

# Unique Idiosyncratic Style in Tundé Kèlání's Movies

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## Abstract

*Idiosyncrasy denotes a peculiar or unusual characteristic or mannerism that is unique to an individual or a group. Diverse works from a sociological and cultural point of view have been conducted on Kèlání's films but they have not been seen from the stylistic point of view. This study examines style and idiosyncratic ability in Tundé Kèlání's movies viewing them as idiosyncratic uniqueness. We critically explore three of Tundé Kèlání's movies, Dazzling Mirage, White Handkerchief and The Narrow Path, which constitute our source of data for this paper. The selected films are subjected to tenets from Wilson and Sperber's (1986) Relevance Theory. It was understood from the study that, cultural renaissance and globalisation of Yorùbá culture, mass awareness and conservationism vs progressivism are the cogent styles that distinguish this director from other film makers. He hardly embarks on movies without the traits of public awareness and sensitisation as central focal points. This study recommends juxtaposition of more of Kèlání's traits and styles with other African film writers so as to ensure that society as well as individual are sensitised better while being entertained by the movies. It is also established in this study that style goes beyond examining the phono-aesthetic or photo-aesthetic tropes.*

**Keywords:** aesthetics; films; idiosyncrasies; movies; stylistics

## 1. Introduction

Tundé Kèlání (b.1948) is a veteran filmmaker and award-winning producer of films that are not only rich in cultural values but also serve as medium of correcting anomalies in the society. The distinct style of his films distinguishes him from other film makers who may be more motivated by popularity, fame and funds. Whenever something is done recurrently in such a way that that thing becomes the peculiar identity and style of a person and when ideology, subject matter or a particular inclination is central to one's work of art, it becomes idiosyncrasy. In this study, effort is made to establish some features as style, identity and peculiarity of Tundé Kèlání.

Stylistics is mostly seen from language point of view but there is one elaborate and all-encompassing school of thought that see stylistics beyond analysis of linguistic components in a work (Òjò, 2020, 2023). This study adopts the tenets of this school of thought by looking out for the manner of approach that distinguishes a work from another, as Sriraman, 2012:37) states:

“Stylistics, as the name suggests, is the study of style. While “style” is a general term which can refer to the way or manner anything is done (e.g. “We don't like so-and-so's style of functioning”), or designed (e.g. “a building in the Moghul style of architecture”), stylistics in particular examines the style of written or spoken texts. Even more specifically, stylistics attempts to study the style or language of literary texts.”

This implies that stylistics can explore the manner and approach that is dominant in a writer's work beyond mere consideration of the linguistic element. To Sriraman (2012:37), style<sup>1</sup> is a term that can be applied to a wide range of fields, including building, textiles and architecture among others, though it is routinely accepted to be the study of the language of literature from a linguistic orientation, where both phono-aesthetic or photo-aesthetic tropes are dominant or foregrounded in a work of art. In other

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<sup>1</sup> Stylistics, according to Òjò (2013) and Olátéjù (2016), is a conglomeration of style + linguistics. But some scholars have attributed stylistics to the general study of manners of doing something. Yet, the derivation of the name remains.

words, even when we accept that stylistics deals principally with the language of literature, it can be broadened to encompass areas other than language. Hence, we see cultural renaissance, mass campaign and sensitisation, and a voice against bad cultural practices as the style of Tundé Kèlání<sup>2</sup> works. Olátéjú's (2016) assertion has justified this when he says: "The effort of the above-mentioned scholars are mere description or approaches which can be harmonised into four schools of thought or four approaches, namely: style as language, style as choice, style as deviation and style as individuality."<sup>3</sup> We opine that from this reiteration of Òjó (2005) and Olátéjú (2016), justification for taking style beyond language alone is established because style can be of language, a choice, deviation or identity in a particular work for which an artist is known. Consequently, while an aspect of stylistics deals primarily with language use, others are applied to wide varieties of disciplines and undertakings. This is in line with Bello (2020:57), who says; "Style whether seen as sartorial (fashion) style, literary style, performance style, musical style, or other kind of style, is defined as embellishment or ornamentation—that is embellishment or ornamentation that results in deviation from norm." For example, Tundé Kèlání does not choose a legendary or historical style or approach for his film writing approach as his style, despite these being hitherto popular in Yorùbá or Nigerian movie industry; he chooses public enlightenment, lending voice to cultural renaissance and campaigns against stigmatisation and other cultural practices as his style. These along with fabulous entertainment and educational masterclass are legacies, as long as they are not monotonously presented. We therefore explore Tundé Kèlání's films *White Handkerchief* (2000), *The Narrow Path* (2006) and *Dazzling Mirage* (2015) as our data sources. While the themes cum-style observed in Kèlání's works reverberate conspicuously in almost all his movies, we cannot explore all his numerous films in this paper. The choice of these three movies is two-fold. Firstly, the years of production are not wide apart. Secondly, the selected three are few of the films in English language where little or no translation would be needed in this paper for spatial reasons.

