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Mythology in Yorùbá Drama: A Study of Léré Pàimó Films

Introduction

Drama, a popular genre of literature, can be described as “a slice of life”, a recreation of society, and a megaphone for projecting the failings, triumphs, sentiments, aspirations, history, changes, interests, idiosyncrasies, beliefs; etc of the society. Therefore, drama is a potent tool of picturing a particular society with a view to educating, informing and entertaining the audience. But then drama and society are indivisible as drama is planted on the rich loamy soil of society, and is watered and indeed fertilized by the society. Thus drama entertains, gives pleasure to the tired minds and show cases the belief, the dilemma and uncertainties of human life one of which is the issue of myth on which this study focuses.

The preoccupation of this study is to identify and discuss mythology and its manifestations in Yorùbá drama with the works of Léré Pàimó, an ageless and prominent actor-producer of the Yorùbá video genre, as a case study.

Background of Yorùbá Traditional Theatre

The Yoruba travelling theatre evolved from the Yoruba traditional theatre. Ogundeji (2003:5) however considers the term “traditional” inappropriate and instead offers the term “indigenous”. There is a consensus among African scholars that the indigenous theatre is embedded in the pre-colonial rituals, festivals and such related performances (Adedeji, 1969; Traore, 1972, Ogunba, 1976; Ugonna, 1983 and Eneke 1987).

According to Ogundeji (2003:5)

The pre-colonial theatre (and drama) practice is usually described as ‘traditional’ theatre practice by many scholars. The use of the term is usually contrasted with ‘modern’ theatre practice. Taking componential meaning of the qualifier ‘traditional’ into consideration, it was found to be inappropriate to describe the pre-colonial form because the new, ‘modern’ and post-colonial form is also a tradition and can therefore be traditional in that context. The

term 'indigenous' has therefore been suggested to replace it, since 'traditional' is often used to suggest the meaning it connotes.

Ogundeji (1981) categorises the traditional drama into two namely: sacred drama and *Eégún Alaré* drama or traditional travelling theatre. Later, he identified three traditional theatre practice which are sacred ritual performances, the ritual festival performances and the deritualising dramatic performances (Ogundeji 2000) while the fourth category which he called "the deritualised performances" was also added (Ogundeji 2003). Of all these categories, the *Egúngún Alaré* movement or tradition from which Yoruba travelling theatre metamorphosed belongs to the ritual festival which Ogundeji (2000:16) also calls "dramatized ritual". Adedeji's (1969) account of the historical development of Yoruba masquerading establishes that the ritual festival drama grew out of the sacred ritual. According to him, masquerading evolved as "spiritism" at the ancient town of *Ilé-Ifẹ̀* in the 14th century, and developed into ancestral worship at *Ọ̀yọ́* during the reign of *Ẓàngó*, the fourth *Aláàfin*. As an ancestral worship, the *egúngún* involves the funeral rite of *Ìṣẹ̀kúú* or *Òkú fífà*. The maiden funeral rite of *Ìṣẹ̀kúú* was held by *Aláàfin Ẓàngó* who was influenced by his *Tapa* (Nupe) descent to commemorate the death of his late father *Ọ̀rànmíyàn*. *Ẓàngó's* inability to secure the remains of his father who died as a monarch at *Ilé-ifẹ̀* for burial at *Ọ̀yọ́* where *Ẓàngó* was the incumbent *Aláàfin* actually led to the introduction of the *Ìṣẹ̀kúú* tradition. *Ìṣẹ̀kúú* is essentially a ritual of impersonation in which a person having similar height and physique of the deceased father puts on the *Èkú* or *agò* (costume) to represent the spirit of the departed. With time, the ritual became popular in *Ọ̀yọ́* and became what is known as *Qdún baba* (festival of fathers) or *Qdún eégún* (masquerade festival). *Qdún baba* or *Qdún eégún* entails a yearly parade of colours and display of artistry of the ancestral masks of different households in the community.

