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## **Representing Africa in Contemporary Nigerian Hip Hop: A Video Analysis of Ruggedman's "Ruggedy Baba"**

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**Abstract:** Since MTV pioneered the art of music video broadcast in 1981, music video has gradually become one of the most important outlets for music promotion and an indispensable marketing strategy for an artiste. In recent times music video has almost assumed a life of its own and somehow larger than the music itself with a lot of investment in energy and finance being put into it by artists, labels and management. Africa on the other hand is catching on with this trend as there is an overt visibility of MTV Africa and other satellite television stations like Channel - O, Soundcity, Nigezie and Trace solely dedicated to promoting music videos. This paper examines the concept of music video in the Nigerian popular music context while extracting its functionality in the contemporary Nigerian hip hop genre. Against the backdrop of the 'Ruggedy Baba' video this research isolates the primary function of a video to music and argues that through visual representation of music, identities can be formulated as presented in 'Ruggedy Baba' where traditional Africa is prominently represented in a music genre deeply rooted in urban street culture.

**Keywords:** Music video, Popular Music, Hip Hop, 'Ruggedy Baba', Nigeria.

## 1. Introduction

The origin, evolution and socio-political implication of hip hop as a reactionary cultural weapon of the African-American minority in the United States regarding their struggle towards harsh economic strangulation, police brutality, segregation and marginalization of their time has been well documented by various scholars e.g. Keyes 2004, Ards 2004, Forman 2002 and Rose 1994 to mention a few. In Africa hip hop has gradually dominated the popular culture sphere through youths that found in the genre a sense of affiliation and belonging by adapting its philosophy and its other cultural paraphernalia towards combating the realities of their local situations (Adedeji 2013). Globalization has been ascribed as a major factor that facilitated the spread of the genre worldwide and one of the fastest means in which hip hop has been popularized to become a global phenomenon is through the music video whereby the message, culture and philosophies were spread across the world visually from the U.S. made available through satellite television.

Nigeria embraced hip hop music since the late 1980’s and the genre has been consolidated in the 1990’s; right about now hip hop has become the mainstream music in the country and its cultural output musically is now assessed to some extent through this genre. Hip hop has presented a lot of possibilities through the dynamic attitude of its players, mostly the youths that have tapped into the country’s cultural heritage to create an African identity out of this music form through syncretism –by appropriating existing music style like *fuji* or *highlife*, through code-switching in which one or two Nigerian languages are combined with English on a song and in this case situating hip hop in Africa through the music video medium. The hip hop genre is now fully entrenched in the Nigerian popular music sphere and one of its pioneering artists is Ruggedman whose 2007 ‘Ruggedy Baba’ song and video offers a new prospect towards hip hop indigenization in Africa.

## 2. Popular Music Video: An Overview

In terms of functionality music video is designed primarily to sell the song it visually interprets and also sell or publicise the artist, which

means that commercial exploitation is the keyword of a music video production as they are primarily designed as marketing tools by the music industry (Keyes 2004, 210). Music video has become popular especially among the youths as a unique expression of urban popular culture setting paces in fashion, expression, dance and hip hop culture somehow becoming more of a fad or vogue as it rapidly changes in style (Vernallis 1996) while creating a world where image becomes a representation of reality and an accessible form of the larger tendency of postmodernism.

Artists themselves use their videos to make a statement, create an identity or personality or promote a value. Bjork has been credited with projecting her national identity visually especially in the music video “Joga” (1997) which “articulates a pre-existing image of Icelandic identity which represents the narratives and histories shared by Icelanders... [becoming] an instance of ‘national music’” (Dibben 2009, 42). Michael Jackson kept producing new versions of himself after the release of his monster hit ‘Thriller’ in 1983. With each subsequent album the video has always been the platform to show the world his latest look or version. Jay-Z is used to making fashion statements in videos with his endorsement of the successful clothing label ‘Rocawear’ and has been credited as the originator of style and suaveness in modern hip hop culture. In Nigeria, Lagbaja! has always been an Afro-centric artist but an embrace of the latest technology is evident in his ‘Surulere’ video (2000) using computer generated animation; he has been credited as the first Nigerian artist to produce animated video. This was followed by other artists like Weird MC with ‘Ijoya’ (2006) and 2face Idibia’s ‘4instance’ (2007).

