

KÓLÁ OGÚNMÓLÁ:

A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY OF HIS FOLKLORIC PLAYS

BY

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DEDICATION

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO MY WIFE AND MY CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The Yoruba modern travelling theatre traditions has been a major point of focus by some scholars of the performing arts in the recent past. Their interest in this tradition is probably due to its educative technique and its entertaining and didactic nature. Some of these scholars have deliberated on various aspects of Yoruba theatre and drama, and studied some of the Yoruba popular dramatists with the aim of highlighting their innovative techniques. In their studies, therefore, they have suggested several ways in which the Yorùbá cultural heritage can be revived for the benefit of the present generation and the future Nigerian generations.

The renowned performing artists who have been studied include the late Hubert Ògúndé, the late Kòlá Ògúnmolá, Oyin Adéjòbí, the late Dúró Ládípò, Moses Oláiyá Adéjùmò (alias Bábá Sálá), and a host of others. Studies on these performing artists range from their organizational ability, their physical presence on stage, their innovative techniques, their style and

their interest in traditional material for production, to language use and manipulation and their contributions to the socio-cultural, economic and moral development of the Yorùbá society in particular and the Nigerian nation in general.

Unfortunately, however, the present writer has discovered that not much has been done on the work of the late Kṣlá Ògúnṣlá who is generally believed to have been a seasoned and renowned performing artist in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, it has also been discovered that the folkloric plays of Ògúnṣlá have been only briefly touched upon and analysed by scholars.

In the light of this situation, the present writer decided to look more closely into the content of the late Kṣlá Ògúnṣlá's folkloric plays with the aim of analysing the philosophical thoughts behind them in a socio-cultural context. It is our hope that the findings of this research would be of benefit to the contemporary and future Yorùbá societies and to the community of scholars world-wide. This is without prejudice to the enduring value of the plays themselves.

The first chapter is an introductory one which discusses the rationale, conceptual framework and the scope of the study, the methodology followed and the life history and philosophy of the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá. A typological survey of Ògúnmòlá's plays is made, while a thematic analysis of his folkloric plays is briefly attempted. Finally, the significance of folklore in Yorùbá socio-cultural life is discussed at some length.

The second chapter attempts a review of approaches to folklore, literature and theatre studies and highlights some topics which have been discussed by previous writers on the Yoruba travelling theatre tradition and on the personality of the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá. The views, comments and submissions of these writers are carefully examined in order to find out which, among these, still remain valuable or relevant and which ones need to be set aside.

Chapter Three makes an in-depth study and attempts a critical discussion in a textual analysis of each of Ògúnmòlá's folkloric plays and finally makes some comments on the socio-cultural and economic

messages in the plays with particular reference to the Yorùbá people of Southern Nigeria.

In Chapter Four, the stylistic features of the Yorùbá language and Ògúnṣọ́lá's expertise in the manipulation of the language and the musico-poetic aspects of Ògúnṣọ́lá's folkloric plays are discussed.

Chapter Five concludes the dissertation with comments, views and submissions on Ògúnṣọ́lá's contribution to modern theatre and drama and his philosophical message, as revealed in the plays, to both the people of his time and to future generations. Finally, it touches upon the future of the modern Yorùbá travelling theatre and the benefits that are expected to be derived from it.

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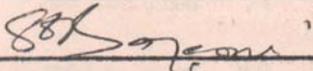
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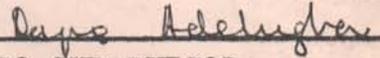
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CERTIFICATION

We certify that this research work was conducted by OLUBAYO OLADIMEJI ADEKOLA at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, under our supervision.



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale of the Study.

As a matter of fact, it appears that our contemporary society is morally and socially sick, and that it is declining culturally and spiritually. There seems to be fear everywhere and at all times. There is the fear of political instability, religious intolerance, economic depression, famine, social insecurity and natural catastrophes or disasters. Consequently, some people are of the view that the future and stability of humankind in general and of the Yorùbá race in particular seem to be unpredictable.

The increasing frequency of these problems is daily contributing to the untimely deaths, poverty, and other social vices that have plagued our nation in particular and the entire world in general. The reason for the multiplication of old problems is not far to seek. One of the major causes of all these things, according to Akinşòlá Akiwòwò (1980), is

lack of character or the failure of individuals to develop the right values and the sense of good comportment. He noted that,

There are evidences today, of an ever-rising current of aimowahu (loss of the sense of good comportment) in our midst (1980: 31).

Due to the loss of the sense of good comportment by the youths and adults of our contemporary period, criminal thinking and behaviour has jeopardised the well-being of all and sundry. The youths of the contemporary times are unwilling to work legitimately and honestly to achieve their life ambitions. They are not prepared to struggle with patience before they achieve their life ambitions. This is probably one of the reasons why many of our youths today resort to criminal acts to achieve their selfish aims.

It is on this note that Akiwoṣo, among others, appeals to all Nigerian sociologists and anthropologists, pointing out that they have a vital role to play in order to redeem our fatherland from an imminent societal chaos. Moreover, Akiwoṣo identifies five major problems which, he

thinks, need urgent solutions and to which Nigerian sociologists and anthropologists should address themselves with the utmost despatch. These, according to Akiwōwō, include:

- (a) the phenomenal rise in the number of the mentally ill, (b) the ebb and flow in the tide of armed robbery; (c) the rising mortality rate of young adults from the age of 25 to 45 years, (d) the unabating abandonment of Nigerian children by young mothers, and (e) the discovering of a self-evident truth in the world around us to which the Nation can hold political leaders and upon which àjòbí and àjogbé sociations must be founded (Akinṣolá Akiwōwō, op.cit. 32-33).

To solve the above social problems, social anthropologists must try to look for the immediate and remote causes before they could, in an informed manner, suggest solutions.

Apart from the social problems envisaged above, there is also the problem of culture disintegration within the Yorùbá cultural milieu. This, of course, might have been one of the cankerworms that contributed to the socio-economic imbalance within the general Nigerian economic system.

However, it should be recalled that, before the coming of the colonial overlords, the indigenous Yorùbá culture was kept relatively intact. But quite unfortunately, with the coming of the colonisers, who tried as much as humanly possible to suppress the indigenous culture and implant their own, majority of the Yorùbá people were forced, indirectly or otherwise, to accept the alien culture. Therefore, the majority of the Yorùbá people embraced the alien culture and discarded, totally or partially, the customs and ways of life of their forebears. This is remarked by Bassey Andah (1982.5-6) when he says, of Africa:

... her peoples' cultural outlooks have been affected and have therefore had to take into account several recent historical experiences and realities which are still very much with them today. Principal among these have been Arab imperialism, slave trade, western colonialism and imperialism and accompanying missionary influence, the introduction of western concepts of education, religion, science, political and economic institutions and the like³

The above question reveals that the African cultural outlook has been grossly affected by acculturation. Several alien cultural traits have intermingled with the African traditions and this has given rise to cultural adaptations through time, either to the detriment of the indigenous beliefs and practices or

to their advantage and societal development. However, it needs to be pointed out that the total abandonment of the indigenous cultural heritage, in some respects, has adversely affected the living styles of individuals or corporate groups. Many of the natives started to adopt European fashions and styles of living. They started wearing foreign dresses, some of which are unfriendly to the tropical weather. They sometimes ate foreign foods, embraced the "imported religions" and even spoke the foreign languages at the expense of the indigenous ones; and this affected their social integration in one way or the other.

With this state of affairs, there emerged some philosophers, playwrights, artists, theatre practitioners, particularly among the Yoruba people, from about the early forties. These people started to point out the abnormalities within the society and to suggest (through action and performances), indirectly or otherwise, ways by which the contemporary society could offset her socio-cultural deficiencies and struggle for survival and ultimate development.

One of such playwrights and theatre practitioners of our time was the late Elijah Kólá Ògúnmlá.

Several scholars have discussed Ògúnṣọlá and various aspects of his life and personality, his talent, his life ambition, his style of performing, his skill and expertise, his theatre group or his career as a director/producer of many plays. Notable among these scholars are Ulli Beier (1954;1967; 1981), Martin Banham and Clive Wake (1976), Michael Etherton (1982) and Biodun Jeyifo (1984). These scholars, without doubt, have done a great deal of work on Ògúnṣọlá and his theatre company. However, they have not given specific attention to the socio-cultural aspects of Ògúnṣọlá's plays. Therefore, this dissertation intends to carry out a fairly detailed study on the socio-cultural aspects of the late Ògúnṣọlá's folkloric plays so that the philosophical thoughts behind them could be advantageously utilized by the contemporary and future Nigerian societies.

It may be recalled that, in the traditional past, our forebears usually adopted the use of folklore to instil sanity into the minds of youths or adult members of the society in general. They did this through the medium of story-telling, proverbs, myths, legends, riddles and other forms of Yorùbá poetic genres. In

actual fact, this medium contributed in no small measure to the socio-cultural and economic upbringing of many in the Yorùbá traditional society. Finally, therefore, this dissertation tries to discuss, among other things, the significance of folklore within the Yoruba traditional society, its relevance and contribution in the contemporary Nigerian situation and suggests how folklore studies could be manipulated for the development of the present and future Nigerian communities.

Theoretical Framework

Various approaches have been used to study folklore by folklorists and other scholars over the years, and there have been many submissions and counter-submissions on the discipline. Scholars all over the world have, however, agreed that the study of folklore should be a thing of necessity and not a matter of offhand, jocular treatment.

This is probably why Ketner says:

Nothing could be more humane than this important finding, established with the aid of a scientific mode of inference: that folkloric behaviour is not a curiosity, not a symptom of inferiority and ineptitude, not a mass of error, not the exclusive property of the stereotyped "folk", but a sign of one's humanity.⁴

As we have seen above, apart from the fact that folklore studies are considered as necessary in the modern-day context, it is also significant to note that all that man does or believes is entrenched in folklore.

Folklore, according to scholars, is an extremely diversified subject which has been called a mongrel field because, in its name, men have studied apparently miscellaneous things. "Although folklorists have often understood each other impressively well, when describing and analysing objects of immediate scrutiny, the range and scope of the science have always been uncertain."⁵ For instance, when the question of delimiting or defining the field arises, several folklorists and other scholars alike encounter difficulties and experience malaise. From Dorson's point of view, "the study of folklore entails more than merely collecting or presenting selected examples of human traditions. It also requires larger

analysis and synthesis...⁶

Some scholars have approached the subject from the humanistic point of view, stressing that the same tales are directed toward all human beings and so, can scarcely be said to reflect the ethos of a particular people, even when they have been strongly localized.⁷ Some scholars, on the other hand, look at folklore studies from the psychological-psycho-analytical perspective which views the materials of folklore neither functionally nor aesthetically but behaviouristically. The exponents of this theory see myths, dreams, jokes, fairy tales, etc. as expressing hidden layers of unconscious wishes and fears. However, the present writer has decided to approach the study from a socio-cultural perspective, concentrating on a careful analysis of the plays themselves. This is in harmony with the definition of folklore as given by Botkin, Espinosa and Jameson showing a tendency to account for the fact that the phenomena which folklore must study are social facts, and that the point of view developed by the various social sciences should be taken into consideration.⁸ Making reference to The Dictionary of Folklore, Marcel Rioux also says:

There is practically nothing that folklore is not deemed to include—beliefs, mores, customs, traditions, religion, art, techniques..⁹

In the above quotation, one realizes that the study of folklore gives further leads for the investigation of the content of culture, ensuring that important cultural details are not overlooked; it also provides a non-ethnocentric approach to the ways of life of a people.¹⁰ It should be observed that all genres of folklore, as scholars and researchers delineate and recognize them, have cultural and symbolic meanings, and that all texts, framed into genres and performed in socially defined communicative situations, acquire significances beyond the literal meanings of their constituent words.¹¹ Therefore, one may support Rioux's submission that folklore "could include anything from anthropology, sociology, mythology, musicology, to the study of oral literature."¹²

Conscious of the fact that anthropology studies man as a biological, cultural and social animal, the present writer's interest in anthropology has predisposed him to observe the social and cultural behaviour of the society which creates the backcloth for his

chosen artist's creative energies. If we also see anthropology as "the scientific study of man-in-society, a people, their culture, material and non-material: that is, the ideas, values, beliefs, gods and goddesses, institutions, technologies and sciences,"¹³ we would understand why, occasionally, the anthropologists stress the social and cultural mechanisms that enable a society to perform its functions.

It may also be reasserted that a major theoretical interest of a social or cultural anthropologist has always been the comparison of socio-cultural behaviours among different societies and at specific periods. In such comparisons or analyses, attempts are made to account for similarities and differences in those behaviours. The scope of the present study, however, makes it impossible to prove at this time our theoretical interest in cross-societal and cross-cultural comparison, but we have nonetheless attempted to find adequate information on the society which nourished our chosen artist.

Meanwhile, the present writer examines the materials of folklore using eclectically relevant hypotheses from the social sciences. We have looked

for cultural norms and values and predictable laws of behaviour that form a consistent pattern in the semi-literate society in which the chosen artist grew up and had his nourishment and education. We see folklore as an aesthetic product of a society, mirroring its values and offering a projective screen that illuminates its fantasies.

Considering all varieties within folk themes, therefore, we should accept folklore as part of a continuous human process to be studied in its social, cultural and psychological dimensions, or as part of a diffusionary and evolutionary process. As Akiwọṣọ has said,¹⁴ all Nigerian anthropologists and sociologists should, as a matter of urgency, address themselves to the increasing problems of àimòwáàhù in our society which, as some people think, keep on jeopardizing the progress of the nation. This could be partly achieved through recommendations and suggestions from research findings of folklore and other cultural studies.

(iii) The Scope of the Study

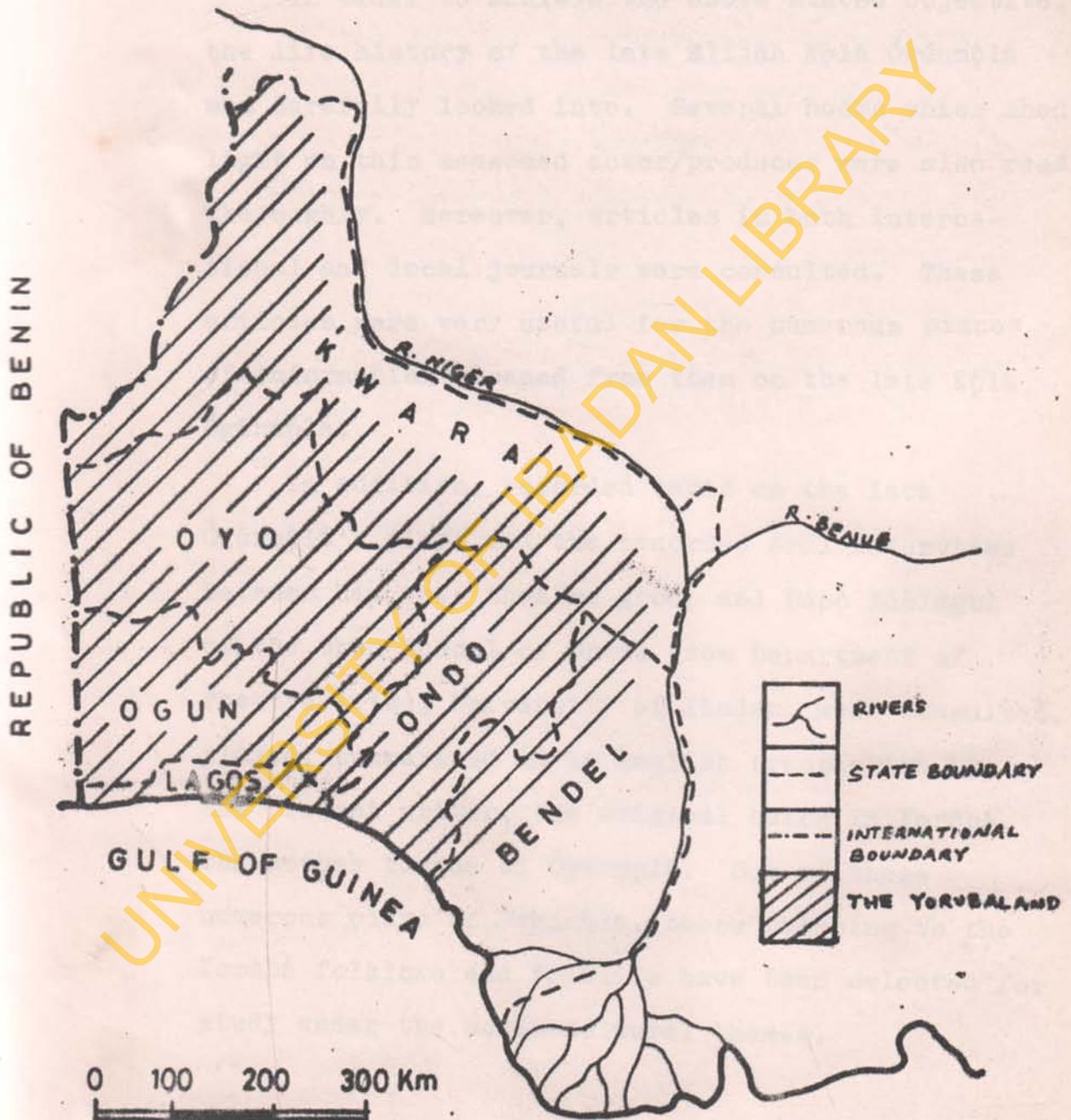
Although the findings of this study may be universally applicable, the dissertation focuses its attention on the Yorùbá geographical environment. According to the geographical delineation of the Yorùbá country by Fadipe (1970:21),

YORUBALAND lies between the parallels 5.86° and 9.22° North, and between 2.65° and 5.72° East. Its southern boundary is the Bight of Benin, and extends from the eastern limit of (former) French Dahomey on the west to the western border of the Kingdom of Benin on the east. To the east it is bounded by the territory of the same Kingdom, and by the Niger up to Etobe, at about 7.3° N. From this point the boundary is in a north-westerly direction, along a straight line drawn rather arbitrarily to meet 90° of latitude immediately due south of Jebba. What may be called its northern boundary continues along the same parallel of 90° north latitude until it merges with the political boundary between the Northern Provinces and the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, which ends at the river Okpara on the French frontier.¹⁴

However, it may not be an easy task to delineate accurately the Yorùbá geographical boundary due to the fact that the colonial boundaries have cut apart several people of the same stock, language and of the same or identical ethnic origin. Nevertheless, we may

posit that the Yorùbá people are found in large numbers in the present Lagos, Ògùn, Oḥdó, Òyó, and, to some degree, Kwara States of Nigeria. Some of these people can also be found in the Republic of Benin, parts of Togo, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Yorùbá people are also found in large numbers in the Americas - Cuba, South Carolina, Brazil, etc. In all these places, despite the problem of acculturation and culture suppression, the Yorùbá culture still persists in several forms. Meanwhile, for clarity of purpose and expression, and also for the attainment of thorough research findings, the Yorùbá people within the Nigerian geographical environment would be focused upon from Ògúnṣá's period till the present day.

MAP OF YORUBALAND, NIGERIA.



(iii) METHODOLOGY

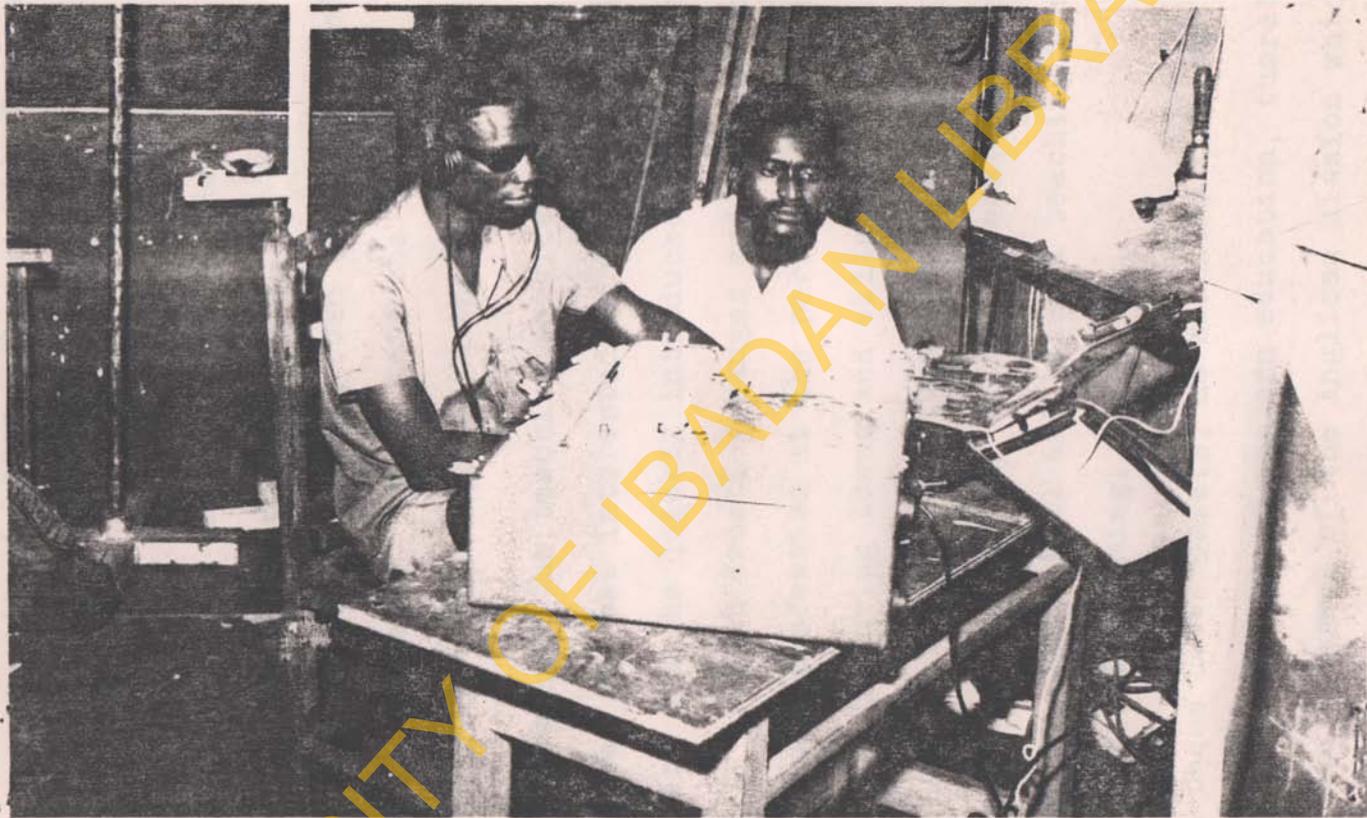
In order to achieve the above stated objective, the life history of the late Elijah Kòlá Ògúnmòlá was carefully looked into. Several books which shed light on this seasoned actor/producer were also read thoroughly. Moreover, articles in both international and local journals were consulted. These articles were very useful for the numerous pieces of information gleaned from them on the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá.