This tradition however evolved a movement of theatre or dramatic practice called *Eégún Alaré* during the reign of *Aláàfin Abiipa* who was also known as *Ọba Mọ̀rò* in *Ọ̀yọ́-ilé* in the sixteenth century. According to Adedeji (1969), *E3g5n Alqr3* dramatic and theatre movement evolved initially out of a political crisis. The first performance was therefore satirical. It was a punitive measure aimed at reprimanding and teaching the erring members of the *Ọ̀yọ́mèsi* ruling council a lesson. As expatiated by Ogundeji (2000:18), Ologbin was the manager of the first *Eégún aláre* troupe and the first performance took place in the palace court. The practice however went beyond the royal court in the palace later in a bid to provide more performance opportunities for the troupe generally and particularly for *O15gb21*, the hybrid son of *O19gbo* who was restricted to the palace prior to the establishment of the troupe because he was half-human, half-gorilla. After the death of Ologbin, *Èsà-ògbín* took over

the leadership of the troupe and subsequently many other troupes were founded. Over time, the theatre developed its repertory and itinerant mode of operation along the line.

With each successive generation, Eégún Alaré attained fame and popularity in all crannies of Yorubaland. It also became a major source of dramatic entertainment widely acclaimed and accepted by all and sundry. It is a roving movement, travelling from one community to the other, punctuating their trips by stopping along the way from time to time to stage performances. Essentially, an Eégún Alaré troupe is an assemblage of artists of different specializations. According to Ogundeji (2000:19), there are four groups of artists involved in the performance of the Eégún alaré. These are Bàtà instrumentalists, chorus (who chant in the *ẹ̀sà* mode, sing and dance), acrobats and actors.

The male members of the troupe engage in acting and acrobatic displays while both females and males sing, chant and dance. As for the instrumentalists, they are practitioners who are hired on contract for the purpose of the performance and are normally paid off. However, each troupe has its own choice of instrumentalists who go on tour with it regularly.

It should be noted that the actor usually appears in full mask and puts the costume that covers all parts of the body. This *ẹ̀kú* is called "Òkolombo". It is a kind of underwear mask on top of which other masks, costumes and make-ups are worn for character depiction. Ogundeji (2000:19) also classifies the performance of Eégún Alaré into three namely; the opening which comprises salutation, homage, singing, chanting, dancing, acrobatics and instrumentation; the play proper which is made up of short sketches and finally the finale.

Staging is an important element in traditional theatre and drama. For ritual performances, Ogunba (1986:55-66) identifies places where "the earth has eyes" like the outskirts of a town or village, road junctions, particular routes, women cult houses and houses of offenders as stage locations. Three different types of stage are identified as the stage-in-the-round, the roughly rectangular stage and the picture-frame stage.

Ogundeji classifies the plays in the Eégún Alaré's repertoire into two broad categories namely: Religious and Social. The religious plays are mythological and totemistic plays while the social plays are of five different types: the handicapped, stranger, topical, didactic and historical plays. The plays involve character depiction and role-playing. Under social plays, topical and didactic plays often picked on notable personalities in the society for mockery with a view to expose them to ridicule. An example was the mask satire of Akintola and Awolowo crisis in the former western region of Nigeria and that of Elésèc, king of Igbàjà who according to Ogundeji (2000:21) ruled with iron hand.

Through oral tradition essentially, the art of Eégún Alaré is sustained from

generation to generation until the early twentieth century when with the influence of Christian religion and western culture, a new form emerged. This new form is what Ogundeji (2000:23) called The Ogunde Dramatic Tradition.

Previous Works on Ogunde Dramatic Tradition

Perhaps the pioneering work by Eburn Clark on the theatrical activities of Hubert Ogunde, who incidentally was the pioneer of Ogunde dramatic tradition remains undoubtedly the most detailed study of one single theatre practitioner. Eburn Clark (1979) carried out a historical survey of the professional theatre of Hubert Ogunde, which opened in 1944, highlighting how he withdrew the theatre from the direct patronage of court and church and gave it to the people. The journey of this professional company right from the beginning through its rise, its operations, its political activities as a nationalist movement, the different phases of the theatre company and its plays are extensively discussed. Also, Owomoyela (1970, 1971) are relevant works on Ogunde dramatic tradition.

Biodun Jeyifo makes a compilation of his interview with seven theatre practitioners in a monograph while he discusses the major characteristics of the theatre tradition in his book published in 1984. Ogundeji (1981) carries out an introductory study on the plays of Oyin Adejobi in which he observes that some of the existing works on the practitioners of Ogunde dramatic tradition concentrate more on historical study of the theatre than the study of the plays. Ojo (1974:4) notes that Ogundeji (1981) Arohunmolase (1982) and Adeoye (1984) changed this dimension by concentrating their efforts on the study of the plays of Oyin Adéjòbí, Jimòh Àlìù, and Léré Páimò respectively in their master degree projects. Lakoju (1983) focuses on Moses Oláiyá Adéjùmò (Bàbá Sàlá) while Ògúndèjì (1984), and Adékólá (1998) work on Kólá Ògúnmò lá and his plays.