### **3. About Hip hop Videos**

Hip hop videos have been facing tough criticism due to the kind of images projected on screen by the artists, and it is quite evident that the American hip hop scene where the genre originated from dictates (positively or otherwise) the trend of hip hop on the world scene. Keyes emphasised that “the imagery of rap music videos documents the history and dreams of urban black culture that are specific to its audience” (2004, 211). She also asserted further that the essential

ingredient of such video is the visual projection of “iconic memory” which is “the referencing of places, historical events and music familiar to hip hop viewers. These... contain encoded cultures, capsules of meaning that add power and depth to the artist’s messages... The employment of iconic memory is an essential unifying and nearly omnipresent trademark of hip hop videos” (2004, 211).

The above highlights the fact that referencing of places and images is relevant in hip hop videos as a way of bringing the viewers to the artist’s level as regards understanding the message being passed across. Rose also opined that “identity and location” is primary to rap videos and has been one of its vital thematic concerns:

Rap videos’ themes have repeatedly converged around the depiction of the local neighbourhood and local posse, crew, or support system. Nothing is more central to rap music video narratives than situating the rapper in his or her milieu and among one’s crew or posse... [Thus] rap music videos are set on buses, subways, in abandoned buildings, and almost always in black urban inner-city locations. This usually involves ample shots of favourite street corners, intersections, playgrounds, parking lots, school yards, roofs and childhood friends. (Rose 1994, 10)

Closely linked to the projection of ‘iconic memory’ which situates a rapper in his ‘hood’ or locality is the use of dance and choreography. Considering the way hip hop originated with the assemblage of crews or ‘posse’ of dancers called ‘B-Boys’ and ‘B-Girls’ being a vital unit of the rap group, dance therefore is needed for proper illustration in most hip hop videos. Emphasis on dance and choreography is evident in classic videos like ‘Naughty by Nature’s’ ‘OPP’ (1991), MC Hammer’s ‘U can’t Touch This’ (1990), Run DMC’s ‘Walk This Way’ (1986) and in recent times Missy Elliot’s ‘Get your Freak On’ (2001) and ‘Work It’ (2002).

It is also observed lately that hip hop videos are filled with the projection of illusionistic lifestyles, stereotypical creation of an ideal

male or female figure and over-exhibition of eroticism that tend to almost sever hip hop from the realm of music. As Osumare (2000) observes, “although rap music is situated in the continuum of historical exportation of American pop music, hip hop as a culture has interjected its own often self-empowered messages and attitudes that are not necessarily under the control of the music industry” (172).

#### 4. The Nigerian Music Video Scene

On the Nigerian music scene, music videos have assumed a life of their own almost independent of the music itself in terms of marketing and nearly competing with Nollywood, the Nigerian movie industry as regards sales. Most music videos are marketed and invested on by a film marketer or music distributor who advertises and strategizes the same way they market the movies, and this is evident in terms of the trailers most of the time being included in movies, the way the commercials and jingles are made all similar to Nollywood style. A typical example is the video compilation for 9ice’s breakthrough album ‘Gongo Aso’ which according to the marketer, as revealed in an interview (2009), is a joint venture between 9ice and Afrobest company.

