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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE COMPONENTS AND LIGHTING TECHNIQUES IN "OCTOBER 1"

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ABSTRACT

In film making process cinematographic lighting is one of the most important features which can make or mare any production. Even though cinematic lighting often features either as part of mise-en-scene composition or as editing component, yet study have shown that this element has not been accorded due attention in Nigerian academic study or Nollywood film criticism. Often times, this aspect is only used to explain or buttress relevant points on film analysis and evaluation. Hence the study is meant to diagnose the creative use of lighting system as a component of narrative technique in a Nigerian film: October 1. In carrying out this theoretical exploration on the creative use of light in October 1, the critic employed formalism approach, library study, observation, and studio editing. In this paper, efforts are made not only to identify the relevance of the narrative and light techniques featured in the film but to include detail examination and the various usages of these important filmic elements in the production.

INTRODUCTION

To most people lighting is basically meant for illumination however, according to Ola-Koyi, S.J.B. (2014) lighting is more than mere illumination in videotaping or cinematography. Like the human eyes, lighting often aids camera lens in capturing images. It is cleared from the foregoing that a movie can used lighting as the major technique of narration. Consequently, the aim of this paper among other things is to examine the various narrative methods and the lighting technique employed in telling the story in the film October 1. Although, in some films, the common patterns of form (lighting, editing, cinematography, or mise-en-scène which encompassed the movement of the image/characterisation, the costumes and make-ups, the setting) might be examined as the main technique of revealing the events in the movies, but in October 1, it could be stated that lighting technique will be examined as the main channel of relating the flow of information to the audience.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

In exploring the meaningful patterns of data existing in the film under review, the formalism theory will serve as a basic tool of investigation because it has a rich record of techniques on film analysis. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2004), "The human mind craves for form. For this reason, form is of central importance in any artwork, regardless of its medium." It is believed that a film is not simply a random batch of elements, but like other art works, form in film is an internal system governing the relations among elements. These scholars believed that form in its broadest sense, is the overall system of relations that critic or viewer perceived among the various elements in the whole film.

In giving an overview on the use of formalism theory in film evaluation and criticism, an online publication on "How to Write About Film..." from the Writing Center of the University of Colorado postulated thus: Formalism looks specifically at matters of structure and style; often combined with one or more of the other approaches; strict formal analysis only looks at what happens on screen, ignoring all outside factors, such as the biography of the director, the historical context, etc.

From this fact, one could see that a formal analyst often seeks to know what is most interesting and significant about the elements featured in a given film and how they add to the story and themes. In looking at a particular scene or sequence, critic often searches for the roles and impacts of the mise-en-scene, light, sound, editing, or cinematography in decoding the meaning derives from the film. In applying formal elements to film criticism and evaluation, the available publications suggest further that, a critic could venture into film assessment through the following perspectives: genre, historical, theoretical, national cinema, auteur, ideological perspectives. However, in this study effort will be channelled toward the examination of the common patterns of narrative and lighting techniques used in revealing selected events and in decoding meanings in the film. Although, October 1 reflects a unique period in Nigerian history, yet the concern of the paper is not with the implication of these historical events but how these events are reflected and depicted through the various manipulations of narrative and lighting techniques and how the historical background aids these narrative and lighting techniques used in the film under review.

In looking at the meaning of light in line with his previous proclamation, Ola-Koyi (2014) opines that:

...light is not only the energy from the sun, a lamp, etc. but an illumination that makes it possible to see things around us. However in cinematography, light is more than mere illumination, like the human eyes; only with the aids of the light that images could be captured through the lens of a camera on a given film. In filming process, the use of light can influence the meaning of a shot or determine the filming style of a director.

According to a film director, Federico Fellini quoted by Bordwell and Thompson (2004):

> Light is everything. It expresses ideology, emotion, colour, depth, style. It can efface, narrate, describe. With the right lighting, the ugliest face, the most idiotic expression can radiate with beauty or intelligence.

Yet, Bordwell and Thompson (20**04**) still believe that, "Much of the impact of an image comes from its manipulation of lighting." In their view, lighter and darker areas within the frame help create the overall composition of each shot and thus guide our attention to certain objects and actions." In buttressing this assertion, Ola-Koyi S.J.B. (2014) once again affirms: In shot composition, lighting could be used to articulate textures...; to illuminate gestures for clarity ... or to stimulate suspense by concealing a detail of what is presented on screen... Put differently, lighting could be used to outline, establish or shape each feature of an object on screen by creating highlights and shadows.