Adelugba's work appeared in *Wole Soyinka: A Birthday Letter and other Essays*. Ogundeji's effort is notable for his concentrated and consistent discussion on different aspects of Ogunde dramatic tradition. In 1987(a), he discusses trends and issues in Ogunde dramatic tradition while 1987(b) dwells on Duro Ladipo's *Qba Kò So*. In 1988, his University of Ibadan doctoral thesis is a semiotic study of Duro Ladipo's mythico-historical plays. In 1996, his work on Duro Ladipo appeared in *Yoruba Idea* while his other works (1997, 1998, 1999) center on Oyin Adejobi and Duro Ladipo respectively.

Adele (1985) examines the late Ìṣòlá Ògúnsòlá's theatre while Ojo (1997) writes on the plays of Abíòdún Àrẹ̀mú. In 1988, Ad3k5nl3 Tqd3 considers the aesthetics of Oyin Adejobi's theatre while Lawal (2003) critically appraise the Islamic television plays of Kàrimù Adéjòjù (Bàbá Wándé). Akangbe (2005) worked on I èrè Páimò in his study titled "From the stage to motion pictures:

The changing phases of *Léré Páimò* theatre. Series of other works have also been done on other notable theatre practitioners and performing groups.

In the area of film and home video, a number of works have been published. Àlà mú (1992) discusses the developmental trends of Yoruba film while Afólá bí Adésànyà (1997) and Wólé Ògúndélé (1997) discuss the transition of film to video and folk opera to soap opera respectively. Oyedeji (2003) carries out a study of selected films by Yẹmí Adégúnjú Adeleke (2003) evaluates culture, Art and film in African society while Àlà mú (2004), Olújínmí (2004) and Adágbádá (2005), discuss Yoruba films from different perspectives.

Theoretical Framework: Sociology of Literature

Sociology of literature is employed for this study. Though the formalist school of critics considers sociology as an extrinsic factor in understanding literature and as such irrelevant as a critical tool but we align fully with the structuralist Marxist school that the study of literature in itself is limited and incomplete without adequate consideration of the social value and context of text.

Bantock's (1975) submission authenticates this standpoint when it restates the interrelationship between literature and the social world that:

all novel and plays and a fair amount of dramatic or narrative poetry may not be understood without their environing context because they focus their attention on characters and incidents that bear close parallels to imitation of an action with the highest consciousness of the age in which they were written.

We can deduce therefore that literature, particularly drama, is concerned with two things: the moral and the story. The moral suggests the author's relationships with society while the story dwells on his (author's) relationship with art. The simple fact that all plays basically tell about social life reveals the status and common pursuit of literature and sociology, hence the reason for the choice of sociology of literature as a theoretical tool for the study.

The term "Sociology of Literature" was coined by Taine, the French philosopher and critics (1828-1893) (Laurenson and Swingewood 1971:31). Moore (1967: 207-215) cited in Olunlade (1999:9) defines sociology as "the science of social relationship for ongoing social systems and the process of social change". This definition presupposes that sociology transcends social relationships among the dwellers of a given society, the essence of the social relationships is to initiate and ensure social changes.

Berger (1980:11-40) corroborates this that

Sociology is more than the mere study of human relations. It is also concerned with the process of change in the society; that is how society changes gradually or radically from one type of society to another and the effects these changes have on the social structure.

In Berger's view, social changes can take two forms. These two forms are gradual process or radical process, and either of the two processes will have significant effect on the social structure.

Barber (1979:1) in a simplified form amplifies the capability of sociology to transform society when he states that

Sociology is a way of trying to understand society, its structure, how it works, the forces that bring about it.

To Bamidele (2000:4),

Sociology is an essentially scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institution and of social processes.

In his explanation, he claims sociology seeks to answer the questions of how society is possible, how it works and why it persists. As a discipline, it also examines social institutions of the political, which together constitutes what is called social structure.