While different genres of music in Nigeria employ different styles of video production there still exists the common goal among them, to sell the song and artist. Genres like *jùjú* and *fújì* have a trend of using drama and storyline in their videos as well as engaging popular actors from the mainstream film industry to illustrate this visually. This can be attributed to the fact that music in this category is full of narratives where the thematic notion is based on typical Yorùbá beliefs like *ìwà rere* (good character or virtue), *sùúrù* (patience) or *àfaradà* (tolerance and perseverance), and in most cases these musicians employ the art of storytelling to make their messages persuasive to the audience while popular Yorùbá actors come in handy to dramatise this in the video, using their popularity to sell it as well as the music. A typical example is Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde-Barrister’s ‘Fújì Fantasia’ (1993) with the popular ‘Ajileye Theatre Group’ acting out the narratives using the popularity of their then successful Television Drama ‘*Kòtò Òrun*’ to

make the video popular, as some of the popular characters in the series like *Orí Adé* and *Ògùnjìmí* was enacted in the music video.

Hip hop videos in Nigeria have come a long way with the increasing popularity of the genre over time in the music scene. One of the earliest music videos in this genre was ‘Da Trybe’s ‘Oya’ (2002) directed by Ayo Sonaiya which exhibited great street suaveness, encompassing attitude, dance, choreography and use of urban street gear. It was shot on a basketball court, one sport that has been associated with the street and the projection of hip hop attitude to the fullest. Gino’s ‘No Be God’ (2007) has been adjudged one of the best hip hop videos to come out of Nigeria in recent times having won the Nigerian Music Video Awards (NMVA) in 2008. Apart from its film quality of been shot on 35mm camera, the music video was a projection of street hustle to the fullest. The rapper was portrayed assuming different roles from being a street hawker to being a successful artist while incorporating the typical street arrest by the police (common in American gangsta rap videos). This was played out in harmony with the overall message of the song that encouraged hustlers to keep their head up as tough times don’t last but tough people do.

Like their American counterpart it can be observed that dance and choreography is also being emphasised in most Nigerian hip hop videos, for example in videos like ‘Baraje’ and ‘Baraje remix 2006’ by Ruggedman, or ‘Get that feelin’ 2005 by 2Face Idibia. One can also see the projection of the mundane, fantasy and ‘bling-bling’ in videos like ‘Yahooze’ 2007 by Olu Maintain where there has been an exhibition of affluence with a line-up of state-of-the-art cars like the Hummer 4WD, spraying of dollar bills and popping of champagne. However, unlike their American counterpart Nigerian hip hop videos have not gone to the extremity of outright eroticism. This might be partially due to the censorship law that is enforced by the Nigerian Censorship Board where some videos have been branded ‘Not To Be Broadcast’ in the past, although there has been argument that this is often political, especially when Femi Kuti’s ‘Bang Bang’ video was banned and many people wondered if it actually contained any lewd visuals to warrant such a ban. However, despite censorship, the UK based Nigerian hip hop group JJC and The 419 Crew released a video compilation in 2006



containing an x-rated version of their successful song ‘Gba o’ which was successfully marketed in Nigeria by Obaino Music, Lagos.

Looking at the music video scene in Nigeria critically within the latest trend of urban popular culture, it is apparent that commercial gratification is also a driving force as in America. This can be deduced from heavy financial investment being put in it by artists and their record label, as it is believed once their video trends online and being played on TV it popularises the artiste and in turn brings in financial returns through shows and product endorsements. As the world of music video expands daily in Nigeria, there are now various programmes dedicated to music video on television such as Sound City, Nigezie, or Livebeats and on satellite television, Channel ‘O’ and especially with the presence of MTV Base Africa, in Lagos and Johannesburg. Likewise with the incursion of the internet technology and its precursor youtube.com, a video hosting site, there is now enormous pressure on the Nigerian artist who believes video now comes almost before music.

Clinching an award in the video category is now as important to artists as with music, as this is seen as a career booster thanks to the many video awards now available to artists in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole. The Nigerian Music Video Awards (NMVA) has gradually become a reference point for an artiste in the popular music scene. This award commenced in 2006 and held its third edition in November 2009 in Lagos with the theme ‘Music Edifies’. Cally Ikpe, the producer of ‘Livebeats’ on television and CEO/founder of NMVA, believes “some music videos are projecting Nigeria positively and some negatively. At the NMVA we emphasise on the ones that project us positively. If you make your videos offensive, it would not be entered for NMVA” (personal interview 2009). The recently concluded 2014 edition was themed ‘Music against Violence’ aimed at using the popular culture sphere to sensitise people about the negative impact of violence in the society.