Sourcing from Bordwell and Thompson (2004)'s text, Ola-Koyi, in his study identifies some features of cinematic lighting which include *highlight and shadows, high-key and low key lightings, the quality, the direction, the source,* and the *colour of light.* Consequently, in this paper an attempt will therefore be made to diagnose the film: October 1, and reveal how the creative manipulations of the following elements are deployed along other components of narrative technique. That is: the prominent mode of transition in the film editing; the colour of the light cum the range of tonalities, creative use of the highlight and shadow, the artistic manipulation of the quality, the direction and the sources of light.

In his work Ekwuazi, H. O. (2002), considers the modes of transition as "A visual temporal element ties one shot/visual to another or one scene/sequence to another." Hence, he identified the following modes of transition in screen drama: the cut, the fade, the dissolve, the defocus - refocus, the wipe, the flexitron and the swish pan. Quoting Bordwell and Thompson (2004) Ola-Koyi, explains some identified features of cinematic light thus:

The *highlight*, this could be seen as a patch of relative brightness on a surface of an object in a frame. The unilluminated side of the object will result in a *shadow*. It is on record that, "Highlights provide important clues to the texture of the surface. Hence, if the surface is smooth, like glass or chrome, the highlights tend to gleam or sparkle; a rougher surface, like a coarse stone facing, yields more diffuse highlights." The variations of shadow in film include *attached shadow* and *cast shadow*. An *attached shadow* occurs when light fails to illuminate part of an object because of the object's shape or due to the surface shapes, the *cast shadows* on the other hand could be realised when the body of an object in a frame blocks out the light and the silhouette of the object is reflected on the floor or on the wall.

Fundamentally, *high-key lighting* technique deals with an overall lighting design that uses fill and backlight to create low contrast between brighter and darker areas. "Usually, the light quality is soft, making shadow areas fairly transparent." Branston and Stafford (2007:397/8) believed that, "...in mainstream film and television, most comedies, musicals, talk shows and light entertainment are presented in high-key lighting. This means that the ratio of fill to key is high - most of the shadows are filled in." Unlike the situation in low key lighting/ soft lighting which creates only slight shadows, the texture of the hard lighting design/high key lighting produces deep and sharp shadows.

In examining the Colour of the light on screen, filmmakers tend to think of lighting from two basic colour perspectives - the white of sunlight or the soft yellow of incandescent interior lamps. (But with the revolution in lighting technology, there are lamps capable of producing lights that are as white as that of the sunlight.) In practice, film directors often work with purely white light in order to control lighting for various production purposes. Essentially, a filmmaker can colour the onscreen illumination in any fashion by placing filters in the front of the light source.

The *Quality of light* in film production refers to the relative intensity of the illumination. On this quality, there are two basic types: the first is the *hard lighting* which creates clearly defined shadows, crisp textures, and sharp edges, while the second which is *soft lighting*, creates a diffused illumination. It is on record that, 'the noonday sun creates hard light, while an overcast sky creates soft light.' Bordwell and Thompson (2004) believe that even though these 'terms are relative, and many lighting situations will fall between the extremes...'

The *direction* of light in a given frame is meant to describe the various channels through which the ray of light moves from its lantern to a lit figure within that frame. In other words, "the path of light from its source or sources to the object lit." According to Von Sternberg "Every light, has a point where it is brightest and a point toward which it wanders to lose itself completely.... The journey of rays from that central core to the outposts of blackness is the adventure and drama of light." records, five different available modes From of direction/source of lighting in shot had been identified as frontal lighting, sidelighting, backlighting, underlighting, and top lighting.

The *source* of lighting in a given shot could be used as another attribute/characteristic of lights in filming process. Fictional

filmmakers often use extra light sources to identify and obtain greater control over the quality of pictures/images. Basically in film production, there are *false/motivational lighting source* (i.e. visible or onscreen source of light) and *the authentic but invisible lighting source*. While the former source of lighting could be described as the *established source of light* in a given shot, i.e., the table lamps or streetlights that are seen on screen are not the real/the principal source of illumination for filming in a given composition within a mise-en-scene. But such visible source of light, only serves to motivate the lighting decisions made in taping/recording of such a production. The latter source of lighting however, could be described as *the genuine or the true source of lighting* although, invisible to the audience.