Ebewo (1999:60) sees a symbiotic relationship between sociology and literature. According to him,

Society produces and influences a writer and his work, and the writer in turn, through his work, influences society. This in fact is a kind of symbiotic bond. The right hand is made to wash the left, and the left hand is made to wash the right, thereby rendering both hands clean.

Literature on the other hand, has been described by different scholars such as Abraham (1958); Abimbola (1965); Taiwo (1967); Soyinka (1976) and Ogunsina (1987). Out of all these, Ogunsina's definition is quite detailed and useful for this current study.

According to him:

Literature is concerned with man and his society. It is an art composed of words in such a way that it proffers entertainment, enlightenment and relaxation. It attempts to develop, elevate, expand and transform the experience of its audience. Literature functions as a continuing symbolic criticism of social values. As a virile vehicle of human expression, literature seeks to investigate man, his behaviour in society, his knowledge of himself. Literature is part and product of society. Its nature is essentially social. It has no independence from man, for it is produced by people living together (cited in Olunlade (1999:11-12).

This definition clearly establishes that literature cannot be divorced from society and vice-versa. This notion is supported by Lucacs and Goldmann that:

Literature is an art that is primarily an activity of the mind a creation and self conscious enterprise, one that is socially formed in the sense that the writer is part of the current of human thought; the writer shares in the language, attitude, tone and voice of his fellows and he expresses values that come from a discernible

context in society, in a nation and at a period. (cited in Bamidele 2000:3)

This connotes that the literary artist obtains his creative raw materials from the society based on his experience and happenings in the society at a given point in time.

Chukwulozie (1973) sees literature as:

The branch of the humanities, which deals with man's private responses to his natural and social environment and with the expression of his-self awareness and individuality.

This is in consonance with Ebewo (1990:60) broad view that literature entertains, gives pleasure to the bored soul brings one to the realities of the human affairs, shows human motives and reveals the dilemma and uncertainties of human life.

This submission further strengthens the affinity of literature to society. Art is not created in a vacuum. It is the work of an author who is fixed in time and space and through his work he relates and responds to a community of which he is part and parcel of. A sociological critic is therefore interested in understanding the social milieu and the extent to which and manner in which the artist has responded to it.

In other words, it is a reconstruction of the world from the point of view of the author. In the words of Bamidele (2000:4)

While the writer may be aware of literary tradition, it is the unconscious reworking of experience, fused with his own definition of a situation and his own values that produce the fictional universe with which the sociology of literature may be concerned to explore.

This common goal of literature and sociology is not in doubt. As a matter of fact, without a literary hindsight, a student of society will have a blur vision about the fullness of that society. And from generation to generation, employing different genres of literature, poets, novelists and playwrights have proved this view right. From the Greek's plays of Aristophanes, Aeschylus and Euripides; through William Shakespeare, Thomas a Beckett, Ben Johnson, Henrik Ibsen, Bertolt Brecht and Wole Soyinka, playwrights have recreated their societies for commendation, condemnation and correction, revealing a lot through their compositions, with the sole aim of effecting desirable changes that will make life better for the citizenry and propel the society to greater heights.

Talking of the symbiotic relationship of literature and sociology, and the truthfulness of art to society, Ernest Fischer emphasizes how compelling it is for art to be truthful in its representation of the society. According to him,

In a decaying society, art, if it is truthful must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break tradition with its social function, it must show the world as changeable, and helps to change it. (cited in Folorunso 1988:30).

It is thus a must for art to represent society correctly and accurately. In other words, if the society is rotten, the decadence must be reflected and if it is sane and stable, the sanity and stability should be represented. This is a utilitarian summation of the functions of arts to society.

Léré Pàimó Theatre

Léré Pàimó theatre was founded in 1973 under the leadership of Léré Pàimó popularly called “Èdá”. This was after putting in what could be regarded as an apprenticeship of twelve years under the Late Duro Ladipo. Duro Ladipo who was Léré Pàimó’s master himself belongs to what we call the first generation of dramatists in Ogunde dramatic tradition, a position, which Léré Pàimó also shares. Duro Ladipo’s contemporaries in the first generation were the late Dr. Hubert Ogunde – the Doyen of theatre himself, the late acclaimed energetic actor – Kólá Ògúnmólá, late Oyin Adéjóbí, Late Àyinlá Olúmègbòn and Akin Ògúngbè, making six in all.