In addition, recorded tapes on the late Ògúnmòlá's plays and the recorded oral interviews between him, his theatre group and Dàpò Adélùgbà of the then School of Drama (now Department of Theatre Arts), University of Ibadan, were consulted, played, summarized in an English translation by the present writer, the original being in Yorùbá, the mother tongue of Ògúnmòlá. Out of these numerous plays of Ògúnmòlá, those relating to the Yorùbá folklore and folklife have been selected for study under the socio-cultural themes.

In addition, the present writer held oral interviews with some living members of the late Kplá Ògúnmòlá's troupe, especially those who were his close associates during his lifetime. Oral communication was held with renowned and seasoned performing artists and scholars within and outside some Nigerian higher institutions of learning, particularly the universities and the colleges of education. Here those who had worked with Ògúnmòlá directly or indirectly, and who had contributed to his success in the performing arts in one way or the other were consulted. Comments from these persons have served as a valuable source of information in this research work.

(iv) Life and Philosophy of Kplá Ògúnmòlá

The life of the late Elijah Kplá Ògúnmòlá was full of memorable events. According to Ògúnmòlá himself, he had been interested in drama and the theatre profession right from youth, and the attributes inherent in this famous popular performing artist started to manifest themselves from then.¹⁵



The recording technician (left) with Dàpò Adélùgbà, leader of the recording team (right) in the studio (1968) during a consultative session.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

Elijah Kṣlā Ògúnṃṃlā' was born at Òkè Ìmṣí, Ondo State of Nigeria, in 1923. He had his elementary schooling at Íjerò-Èkiti, and later became a school teacher at Adó-Èkiti. He then moved to a mission school at Òtùn-Èkiti, under Archdeacon Henry Dallimore who was his superintendent. It was from these humble beginnings that he rose to the post of a headmaster before he finally left the teaching service for full-time business in the performing arts.

When he was in the teaching service, the late Ògúnṃṃlā loved and was interested in drama and music to the extent that he quickly introduced innovations that rapidly brought drastic changes and developments in the teaching profession at the period. He organised parades to neighbouring towns and villages in order to draw more pupils to Western education. He also requested for some musical instruments from the local superintendent of his mission school and started teaching his pupils the art of drumming.

With these developments, he was able to draw children of school age to western education, thereby promoting the interest of the Anglican Mission which he was working for. After some years, Ògúnṃṃlā started organising and staging some dramatic plays

in his school with his pupils as members of his cast. Later, he became famous in theatre production and drama but used the church, school and court halls for his plays.

In 1961, Ogunmola left the teaching profession and became a full-time professional actor and director. As regards the theatre performances, the late Ogunmola proved beyond reasonable doubt that he was endowed with extra-ordinary talents. For example, the innate ability and the imperative urge in him warranted the move to organise some of his school pupils to form his first amateur theatre group.

There is no doubt that, from the outset, the late Ogunmola was an extraordinary man in several aspects of human endeavour, particularly in the field of the performing arts. He excelled many of his contemporaries with regard to acting on the stage, the management of his theatrical company and also in lively social interaction with other people in the society. Ogunmola exploited fully his natural talents to rise to an enviable position before his demise. Therefore, he could be regarded as one of the greatest heroes in the performing arts during his period and



The Arts Theatre auditorium at the University of Ibadan where the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá was appointed as an Artist-in-residence in 1962 and at which he and his company gave many performances during his lifetime. Sitting at the extreme right is the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá while his senior wife, Táyò Ògúnmòlá, sits at the extremis left. At the middle are Ògúnmòlá's children.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Photographic Division, 1968.

he has left a legacy which several theatre practitioners now emulate.

As could be rightly assumed, he was converted to the christian religion, and his knowledge, experience and activities as a christian contributed considerably to his theatrical expertise. With this background, Ògúnṣọlá could successfully produce his first play titled "Reign of the Mighty" which was an adaptation from the Biblical story of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.¹⁷

Ògúnṣọlá was a man of courage, ambition and determination. He usually faced the problems of life with courage and perseverance. This view was remarked by Ulli Beier when he said that Ògúnṣọlá "was a philosopher who could accept the hardest fate calmly."¹⁸ In spite of the fact that he knew not what the future had in store for him, Ògúnṣọlá faced his theatre business with much confidence and optimism, though he was financially handicapped.

Another attribute of the late Kọlá Ògúnṣọlá worthy of note was the managerial skill he possessed. It is far from an exaggeration to say that Ògúnṣọlá

was one of the best managers/actors of his period. He efficiently managed his business by giving necessary incentives to members of his troupe. He was neither too harsh nor too gentle. With patience and words of encouragement, he won the confidence and co-operation of his workers. This is in conformity with the Yorùbá adage which says, "Àgbà tó ní sùfùrù, ohun gbogbo ló ní" meaning, "An elder who is endowed with patience possesses everything."

Ògúnmólá was a man of proven integrity and transparent honesty. This can be deduced from the statement he made that he always promised his workers what he thought he could afford to pay them, and this he paid them regularly.¹⁹ This also contributed immensely to the success of his theatre business.

As regards physical performances and acting on the stage, the late Kólá Ògúnmólá was a great actor. He had a good command of Yorùbá, his native language, which he always made use of to arouse the enthusiasm of his audience. He was humorous, and bold, physically active and mentally alert. This is probably why Wọle Şoyinka who is a keen admirer of Ògúnmólá remarked:

Ògunmólá's presence on the stage is that of a theatre-breathing, theatre-eating fiend, and one feels that with a few demons of possession like this man ignited at the tail and let loose on the world a transformation might indeed take place in the public's aesthetic consciousness... (Ògunmólá's) verbal manipulations and facility with vocal nuances make him, quite simply, as consummate an actor as one may hope to find on any stage in the country.²⁰

The Nobel Prize winner also pointed out in one of his comments that the late Ògúnmólá was an actor whose mere presence on the stage was "nearly always a complete dramatic statement."²¹

Ògunmólá was indeed a real actor blessed with extra-ordinary power and the wisdom of innovation. Departing from the pattern of Ogunde's plays, it was said that Ògúnmólá cut out the music hall element - the horse-play, the sexual appeal, the saxophone, etc., and tried to substitute all this with serious acting. According to Ulli Beier (1967: 247),

Ògúnmólá's forte is his acting-his mime in particular...As an actor, and even as a director, he can reach great heights.²²

In another account, Ulli Beier also wrote that what made Ògúnmólá's performance an experience of a different kind was the quality of his acting. According to Beier,

There was sensitivity here, an attention to detail that was totally captivating.



:Discussion between Dàpò Adélùgbà (right) and the late Kòlá Ògúnṣà (left) during one of the recording sessions.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

Even with virtually no knowledge of Yoruba one could follow any tiny shade of meaning and mood. The acting was selectively realistic....²³

Therefore, it can be contended that the late Kòlá Ògúnṣòlá excelled many of his contemporaries in the field of the performing arts, with particular reference to acting on stage.

Ògúnṣòlá's plays centre basically on Yorùbá philosophy and socio-cultural life patterns; and one of the major themes was the teaching of morals and ethics within the Yorùbá society. In doing this, he attempted to encourage peaceful co-existence among people. Like some of his contemporary performing artists, he always emphasized the importance of morals and social ethics in his plays in order to teach or instil a sense of good comportment (Jeyifo 1984).²⁴

For the fact that Ògúnṣòlá was born and bred within the Yorùbá cultural environment, he was able to utilise effectively this knowledge and experience of the Yorùbá culture he possessed for the success of his theatre profession. Thus, he was able to arouse



Kòlá Ògúnmòlà in action in one of his productions.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Photographic Division, 1968.

the interest of his audience and make them ponder on the adulterated Yorùbá socio-cultural life with the aim of correcting the unpleasant aspects.

Speaking further on the nature of Ògúnṣọlá's plays, Ulli Beier noted:

Ògúnṣọlá's plays, however, were preceded by a number called the "Opening Glee", in which the audience is told in advance about the story they are about to see, and in which a suitable moral is drawn.²⁵

With all these things in mind, Ògúnṣọlá was probably of the view that moral teaching could be one of the means by which the Yoruba society could overcome some of the vices that have plagued the contemporary Yorùbá society or the Nigerian nation in general. Ògúnṣọlá seems to point out that life has two sides - the sweet (pleasant) aspect and the bitter (unpleasant). This is probably why he chose to introduce tragedy and comedy into his plays. Although many people would always prefer pleasant and favourable events, Ògúnṣọlá was probably re-emphasizing the Yorùbá philosophy which states that there must be ups and downs in the life of humankind before it could be meaningful and

successful.

Meanwhile, it may be unfair to discuss the life and philosophy of the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá without pausing to look at the relationship that existed between him and members of his theatre group. Therefore, a brief discussion of this will now be attempted. From the recorded interviews between Dàpò Adélùgbà and Ògúnmòlá's theatre group, and from oral communications and interviews with some living members of the group, the present writer could deduce that, unlike Ògúnmòlá, interest was not the major concern that drew the majority of his workers into theatre practice. It was discovered that many of them were under-employed or really unemployed before they decided to take up the theatre job as a last resort. On the other hand, it was also discovered that many of them were not well educated enough to secure white-collar jobs. Some completed the elementary school with poor results while some dropped out even before they got to the final class. Others learnt some trades or vocations but were not financially viable enough to set up or establish



Wale Ogunyemi, a member of the recording team,
himself a dramatist and an actor/director.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African
Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic
Division, 1968.

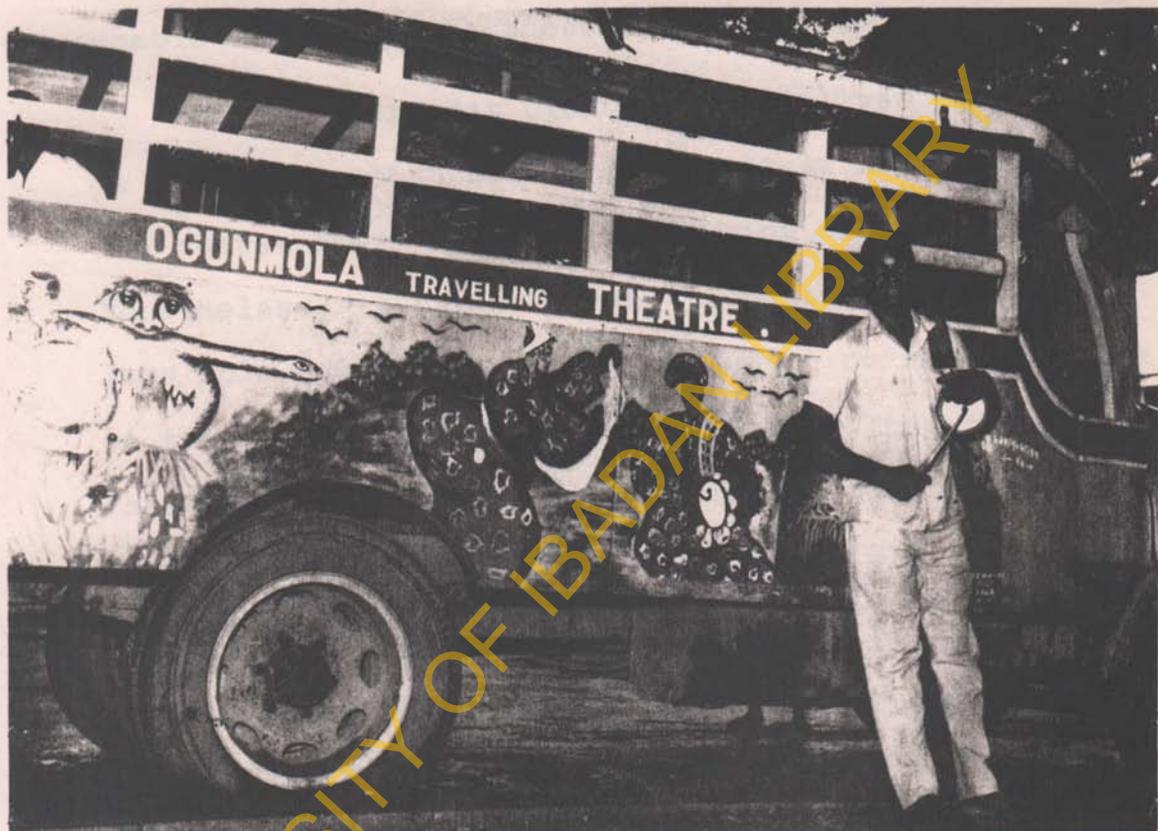
businesses on their own. Most of them could not secure what they considered more congenial jobs. This was one of the teething problems faced by Ògúnmólá as a sole director of his theatre business; but, with some degree of competence and diplomacy, he managed to solve this seemingly insurmountable problem, and he achieved success.²⁶

Another problem which could have shattered Ògúnmólá's ambition was his poor financial standing. Lack of adequate finance adversely affected Ògúnmólá's success directly or otherwise during the early period. Some members of his theatre group who might have developed interest in the theatre and performing arts and who could have remained permanently with him were discouraged by the poor remuneration and the low wages they were being paid. With a sense of good comportment, kind-heartedness and a calm sense of responsibility, Ògúnmólá overcame this problem. He always appreciated the efforts and performances of his men; he compensated them and offered them words of encouragement.²⁷ He would not promise what he

would not be able to offer them, and he made available all what he promised them at the appointed time. This claim was substantiated by Beier when he remarked: "Ògúnṣplá inspired great loyalty in his company and kept his troupe together extremely well."²⁸

In turn, members of Ògúnṣplá's theatre group acknowledged their leader's kind-heartedness, honesty, generosity and sense of responsibility, as proved by the type of training which they received from him; and they confidently boasted that they could compete favourably with any other Nigerian or African dramatic group of the period. Some even claimed that, with the experience and training they had got, they could successfully set up and manage effectively their own theatre companies, if they were financially opportuned in future.²⁹

Ògúnṣplá, being an ambitious man, hoped to expand his theatre company at a later date by building a large hall which would accommodate a large theatre, and also a hotel. He also thought of filming all his plays when time permitted. But



Members of Kólá Ògúnmólá's theatre group in the Travelling Theatre's lorry. Standing beside the lorry is one of the performers holding a drum.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

quite unfortunately, the cruel hands of death snatched him away at his prime of life and he was unable to accomplish these laudable objectives.

Had it been that Ògúnṣọlá still lives today, he would have been one of the greatest heroes among the contemporary Nigerian performing artists. Nonetheless, it is no exaggeration to say that the late Kọlá Ògúnṣọlá had contributed in no small measure to the upliftment of the modern Yorùbá Travelling Theatre tradition, and that, after his death, the Yorùbá theatre has been developing rapidly.

Finally, the name Kọlá Ògúnṣọlá will for ever remain indelible in the history of the Travelling Theatre in Africa. This is for the simple fact that he was one of the pioneering founders of the Travelling Theatre tradition in Nigeria. In addition, Ògúnṣọlá's theatre group was one of the top-rated few during its heyday. To support this assertion, Etherton (1982) has this to say:

It was the opinion of many who saw Kòlá Ògúnmòlá perform his plays that he was the most brilliant actor of the 1950s and 1960s.³⁰

Commenting on this great performing artist, Jeyifo also remarked:

Some famous and acclaimed actors and actresses do not of course get stuck with such a stage label derived from some particular production. Rather they attract the adulation of the audience in their own idiosyncratic expressions from role to role. The outstanding example of this is the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá, who is justifiably and universally acclaimed to have been the greatest actor the Travelling Theatre has provided to date.³¹

Meanwhile, looking carefully at Ògúnmòlá's plays and viewing them from a socio-cultural perspective, one would notice that Ògúnmòlá had deliberated on many issues of our contemporary period. It also seems, from these plays, that Ògúnmòlá was then prying into the future of the Yorùbá society and suggesting some solutions to the unavoidable future problems which need critical studies and careful appraisal. If this could be properly done, there is no doubt that his experience, knowledge and philosophy could be borrowed and made use of, with the basic aim of having a coherent, peaceful,

developing and progressive nation.

(v) A Typological Survey of the Late Kòlá Ògúnmolá's Plays

It is worthy of note that Ògúnmolá and his theatre group had produced and staged more than fifty plays on various themes dealing with social, economic, religious and other natural phenomena within the Yorùbá society. At the initial stage of his theatre career, he made use of his knowledge and experience as a christian to produce some plays relating to the Biblical 'tales' of the Old and the New Testaments. But, according to Beier, most of the performances in the Biblical plays "are everyday events from an entirely Yorùbá setting."³²

Although this dissertation aims at studying Ògúnmolá's folkloric plays, it is pertinent to classify in a nutshell all his plays before focusing attention on the major topic. This is necessary in order not to mingle his unique and peculiar style of production with those of his contemporaries in the performing arts. While Dúró Ládipò's plays centre

mostly on legendary, mythical, or historical accounts and figures, most of Ògúndé's plays focus attention on political events and the social conscience of the nation. On the other hand, most of Ògúnmlá's plays deal with mundane events. This point was also remarked by Jeyifo (1984) when he wrote;

Ògúnmlá's plays deal mostly with the mundane realities of everyday existence, sufficiently generalised in terms of the constitutive situations of the plots such that any given member of the audience can easily identify with them.³³

In other words, Ògúnmlá looked at what was operating within his immediate environment at the period, studied the situation critically and made a humorous production of this on the stage for his audience's reactions. This is because he was of the contention that man's problems originate from man and not from any non-physical realm or from the gods or spirits. Therefore, he believed that only man could solve these problems by himself through radical and revolutionary changes.

Meanwhile, to classify Ògúnmlá's plays into types or categories may not be an easy task.

This is because several themes overlap or run concurrently in some of the plays and a line of demarcation may be difficult to draw between them. Hence, it may be impossible to have a clear-cut classification of the plays now until further research has been done. Nonetheless, we have tried as much as possible to make a rough typological classification.

Kòlá Ògúnmólá's plays could be classified into five main categories/types. These are: the "Biblical plays", "Plays from Written Novels", "Plays on Cultural Beliefs", "Ethical Plays" and the "Folkloric Plays".

(a) Biblical Plays

The Biblical plays of Ògúnmólá are those produced by adapting some famous/popular Biblical stories and incorporating them into the Yorùbá socio-cultural setting. These plays include "Ojò Ìbí Krístì" ("Birth of Christ"), "Hannah's Trial," "Joseph and his Brethren" and "Reign of the Mighty."³⁴

(b) Plays from Written Novels

Apart from his Biblical plays, Ògúnṣọlá also produced some plays from stories he adapted from written novels. The most popular among these plays are, The Palmwine Drinkard³⁵ (written in English), "Àdítú Olódùmarè" which was adapted from D.O. Fágúnwà's Àdítú Olódùmarè,³⁶ and "Ìpín Àiṣẹ," adapted with slight variations from Aláwiyé, Apá Kẹta³⁷ which was written by J.F. Ọdunjo (1949). Though there were elements of folktales in these plays, the original works had appeared in published form as books before Ògúnṣọlá adapted them for his own plays.

(c) Plays on Yoruba Cultural Beliefs

Another type which occurs among Ògúnṣọlá's works are those plays based on Yoruba cultural belief systems. These include "Kádàrá ọ Papọ" (Individual destinies differ), "Èyìn Ọla" (The Future), "Baba ni baba n jẹ" (An elder is always an elder), "Èni Ọlórún là" (He who is made wealthy by God), "Bíkà Kúure, kó ní sùn-unre" (If a wicked person dies well, he would not rest peacefully), "Ọlórún ló mọla" (Only God knows the future), and "Ọrìṣà jẹ n pé méjì

obinrin kò dénú" (No woman is ever happy to get a co-wife).

Like several other religious believers worldwide, the Yorùbá people believe in predestination, and they always attribute any positive or negative occurrence in life to destiny. However, this may be a controversial issue which is not a subject of our discussion in this dissertation. Also, they are always mindful of the future when, they believe, the order of things may change radically either in one's favour or otherwise. Moreover, they also believe that elders or the aged people must be honoured and respected because of their wisdom and as a result of their experiences in life. This is in conformity with the Biblical injunction which states that, elders, particularly our parents, must be respected and given due honour and regard.³⁸

Majority of the Yorùbá people hold the belief that no one knows what one would become in future and that it is only Olódùmarè (the Supreme Being) who knows the future and could predict what would happen to any creature. The people also generally

believe that only Olódùmarè could redeem man from world disasters. Furthermore, they are of the view that goodness is godliness and that a disastrous end awaits every wicked soul. Hence, they often say that, even if a wicked man dies well, he would not rest peacefully.

Lastly, it is worthy of note that the Yorùbá people are customarily polygynous, probably due to some social and economic reasons; yet, they believe that monogamy is ideal. This contention can be substantiated by an Ifá poem which reads,

Ọkan ọpọ ọrọ lobinrin dùn mọ lẹwọ ọkọ.
 Bì wọn bà di méjì
 Wọn a dẹjówù.
 Bì wọn bà di mẹta,
 Wọn a dẹta ntúlé,
 Bì wọn bà di mẹrin,
 Wọn a di iwọ lo rin mi ni mo rin ọ....

A single wife/woman is the ideal thing for
a husband.

When they become two,

They start to envy each other.

When they become three,
 They make the house to be desolate
 If they become four,
 They start to suspect each other of
 ridicule...³⁹

From the above Ifá poem, one may deduce that traditional Yorùbá people know the implications of polygyny but their socio-economic situation tends to support the idea of having more than one wife.

(d) Ethical Plays

The plays categorised under this heading are those that relate to the Yoruba ethics and moral values. These include "Òfo Agbá" (Empty Barrel), "Èéfín Niwá" (Character is like smoke), "Àṣejù" (Overstepping one's bounds/overdoing), "Olóḍótọ́ ilú" (The honest one in the society), "Inú borí jẹ" (Character spoilt the ^{would-be} destiny/luck), "Ọjà Okùnkùn" (Black market/deal), "Hell on Earth," "Ìfẹ́ Owó" (Love of Money), "Èrì-ọkàn" (Conscience), "Aitètè mólè" (Slowness in catching a thief), "Ìjáfara léwu" (Procrastination is risky), "Ọlọgbọ́n

ẹwẹ" (The cunning one), "Ẽni a bíire" (One who is born nobly), "Ojú ẹ mẹrin" (When Four Eyes Meet) and "Ohun ojú wá lojú fí rí" (Self-imposed disaster).