The Nigerian music video industry have also created job opportunities as we have seen the emergence of new creative videographers whose work has been acclaimed by bringing in new

innovations through the use of the latest technology while raising the bar of music videos with exotic scenic designs, dramatic effects and digital aesthetics. DJ Tee is one of the most sought after director on the scene and holds the Hip Hop World Awards (HHWA) 2008 Director of the Year for DJ Jimmy Jatt’s ‘Stylee’ (2007) video. Other directors include Jude ‘Engees’ Okoye who has numerous Awards for directing P-Square’s video exclusively among which is the ‘Best Director’s’ plaque at KORA Africa 2010 Awards for ‘Do Me’. Others include Clarence ‘Capital’ Peters; Wudi Awa, acclaimed for Gino’s ‘No Be God’; and Emeka Obefe who got the Director’s Award for ‘Best Indigenous Concept’ at NMVA 2008 for Ruggedman’s ‘Ruggedy Baba’. There has also been a recent incursion of vibrant and creative directors using the music video medium as an avenue of their artistic expression while introducing new possibilities to the genre. Among these new wave directors are Mr. Moe Musa, Adasa Cookey and Kemi Adetiba who is gradually building reputation as a formidable female director with flicks like Banky W’s ‘Lagos Party’ (2012), Niyola’s ‘Toh Bad’ (2013) and Olamide’s ‘Sitting On The Throne’ (2013) which won the Video of the Year and also got her the ‘Best Director’s Award’ at the just concluded NMVA 2014.

## 5. ‘Ruggedy Baba’: The Video

The song ‘Ruggedy Baba’ (2007) released on Rugged Records is thematically Afrocentric and through the powerful lyrics delivered in Yoruba, English and Nigerian pidgin Ruggedman defends his stance of using a Nigerian language to perform rap while asserting the claim of giving a face to Nigerian hip hop music. The song and the whole Ruggedy Baba album is rather a mission statement by the artiste aimed at creating a fully indigenised Nigerian hip hop through language use. The song was rendered in a blend of languages which primarily are Yoruba, Standard English and the Nigerian pidgin – a pattern generally referred to as ‘Code-switching’ which is now becoming the identity marker for Nigerian hip-hop now dubbed ‘Afro hip hop’ (Adedeji 2014, 503). The chorus of the song is Yoruba dominated with a spice of Nigerian pidgin and English. This is the hook on which the video is based, hence the heavy portrayal and dominance of Yorùbá culture in the video. The chorus ran thus:

Àtèwó mó balá (I found lines on my palms)  
Á o meni tóò Koó, (But never knew who put it there)  
*We spit in pidgin*, (We sing in Pidgin English)  
Àwòn Kan ún wúkó, (Some people are complaining)  
E jé Kán ma pòfóló (Let them choke)  
You better show them where you belong  
5-*Ruggedy baba* (All hail Ruggedman)  
Òpómúléró mo jalekàn (The pillar that holds Nigeria’s hip hop)  
6- Sá ma wò wón níran (Just keep looking at them)  
(Ruggedman 2007)

## 5:1. Introduction

As observed by Collin Chua (2009) “the images of music videos work to offer the music an added value, whereby the images enrich a given song, by providing a visual expression that in many ways seeps into and infuses the song. The visuals do not simply support the music, but in a sense fuse with and resonate with the music” (p.219). This projects the fact that synchronization of sound with images can be achieved in different formats depending on the inspiration and design of a video director: it might be through narratives, costume, or use of space and at times it might be through an abstract idea in a way that might seem totally contrasting to the song.

