events in the histories of the development of cultural Pan-Africanism in the second half of the twentieth century.”⁶¹ In addition, this research aims to insert these histories into the study of International Relations, considering Pan-Africanism a transnational movement that strengthened solidarity amongst formerly colonized peoples and sought to transform the world order to bolster meaningful self-determination. Even though the organization of the Pan-African festivals marked the shift to cultural Pan-Africanism, the politics of solidarity and self-determination were given shape through the celebration of culture, producing a sense of community and shared heritage. As such, the Pan-African festivals were important sites and moments in the era of decolonization as they enabled participants to reenact the ideas and theories of cultural renaissance in practical terms, promoting historical retrieval and cultural revival to counter derogatory assertions that portrayed Africa as the Dark Continent, as a place without history, culture and civilization.

Despite an emerging research field of Black and African cultural festivals and significant interest in the earlier festivals, the 1977 festival has received less attention than, for instance, the maiden edition held in Dakar, 1966 or the ‘radical’ follow-up in Algiers in 1969.⁶² Partially due to significant differences between the guiding philosophies behind the festivals, but also due to continuing cleavages between Anglophone and Francophone Africa in research.⁶³ More importantly, the legacy of the civil war and the exorbitant spending of the military government has long overshadowed the largest Pan-African event of the twentieth century.⁶⁴ Therefore, this research attempts to re-examine FESTAC and revalue the effort to challenge the existing world order and achieve meaningful self-determination. Recently a South-African publishing house, *Chimurenga*, has composed a new publication bringing a significant part of the FESTAC archive together for the first time in an attempt to reappraise the cultural production undertaken at FESTAC '77.⁶⁵

By making use of these newly published materials and other primary and secondary sources, the festival is approached as a ‘bottom-up event’ or ‘cultural battlefield,’ where

⁶¹ Murphy, ‘Global African culture’.

⁶² Malaquias & Vincent, ‘Festival complex’, 197.

⁶³ Locke, ‘The intellectual dimension’, 2.

⁶⁴ Ikonne, ‘FESTAC 77’.

⁶⁵ Author unknown, *FESTAC: Decomposed, an-arranged and reproduced*, (Cape Town: Afterall and Chimurenga, 2019).

meanings were contested and the experiences of participants created new conceptions of community, identity, culture and history.⁶⁶ The primary sources examined for this research range from officially published materials by the Nigerian state to personal archives. The African Studies Centre in Leiden holds a large part of the officially published materials by the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), which was brought into existence by the Nigerian government following FESTAC to serve as a center for cultural knowledge and archive of FESTAC.⁶⁷ Amongst which are the ten-volume series on the arts and civilization of Black and African people resulting from the FESTAC colloquium and an overview of the festival proceedings. This research has also greatly benefitted from the digital archive of Abdul Alkalimat, a U.S. delegate to the FESTAC colloquium. Many of the materials collected on his website are originally from his personal archive and consist of “official documents handed to participants, some of the papers presented, video documentaries, and articles written about FESTAC.”⁶⁸

In addition, some excerpts from the personal archive of Jeff Donaldson, the leader of the US contingent, are explored.⁶⁹ This archive, which could be accessed online, primarily focused on the difficulties of the US contingent but also provided valuable insights into the experiences of the US participants. Noteworthy is the report of FESTAC by Sylvia Moore commissioned by the Dutch government. The report can be considered a written testimony as it described the run-up to the festival, the proceedings and the aftermath in great detail. Also included in this report are testimonials of participants, which have offered valuable insights into the experiences of various attending artists. The biographies and autobiographies of Fela Kuti, Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo complement these primary sources. This research could have benefitted from interviews with FESTAC organizers and participants and a visit to the FESTAC archive in Lagos, Nigeria. However, due to limited funds and time, this was not possible. As a result, this thesis has also relied heavily on secondary sources. In particular, the works of David Murphy and Andrew Apter have been helpful.

These sources are analyzed by taking a bottom-up and actor-centered approach, exploring the different conceptions of Pan-Africanism brought forth at the festival by organizers, performers and participants. In doing so, it opens up space for the manifold and

⁶⁶ David M. Guss, *The festive state: race, ethnicity, and nationalism as cultural performance*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6.

⁶⁷ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 10.

⁶⁸ Abdul Alkalimat, ‘Introduction and acknowledgements’, From ‘FESTAC: A partial documentation’ *Digital archive* accessed at 9-6-2022 <<https://www.alkalimat.org/festac/introduction.htm>>

⁶⁹ Jeff Donaldson, ‘Documemoir’, From the Jeff Donaldson papers, 1918-2005. *Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution*.

competing conceptions of Pan-Africanism presented at the festival and to account for the official reading of the festival by state officials as well as the experiences of the performers and participants. At the same time, challenging simplistic notions of neatly segmented historical trajectories and other dichotomous readings of the festivals as being either a success or failure. Taking the national and international political context into consideration helps understand how the festival's predecessors helped shape the festival's template, outlook and objectives, as well as the troubled run-up to the festival and reveal some of the reasons for its tainted legacy as the festival eventually fell short of ushering in a new episode for the continent and the world at large.

Chapter 1: A history of the Pan-African festivals: competing conceptions of Pan-Africanism and envisioned world orders

The history of the festivals is often portrayed as a linear progression of events, in which FESMAN is presented as the maiden edition, PANAF as the ‘radical’ follow-up and FESTAC as the grandiose synthesis of the previous festivals.⁷⁰ While there are significant differences between the festival, the similarities between the festivals are evident. All three festivals largely followed the same template, consisting of intellectual deliberations, cultural performances and exhibitions. More importantly, the festivals offered a veritable stage for the organizing states to construct their conception of Pan-Africanism through the celebration of culture. Therefore, the development of the Pan-African festivals can best be understood in terms of mutual entanglement, as various ideas, themes and issues resurfaced throughout the various iterations.⁷¹

The organization of FESMAN, the first Pan-African festival, can be seen as the continuation of ideas of historical retrieval and cultural revival, which had been propagated since the late 1950s.⁷² Through the organization of various gatherings from the mid-1950s onwards, Africans and members of the diaspora sought to promote Black culture and civilization as they looked to revive the long-overshadowed heritage of Black and African peoples. In this vein, the First Congress of Black Writers and artists was organized by the literary magazine *Présence Africaine* in Paris in 1956, where the idea for a cultural festival first emerged.⁷³ The idea resurfaced again during the second African Congress in Rome in 1959, and it was decided that Senegal would organize the first edition. As a result, the first Pan-African festival was held in Dakar in 1966, under Leopold Senghor's leadership and UNESCO's patronage.

Naturally, Senghor left his mark as his philosophy of Négritude would be an important impetus for the first edition, highlighting the cultural achievements of Black and African peoples and practically manifesting the theories he had championed before.⁷⁴ The cultural achievements in theatre, visual arts and poetry were cherished the most at FESMAN, revealing Senghor's conservative and somewhat elitist understanding of art as ‘high culture.’ More popular types of culture, such as music and film, were marginalized.⁷⁵ The prominence of

⁷⁰ Malaquias & Vincent, ‘Festival complex’, 194.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Osofisan ‘FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity’, 32.

⁷³ Babaschinde Ademuleya and Michael Fajuyigbe ‘Pan-Africanism and the Black Festivals of Arts and Culture: Today's Realities and Expectations’ *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 20/1 (2015), pp. 22-28, 23.

⁷⁴ Moore, ‘Afro-Black connection’, 4.

⁷⁵ Murphy, ‘Global African culture’.

Francophone countries at the festival caused discontent amongst Anglophone countries. Especially since East-African countries were largely absent as they lacked interest in the preferred 'high culture.'⁷⁶ Moreover, politically FESMAN sought to reassert Senegal as a regional leader after the failure to become the political capital of West Africa in the Mali Federation, foreshadowing the later competition between Senegal and Nigeria for regional hegemony.⁷⁷

However, Senghor was primarily criticized for refusing full participation rights to the North African countries and the absence of radical voices. At the 1966 festival, Senghor had reduced the North African nations to observer status and excluded them from participating in festival competitions.⁷⁸ He deemed them fundamentally different from his envisioned Black civilization. In contrast, at PANAFA, the North African countries were given full participation rights.⁷⁹ Besides excluding the North-African countries, Senghor's rather conservative political outlook was also ostracized in subsequent years. While the celebration of culture at FESMAN was used to showcase the achievements of African peoples, a strict separation between politics and culture was practiced. Indeed, Senghor refused to invite the liberation movements fighting for their independence in Lusophone and Southern Africa.⁸⁰ Three years later, this would be fundamentally different in Algeria, as politics and culture were explicitly linked.