The above categorised ethical plays seem to mirror some of the social vices in Ògúnmólá's time and also in the contemporary Nigerian society. Looking around in the society right from Ògúnmólá's time, one discovers that there is an unprecedented wave of criminal acts and violence everywhere. Tragically, the stable family unit is being rapidly broken down through divorce, separation and desertion. Vicious criminal behaviour occurs almost everywhere, especially among the youths. The family structure is most greatly fragmented and it seems that good ethics or moral behaviour has eluded our society for quite some time. Therefore, it might have been the opinion of Ogunmola that, before things could be reshaped, a moral and stable family life is very necessary. He probably believed that, if the family fails in its effort to discipline a youngster, thereby instilling in him/her a sense of self-discipline, then it later becomes the almost hopeless job of the courts to accomplish

this aim. With these plays, Ògúnṣàlá kept emphasizing that the youths must be taught to know their responsibilities by parents and other adults in the society. They should be taught to recognize, resist and overcome emotional feelings of instability, destructiveness, defiance of authority or lying in their character. According to Donald D. Schroeder, "If a society doesn't train its youths in such attitudes in the early years of life, it is certain to have a horrendous crime problem."⁴⁰

(e) Folkloric Plays

One of the means by which the traditional Yorùbá people imparted knowledge and moral ethics to their youths and to the adults as well was through folklore. Various stories about mundane or mythical figures were told, legends of past heroes were narrated; proverbs, riddles and other types of traditional poetic genres were chanted. Unfortunately, however, this method by which discipline was being inculcated into the society is

gradually being set aside. Therefore, due to lack of good comportment within the Yorùbá community, peace and harmonious living have been difficult to achieve. Consequently, the contemporary Yorùbá society (to be precise) seems to be at the cross-roads.

The foreign culture and ways of life have persistently been gaining ground and the indigenous Yorùbá man has rejected, totally or partially, his traditional cultural heritage. The Yorùbá people, particularly the youths, now stick to their television and radio sets where they listen to and watch adulterated cultural programmes and films. These, in some cases, have contributed to cases of criminal behaviour and carefree attitudes among the youths of the contemporary Yorùbá society. Consequently, it seems that the embracing of the foreign cultures has adversely affected the moral and spiritual growth of the youths in our society. It is with all this at the back of his mind that the late Kplá Ògúnmólá probably believes that this problem can be minimized if the folklore technique

is adopted through dramatic performances and play-wrighting. This is perhaps why he chose to tackle some of the seemingly insurmountable problems by means of folkloric plays.

In our overview above, we have classified Ògúnṣọlá's plays under five headings. The main focus of this dissertation, however, is on the folkloric plays. It should be noted that the present writer does not claim perfection in this classification. What has been done, therefore, is to bring like to like and make an analytical discussion to back up one's claim. Invariably, there may not be a clear-cut demarcation between each of the classes and other analysts and critics may view each play from different perspectives. Nonetheless, the present writer has decided to adopt this classification in order to avoid ambiguity.

(iv) Thematic Analysis of Kólá Ògúnṣọlá's Folkloric Plays

Ten of Kólá Ògúnṣọlá's plays have been classified under the folkloric type. These are:

- "Sùúrù Lágbà" (Patience is the oldest or best),
 "Ọgbọ̀n ju agbàra" (Wisdom surpasses power),
 "Ọjú la rí" (Appearances are deceptive),
 "Ajé kí í gbé" (Well-earned money is never lost),
 "Aṣoore-má-ṣiká" (He who always does good and never performs cruel acts),
 "Èrú yátò s'òmò" (Betwixt slave and son there's a difference),
 "Bólòrun ò pani, ọba/^{kan}kò lè pani" (Kings wield power, God's is the Supreme Power),
 "Ọlòrun ló mọ̀jọ̀ dá" (God is the equitable judge),
 "Èsù Ọ̀dàrà" (The devilish Èsù),
 and The Palmwine Drinkard.⁴¹

The introduction of Yorùbá folklore by most of the Yorùbá popular playwrights and performing artists can be easily explained. According to Oyekan Owomoyela (1971), it was a nationalistic gesture and a reaction to foreign oppression and a bid to return to the native culture. Owomoyela then quoted James Coleman who remarked,

The special grievances of the westernised elements (in Nigeria) were crucial factors in the awakening of racial and political

consciousness. Much of their resentment, of course, was the inevitable outcome of the disorganisation following rapid social change.⁴²

In the light of all this, the emergent Yorùbá popular performing artists started to react against domination and gradually declining to emulate European theatrical methods by adapting these to the African socio-cultural life and replacing the foreign material with the traditional ones. Moreover, the Yorùbá popular theatre depended on folklore as a matter of expediency.

As remarked by Owoboyelá,

... folklore is a vast treasury of theatre material. The tales furnish a wealth of plots, the proverbs and such eulogistic poems as oriki, ijálá and ewi provided rich examples of ornamental dialogue, and if we include folkways in folklore, the physical actions connected with certain festivals give to dramatic actions ideas that are effective on stage.⁴³

Meanwhile, it is important in this study to make a thematic analysis of Ògúnwólá's folkloric plays before we look closely into their contents later. Here, for the sake of brevity, we will concentrate on the major

themes in these folkloric plays, although references will be made to some of the minor themes when and where necessary.

The major themes in Ògúnṣẹ́lá's folkloric plays may be put under the sub-headings of 'Social Vices,' 'Significance of Patience,' 'Endurance and Perseverance,' 'Patriotism and Dedication,' 'Fruits of Dishonesty and/or Kind-heartedness,' 'The Mightiness of God,' and 'Appearance Depicts Importance.'

A. SOCIAL VICES

Ògúnṣẹ́lá emphasized the effects of some social vices during his days, and probably what should be expected in the future Nigerian society. Some of the aspects he touched upon are drunkenness, illicit love with women and the excessive use of power. In "Ogbón Ju agbára," he pointed out how drunkenness, illicit love with women and an uncontrolled tongue made the war leader and the entire citizenry of Ọ̀yiyá town lose their sovereignty when the princess of Onikán-ún town disguised

as an honest visitor to the war leader of Òyiyà town. The war leader of Òyiyà town was enticed to alcoholic drink which he took excessively and he became drunk. Probably, he would have liked to have sexual intercourse with the princess if she had stayed longer. Finally, he could not but reveal all secret information about his power to the princess from Oníkánfún town.

B. PATIENCE, ENDURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Among the Yorùbá people, patience, perseverance and endurance are believed to be very important assets for anyone who intends to achieve success in life. Hence, a Yorùbá proverb, Àgbà tó ní sùúrù, ohun gbogbo ló ní (An elder who possesses patience has everything). The Yorùbá people uphold the view that, without patience, no undertaking in life could be successful. Ògúnṣọlá revealed this in "Sùúrù l'ágbà" when he showed us Kéyindé as Sùúrù (Patience), Táyéwò as Owó (money)

and Ìdòwú as Omọ (children). Here, he personified Sùúrù, Owó and Omọ as Kéyìndé, Táyéwò and Ìdòwú respectively. In spite of all odds, Sùúrù (Kéyìndé) became victorious when Owó (Táyéwò) and Omọ (Ìdòwú) returned to her and put all their wealth and properties in Sùúrù's care.

C. PATRIOTISM AND DEDICATION

Ògúnmọlá emphasized that what could make a nation prosper and develop is patriotism and the total dedication of one's life to one's fatherland. In "Ogbon Ju Agbara," the princess of Oníkán-ún dedicated her life to the redemption of her town; and, because of her patriotism, she could achieve her aim. Thus, she redeemed her people from perpetual bondage. As we have stated above, this play is an adaptation from the legendary story of Mbremí, an Ifẹ queen.

D. FRUITS OF KIND-HEARTEDNESS AND HONESTY

Ògúnṣọlá re-echoed the Yorùbá belief that good deeds are rewarding. It was a general consensus that individual persons would reap what they sow. Hence, they always say, Ìká á koníkà, rere á bẹni rere (Evil would befall an evil-doer, while a kind-hearted man would reap his/her good deeds). Ògúnṣọlá also re-echoed this in "Aṣoore-máṣíkà". In this play, Ògúnṣọlá reminded us that problems would always arise as one continually performs good deeds, but that the fruit of such behaviour would definitely be reaped at a later date.

E. APPEARANCE DEPICTS IMPORTANCE

The above theme seems to be a controversial one in the sense of a Yorùbá proverb that says Aṣọ ńlá kò lẹ́yàn ńlá (A big and expensive garment does not depict bigness or responsibility). On the other hand, another Yorùbá adage says, Ìrínisí ni ẹnì lẹ́jọ́.

(Appearance/behaviour depicts how one would be treated). These two proverbs seem to contradict each other but it has been discovered that the former proverb is not a complete one. According to my source, the proverb is negated by the suffixional phrase, ... a fi ní dá inú alákiisá dún ní (... it is to console the man in tattered clothes). Therefore, Ògúnṣlá, like any other Yorùbá man, was probably of the view that one's character/appearance or actions would reveal the type of person one is, and how responsible one would be. This is why Alṣlá, a slave to Dáwodù in "Èrú yátò s'òmp" (Betwixt slave and son, there is a difference), behaved poorly and revealed his identity as a slave, despite all the golden opportunities he had. The late Ògúnṣlá adapted this play from the Yorùbá folktale, "Ìdà ní yóò pé ara rẹ̀ lẹ̀rú" (It is Ìdà who would identify himself as a slave).

F. THE MIGHTINESS OF GOD

Under this theme, Ògúnṣlá re-emphasized the mightiness of God, and of His power prevailing over

that of Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà. In "Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà" (The Devilish Èṣù), Ọ̀gúnṣọ́lá pointed out that, though Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà is powerful, his (Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà's) power was quite small compared to that of Olódumare, the Supreme Being.

The Yorùbá people believe that God is the only impartial Judge. Ọ̀gúnṣọ́lá re-echoed this cultural belief in "Ọ̀lórún ló mọ́jọ́ọ́ dá" (God is the Equitable Judge). He also pointed out the mightiness and omnipotence of God in "B'Ọ̀lórún-ò-pani-ọ̀ba-kan-ò-le-pani." In these folkloric plays, Ọ̀gúnṣọ́lá showed how the power of God always prevails over that of Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà.

Apart from the general classification of the late Kọ́lá Ọ̀gúnṣọ́lá's plays that has already been done, six major themes in the plays that depict the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the Yorùbá people have been identified above. Each of the themes has been assessed while the philosophical thoughts behind them have been briefly discussed. No doubt, this may serve as informed education for grooming the youths and may also help to bring out reflections

on the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the Yorùbá people.

(vii) Significance of Folklore in Yorùbá Socio-Cultural Life

It is an indisputable fact that folklore played an important role in the traditional Yorùbá society; but before narrating the significance or role of folklore, it is pertinent to give a succinct definition of what it connotes.

It should be noted that folklorists are just beginning to look at Africa, and a great quantity of folklore material has been gathered from African countries in the 19th Century and published by missionaries, travellers, administrators, linguists, and anthropologists, although this has been incidental to their own pursuits. Dorson (1972), while making reference to a Committee of the African Studies Association's report on the state of research in African Arts, submits that, despite the fact that Africa is the continent supreme for traditional cultures that nurture folklore, "no field worker has devoted himself exclusively or even largely to the

recording and analysis of folklore materials" until recent times.⁴⁴

It is unfortunate that scholars have not agreed on a single definition of folklore up till today. There have been arguments and counter-submissions on this issue and many folklorists have defined folklore from various perspectives. For instance, The Dictionary of Folklore records twenty-one definitions as given by various scholars.⁴⁵ According to ten authors out of the twenty-one, "there is practically nothing that folklore is not deemed to include: beliefs, mores, customs, traditions, religion, art, techniques...." while three of them stress the social aspect of folklore. What some of these scholars called folklore, others call sociology or social anthropology.⁴⁶

Folklore is a diversified subject which may not be defined with a single sentence or given a single definition. Folklore genres "have been woven out of the substance of human experience - struggles with the land and the elements, movements and migrations, wars between kingdoms, conflicts over pastures and

waterholes, and wrestlings with the mysteries of existence, life and death."⁴⁷ These are products of long reflections about the relations among humans, between man and woman, between humankind and the animal world.

According to Dorson (1972), the term "folklore" was coined in England in 1846, when members of the educated gentry discovered with astonishment that an alien culture of the "lower orders" surrounded them and was expressed in collections of local tales, customs, and beliefs."⁴⁸ However, since the beginning of the 19th century and for most of the 20th century, "folklore has referred to those products of the human spirit created outside the written record and kept alive by oral transmission."⁴⁹ Genres of folklore are taken to be folksong and folktale, passed on to participatory audiences by an active tradition bearer, folkdance practised in a group with ancient choreography and untutored leaders, folk plays and ancient rituals, folk medicine, weather lore, etc.

With reference to the theories and speculations brought about by scholars like Morgan, Tylor and Frazer

on the nature of history and literature,

'Folklore' became popular as a term to describe the supposed customs, beliefs, and the culture of both 'early' man and his presumed equivalents today: contemporary 'primitive' peoples and the modern peasants, i.e. the 'folk' among whom could still, supposedly, be found traces of the earlier stages of unilineal human evolution. (Finnegan, 1970.)⁵⁰

In this case, folklore could be seen as the totality of the beliefs, customs, culture and the ways of life of a people, particularly the peasants. This is evidenced in the use of folktales, legends, myths, proverbs, pithy sayings, poetic renditions, etc. In sum, folklore is the way of life of a people in all its totality from the traditional past. Unfortunately for the Yorùbá folklore, it was not committed to writing before the advent of the colonial masters when the Yorùbá language was reduced to writing. It was being transmitted orally from one generation to the other.⁵¹

Among the Yorùbá people of Nigeria, folklore plays an important role in shaping the life of the youths and adults alike. This medium is used daily to instil morals and teach the youths about the social and cultural institutions of the people. Up till today, there is no man or woman within the Yorùbá cultural environment who could deny the fact that he had used, or heard others use folklore genres. Stressing the importance of folklore in the Yorùbá socio-cultural environment, Owomoyela has this to say:

Folklore is so significant and important a part of Yorùbá culture that it must be the quarry of all who wish to know about the Yorùbá past, the Yorùbá mind, and the Yorùbá world. It is in a real sense that equivalent of the literature of the literate societies, performing for the Yorùbá all the functions that literature of sorts, religious, ethical, medical, historical, and artistic, perform for literates (1970: 69).²

From the above quotation, it is clear that the socio-cultural life of the Yorùbá people is enshrined in their folklore. Therefore, to understand the past and/or the minds of this people, one has to exploit the knowledge within their folklore. This is probably why the 'young' generation of the

Yorùbá popular theatre practitioners and dramatists use, among other sources, the Yorùbá folklore to condemn the social vices that have eaten deep into the fabric of the contemporary society.

Expressing his own view, E.K. Martins (1936:14) wrote as follows:

As a means of general entertainment, our folklore is never lacking. Folk stories may be...dramatized and the songs accompanying them practised and sung in the vernacular.⁵³

It should be recalled that, in the traditional societies, folk stories and tales were usually told to entertain people, particularly the youths, in the moonlit evenings and after the day's work had been completed. These people were educated through this medium and their lives were moulded by the moral tales and instructions.

Owomoyela further remarked that folklore is the single most important element of Yorùbá culture showing their cultural heritage and giving meaning to the phenomenon they experience (1970:104).⁵⁴

Therefore, it should be borne in mind that folklore

provides material for plays of a topical nature, and that folkloric plays engender enthusiasm and awaken interest, on the condition that they express present-day aspirations. This is probably why Bakary Traoré (1972) is of the opinion that,

A complete return to the past can lead only to works which, for all their brilliance, would only strike a false and long forgotten note. The present day has scant sympathy for forgotten themes. We must seek to go beyond history and myth, to re-adjust our models to fit the needs of our own times.⁵⁵

This accounts for the reason why the language of these plays is always in the vernacular, and why they draw heavily upon adages, myths, legends, proverbs, the vivid metaphors, and the repetitions and parallelisms of oral literature, and the attraction of the productions lies partly in the songs and dances accompanying them.

In her own submission, Gladys Reichard states that stories, folktales, proverbs, songs and other folklore genres are used to relieve tedium. She then

remarks that:

Even among the Africans where the moralizing element is ever present in fables, the stories are told and are enjoyed by them as much as children ...the mythology is not primarily for the children, but rather an aesthetic adult outlet and may be told to put adults as well as children to sleep.⁵⁶

In the above quotation, Reichard reminds us that folklore is occasionally used as a means of relaxation and to relieve one from some of the worries of life. She is also of the conviction that some folklore genres are useful in instilling morals in children and adults alike.

Another important submission by Owomoyela concerning the significance of folkloric plays is that they usually reveal man's frustrations and attempts to escape in fantasy from repressions imposed upon him by society, whether sexual or otherwise, and also man's attempt in fantasy to escape from the conditions of his geographical environment.⁵⁷

According to Bascom, "the recording of folklore, in itself, is a useful field technique for the anthropologist" and it may offer clues to past events

and to archaic customs which are no longer in actual practice. Folklore may provide a means of getting esoteric features of culture which cannot be approached in any other way, and also reveal the affective elements of culture, such as attitudes, values and cultural goals. He submits that "the folklore of a people can be fully understood only through a thorough knowledge of their culture."⁵⁸

However, Bascom has given us four functions of folklore in his ^{bid} to point out the significance of the folklore genres. Firstly, he posits that folklore is one of the important means of amusing people. One would observe that amusement relieves tension and makes one wear a fresh look and forget, temporarily, some problems of life which may be cropping up at a particular point in time. He further states that folklore validates culture and justifies its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them. Making reference to Malinowski, Bascom says that myth is not explanatory, but it serves as "a warrant, a charter, and often

even a practical guide" to magic ceremony, ritual and social structure.⁵⁹

The third function of folklore given by Bascom is that which it plays in education, particularly, but not exclusively, in non-literate societies. He states that various tales and stories are occasionally used in the discipline of young children while lullabies are sung to put very young children in good humour. Moreover, fables and folktales incorporating didactic morals are sometimes introduced to inculcate general attitudes and principles of good comportment, such as diligence and filial piety, and to ridicule laziness, rebelliousness and snobbishness, etc. Bascom also stresses the people's belief that information got from folklore is authentic, when he states:

In many non-literate societies, the information embodied in folklore is highly regarded in its own right. To the extent to which it is regarded as historically true, its teaching is regarded as important; and to the extent to which it mirrors culture, it "contains practical rules for the guidance of man".⁶⁰

Emphasizing the role of folklore in education, Opler (1938) also reveals that, "the mythologic system of a people is often their educational system, and the children who sit listening to an evening's tale are imbibing traditional knowledge and ^tattitudes no less than the row of sixth-graders in our modern classrooms."⁶¹ Among the Yorùbá people, for instance, children are taught and educated in every aspect of daily life through the use of folklore and, when they are grown up, they are capable of knowing fully what operates within their social and geographical environment. African folktales are considered as important for the education of children for the fact that many of them, including the animal fables, are moral tales. Thus, folklore appears to be one of the principal features in the general education of the child in most societies.

Finally, Bascom⁶² submits that an important function of folklore which is often overlooked³ is that of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour. He states further that,

apart from simply serving to validate or justify institutions, beliefs and attitudes, some folklore genres are important as means of applying social pressure and exercising social control. These may be employed against individuals who attempt to deviate from social conventions with which they are fully familiar. When this happens, a song of allusion, a proverb, a riddle or a folktale may be used to express disapproval or chide aberrant conduct.

In view of the above, we may rightly submit that folklore usage among the Yorùbá regulates the behaviour, among other things, of the society. Generally, it may also be contended that folklore is an important mechanism for maintaining the stability of culture. It is used to inculcate the customs and ethical standards in the young, and to reward adults with praises when they conform, to punish anyone with ridicule or criticism when he or she deviates from social norms. It is also used to provide rationalizations when the institutions and conventions are challenged or questioned, and to suggest that one be content with things as they are or provide one with a compensatory escape from

the "hardships, the inequalities, injustices" of everyday life. This is evident in the fact that a fair sample of the moral ethics which synthesized the àjòbí and àjògbé phenomena abound in folklore. Hence, the contemporary Yorùbá performing artists, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, among others, probably adopt the use of folklore to inculcate discipline and cultural ethics in the minds of the contemporary people. Lastly, one could submit that the use of folklore among the contemporary Yorùbá dramatists has contributed greatly to the moral and socio-cultural education of our youths and adults and, viewed within this broader perspective, Kólá Ògúnmólá's plays may be re-appraised for their lasting value.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW(i) Concepts of Folklore and Culture

As we are already aware, the term "folklore" became a popular word used by scholars in the middle of the nineteenth century. Dorson¹ states that "two main conditions for the study of folklore are just being realized in Africa." According to him, the two conditions are "the appearance of an intellectual class with a culture partly different from that of the mass of the people, and the emergence of national states." The people, out of their curiosity, started to inquire into collecting the oral genres with the aim of interpreting and analysing them for the use of the societies. Therefore, Dorson finally submits that, "part of the impulse to study folklore is intellectualistic while, on the other hand, it is nationalistic," and points out that the two impulses often work at cross purposes.

Another renowned scholar, Harold Courlander, states that the accumulation of African experience and wisdom is embedded in their folklore. He points out that,

Man in Africa, as elsewhere, has sought to relate his past to his present, and to tentatively explore the future so that he might not stand lonely and isolated in the great sweep of time, or intimidated by the formidable earth and the vast stretch of surrounding seas.²

This is why the African man, in his myths and legends, bridges back to the very dream morning of creation, while in his systems of divination, he projects himself into time yet to come, and in his epics, he asserts the courage and worth of the human species; in his tales he ponders on what is just or unjust, in his proverbs and pithy sayings he encapsulates the learnings of centuries about the human character and about the intricate balance between people and the world around them.

Kenneth Muir submits that "folklore now covers a multitude of fields, anyone of which could keep one busy for a lifetime - folktales in many languages, proverbial wisdom, folkplays, witches, ghosts, fairies,

seasonal festivals, anthropology, flora and fauna, magic, sports and pastimes, popular medicine, jest-books, totem and tabu, even religious rituals, both pagan and christians...."³. This supports the early submissions that folklore is a wide subject which needs to be tackled with the utmost caution.