Andrew Goodwin (1992) established three parameters in which music video can be viewed by postulating three relationships that exist between a song/music and the visual text of video thus: *illustration* in which the video is telling the story of the song lyrics, *amplification* in which it introduces new meanings to the song without conflicting with the lyrics, and *disjuncture* where the image and interpretation of the video has nothing to do with the lyrics or even contradicts the lyrics in their entirety (cited from Keyes 2004, 211). The music video ‘Ruggedy Baba’ can be situated within the category of *illustration* in the aforementioned relationships.

## 5:2. The Caption

The video commences with a caption used as a kind of opening montage with a statement or assertion that reads:

From Ebem, Ohafia Abia state comes a rapper with a mission to give Nigerian rap music a face with our languages, like South Africans did with *Kwaito* and Ghanaians with *Hiplife* – I’m proudly Nigerian.

This caption dictates a stance from the beginning portraying the artist as an advocate with a mission, thereby allowing the viewers to understand where he stands and what to expect from the video. What also requires some cognizance is the typewriter effect that goes with the caption which sounds quite emphatic and significant drawing the viewers’ attention to this message.

## 5:3. The Setting

The importance of a setting cannot be over-emphasised in music video; setting denotes a locality and place where a video is situated. In the production process it is a way of allowing sound (music) to occupy and inhabit a space which can be either imaged (created), imagined or real. Setting is also a kind of framework on which the entire video rotates and it has many implications for the artist, the song or the genre, especially as regards identity, because “an integral part of cultural identity is the need to belong in and/or to a ‘place’, physical or not— place and identity thus have an important relationship” (Chua 2009, 221).

Hip hop music has strong rootedness in the sense of place and locality, as observed by Vernallis (2004): “[the] emphasis on visual detail and on the political and cultural functions of place resonates with the practices of hip hop” (78), and this points to the reason why “rap music videos... have traditionally taken place on the street and used a realistic mode of depiction” (73). ‘Ruggedy Baba’ has implicitly emphasised this with the use of a realistic setting – principally a village square that translates to ‘the street’ in a hip hop setting, thereby complementing the Afrocentric message of the song.

The use of the village square as the major location involves the creation of a throne where Ruggedman is situated as the principal character, which pointedly makes him the ‘king’ or *òpómúléró* (the pillar) of Nigeria’s hip hop. This is an aesthetic and creative re-creation of a rap setting into the traditionally Afrocentric space which completes or supposedly signals the (re)birth of Nigeria’s indigenous hip hop, or ‘Afro hip hop’. This realism in setting was further accentuated by some establishment shots at the beginning of the clip. First was the local horns man (see Figure 1) who was projected in a silhouette sounding the call or summon, followed by the shot of the mother hen and chicken (Figure 2). Both are indicative of typical African settings where the call was used in the olden days as a means of communication or public announcement, while the hen and the chicken signifies nature and freedom which is seen as an attribute of Africa.



**FIGURE 1.** Silhouette of the horns man making the call (video still)

The major setting is complemented by some additional minor settings or localities and abodes which support the dictates of the narratives. This includes a sitting room, backyard compound and street corner which were projected through flashing cuts of shots to visualize activities going on there as they stem from the narrative and rap verses.



**FIGURE 2.** The mother hen and chickens denoting nature and Africa (video still)

## 5:5. The Plot and Storyline

The presence of a story line is seen by many as a requirement for understanding a song through its video, which can be likened to having the song played (or acted) out in visuals. Yet pop music videos have been very diverse in terms of presentation and “music video presents a range all the way from extremely abstract videos emphasizing color and movement to those that convey a story... [while] most videos tend to be non-narrative” (Vernallis 2004, 40). Even within the narrative ones “the images of music video do not really adhere to traditional narrative structures; the images are deliberately placed to articulate with the music” (Chua 2009, 230). Nevertheless most music videos within the hip hop genre still thrive on narratives due to rap’s generic emphasis on creating a sense of place. Narrativity of a music video is exhibited through a plot performed by various characters. In this vein ‘Ruggedy Baba’ is presented from a narrative angle which stems from the video being ‘illustrative’. It has a linear plot that has been carefully storyboarded and compressed within the frame of time using shots that function in coherence with the lyrics and melody.