In most cases, filmmakers strive to create a lighting design that is in consistent with the source on the set. Moreover, in setting the *sources* of authentic lighting, the shooting may require a two or three point lighting technique depending on the subject to be filmed and the condition of the shooting environment.

Film Production Data:

October 1. (2014). Golden Effects Studio, written by Tunde Babalola, produced and directed by Kunle Afolayan. It stars Sadiq Daba, Kayode Olaiya, David Bailie, Kehinde Bankole, Kanayo O. Kanayo, Fabian Adeoye Lojede, Nick Rhys, Kunle Afolayan, Femi Adebayo, Bimbo Manuel, Ibrahim Chatta and Demola Adedoyin; and Deola Sagoe.

The Synopsis of October 1:

This is a thriller film based on the consequences of paedophilia or the psychological trauma of sexual abuse. This film which is set at the tail end of colonial period in Nigeria narrates the adventure of inspector Danladi Waziri (Sadiq Daba). As a police detective from Northern Nigeria Inspector Waziri is posted to a remote town of Akote in Western Nigeria to investigate a serial killing of virgins in that community and he is able to solve the mystery before October 1, which is the Independence Day of the nation.

Basically the plot of the film could be restructured as a story of two boys (01) whom the whole village entrusted their secondary education to an English clergy man Reverend Dowling (Colin David Reese), an educationist with a propensity for paedophilia and homosexuality. With time Rev. Dowling ends up molesting and sexually abusing these boys as he lodges them in Lagos in a missionary boarding school. As a result of his actions the Reverend clergy man unconsciously injects into these boys psychological trauma. Agbekoya (Kunle Afolayan), one of the boys who could not take the abuse any longer returns to his village a few weeks after his stay in Lagos to become a full time famer. However, due to his desire for education, the other boy; Prince Aderopo (Demola Adedoyin), the son of the king endures the trauma of sexual abuse for six years in order not to disappoint his father, and the whole village that imposed a big trust on him.

After the completion of his secondary school education, he proceeds to a University where he acquires a degree. But when Prince Aderopo finishes his educational sojourning in cities, he finally returns to his village for a short break

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before embarking on another educational journey abroad. On his part, the king honours his son's return with a horse ride round the district which announces his triumphant entry into the village (**02**). The villagers equally accord him a heroic welcome by trooping out to welcome the illustrious and royal son of the land who happens to be the first university graduate from his district.

Unknown to the villagers, the mysterious death of a virgin in the village (03) that precedes the arrival of sophisticated Prince Aderope is not a mere coincidence, but a deliberate signer for other mysterious disasters awaiting the whole village in the nearest feature. In an attempt to halt the unprecedented and brutal murder of virgins, the Oba of the village calls the council of chiefs and holds a consultation with the chief priest, Baba Ifa (Ifayemi Elebuibon) who predicts that the crime will continues unabated until the perpetuator exhausts his list of vengeance (04). On his part, Winterbottom (Nick Rhys), the colonial District Officer (D.O.) requests for the service of a brilliant inspector, Danladi Waziri (Sadig Daba) and a reputable detective officer the police force serving with to investigate the unprecedented serial murder case (05).

With the aids of Agbekoya, Danladi Waziri is able to discover the reason behind the psychological trauma which the serial killer is going through. And with the assistance of Sergeant Afoja (Kayode Sunday Omobolanle), the head of the police service in that locality and other members of the police force (**06**), inspector Danladi is able to solve the mystery behind the habitual killing of the virgin in the land. But as an educated fellow, the murderer is revealed as a very smart person and a ruthless being, who murders in cool blood, the first police officer - Corporal Omolodun (Fabian Adeoye Lojede) that dares to discover his identity (07). At the end of the narrative, Danladi Waziri is able to catch the serial killer in the very act of murdering yet another victim, his childhood lover Tawa (Kehinde Bankole) (08).