In his own definition, Bascom sees folklore as "folk learning" which "comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and other techniques that are learned by imitation or example, as well as products of these crafts." In this case, one may say that folklore includes folk art, folk crafts, folk tools, folk costumes, folk custom, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk music, folk dance, folk games, folk gestures, and folk speech, as well as those verbal forms of expression which have been called folk literature by some scholars. This contention, however, is pointing to the fact that folklore is a diversified subject which may be difficult to define with a single statement or sentence.⁴ Folklore is not only folk dances,

folktales, folksongs, legends, myths, proverbs and folkplays but an embodiment of the daily life of the people - their traditions, customs, modes of work, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, ~~songs~~ songs of joy and sorrow. This is probably why Bayard sees folklore as "the empirical culture of human societies,"⁵

With the above submissions, therefore, the true field of folklore cannot be literature exclusively, nor art nor aesthetics alone, but we may postulate that it lies in the realm of thought, and concerns itself with man's experience, wisdom, practices and some aspects of the content and activities of people's minds. It is also concerned with all bodies of belief, ceremonies, rites, customs, dramatic or mimetic actions, procedures, techniques, and arts in any form, that may legitimately be looked upon as the outgrowths, manifestations, or representations of the ideas of the society in question.

Culture, on its own, is often used in attempts to analyse and interpret events and ideas in a broad

spectrum of areas of society; and this accounts for the reason why, due to the diversity of its uses, the concept of culture has often been caught in a considerable amount of confusion, even in African Studies.⁶

Culture is a concept developed by anthropologists and ethnologists and used by psychologists, archaeologists, musicologists, historians and other scholars in related fields. In America, culture is explicitly the central concept of anthropology. Culture has been commonly defined as patterns of learned behaviour, knowledge and beliefs which are integrated in accordance with some dominant values or principles forming configurations which may be totally different from one another. For instance, the culture of the Yorùbá of Nigeria may differ from the culture of the Ashanti people of Ghana.

The words "folklore" and "culture" are, to some extent, interrelated. They both deal with the oral traditions of a certain people or their ways of life. But culture, unlike folklore, is much wider in its connotations, and it deals with

both the verbal and written traditions of a people; and, according to Bascom, culture "as anthropologists use and define the term, effectively encompasses all learned behaviour, whether transmitted by writing or not; it excludes only that learned behaviour (derived from individual experience) which is idiosyncratic and is not traditional in that it is not shared by other members of the society."⁷ As with folklore, many definitions of culture have been propounded. This is probably why these definitions have given rise to all kinds of interpretations and manipulations. Indeed, both folklore and culture are terms notoriously difficult to define. Invariably, we shall try to make a succinct definition of culture as put forth by some scholars and anthropologists. According to Sayce (1956),

...a culture is a living, organic whole. It includes all of man's activities and their results - beliefs, dress, food, speech, houses, music, work, dance, tales, social life and customs, and especially his ideas about his own nature, his relations with the visible and the unseen elements of the universe, and his ultimate purpose.⁸

In the above definition, one could observe that culture entails all activities of human endeavour.

Although traditional account usually associates the coining of the term "culture" with Edward B. Tylor in 1871, a preliminary inquiry into the history of the culture idea suggests an earlier usage especially when one realizes that the term was derived from the German word "Kultur" meaning "civilization." ⁹

Tylor's definition of culture, taken in its ethnographic sense, "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." A similar view was also expressed by Edward B. Reuter in 1950 when he asserts that culture is "the sum total of human creation, the organized results of group experience."¹⁰ It should be recalled, however, that there have been a lot of controversies as regards the authenticity of the early scholars' definitions of culture but it is not our desire here to pursue the intricate issue of the definition. What concerns the present writer is to show, in a nut-shell, the connotation of the controversial concept known as "culture". We will therefore look at^a few more definitions and concepts

on culture so as to understand what these things connote or imply.

According to Ogunniyi,¹¹ "in the natural world, culture is a distinct phenomenon which reflects the highest level of accumulated experiences by a given society." He refers to A.L. Kroeber who says that culture is superorganic for the fact that it emerges from the psychic organic mechanism of men; but, at the same time, it is not in the organic structure of men per se because it exists before an individual exists and persists after his death. He is of the view that culture is both overt and covert. It is overt in terms of observable artifacts, viz., clothes, houses, boats, knives, automobiles, etc. It is also covert in the sense that it controls perception and sets attitudes and beliefs about objects, events or situations. Ogunniyi states further that culture is explicit in terms of a readily explainable thought or action and implicit with respect to action or thought.

not so readily explained and yet believed. He is of the opinion that culture is shared through nature simply by mere existence within a given culture and learned through the process of education. In this wise, one can submit that culture relates to the organized body of knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, conventions, routines, social institutions and the ways of life of a people, their origin, development, orientation, which are passed by word of mouth or by example or other means from one generation to the other.

Peter P. Ekeh¹² submits that culture is a construct that is in wide use, in the social sciences and the humanities, to depict important aspects of society, and that its significance in the analysis and interpretation of society, and, within society, of human conduct is far-reaching.

One should also note that, apart from natural factors which differentiate one individual from another or a tribal group from the other, there is the cultural factor. It is remarkable that the cultural factor is peculiar to humankind for the fact that it is more marked and manifested in human beings

than among the lower animals.

According to Ayisi,

Since MAN first inhabited this planet, it has been one long struggle for survival between himself and nature. Man has had to live and also to find his place in the universe. In the process man has left behind traces of his achievements at various levels of his development, and the cumulative knowledge of his various achievements constitutes what we refer to as culture.¹³

What Ayisi is trying to tell us here is that culture is an accumulation of man's experience; through trials and errors, since the beginning of his sojourn in the world.

In his own definition, Piddington submits that:

The culture of a people may be defined as the sum total of the material and intellectual equipment whereby they satisfy their biological and social needs and adapt themselves to their environment.¹⁴

A careful observation of the above definition will make one deduce the fact that Piddington's definition spells out what has been said above by Ayisi and which implies that man has to struggle for his survival and also reconcile himself to nature.

He also states that the social as well as the biological needs should be satisfied. It is further observed that the concept of culture has been used in various ways to depict the various experiences and activities of man in the universe. However, what is significant in our present study is that culture is embodied in the totality of human life. This concept embraces everything which contributes, both physically and sociologically, to the survival of man.

At this juncture, it is necessary to see how the concept of culture and the social system interrelate and why Kólá Ògúnmólá's folkloric plays under study are viewed in these perspectives.

Explaining the relationship between culture and social structure, Peter P. Ekeh states that:

Culture can be paired with social structure for a maximum understanding of what each refers to. In very broad terms, sociologists study the social structure of a society while anthropologists study its culture. Both social structure and culture refer to the same elements of society: its institution, values, norms, ideas, ethos, and science and technology of society and the attitudes and behaviors of its individuals.¹⁵

This quotation vividly explains that there is a very close link between culture and social structure. We deduce from this submission that the two phenomena point to the same elements of society, though they may have different time scales.

Clifford Geertz also submits that:

One of the more useful ways - but far from being the only one - of distinguishing between culture and social system is to see the former as an ordered system of meaning and of symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place; and to see the latter as the pattern of social interaction itself. On the one level, there is the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgements; on the other level, there is the on-going process of interactive behavior, whose persistent form we call social structure.¹⁶

In the above submission, one may rationally deduce that culture and social system interact and that we may call them "twin sisters". We may also add that, while culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action, social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations. In this case, culture

and social structure are then but different abstractions from the same phenomena. We may then be convinced that it is only by referring to the social and material conditions of the society that one can arrive at a valid appraisal of the social behaviour of the people to whom the plays under study are directed. This, to some extent, is one of the conditions in which theatre was born.¹⁷

According to Traoré,¹⁸ there is a close affinity between theatre and society for the fact that it is here that the cast and the audience act out the condition of man. Therefore, one could submit that theatre is always pre-occupied with man in the social aspect. One may further add that the idea to preserve our cultural heritage, which is being gradually eroded under the system of Western education, is another factor which spurs dramatists into producing plays that could appraise their cultural beliefs and practices and serve as a means of communion with the people's traditions.

Meanwhile, looking at the concept of folklore viz-a-viz the concept of culture as hitherto

discussed, we should be convinced that the two phenomena deal with the transmission of knowledge and wisdom of the elders and of the people as a whole from one generation to another. It has also been observed that the concept of culture, though it interacts with that of folklore, is wider in scope. Finally, we ^{can} also deduce that culture and social structure can be paired to enable us to derive a maximum understanding of our subject-matter. It may therefore be contended that the cultural background as well as the social system of the Yorùbá people, for whom the folkloric plays of Kòlá Ògúnmólá were originally produced, should be considered. This is why, in the subsequent Chapter, the socio-cultural aspects of Kòlá Ògúnmólá's folkloric plays are discussed and analysed.

: Although it has been explained in the previous Chapter that the theoretical framework based on Akiwọwọ's submission in his Inaugural Lecture will be used as the basic premise, it may still be re-submitted that bringing the social and the cultural perspectives into focus will shed more light on the

lore of the people and, using these concepts in discussing and analysing the late Kólá Ògúnmólá's folkloric plays, the chaotic state of àimowááhù (loss of good compartment) which seems to have eaten deep into the fabric of the present society would be kept in check, and this may pave the way for a better future.

ii. Origin of African Drama and Theatre Traditions:

Traditional drama and theatre performance was not unknown in Africa before the colonial era. Prior to the advent of the colonial masters and the Arab invaders, many African societies had evolved their own drama and theatre traditions. However, it may be recalled that, all over Africa, there are enactments and re-enactments of historical events, especially battles. There are satirical performances in many places, which sometimes include small dramatic scenes as the different characters interact. Invariably, Africa did not build structures especially designated "playhouses" which served the

purposes of entertainment or dramatic instruction and nothing else. Though there were arenas for performances, they were not constructed like those of the ancient Greeks.¹⁹ However, drama is a good deal more developed among some peoples, particularly in West Africa, than among others.

Unfortunately, most of the European scholars and observers of traditional performances in Africa who wrote about African performances had no specialist interest in drama and, consequently, they complicated the issue by quickly labelling much that they saw as "dramatic" events, not constituting real drama in essence.²⁰ According to Ogunba, the fact is that "Most African cultures do not even have a word for drama, although they do have words for play, music, performance, etc."²¹ This is probably one of the reasons why the African traditional drama was not recognized.

Meanwhile, it is a thing of joy for the young generation that several playwrights and renowned scholars in the field of the performing arts have discussed critically the probable origins of African drama and theatre. These scholars include

among others, Joel Adedeji (1970), J.P. Clark (1966), Bakary Traoré (1972), etc., who have submitted that the African drama might have evolved from religious rituals and festival celebrations, and that the nature of the contemporary African theatre can be fully understood in the context of its historical roots. On the other hand, another school of thought is of the view that dramatic art is a natural phenomenon that originated with man, even before man thought of religion per se.

Looking at religion and festival celebrations as the root of dramatic arts, a scholar in the former group, J.A. Adedeji (1969) says,

Religion is the basis of dramatic developments in Yoruba as in most cultures of the world; disguise, its means, and both depend on artistic propensities for their fulfilment. The worship of Ọbatala (the Yorùbá arch-divinity) has important consequences for the development of ritual drama and, finally, the emergence of the theatre.²²

Making reference to the traditional European drama, Clark also reports,

As the roots of European drama go to the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Dionysus, so are the origins of Nigerian drama likely to be found in the early religious and magical ceremonies of the people of this country.²³

The above submissions point to the view held by some

scholars concerning the evolution of dramatic arts and theatre. They are of the opinion that the African traditional drama takes its roots from festival drama and ritual celebrations. Another scholar who also supported this contention is Cohen, who says,

Every religion produces drama and every cult voluntarily and spontaneously takes on dramatic and theatrical form. 24

Truly, it may be remarked that the enactment of hunts and the re-enactment of historical events, especially battles, are found throughout Africa South of Sahara. These might have given rise to dramatic actions and, subsequently, to stage plays. This is probably why Traoré (1972: 19) remarked that the first manifestations of the Negro-African theatre were in religion and cosmic ceremonies. Pin-pointing Nigeria and Dahomey (Republic of Benin) as typical examples, Traoré said that the cult devoted to the orishas and the voodoo is an occasion for productions where song and dance mingle in order to relive and imitate the passions, wars, and great achievements of deified ancestors.

Meanwhile, it is worthy of note that, throughout the traditional African societies, there were usually ritual celebrations performed at key stages in man's life. The most significant of these stages are during birth, puberty and at death. The priests who lead and officiate at these ritual celebrations are always seen as directors of the performances. During the birth of a new baby, traditional rites and religious rituals are performed. Also, when a man or a woman crosses the youthful stage to that of adult-hood, initiation rites are performed to show his or her ability to transform from the stage of adolescence to that of adulthood and at death, ritual ceremonies in form of burial or funeral are observed. All these occasions involve "dramatic" and historical scenes. Examples of these could be seen among the Mbatos of the Bingerville district in Ivory Coast where the army is reconstituted every ten years in order to mark a change of class, and among the Mende of Sierra Leone where initiation rites are performed for male and female youths who are ripe enough to move from the adolescence stage to that of puberty. This practice is also a common

phenomenon among the various communities within the Nigerian ethnic groups, particularly among the Yorùbá people.

On the other hand, some scholars are of the view that African drama and theatre is as old as civilization, since its themes and materials are embedded in oral traditions. Commenting on this opinion, some writers said that drama and theatre could not have evolved as a result of the natural instincts in man, and that this gave birth to the dramatic urge and performances. Oyekan Owomoyela seems to support this contention by quoting Aristotle, who was held in high esteem to be a reputable and the first systematic theatre historian. In Aristotle's view, quoted from the Poetics,

As to the general origin of the poetic art, it stands to reason that two causes gave birth to it, both of them natural: (1) Imitation as part of man's nature from childhood, (and he differs from other animals in the fact that he is especially mimetic and learns his first lessons through imitation) as is the fact that they all get pleasure from works of imitation.....and (2) melody and rhythm also.....at the beginning of those who were endowed in these respects, developing it for the most part little by little, gave birth to poetry out of the improvisational performances.

In the above quotation, Owomoyela was making a remark on the view expressed by Aristotle about two thousand years ago. Here, Aristotle submitted that imitation and impersonation are a part of human nature, and argued that whether or not religion could be regarded as a part of the human essence was a controversial issue. Rather, he was of the opinion that the mimetic instinct developed in man very much earlier than any evidences of religious inclination, and before religious indoctrination. Owomoyela emphasized this when he says,

Thus, long before children can make any sense of religious beliefs and practices, they evince a sense of mimesis by playing house, and cops and robbers - apart from performing those mimetic activities associated with the learning process.²⁶

With the above, one may deduce that dramatic performances predated religious beliefs and practices.

With particular reference to the evolution of African drama and theatre, Traoré hinted that,

If we consider that theatre finds subjects mainly in folklore, that is, in an aggregate of myths, legends, traditions, stories, then we can say that a specifically Negro-African theatre has existed since the beginning of African civilizations.²⁷

Traoré is hereby emphasizing that, even long before the advent of the Europeans and the Arabs into Black Africa and since the beginning of African civilization, drama and theatre practice had existed within several African societies. To lend credence to the proposition, Traoré remarked that the empires of old Ghana, Mali and Songhai which extended from the Senegambia to Nigeria were cradles of civilization which inspired early Islamic scholars into writing historical notes for future records and uses. Making reference to one of Ibn Batoutah's accounts, Labouret and Moussa Travelé said,

There is a great deal of evidence to show that the Mandingo civilization shone brightly in days gone by, so one should not be surprised to see unique social institutions and artistic achievements worthy of study in the area which witnessed its glory.²⁸

It was further remarked that,

These artistic achievements find their main expression in an abundant oral literature consisting of myths, legends, stories, short pieces in prose or verse, rhymed or free, and puppet show or exhibition of conjurers, magicians and animal charmers, as is found in certain parts of Africa, but of real drama with a perfect sense of plot and unity, aiming, through its actors, to develop a given theme.²⁹

In conclusion, one may say that, like the European drama and theatre tradition, the African drama developed from natural instincts and, later, through religious rituals and festival celebrations. The most important element in the African drama and theatre tradition is the idea of enactment and re-enactment of representation through actors who imitate persons and events. Linguistic content, plot, the represented interaction of several characters, traditional music and dance are also of much significance.³⁰

Therefore, looking through the historical development of drama and theatre, one could deduce that the African theatre and drama does not have the same conception of theatre as in Europe. This is why some past writers on this topic held the view that an authentic African theatre did not exist. This view was re-echoed and disproved by Adandé when he says,

If the numerous festivals of our village - to wit, pre-ploughing or post-harvesting rituals, with or without masks, circumcision rites, religious ceremonies developing through several 'acts' and comparable with full-scale ballets by virtue of the number of performers and the complexity of the overall choreographic design - if all these may be considered as theatre, it is clear that the development of theatre in Black Africa

took a different turn from that of modern Europe. 31

In the light of these submissions, one may be tempted to claim that the African drama evolved through natural instincts and an imperative urge within the people, and developed gradually through religious inspiration and rituals. It may also be said that it manifested in festival celebrations and the enactment or re-enactment of historical ceremonies, but one cannot say with all certainty that those manifestations were drama per se, though they are dramatic in nature. On the other hand, one could safely posit that religious celebrations or ritual and the enactment or re-enactment of historical ceremonies in Africa are features of drama and that this had developed long before the advent of the colonialists.

iii. Emergence of the Yorùbá Popular Travelling
Theatre Tradition

Nothing exists in any society without a particular root or origin. When one looks at how the Yorùbá performing arts or theatrical performances thrive today, one notices that they are growing or developing rapidly. Many people who are privileged to watch the performing artists in the recent past would have been convinced that progress is being made in this direction and that the audiences are developing more interest and enthusiasm. Several theatre groups or companies have emerged and have, consciously or otherwise, discarded some of the alien materials in their productions, adapting their plays to suit the socio-cultural conditions of their societies. This has in no small measure brought about cultural awareness within the rank and file of the people, especially those who had been formerly lured away to embrace the alien cultures to the detriment of the indigenous one. Therefore, it is pertinent to look

at the probable roots or origins of the Yorùbá Popular Travelling Theatre in order to understand why this business has continued to grow at such a fast rate in recent years.

As narrated earlier, several scholars have given us clues as to the roots of the modern Yorùbá Travelling Theatre tradition. From these accounts, it may be surmised that the modern Yorùbá Travelling Theatre evolved first from the traditional masquerade drama and later from the separatist African churches. Speaking on the emergence of the traditional Yorùbá masquerade drama, Adedeji says,

The Yorùbá Masque-Theatre emerged as a court entertainment from the Egungun (masquerade) rites about the early part of the seventeenth century at the instance of Ologbin Ologbojo, an official at court at Oyo Igboho.³²

Subsequently, this masque drama was taken outside the court and became known, first as Egún Aláré and eventually Alárinjò, the first professional travelling theatre among the Yorùbá. He stated that, by the eighteenth century, this masque theatre

had spread throughout the Yorùbá country and had become the people's theatre, with troupes plying the towns and villages of the Old Oyo Empire.

With regard to the emergence of the modern Yorùbá theatre, it could be argued that it emerged from the theatrical presentations of the Yoruba masque theatre and the Yorùbá Operatic Theatre. Adedeji is of the opinion that these theatre parties "are the two theatrical developments in Yorubaland which are indigenous and are products of Yorùbá cultural history."³³ He further stated that both of them are professional theatres with travelling troupes which developed from religious rites.

However, the contemporary society has witnessed the emergence of a new form of entertainment (i.e. the Operatic Theatre) as a result of its socio-cultural changes. This type of drama developed from the 'native dramas', popularized by guilds and societies of the secessionist churches in Lagos in the early part of the twentieth century. The new theatre, which is one of the most popular

in Africa, emerged from Protestant African Churches, among which are the Cherubim and Seraphim churches and the Apostolic churches which broke with the Anglican or Methodist Churches. And, of course, this theatre "was born out of a new exigency of the African society: that is, the need to raise moral problems, and to satirize the new institutions established by the modern administration."³⁴

Ulli Beier supported this claim when he said,

It was, I believe, the split-away African churches, the Seraphim and Cherubim, the Apostolic Church and others who began to perform Biblical stories in and outside the church as a means of instructing their members, and also as a fund-raising device.³⁵

Later, with much interest in this new theatre development, the new Yorubá drama and theatre started to gain more popularity and success as a theatrical art form. Some of the choirmasters involved with the production of the "Opera" (as it was then called) started to organise their private drama groups outside the church and held public performances in town, court and school halls. According to Adedeji,

With developing interest in concerts and amateur theatricals growing out of the remnants of the Variety Shows or the so-called Concerts in the 1880s, the organisers of the Yoruba Opera began to operate with artistic modifications that derived from traditional and foreign sources.³⁶

In his own submission, Oyekan Owomoyela said that drama was introduced into the city of Lagos around 1880 as a means of providing evening diversion on the European model for the Lagos elite and that the modern Yorùbá popular theatre emerged as a result of the reaction of the natives against the rigorous suppression of all facets of African Culture by the European christians. However, the Yoruba popular Travelling Theatre was not developed until the late twenties and thirties of the twentieth century.³⁷ Ulli Beier re-affirmed this submission when he said,

Theatre in Yorùbá language is mostly a kind of opera, in which the songs are rehearsed, while the dialogue is improvised. In the late twenties and thirties, this form was developed in the so-called African churches, the Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim. The Bible stories and moralities performed by these church societies soon gave way to profane plays, social and political satires which were played by professional touring companies.³⁸

Akinwumi Işola recalled the general accepted theory of the evolution of religious and ritual drama which

featured within the African societies before the era of Western education. He said that ritual drama and the alárínjò (travelling masquerades) were all that was known in form of drama among the Yoruba. However, he stated that the modern travelling theatre is a new breed which "arose from christian inspired operas and service of songs until Ogunde changed the orientation and moved it to a play form."³⁹

Biṣṣun Jeyifo (1984) also submitted that the earliest concerts and entertainments which were of Western origin in Lagos date back to the 1860's, and were mounted by the nascent African elite made up of a settler community of liberated slaves who had started returning from Sierra Leone in the 1830's and who were later joined by others from Brazil and Cuba.⁴⁰

As time went on, there were moves to fashion an 'indigenous drama' through the blending of the western theatrical form with local materials.