In this case, Ruggedman is the king and 9ice the featured artist is his second in command. The scenario is that the king is making an

important statement and everybody is summoned to the square to listen as well as have the opportunity to see his ‘majesty’. So we hear ‘the call’ at the beginning while people rushed to the village square, and those unable to make it to the square stay glued to their transistor radio or black and white television in their homes. Assuming the role of the protagonist Ruggedman makes his statement in verses where he recounts his achievements in the rap game, castigated his detractors who thinks he is not ‘keeping it real’ and puts forward his proposal regarding using the mother tongue to create an authentic Nigerian hip hop. The video ends after delivering this message as the king leaves the square with his entourage. The narrative also made use of a visual switch from the main setting—the square—to other settings where we see extras acting out different scenes. The plot presents an aesthetic intertwining of the traditional African socio-political setting with urbanity, both occurring within the same time frame in a coherent manner.

## **5:6. Characterisation**

Characters are roles performed by actors on stage or screen and the process of defining a role or making each character distinct or identifiable through speech, gesture, looks or costume is called characterisation. Role playing also occurs in music videos as artists are put in a position to perform their music visually by lip-syncing, and most importantly in narratively inclined video where the artist assumes a role that can be defined through various techniques of visualizations as adopted by the director and in relation to other performers in the video. In ‘Ruggedy Baba’ Ruggedman is the protagonist and characterized as the king (leading role) while 9ice the featured artist is characterized as a chief or second in command and the supporting characters were downplayed and put on the same level without any prominence.

The position of Ruggedman as the star performer in the video is adequately negotiated right from the beginning as what we can infer from him stems from the way he is placed and how he is projected by the shots. 9ice starts off the video after the initial introduction and caption when he is projected with a close-up performing the hook line

‘*atewo mo bala*’ (see Figure 3). When the shot cuts wider his position is established sitting on the mat surrounded by the townspeople on the same level. Before the end of this chorus, there is a quick cut establishing the entrance of Ruggedman showing his feet and the accompanying entourage while quickly cutting back to him sitting on the throne to render his first verse.



**FIGURE 3.** 9ice with the opening line ‘*atewo mo bala*’

What is noticeable here is the establishment of hierarchy: the subjects are waiting for royalty and Ruggedman coming in to address the waiting crowd establishes him as the star performer. Also the arrangement and positioning at the square with Ruggedman seated on a raised platform while the rest were on the floor including 9ice clearly indicates who holds the position of authority. The role of Ruggedman as the star performer is also reinforced through camera techniques detailing his moves and gestures especially through close-up shots. As Vernallis observes:

The close-up of the singer’s face is shot and edited to emphasize one simple gesture—a gesture that in its abbreviated simplicity will indicate a way of paying attention to or grasping some element of the music. It



may be the main hook, a lyric, or a small rhythmic or melodic feature. (2004, 55)

A typical example of this is the last line of Ruggedman’s first verse where the emphasis on the word ‘mother tongue’ was laid through gesture with the artist touching his tongue and the camera capturing this in close-up (see Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4.** Ruggedman emphasising ‘mother tongue’ with gesture

The relationship between Ruggedman and the supporting actors is also used in highlighting his lead role status especially in an instance where one of the maids kneeled to give him a glass of water (see Figure 5).



**FIGURE 5.** Maid kneeling to present water to Ruggedman

## 5:7. Costume and Props

Costume and props are important paraphernalia of music videos which complement the settings. They function in many ways which include: define a character or establish the relationship between different characters, make a statement about the artists and at times indicate the generic category of a particular music. ‘Ruggedy Baba’ presents the general code of traditionality in terms of costume and props, illustrating visually the message of indigeneity and Afrocentricism as signalled with the opening caption of the video.