PANAFA and the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto

While the 1966 festival was deemed as being devoid of politics by its critics, the 'radical follow-up,' PANAFA, held in Algiers in 1969, was explicitly radical. Having achieved independence in 1962 after a violent struggle, Algeria was devoted to supporting radical left-wing politics in Africa and elsewhere.⁸¹ As such, PANAFA not only offered a platform for independent African countries but also for various liberation movements. United in their stance against colonialism and Western dominance, the participants sought to give shape to an 'alternative reality' expressing the desire for a more just and egalitarian world order through performances and deliberations.⁸² Moreover, the festival also figured as a critical moment in Pan-African thought, as the influential philosophy of Négritude and the original 'mandate' of the first festival was

⁷⁶ Kulla, 'Politics of culture', 168.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷⁸ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁷⁹ Locke, 'The intellectual dimension', 6; Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 67-68.

⁸⁰ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

increasingly deemed outdated.⁸³ While both festivals were organized based on Pan-African ideals, PANAF did not consider itself the successor of FESMAN.

Whereas the program of activities consisting of performances and intellectual deliberations was quite similar to FESMAN, the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto created at PANAF '69 deviated considerably from the cultural vision formed at Dakar. The '69 festival served as a collective reckoning with Négritude that many felt had run its course. In particular, the essentialized conception of Blackness, with its emphasis on emotion and rhythm, was criticized for preserving racial categories without questioning the validity of these categories. Instead, influenced by Frantz Fanon, the symposium at PANAF examined the transformative and revolutionary power of culture in the postcolonial world.⁸⁴ The resulting manifesto emphasized how culture could contribute to the future development of Africa rather than a romanticized reappraisal of a lost past.⁸⁵ Reflecting the preferences of the OAU, PANAF created a new Pan-African conception of identity and culture with clear political implications, leaving behind the 'older racially based' conception of Pan-African solidarity.⁸⁶

Sanctioned by the OAU, PANAF was unquestionably Pan-African as the North African countries excluded at FESMAN '66 were prominent participants in Algiers. The participation of the North-African countries would remain a divisive topic, as Senegal strongly opposed their participation based on Senghor's racialized conception of Africanness. However, not only the North African countries were included at PANAF. Various liberation movements from Southern and Lusophone Africa still fighting against colonial rule were also included.⁸⁷ This made PANAF truly continental in scope and represented another break with FESMAN, correcting Senghor's attempt to keep politics and culture separated by only inviting states that had achieved independence.⁸⁸ Even though Senegal had hosted diasporic communities at the maiden edition, the delegations from outside the continent invited to PANAF were more radical in nature.

Illustrative of the more radical stance promoted at PANAF was the invitation of the Black Panther Party and the presence of Eldridge Cleaver, who was in exile at the time.⁸⁹ Moreover, as Nigeria would do later, solidarity was extended beyond the continent and the

⁸³ Samuel D. Anderson, 'Chapter six: Négritude is dead': performing the African revolution at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival', In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 133-150, 149.

⁸⁴ Anderson, 'Négritude is dead', 133.

⁸⁵ Kulla, 'Politics of culture', 168.

⁸⁶ Anderson, 'Négritude is dead', 150.

⁸⁷ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

African diaspora. The African struggle for liberation from Western rule was connected to other emancipation and freedom movements from all over the world. Among the non-African attendees were the Palestinian Liberation Organization and radical movements from India and Vietnam.⁹⁰ As a result, PANAFA represented an anti-imperialist vision, following Algeria's attempt to hold on to revolutionary politics and remain the 'capital of the third world.' Whereas PANAFA figured as a turning point away from the philosophy of Négritude, to hold on to the radical politics as promoted at the festival proved difficult. However, in many ways, FESTAC would be similar, as Nigeria looked to project its own political and cultural vision on Africa and the world, albeit for a short period of time.

FESTAC and Nigeria's vision for the postcolonial world

Even though FESTAC was being organized as the successor of the Dakar festival, it also illustrates a clear break from the 1966 festival. Driven by Nigeria's oil-boom, the festival symbolized Nigeria's quest for regional leadership and international prestige. Like Senegal and Algeria had done in the 1960s, FESTAC was used to promote Nigeria's vision of Pan-Africanism and accompanying cultural politics.⁹¹ It broke with Senegal's cultural agenda based on the philosophy of Négritude. Whereas the radical '69 festival renounced Négritude mainly on Marxist grounds, FESTAC aspired to accommodate all of Africa in line with OAU policy. Accordingly, the festival hosted the Arab nation and liberation movements recognized by the OAU. Breaking with the 'Negro-African' identity, FESTAC employed a broader conception of the Black world, moving beyond the continent and diaspora by incorporating dark-skinned peoples from Asia and Australia, such as Papua New Guinea.⁹² As a result, the festival articulated a vision for a new Black world order, more expansive than before.

The envisioned Black world was divided into sixteen zones that reached far beyond the continent and diaspora. Even though the zonal scheme was mainly organizational, as each zone had its own delegate in the International Festival Committee (IFC), the categories showcase Nigeria's vision for the Black world. There were even plans to invite the Black peoples from the Soviet Union and the Middle East. However, these failed to materialize.⁹³ The invitation of Black communities from Western states and liberation movements exemplify FESTAC's attempt to transcend the nation-state. Moreover, by only extending the invitation to the Black communities of the predominantly white states, FESTAC reversed the social order as many of

⁹⁰ Anderson, 'Négritude is dead', 138.

⁹¹ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

⁹² Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 54.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 55-58.

these communities were considered second-class citizens in their respective nations. Even though not all invited countries and communities participated, FESTAC aspired to promote an expansive conception of transnational Black culture.

Not only in terms of participation the festival surpassed the previous festivals. FESTAC was significantly larger in scope as the performances, exhibitions and intellectual deliberations characteristic of the earlier iterations were extended with a durbar and regatta.⁹⁴ It hosted some prominent artists from the diaspora, such as Stevie Wonder and Gilberto Gil, and acclaimed artists from the continent like Miriam Makeba and rumba band TPOK Jazz.⁹⁵ Before the festival, Lagos was revamped as the vibrant market square Tafawa Balawe Square was refurbished, and new roads and highways were built. In order to host the international guests of stature, five-star hotels were erected as well as a modern housing estate which came to be known as FESTAC village.⁹⁶ With Nigeria firmly at its center, the envisioned transnational community had all the paraphernalia of a nation, with its own flag, emblem and identification cards that could be used as passports to enter the FESTAC village.⁹⁷

The ruling Federal Military Government was determined to surpass the previous festivals in scale and scope, resulting in an unprecedented extravaganza of arts and culture. Their position strengthened by the enormous oil revenues and efficient top-down command, they set out to revitalize the nation through large infrastructural projects. Moreover, through FESTAC, the military government would foster national unity and loyalty in a multi-ethnic society to pave the way to return to civilian rule.⁹⁸ The newly built, state-of-the-art National Stadium and FESTAC village were equipped with modern luxuries and doubled as a model for Nigeria's national development. As such, FESTAC helped bring about the nation's historic renewal and reflected Nigeria's newly attained power backed by oil revenues. The civil war had created a need for unifying national symbols, while the oil revenues enabled and spurred the 'postcolonial phantasia' centered around "state-led industrial revolution and cultural production."⁹⁹

The presentation of culture was carefully curated and served both the construction of national and Pan-African heritage. On the national level, the festival combined pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial cultural symbols and traditions to forge national unity and come into

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁵ Murphy 'cultural citizenship'

⁹⁶ Ikonne, 'FESTAC 77'.