In the process of averting another tragedy, inspector Danladi Waziri shoots and finally gets rid of Prince Aderopo - the serial murderer (09). However, the greatest shock of his life awaits the inspector at the point of giving his report to the District Officer - Winterbottom in company of Tomkins (Lawrence Stubbings) where he discovers that the truth about his investigation could not be officially documented (10). According to Winterbottom, such documentation will be a threat to a fragile and an intending political independent nation like Nigeria. That is, as at the moment of giving his report on the 1st of October, 1960, the country needs nothing but a peaceful co-existing relationship of the various tribes within the nation. Or how could one explain to the public that an Igbo girl is killed along with other virgins in a Yoruba land and an Hausa man that is wrongly accused is murdered by the father of the Igbo girl while the real culprit is an educated Yoruba prince whose father has a strong connection with the newly elected Premier of the Western Region, Adegoke Akintola

Film analysis

As Yoruba would say "the action the night, goes with the night," hence, this caption could represent the theme of this movie because anyone who has seen the film *October 1* would agree with the fact that the film tells the story of the night.

In other words, this is a narrative that reveals the night life experience of Akute community around and at the eve of Nigerian independence.

In revealing any major event that occurred in the night hours, the auteur of such movie must be knowledgeable in the techniques of cinematic lighting. Although, the narrative technique used in this thriller is not new to some filmmakers in other parts of the world, however, the fact remains that, it is one of the novel approaches to filmmaking in Nigeria and it must be encouraged.

Basically the narrative method used in *October 1* is that of a detective or a method of revealing mystery story, while its mode of presentation follows the plot structure of a goal oriented pattern. In exploring the narrative structure of this film further, one could say the movie makes use of unrestricted range of plot information or an omniscience pattern of story development. That is, the cinematographic style of revealing and withholding pieces of information in this narrative is like that of the eye of God, who is all knowing and all seeing in relating the various actions and thoughts of each character in the story to the viewers.

Mainly the director employed this method in telling his story for so many reasons. For instance, the nature of a mystery plot required, holding back certain pieces of information at the initial stage and revealing these pieces of information at the later stages of the narrative. Therefore the deployment of this technique of storytelling in the movie is meant to arouse viewers' interests, create and maintain suspense throughout the film. In accomplishing his target of keeping the viewers glue to the screen, the auteur of *October 1* employed a cut transition mode of editing at the prologue of the film (**03**). With this editing style, the director is able to realise the fast tempo needed for a sequence of action scenes, which the prologue demands. In this first sequence, viewers are greeted with two contradicting images of a frightened virgin running for her dear life and a desperate male chaser, the sequence ends up in a revelation of a "stylized" act of rape cum cool blooded murder.

Analysing the range of tonalities in frames 03 which represent selected shots from the opening sequence, one could see that these shots could not be achieved without appropriate lighting. Even though, in cinematographic lighting and editing, the night scene is usually depicted with blue or purple hue and this could be identified in 06, here the environment of police headquarter in Akute is established with blue colour and the inner chamber of the building is depicted with the hard yellow of incandescent interior lamps. Nevertheless in the prologue of this film -October 1, the director decided to used a darken crimson toning not just to represent the night hours but for other narrative purposes which include creating atmosphere of fear or horror hence, the lighting hue could be interpreted as "a warning signer of the impending doom" that is to befall of the villagers in this narrative.

Basically the thrilling mood of selected frames in **O3** is presented and achieved with the creative deployment of highlight and shadow. For instance, the highlighted part of the moon in the mainframe looks gleaming while the un-

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illuminated side results in attached shadow. Mystery mood so created with the invocation of this half lit moon is in line with thriller or horror movies lighting convention which are often deployed to connote fear and anxiety. The creation of suspense is further entrenched in the film with lighting technique use in registering both the running and dying images, which are also in **O3**. Here, one could see that the highlighted parts of these bodies produced glittering skills because of the sweats which the bodies had generated while running in the forest yet the other unlit parts of these bodies equally recede into shadows of mystery.

In introducing anachronism which is another narrative technique of bringing the past into the present or revealing the past experience within unfolding events, the director use a cut transitional mode in revealing a sequence of black and white frames which brings in series of flashback events instead of using a fade transitional mode. The first of such flashback reveals how Aderopo and Agbekoya were entrusted to a clergy man, Rev. Dowling, who rather than inculcating moral and advancing their educational standard, sexually abuses these two boys and turning them into potential murderers. The subsequence use of the technique reflects on how the reverend clergy man is honoured by the villagers and how he is eventually murdered by Agbekoya among others events.