Consequently, there was a gradual movement by some inspired Yorùbá *indigenes* to create an indigenous theatre and drama. This contention is corroborated by Adedeji when he says,

As noted earlier, the Abeokuta mission started the movement towards the "Native Drama" by blending Yoruba and European materials in their entertainments because, unlike in Lagos, the reasons for entertainments were more than just raising funds for missionary activities. It encouraged non-Christians, especially Muslims and adherents of traditional religions, including those from adjacent villages, to attend and find meaning in these entertainments.⁴¹

Meanwhile, it has been proved adequately that the modern Yoruba Travelling Theatre emerged from the fusion of the traditional Eégun Alárinjò theatre and the western theatrical performances. The idea of the "new Yoruba drama" and theatre was born out of the reaction of the African natives against the suppression of their dramatic culture by the aliens. Therefore, these inspired theatre practitioners started to replace the western materials with the indigenous ones. Hubert Ogunde who was popularly known as the "father of the Yorùbá Operatic Theatre"

was the first Nigerian artist of the contemporary theatre to turn professional and assume the leadership of his flourishing theatre troupe. Ogunde, when recalling his past experiences, said,

I was playing drums with the masqueraders in my home town when I was young, and these Egungun people gave me the urge inside me to start a company of actors.⁴²

Here, Ogunde is declaring that his experience and source of inspiration belonged to the Alárinjò theatre. Finally, it has been proved that the modern Yoruba Travelling Theatre which sprang up from the Alárinjò Travelling Theatre and the western theatrical performances has become a firmly established theatre and drama tradition of the Yorubá people in the contemporary period.

iv. Comparative Analysis of Traditional With Modern Yorubá Theatre Traditions.

Placing the traditional Yoruba theatre side by side with the contemporary travelling troupes, one discovers that there are many similarities and

differences. Occasionally, the form and techniques adopted in each case are similar while, at other times, there are departures from old techniques or systems of operation when indigenous materials are used to replace the alien ones, or when new methods are introduced into the performances.

In fact, there is no gainsaying that the two theatre traditions have similar traits. This is probably because the modern theatre is an offshoot of the traditional one. Therefore, if we consider the Yoruba adage which says,

Òkéré jòkún, òdùnkún sì jò ase, èèpo
 èpá jò pòsí èlírí, àtápákò jò orí ahun,
 èsè Ijápá jò áran òpẹ, bẹẹ ni èjẹ òkété
 jò éélá obinrin.

(The tiny squirrel resembles ikún⁴³
 (deaf squirrel. òdùnkún⁴⁴ also
 resembles ase,⁴⁵ the husk of the
 groundnut is like the casket of the
 tiny mouse,⁴⁶ the thumb looks like
 the tortoise's head, the tortoise's
 leg resembles the male efflorescence
 of the palm-tree while the blood of the
 giant rat resembles women's menstrual blood.).

We would realise that it is necessary to discuss briefly the similarities and/or differences which could be clearly discernible.

Firstly, the traditional and the modern Yorùbá theatres are significant for their entertainments and moral teachings. It should be remarked that, whenever the plays are staged, people from neighbouring areas gather to watch the performers with the aim of entertaining themselves after the day's work. Here, they are sure of relieving themselves, temporarily or otherwise, of their tensions and life problems, while they also enjoy the teachings drawn from the plays. On several occasions, these plays may draw their themes from social solidarity or from the re-affirmation of facts, beliefs and such relationships and attitudes as the community considers vital to its sanity and continued healthy existence. At intervals, several members of the audience are seen laughing during some exciting performances, or they may even chorus songs raised by members of the cast. They may also clap if conditions warrant

this, especially at the end of each scene in the play.

The traditional Yorùbá dramatists and their modern counterparts expected financial rewards from their performances, although the systems adopted by each of them to accomplish this aim differ. For example, as for the modern Yorùbá theatre, gate-taking is mandatory before the play starts, whereas the traditional theatre practitioners depended on voluntary donations from members of the audience, and this was usually done at the middle of the plays.

In the past, the Yorùbá traditional theatre artists did not normally perform their plays on set stages or platforms like their modern counterparts. Instead, they operated and performed their plays in open spaces either in market places or at kings' palaces, and, occasionally, under the shade of big trees. These places served as 'arenas' where people assembled to watch the performers in action. Here, their gates were opened to

any interested members of the public to watch their performances free of charge, although gifts in kind and/or cash were sometimes offered to the artists by some members of the audience who were thrilled by the aesthetic modes of the performances.

However, in the contemporary period, some groups of the traditional Egúngún onidán have been influenced by the current trends of events in our changing society. Members of the cast are now being motivated to sing or chant well in order to get more financial reward from members of the audience and to supplement their living with earnings derived from the shows. To lend credence to this claim, Olajubu says,

Nowadays some groups of Egúngún onidán live entirely on the earnings of their performances.⁴⁷

Also, the role played by each of the actors within the two systems is very significant. If any of the actors or actresses fails to perform well, or if he/she does not measure up to expectation,

the whole performance becomes trivial and meaningless. Therefore, the contents and themes of these plays are always blended to reflect the current happenings within the Yorùbá socio-cultural environment. For example, the Yorùbá social and economic institutions, political and administrative systems, etc., usually feature in the plays in order to remind the people of their cultural heritage. At times, when a foreign play was staged, it was usually adapted to a purely Yoruba socio-cultural setting. This is vividly seen in "Ojò íbí Krístì" (Birth of Christ) by the late Kòlá Ogúnmólá, where King Herod was presented as a replica of a crowned Yorùbá Oba. By doing this, the traditional and the modern theatre practitioners try to uphold the customs and religious beliefs of their people.

Among the Yorùbá traditional and modern dramatists, the performances or shows usually start with ìjúbá (homage) which is the formal or ceremonial opening very much like the "opening glee". Writing on this, Adedeji says,

It contained the "pledge" and the "salute", both chanted together sometimes in a particular order of succession, sometimes in any order.⁴⁸

With reference to the traditional masque theatre, this rendition is usually addressed to Èsá Ògbín, the foremost masque-dramaturge and the founder of the first professional league. They do this in order to solicit for the protection and co-operation of the audience. These traditional performing artists believed that homage must be paid if an artist wanted to achieve success in his/her endeavours. It should also be recalled that paying homage and giving due respect to elders or the aged is of utmost importance in the Yorùbá socio-cultural context. The Yorùbá believe that elders or the aged have a lot of experiences: hence, they must be honoured if one wishes to succeed in life. This accounts for why the Egúngún Alárinjò or Onídán pay homage to both old and young colleagues in the profession through the original pledge called èsá.

The order of succession of paying homage varies from troupe to troupe. Usually, the troupe leader first acknowledges the lineage from which he drew his inspiration or the leader from whom he received his training; he then addresses the invisible spirits or the unseen forces, seeks for the support of his colleagues in theatre business, and, lastly, introduces and praises himself.

Among the Yorùbá people, it is commonly believed that, if proper homage and due acknowledgement is not paid, the unseen forces may work against the performance and cause havoc or bring the performance to a catastrophic end. Also, in the contemporary period, it is believed among the Yorùbá that a performing artist who would be successful in his/her undertakings must pay obeisance to his colleagues, old and young. This is probably why Hubert Ogunde adopted the spirit of the entrance song, but introduced some modifications which are a reflection of his christian outlook and contemporary viewpoint.⁴⁹

Another thing worth noting is that the traditional Egúngún Alárinjò Theatre is a hereditary art, and that only members of the lineage of the masquerade - dramaturge succeed to the position of old members of the troupe. However, this should not be much emphasized because the nature and purpose of some of the contemporary Nigerian performing artists strikingly relate to that of the Alárinjò. This is why Adedeji noted,

In conformity with the practice of the traditional theatre as a lineage profession, Ogunde has worked his wives and children into his company in order to perpetuate it as a going family concern.⁵⁰

Although it is the wish of some contemporary performing artists to pass on the art and their glory in the business to their offsprings, one cannot be entirely optimistic about the future success of this idea as compared with what obtained within the traditional Yorùbá theatre.

The scope of performances of the contemporary Yorùbá theatre is more elaborate than what obtained within the traditional theatre. For example, among the traditional performing artists, wooden masks are

usually put on to depict various characters in the Yoruba society; and these they tried to caricature and satirize. The most common character being satirized include Tápà (the Nupeman), Aséwó (the prostitute), Olópáá (the Policeman), Woléwolé (the Sanitary Inspector), Oyinbó (Europeans with enormous hooked noses and smooth black hair made from colobus monkey skin). They also satirized people with some abnormalities. For example, elétí kólóbó (one with small ears), eléèké dídí (one with bulging cheeks), onimú orù (someone with a very big nose), Ìyáwó pálò (parlour bride), etc. They also costumed themselves in animal skin to resemble animals like èkùn (leopard), kinifún (the lion) or any other animals they wished to imitate.⁵¹ Occasionally, the boa skin was used to imitate the boa constrictor. However, the costumes being used today by the modern Yoruba theatre artists are different. Though wooden masks may be used for specific roles, this old practice is gradually fading out. Artists are rarely seen in masks but with costumes which portray a specific role. Apart from this, plays are woven into

themes that would teach members of the audience some moral lessons or those that would arouse their sentiments towards the current happenings in their immediate environments.

The period when these artists operate is also of great significance. It should be observed that the traditional theatre practitioners operated mostly during the dry seasons when there would be less to do by the farmers. Adedeji corroborates this fact when he remarks that the troupes "travelled mostly during the dry season and spent the rainy season as sedentary medicine-men...."⁵²

Apart from operating during the dry seasons, the traditional Egúngún 'masque dramaturge' normally staged performances in the evenings when farmers were back from their farms. This differs from the modern performing troupes which stage their shows at any period of the year and could perform at any time of the day, especially at week-ends. Unlike the traditional performing artists who were always invited to stage their shows at public and open places like the markets or the Oba's palaces, the

present-day dramatists stage their shows in public or in town halls, or in large hotels which can accommodate many people.

In the light of the above discussion, it would be observed that, though there may be identical traits between the traditional and the modern Yorùbá drama, it is evident that modern theatre practice is daily metamorphosing into a new order and adapting itself to the socio-cultural changes of the contemporary Yorùbá society.

v. A Review of Previous Studies on Ògúnmòlá

As we have stated earlier in the introductory chapter, some scholars have written articles and chapters in books on various aspects of the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá's life ambition and achievements in the performing arts. Some have discussed the extraordinary skill of his acting; some have written on his organisational competence, while some have discussed his personality and his unique style and mode of performance. The most prominent among these writers is Ulli Beier, who wrote a comprehensive

personal memoir on the late Kòlá Ogúnmòlá.

In his personal memoir, Ulli Beier⁵³ stated that his first contact with Ògunmòlá was at Ìkèrè-Èkitì where he (Beier) watched Ògúnmòlá's play, "Joseph and His Brethren," which was staged in one of the school rooms. According to Beier, this encounter was very exciting. Stylistically, he likened the performance to an earlier one staged by ^{the late} Hubert Ògúndé and which he watched in Lagos about a year before that time. He explained that the music of Ògúnmòlá's performance was derived from highlife, but with a certain influence of church hymns. He remarked that this particular performance was an experience of a different kind due to the quality of the acting. He specifically emphasized the swaying movement of the actors/actresses, and their use of the Yorùbá language with its tonal aesthetics, particularly during the rendition of the "opening glee". He also stated that the language, as used by Ògúnmòlá in his plays, was colourful and humorous.⁵⁴ He was also excited by the female members of Ògúnmòlá's cast who then formed a kind of chorus during the performance. He described the acting as captivating

and selectively realistic.

Ulli Beier was intrigued during his first experience and consequently followed him (Ògúnmólá) around to watch more of his plays. He then commented that his favourite of all Ògúnmólá's plays was "Love of Money" which, according to Beier, may fall under the themes of "ingratitude to a legally married woman," "women of dubious characters," "one who laughs last," etc.

Apart from being an actor, Ògúnmólá was seen as a producer of ability. Making reference to the same play above, Ulli Beier said,

Ògúnmólá was not only an actor, but also a producer of no mean talent. One scene that is unforgettable in the Love of Money is the preparation for wedding of Adeleke and Mopelólá.⁵⁵

He explained further,

Ògúnmólá would play this on a completely empty stage, with only himself and Moróláyò present. And yet, between the two of them, they managed to convey a busy, bustling, nervous household.⁵⁶

Michael Etherton remarked that it was the opinion of many who saw Ògúnmólá perform his plays that he was the most brilliant actor of the 1950s

and 1960s.⁵⁷ He admired three of Ògúnṡlá's plays best. These plays are The Palmwine Drinkard, "Love of Money," and "Conscience" which were produced in the style of Ògúndé's moralistic theatre.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Ògúnṡlá deviated from Ògúndé's style and introduced innovations into the Yorùbá "opera". According to Ulli Beier (1967),

It was left to E.K. Ògúnṡlá, one of Ògúndé's colleagues from Èkiti, to develop Yorùbá 'Opera' as a serious theatre form.⁵⁹

As Ulli Beier has stated, Ògúnṡlá was reported to have cut out the music hall element from Ògúndé's plays and substituted this with serious acting. He also remarked that the acting in the plays was spontaneous and compelling.⁶⁰ He emphasized the point that one of Ògúnṡlá's special talents was his acting, particularly his mime. With these things, he said, Ògúnṡlá could reach great heights. Indeed, this observation gradually became manifested in Ògúnṡlá's later life as a performing artist, a great actor and as a director/manager of one of the modern Yorùbá

travelling theatres in the late forties. In fact, one could agree with Beier that Ògúnṣọlá's personal acting was, as always, "a delight to watch".⁶¹

Jeyifo (1984) also remarked that, before Ògúnṣọlá, the troupe leader always played the role of king or hero and other members of the troupe moved around that star player, relative to their standing in the hierarchical structure of the group. The leader thought it to be unwise for him to play roles that would not portray him as the spokesman of the group. It was Ògúnṣọlá who first departed from this conventional norm. To corroborate this claim, Ògúnṣọlá has this to say:

The man who started this was Kọlá Ògúnṣọlá. He didn't particularly care to be recognised on stage as the leader. You always find him in the most difficult roles in their productions.⁶²

Ògúnṣọlá's music was more purely Yorùbá than Ògúnḍé's.

Narrating further on this, Beier said,

...he still does not make full use of Yoruba instruments, relying mostly on Bongo drums, but he has developed a kind

of nervous, electric rhythm that underlies all his singing and spoken dialogue and gives considerable unity to his play.⁶³

Ulli Beier's report reveals that the musical interest in Ògúnṣọlá's plays lies mostly with the vocal parts which are pleasant tunes, little influenced by European music and strictly based on the tone patterns of the Yorùbá spoken language.⁶⁴

The Nobel Prize winner for Literature in 1986, Wole Soyinka, also strongly remarked that Ògúnṣọlá's mere presence on the stage with his verbal manipulation of the Yorùbá language made him, as earlier quoted, "quite simply as consummate an actor as one may hope to find on any stage in the country."⁶⁵

Alain Ricard is of the view that Ògúnṣọlá and his troupe tried as much as they could to present a theatre more serious than the satires mixed with farce which made the success of Hubert Ògúndé. For example, Love of Money recounts the adventures of Adélékè, a rich and happy husband of Mọ̀rọ̀láyọ̀, who allows himself to be pushed into marrying a second wife, an intriguing woman who

planned to steal his properties, disband his family and leave him poor, wretched and ruined. Another example is Ògúnmólá's Yorùbá adaptation of Tutuola's novel, The Palmwine Drinkard, which was popularized by Ògúnmólá's play. According to Alain Ricard, this Yorùbá adaptation of the book on the stage gave it "a new wash of popularity and made it undoubtedly accessible to a larger public."⁶⁶

The late Kòlá Ògúnmólá was acclaimed for his personal ambition, ability, competence, natural good behaviour, experience and philosophical thoughts. Ulli Beier discovered that "Ògúnmólá knew about every weakness of the human character and he would expose it, but he would expose human beings without harshness."⁶⁷ His audience loved his plays because they consciously portrayed the Yorùbá society, and more importantly for the fact that they (the audience) could recognize themselves in this socio-cultural setting.

Ògúnmólá was also credited for the managerial skill or expertise he possessed. It was observed

that Ọ́gúnmọ́lá tried as much as he could to keep his troupe intact. Through inspiration and personal example, he could gain the support of members of his company and he kept them together extremely well.⁶⁸

In Ulli Beier's personal memoir (Yemi Ogunbiyi: 1981), he categorically stated that the late Kọ́lá Ọ́gúnmọ́lá was well received and publicly acclaimed by his audience even until his death. He narrated his experience at Fakúnlé Major Hotel, Oşogbo when Ọ́gúnmọ́lá re-appeared on the stage after a brief period of illness. On this occasion, Ogunmọ́lá was being warmly received as usual by his audience amidst great excitement and indescribable applause. The people were exceedingly happy to see Ogunmọ́lá come back on the stage. According to this report, an incredible roar of great delight went up.⁶⁹

Although it was reported that Ọ́gúnmọ́lá could not play his usual role in the play, his mere presence was felt by all those who were present to watch the show.

As Ulli Beier directly put it:

But his presence was felt big and strong and warm by everybody. And that incredible, roaring noise was like a kind of ovation. The intense feeling never left the crowd throughout the long evening.⁷⁰

This is probably why Peter Brook humorously commented that he had never seen such a type of strong communication between an actor and his audience.⁷¹ Ulli Beier is still of the conviction today that he has not seen or heard of any Nigerian performing artist who has surpassed the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá in acting.⁷² With all these reports and remarks, it is no exaggeration to say that the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá was a genius as well as a sage in the field of performing or dramatic arts.

vi. A Review of Previous Works on Ògúnmòlá's Folkloric Plays.

Despite the fact that the late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá was a force to be reckoned with in the field of theatre and dramatic arts, no detailed works have so far been done on his folkloric plays. Those who

wrote on Ògúnmólá and his dramatic professionalism did not discuss, in detail, his folkloric plays. Rather, they were interested in his ingenuity with regard to acting and the ability to organise effectively.

Describing the performance in "Èsù Ọ̀dàrà", a critic remarked that music, mime, dance and poetic speech blend to give an interesting creation of theatrical language enjoyed by the audience, and which often presents a communication "beyond the Yoruba medium of linguistic expression." ⁷³

According to this critic,

The plot-line was extremely loose and was still easy to follow even for those of the viewers who spoke no Yoruba, for each short scene was played in a stylised and explanatory manner reminiscent of silent films and pantomime reviews.⁷⁴

This factor was believed by many to have contributed immensely to the success and popular acceptability of the play.

Another popular folkloric play of Ògúnmólá which has been generally acclaimed by critics is The Palmwine Drinkard. Alain Ricard recalled that Ògúnmólá adapted some of the novels of

D.O. Fagunwa for the stage, just as he had done in the case of The Palmwine Drinkard. The play, being the most popular among the numerous folkloric plays of Ògúnṣọ́lá, was an adaptation of Tutuola's novel, The Palm-wine Drinkard.

Commenting on the success of The Palmwine Drinkard at the time, Martin Banham and Clive Wake remarked that Ògúnṣọ́lá's adaptation of Tutuola's novel was a result of an association with the University of Ibadan's (then) School of Drama (now Department of Theatre Arts) in 1962, when he was invited to bring his troupe into the University to improve their skills, and thus he became an artist-in-residence. Therefore, with his company, under the guidance of the Director of the School of Drama, Geoffrey Axworthy, and the direction/design of Demas Nwoko, Ògúnṣọ́lá was able to recreate Tutuola's tale on the stage.⁷⁵

Describing the actual performance of The Palmwine Drinkard, Banham and Wake stated that it contained a fine mixture of thrills, satire, and broad comedy; and that "its success in performance

stemmed not only from these qualities, but from the zest of performances."⁷⁶

Ulli Beier reiterated that many people would for ever remember Ògúnmọ́lá for the famous production of The Palmwine Drinkard, which was a tremendous play and which was commissioned for the Algiers Festival.⁷⁷ The Palmwine Drinkard was a kind of self-advertisement to him, and this made many people to accept him as a great producer, a serious dramatist and an indefatigable actor of his time. This is probably why Şégun Olúşọ́lá also supports this assertion when he says,

In his 'praise-song of the spirit of Palmwine' he surpassed anything that has ever come on the local stage. Whether he sings it or leads the chorus to recite it, his pauses, nuances, gestures, word associations or the eloquent mimes when he puts his expansive face to full use....you are witnessing a great performer in the act with a relish for the liquor that is easily transferable to the audience.⁷⁸

With this great popularity and wide acceptance, The Palm-wine Drinkard was reported to have remained in Ògúnmọ́lá's repertoire for many years, even until his demise.

Olú Ọbáfẹmi believes that Ọgúnmọlá's Palmwine Drunkard (sic) follows the theme of man's search for harmony in society through a corresponding and harmonious relationship with his cosmic environment.⁷⁹ According to Ọbáfẹmi, the philosophy behind the play is that man cannot isolate himself from his cosmic environment. Consequently, he must find all avenues for the attainment of mutual agreement and necessary co-operation with the forces that surround him.

Lastly, it was on this same play, The Palmwine Drinkard, that the late Robert G. Armstrong, erstwhile Professor of Linguistics and Director of the University of Ibadan Institute of African Studies, acknowledged the contribution of the late Kọlá Ọgúnmọlá to the development of Yorùbá drama and Nigerian theatre during the 1960s and the preceding decades. He categorically stated that one of the best known of Ọgúnmọlá's productions/plays is The Palmwine Drinkard.⁸⁰

Therefore, it is clear that, apart from The Palmwine Drinkard which had been widely discussed, and "Èṣù Ọdàrà" which was passingly touched upon,

several folkloric plays of Ogunmólá are yet to be given prominence by modern critics and scholars. Consequently, these folkloric plays will be given detailed attention in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

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43. Ikún is a species of squirrel, bigger than the tiny squirrels which are commonly seen around in the tropical forests of West Africa. It is believed among the Yorubá people that Ikún has deaf ears, and this is why the people usually liken someone who is stubborn or does not hear well to Ikún.
44. Another species of the rat, smaller than Ikún but bigger than the mice.
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CHAPTER THREE

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF KÒLÁ ÒGÚNMÓLÁ'S FOLKLORIC PLAYS

As we have pointed out in Chapter One of this dissertation, folklore mirrors the socio-cultural behaviour of any community in as much as the essential actions of life are expressed there.¹ In this case, Kòlá Ogúnmólá's folkloric plays give us glimpses of the socio-cultural and economic life of the Yorùbá people as a distinct group, and also draw some moral teachings that tend toward promoting the achievement of peaceful co-existence within the Yorùbá community. Meanwhile, this chapter makes a critical content analysis of each of the folkloric plays and expresses, in some measure, the philosophical thoughts and socio-cultural ideas in them.

i. SÚURÚ LÁGBÁ (Patience is the oldest or best):

The title of this play emanates from a Yorùbá popular maxim which explains the importance of this abstract phenomenon and the value which the Yorùbá people attach to it. This simple sentence is, no

doubt, clearly explicit in itself. Basically, it connotes that patience is the best form of behaviour. However, it is worthy of note that, from the traditional Yorùbá viewpoint, owó (money), omó (children) and àkúléwe (longevity) are very essential in life. Apart from these, the Yorùbá people also hold the belief that the acquisition of the above-mentioned basic necessities without sùúrù (Patience) would be calamitous for a man since they believe that Sùúrù is a complement to those three things. This explains why they often reiterate that Sùúrù is more significant and valuable than they, and that no one could live a happy and prosperous life without Sùúrù.