⁹⁷ Murphy, 'Global African Culture'

⁹⁸ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 46.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

terms with its recent past. Local festivals were organized in different federal states to select delegations and artifacts to perform and exhibit during FESTAC. Originally, Nigeria had scheduled preparatory festivals that were supposed to be held at national and zonal levels throughout the Black and African world. However, many of these festivals were never held due to a lack of funds and enthusiasm. Despite the absence of these preparatory festivals and other organizational difficulties, most countries succeeded to put forward their contribution to the festival, albeit with financial support from Nigeria.¹⁰⁰

The performances and displays of drama, dance, music and films at FESTAC explored a wide variety of topics. However, broadly speaking, three main topics were featured. Naturally, there were human stories that explored themes such as good and evil, love and death, and power and corruption, often set in a traditional setting, taking the form of a folk tale with a moral lesson.¹⁰¹ Many of these plays easily transcended space and time and could be applied to different contexts. For example, Nigeria's own entry for the festival, Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo*, although set in a traditional setting it clearly applied to Nigeria's current situation. The story of seven hunters who set out to obtain an elixir that brings peace and prosperity to their community celebrates cultural diversity and calls for unity and peace. The play addresses the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War without explicitly mentioning it. It is important to note that Nigeria's entry was vetted to avoid criticism of those in power.¹⁰²

Performing at the festival was not without risks and consequences. The Ugandan playwright Byron Kawadwa had been selected to represent Uganda at FESTAC. His play *Oluymba Lwa Wankoko* or 'Wankoko's Song' was a political satire of the authoritarian regime of Idi Amin.¹⁰³ Similar to Ogunyemi's *Langbodo*, the play was a dramatization of folkloristic fables of his native Buganda.¹⁰⁴ In the story, the protagonist, Wankoko, rebels against the absolute monarchical power. Using the revolutionary struggle against the king as a metaphor for the political dictatorship of Amin. The play was performed during the time when Amin was desperately trying to cling on to power as his regime grew more and more repressive.¹⁰⁵ Upon return to Uganda, Kawadwa was arrested and murdered by Amin's secret police. His political commentary in *Wankoko's song* and some of his other plays were deemed subversive. Moreover, having traveled to FESTAC, he was suspected of having established contact with

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰¹ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 24.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰³ Andrew Horn, 'Uganda's theatre – the exiled and the dead', *Index on Censorship* 8/5 (1979), pp. 12-15, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Buganda is a Bantu kingdom within Uganda

¹⁰⁵ Samuel Kasule, *Resistance and politics in contemporary East African theatre: trends in Ugandan theatre since 1960* (London: Adonis & Abbey publishers ltd, 2013), 71.

anti-Amin organizations. Even though the exact reason for Kawadwa's tragic demise remains unclear, the euphoric celebration of culture brutally ended when he returned home.¹⁰⁶

As tragic as Kawadwa's murder was, there was a relatively large degree of artistic freedom within the confines of the festival. Besides the dramatized folktales, there were also plays and movies which explored historical themes, primarily dealing with colonial times and the problems of post-independence, particularly concerning corruption. Many of these performances were based on true events. For example, *Beatrice du Congo* by Bernard Dadié from the Democratic Republic of Congo (then known as Zaïre) portrayed the first encounter between Europeans and Africans based on the life of Dona Beatriz. Strongly condemning the colonial project, Dadié depicts a subjugated people who are to be saved by Beatrice du Congo, who is leading a rebellion against the outsiders.¹⁰⁷ The Guinean entry 'Thiaroye' by Boubacar Boris Diop focused on the massacre of French West African soldiers or *tirailleurs* by French forces during the Second World War at Thiaroye camp near Dakar, Senegal. The West African Soldiers mutinied in reaction to arrears of salary, low pension and poor conditions. French soldiers opened fire on the camp to counter the mutiny, killing an estimated 30 to 300 *tirailleurs*.¹⁰⁸ Both Diop and Dadié attempt to construct Pan-African heroes and martyrs in their works, condemning the colonial project.

The more than 100 movies shown at FESTAC primarily dealt with similar topics. Another indictment of colonialism was presented in the documentary *L'aube des Damnés* or 'Dawn of the damned' by Ahmed Rachedi sent in by Algeria. Based on the French film archives in Algeria, the documentary compiles a realistic but harrowing picture of the colonization of Algeria. In particular, the evils of colonialism are highlighted as the French film archives contained footage of the tortures, massacres and executions of Algerians.¹⁰⁹ The more severe criticism was reserved for colonialism, but the ruling African elite was not spared either. In *Xala*, the Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembène portrays a businessman who has become impotent. The movie is a satire on corruption in post-independence Africa. The impotence of the businessman represents the failure of the ruling African elite to be functional.¹¹⁰

Although the festival boasted of artistic prowess with all its extravaganza, the extensive intellectual deliberations were considered the heart of the festival. The more than 700 artists,

¹⁰⁶ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 25.

¹⁰⁷ Robert P. Smith, 'History and tragedy in Bernard Dadié's *Béatrice du Congo*', *The French Review* 55/6 (1982), pp. 818-823, 821.

¹⁰⁸ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 25.

¹⁰⁹ Roy Armes, *Postcolonial images: studies in North African film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 8.

¹¹⁰ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 38.

writers and scholars aspired to bring about meaningful self-determination in the era of independence. In particular, as it related to the legacy of colonialism, debating how to recast the African identity based on their own culture and heritage through education. More importantly, the colloquium aimed to address contemporary challenges and needs of Africa as well as peoples of African descent in an increasingly interconnected world. Other challenges in African societies were to be confronted on the basis of science and technology. Moreover, the colloquium examined the links between the continent and diaspora and the role and place of Africa in the world.¹¹¹

Notable examples of the various proposals to build continental and diasporic solidarity are those of Ron Karenga and Wole Soyinka, both present at the colloquium. In search of commonalities on the continent, various debates were held about the similarities and differences between African languages. As it was believed, the commonalities in the languages affirmed the shared history and unity of the continent. In this vein, Wole Soyinka even went as far as to argue for Swahili as the official *lingua franca* for Africa.¹¹² The African-American scholar Ron Karenga (now known as Maulana Karenga) also provided a lecture on the relationship between Africans on the continent and Africans in the diaspora. As he considered the history of the African continent and the diaspora, he argued against what he called ‘continental chauvinism.’ Instead, he advocated for real solidarity between Africa and the African diaspora based on their common origin, the shared experience of capitalism and racism, and their desire for liberation.¹¹³

Perhaps these postcolonial responses are the most revealing and can be considered the most tangible expressions of the participants of the festival to make sense of their history and current problems. Compared to the other festivals, the Nigerian festival largely followed a similar template but exceeded the others in scale and scope. Even though the festival had shortcomings, as Nigeria was ruled by a military government, it facilitated these expressions and concrete encounters between the festival’s participants. Whereas the other festivals were important influences for FESTAC, external events such as the Nigerian civil war and the oil-boom also shaped the 1977 festival.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹² Locke, ‘The intellectual dimension’, 11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

Chapter 2: Oil-boom and civil war: the troubled run-up to the 1977 festival

Not only previous Pan-African gatherings shaped the festival's template and its proceedings, but different external events also had far-reaching consequences on the 1977 festival. The Nigerian Civil War had left the country devastated and in need of unifying symbols. As such, FESTAC was intended as a turning point to unify the country and leave the troubled past behind. Still, at times it looked like the festival would not be held at all as different military governments rapidly succeeded each other. Nevertheless, the various military governments remained committed to organizing the festival, undoubtedly because of the oil-boom the country experienced from the 1970s onwards. The different military governments eagerly welcomed the wealth after the political turmoil of the late 1960s, as it enabled them to realize their grandiose ambitions for the festival and other infrastructural projects, providing them with almost inexhaustible funds.

However, the organization of the festival was postponed due to the political instability of the country, as violent military coups plagued the country from the late 1960s onwards. The political instability eventually culminated in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). The causes of the Biafran War or Nigerian Civil War can be traced to the fragile federal structure of the Nigerian state during the First Republic (1960-1966). After reaching independence in 1960, the state was organized based on three strong semi-autonomous regions; Northern, Eastern, and Western. The political parties in the three regions were largely based on ethnic affiliations, the Northern, Eastern, and Western regions respectively representing the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba peoples.¹¹⁴ The three regions competed for power and national wealth in the newly independent nation-state, causing tensions between the three regions and corresponding ethnic groups. With its privileged position in the parliament, the Northern Region dominated Nigeria at the federal level. The continued dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of power ultimately broke the fragile federal balance. Causing the military coup of January 1966, led by Major General Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi. In the coup, Prime Minister Abubakar Tafewa Balewa was killed, ushering in a period of political instability.¹¹⁵

His rule was short-lived despite the attempts of Aguiyi-Ironsi and his military regime to strengthen national unity and replace the fragile federal state. While Aguiyi-Ironsi attempted to create a unitary state by abandoning the federal state by the 'Unification Decree' of May 1966,

¹¹⁴ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 262.