The costume worn in the video for the main act is purely African and Ruggedman is in African regalia of a Yorùbá extract portraying a first class *oba* or king holding the *òpá àse*, an artistically carved staff of authority, in his right hand. The first thing that is recognizable is his donning of a crown—a Yorùbá *Adé ilèkè* (beaded crown) which is a characteristic mark of the Yorùbá traditional kingship. In Nigeria it is only within the Yorùbá that a beaded crown is used, and among the Ibo that Ruggedman comes from the traditional rulers only used caps. (See Figure 4 above and note the *òpá àse* on Ruggedman’s right hand as well as the *adé ilèkè* with the veils).

The use of the beaded crown by Ruggedman is of tremendous significance as the crown represents political and spiritual authority within the Yorùbá cultural precinct. It should be noted that:

[The] beaded crown was considered the prerogative of only rulers of Yorùbá Kingdoms who as descendants of Oduduwa, of Ife kingdom were of divine nature... [It] was believed to be by virtue of elements of its design an instrument of power by which the *oba* was able to intercede with the spirit world, and particularly with his royal ancestors, for the benefit of humanity. (Minneapolis Institute of Arts 1998)

Drewal, Pemberton and Abiodun (1989, 39) also asserted that:

The beaded veil masks the identity of the *oba*. His awesome performative powers are intensified when he

wears the crown. It is taboo for people to look directly at the head of the king because of the powers it embodies... [Here] concealment constitutes heightened spirituality... For the Yorùbá the use of the crown is awesome. When the chiefs kneel before their crowned ruler, they greet the crown and the one who wears it with the salutation: *Kabiyesi Oba! alaase ekeji orisa!* (‘Your Highness! The king’s power is next to the gods’). (Quoted in Adejumo 2005, 136)

The above signifies the spiritual and political power a beaded crown holds while its use in ‘Ruggedy Baba’ is a declaration of allegiance and subscription to the Yorùbá socio-cultural belief that marks the final ‘rites’ for a presumed ‘Yorùbá-nization’ of Ruggedman and by extension the Africanization of hip hop music through visual presentation.

Ice was also attired in a ‘danshiki’ garment made from the Yorùbá traditional fabric *aso òkè* which is typical of a Yorùbá chief. The king’s court are also in typical African uniform while the extras are wearing what is common for everyday people in Nigeria, a mix of shirt, trousers or blouse dabbed with different African designs. Apart from these principal characters the rest of the cast in the video project the normal everyday wear like shirt and trousers, and the rappers wear the usual hip hop jeans and hoodies. The use of traditional attire by the principal character clearly defines his position as an advocate for the domestication of hip hop which literally and visually completes the indigenization of rap as proposed lyrically in the song. Performing rap and visualizing it traditionally is also indicative of the syncretism of tradition and modernity that exists in everyday African life.

## **5:8. The Flow and Tempo**

The aim of any music video is to achieve a perfect synchronization between the sound and the image in a way that will give meaning to the song. Within this trajectory we also have the lyrics whose proper interpretation contributes towards achieving this perfect flow. The music video ‘Ruggedy Baba’ is able to achieve this syncretism by using

harmonized motion of shots to maintain and sustain the song’s impetus while using interpretative shots to give meaning to the lyrics and establish their relationship with the image. A typical example is the song’s hook line performed by 9ice and interpreted visually: every time he says ‘*Ruggedy Bàbá òpómùléró...*’ he genuflects and points to Ruggedman on the throne, and this act is given a tangible visual prominence (see Figure 6). This technique ensures continuity which creates a kind of lucidity that the song tempo dictates.



**FIGURE 6:** 9ice genuflecting to Ruggedman while on the hook line ‘*Ruggedy Bàbá òpómùléró...*’

### **5:9. Editing and Visual Effects**

Editing performs an important function in music video as it is through this technique that shots can be arranged and sequenced to achieve an overall synergy and statement that the music video is supposed to project:

Most importantly, the editing in a music video works hard to ensure that no single element (the narrative, the setting, the performance, the star, the lyrics, the song) gains the upper hand... [Moreover] it prevents powerful images from acquiring too much weight and stopping the

flow of information... [Therefore editing] preserves the video’s momentum and keeps us in the present. (Vernallis 2004, 27)

The music video subscribes to an overall theme of realism in terms of visual interpretation, as it was shot and edited as close to nature as possible as there are no flashes, exotic sets or computer-generated virtual or imaged backgrounds.