"Sùúrù lágba" is an adaptation of a popular Yorùbá folktale which narrates the ordeal faced by a mythical old man with his two wives who lived together for many years without a single child.

One day, this man went sorrowfully to Olódùmarè (the Supreme Being) and enquired from Him, the reason why his family was being deprived

of these basic necessities of life, especially children. After listening attentively to the poor old man's complaints, Olódùmarè pitied him and promised to bless the family with only one thing among four alternatives. Unfortunately, however, this old man was mandated to choose only one option out of the four alternatives. Those four things from which he was asked to choose one include owó (money), omọ (children), Sùúrù (patience) and àikúlèwe (longevity).

Thereafter, Olódùmarè advised the man to go back to his family and discuss with his people what choice they would make, but reminded him that they should make only one choice. This new development posed a big problem to the poor man and all other members of his family for the fact that they could not reach a consensus as to how they could make a reasonable choice out of the four alternatives. At last, the final decision was left to the man alone; and, after some ponderings over the issue, this man, probably out of inspiration,

decided to choose Sùúrù. On the other hand, he might possibly have made this choice due to his vast experience of life and the popular belief among the Yorùbá people which stipulates that no one succeeds in life without Sùúrù. This accounts for the Yorùbá adage which says, Àgbà tó ní sùúrù, ohun gbogbo ló ní (An elderly person who possesses patience has everything).

Getting back to Olódùmarè in heaven, the old man chose to have sùúrù and forget owó (money), omọ (children) and àìkúléwe (longevity). As promised earlier, Olódùmarè released Sùúrù to the poor old man and kept the other three items with Himself in heaven. But no sooner had Sùúrù left the abode of Olódùmarè than Owó (money), Omọ (children) and Aìkúléwe (Longevity) could not further withstand the agony of Sùúrù's absence among them. They therefore went to Olódùmarè and pleaded with Him to release them to Sùúrù so that they would stay permanently with him in his new abode. Without much ado, Olódùmarè accepted their plea and approved their request;

and the three close associates of Sùúrù (Patience), Owó (Money), Omo (Children) and Aikúléwe (Longevity) went to meet Sùúrù (Patience). Thus, the ~~poor old~~ man and his family were in possession of Sùúrù (Patience), Owó (Money), Omo (Children) and Aikúléwe (Longevity). This popular folktale has been rendered in song by a popular Nigerian musician, Ebenezer Fábíyí Obey, under the title "Sùúrù, ló dára".

The play, "Sùúrù Lágba," starts from the blacksmith's shed. There are periods of business transactions and periods of greetings, entertainments and jokes. Everything proceeds casually as if it is in real life. Customers are seen haggling over prices between each other, as we experience in real life.

The play continues with a riddle being told by Ìsòlá, one of Ògúnjána's friends, and which is expected to be deciphered by Ogúnjána. In this riddle, Ìsòlá tries to convince his friend that the best part of an animal is the tongue and, again, he

insists that the same tongue is the worst part of an animal. This submission surprised Ògúnjána's father who immediately intervened and demanded further clarification from Ìsòlá, his son's friend. To their utmost dismay, Ìsòlá explained that he calls the tongue the best part of an animal because it is the tongue which is always used to praise or commend a man and also it is the same tongue men use to slander each other. It should be noted, however, that the riddle told by Ìsòlá at this moment is intentionally used by Ògúnmólá to prepare the way for a future incident that would take place in the play.

Not quite long afterwards, a message came from Bàbá Orisà-òkè inviting Ogúnjána's father (Àgbèdè-Ògún) for an urgent discussion. Taking Bàbá Orisà-òkè's status into consideration, Àgbèdè-Ogún wasted no time in answering the call, and before his (Àgbèdè-Ogún's) arrival, Bàbá Òrisà-òkè had called his wife, Àyinké and their three daughters, Kéyindé (nicknamed Sùúrù), Táyéwò (Owó),

and Idowá (Ọmọ). These three girls are warned and advised on the impending risk of wasting time in choosing responsible men who they would marry. However, Bàbá Orisà-òkè informs his daughters of his intention to betroth one of them to a man of his wish but assures the remaining two daughters that they are free to choose whoever they like to be their suitors. To this, the three girls willingly agree with their father and await further action.

Getting to Bàbá Orisà-òkè, Àgbèdè-Ògún is surprised to hear from him (Bàbá Orisà-òkè) that the family has decided to betroth one of their daughters to his son, Ògúnjána, and that the boy is free to choose among the three girls the one he likes best as his wife-to-be. Unfortunately for Àgbèdè-Ògún, in spite of his repeated warnings and advice to his son to choose Táyewò who symbolizes money, Ògúnjána chooses Kéyindé, who is a symbol of patience, out of his own volition.

Traditional Yorùbá greetings are prominent here. When Agbèdè-Ògún enters, Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè is seen showering chants of praise names and praise poems on Agbèdè-Ògún and greeting him in the traditional Yorùbá way. In turn, Agbèdè-Ògún responds courteously and his responses show that he has been nurtured within the Yorùbá traditional community where respect for elders is of paramount importance.

The incident which follows ^{gives} glimpses of the traditional system of adjudication among the indigenous Yorùbá people. There is a misunderstanding between Ajéboríogbón and his spouse, and we discover that Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè is there to settle the dispute for them. It may be recalled that, in the traditional Yorùbá communities, disputes or feuds are always settled by the elders who are believed to be competent enough to handle such cases.

Ògúnjànà and his father come in and the matter of choosing who he likes best out of

Bàbá-Orisá-Òkè's three daughters is settled, and it is a surprise to Àgbèdè-Ògún to see that his son does not hearken to his advice that Owó (Money), in person of Táyéwò, is not chosen. Meanwhile, the wedding day was fixed and everyone was preparing for the great and memorable occasion. On the appointed day, however, the father-in-law (Bàbá-Òrisá-Òkè) starts to pray for the couples in typical Yorùbá traditional fashion. The language used here is noteworthy. In his prayer, for instance, Bàbá Orisá-Òkè asks that her daughter will produce both male and female children for Ògúnjànà when he says, "Yóó bí yáyá, yóó bí yoyo fún ọ." (She will give birth to male and female children for you) Also, when Àgbèdè-Ògún looked depressed at his son's choice of Keyindé (Sùúrù) and his mother-in-law asked why he was in that unhealthy mood, Bàbá Orisá-Òkè said, "Òwú kí í là kínú bólókó." (A cotton seed does not break to the annoyance of the farmer.) There are many of these proverbs, maxims and aphorisms in this play which show that Ògúnmólá was a skilful user

of traditional genres of orature.

Another incident worth noting in this play is the Yorùbá system of inheritance. Bábá-Òrisá-òkè decides to share his property among his children and does this as he likes. He gives all the money he has to Táyéwò who, they assume, is an enterprising child and whose name symbolizes money. All the houses and fertile lands are given to Ìdòwú who, as we were earlier told, likes children, while the barren or unproductive lands are given to Kéyindé, the eldest child.

It should be recalled that the custom of inheritance is very significant among the Yorùbá, as with other communities in African countries. It should be noted, however, that, though it is not usual and customary for one to share his properties when one is still living as Bábá Òrisá-òkè did in this play, Kòlá Ògúnmólá probably uses this technique to pave the way for what would

happen later in the play. Apart from this, the way Bàbá Orìṣà-Okè shares his property, giving Kéyindé the barren and unproductive lands, while he gives money, productive lands and other properties to Táyéwò and Ìdòwú respectively, may seem to be unreasonable to some people, yet Ògúnmólá later gives us an insight into why he does this in the plot. We are made to realize the usefulness of this technique when Táyéwò and Ìdòwú finally came back later to put all their properties in Kéyinde's care and custody.

The significance of the name, Sùúrù, manifests itself after Kéyindé has legally become Ògúnjána's wife. With patience and endurance, she lives with her husband and she averts several domestic and marital problems that could have broken their marriage and also arbitrates successfully in a dispute between Ògúnjána and one of his customers which might even have led to a horrible and catastrophic situation for the family and Ògúnjána in particular.

In the original folktale earlier narrated, we could deduce the Yorùbá philosophy which states that anyone who possesses Sùúrù possesses all essential things in life, whether material or otherwise. The old man and his family in the above folktale were able to acquire money, children and long life due to their wisdom and courage in choosing Sùúrù out of the four alternatives put before them. Having possessed these things, we are told, the family in question became happy and prosperous for the rest of their lives.

In "Sùúrù Lágba," Ògúnmólá personifies Sùúrù, Owó and Omo and calls them Kéyindé, Táyéwò and Ìdòwú respectively. Similarly, in the Yorùbá folktale narrated above, Sùúrù, Owó and Omo are personified and made to live with Olódumare. In Kòlá Ògúnmólá's play, "Sùúrù Lágba," Kéyindé, otherwise nicknamed "Sùúrù," is the eldest daughter of Bábá Òrìṣá-Òkè, though in the folktale, we are not told of the position he holds among the four personified beings mentioned. In

Ògúnmólá's play, "Sùúrù Làgbà," it is worthy of note that Kéyindé's behaviour proves her worth as the mythical Sùúrù. Therefore, giving this personality the name Sùúrù or Kéyindé is not a co-incidence. Ògúnmólá has his reasons for doing this. He is probably pointing out here that 'ripe age' and 'patience' are synonymous and symbolic. According to what obtains in this play, Kéyindé proves her worth as the eldest child of Bàbá-Orisá-Òkè, and her name as a symbol of patience when she voluntarily agrees to her father's wish and order to marry Ògúnjànà. Also, she later keeps mute and agrees with her father's decision without a grudge when he (Bàbá Orisá-Òkè) shares his properties among his daughters in a way that seems unfavourable to Kéyindé. However, with some degree of patience and endurance, those properties are later returned to Kéyindé by her sisters who asked her to take full and effective control and custody of them.



Kólá Ògúnmólá as Ògúnjána's father (left) discussing with his son, Ògúnjána (right) in the smithy in "Súúrù Lágba".

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

Meanwhile, it appears that Ògúnmólá is trying to point out in this play that patience is most significant and essential for a peaceful and harmonious living. Here, he is probably giving a note of warning to everyone, particularly the youths of our contemporary age who are always too impatient in their actions or behaviours. Such youths are enjoined to face life with equanimity if they wish to reap the fruits of their labour and live a happy and successful life. This is why the traditional Yorùbá people believe that patience is the best form of behaviour and commonly say, Sùrù ni baba iwà (Patience is the most supreme of all behaviour).

One should also note that Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè's family is a symbol of peace, responsibility and unity. We discover that all members of this family work harmoniously together for a common goal. Due to their co-operation and peaceful operation within the family, they were able to overcome some problems which could have rent them asunder.

Though there is naturally no group of people devoid of petty strifes or misunderstandings, we are not told that such an incident occurred within Babá Òrìṣá-Òkè's family unit. This might be as a result of the co-operation and mutual understanding that existed among its members. Consequently, if every family could emulate this noble example, peace and concord would reign supreme in our contemporary period. This is probably why Ogunmọlá in his concluding song says,

Ẹ jẹ́ á ní in,
 Ẹ jẹ́ á ní in,
 Sùúrù làgbà,
 Ẹ jẹ́ á ní in.
 Bọmọdẹ bá ní in,
 Ó lóhun gbogbo
 Bágbà bá ní in
 Ó lóhun gbogbo
 Sùúrù làgbà
 Ẹ jẹ́ á ní in.²

Let us possess it,
 Let us possess it,

Patience is the best,

Let us possess it.

Youths who possess it

Possess everything

Elders who possess it

Possess everything.

Patience is the best;

Let us try to possess it.

The above song explains vividly the significance of having patience in one's life. *Ògúnmólá* reiterates here that it is mandatory for anyone who seeks for peace to possess patience which, among the Yorùbá people, is generally believed to be the best form of behaviour.

ii. Ogbon Ju Agbara (Wisdom surpasses power).

In Yorùbá philosophical thought, it is believed that a man/woman must possess or be blessed with abundant wisdom before he/she could overcome some knotty problems of life, and this he/she would use to tackle some sensitive and delicate issues that may crop up within the

the menace of the historical Igbò people.³ Similarly, in "Ogbón Jù Agbára," the princess of Onikánún released her people from the perpetual bondage to which the people of Olóyà had subjected them. She therefore went to meet the war captain of Olóyà in his domain, disguising herself as an innocent and honest visitor in order to lure her victim into revealing the secret behind his (war captain's) town's success in wars. After accomplishing her aim, she absconded in a manner similar to Moremi's episode, ran back to her people and informed them of the secret that had just been disclosed to her. She therefore started to instruct and educate her people about how they could prepare fully for subsequent and imminent war. At the subsequent war thereafter, the people of Onikánún were able to defeat the people of Olóyà town and take them captives. In this case, the princess of Onikánún had run the risk of posing as a friend to the war captain of Olóyà in order to get the secret behind his (Olóyà captain's) town's successes in wars and thereby manipulate this knowledge to free her people from their age-old bondage.

It is pertinent to point out here that Ògúnṣọlá was probably of the view that courage, perseverance and dedication are mandatory or essential for the accomplishment of one's goal in life, and that everyone should learn to be patriotic and selfless in order to achieve the desired progress and rapid development of the society.

Ògúnṣọlá probably believes that, for an effective maintenance of the status quo, each member of any society should emulate the good example of the princess of Oníkánún who, like the legendary Morèmi, selflessly submitted herself and decided to face the attendant rigours in order to attain freedom for her people. Meanwhile, the play reminds us of the Yorùbá belief that abundant knowledge and wisdom are necessary ingredients to achieve greatness in life, and that these are not a monopoly of the male sex. In this case, it seems that Ògúnṣọlá was trying to educate some people in

our contemporary age, who believe that only the menfolk are naturally endowed with power and wisdom, that they should change their thoughts and note the incident in "Ogbón Ju Agbára". According to our experience in this play, wisdom is not a monopoly of either sex; it cannot also be determined by age or personality. This accounts for the reason why a Yorùbá maxim says, Omodé niṣé, agbà niṣé la fi dálẹ̀ 'Fẹ̀ (the land of Ifẹ̀ was established through the mutual co-operation of both the young and the old people). Also, our day-to-day experience gives us more insight into the authenticity of the above contention. Indeed, several women who felt within themselves that they were created to play a subordinate role to that of their male counterparts are now realizing their misconceived opinion and struggling hard to play their parts as partners in progress and in the development of their society or family. Some enlightened women in the contemporary period are even forming corporate groups and organizations to educate their colleagues, who still hold the

notion that women are born or created to play second fiddle to their male counterparts, that this opinion should be shelved.

Evidence has shown that there are women in historical records who have distinguished themselves above several men in their societies and have taken leading roles in several aspects of human endeavour. Like the legendary Morèmi of Ifè fame, and the mythical princess of Onikánún in "Ogbon Ju Agbara", several ^{women} now take up the challenge to dedicate themselves to the good cause of women's emancipation, and the conviction that women should see themselves as complement and partners in progress to their male counterparts.

Meanwhile, one should note the importance of co-operation and unity in the progress of any nation. With the unflinching support given to the king of Onikánún by his subjects, the town was able to subdue their enemy and capture the war captain of Olódyà. The Oba, as we have realized in this

play, usually seeks the advice of his subjects and readily offers them the opportunity to bring forth valuable suggestions that could be harnessed to solve some of their problems. He was neither a tyrant nor a dictator; hence, he was able to gain the consent of his people.

Ògúnṣọlá seems to be sounding a note of warning to our present leaders, be it in government, religion, business, or private life, always to seek for their people's support and co-operation in any venture they might wish to embark upon. He seems to have believed that a nation can only achieve greatness through co-operation and understanding from the people. This contention can be corroborated with the statement of the king of Oníkánún who says, Bí ò bá sígi lẹyin ogbà, wíwó ní í wó (If there is no support for someone by one's people, one may not be victorious in one's endeavours). This indicates that, without the co-operation of the followers, it may become difficult for a leader to achieve success. The king of Oníkánún

was wise enough to realize this simple ethic and was victorious at last.

Finally, Ògúnṣọlá apparently frowns at pride in its totality. In this play, the war captain of Olódyá started to boast, exalt himself and cast jokes against the people of Oníkánún. He depended solely on power but forgot that wisdom surpasses power, and this is why the princess from Oníkánún could play upon his intelligence by enticing him with palmwine in order to find out the secret behind his continual successes in wars. Of course, the Yorùbá people abhor pride and dislike anyone who is arrogant or egocentric in his or her behaviour. It is believed among the people that pride often leads to destruction, and this is why we often hear the Yorùbá maxim that says, Igbéraga ní í síwájú iparun (Pride often leads to destruction).

In "Ogbón Jù Agbára," therefore, Ògúnṣọlá perhaps tries to bring out the importance of

patience and humility in human life. Moreover, he seems to emphasize the urgent need to mobilize ourselves irrespective of age, status or sex for the advancement and rapid development of our society. Naturally and as one can deduce from this play, an ideal society can only evolve through the acquisition of knowledge, abundant wisdom and mutual co-operation among its inhabitants. These must also be complemented with dedication, patriotism, selflessness and total humility by every member of the society. If these could be achieved, probably our society could become a peaceful, coherent and developed one in the nearest future.

The use of the town-crier at the beginning of the play is noteworthy. It may be recalled that this practice is customary among the Yorùbá people. In the traditional past, each Oba has his own town-crier who he sends on errands either to the generality of the people or to individuals. The town-crier therefore goes to the market-place or other public places to announce the Oba's message to his

people. Occasionally, however, this method of communication is still being used in some Yorùbá towns up till today. The method may be used to call or summon the townspeople to important meetings, to announce the commencement of important traditional festivals or to warn the people about an impending disaster.

The bone of contention between the people of Olóòyà and those of Oníkán-ún towns is not unconnected with land dispute. It may be recalled that this has been the tradition among the Yorùbá people since time immemorial. Feuds over lands and landed properties are usual occurrences, even up till today. This may erupt between one man or family and another, between one State/ community and the other. Reference may be made to the current imbroglio between the peoples of the border towns of Ọyọ and Onđó States over boundary adjustment, and also the recent Gulf war which virtually developed into a global warfare. Similar disputes are not uncommon in our societies throughout the world today.

The war songs sung by the peoples of Onikán-ún and Olóòyà towns should also be noted. Here, Ògúnmólá made use of the audio-visual resources of the theatre. It reveals a clash of powers. While the Onikán-ún warriors are singing the song,

"Òní á ro,
 Òní á ro,
 Kòlòmọ kilẹ fọmọ rẹ o,
 Òní á ro.⁴

Today's encounter will be really tough,
 Today's encounter will be really tough,
 Every one should be forewarned,
 Today's encounter will be really tough.

the Olóòyà warriors are simultaneously countering it with the song,

Bó lẹ dogun,
 Kó dogun,
 Bó lẹ dogun
 Kó dogun,
 Ójò pewée kókò,
 Bó lẹ dogun,
 Kó dogun.⁵

If it would result to war,
 Let it be so,
 If it would result to war,
 Let it be so,
 Rain, beat the cocoyam leaves,
 If it would result to war,
 Let it be so.

The simultaneous singing of both songs reinforces the conflict and the determination of each side to win. War songs of this nature were a common feature among the traditional Yorùbá people, especially during the days of inter-tribal and inter-necine wars which nearly rent them asunder.

The theatrical ending of this play is in harmony with the Yorùbá custom of bidding one another farewell. The war captain of Olóòyà's farewell song reminds us of the Yorùbá custom whereby one who finds himself/herself in a critical situation starts singing a song expressing lamentation or sadness. At this point in time, the war captain of Olóòyà seems to realize his folly and starts

regretting his past mistakes.

This play is a moral fable which Ògúnmólá probably intends to make use of in order to teach the young generation how to embrace the virtues of a morally upright life.

iii. Ojú la rí (Appearances are deceptive)

This play narrates the story of a pair of friends, Ajifowówè and Aláidáa. We are told that Ajifowówè was faithful and honest but Aláidáa proved to be an hypocrite. In a nutshell, the folktale tells us how Aláidáa usually treated with levity his friend's efforts to get children. There are occasions ^{on} which he went secretly to the priest of Iwinmi (river goddess) to forestall his friend's struggle for children. Even after Ajifowówè had been blessed with a male child (Akinlâwón) by the river goddess, Aláidáa was instrumental to the tragic drowning of the boy in the Abùùbùtán river when Ajifowówè, his friend, left the young boy in his (Aláidáa's) care when

he went on a short business trip. Despite the fact that Aláidáa had been instructed and warned before then not to let Akinlâwón go close to the bank of river Abùùbùtán, he (Aláidáa) intentionally sent the boy to the tabooed river to fetch some water for him. Though the small boy reminded his father's friend of the taboo surrounding him and river Abùùbùtán, this reminder fell on Aláidáa's deaf ears, for he insisted that Akinlâwón must go to the river and fetch water for him. The helpless small boy was therefore forced to go to the river where he got drowned instantly.

When Ajifowówè and Ajoké returned from their journey, Aláidáa pretended and denied any knowledge of Akinlâwón's whereabouts. Therefore, a search party was organized, and, after frantic efforts to get the boy, it was discovered that he had got drowned in the river Abùùbùtán and that it was Aláidáa who was behind the incident. After several efforts to recover this boy from the river goddess

had failed, the priest of the water spirit asked all those who were present at the scene and who knew something about the happening to confess openly, but Aláidáa claimed that he was innocent. At last, Aláidáa's mischievous ways were revealed. He was therefore rewarded accordingly. He was made to become deaf and dumb by the river goddess for perpetrating such a mischievous act.