Léré Pàimó belongs to the second generation of dramatists. His contemporaries include the late Ray Èyiwùní, late Ìshòlá Ògúnsolá (Dr. I. Sho Pepper), the late Adéyemí Afoláyan (Ade Love), Chief Jímòh Àlìù (Àwòrò), Chief Moses Adéjùmò Qláiyá (Bàbá Sàlá) and one Akosity based in Ilorin, Kwara State.

On February 1, 1973, Léré Pàimó Theatre was inaugurated. Unlike the experience of Chief Hubert Ogunde and his contemporaries, he did not have problem getting actresses for his group. Léré Pàimó Theatre grew like a wild fire in the harmattan wind, leaving a mark of success in its way. Today, Léré Pàimó is a success and he is celebrated by his teeming admirers.

Léré Pàimó Video Films

Léré Pàimó is a respected household name in the video film industry. He has acted in so many video films that one has lost its count. As a scion of Duro Ladipo and a stock of the old order in Ogunde dramatic tradition, the ageless super-actor is renowned for good social and historical stories. For the purpose of this study, some of his eight video films shall be discussed. These are *Ògbórí Èlémòsò*, *Àgbékòyà*, *Adé Ìwà*, and *Àjàkà Èkùn*.

Ògbórí Èlémòsò

Ògbórí Èlémòsò is an historical film about the origin of the ancient town of Ògbómòsò. A utility play in Léré Pàimó’s repertoire, Ògbórí Èlémòsò can be

branded as a play for all media as it emanated from the stage, and over time had appeared on television, in phonograph disc and celluloid film. When the era of Home Video came, it was also replaced as a video film.

Ògbórí Èlémòsò is the story of the valiant warrior, Şòún Ogunlólá who assists to rescue the Igbón town from the incessant annihilation of Ídagiri. Şòún Ogunlólá defeats Ídagiri and is given Àsùnké a beautiful young girl as wife by Olúgbón as a mark of appreciation. Meanwhile, Àsùnké's suitor, Bàbá Ìjèsà, is disgruntled, plans vengeance against Şòún but is killed in the process by Şòún. Şòún is guilty of murder, he is sentenced to death and taken to Alqzfin Zjzgb9 for execution. While in prison, Şòún requested to be permitted to challenge Èlémòsò who has been terrorising Öyó town, Qba Àjàgbó granted him the permission and surprisingly, Şòún defeats Èlémòsò and is pronounced the head of his community.

Adé Ìwà

A thoughtful story of power intrigues and kingship, *Adé Ìwà* is a commentary on the topical issue of succession dispute that is prevalent in our society. The play is a didactic account of how Atólágbé wrongly mounts the throne with the connivance of +t5n but commits suicide after Bàbá Fárínú, the Olúáwo he had looked up to, is found dead in the prison. Abidogun joins the kingship race of Amóyègún as a successor to the late Qba. He employs different evil means to actualise his ambition and destroys his rival's family – Adébólá. Fortunately, nemesis catches up with him when he is attacked by the spirit he sends to destroy Adébólá. Abidogun is burnt all over and lastly disfigured while Abímbólá, the son of Adébólá is enthroned amidst pomp and pageantry to the delight of all the masses.

Àgbékòyà

Àgbékòyà is an historical account of the 1969 Àgbékòyà (farmers) uprising in the western region of Nigeria. The play opens on a note of tension. Farmers are aggrieved about the fall in the price of cocoa and the high-handedness of the tax officials who oppress and suppress the masses at all cost under the leadership of Ìrókò – the Chief tax officer. When the matter became unbearable, the farmer come together, form a formidable front and appoint Lávàni Amúbíçyá as their warlord. They confront the government tax officials and police. Several farmers are arrested which are released by the farmers through diabolical means, which prompts the government to send Magi, a police detective, as a spy to capture Lávàni Amúbíçyá. Magi becomes Amúbíçyá's wife and in the process knows all the secrets. She eventually plans and ensures his arrest.