¹¹⁵ Chibuike Uche, 'Oil, British interests and the Nigerian Civil War', *Journal of African History* 49/1 (2008), 111-135, 119.

prominent figures in the Northern Region saw their privileged position within Nigeria and access to the national wealth lost.¹¹⁶ This resulted in a counter-coup organized by Northern officers, killing Aguiyi-Ironsi and installing General Yakubu Gowon from the Northern Region as Head of State.¹¹⁷ To make matters worse, the persecution of Igbos living in the Northern Region, which had been going on since June 1966, caused Igbos to flee the region, ending up in the Eastern Region. Following the political turmoil and continued persecution of Igbos, Gowon anticipated the secession of the Eastern Region and redivided Nigeria into twelve states to undermine the power base of the Military Governor of the Eastern Region, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu.

The Eastern Region was of vital importance for the economy of Nigeria, as the main oil-producing areas, Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers, were located in the south of the region.¹¹⁸ By 1967 Nigeria produced on average 580,000 barrels of crude oil a day, primarily produced in the Eastern Region. When Gowon partitioned Nigeria into twelve states, the Eastern Region was split into the three regions South Eastern State, Rivers State, and East Central State. This effectively cut the predominantly Ibo state, East Central State, from the oil-producing areas.¹¹⁹ In reaction, Ojukwu proclaimed the independence of the whole Eastern Region, renaming it 'the Republic of Biafra.'¹²⁰ The secession of Biafra resulted in a civil war in which both sides were supported by different European powers and lasted until 1970 when the Biafran leadership unconditionally surrendered. The civil war had left the country devastated and reconciliation efforts after the war proved difficult.¹²¹

As a result, Gowon and the Federal Military Government were initially occupied with the reconsolidation and rebuilding of the nation. Through large infrastructural projects and other prestigious projects, the government set out to lift the country out of post-war poverty.¹²² In this context, the Gowon Government soon realized the festival could also be used to repair the national image damaged after the civil war and add to the reputation of the Federal Military Government.¹²³ As a result, the first gathering of the IFC was commenced in Lagos in October 1972, deciding that the festival would be organized in November 1974. Gowon appointed Chief Anthony Enahoro as President of the festival, a well-respected politician who had risen to

¹¹⁶ Uche, 'Oil and Nigerian Civil War', 119.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Osofisan 'FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity', 33.

¹²² Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 25.

¹²³ Kulla, 'Politics of culture', 169.

prominence during civilian rule. The Senegalese Alioune Diop, closely associated with *Présence Africaine*, filled the position of Secretary-General of the festival's administration. Enahoro and Diop closely worked together to ensure continuity with the 1966 festival.¹²⁴

At the same time, the Federal Military Government was determined to improve and surpass the Dakar festival, yet as it became clear these objectives could not be met in time, the festival was postponed to November 1975.¹²⁵ The grandiose ambitions of the Nigerian government were funded by the oil revenues that reached new heights as the country experienced an oil-boom from the 1970s onwards.¹²⁶ With almost inexhaustible funds and equally big ambitions, the festival was predestined to become an extravaganza of culture. However, the Nigerian population became increasingly dissatisfied with its lavishly spending government, as its newly found wealth failed to bolster meaningful development for the young nation. Locally the festival became known as 'the Festival of Awards and Contracts,' as few governmental and business elites divided the lucrative contracts among themselves.¹²⁷ The Gowon Government made little progress in returning to democratic rule and increasingly showed signs of a kleptocracy. This was reflected in the organization of the festival, as the excessive spending and failure to control the festival's funds contributed to the eventual downfall of the government.¹²⁸

In yet another military coup in July 1975, a new government under the leadership of Brigadier Murtala Muhammed took over power in an attempt to combat the rampant corruption. As the discontent over the organization of the festival grew, many demanded that the festival should be canceled.¹²⁹ However, significant investments and important international agreements were already made. Therefore, the new military government felt it was unable to back out of its commitments as its reputation was at stake.¹³⁰ Instead, the festival was downsized to manageable proportions, reducing the number of participants from 25,000 to 15,000 and canceling major international projects such as the exhibit on traditional chieftaincy and a taxidermy display.¹³¹ Moreover, in an attempt to break with the cronyism under Gowon's regime, prominent members of the festival organization were removed for squandering the

¹²⁴ Murphy, 'Global African culture'.

¹²⁵ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 5

¹²⁶ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 2.

¹²⁷ Osofisan 'FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity', 36.

¹²⁸ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 5.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 5.

¹³¹ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 91; Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 5.

festival's funds and personal enrichment.¹³² Including the President of the IFC, Anthony Enahoro, who was replaced by Commander O.P. Fingesi.¹³³

Despite significant attempts to demilitarize government and anti-corruption campaigns, Mohammed Murtala was assassinated in a failed coup in 1976. Murtala was succeeded by General Obasanjo, who later would lead the transition to civilian rule. Under the leadership of Obasanjo, it was eventually decided in mid-1976 that the festival should take place in January 1977 to protect Nigeria's reputation and save the already spent funds. Now being on a tight time schedule, the Federal Military Government was determined to leave the organizational difficulties behind, keeping a tight grip over the festival's organization. However, as the Nigerian government expanded its influence over the festival, it was also determined to push Nigeria's national and international political agenda through the festival.¹³⁴

Questions of participation

The expanding influence of the Federal Military Government over the festival also brought them at odds with participating artists. As the government increasingly interfered with the appointment of prominent members of the secretariat and other important officers, the administrative and organizational structure of the festival became increasingly detached from the artists.¹³⁵ The relationship between the artist and the government was already complicated, as the artist were generally more progressive than the conservative government bureaucrats.¹³⁶ The tensions between the government and participating artists can best be explained through the quarrels of the government with two of Nigeria's most prominent artists, the writer Wole Soyinka and the Afrobeat artist Fela Ransome Kuti. Whereas Kuti would eventually boycott the festival, Soyinka played an important role in representing the interests of the artists to gain more artistic freedom.¹³⁷

After studying in the United Kingdom and traveling to the United States, Fela Kuti, inspired by the Black Power movement, embraced his own Africanity, which he had first deemed 'primitive.'¹³⁸ Even though Pan-Africanism in Africa had been mainly limited to the upper echelons of society, Fela brought his vision of Pan-Africanism to the Nigerian public through his music and vibrant performances. Naturally, he was invited to give shape and partake

¹³² Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 90.

¹³³ Kulla, 'Politics of culture', 166.

¹³⁴ Osofisan 'FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity', 34.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 90, 95-96; Osofisan 'FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity', 34.

¹³⁸ Ikonne, 'FESTAC 77'.

in the upcoming festival, joining the National Participation Committee (NPC) with Soyinka and cinematographer Ola Balogun and playwright Hubert Ogunde. In the early stages, Kuti was excited as he hoped the festival could help “redirect the thinking of the common man.”¹³⁹ However, as his ideas to shape the festival’s cultural program were rejected, Fela decided to boycott the festival. Kuti took issue with the leadership of the committee, Major General I.B.M. Haruna, as he argued that a military man should not chair the organization of a festival for arts and culture.¹⁴⁰ He denounced the cultural program put forward as a ‘huge joke’ and publicly declared his resignation in July 1976.¹⁴¹

Fela’s resignation would cost him dearly. His outspoken criticism of the festival and the ruling government ushered in the end of Fela’s compound, known as ‘the Kalakuta Republic.’ In his biography, he describes his discontent with the festival's organization and how he organized a ‘counter-FESTAC’ during the month-long festivities at his club ‘the Africa Shrine.’ Kuti, already deeply embroiled in a conflict with the government, was not holding back and, as he put it in his own words, “used the stage at Shrine to denounce all of the shit and corruption of that government which had invited them [international artists].”¹⁴² Many of the visiting musicians and artists were keen to meet the internationally established Afrobeat artist and learn about the political situation in Nigeria. Moreover, the bustling parties at the Shrine were considered more raw and exciting than the official festival programming, and many of the international artists started going to the unofficial festivities instead, much to the government's dismay.¹⁴³

Shortly after the festivities ended, the Kalakuta Republic was raided by the military. Tensions ran high during the festival, and a skirmish between some soldiers and members of Fela’s entourage set off what Kuti described as a ‘retaliation’ for his outspoken denunciation of FESTAC and the government.¹⁴⁴ During the raid, various people from Fela’s inner circle were abused, and his compound was set afire. The incident with Fela’s mother was even more tragic, as she was thrown out of the first-floor window and would later die from her injuries inflicted during the raid. Fela was convinced Obasanjo himself had held off the raid until the international audience had left.¹⁴⁵ The attack on Kalakuta would not only profoundly affect Fela Kuti himself but became ingrained in the memory of FESTAC. Fela would harden in his

¹³⁹ Fela Kuti, Quoted in Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 90

¹⁴⁰ Ikonne, ‘FESTAC 77’.