### 1.1. Biography of Tundé Kèlání

Born in February 1948, during the colonial era in Nigeria, Chief Tundé Kèlání is a Lagos born veteran who started schooling in Òkè-Ọ̀nà Modern Primary School at Ìkijà in Abẹ̀òkúta, Ògùn State. Although, he was born in Lagos, the rigorous nature of the work of his father as a railway worker and ever-busy nature of his mother necessitated his migration to his grandfather's place at Òkè-Ọ̀nà in Abẹ̀òkúta so that he could acquire uninterrupted education. His grandfather was a farmer who seldom went to the farm with him during weekends. Tundé Kèlání so much enjoyed the variety of foods at the farm that he could not even remember his biological father and mother who resided in the city of Lagos. Apart from his grandfather being a farmer, he was also a member of the Ògòdò group that later became involved with Àpàlà music. Tundé Kèlání was a Muslim at that time but he had a good grounding in Yorùbá oratures<sup>4</sup> such as Àrùngbè and ẹ̀ṣà-egúngún that helped him move to the theatre when he was in Abẹ̀òkúta Grammar School, which he completed in 1965. During this time, his grandfather was made Balógun of Ìjàyè kúkúdi and he enjoyed inviting masquerades from Ìdàhòmi, Ọ̀yọ̀-Ìgbòho, Òkeehò and Ọ̀tá, among other towns, to entertain him during festivals. It was during this time his interest in theatre intensified. When Tundé Kèlání finished his secondary school, he joined Western Nigeria Television (WNNTV), where he learned cinematography. He also had access to watching Ògúndé's stage plays and had a keen interest in *Palmwine Drunkard* by Amos Tutùólá. Tundé Kèlání embarked on schooling abroad for three years from 1968 to 1970. He studied cinematography in London. He came back in 1970 to join BBCTV as a cinematographer. He left BBCTV for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and he was there when he went to Ethiopia and Zimbabwe to represent NTA during their independence ceremonies.

<sup>2</sup> Tundé Kèlání is a veteran filmmaker and director of films in Yorùbá and English language. Even when the language is changed to English language for easy access for a non-Yorùbá audience, his uniqueness persists.

<sup>3</sup> We agree that these four approaches are good domains of stylistics, although we recognise propositions by other scholars as domains of styles such as style as a geographical location or style as a temporal phenomenon, among others.

<sup>4</sup> Yorùbá orature is derived from oral + literature which comprises of all the verbal arts that are passed from generation to generation.

In 1972, Tundé Kèlání directed the movie that is based on the life history of Reverend Father Micheal, which was written in Yorùbá language by Adébáyò Fálétí called *Ìdààmú Páàdì Míńkálù*. Adébáyò Fálétí, Lọlá Fàńí-Káyòdè, Alhaji Làsísì Oríẹkùn, Wálé Fánúbí and Yẹmí Fáróunbí were part of the crew with Kelani then. Kèlání's success earned him the popularity that caused Ògúndé, Ìṣòlá Ògúnṣòlá, Akin Ògúńgbè and others to choose Tundé Kèlání as their cinematographer. Some of their works that ensued were *Taxi Driver*, *Aníkúrà*, *Ogun Àjàyè*, *Ìyá nì Wúrà* and *Fópomóyò*. In 1990, Tundé Kèlání having gained expertise in film directing, started work for American Drama Films (ADF), which produced a film adapted from a Joyce Cary novel *Master Johnson*. Tundé Kèlání himself established Òpómúléró (Mainframe) Film Production in 1991-1992, where numerous films were produced, including *Ti Olúwa ni Ilẹ̀*, *Ayò nì mo fẹ́*, *Narrow Path*, *The White Handkerchief*, *Arugbá*, *Agogo Èèwò Mààmi*, *Abẹ̀nì*, *Campus Queen*, *Saworoidẹ* and *Kòséẹgbé*, among others.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is seen as a framework that demonstrates that all verbal and non-verbal communication have intended meanings. It is based on the principle of recognition and expression of intentional action (Grice 1989). Grice (1989) is the foundational interpretation model of communication as an alternative to the classical model. According to the code model, a communicator encodes an intended message into a signal that is directly decoded by the decoder using an identical copy of the code. According to Grice's (1989) concept of inferential meaning, an addresser makes available evidence of an intention to relay a certain message and meaning into a signal which is referred to the audience on the basis of evidence provided. An utterance is systematically coded linguistically as evidence, so that verbal comprehension involves an element of the coding of the linguistic meaning transmitted and recovered by decoding as just one of the inputs to non-demonstrative inference process, which yields an interpretation of the speaker's acceptance of the message.

Wilson and Sperber (1985) propounded the theoretical term of relevance theory. Other advocates of this theory are Wilson and Sperber (1985) and Grice (1989), among others. The goal of the inferential pragmatic is to emphasise how the decoder infers the speaker's meaning based on evidence provided. Grice (1989) is of the opinion that utterances create expectations automatically in the hearer's mind in diverse ways. This involves the co-operative principles and maxim of quality, quantity (informativeness) and maxim of relation (relevance). Looking at the tenets of relevance theory, one can say that there is an emphasis on inference and evidence. While some of the messages Kèlání passes in his movies are known by large sections of society, codifying it through films makes them very relevant and effective in society. Hence, life will be saved, society will be transformed and enlightenment of the larger society would be made easy.

The interpretation a decoder will choose to unravel or digest the information is the one that best satisfies those expectations of relevance (Wilson & Sperber 2002; Grice, 1989). Wilson and Sperber (2004) highlight two pillars of relevance of an input to individuals that we find most suitable for this study. Firstly, they posit that:

“Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effect achieved by processing by an input, the greater the relevance of the input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.”