Àjàkà Èkùn

Àjàkà Èkùn is the story of Àjàkà, the criminal chief who makes his wealth through crooked means. He is oppressive and cruel. He is brutish and dangerous. In a bid to accumulate wealth, he kills Bádéjókòó his friend in order to take over his family's large expanse of land because of its gold deposit. Unfortunately, his henchmen cannot get the land documents. Sensing conspiracy, Olórí Èbí decides to duplicate the land documents but Kòfowórlá, the daughter sent to make photocopy is kidnapped by Àjàkà's men and dumped at the river bank where she is rescued and raised up by Bàbá Olódò. Later in life, Kòfowórlá Ọmọjọyìbò becomes a Fuji artiste and gets married to Àkànní the military son of Àjàkà. Meanwhile, Àjàkà does not relent in wanting to kill Kòfowórlá. She is attacked by Àjàkà himself but Bàbá Olódò, the foster father of Kòfowórlá confronts Àjàkà in a battle of incantation. The police on a tip-off arrives on the scene and Àkànní, who has earlier arrived on the scene hands over his father to the police. The case is charged to the court and Àjàkà Èkùn is sentenced to death by hanging.

Mythology in Léré Pàimó Films

Myth, which G.S. Kirk regards as "one of the primary manifestations of non-literate culture" is commonly expressed as a story involving gods or heroes. Although some tend to equate myth with falsehood and as such non-existent, modern scholars use the term more respectfully. Myth possesses elements of truth that goes beyond mere facts and conveys realities, which cannot be empirically verified. Africans generally place much premium on myths and they occupy a unique place in their world-view. Adeleke (2004:180) contends that:

Myth is the storehouse of African beliefs, traditions and values. It covers a gamut of human and non-human endeavours that traverse the physical and spiritual worlds

Myth has some distinctive and peculiar characteristics. It is essentially an oral phenomenon, which is narrated by words of mouth and transmitted from generation to generation. Myth has no author but only teller and the tellers are at liberty to add to or remove from the text of mythical tales or stories creatively. Its oral form makes it highly susceptible to changes at every retelling thus myths have loose texts.

Afigbo (2000:79-80) maintains that:

Myth addresses the actions of men, of other animate and inanimate objects, of the natural and the supernatural, of the physical and meta-physical, of the real and the fictional, at times in a context beyond time and space. (cited in Adeleke 2004:181)

In short, myth captures the intangibles of ordinary life, illuminating the culturally embedded assumptions of daily activities from the mundane to the profound. Adeleke (2004:181).

Ifie (1998:18-29) identifies types of myths as cosmogonical myths, myth of the creation of the universe; heroic myths – myths celebrating heroism; nature myths – myths about belief in mountain, water, sky god and founding heroes. He also delineates myths based on themes such as after-life, witchcraft or shamanism, social values, norms and philosophy, history and African psychology. Olateju (1998: 84-103) identifies “Ìtàn” as myth and categorises Ìtàn into five types. These are Ìtàn Ìsèlẹ̀ (historical narratives), Ìtàn Ìgbàani (legendary tales), Ìtàn Ìwásẹ̀ (story of ancient times), Ìtàn Àlọ̀ (folktales) and Ìtàn ifá/ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ifá (ifa narratives). Adeleke (1998:247) identifies witchcraft and wizardry, Yoruba ancestral worship, vows to gods and goddesses, beliefs in ghosts, destiny, divination and twins and Àbíké as the mythical elements in Yoruba films. It is noteworthy that all *Léré Pàimọ* films parade these mythical elements in varying quantities.

Witchcraft and wizardry is an extremely pervasive theme in African myth and it is highly visible in *Léré Pàimọ* films. Witches, wizards, sorcerers or sorceresses are commonly believed to possess supernatural powers, which enable them to perform feats beyond the capability of the ordinary beings. They are summoned at will for support especially in dealing ruthlessly with their enemies. In *Adé Ìwà*, Abidogun communes with the witches for support such as to overcome others in his chieftaincy contest. He also enlists the physical presence of a witch living in Adébólá's compound to afflict Àlàkẹ̀ (Adébólá's wife) to death in her labour. Fortunately for Àlàkẹ̀, the old witch is knocked down by a hit-and-run car.

In *Àgbékọyà*, we see Làwàni Amúbíyá, ọmọ Jọláádé attending the meeting of the witches to acquire more power. It is typical of both the ruler and the ruled; oppressor and the oppressed to seek for blessing and protection from the witches and wizards to consolidate their fortune or afflict their real or imaginary assailants. The witches readily support Amúbíyá by giving him powers made from Àkọyé ẹyin igún (maiden egg laid by vultures), ẹyin Àkàlámàgbò (egg of ground-hornbill), ẹyin adię òpìpì (egg of fowl) and ẹyẹlẹ̀ Ọwẹwẹ̀ (pigeon). All these are to equip him for the battle ahead.