Basically the employment of these flashbacks is meant for the manipulation of the depth of story information and for elongating the plot time in the narrative. That is, through the use of this anachronism technique, viewers are able to penetrate into the casts' memories while sharing their past experiences. For instance, in accomplishing this narrative style visually, the director in these selected frames in **01** creatively used shooting or editing process that maintained a balance of grays, blacks and whites in depicting the various actions that take place both in the day and at the night in hours of this film.

Contrary to what is shown in **01**, the frame in **02** reveals a carnival procession during the day: this is a mass heroic welcome bestowed on the illustrious son and the first university graduate from the district. In considering the quality of light used in **02**, one could see that the masses are established with a noonday light. From close observation, one could also say that the sunlight that served as the key light comes from the top left side of the frame. In this shot, it could easily be detected that the highlight radiates on the foreheads, the cheeks and the chests of the women in the foreground, while casting attached and defused shadows on other parts of their heads especially the unlit parts of the cheeks, the chins and the neck regions as well as the back of the heads of these women.

Still on directional lighting, one could identify another use of top lighting in **04**. This is a lighting system used to glorify the status of the king among his chief and chief priest. In deliberating on the unprecedented occurrences in their community, the arrangement in **04** reveals the sitting order of importance of the political leaders in the village. Here, in accomplishing the visual set up, the director makes use of another night lighting technique which could be identified as a modified hard lighting system. That is, the directional light from the top centre and the cross lighting from either sides of the frame creates not too clearly defined attached shadows around each image in the shot. Although, there are elements of crisp textures and sharp edges around each of these figures, yet the sparsely invoked hard lighting technique is able to shape the shot's overall composition amidst solid darkness.

From all indications, the lighting system of this shot affects viewers' sense of scale, shape and texture. By emphasizing the king as the most frontal and clearly lit figure he is made the most important object of the frame while others who are depicted with cross lighting technique in the frame are revealed as of less importance to the king. By embellishing each image with dramatic cross-lighting in the shot, the frame adds to attractive quality to the visual aesthetics of the narrative.

In exploring further the narrative deployment of the quality and the direction of the light, one could see in **05** how hard lighting serving as key light and a cross lighting system. This cross-lighting technique is used to establish the level of importance, shape and texture among the two figures in the frame.

Although, the key light (in an hard-lighting form) is used as a cross light from the right side of the frame, yet one could see that Winterbottom, the District Officer is the most lit figure facing the camera while the backlight is able to carve him out from the house entrance background. Both the shape and the texture of this image are clearly identified through the use of this hard lighting technique. However, the same could not be said of the other man from this shot. Here, one could say that Inspector Danladi, who is established at the foreground, backing the camera with a panning face to the right, is of a less important figure because his face is partially revealed with the same cross lighting while other un-illuminated parts of his head and his back are established with attached shadow. Although, his shape and texture are not clearly identified with this cross hard lighting system in the frame but he is of a lesser scale, to the District Officer who is very much distinguishable from the frame.

In reflecting and creating the illusion of the act of murdering in cool blood by an evil-genius, the director established the scene where Aderopo kills with a razor, Corporal Omolodun, the young police officer who first unravelled his identity. One can identify the invocation of a soft lighting technique which creates a diffused illumination. Thus the figures of both the perpetuator and his victim in **07** are established in silhouettes through the use of soft lighting technique. This technique of creating silhouettes is invoked to create the impression of mystery around the murdering act committed at night undiscovered and expected to go with the night.

In exploring further the creative deployment of the direction of the light, one could identify another shot in **08**, where Prince Aderopo is revealed with hard key light from right side of the frame in the very attempt to murder his last virgin victim - Miss Tawa. In a shot which is one of the selected frames in **08**, half of Aderopo's face is lit while the other part of his head is in cast shadow that falls on his right shoulder. The fill light could be identified as underlighting, as it comes from the bottom of the frame while the

backlighting is able to separate Aderopo's image from his background.