It is evident here that when a certain input (message) coded by language and encoded by the addresser to the addressee is of positive impact, the effect will be felt much more than the one that does not have a positive impacting. This is the reason some themes propagated through Mainframe Production are evergreen. This inference is usually raised by evidence of the experience of the hearer so that the input becomes relevant and it receives ultimate attention from the decoder. Secondly, they go further to assert that “Other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.” This version of the relevance of an input to an individual is the most suitable for this study because Òpómúléró, Mainframe Production, assumes the role of advertiser who through movies promotes the cultural practices, ideas and habits to the audience as decoders. Using

too much official or extended metaphor and euphemism that occurs within the basic linguistic convention of Yorùbá will make the experience too alienating for the audience but the use of movies which people are already accustomed to makes it possible to convey this information to the audience of films in Yorùbá. This is the reason why Kèlání makes use of his experience. Through the message from the films, via television, society is transformed because, as Fiske and Hartley (1978:24) opine:

“The world of television is different from our real social world, but just as clearly related to it in some ways ... television does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface.”

Invariably, films bring first-hand experiences to the proximity of the audience and they related to them appropriately because the evidence is manifested for all to see. It makes them relate to the daily occurrences in society. It is not surprising that campaigns against stigmatisation of people who have sickle cell anaemia in *Dazzling Mirage* and victimization of ladies who have lost their virginity in *The Narrow Path* and *White Handkerchief* are immediately effective, as Tùndé Kèlání intended. This approach is appropriate for this study.

### 3. Films in Yorùbá Society

Films, just like other work of art, are an extension of historical forms of entertainment that transform masques and stage plays to movies. The primary motive of films is the same as that of stage plays and masques before the invention of films. Film is now seen as a kind of literature that people can use to ease themselves of tension after rigorous daily routines. Walter and Gioglio (2014:333) observe: “Filming is one of the works of art in which entertainment is highly presented and also giving information about news in our societies.” What film does is not too different from what is obtainable in other literary works. It prioritises narration, entertainment, education and humour<sup>5</sup> as the intended message. The rate at which people find succour in personalized home videos instead of drama and novels intended for everyone is alarming. Consequently, it is easier to channel communications that are beneficial to society through movies in the Tùndé Kèlání style. Adéléké (1995:171) says that:

“It has emerged in our analysis [of 4.1.6] that the Yorùbá film audiences were mainly Yorùbá. This is so because the Yorùbá films dwell largely on cultural re-evaluation and restitution of Yorùbá culture from foreign desecration. It would then appear as that cultural tendency.”

While it is plausible to say that Yorùbá were the dominant audiences of Yorùbá films in the past, it is no longer true as Yorùbá film audiences have grown beyond the Southwestern area of Nigeria where Yorùbá people are indigenous. Also, cultural re-evaluation may result in positive or negative reactions towards the filmmakers. Cultural renaissance and the restitution of cultural values are one of the main aims of many Nigerian movies. Some would say, we tell our own story instead of it being told by others. Adéléké (1995:264) writes:

“From the audience’s assessment of the contents of Yorùbá films, there are six dominant elements: crime/horror/violence, cultural/historical, love/sex, political, comic and tragic.”

The dominant elements in Yorùbá films are the six highlighted above by Adéléké (1995) but there are much more to them than that, because the style and path that Tùndé Kèlání takes differ from the one pinpointed. Although they may be historical or culturally-related, nevertheless his incorporation of mass enlightenment, public awareness and sensitisation constitute his style, which is unique compared to other film producers.

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<sup>5</sup> These are some of the key functions of literature, of which Yorùbá films are a part.

Adágbádá (2005:5) states that:

“Film is set to totally achieve what the written drama has not - to effect the purported changes that the playwright desires in the society on the page. Feature films can be seen as the literature which walks and talks. A form of literature that has life.”

Adágbádá's (2005) observation about films is very germane here. The setting of the film and its mode of presenting facts is appealing and less strenuous compared to other work of arts. The desired message is now very easy for the audience to access. Just a click away in the comfort of one's abode, this is a veritable literary genre that is entertaining, educative, humorous and enlightening. Hence, accessibility is coupled with edification.

#### 4. Synopsis of Selected Films

In this section of the paper, we present the synopsis of the selected films, *The White Handkerchief*, *The Narrow Path* and *Dazzling Mirage* so as to outline their content.

	Name	Producer	Director	Year
1.	<i>Dazzling Mirage</i>	Túndé Kèlání	Túndé Kèlání	2014
2.	<i>The White Handkerchief</i>	Túndé Kèlání	Túndé Kèlání	2000
3.	<i>The Narrow Path</i>	Túndé Kèlání	Túndé Kèlání	2006

##### 4.1. Synopsis of *The Narrow Path*

Lápádé is a cloth merchant who regularly comes to Àgbèdẹ village to sell his cloth even though he is not a native there. He is interested in marrying Àwèró but an incident that almost claims his life leaves him seriously disabled and he cannot be seen in public again because people think he is dead. Ọdẹjímí, who mistakenly shot him, shows interest in Àwèró and he is accepted as the groom-to-be. While Àwèró is being courted by Ọdẹjímí, with her bride price paid and wedding date fixed, she is also being courted by Dáúdà who is not based in Àgbèdẹ village but lives in Lagos. Dáúdà buys a lot of gifts for Àwèró and eventually lures her to the outskirt of the village where he rapes her. This makes Àwèró withdrawn and unhappy until the day of her wedding, although everyone thinks it is just the usual, unhappy state of all brides-to-be prior to their weddings. When Àwèró and Ọdẹjímí do get married, Àwèró is no longer a virgin as tradition demands. As a result of this, she is sent back to her father's house and Ọdẹjímí and his family suffer because they are considered failures according to tradition. Ọdẹjímí is mocked everyday by his colleagues outside and so wages a war against the family of Àwèró. But when the war is already set to take place between the two warring families, Àwèró intervenes that she should be killed instead. She said it is barbaric to kill a lot of people through war because of the crime only she committed. Her intervention and act of rhetoric stops the war and it puts an end to the culture of virginity in Elérin and Àgbèdẹ villages.