In *Ọgbórí Èlẹmọsọ*, while Sòún Ogunlọlá and Èlẹmọsọ engage in fierce duel, each readily conjures the spirits of witchcraft and wizardry to come to their aids for support and victory over his assailant. Hence the frequent reference to:

Ọ̀ṣòròngà apanimáwágún
Olókíkí òru
Atapá jorí
Atidí jòrónro

Òṣòròngà – one who kills without using magic
 midnight revelers
 Eaters of head from the limb
 Eaters of heart from the liver
 Eaters of the bile from the buttocks

Heroism is another myth that recurs in the films of Léré Pàímó. J. P Clark (1978:2) defined hero as

A man of super-human qualities favoured by the gods; a demi-god. He is an illustrious warrior....a man admired for achievements and noble qualities.

To Okpewho (1979:120) the foremost value an hero possesses is excellence and by excellence is meant everything that makes a man more than just an inconsequential little being....

Sarah Anyang (1998:290-299) states that in African heroic tradition, when the hero is faced with forces he cannot contend with all by himself, the supernatural powers in form of gods or goddesses come to his aid. Thus intervention may come through the use of sorcery and witchcraft. The use of magical devices is also pertinent to heroes. The use of magic makes the hero more heroic of course, the hero is a mighty man of valour whose physical force is matched by strength of mind. In the film *Oníkòyí*, Oníkòyí is an hero of repute. He is physically strong. He is magically equipped. He is a fighter and warrior. He wins battles. He wins a maiden after making conquest. He becomes transformed into a rabbit and is deified.

Sòún Ogunlólá in *Ògbòrí Èlémòṣò* is another heroic character in Léré Pàímó films. Sòún Ogunlólá, an Ìbàribá man and a powerful hunter migrates from Ìbàribá land to sojourn around Igbón town. His militancy and strength easily shows and his contemporaries acknowledge him as a leader. Thus when it becomes necessary to tame Ìdágìrì, Sòún Ogunlólá is readily fingered by Dágbólú another militant hunter. His victory earns him a maiden from Olúgbón, which precipitates a conflict that will bring about his error of character. Àsùnké, the maiden given to Sòún Ogunlólá is already betrothed to Bàbá Ìjèsà. Bàbá Ìjèsà therefore plans to charm Sòún Ogunlólá but he is killed in the process. Thus Sòún Ogunlólá becomes a murderer and is sentenced to the court of Alááfin Àjàgbó in Òyó where the notorious Èlémòṣò has been tormenting the town and its environs.

True to heroic characteristics, Sòún Ogunlólá is formidable and powerful. He feels love and concern for his fellows but he is also human and therefore not perfect. His imperfection manifests itself in his committing murder. In short, typical of a hero, Sòún Ogunlólá is capable of kindness and consideration just as he is reckless and blood-letting.

Belief in ghosts and spirits is another mythical element in Léré Pàímó films. In *Adé Ìwà*, Abidogun has an errand-spirit called Ojúgbòjò Ìgbònà. It is this

errand-spirit that carries out all the devilish activities of Abídogun. In *Àjàkà Èkùn*, Chief Àjàkà Èkùn also has an errand spirit that intercepts Àdábánijà and pours the sacrifice he is carrying on him.

Another mythical element in African myth and mythology is the belief in life here after. It is possible for the dead to relate with the living in African mythical world. This is what happens exactly in the film *Adé Ìwà* when the late oba who is Prince Adébólá's father appears to Olúáwo Fárínú. He hands over Adé Ìwà to Bàbá Fárínú with an instruction that he must keep it properly until the ancestor will come and demand of it from him. In another instance, Kábíyèsí also appears to his son Adébólá in the bush. He consoles and congratulates him that the hard time is over and that the gods have vindicated him. He also gives him a complete set of cloth to wear to his son's chieftaincy coronation. There after the spirit disappears. Apart from Yoruba and African tradition, we also find instances of apparition of ghosts in Julius Ceasar and Macbeth, both written by William Shakespeare. Adeleke (1998:261) notices that:

Apart from the utilization of real mythical events or elements, African film producers depict quotidian ceremonies such as the installation of a new oba or king, the exchange of pleasantries, courtesy, paying of homage to community leaders, the celebration of funeral rites, marriage and naming ceremonies in conformity with African tradition.