Looking at the play, one sees Ògúnmólá's narrative techniques when he made Aláidáa to act as a backbiter to Ajifowówè who, we were told, was his close friend. One may also wonder why Ajifowówè and Ajokè failed to take their son with them on their journey. Ògúnmólá did this intentionally to accomplish his aim. Meanwhile, Ògúnmólá's message is clear. He is probably advising or warning people of the contemporary Nigerian society to be careful in their ways, especially in choosing friends, inferring that people of Aláidáa's calibre are numerous in the society. This is in harmony with a modern day saying which states that Òré kò sí mó, ká wéni bá rìn ló kù (There are no honest friends

any more; those whom we now move with are mere associates.)

Ògúnṣọlá seems to believe that hypocrisy is a devilish act which, according to Yorubá traditional belief, attracts retributive justice. In the play, therefore, Aláidáa was instantly punished for his mischievous deeds, while Ajifowówè, on the other hand, was duly compensated and blessed for his open-mindedness, transparent honesty and unalloyed faith in man and God. Ajifowówè was blessed with a male child and, as his name implies, he might also have been blessed with money. Aláidáa, in turn, was a peasant farmer who toiled day and night to make a living. In this play, we discover that Aláidáa himself was struggling to have children but, probably due to his waywardness and evil machinations, he was not blessed with any.

Ògúnṣọlá is probably warning or advising the people of his time and the future generations, particularly the Nigerian society, to be very careful

and selective in choosing friends or associates as people of Aláidáa's calibre are numerous. In this case, the traditional Yorùbá people believe that, as there are good friends, bad ones also abound, and this is why they often say, Òrẹ̀ ní í paní, òrẹ̀ ní í la ní (It is friends who are often instrumental to one's fall, it is also friends who are instrumental to one's progress or well-being), Unfortunately, in "Ojú la rí", Aláidáa is a mischievous friend who proved himself to be an instrument of destruction against his friend (Ajífowòwẹ̀) who loved and trusted him immensely.

Furthermore, Ògúnmólá depicted Aláidáa as a wolf in sheep's clothing and probably intends to warn his audience to steer clear of men and women of questionable character, since appearances are often deceptive. In the traditional past, however, this sort of behaviour was not common and the average person seemed to believe that he/she was his/her brother's keeper, and that Olódùmarè is a God of retributive justice. Consequently,

the fear to behave in a way contrary to the people's ethical belief was not, as a rule, in the people's hearts. Unfortunately for the contemporary generation, the reverse is the case.

There is a sharp contrast between the action of Abèbí's friend and that of her husband's friend (Aláídáa). While Aláídáa proves to be a dishonest and treacherous friend, Abèbí's friend behaves in a loving manner. She honestly advised her friend (Abèbí) to discuss with Ajífowówè how they would consult the Àwòrò Iwínmí for children. This they successfully did and they were later blessed with a male son, Akínláwón. The title, "Ojú la rí," is shortened from a Yorùbá maxim which says, Ojú la rí, òrẹ ò dènú (Appearances are deceptive; there may not be true affection beyond the surface). This implies that healthy or bright facial expressions do not always depict true love or affection for one's fellowman. Some people like Aláídáa of this play often hide their true colours and pretend to be good, whereas they later prove to be green snakes under the verdant lawn. Therefore, Ògúnmólá is probably reminding the contemporary

generation that not all that glitters is gold, and that we should be extra careful in assessing people's appearance since people like Aláidáa are numerous within our society. This does not imply that trustworthy and honest people or friends do not exist. What the late Kólá Ògúnmólá probably wishes to remind us of in "Ojú la rí" is the fact that honest friends/people are very rare in our complex society. In the light of this, Ògúnmólá perhaps feels that one should love all but trust a few.

The plotting of this play and Ogunmola's narrative technique are adroit. He made Aláidáa to behave in a manner that would show him to the audience as a dishonest person while posing as a righteous man out-wardly. For instance, Aláidáa went secretly several times to the àwòro iwinmi (the priest of the water goddess) to backbite his friend, Ajífowówè. At a point in time, he (Aláidáa) advised the àwòrò to make it impossible

for Ajifowówẹ to get children. On the other hand, Ajifowówẹ is made to display naivety as he always deals honestly with his friend (Aláídáa) and puts all his trust in him. In the play, there are several occasions when Ajifowówẹ discloses to and discusses with his friend (Aláídáa) personal matters concerning Abẹbí's barrenness. This is probably why, on one occasion, despite the fact that his wife had continually warned him to desist from disclosing their personal secrets to Aláídáa, Ajifowówẹ says to his friend, "Mo fọkan tán ọ tán púpọ" (I wholeheartedly trust you).

It is pertinent to point out here the Yorùbá adage which says, "Ìrírí ní í kọni lẹkọpọ" (Experience is the best teacher). Akínláwọn, though a young boy at the time of the incident, seems to have got series of life experiences. He is able to recall into memory the sad events he had experienced in life. Sensing that he was in danger, Akínláwọn starts to sing a song of fear and premonition.

He recalls his experiences in life and probably comments his father's honesty when he says,

Bá ò bá ti kú,
 A ó mà rihun rò,
 Ajífowówẹ, baba mi káre o.⁶

If we do not die prematurely,
 We would have series of experiences to relate,
Ajífowówẹ, my father, I commend you.

The second song sung by the water spirit is also significant. Here in this song, we are informed that Akinlāwón has been transformed and taken to the spirit realm due to the fact that the taboo surrounding his earthly existence has been broken. This song is appropriately used here as it moves everyone at the scene and the affected men start to dance. In this play, Ógúnmbílá draws a sharp contrast between Ajífowówẹ and his friend Aláídáa, as we have seen above. Ajífowówẹ is an honest and simple-minded person while Aláídáa behaves mischievously and treacherously. This contrast can be equally applied to

our daily experiences between one set of friends and another in the contemporary situation.

iv. Ajé ki i gbé (Well-earned money is never lost).

"Ajé ki i gbé" is a title derived by Kòlá Ògúnmólá from another popular maxim which emanates from a folktale among the Yorùbá people. In "Ajé ki i gbé," the fable of three robbers who robbed a prominent business woman (Iyá aláwújẹ) of her legitimately-earned money and ran away with the loot, is narrated. However, due to selfishness, the robbers who could have shared their loot equally among themselves hatched a plan, secretly and individually, to eliminate each other so that the money would not be shared by the three men, but remain in the possession of one of them. This plan materialized and the three robbers killed one another, leaving the money behind. At last, Iyá aláwújẹ, through the assistance of some food vendors, traced the robbers to their hideout; and, fortunately for her, she recovered her money and became very happy.

In this play, Ogúnmólá emphasized the general Yorùbá conception that any legitimately acquired wealth will not elude its owner. If such wealth or property got lost or stolen, it is believed that the legitimate owner would recover it eventually. This explains why Iyá aláwújẹ was so fortunate to recover her stolen money after Sáábádá, Aláparò and Jálẹ̀kùn-ẹ had killed each other for selfish reasons.

Ogúnmólá also looks at the havoc being perpetrated by robbers and thieves in the contemporary society. He showed the nefarious activities of Sáábádá, Aláparò and Jálẹ̀kùn-ẹ when they deprived Iyá aláwújẹ of her legitimately earned money, thereby leaving her to be impoverished. In the same vein, several people in our society have been afflicted with poverty through the menace of armed robbers and their evil machinations. Apart from loss of properties, the lives of a great number of people in our society have been terminated by devilish armed gangsters.

However, Ogúnmólá seriously stated that it is unfortunate to see that the majority of these

gangsters are people popularly known within the society. Some of them even collude with some bad eggs among the law enforcement agents by making friends with them in order to accomplish their nefarious aims. He also noted that several people who should expose the activities of these men of dubious character are very cowardly. This claim can be substantiated by the comments of the food-sellers and those of Bàbá aláwújẹ in the play when they say,

Bàbá Aláwújẹ: Èyin náà mò wọn,
 Ìyá olóúnjẹ niyí

Iyá olóúnjẹ: Háwù, kò sẹni ti ò mò wọn
 nílúú yáí; awon gbéwiri!

Cowpea seller: You also know them very well.
 This is Mámá, the food vendor.

Women food vendors: Yes, indeed, there is no
 one in this town who does not
 know them, the thieves!

In this play, it is discovered that Sáábàdà, Aláparò
 and Jálẹ̀kùn-ẹ were popularly known by people in the

community as criminals but no one was bold enough to challenge these people and expose their dubious activities.

"Ajé kí í gbé" also gives us some insight into some popular economic activities among the Yorùbá. Here, Iyá aláwújẹ and Bàbá aláwújẹ trade in cowpeas while the food vendors are busy selling in their canteen. Also, the palmwine seller features prominently in this play. These trades are some of the popular business activities among the Yorùbá people, particularly in the urban centres.

The mention of Alákòwé in this play may make us believe that Ogunmòlá was recapitulating his experience at the time when the Europeans had just taken over the government of Nigeria, and some indigenes within the Nigerian society were offered white collar jobs in government establishments and private industries. Alákòwé in this play would be someone who had been given western education and was working as a government official.

Moreover, Ogúnmólá seems to hold the view that responsible people in our society should, as much as possible, cut their coats according to their cloth. He is probably of the opinion that, without contentment, some of the problems facing our generation may not be solved. Jálẹ̀kùn-ẹ̀, Aláparò and Sáábàdà were anxious to get money at all cost and by all means, and were not contented with what could have been their shares out of the loot; hence, they met their doom. We also discovered that these three robbers spent the money they got through dubious means lavishly because they did not sweat before getting it. In contrast, Alákòwẹ̀, who got his money from a legitimate source, could not spend it lavishly for the fact that he sweated before he got it. In this case, Ogúnmólá was probably re-emphasizing a Yorùbá proverb which states, Òdùn tí a kò fowó se, ẹ̀yin ààrò ní í gbé (a medicine got free of charge is usually kept at the back of the hearth); that is, anything acquired without sweat will be carelessly used. Meanwhile, the play tends to warn against the illegitimate acquisition of wealth because such property may not last, and could bring

calamity upon the possessor. The plot whereby Iyá aláwújẹ pursued the robbers to their enclaves is not real to life. It is for the convenience of the plot of the play. In real life, such an action may be very risky, and the robbers may even take the life of their pursuer. Anyone who lost his or her property to hardened criminals like Sáábàdà, Aláparò and Jálẹ̀kùn-ẹ̀ in "Ajẹ̀ kí í gbé" would not be advised to take such a risky venture. On the contrary, such a victim may be advised to report the case to the police for redress. Therefore, it can be deduced from the play that Kọ́lá Ògúnmọ́lá intentionally creates the plot for the convenience of the play's message.

Ògúnmọ́lá's plotting of and characterization in the play are adept. Characters do not change drastically during the course of the drama and we see Ògúnmọ́lá as a skilful dramatist who brings everything to his audience as if they are in a real life situation. The play makes an interesting historical study of the 1960s when the Nigerian

economy was very buoyant. At that point in time, five shillings was enough to feed one or two people satisfactorily at a time, whereas about twenty years after, one could not boast of feeding one person satisfactorily with five naira. The play is true to the society and it portrays the happenings within it.

The play presents us with good people and charlatans as well, and also contrasts the educated elite with the traditional petty bourgeois class. Ògúnmplá uses a good mixture of Yorùbá dialects, notable examples of which we have seen in the play. For instance, he made the palmwine seller to speak in ìlá dialect to portray them as versatile and professional palmwine tappers in Yorùbáland.

The concluding song tells us of the Yorùbá philosophical thought which states that well-earned money is never lost. The play, however, is a traditional fable which draws moral lessons at the end.

v. Aṣooremásikà (He-who-always-does-good-and-does-not-perform-cruel-acts).

This play narrates the story of a man in Yorùbá folklore, who was popularly known and acclaimed for his good deeds to every man and woman that came his way, Aṣooremásikà was kind-hearted, honest, simple-minded, and was loved by all and sundry. Unfortunately, however, a man who pretended to be honest and responsible came to Aṣooremásikà's hut carrying some loads, which Aṣooremásikà thought belonged to his guest. As usual, Aṣooremásikà did not hesitate to accommodate his new guest. But not quite long after then, the owner of the stolen clothes which Aṣoore's guest brought inside the hut pursued the man and rounded him up in the hut.

The man was therefore accused of stealing, but he denied any knowledge of the clothes found in Aṣooremásikà's hut. In the light of this

development, Asooremásikà and his guest were arraigned before the king of Alù town where they were charged with stealing. It should be recalled that Asooremásikà had earlier on assisted the Oba's prince in tracing his way back home after he (the prince) had got lost for several days. Fortunately for Asooremásikà, the prince who he had assisted was present when the theft case was brought before the Oba, although the prince was not able to recognize his helper at first.

Meanwhile, Asoore and his guest stated their cases before the king and his judicial council, each denying any knowledge of the clothes found in Asoore's hut. But luck was on Asoore's side when those people he had assisted in one form or the other and those who knew him to be a good, honest and kind-hearted man were able to recognize him, gave reminiscences of his past good deeds to people and strongly defended him. They informed the king that Asoore was a man of probity and transparent honesty and that it could not be he who stole the clothes. They brought back into memory how Asoore usually helped people and assisted them when necessary.

At last, Asooremáşikà was identified by the prince of Alù to be the old man who helped him to trace his way back home/^{at} some time past. Therefore, Asooremáşikà was discharged and acquitted and was compensated with plenty of money, houses and other valuable goods for his past deeds and generosity to people. On the other hand, Asooremaşikà's guest was declared guilty of stealing and was consequently convicted. In this play, Asooremaşikà is being presented as an honest man who always does good without grudge. This behaviour has been part of him to the extent that he may not think that he could get into such a horrible experience in his life.

People of Asooremáşikà's calibre are now very rare, if they exist at all. Asooremáşikà is so generous, kind-hearted and philanthropic to the extent that he is nicknamed Asoore-bí-èní-gò (one who performs good deeds as if one is foolish). The play, therefore, tends to emphasize the Yorùbá belief which states that anyone who sows evil

would reap the same, no matter how long this might take to come. It shows hypocrisy and the way one should view it. It convinces one that, those who behave well and do good to others would always be compensated with the good things of life, whatever suffering they might come across for doing good to their fellow human beings. It is realized that, despite his generosity and kind-heartedness, Asooremásiká suffered from an undeserved punishment when he was falsely accused of stealing. However, he was finally declared innocent, was released and was equally compensated for his past good deeds, generosity and kind-heartedness while, on the other hand, his purported guest was punished for his dubious acts. This corroborates a Yorùbá adage which states, Olóòótọ́ ọ̀rọ́ kí í lẹ́ní, sùgbọ̀n kò ní í sùn nípò iká láá láá (A honest person does not have mats - that is, properties but will certainly not sleep in the precincts of the wicked). In this case, Ogúnmplá is emphasizing the Yorùbá belief which states that good deeds pay, no matter the

amount of problems one may encounter in the process of doing them.

Aṣooremáṣikà was singled out among many people within his community as a saint in human flesh. There are various instances where this can be proved. For example, Aṣoore called back the woman who sells àgídí (èkọ) and declared that she had overpaid him and therefore returned the excess money paid to him by the woman. He also gave back to the woman her shawl which she had forgotten earlier on in his hut. Moreover, Aṣooremáṣikà was in the habit of entertaining people who passed by his tent with either food or other things he had. We were told in this play that he offered kolanut to Elébùtè, among others, and also entertained the prince of Alù with àgídí and soup. He was indeed very generous to all those that passed through his farm or who came to visit him in his hut. This is in harmony with the Yorùbá custom and practice whereby strangers are well received and taken care of, no matter how distant the stranger/visitor may be as regards relationship.

Unfortunately, however, this custom is declining owing to some reasons similar in nature to what we experience in Aṣooremáṣikà's story. Nevertheless, Ògúnmọ́lá was probably of the conviction that, if people of the contemporary age could emulate Aṣooremáṣika in behaviour, the society could become more peaceful and harmonious.

Ògúnmọ́lá therefore seems to emphasize the necessity to do good, and submitted that those who are wicked would reap the fruits of their wickedness while those who do good would receive good in return. This is deduced from one of his concluding songs which says.

Bí o bá ṣere
 Wà jèrè ire
 Bí o bá ṣekà
 Wà jèrè iká⁸.

If you do good
 You will reap good
 If you do evil,
 You will surely reap evil in return.

Asooremáṣikà was therefore depicted as an embodiment of good comportment, hence, he was rewarded accordingly. Evidence of such reward is got from the song which was sung by the king and which runs thus:

Owó niyí

Mo fún ọ gbé

Aṣọ wọnyí o

Tiẹ ni.

Ilé olókè tó n wò yẹn,

Látòní lẹ,

Tiẹ ni..... 9

Here is money

I offer it to you as a gift.

Those clothes

Become yours

The storey building you are looking
at in front of you,

From today on,

Is yours.....

It is pertinent to note that, from the beginning of the play, Ogunmòlà had started to sound a note of warning to people of his period. He reminded his audience of the Yorùbá traditional belief in re-incarnation or life after death and the conception that, when everyone leaves this mortal world for the world beyond, one would account for whatever one does on earth as soon as one gets to the mythical gate of heaven where a gateman has been stationed to query anyone who will be crossing to the world of the spirits. Consequently, Ògúnmòlà keeps repeating the significance of doing good in the folk song which says,

È má sèkà láyé,
 Torí a ó rọrun,
 È má sèkà láyé o ò
 Torí a ó rọrun.
 Bá a bá dé bodé
 A ó rojọ¹⁰

Do no evil on earth
 Because we shall all go to heaven.
 Do no evil on earth (I say),
 Because we shall go to heaven.
 When we reach the gate of heaven,
 We shall account for our deeds.

The seriousness with which Ogunmola had this folk-song sung and the number of times he repeated it in this play showed that he was keen to stress his warning. It should be noted, however, that this song is sung seven times. It is the present writer's view that the number 'seven' here is very significant and symbolic.

Firstly, this connotes seriousness. Whenever the Yoruba people repeat a statement, it connotes that they want the person who is being addressed to take the matter with deep concern. This is why a Yoruba adage says, Koko là à rānfá adití (Statements directed to a deaf man are constantly repeated).

Secondly, the number "seven" is occasionally used among the traditional Yorùbá people to remind themselves of their common root and in connection with some common festivals and annual celebrations among them. According to Claudia Zaslavsky (1973):

The number seven occurs in connection with the seven-day harvest festival and with the Egungun celebration, which is dedicated to departed ancestors and observed with great homecoming festivals. One version of the creation myth refers to the seven grand-children of Odùduwà, who subsequently became the rulers of the Yorùbá and Benin people.¹¹

The number "seven" here probably tries to remind the people that they originated from the same source. Therefore, they should learn how to be their brother's keeper and be kind-hearted to one another. Also, the number "seven" is often repeated in connection with the rituals concerning the departed ancestors. The traditional Yorùbá people believe that the dead ancestors must be

venerated in order to seek for their favour. Therefore, whenever an aged person dies, the ritual ceremony is usually finalized on the seventh day or, occasionally, on the seventeenth day. During the seven days, the traditional lamp with seven holes is lit. In a nutshell, the number "seven" here reminds the Yorùbá people of their primordial relationship with Odùduwà who is generally believed to be the progenitor of the Yorùbá race, and also in connection with their ancestors.

In this play, therefore, Ògúnmólá probably had the song sung seven times to tell his audience that they should not frown at this warning but take it with all seriousness. He may be of the opinion that, if people of our contemporary period (particularly the Yorùbá) could see themselves as one entity that evolved from the same stock and origin, they would not hesitate to be their brother's keeper. This lesson would also be of great benefit to people of the present Nigerian society, particularly the Yorùbá

race which seems to be gradually losing its cultural identity. If this warning could be heeded, our contemporary Nigerian society would perhaps achieve more rapid progress and perhaps foster development in the various sectors of the shattered economy, and our cultural heritage would perhaps be more speedily revived.

Meanwhile, it needs to be pointed out that Aṣooremáṣiká was at first declared guilty by the king but the timely intervention of people he had earlier on helped one way or the other saved him from this predicament. Without this, Aṣooremáṣiká could have paid dearly for a matter which he knew nothing about. This explains why a Yorùbá proverb says, Orí yéye ní Mògún, tàìsè ló pò (out of the several heads found at Mògún,¹² the innocent ones are the more numerous). This implies that not all those who are usually condemned for one offence or the other are always guilty of these offences. The Yorùbá people are sometimes of the view that luck may sometimes run against some innocent souls and thereby they suffer for offences they did not

commit. However, they are of the conviction that to die a glorious death is more rewarding than becoming a nuisance in the society. They also believe that there is abundant reward for people who die a noble death in the world beyond.

Although some people within the Yorùbá sub-groups sometimes say, Oore níwòn; bí oore bá pò lápòjù a dibi (Kindness should be in due measure; if it exceeds certain limits, it often brings evil).

That is, one needs to restrain oneself from too much kindness because people might thereafter repay one adversely.

On the other hand, Ogúnmólá in this play seems to correct the above notion by using Asooremáṣiká as an embodiment of good comportment and righteousness. Like many other Yorùbá people, he was probably convinced that anyone who sows good would reap good and those who are adept evil-doers would be rewarded accordingly. This is why, in his concluding song, he says,

Bí o bá sere

Wàá jèrè ire.

Bí o bá ẹ̀kà

Wáá jèrè iká.¹³

If you do good,

You will be rewarded with goodness,

And if you do evil,

You will be rewarded with evil.

Ògúnmólá therefore seems to call the attention of his audience and the Yorúbá people in general to witness the aftermath of the honesty and righteousness of Asooremásiká and thereafter advises his audience to emulate Asooremásiká's good example.

The plot in "Asooremásiká" whereby Ògúnmólá manipulated his dramatic expertise to bring in the prince of Alu who had been earlier on assisted by Asooremásiká is very significant. Asooremásiká should have suffered for his kind-heartedness and this incident might have discouraged other people from doing good; but Ògúnmólá showed that a righteous man will be rewarded, no matter what problems he might encounter in the process of performing good acts.