##### 5.2. Synopsis of *The White Handkerchief*

Àwèró is a beautiful young woman who is attracted to many men of marriageable age. Àwèró chooses Ọdẹjímí numerous suitors to be her husband but continues to receive gifts from a stranger who also admires her. Her friends warn her several times but she will not heed their warnings. The secret admirer of Àwèró subjects her to an act of sexual violence and her virginity is lost. She becomes very downtrodden and unhappy but her people do not look in her direction. She attempts suicide but is saved by one of her friends. Àwèró refuses to tell her parents about her plight because of the societal shame that is attached to her situation. She gets married to Ọdẹjímí, her heartthrob but the wedding leads to chaos because Àwèró has lost her virginity before the wedding. War ensues between Àwèró and Ọdẹjímí village and many lives are lost in the war.

### 5.3. Synopsis of *Dazzling Mirage*

Fúnmi is a carrier of sickle cell anaemia. She is engaged to Sànyà but his mother detests her so much that she another girl for him to marry. Fúnmi learns from her parents that she is not their biological daughter. She attempts suicide but she is saved by two fishermen at the river bank. Sànyà stands by Fúnmi truly and he wants to be with her but his mother will never agree that they get married. Fúnmi is a flourishing and very versatile employee in her place of work. She successfully obtains contracts for her company but the work becomes too hectic for her to the extent that she suffers a series of sickle cell-related attacks. This makes her boss doubt if she will be able to continue at work. However, one of her male colleagues vows that she will come out stronger as a result. After her suicide attempt, she joins a non-governmental group that campaigns against stigmatisation and champions awareness about sickle cell anemia and its prevention. She later becomes famous through the organisation as the spokesperson who has led the campaign in print and electronic media. This endears her to her boss at work who then does everything possible to make Fúnmi his own. While Sànyà gets engaged to his personal assistant at work, as arranged by his mother, Fúnmi and her boss become husband and wife. The marriage produces a child that they both love and nurture. The film portrays Fúnmi as a sickle cell carrier and a person with unlimited potential who can blossom with adequate care and self-worth and self-awareness.

## 6. Idiosyncrasies of Tundé Kèlání's Movies

Idiosyncrasy connotes an identity relating to an individual that acts as making a distinction from others. Idiosyncrasy can be an aesthetically distinguishable trait that is unique to a particular artistic work, ornament or architectural design. So, when an idea, style or inclination is deemed someone's style, it becomes part and parcel of that person under any circumstances. Tundé Kèlání has an enviable vision which is a marker of his identity in almost all his films. The marker reverberates emphatically throughout his work, although only a few films are considered here. In the surveyed films, we found cultural renaissance and globalisation, sensitization and mass awareness and conservationism vs progressivism as the unique idiosyncrasy of Tundé Kèlání that has set him aside from other film producers and directors. The manifestation of these features is explored in this study:

### 6.1. Mass Sensitisation and Awareness

African society is developing and needs freedom from misinformation for so many phenomena, ideas and new inventions to emerge. The concepts and ideas in question are those that are very germane to the existence of communal harmonious living. Tundé Kèlání, judging from his background and exposure to society, as previously noted, adopts this task as one of his preoccupations not in one, two or three of his works but virtually in all his films both in English and indigenous language, Yorùbá. Awareness and mass sensitisation like this become *sine qua non* if society is to be peaceful and attain intellectual freedom. Such phenomena that Kèlání has been so fixated in getting across to the masses include sickle cell anemia, gender balance and equity, conservation of natural resources, corruption and others. This is the input targeted by Wilson and Sperber (2004) in relevance theory because the greater the influence of films on people, the greater the relevance to them. Films are not just impactful when they entertain but when they sensitise people the way Kèlání adopts his films to impact lives positively.

He envisages that masses need information so as not to be handicapped and he takes it upon himself to use the widest avenue that people are conversant with, films, to get across the messages to them in the best possible form and, thereby, limit the crisis of abject societal catastrophe people are wallowing in hitherto. This aligns with what the advocates of Relevance Theory hold, that all available avenues be utilised to achieve one's desire. Kèlání seizes the opportunity provided by Nollywood to educate and champion the renaissance and globalisation of African cultures.

In *The White Handkerchief*, Àwèró's mother adheres to the views about how tradition should change as African societies change when she says:

Àwèró's Mother: "I want my daughter back alive but this one is impossible. Soon, there would be a war between our families. Does this tradition mean it is worth the unhappiness and fighting? Our women remain the sacrificial lambs in this part of Africa. Our continent is changing, our traditions must also change."

This is a clear protest from Àwèró's mother after the death of her daughter who committed suicide because she was not a virgin on the evening of her wedding. It can also be said to be an attempt to change people's opinion about a tradition that demands that a bride and her parents must be humiliated if the bride is not a virgin. She is of the opinion that the tradition is not worth the stress, fighting and communal crises it generates in society. This implies a clear message that the writer rather than the character wishes to communicate to the audience so as to change their orientations about some cultural beliefs. This aligns with the precepts of Relevance Theory. The cognitive behaviours of people are positively impacted.