¹⁴¹ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 90

¹⁴² Carlos Moore, *Fela: this bitch of a life*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009), 137.

¹⁴³ Ikonne, ‘FESTAC 77’.

¹⁴⁴ Moor, *Fela*, 137.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

political commentary and relentlessly lambast the corrupt government. Whereas the festival could have been remembered as a unique Pan-African experience, the positive achievements were obscured by the harsh military government with little room for dissidents. Moreover, the large infrastructural projects and public buildings, would soon fall into decay in the decades after FESTAC.¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Soyinka took issue with the organizing military government. He had been a well-known writer in Nigeria and a prominent participant at the Dakar festival. As such, he was part of the NPC. However, Soyinka had become increasingly disillusioned with the control of the government over the festival and refused to accept his position as director of Nigeria's literature event.¹⁴⁷ He lambasted the officialdom "you bring in trained people in the various cultural sections, experts in their own fields, but they can do nothing because some bloated semi-demi-perm-sec insists that he is the authority."¹⁴⁸ To make matters worse, various governments were making deliberate attempts to censor the participating artists behind the scenes, much to the dismay of Soyinka.¹⁴⁹ After several proposed texts and authors were rejected because they were against the national interest and security, Soyinka urged the government to strictly keep with the agreed cultural program and ignore the political implications. His appeal was largely granted, thereby achieving some artistic independence.¹⁵⁰

Rift between Senegal and Nigeria over the North-African countries

Soyinka found himself in the midst of another row, this time of international proportion, as Senegal threatened to boycott the festival over the participation of the North-African countries. Whereas the North African countries were reduced to 'observer' status at the 1966 Dakar festival, General Obasanjo insisted that the North African should be given full participation rights at FESTAC.¹⁵¹ The ensuing quarrel between the West-African nations can be understood in terms of competing conceptions of Africanity and geopolitical rivalry. Through FESMAN, Senegal had attempted to once again establish itself as a regional leader by asserting itself on cultural grounds and promoting Senghor's philosophy of Négritude. While FESTAC officially was organized as the successor of the Dakar festival, the differences between the two countries

¹⁴⁶ Ikonne, 'FESTAC 77'.

¹⁴⁷ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 95.

¹⁴⁸ Wole Soyinka quoted in Osofisan 'FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity', 34.

¹⁴⁹ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 6-7

¹⁵⁰ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 95.

¹⁵¹ Apter, Andrew, 'Chapter seven: Beyond Negritude: Black cultural citizenship and the Arab question in FESTAC '77', In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 151-165, 151.

would become more pronounced in the run-up to the '77 festival. Much like Senegal had done in the 1960s, FESTAC represented Nigeria's bid for regional leadership and was utilized to promote Nigeria's conception of the Black and African world.

Senegal opposed the participation of the North-African countries on cultural grounds. According to Senegal, the 'Arab-Berber' culture of the North-African countries was distinguishable from 'Negro-African' culture. Therefore, Senegal held that these countries should not be given full participation rights but had to be reduced to 'observers,' as the festival and, in particular, the colloquium, aimed to promote Black and African culture.¹⁵² Senegal's position was met with great displeasure, as it was considered discriminatory and undermined continental solidarity. On the other hand, Nigeria insisted that the North-African countries should be given full participation rights, justifying their position based on cultural and political grounds. Self-evidently, the North African countries were located on the continent, but moreover, they were part of the OAU, automatically granting them participation rights. Instead of focusing on cultural differences, Nigeria emphasized the cultural links between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the shared Islamic religion and influence of Arabic languages.¹⁵³

Although Senegal's position was received with much dismay, Senegal was adamant and assembled a group of West African nations that threatened to pull out of the festival. However, only Senegal announced the boycott, which prompted a strong response from Nigeria.¹⁵⁴ The President of the IFC, Commander Fingesi, increasingly excluded Secretary-General Alioune Diop from the committee for his alleged loyalty to Senghor. Tensions between Fingesi and Diop had been growing over the years as Diop realized FESTAC was not going to follow the Senegalese cultural vision and denounced the "increasing Nigerianisation of the festival."¹⁵⁵ Eventually, Diop was removed from the IFC in April 1975. Whereas the appointment of Diop was meant to ensure the continuity between the 1966 and 1977 festivals, the sacking of Diop symbolized the split between Senegal and Nigeria. Challenging Nigeria's authority, Senegal had hoped that the complete festival would collapse after its withdrawal, yet to Senegal's surprise, no one followed their lead.

In an attempt to settle matters, Wole Soyinka and Alioune Diop traveled to Paris to meet Senghor, who soon realized he was without support for his opposition to the participation of

¹⁵² Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 65.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Alioune Diop quoted in Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 6.

the North African countries.¹⁵⁶ Senghor then compromised and accepted the agreed principles and objectives of the festival, reducing their influence over the festival and adding to Nigeria's prestige. Officially the reasons for Senegal's boycott had been purely philosophical. However, other latent issues were at stake. Firstly, the collective ousting of Négritude led by Sekou Touré at PANAFA '69 bothered Senghor.¹⁵⁷ As his philosophy was deemed outdated and replaced with a more radical, Marxist cultural agenda, Senghor considered the FESTAC colloquium as a chance to restore Négritude as a guiding philosophy for African cultural politics. However, it seems unlikely that personal grievances were his only motive, especially since Nigeria threatened Senegal's regional influence in the newly established ECOWAS.¹⁵⁸

Indeed, FESTAC was not the only battleground. The competition for regional influence was also reflected in the negotiations for the establishment of ECOWAS. The negotiations took place from May 1975 to November 1976 and coincided with the preparations for FESTAC.¹⁵⁹ ECOWAS was founded to foster further cooperation between the fifteen West African states in an attempt to dismantle structures of economic dependence on Western states by promoting interregional trade and economic integration.¹⁶⁰ However, propelled by its new-found wealth, Nigeria was surpassing Senegal's economic and political power. As a result, Senegal tried to contain Nigeria's influence in the region by strongly opposing the establishment of the ECOWAS headquarters in Lagos. Senegal's resistance to the establishment of the headquarters in Lagos and the participation of the North African countries can thus be regarded as the result of the changing power dynamics in the region.

In the end, Senegal could not match Nigeria's power and agreed to the establishment of the headquarters in Lagos and Nigeria's position on the North African countries. Senegal had been the driving force behind the establishment of ECOWAS, as it hosted the first gathering just after the festival was held in Dakar in 1967. By 1977, Nigeria not only accommodated the headquarters of ECOWAS but also hosted the succeeding festival. As Nigeria took over Senegal's position in the region and on the continent, the balance of power in the region was reversed. Through FESTAC and ECOWAS, Nigeria aimed to leave the Nigerian Civil War behind and display its power in the region and on the continent, taking in the position of the leader of the Black and African world. This coincided with Nigeria's active and assertive role in African affairs and world stage.

¹⁵⁶ Moore, 'Afro-Black connection', 6.

