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# The Dynamics of Laughter and Jokes in Nigeria

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## Résumé

The paper examines the dynamics of laughter and joking in Nigeria. The acts of making people laugh through jokes can be traced to pre-colonial Nigerian Kingdoms and communities when certain individuals acted as masters' ceremonies, spokespersons and praise singers thereby adding humorous angle to the events. By the 1970s and 1980s media outlets, radio, television and magazines were amply used in engaging the public in rib cracking jokes. However, there was a paradigm shift in the acts of jokes influenced laughter. The paper reflected on newspapers, journals and interview of 21 respondents' analysed qualitatively using historical approach revealed that from the 1990s the acts of jokes became professionalised and became regular features in social and business events across the country. The major players such as Ali Baba and Opa Williams brought innovation and creativity into the sub sector. This further attracted the interest of the general public and corporate organisation endorsement of the major players. The paper concluded that most of the stand-up comedians deployed their skills in deriving their jokes from the socio-economic, religious, political and cultural happenings in the country that arose laughter amongst the public however in recent years some of the jokes of the comedians have also created division in the country following the attempts to underplay issues of women's rights and rape.

**Mots-Clés:** Nigeria

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