In *Dazzling Mirage*, Kèlání's major motive is sensitisation of the masses about sickle cell anemia. He employs every possible medium to pass this message to the audience through virtually all the characters. Sickle cell anaemia is a public menace and disorder that affects so many people. It was confirmed that marriage without the prior test for genotypes is the reason for the untimely death of many children wrongly termed *àbíkú*<sup>6</sup> but they are actually sickle cell carriers. As stated in *Dazzling Mirage*, "Each year in Nigeria, 150,000 children are born with sickle cell disorder. Many die before they are five. Others live in pain with no hope of cure. Know your genotype, attend sickle cell counselling support."<sup>7</sup>

To minimise the rate of this untimely death and pain the parents subject their children and themselves to in Nigeria, there is a dire need to sensitise people who may fall into this trap unknowingly. This is the mantle taken upon by the director to help society. One of the nurses in the hospital Fùnmí was admitted to asks the doctor thus:

Nurse: Excuse me sir. Can a sickle cell patient live long?

Doctor: Of course, with adequate care and if they believe they can. Healing is not about doctors and drugs. It's about accepting yourself, loving yourself, including the part of you that is a sickler. There is no shame in carrying sickle cell.

The impression here is to correct the erroneous views of people about sickle cell patients and what the patients think about themselves. People think that sickle cell patients cannot attempt some rigorous activities. They segregate them or stigmatise them once their condition is publicly known. According to the film, this is not accurate. The patients too look down on themselves, perhaps because of fear of the unknown or the public humiliation that may follow their sudden breakdowns. This is why the prayers of patients of sickle cell in the film attempted to address the issue:

"Let's rise up and be thankful for if we didn't learn a lot, we learned a little. And if we learn a little, we didn't get sick and if we got sick, at least we didn't die. So, let's be thankful."

The prayer of the sickle cell patients formulated by the playwright address a lot of things. The sickle cell carriers need to appreciate their self-worth, they must know their limits and they should know that they can do everything within that limit. So, stress is the major cause of breakdown for the patients; to avoid constant breakdown, they must avoid too much stress. If this is done, they will be far from the crisis that may lead to public humiliation. This kind of enlightenment and public awareness that liberates people from calamity means that suicides like the one Fùnmí attempts in *Dazzling Mirage* people may be minimised. Kelani, through his characters, is a communicator who encodes an intended message into a signal that is directly decoded by the decoder using an identical copy of the code (Grice, 1989). An addresser makes available evidence of an

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<sup>6</sup> People in Africa, specifically in Yorùbá land, were made to believe that the incessant deaths of children after a long period of pain was the result of a spiritual problem. A child called *àbíkú* was believed to belong to a secret spiritual group who would not allow the child to live long until research proved that they actually had a genetic disorder and were not spiritually possessed.

<sup>7</sup> The end notes by Mainframe Production after the film reveal its purpose. This shows that the film is indeed a campaign to increase awareness.

intention to relay a certain message and encode the meaning into a signal which he refers by the audience on the basis of evidence provided. This constitutes the priority, recurrent theme and preoccupation in Tundé Kèlání's films, which this paper has called idiosyncrasy. One of the idiosyncrasies of Kèlání is projected in the foregoing. The study affirms that Kèlání's style can be seen beyond linguistic dexterity but that this is combined with thematic style to form his idiosyncrasy. Consequently, sensitisation of the masses becomes one of his idiosyncrasies.

## 6.2. Conservationism vs Progressivism<sup>8</sup>

Conservatism denotes the quest to keep existing natural phenomena from encroachment or extinction. There is usually a presentation of two schools of thought about any concept that Kèlání wants to justify. One school of thought has a soft spot for traditional beliefs and principles. The pro-traditional school may be called conservationism and it defends and justifies why it must be held while the second school of thought, progressivism, insists that the tradition or existing principles be abolished and replaced with the new and contemporary assumptions and stances.

The focus on society of Tundé Kèlání moves gradually from the one which believes in the *àbíku* phenomenon to one that believes premature deaths are avoidable. However, people, especially those who are semi-literate or illiterate, still do not get themselves tested. Kèlání uses *Dazzling Mirage* to enlighten people that it is necessary to do the test as follows:

Şadé: "My name is Şadé Sànúsí. I have been living with sickle cell anemia for a long and there is nothing wrong about it. It's just a disorder not a disease. I am even fine and getting taller. Although, there have been a whole lot of bad experience and hurdles but life still goes on. People living with sickle-cell should learn to appreciate themselves."

Şadé represents the modern and contemporary voice who see nothing wrong in someone that carries the sickle cell gene. She dispels the notion that sickle cell is a disease that can even spread, hence the stigmatisation. She goes further to advise the sickle cell patients that they should love themselves so as to live long because the fear of no cure in sight for something that can inflict one with abject pain may be terrifying. She is directly opposite in thought to Sànyà's mother who thinks sickle cell patients like Fúnmi cannot do anything because they are always liability. She:

Sànyà's Mother: Who are they trying to fool? We can do anything? They can't do anything!

Sànyà's mother is a pessimist and a personification of the old generation, who hold negative thoughts and biases against Fúnmi, her son's fiancée. She did everything to ensure Sànyà and Fúnmi did not get married. It is a constant theme in Kèlání's work to show situations which might lead people to change their opinions, hence his style and the idiosyncratic features that are hardly absent from Kèlání's work. To justify Tundé Kèlání's obsession with the theme in question, let us see how he makes jokes out of such theme in *Dazzling Mirage*:

Sànyà: Hi Bukky!

Bùkólá: I said I am not Bukky. I am Bùkólá. Bukky is for a dog.