¹⁵⁷ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 70

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: FESTAC and a new role for Nigeria in African affairs

The festival also served as a place for the leaders of African countries to converge and discuss continental issues. Both leaders of independent countries and prominent members of various liberation movements used the events at FESTAC to hold face-to-face meetings and coordinate political issues. One of the most pressing themes of the moment was independence in Southern Africa. For example, for both Kenneth Kaunda and Thabo Mbeki, FESTAC would serve as an important moment in the struggle against colonialism and Apartheid in Southern Africa.¹⁶¹ Nigeria not only facilitated these concrete encounters at FESTAC but also played a decisive role as an intermediary and power broker as it leveraged its powerful position on the continent in dealings with the West. Nigeria's foreign policy was characterized by its conservative stance on continental issues prior to 1966. The civil war and oil-boom radically changed Nigeria's position within the OAU as Nigeria adopted a strong stance against colonialism and Apartheid and supported various liberation movements.

Nigeria's new assertive role in African affairs stands in stark contrast with Nigeria's foreign policy prior to the civil war and oil-boom. Nigeria had been part of the conservative block or 'Monrovia group,' which advocated a gradualist approach to African unity instead of the federalist 'Union of African States.'¹⁶² Opposing a federation of African states, Nigeria favored a postcolonial order which affirmed national sovereignty and territorial integrity. As an ethnic and religious heterogeneous state, Nigeria feared internal political conflicts could jeopardize postcolonial independence. Therefore, it supported a regional organization that would uphold national sovereignty and non-intervention to prevent fragmentation of the new postcolonial states.¹⁶³ Nigeria's conception of regional cooperation was eventually affirmed in the creation of the OAU, as it became a treaty organization without any independent political power instead of a strong federalist union.

Whereas Nigeria's position on continental cooperation was more widely supported by several African states, its stance on the Congo crisis and Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe) left the country isolated. During the Congo crisis, Nigeria was one of the few countries within the OAU to side with the secessionist government of Moïse Tshombe. Nigeria even went as far as to support the American-Belgian rescue operation when 22 Afro-Asian countries denounced the

¹⁶¹ Mark Gevisser, *A legacy of liberation: Thabo Mbeki and the future of the South African dream*, (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2009), 161; Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 75.

¹⁶² Olonruntoba, 'Pan-Africanism, knowledge', 11.

¹⁶³ Adom, Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire: the rise and fall of self-determination*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 134.

undertaking at the United Nations.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Nigeria refused to break diplomatic ties with Britain over its support for Ian Smith's racist government in Rhodesia. Economically, Nigeria also undermined continental solidarity. While other African countries sought to improve Africa's trade relations with the West through the establishment of an African market, Nigeria looked to strengthen its own ties with the European Economic Community.¹⁶⁵ This tarnished Nigeria's reputation within the OAU and led to a dispute with Ghana, as Nkrumah strongly condemned Nigeria over the presumed neocolonial allegiances.¹⁶⁶

An active and assertive role for Nigeria

Altogether Nigeria's role in African affairs was largely dysfunctional prior to 1966. After the civil war and the oil-boom, Nigeria's position within the OAU and generally in African international relations changed. From 1970 onwards, Nigeria meaningfully contributed to African unity and solidarity, recommitting to the elimination of colonialism and racism in Africa while actively promoting economic cooperation.¹⁶⁷ Using its newly found oil-wealth, Nigeria advocated for the increase of the contribution to the Special Fund of the OAU Liberation Committee, which aimed to aid independence movements—even going so far as to offer material support in the form of trucks, artillery, food, and clothes to various independence movements and freedom fighters.¹⁶⁸ Likewise, Nigeria fostered economic cooperation on the continent through both regional and continental organizations but also through its dealings with actors outside the continent. It was taking a leading role in the formation of ECOWAS and forming a continental bloc in the negotiations with the trade and aid agreement with the European Economic Community.¹⁶⁹

Like FESTAC's global outreach, Nigeria's political and economic ambitions were not confined to the African continent. From the late 1960s onwards, the Nigerian leadership aspired to become the leader of the entire postcolonial world through various international initiatives, but in particular through the United Nations.¹⁷⁰ The United Nations had supported Nigeria's territorial integrity during the civil war. As a result, the Nigerian government strongly believed in the organization. Still, Nigeria was keen to point out the discrepancy between rhetoric and

¹⁶⁴ Olajide Aluko, 'Nigeria's role in Inter-African relations: With special reference to the organization of African unity', *African Affairs* 72/287 (1973), pp. 145-162, 147.

¹⁶⁵ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 74.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Aluko, 'Nigeria's role in Inter-African relations', 146.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁶⁹ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 74; Aluko, 'Nigeria's role in Inter-African relations', 151

¹⁷⁰ Humphrey Assisi-Asobie, 'Chapter eight: Nigeria and the United Nations', In: Chadwick F. Alger (eds.), *The United Nations system: the policies of member states*, (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1995), 334.

action at the United Nations. In particular, as it was relating to the elimination of racism and colonialism in Africa as well as other efforts made to establish a more just and fair world order. Nevertheless, despite the structural deficiencies, Nigeria remained dedicated to working through the United Nations and believed it could help establish a new international order.¹⁷¹

Nigeria's commitment to a more egalitarian and just world order was primarily given shape through its advocacy for the NIEO at the United Nations.¹⁷² The relationship between developed and developing countries was certainly one of the most pressing topics of its time and was debated from 1964 onwards at the United Nations. Amongst developing nations, it was believed that meaningful political independence was curbed by continued economic dependence on the export of raw materials and, with that, former colonizers.¹⁷³ The NIEO imagined an egalitarian world addressing the economic inequalities that jeopardized postcolonial self-determination and can be described as "the most ambitious project of anti-colonial world-making."¹⁷⁴ By taking a leading role in the advocacy for the NIEO, the Nigerian government strived to become the leader of not only the African continent but the entire postcolonial world. It believed that taking on an active vanguard role in African and international affairs would add to the legitimacy of the military government.¹⁷⁵

Nigeria's more active and assertive role in African affairs and on the world stage can be attributed to two developments. Namely, the experiences of the civil war and the increased economic and military power as a result of the oil-boom. Yet, the shift in foreign policy can primarily be attributed to the experiences of the Nigerian Civil War. By the time the war ended in 1970, the Biafran conflict had come to symbolize "the exhaustion of postcolonial optimism."¹⁷⁶ As images of the horrors of civil war and starving children had gone around the world, the victorious Federal Military Government was dedicated to restoring Nigeria's image and leaving the civil war behind as soon as possible. More importantly, the civil war had made the Nigerian establishment more aware of the political allegiances and alignments on the continent.¹⁷⁷

The white-dominated African states, such as South Africa and Rhodesia, had morally and materially supported the Biafran side. Consequently, the Nigerian government recommitted

¹⁷¹ Assisi-Asobie, 'Nigeria and the United Nations', 335.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Getachew, *Worldmaking*, 144.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Assisi-Asobie, 'Nigeria and the United Nations', 335.

¹⁷⁶ Brad Simpson, 'The Biafran secession and the limits of self-determination', *Journal of Genocide Research* 16/2-3 (2014), pp. 337-354, 337.

¹⁷⁷ Aluko, 'Nigeria's role in Inter-African relations', 159.

itself to the elimination of colonialist and racist regimes on the continent. Apart from being an affront to the dignity of Black people, these regimes also posed serious security threats to the newly independent African states and their sovereignty as well as territorial integrity.¹⁷⁸ The civil war had also made the Nigerian government wary of the interference of non-African actors in what they perceived as ‘African problems.’ This led them to reconsider and revalue the role the OAU could fulfill in African affairs and explains the later efforts of the Nigerian government to work with the OAU on a wide variety of topics. In doing so, it revitalized the troubled organization. The victory of the Nigerian armed forces over the Biafran secessionists had installed a certain confidence among the Nigerian leadership, as they believed “that their country had an important role to play in liberating areas under colonial and racist regimes in Africa.”¹⁷⁹ Moreover, the military strength of Nigeria had grown significantly during the conflict, which gave them the power to back up their stance.¹⁸⁰

After the civil war, Nigeria experienced an oil-boom and joined OPEC in 1971, and by 1972, Nigeria had become the ninth largest oil-producing country. The production of oil substantially contributed to the growth of the economy in the 1970s.¹⁸¹ The growing economy enabled the Nigerian government to take on a leading role in Africa, especially considering the economic difficulties which plagued some other African countries. It allowed the Nigerian government to aid other African countries without negatively affecting their own financial situation. The growth of the economy also attracted a lot of foreign direct investments, most notably from western countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. This gave the Nigerian government an important tool to ensure that Nigeria’s stance on the elimination of colonialism and racism in Southern Africa was taken seriously, as it could pressure the Western governments with the threat of nationalization. At the time, it was argued that “Nigeria alone can effectively use the threat of nationalization to make Britain respect African opinion on Southern Africa.”¹⁸²

International recognition of Nigeria’s power

Internationally, Nigeria’s new-found power was recognized and FESTAC serves as a ‘veritable off-stage’ to discuss African affairs.¹⁸³ For both the leaders of independent African countries and the various attending liberation movements, the festival offered many venues to

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁸¹ Ikonne, ‘FESTAC 77’.