In establishing his victim, the suppressed lady at the point of death as revealed in **O8**, one could see the creative use of what could be termed as "a hard-soft lighting" because the hard light technique used had some components of diffused illumination due to the creepy function of a mystery film it performs in this narrative. This is a lighting technique that falls between the two extremes of hard-lighting and soft lighting. Therefore, while some parts of Tawa's head are clearly defined with crisp texture and sharp edges (attributes of hard lighting) other parts of the suffering lady at the point of death are depicted with diffused illumination (characteristic of soft-lighting).

In examining the creative use of the sources of light in this narrative, one could identify the employment both the motivational lighting source and the authentic sources of light in **09**.

In this film kudos must be given to the director in his attempt to synchronize the authentic source of light with the motivational source of light in the sequence that leads to the climax of the narrative, but as depicted in main frame in **09**, there is an unsynchronized relationship between the two identified sources of light.

From this shot, one could see that the authentic source of illumination comes on screen behind an obstruction very close to Agbekoy's belly, the ray radiates as key light of this shot, while the ray of the fill light comes from the right side of the frame and radiating on Aderopo's and Agbekoya's backs. Close observation still reveals the fill light equally radiating on one of inspector Danladi's arms. The radiation on the established lantern on set could be said to glitter only on parts of Agbekoya's hand and the frontal parts of Aderopo's laps, and outer part of inspector Danladi's touch light.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it could be argued that, the lantern in the hand of Agbekoya and the touch-light Inspector Danladi is holding are supposed to be the two sources of illumination in this frame (thus in cinematic lighting they are regarded as the false/motivational sources of light). And the authentic source of light - the real lamps used in lighting the scene are supposed to be synchronized along the same direction as the established sources of light on the set. But due to unpredictable movements of the images in the scene, the main shot in **09** as analysed above thus revealed an unsynchronized relationship between the motivational and the authentic sources of light in the frame.

In 10 one could see a better synchronized relationship between the motivational lighting source - house lights and the authentic sources of light which comes on the set from the top right side of the frame. From the established house of Winterbottom, in this shot, it is easy to think that the illumination that brings out the shape and glorified the texture of the house is the security light around the house which in cinematic parlance is not but just the false or motivational lights on set. However, the authentic source of light that carves out the shape of the house and project the texture of the house is from the right top side of the frame. Radiating on the tree-leafs at the top right angle of the frame and casting attached shadow on the gable or relief part of the house's "shootout." Naturally the shot is another scene that add aesthetical quality of the night shots featured in the overall composition in the film.

CONCLUSION

It is cleared from this study, that the writer had attempted to identify the narrative technique used in this film as that of a detective or a mystery story which is based on unrestricted range of plot information where the director impact his narrative through an omniscience pattern of story development.

In buttressing his claim that October 1 film tells the story of the night, this is a narrative that reveals the night life experience of a community around and at the eve of Nigerian independence which he captured with a Yoruba adage "the action of the night, goes with the night", the author of this paper, identified and dissected the creative use of prominent mode of transition in the film editing which is a cut, examined the use of the colour of the light cum the range of tonalities, consider the featuring of the highlight and shadow as a creative device, scrutinize artistic invocation of the quality, the direction and the sources of light featured in selected shots from the film while identifying their narrative functions within the film under review.

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A Critical Analysis of Narrative Components and Lighting Techniques in "October 1"

Ola-Koyi, S. Joseph Bankola

Appendix I:



01. The frame comprises of selection of shots that maintained a balance of grays, blacks and whites in depicting the various actions that take place both in the day and at the night in hours of this film



03. With of a cut transitional mode and a colour of darken crimson toning, the auteur is able to achieve a fast-motion sequence of actions and a narrative connotation of impending evil at the prologue of the story in his film.



05. This cross-lighting technique is used to establish the level of importance, shape and texture among the two figures in the frame. Here one could see that Winterbottom, who is facing the camera is the most important while Inspector Danladi, who is established at the foreground, backing the camera with a panning face to the right, is of a less important figure.



02. The frame reveals a carnival procession reception bestowed on the illustrious son and the first university graduate from the district. The masses are established with a noonday light as the quality of light used.



04. This is a lighting system used to glorify the status of the king among his chief and chief priest



06. Here the environment of police headquarter in Akute is established with blue colour, representing the night hours and the inner chamber is depicted with the hard yellow of incandescent interior lamps

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