This is just a causal exchange of greetings between Sànyà, who represents progressivism, which holds that a name can be altered, modernised or changed to acronyms whether the meaning is still retained or not. Bùkólá, Fúnmi's friend, does not see her name as something one can tamper with at all. She quickly opposes the name Bukky as a supposed abbreviation for Bùkólá by Sànyà that it belongs to a dog not a person. This a case of progressivism vs conservationism in a lighter mode.

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<sup>8</sup> These are the two contrasting ideas. Conservatism intends to preserve the existing traditions or stances while progressivism argues in favour of contemporary ideas or phenomena.



In *The White Handkerchief*, Àwèró protests against the notion of testing women alone for virginity, while men are left unchallenged about this. She cannot help it but Túndé Kèlání, through Àwèró, protests thus:

Àwèró: But, why has no one tested Odéjímí to see if he is a virgin? Why are there different rules for the men? Our society is dominated by men. It has always been so. Will it be so forever?

These are questions begging for answers from progressivists who think that women being tested for virginity is suppressive against women who are dominated by men in the society. It's clearly unequal to test women for virginity while men who are the culprits of removing that virginity move freely and protest when their brides are not virgins. To feminists, whatever that not applicable to men should not be held against women because gender equality is sacrosanct. This is a clear case of conservatism and progressivism and another example from *The White Handkerchief* is given below:

First Man: What's all this?

Second Man: You are fighting the poor woman out of distress.

First Man: But we are following the demands of the tradition.

Second Man: Does tradition demand life in such a situation? This is death in protest.

The conversation happens after Àwèró has committed suicide for not being a virgin on the day of her wedding. If she had not committed suicide, there would have been war between the families of Odéjímí and Àwèró because the latter gives the hand of a 'broken pot' in marriage to their son. We can clearly see the case of two opposing schools of thought here. One fights for the continuous sustenance of the virginity culture that has disadvantages such as wars between families, suicide, lifelong dented image of women and their families and others outweigh the advantages it serves to pursue. By exploring the two sides of the coin, Kèlání has passed the relevant message by changing the cognitive reasoning of the audience. Hence, relevance theory tenets are operational.

Similarly, in *Narrow Path*, there is the presentation of two schools of thought. One is clamouring for preserving the culture of women not talking or having close contact with a man they will not marry. The second school of thought holds the belief that casual or sexual advances towards women by men is not a crime as long as the two involved are consenting adults. Having a date with a man, having courtship and close contact with women that are not your future spouse is forbidden in traditional Yorùbá society. Dáúdà, who lives in the city but occasionally comes to Oríta's village, says:

Dáúdà: "In one of the photographs, two girls were sitting on my thighs and the other was putting a glass of lager beer in my mouth.

Villager: These girls are not even your wives and you have not paid dowry for them.

Dáúdà: Who has time for that? Listen, anytime you want to play love with a girl. You just walk up to her and say, 'Baby, I love you. You want to play love. Let us play love.' That is all.

2nd Villager: Here in Oríta Village, if you touch a girl's hand or you look at her new-plaited hair too long, you will be in trouble."

Dáúdà and city life represent the contemporary culture where men and women of adult age move, interact or become involved in sexual escapades at will but the villagers and Oríta Village represent the conservatism that preserves the culture that holds that women who are not married are sacred. In the city, where Dáúdà gets his experience, a virginity test is of no importance but in Oríta village, a girl must be a virgin till the day of her wedding, otherwise she and her parents will suffer humiliation. That is why Odéjímí says to Àwèró: "Your parents have failed to do their duties. They will suffer for this."

Film	Voice of Conservatism	Voice of Progressivism
<i>Dazzling Mirage</i>	Sànyà's mother,	Şadé, Fúnmi, Bukola
<i>The White Handkerchief</i>	Odéjímí	Àwèró
<i>The Narrow Path</i>	2st Villager, 2 <sup>nd</sup> villager, Odejimi	Dáúdà, Awero,

Table 1: Different Viewpoints in the Films Studied; source: Authors

### 6.3. Cultural Renaissance and Globalisation

Túndé Kèlání, despite his experience and the international tutelage he underwent, is very inclined towards the promotion of good traditional practices in his films. He presents this theme in such a way that people are fully enlightened about the subject matter that is the cultural heritage of Africa, most especially for the Yorùbá people. He promotes and globalises good and credible cultural values like marriage, belief system, charms and amulets, naming, virginity and the political and economic undertakings of Yorùbá so as to dispel misinformation about these cultural values. This is another facet of his idiosyncrasy that hardly eludes any of his films and thereby make him unique among directors and producers.

The cultural heritages of Africans and Yorùbá in particular are highly valuable to him and he makes his films the avenue to propagate, globalise and promote African cultures. Phenomena such as divinity worship, thunderbolts, virginity, marriage, politics, hairstyles, naming, clothing and literature which Ìṣòlá (2010) refers to as tangible and intangible cultural heritages, are constantly promoted and globalised in Túndé Kèlání's films. The constant exhibition of these also constitutes the style dominant in Mainframe films. For example, in *Narrow Path*, Túndé Kèlání, through Àwèrò's mother, globalises two Yorùbá cultural heritages for those that do not know them:

Àwèrò: I just don't like *Kòlèsè*. It makes my face fat and ugly.

Àwèrò's Mum: Look at you. When did you come into the world to know which hairstyle suits your head and which does not?

Àwèrò: I just don't like *Kòlèsè*, it is for old women. All the other women now do modern style.