¹⁸² Aluko, ‘Nigeria’s role in Inter-African relations’, 158.

¹⁸³ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 74.

contemplate the state of the continent and new aspirations for the future. Many felt that FESTAC ushered in a new period of continental unity and “might well be remembered as a turning point in modern African politics.”¹⁸⁴ The situation of white-dominated South Africa and Rhodesia was a pressing topic and served as a unifying force amongst the African countries at FESTAC. Nigeria taking on the role as leader of the Black world looked to continue its leading role in the movement against colonialism and Apartheid in Southern Africa. Since its independence Nigeria had supported the anti-apartheid cause championing economic sanctions and cultural boycotts at the Commonwealth, and, from 1976 onwards, it participated in the meetings of the Frontline States of Southern Africa at the OAU.¹⁸⁵

In this context, FESTAC figured as a key moment to demonstrate Nigeria’s effort to become the leader of the Black world and its dedication to end white supremacy on the continent. As Antonio de Figueiredo, who was reporting FESTAC for *The Guardian*, noted that “President Kaunda’s increasingly militant stand against Rhodesia and South Africa prior to this week’s crucial OAU meeting in Lusaka was preceded by personal talks with both the Nigerian and the Ghanaian government at FESTAC’s inaugural ceremonies.”¹⁸⁶ It was at the same OAU meeting coinciding with the festival, that Nigeria’s proposal to form a ‘Pan-African military high command’ to confront the minority regimes was accepted. Even President Nyerere of Tanzania and President Kaunda of Zambia, who had previously opposed the idea, now supported it. Despite unanimous support from the OAU, the creation of the military command was eventually put off to allow the United States to mediate in the Rhodesian situation.¹⁸⁷

For Thabo Mbeki, the later President of South Africa, FESTAC also served as “a key moment in the branding of the South-African liberation movement.”¹⁸⁸ Mbeki led the South-African delegation at FESTAC. The delegation comprised a wide variety of artists from all over the world. Many artists were in exile and, moreover, not every participant subscribed to the ideas of the African National Congress (ANC) as the Black Consciousness movement was also popular among the younger members. In need of direction, Mbeki managed to create a cohesive cohort, accommodating the culturally-oriented Black Consciousness supporters into the sphere of influence of the ANC. More importantly, at FESTAC, Mbeki understood the value of “culture as a vehicle for the mobilization of international solidarity.”¹⁸⁹ Culture could be used

¹⁸⁴ Antonio de Figueiredo, ‘The power behind Black culture’ *The Guardian* February 4th 1977

¹⁸⁵ Mark Patterson, ‘The eagle and the springbok: strengthening the Nigeria/South Africa relationship’, *Centre of conflict resolution report* (2012), 8.

¹⁸⁶ Antonio de Figueiredo, ‘The power behind Black culture’ *The Guardian* February 4th 1977

¹⁸⁷ Antonio de Figueiredo, ‘America courts Black Africa’, *The Guardian* February 8th 1977

¹⁸⁸ Gevisser, *A legacy of liberation*, 161.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

politically to reassert Africa on the world stage and showcase the capabilities of Africans if not held down by racist ideologies. Eventually, arising from the experiences at FESTAC, the Amandla Cultural Ensemble was created, which would play an important role in the international charm offensive to end Apartheid in the 1980s.¹⁹⁰

The 1977 festival also left a deep impression on the American participants. Jeff Donaldson describes how many US participants were disappointed by the chaos they found in Nigeria. Many of them complained about the lack of resources available as there were no communication means, schedules for rehearsals, vehicles for movement and identification cards needed to move around the festival.¹⁹¹ The delegation expressed their displeasure to the International Festival Secretariat but were met confronted with lethargic bureaucracy which left them even more frustrated. As a result, defiant members of the US delegation considered to boycott the festival. However, the mood changed completely as “freedom fighters from newly-liberated Mozambique appeared on the scene and begin to sing their battle songs.”¹⁹² Much has been made of the performances of international artists, however these concrete encounters embody the true Pan-African spirit the festival tried to capture.

The sheer size and exorbitant festivities of FESTAC had instilled fresh hope and renewed confidence in the future of the continent. Yet the decision to deter the creation of a Pan-African military high command left Nigeria’s military government dissatisfied. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of the festival was unabated, as the aforementioned reporter described the ‘militant mood’ amongst the attending heads of state. A member of the ruling military government commented on the decision at one of the diplomatic gatherings; “What is Africa waiting for? We can afford to buy rockets from Russia if the West won’t help us liberate Southern Africa. We want African independence from Cairo to the Cape.”¹⁹³ Subverting the imperialist catchphrase of Cecil Rhodes, as Andrew Apter has argued, into “a counter imperial vision of continental liberation.”¹⁹⁴ This statement was exemplary of Nigeria’s envisioned world order and assertive role on the continent and beyond, based on its new-found power and wealth.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Donaldson, *Documemoir*, 34.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁹³ Antonio de Figueiredo, ‘America courts Black Africa’, *The Guardian February 8th 1977*

¹⁹⁴ Apter, *Pan-African Nation*, 75.

Conclusion

This research aimed to show how FESTAC '77 mirrored Nigeria's efforts to positively influence the direction of the continent and shape the contours of a new world order. For the continent, the Nigerian Civil War symbolized the end of postcolonial optimism. Nigeria's assertive role in African affairs in the years after the civil war can be seen as an attempt to recover some of the lost optimism and restore Nigeria's tarnished reputation. The experiences of the civil war had given the Nigerian establishment a new perspective on African affairs and the oil-boom gave them the means to play the envisioned leading role in the postcolonial world. Nigeria increased its efforts to eradicate colonialism and Apartheid in Southern Africa, particularly within the OAU. Through different initiatives and organizations, most notably the NIEO, Nigeria pushed for a more fair and just world order. Thus, when the festival is placed in the context of Nigeria's foreign policy after the civil war, it becomes clear that for more than half a decade, Nigeria was deeply committed to the development African continent and, more generally, formerly colonized countries outside the continent.

FESTAC also symbolized Nigeria's quest for national unity, regional leadership and international prestige. Nationally, the festival resembled an ousting of the ghosts of the past, a reckoning with the Nigerian Civil War, and looked to foster national unity while adding to the legitimacy and prestige of the Federal Military Government. However, as the 'Festival of Awards and Contracts', it also foreshadowed the crony capitalism that would come to define Nigeria in the following decades. The lavishly spending military government had little room for dissidents, as the case with Fela Kuti has made clear. As a result, the grandiose celebration of culture was ephemeral and seriously circumscribed. Instead of being a turning point for Nigeria and the continent, the festival appeared to be a tipping point. The oil-boom that had enabled Nigeria to organize the festival and realize their grandiose ambitions came to an end, as oil prices began to fall before the end of 1977. The newly built infrastructure and the expensive public buildings, which had symbolized the country's historic renewal, slowly fell into decay.

Even though the festival was short-lived and failed to have an everlasting impact on Nigeria and the continent, this research has shown that FESTAC did facilitate concrete encounters between the festival's participants and served as a veritable off-stage to discuss continental issues. With Nigeria firmly at its center, it employed a broad conception of the Black and African world, linking the celebration of Pan-African culture to anti-colonialism and efforts to end white supremacy. Through the exhibitions and displays of culture, participants reckoned with the colonial past and constructed Pan-African heroes. As such, it enabled Pan-Africanism

to flourish and produced tangible experiences for a wide audience. Therefore, although the festival had shortcomings, FESTAC was a unique moment in the era of decolonization as it enabled the participants to challenge, debate and explore different conceptions of Pan-African culture, identity and solidarity.