The editing style adopted for the video contributes to the overall flow and tempo of the music stressing the rhythmic structure while accentuating and complementing the lyrical message through continuous flow without distancing the viewer’s attention from the music. This is prominent through the use of cross-cutting shots from the major set—the village square—and the supporting sets in a seamless, non-disjunctive fashion. Cross-cutting to these other sets is a way of giving visual interpretation to some messages by Ruggedman as well as establishing coherence in the narratives. (See figure 7 where the shoemaker is on the left side of the frame to accompany Ruggedman’s reference and figure 8 which depicts one of the secondary settings of the town’s people).



**FIGURE 7:** Use of two shots to complement Ruggedman’s statement about a shoemaker (on the left of frame)



**FIGURE 8:** The use of a cross-cutting shot to depict a secondary setting. (Townspople watching Ruggedman’s broadcast on black and white television)

There are two effects noticeable in the ‘Ruggedy Baba’ video which has been purposefully appropriated. The first one is the use or rather non-use of colour, as the final cut of this music video is presented in black and white while it is obvious that it was shot in full colour. The second is the use of an ‘antiquated’ effect which presents the video as being blurred or coarse and far from smooth visually. Watching the video one is quick to notice this with the presence of some erratic thin white lines that constantly appear on the screen spreading across the video’s frame. Both effects can be discerned as not incidental but purposeful towards the overall statement of the music video.

The use of the ‘antiquated’ effect transports us to the past from the present, while the archival look created by this effect presents a historical excursion into the past. In the hip hop milieu this is called ‘old school’ indicating hip hop is a kind of institution and in this context Ruggedman becomes the ‘teacher’, which indicates he has been around for a while and has got the status-quo to instruct, propose and take Nigerian hip hop to the next level through indigenization.

In terms of colour presentation, making the video in black and white stems from appropriating the pioneering rap videos of 1980s America in

the era when afrocentricism was the most popular theme in texts and visuals. Here, presentation in black and white is a major Afrocentric statement and a projected symbol depicting ‘Blackness’. This complements the theme of authenticity and cultural identity which Ruggedman is trying to achieve. It also situates the video within a context where modernity and traditionalism exist side by side. As this effect is achieved digitally it now places the Nigerian popular music sphere and its multimedia accompaniment within the trajectory of current global technology.

## 6. Conclusion

It is quite evident that the ‘Ruggedy Baba’ video gives credence to the multi-cultural nature of Lagos and asserts a new meaning to the hip hop trope ‘keeping it real’ by truly representing Africa through the Yorùbá language and culture as portrayed in this video project. The video is very illustrative as it gives meaningful interpretation in conformity to the song lyrics, statement and the identity the artist is trying to formulate. The total projection of the music video gradually unfolds by situating the artist Ruggedman within the fabric of Yorùbá culture, right from his role and characterisation as a Yorùbá monarch to his partnership with 9ice—a Yorùbá artist. These visual narratives effectively projected his view about the use of the mother tongue and climaxed with his answering to the Yoruba *oríkì* (sobriquet) of *òpómúléró*, meaning the strong pillar of Nigerian hip hop.

The ‘Ruggedy Baba’ music video served its primary functions which are: to complement the song, popularize the artist the more, and assist the audience in attaining a deeper level of understanding as regards the music. Further to this, Ruggedman through this visual have assigned a novel rationale and innate connotation to music video concept as he openly advocated and negotiated for the authenticity of the Nigerian hip hop via the Yorùbá culture. He has fully given a new interpretation to contemporary rap music video that it can be fully traditionalized and indigenized through visual presentation to reflect the identity of its locale – Africa. This presents a case of effective border crossing in modern popular music.

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