Àwèrò's Mum: I know. That is why I am giving you *Kòlèsè* style. I want you to look different so that when I finish, all the men, even the boys and half-man-half-boys will have eyes on your beauty.

Àwèrò: Half-boy-half-man? Who are those

Àwèrò's Mum: They are the men who have passed the age of marriage.

There are two concepts that Kèlání wants to educate people about in the above excerpt. Firstly, he wants people to have knowledge of the symbolism attributed to each hairstyle. *Kòlèsè* symbolises carefree women who do not take adornment seriously but do not want to leave their hair unkempt. That is why Àwèrò protests about the hairstyle. We have other hairstyles that would have suited her like *Korobá*, *Sùkú*, *Pàtèwó*, *Àdímólè*, *Ìpàkó Èlédè*, *Ààfin Oba* and *Morèmi*,<sup>9</sup> among others. This is the culture that Kèlání passes across here. One does not just make a hairstyle but chooses the one that suits one's level. Young ladies have their best hairstyles, newly married wives have their best styles, old women also have the styles that are appropriate for them. In the same climate, Túndé Kèlání also explains the nomenclature, half-boy-half-man in Yorùbá cosmology and marriage setting. Men are those ones who are capable of marrying a woman, boys are the male gender who are not married yet but still not too old to get married. The half-boy-half-men are those Yorùbá refers to as *àpón* who are far beyond marriage age but not married. There is little regard for such men because they refuse to fulfil what society demands from them or because they are indolent. This concept is explained well with only this scene.

In *Dazzling Mirage*, Túndé Kèlání also use the avenue of screenplay to exhibit Yorùbá values in the naming ceremony. In the Yorùbá cultural setting for naming, ingredients would be gathered and prayers will be said symbolically with each of those ingredients by the elders. One of such ingredients used for prayers is *Epo* (palm-oil) as follows:

Ìyá Àgbà: "Ayé ẹ á rójú, ayé ò ní i yọ ẹ lẹnu. Gbogbo nńkan tí a bá ti fepo sè, tó o bá ti ń jẹ ẹ, á maa bá ọ lára mu. Ara á tù ọ nítorí pé, bí ata bá ń tani lẹnu, bí a bá ti fi epo sí i, ara á maa tu ènìyàn ni. Ní gbogbo ọjó ayé rẹ, ara ò ní i ní ọ o!"

Old Woman: Your life will be meaningful and terrestrial power will not disturb you. Everything with which palm oil is made, when you eat it, it will be appropriate for your system. Yours will be comfortable because, when something is too peppery and palm oil is added, one will

<sup>9</sup> These are some Yoruba female hairstyles. Most of them have been modernized but their identity remains. Some of these hairstyles are symbolic in Yorùbá society. See Adiji, Oladumiye. and Ibiwoye (2015:2).

experience comfort, in your entire life, you shall not experience discomfort (translation by the authors).”

This is just an example of symbolic prayers during the naming ceremony in Yorùbá communities. Epo (palm oil) symbolises comfort and softness. Such is the case for others too like Orógbó (bitter kola), atare (alligator pepper), obì (Kola-nut), iyò (salt), irèké (sugar cane), ẹja aborí (catfish), ọtí (alcohol) among others that are naming ingredients. Kèlání wants these to be communicated to people through films most especially people who are born into the Abrahamic religions, to whom such traditions may be unknown.

Similarly in *The White Handkerchief*, Túndé Kèlání choose to use the film to educate us about the marriage rites that the man and woman should perform on the very day of the marriage, while everyone is waiting outside the groom’s room. A groom must enter the room with a white handkerchief and have intercourse with his bride, no matter how exhausted either of them might have been. When Àwèró complains of being tired, Oḍéjímí reminds her that:

Oḍéjímí: “I am sorry Àwèró. I know it has been a long day but you know it’s our tradition, it has to be tonight. My people are waiting.”

It is not that Àwèró does not know this culture but the playwright subtly educates the masses or the would-be novices of Yorùbá culture that it is a must that husband and wife consummate their marriage on that day and show the general populace that she is a virgin. The act is intentional and so must be shown so as to globalise the moribund Yorùbá culture. The same attempt is made in *The Narrow Path*, in which one of Àwèró’s siblings educates her at the same time the general audience that:

“The virginity mortars are taken to husband's house after the marriage sleep. The husband will show the handkerchief to her people and then they will use the virginity mortar to pound yam for the people to eat to celebrate the virginity night.”

This clearly accounts for how Yorùbá people view and attach value to the virginity rite. Any parent who fails in the daughter’s upbringing will suffer the humiliations instead of the privileges given to parents who have performed their responsibilities well to ensure their daughter is intact on her wedding day. Cultural globalisation is hereby affirmed as Túndé Kèlání’s style and one of his idiosyncratic features that hardly eludes any of his works.

## 7. Discussion and Analysis

In *The White Handkerchief* and *The Narrow Path*, which are the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> communication models, virginity is the variable that people consider relevant to society. The occurrence attests to the fact that virginity is highly paramount for keeping society serene because young ladies keep themselves safe from immorality and the presence of children outside wedlock is reduced. However, given that the culture is inimical only to women and not men and the fact that lives are lost when the expectation is not met, he asserts that the disadvantages of the culture outweigh its advantages. Hence, Túndé Kèlání finds the message important for positive cognitive effects and he becomes the agent of change who observes cognitive principles (Wilson & Sperber, 2002) that human cognition is geared to the maximisation of relevance.