By taking an actor-centered approach, this research has highlighted the experiences of various participants and discussed their contributions to the festival. This was done to show that Pan-African solidarity was given shape through the celebration of culture and, therefore, is worth introducing into the study of International Relations. While this research also attempted to surpass the influence of the organizing military government, the Nigerian Civil War and the oil-boom, which loom over the festival's legacy, this proved difficult because the festival cannot be seen in isolation from these events. Nevertheless, many of the themes discussed at the festival, such as meaningful self-determination and the role and place of Africa in the world, are still relevant today. As a result, revisiting FESTAC and other the Pan-African festivals might be useful, and further research could be carried out along these lines.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Alkalimat, Abdul, 'FESTAC: A partial documentation', *Online archive* accessed at 9-6-2022 <<https://www.alkalimat.org/festac/>>

Figueiredo, Antonio de, 'The power behind Black culture', *The Guardian (Lagos)*, (February 4th, 1977).

Figueiredo, Antonio de, 'America courts Black Africa', *The Guardian (Lagos)*, (February 8th, 1977).

Donaldson, Jeff, 'Documemoir', From the Jeff Donaldson papers, 1918-2005. *Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution*.

Moore, Sylvia, 'The Afro-Black Connection: FESTAC '77', *Report for the Dutch Ministry of Culture* (April, 1977).

Poinsett, Alex, 'Second world Black and African festival of arts and culture draws 17,000 participants to Lagos', *Ebony Magazine* (May, 1977).

Unknown author, *FESTAC: Decomposed, an-arranged and reproduced*, (Cape Town: Afterall and Chimurenga, 2019).

Secondary sources

Abegunrin, Olayiwola, *Origins of Pan-Africanism* In: Olayiwola Abegunrin (eds.), *Pan-Africanism in modern times: Challenges, concerns and constraints*, (London: Lexington Books, 2016).

Ademuleya, Babasehinde and Michael Fajuyigbe 'Pan-Africanism and the Black Festivals of Arts and Culture: Today's Realities and Expectations' *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 20/1 (2015), pp. 22-28.

Adi, Hakim, and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the diaspora since 1787*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

Aluko, Olajide, 'Nigeria's role in Inter-African relations: With special reference to the organization of African unity', *African Affairs* 72/287 (1973), pp. 145-162.

Anderson, Samuel D., 'Chapter six: Négritude is dead': performing the African revolution at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival', In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 133-150.

Apter, Andrew, 'Chapter seven: Beyond Negritude: Black cultural citizenship and the Arab question in FESTAC '77', In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 151-165.

Apter, Andrew, *The pan-African nation: oil and the spectacle of culture in Nigeria*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Armes, Roy, *Postcolonial images: studies in North African film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

Asissi-Asobie, Humphrey, 'Chapter eight: Nigeria and the United Nations', In: Alger, Chadwick F. (eds), *The United Nations system: the policies of member states*, (Tokyo: United Nation University Press, 1995).

Blain, Keisha *Set the world on fire: Black nationalist women and the global struggle for freedom*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 2018).

Bogues, Anthony, 'C.L.R. James, Pan-Africanism and the Black radical tradition', *Critical Arts* 25/4 (2011), pp. 484-499.

Bush, Ruth, 'Chapter four: making history: performances of the past at the 1966 World Festival of Negro Arts', In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 97-112.

Falola, Toyin, *Key Events in African History: a reference guide*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002).

Fanon, Frantz, *The wretched of the earth*, (London: Penguin Books, 1967).

Geiss, Immanuel, *The Pan-African Movement*, (London: Methuen & co, 1974).

Getachew, Adom, *Worldmaking after empire: the rise and fall of self-determination*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Gevisser, Mark, *A legacy of liberation: Thabo Mbeki and the future of the South African dream*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009).

Guss, David M., *The festive state: race, ethnicity, and nationalism as cultural performance*, (Berkely: University of California Press, 2000).

Hongoh, Joseph, 'The Asian-African Conference (Bandung) and Pan-Africanism: the challenge of reconciling continental solidarity with national sovereignty', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70/4 (2015), pp. 374-390.

Horn, Andrew, 'Uganda's theatre – the exiled and the dead', *Index on Censorship* 8/5 (1979), pp. 12-15.

Ikonne, Uchenna, 'FESTAC 77', *Red Bull Music Academy Paper* (May, 2017) accessed on 23-4-2021 at < <https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2017/05/festac-77-feature>>

Jaji, Tsitsi, *Africa in stereo: modernism, music, and Pan-African solidarity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Kasule, Samuel, *Resistance and politics in contemporary East African theatre: trends in Ugandan theatre since 1960* (London: Adonis & Abbey publishers ltd, 2013).

Kulla, Morgan, 'The politics of culture: the case of FESTAC', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 7/1 (1976), pp. 166-192.

Locke, Etienne, 'The intellectual dimension of the second world Black and African festival of arts and culture (FESTAC 1977) and its relevance today' *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (2021), pp. 1-16.

Malaquais Dominique, and Cédric Vincent, 'Chapter ten: PANAFEST: a festival complex revisited' In: David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 194-202.

Malisa, Mark and Phillippa Nhengeze, 'Pan-Africanism: A Quest for liberation and the Pursuit of a United Africa', *Genealogy* 2/3 (2018), pp. 1-15.

Monroe, Arthur, 'FESTAC '77: the second world Black and African festival of arts and culture: Lagos, Nigeria', *Black Scholar* 9/1 (1977), pp 34-37.

Moore, Carlos, *Fela: this bitch of a life*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009).

Murphy, David, 'Introduction: the performance of Pan-Africanism: staging the African renaissance at the First World Festival of Negro Arts', In David Murphy (eds), *The first world festival of negro arts, Dakar 1966: contexts and legacies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 1-42.

Murphy, David, Martin Munro, Tsitsi Jaji, 'The performance of Pan-African identities at Black and African cultural festivals', *Interventions* 20/7 (2018), pp. 947-951.

Murphy, David, 'Performing global African culture and citizenship: major pan-African cultural festivals from Dakar 1966 to FESTAC 1977', *Tate Research Publication* (2018).

Oloruntoba, Samuel, 'Pan-Africanism, knowledge production and the third liberation of Africa', *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 10/1 (2015), pp. 7-24.

Osofisan, Femi, 'FESTAC and the heritage of ambiguity', In: Oyeleye Oyediran (eds.) *Survey of Nigerian Affairs 1976-1977* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1981), pp. 32-46.

Patterson, Mark, 'The eagle and the springbok: strengthening the Nigeria/South Africa relationship', *Centre of conflict resolution report* (2012).

Ratcliff, Anthony J., 'When *Négritude* was in vogue: critical reflections of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in 1966', *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 6/7 (2014), pp. 167-186.

Raza, Ali, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zacharia (eds), *The internationalist moment: South Asia, worlds and worldviews 1917-1939* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015).

Reiser, Melissa D., *Music, Negritude and the "African Renaissance": performing Blackness at the World Festivals of Black Arts in Dakar, 1966 and 2010* (unpublished dissertation, university of Wisconsin, 2014).

Schramm, Katharina, 'Chapter Eight: The re-emergence of African civilization – Uniting the African family: claiming a common heritage in PANAFEST', In: Katharina Schramm, *African homecoming: Pan-African ideology and contested heritage*, (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010).

Simpson, Brad, 'The Biafran secession and the limits of self-determination', *Journal of Genocide Research* 16/2-3 (2014), pp. 337-354.

Smith, Robert P., 'History and tragedy in Bernard Dadié's *Béatrice du Congo*', *The French Review* 55/6 (1982), pp. 818-823.

Thompson, Vincent B., *Africa and Unity: the evolution of Pan-Africanism*, (London: Longman Group, 1969).

Tondi, Pakiso, 'Pan-African thought and practice', *Alternation* special edition 2 (2005), pp. 301-328.

Uche, Chibuike, 'Oil, British interests and the Nigerian Civil War', *Journal of African History* 49/1 (2008), pp. 111-135.

Wilder, Gary, *Freedom time: Negritudé, decolonization and the future of the world*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).