In Léré Páimó films, series of quotidian ceremonies, which are fragments of Yoruba myths abound. In *Adé Ìwà*, Oba Atólágbé is installed though his reign is turbulent because it violates the norms. At last, Oba Abím̀b̀ólá, the rightful owner of the throne who possesses the prestigious and much coveted Adé Ìwà is enthroned. Abím̀b̀ólá is installed Oba amidst set rituals: crowning, singing, dancing and speech making, which are all mythical elements. In *Àgbé̀k̀òyà*, L̀aẁnì Amúbíyá is installed as Olóri Àgbè. In *Ògbórí Èlém̀s̀ó*, S̀ò̀ún Ogunlólá celebrates ogun festival to the delight of guests who wine, dine, sing and dance. In *Àgbé̀k̀òyà*, when the farmers' army is set for battle, Ogun is consulted. Ogun is worshipped and propitiated with the casting of kolanuts. The kolanut casting is positive which is an indication that the battle will be won. This good news is greeted with cheers, chants, song and dance.

In *Àjàkà Èkùn*, at the anniversary celebration of Bàbá Owódùnúní, the heroine of the film – Kòfowórlá ọmọjọyíbò band entertains the guests with live performance. There is singing and dancing. In *Àgbé̀k̀òyà*, when the women confront Ìròkò, the chief tax collector and he disappears, all Adépàtẹ – the militant woman leader does is mark Ìròkò's footstep and speaks incantation to it, the effect of which is that certain power make Ìròkò stay glued to the spot where he is until the women catch up with him and kill him. This is a magical fragment of African myth. Also in *Àjàkà Èkùn*, Àjàkà offers ring to

his son Àkàndé as a source of power. The ring is meant to tell the wearer in advance what evil will happen. This is a mythical magical elements.

In all the films, there are rich utterances spiced with proverbs, incantation, singing, dancing, drumming and praise poetry. Power of oration is also demonstrated. According to Isola (1987) Yoruba oration has its definite sequence, which it follows. What an orator, which he calls *alóyinlétè* does is speak publicly and communicates effectively with generous display and demonstration of the flowery spices of Yoruba language.

It is in *Oníkòyí* that we have an appealing demonstration of Yoruba orator. The power of oration is demonstrated in *Oníkòyí* at the communal meeting where *Oníkòyí* is honoured for his success in battle. Here *Òtún*'s speech typifies the concept of public speaking in Yoruba. Though it is not elaborate, the scene demonstrates the beauty of Yoruba oration through *Olóyè Òtún* played by Deji Aderemi a.k.a. *Ọlọfàaná*. As *Òtún* greets each personality, he laces it with *oriki* and drops short prayer intermittently and appropriately.

Òtún expectedly starts the greetings from the highest person in the community i.e *Alààfin Ọ̀rànmíyàn*:

Ọ̀rànmíyàn akàntúnkànsi
Akin nílé Akin lógun
Ògàn abetí rewúrewú

Ọ̀rànmíyàn whose influence spread from
the right to the left
valiant at home, valiant in battle
The Anthill with large ears

and then *Oníkòyí*:

Oníkòyí ọmọ àgbà
Tí í yáàrùn ọ̀tẹ̀

Oníkòyí begotten of the ancients
Who relishes in conspiracy

while he consoles him over the death of his son in battle – *Akíntúndé* – with a proverb that

Àmíkàn ni tàgbà
Akọni ò lójú ẹ̀kún
Sighing is for elders
A valiant does not shed tears

Òtún is able to demonstrate the richness of Yoruba language to the pleasure and admiration of the listeners.

All these quotidian ceremonies have their rightful places in Yorùbá mythical world. Léré Pàímó has demonstrated that myth as oral prose narrative constitutes a significant aspect of the Yorùbá oral tradition.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined the concept of mythology dwelling on its characteristics and types. The study reveals that mythology is both wide and loose covering variants like cosmogonical myths, heroic myths and nature myths; dwelling on a range of themes like after-life, witchcraft, social values, norms and philosophy; stemming from different types of "itàn" (history) such as historical narratives, legendary tales, story of ancient times, folktales and Ifá narratives; and encompassing Yorùbá philosophy and metaphysics such as ancestral worship, vows to gods and goddesses, beliefs in ghosts, destiny, divination, twins and Àbíkú, among others. The manifestation of all these in Léré Pàímó video films are well illustrated and articulated in the study.

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