In *Dazzling Mirage* which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> communication model, stigmatisation against sickle cell patients that they are limited in all ramifications is the bone of contention. Through Túndé Kèlání’s *Dazzling Mirage*, we are able to see the operation of the ostensive stimulus,<sup>10</sup> that once the sickle cell carrier knows his/her worth and can manage his/her health properly, then the sky is their limit. That is why he portrays Fúnmi as a heroine who everyone eventually embraces in spite of her health condition.

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<sup>10</sup> See Deirdre Wilson & Dan Sperber (2002:256) on the use of ostensive stimulus to decode the covert message passed by the encoders.

At the end of everything, the cognitive behaviours of people are impacted and they lean towards change. Consequently, the idiosyncrasy of Tundé Kèlání is change. He achieves change through mass sensitisation, conservatism vs progressivism and the globalisation of culture. His target is change and it is the same that is projected in relevance theory that the communicative principle that utterances create become expectations of optimal relevance.

The table below show spheres of conception and change as contained in three films of Tunde Kèlání examined in this study:

Communication Models (Principles)	Variable	Ostensive Stimulus	Cognitive Relevance	Positive Cognitive Effects
The White Handkerchief	Sacrosanctity of Virginity	Virginity is worth nobody's life	Villagers and audience suffer after the death of Àwèrò	The end of virginity ritual occurs
The Narrow Path	Sacrosanctity of Virginity	Women alone should not be blamed for loss of virginity	Ọdẹjìmí and his people support Àwèrò	The end of virginity occurs
Dazzling Mirage	Sickle Cell Anaemia	Sickle cell is an illness not incapacitation	Fúnmi becomes a heroine with sickle cell anaemia	She excels in her career, gets married happily.

Table 2: Vectors of Change in the Films Studied; source: Authors

The three identified idiosyncrasies of Tundé Kèlání cut across the three sampled films. The styles in questions are awareness and sensitisation, conservatism vs progressivism and the globalisation of Yorùbá culture.

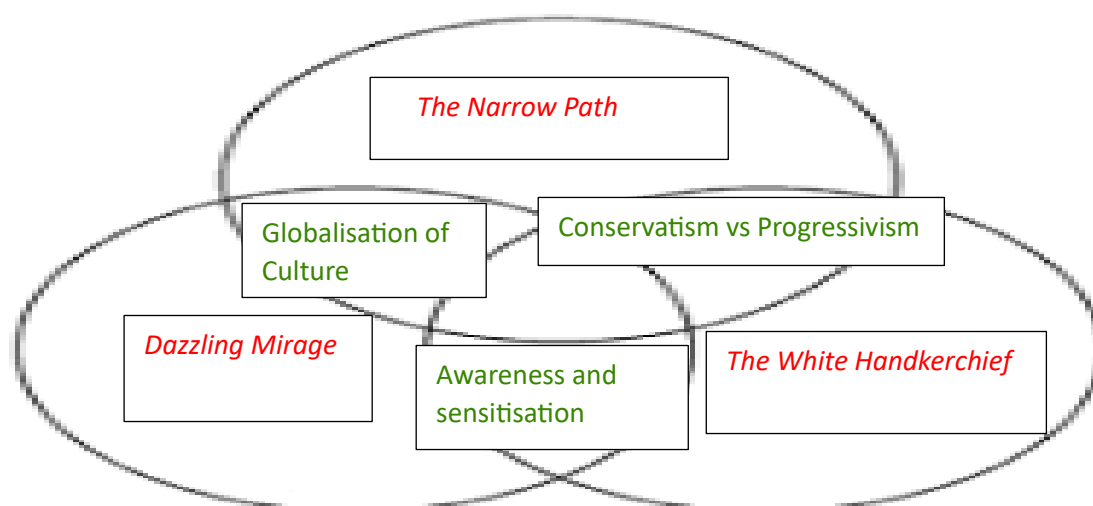


Figure 1: Venn Diagram of the Occurrence of Three Idiosyncrasies in the Three Films Studied; source: Authors

These are the subsets of his idiosyncrasy not only in the three films studied but also in other numerous films he directed and produced under Mainframe Productions. Hence, they become his style and identity optimally pursued to achieve positive cognitive effects termed change.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study reveals that stylistics is seen as being beyond linguistic explorations. Style is a recurrent manner in which something is done or is a dominant feature that is constantly observable in a particular work. The style may be involving design, art, artistic works or the manners in which something may be done. Tundé Kèlání's recurrent themes are seen as his idiosyncrasy in this study. We claim in this paper that globalisation of cultural heritages, mass awareness and enlightenment and conservatism and progressivism are the idiosyncrasy of Tundé Kèlání but his major target is changing stereotyped beliefs. He sees arts as something beyond creativity to entertain but also educate, enlighten and globalise. The films of Kèlání are the communication models, the existing culture and behaviours are the variables. The inputs of Tundé Kèlání are the products of the films while the cognitive relevance is the manner of reception of the audience and larger characters. The cognitive effects are the positive change which Relevance Theory target and which is in line with Kèlání as a producer. He intentionally adopts this style which makes him unique among film producers and directors. The research is limited on the bases that it adopts a qualitative approach and sampling of the films are limited to three out of a number of others produced by Kèlání, hence, the analysis is subjective but it is reliable and valid to the best of our knowledge. The film producers and directors are then admonished to adapt their style to that of Kèlání's or else create a distinct style that will distinguish them from others so as to have tangible brand recognition. Future researchers should investigate others of Kèlání's movies or those of other producers with a similar quest for their idiosyncrasies.

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