The play, as we can deduce, frowns at hypocrisy in all its forms. Although Asooremáṣíkà suffered to some extent; we discover that justice was later restored. In his dramatic technique, Ògúnṣòlá probably shows us that man must be persecuted in his bid to do good, but truth would prevail at last. The play starts casually like an ordinary moment in life and there is consistency all through the drama.

vi. Èrú yàtò sòmọ (Betwixt slave and son, there's a difference.)

"Èrú yàtò sòmọ" retells a Yorùbá popular folktale which narrates the story of a slave (Ìdà) who was being treated like a free-born child by his master but revealed his true identity through his actions and behaviour. The behaviour of Ìdà did not resemble that of a free-born child for he always misbehaved and acted contrary to the expectations of his master.

One day, Ìdá was taken out to a feast by his master, and was introduced to people as a son of his master. But despite all the humane treatment he was given at the feast, Ìdá revealed his identity as a slave. After he had been offered a good and delicious food and treated like a responsible man, Ìdá left the gathering secretly and went to a nearby dunghill and started to eat peels of yam and remnants of food. When Ìdá's master saw what happened and people started to wonder why Ìdá, his son, had behaved in such a shameful manner, the master instantly declared that Ìdá was not his son but a slave, and that he (the master) just wanted to make Ìdá a free-born child. Through his actions, Ìdá had disclosed his identity, and this has given rise to a Yorùbá adage which says, Ìdá ni yóò pe ara rẹ lẹrú (It is Ìdá who will disclose his identity as a slave.).

Similarly, in "Èrú yàtò sòmọ" Afólábí is presented before the audience as a slave to Dáwòdì. Like several kind-hearted people who possess humanitarian feeling and abhor slavery in

one form or the other, Aniyikáyé persuades his friend, Dáwòdù, to release or re-sell Afólábí to him so as to free him (Afólábí) from slavery and give him the opportunity to become a free man. He even wanted to make him his adopted child. Though Dáwòdù agrees and releases the man (Afólábí) to Aniyikáyé, he reminds his friend of the Yorùbá maxim which says that there is nothing one could do to prevent a slave or an illegitimate child from disclosing his or her identity.

Aniyikáyé bought Afólábí from his friend, took him home and introduced him to members of his family and household as one of his brothers who had left home some years past, and who had just arrived from a journey. It may be recalled that, before then, Aniyikáyé had secretly warned Afólábí to behave well so as not to reveal the secret of his former status or identity.

Unfortunately, however, despite all the humane treatment and due regard accorded him, Afólábí behaves exactly like Idá of the folkloric

fable. He went to the kitchen and started to eat peels of yam and food remnants. Unfortunately for him, this led to a situation whereby his new 'master' became disappointed and reveals that Afolábí is not his brother but a slave. Thereafter, Aniyikáyé could not restrain his annoyance and consequently took Afolábí back to Dáwódù, his former master. Having warned his friend earlier, Dáwódù upholds the Yoruba philosophical thought which stipulates that there is no favour or opportunity you could give to a slave that would change his or her behaviour as a slave.

In this play, the hospitality and humanitarianism of the Yorubá people are re-emphasized. This is reflected in Aniyikáyé's plea to his friend, when, out of humanitarian feelings, he decides to free Afolábí from slavery and bondage. In the original fable, of course, Ídá was not bought from another master like Afolábí but was taken out by his master to a feast where he went to a nearby dunghill to feed on peels of yams, despite the

fact that he had been offered enough food by the celebrant. We may also note that the name of Idá's master is not mentioned in the folktale while the master is named in Kólá Ògúnmólá's play, "Èrú yàtò sòmè". This divergence between an original work and an adaptation is often experienced in drama where the dramatist tries to adapt and create his own characters to suit his production.

We are made to realize that Afólabi could not adapt himself to the new situation in Aniyikaye's house. He seems to remain conservative, and, hence, kept on in perpetual slavery. Therefore, the play seems to show us that one can only attain full freedom from the cages that entrap one if one could change from the conservative and shameful ways of life and adapt to prevailing progressive conditions. The play also seems to uphold the Yorùbá maxim which states that "Charity begins at home," for one's action or behaviour would disclose one's true identity or from what root one originates. Ògúnmólá was probably of the opinion that one has to move with the times. Afólabi failed to modify

his old ways of life and adapt to changes; hence, he became an object of ridicule. Therefore, in this play, the significance of humanitarianism and the need to adapt to socio-cultural changes through time have been emphasized. We have also realized that one should try to free oneself from all self-imposed bondage if one wants to live happily and peacefully within the society.

Unfortunately, however, Ogúnmólá's position in this drama seems somewhat one-sided. Aniyikáyé should have given Afolábí a second chance and see if he would continue to behave abnormally. What happened to Afolábí here may also happen to any freeborn child. In this wise, a freeborn child may be given ample chance to correct himself or herself, but, in Afolábí's case, he was not given adequate opportunity to correct his abnormality before a final judgement was passed on him. This, therefore, contradicts the Yorùbá popular adage which says, Bí a se bérú la bomo (Both a slave and a freeborn child are born the same way.). It appears that this play does not show a proper concept

of social change by making Afólábí to behave like Ìdá in the Yorùbá folktale. Nevertheless, it is possible that Ògúnmólá might have wanted everyone who may be under one type of bondage or the other to strive hard and free himself/herself in as much as all forms of bondage are not natural but self-imposed.

The concluding song re-echoes and re-emphasizes the Yorùbá philosophical saying which states that a slave will always behave in a manner that will instantly reveal his or her identity. If we look at the Yorùbá adage which says, "bí a se bẹrú la bọmọ" (Both a slave and a legitimate child are born the same way), one may ponder why these two Yorùbá adages are in conflict. Anyway, we may be of the conviction that, if Afólábí who, as we have seen in the play, is given a second chance, he would perhaps have changed from his old ways of life.

vii. Olórun ló mejjòó dá (God is the equitable Judge).

The above caption emanates from a Yorùbá maxim which states that God is the only Being capable of discovering the truth and of judging rightly. In this play, it seems that Ògúnmólá had been partly influenced by his faith in the Christian religion and partly by his experience in his people's culture. He presented before his audience a messenger of God dressed in the fashion of a Christian clergyman and preaching in the manner of the orthodox priests.

Nonetheless, "Olórun ló mejjòó dá" is an adaptation from a popular Yorùbá folktale which states that man's judgement can sometimes be faulty and that God is the only omniscient Being who knows all hidden secrets and could expose all human thoughts or hidden acts. Consequently, the traditional Yorùbá people firmly believe that only Olódùmarè, who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent can judge rightly and impartially.

In the above play, Ògúnmólá presents a typical Yorùbá community with an Oba (King) who commands respect and honour from his subjects. The Oba

(King) was at the helm of affairs and whatever he said or did was believed to be perfect and right. As stated above, Ògúnṣọlá's christian religious experience has influenced him to create a character in person of the man of God (a christian preacher) who went to the Oba's palace to pay homage to the traditional Head of the community before he embarked on his preaching business among the people. This practice is significant in Yorubá culture for, as soon as any visitor enters a town, village or hamlet, he/she must first visit the king in his palace and pay necessary homage. It should be emphasized that, in the earlier times, no visitor was accomodated by the people unless he/she first presented himself/herself before the Oba (king), head of the town or community. Even at present, important visitors (whether military officers or civilians) who enter a town or village have to pay homage to the traditional ruler of the community before they proceed to other places.

After he had paid homage to the oba, the evangelist in this play introduces himself and narrates his mission to the king and the community in general. According to him, he is to offer prayers of blessing and peace to the oba and his people both in the early mornings and in the evenings. The oba approves this after due consultation with his council of chiefs, and the evangelist prays for those who were present at the scene. It should be noted, however, that the evangelist refuses the oba's gift, claiming that it is forbidden to take gifts for rendering God's service. This is probably a reflection of the christian doctrine which stipulates that the knowledge from God is given free and that one should give it out to people free of charge. However, one may wonder whether this doctrine is still being strictly followed by the modern day evangelists and preachers or not.

Before the departure of the evangelist from the oba's palace, a dramatic event took place. A butcher followed by a woman comes to lodge a complaint to the oba. As the traditional head of the community

whose words were final, the butcher put his case before the king, accusing the woman that her dog has lifted and eaten a piece of meat from his tray. Giving his judgement, the oba mandates the woman who owned the dog to tell her dog to pay for the piece of meat. To this judgement, the oba's council of chiefs and the people who were at the scene hailed the oba and proclaimed that he had judged rightly and that no one could be so wise like their oba.

In harmony with a Yorubá maxim which says "àlejò ki í sòbééré" (a stranger should not be too forward), the evangelist asked whether it was acceptable within the community to speak the truth and that he would like to say a word if he was permitted to do so. The oba willingly permitted the "man of God" who, through his pronouncement, disagreed with the people's notion that the oba was impartial in his judgement and claimed that God is the only equitable Judge. According to the evangelist's claim, man may not always be competent to judge rightly and impartially without necessary inspiration from God. This is perhaps why the oba (king) in "Ọlọrun ló mejjọp dá" is

incapable of judging rightly the case which is put before him by the "man of God".

Moreover, Ògúnmolá in this play was probably of the opinion that, although dignified honour and respect should be accorded the traditional rulers, the Almighty God deserves the highest honour and reverence. In the final analysis, he maintained that God is the only impartial Judge. To substantiate his claim, Ògúnmolá concluded the play with the song.

Olúwa ló méjòpó dá,
Kò lènikèjì
Onidájò agbà
Jàre dájò mi re e e.¹⁴

Only God is the equitable Judge
He has no equal.
The great Judge,
Please, judge my case rightly.

As stated above, the play is an adaptation of a popular Yorùbá folktale masked in a proto-religious christian garb. Ògúnmolá's christian influence probably necessitated the bringing in of the

'christian' visitor in the plot. However, the incident which occurred at the bank of the stream, as witnessed and narrated by the king's messenger, can be likened to Iyá Aláwújẹ's episode in "Ajé kí í gbé". In "Ọlórún ló mejjọ dá," the king pronounced a judgement which was hailed by his subjects, and, therefore, these people rose up to say that only their king was an equitable judge. On the contrary, the 'christian visitor' disagreed with the people's view and verdict, and announced that God is the only equitable judge. To back up his submission, he advised the king to send one of his messengers out, and that he (the messenger) should later come back to relate his experience before the people. This was done, and, in the evening of the same day, the king's messenger came with the news of what he had seen and witnessed.

According to the messenger, a man with a huge amount of money came to a certain stream to bath himself but forgot the money when he was leaving. Another man who was said to be a lunatic came and scattered the money all over the place to the extent

that some fell into the stream while some fell into the surrounding bush. Later, a woman came, saw a part of the money in the bag and quickly carried it away, without bothering to pick those that were scattered. Then came a blind man who washed his feet in the stream but could not see the money which was scattered all over. At last, the owner of the money came back but could not find his money except the few coins which were scattered all over. He therefore challenged the blind man whom he met beside the stream. In this encounter, the blind man was beaten to death for an offence which he did not commit.

The man of God thereafter asked the king to judge the case; and, in his judgement, the king was unable to identify the innocent from the guilty one. At this juncture, the 'christian visitor' corrected the people's impression that any human being could be as perfect as God. He made it known that the woman who carried the money away was the rightful owner for the fact that the man who forgot



A scene in "Ọlórún ló mejjọ́ dá". 'Man of God' (left), the king (middle) and the king's messenger played by Kọlá Ọgúnmọ́lá (right).

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Photographic Division, 1968.

the money at the back of the stream had earlier duped the father of the woman and that the amount of money left in the bag which the woman carried was the exact amount he took from the woman's father. This reminds us of the incident that took place in "Ajé kí í gbé" when Ìyá Aláwújẹ recovered her legitimately earned money from the bandits (see page 174).

Moreover, it seems that Ogunmólá was warning the people of his time and the future Nigerian society to be very careful in adjudicating cases, in as much as no one can claim competence in making impartial judgement. This can be corroborated with the Biblical injunction which says, "Judge not, that you be not judged."¹⁵ We should remind ourselves that not all the people who are being convicted for one crime or the other today are guilty of the offence for which they are convicted. As we said earlier in this dissertation, this confirms the submission that human beings only make efforts at achieving equity; their judgements are often faulty and partial. In this case, Ògúnmólá was

probably reiterating that human wisdom without inspiration from God is incomplete. It seems that he was trying to point out that the present-day judge should seek for God's inspiration and guidance in dealing with cases that are brought before them.

The plot is superb. Ògúnmolá brought before his audience a society which is purely a traditional Yorùbá one in which an Oba featured prominently. Influenced by his christian experience, he introduced a 'christian visitor' and made him to parade himself as an evangelist. To correct the erroneous opinion of the people that their Oba was most supreme and wise, he created a folktale which narrated a complex problem, and which the wisdom of an earthly king could not solve. At last, the christian evangelist proved his claim that only God is the equitable judge when he provided the answer to the 'riddle'. The play is an ethical fable which narrates complex events which need to be handled with utmost care and caution. The king could not adjudicate rightly because of the



Another scene in "Ọlọrun ló mejjọ dá". 'Man of God' (left), the king (middle, King's messenger, played by Kọlẹ. Ọgūnmọlẹ (right).

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

imperfection of his human nature. The 'man of God,' on the other hand, ^{seem to have been} ~~would~~ able to discover the secret behind the whole episode which took place at the riverside because he was probably delivering his message through inspiration or spiritual guidance.

The concluding song re-affirms the Yorùbá conviction that only the Supreme Being is capable of judging impartially. It is a traditional song which is sung in a pentecostal church style. Finally, one may ^{assert} that the play has features of the folktale, especially if one looks critically at the series of incident at the riverside as witnessed and narrated by the oba's messenger.

viii. BỌlọrun ọ pani ọba kan ọ lẹ pani

(Kings wield power; God's is the Supreme Power.)

Like what he did in other folkloric plays, the late Kọlá Ọgúnmọlá also adapted the Yorùbá popular folktale, "BỌlọrun ọ pani, ọba kan ọ lẹ pani," to show the omnipotence and almightiness of God. In this play, Ọgúnmọlá reasserts that only God could save or protect mankind from all problems and dangers of life.

This folktale narrates the ordeal faced by a man called BỌlọrun-ọ-pani, ọba-kan-ọ-lẹ-pani because of the unique and symbolic name he bears. Literally, this name implies that, without the consent of God, no king has the power to destroy or get a person killed. Meanwhile, the king of the town and his subjects felt disturbed and thought that, for this man to continue bearing such an appellation was a piece of insolence to the king and his chiefs in general. Therefore, the king was sad and thereafter thought of plans to exterminate BỌlọrun-ọ-pani's life for bearing such an

"insolent" name with self-assurance.

The king therefore sent for BQlôrun-ô-pani and gave him a gold ring for safe-keeping. However, he warned that, if BQlôrun-ô-pani failed to produce the ring on demand on a future date, he would be killed. BQlôrun-ô-pani in turn promised to keep the king's ring safely and left for his house. Immediately he got home, he called his wife and narrated what the king said to her. Consequently, they both kept the ring under their clothes in a box.

Not quite long afterwards, the king secretly sent for BQlôrun-ô-pani's wife, enticed her with a huge amount of money and asked her to return the ring which he (the king) gave to her husband. He also promised her additional ~~rewards~~ as soon as she brought the ring to him. Seeing the fabulous amount of money she was offered, BQlôrun-ô-pani's wife accepted to betray her husband and destroy him completely. She therefore took the ring without her husband's knowledge and gave it back to the king. After getting back his ring, the king threw

it into the deepest part of a stream so that it would not be found by anyone. On the third day, however, the king sent for Bolórun-ò-pani and demanded for his gold ring. Bolórun-ò-pani got back home, called his wife and searched for the king's ring, and, to Bolórun-ò-pani's surprise, the ring was nowhere to be found.

Having known his fate, Bolórun-ò-pani was not moved but prepared to die for breaking his agreement with the king. Meanwhile, he decided to take his last meal before finally leaving the world. He therefore bought three pieces of fish which he meant to eat for his last meal. Fortunately for him, when he cut the fish, he found the king's ring in one of them.

Bolórun-ò-pani returned the ring to the king who was dumb-founded and thereafter accepted the moral hidden in Bolórun-ò-pani's name. Finally, the king and his subjects, especially those who had conspired against this man, unreservedly accepted the moral truth that only God can protect man, and

that, without God's consent or approval, no mortal being could harm his or her neighbour. The play therefore ends with the Oba and his subjects admitting that only God is capable of saving man from all mischief, as evidenced in their concluding song which says,

Lóòótò, BỌlọrun ò pani,
 Ọbà kan ò lẹ pani
 BỌlọrun ò pani
 Ọba kan ò lẹ pani.
 Ìyànjú ni mo gbà
 Ọlọrun ló le múkú wá
 BỌlọrun ò pani,
 Ọba kan ò lẹ pani.¹⁶

Truly, if God does not kill a person,
 No king can kill him/her,
 If God does not kill a person,
 No king can kill him/her,
 I merely gave advice,
 Only God can pass true judgement.
 If God does not kill a person,
 No king can kill him/her.

The basic story in the above play has also been rendered in song by a renowned musician, the late Kèlání Yusuf and his Sákàrà group in the early 1960s (that is, about thirty years ago). In his rendition, Kèlání entirely condemned the women folk for what he termed as their waywardness and dishonesty. From the outset, he warned that men should never reveal their secrets to women. Thus he says,

Obinrin ò ʒe é finu hàn,
 Èni tó bá finú hàn wọn,
 Ròrun... 17

It is risky to reveal secrets to women,
 And anyone who does so,
 May automatically be destroyed.

What prompted Kèlání to make the above pronouncement is explained later in the song. We are told that Bólórùn-ò-pani and his wife had been living peacefully together for a great number of years before the ugly incident happened. Although they were poor people, Kèlání was of the opinion that

Bólórún-ò-pani's wife should have refused to be lured into such a horrible temptation and could have rejected evil machinations against a husband who loved her so dearly.

The folktale in this play is rendered in song in its entirety with minor variations. For instance, the song speaks of Bólórún-ò-pani as a professional fisherman. We are told that he caught the three fish inside which he found the king's ring by himself. Meanwhile, Ògúnmólá probably thought that one does not necessarily become a fisherman before one could get fishes. He therefore provided those three fish for Bólórún-ò-pani through a fish-seller.

Apart from this, Ògúnmólá in his play also points to the evil machinations usually perpetrated by some women in our society. He narrates how women had sometimes been used as instruments of woe through time. To lend credence to this assertion, one may refer to a warning from an Ifá poem in which it is stated that people should never put their trust in

women because they are treacherous and mischievous.¹⁸

In "BỌlọrun-ò-pani-ọba-kan-ò-le-pani,"
BỌlọrun-ò-pani's wife is presented as a mischievous woman who has no affection for her husband, as already proved by her actions when she submitted herself to be used as an instrument for her husband's destruction. From this experience, one could see how women are sometimes enticed by money to engage themselves in mischievous acts.

Another example worth citing is that of Olójòhgbòdú, the wife of death in Ifá corpus, who, because of an exorbitant sum of money offered to her, agreed to reveal what are taboos to her husband, and thereby causing his instant death. This is why this Odù warns:

Obinrin lẹ̀dàlẹ̀,

Obinrin lẹ̀ké.

Èéyàn ó mọ́ finú hàn fọ́binrin....¹⁹

Women are hypocrites,

Women are traitors,

One should never reveal his secrets to women....

In this folkloric play, BỌlọrun-ò-pani-oba-
kan-ò-lè-pani trusted in, and revealed his secrets
to his wife; consequently, this woman betrayed him and
partookⁱⁿ plans for his death. BỌlọrun-ò-pani would
have been murdered by the king without any just
cause if he had perhaps not been protected and saved
by God in such a benevolent manner. However, one
may deduce that it is Ogúnmọlá's experience of the
avaricious instincts in women which has probably made
him portray many of them, in most of his plays, as
wicked, devilish and mischievous in character. It
is unfortunate to note that Ogúnmọlá seems to play
down the brighter image of women in his plays, but
we should recollect that he had earlier pointed out
in "Ọgbọ́n ju agbára" that the dedication, patriotism
and wisdom of the princess from Oníkán-ún excelled
those of her male counterparts in the town. He
remarks the role played by this woman who selflessly
fought to redeem her people from a perpetual bondage
under the town of Olódyà.

As we have pointed out in some of the other plays,
the Yorùbá institution of ọbashi is very significant.



A scene in "Bólórùn ò paní, ọbà kan ó lẹ̀ paní" where the king, played by Kòlẹ̀ Ọ̀gúnmọ́lẹ̀ (left), gave Bólórùn-ò-paní's wife, played by Táyò Ọ̀gúnmọ́lẹ̀ (right), a bag containing money so that she could betray her husband.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

The omnipotence and omniscience of God is also re-emphasized. We are also made to believe that one must not equate God with any other power, whether **mundane** or spiritual.

One may be misled to ask why Bólórún-ò-pani had to call his wife to show her the oba's ring and let her know where the king's ring is kept. Ògúnmólá might have used this technique to show the social interaction that should naturally exist between a couple, and, as marriage is one of the primordial social institutions, the interactions between a man and his spouse are meant to be very cordial and devoid of suspicion. However, mischief of this sort is not perpetrated by women only. Experience has shown in our society that some men also have betrayed their wives and intentionally planned for their downfall.

The concluding song here also reiterates and re-emphasizes that man can only make human efforts; God is above everyone. This song is therefore sung

in a folktale style probably to remind the audience and everyone in general of their limitations and to warn them not to overrate their wisdom.

ix. Èsù Ọdàrà (The 'Devilish Èsù)

Apparently, this play is adapted from the Biblical story of Satan, the devil in the Book of Isaiah.²⁰ But be that as it may, the Yorùbá Èsù cannot be legitimately equated with the christian satan; however, we cannot rule out the ^{possibility} that Ọgúnmọlá's christian experience is reflected in the play.

The play starts with what seems like the Biblical folk narrative which points to the way in which or the reason why Satan the devil was cast down from heaven into the world of men. Ọgúnmọlá then adapted this story and fused it with the popular Yorùbá folktale where Èsù Ọdàrà (one of the Yorùbá malevolent divinities) started to cause confusion and mischief among humanfolk.

Meanwhile, it is pertinent to briefly discuss some ambiguities or misconceptions that often arise as regards the interpretation being given to Èsù in Yorùbá mythology and the Satan of Biblical narrative. It should be recalled that the early translators of the Yorùbá Bible, out of their ignorance of Yorùbá culture and their bias against the indigenous religion, had in their interpretation, equated Satan of the Bible with Èsù, one of the primordial divinities in Yorùbá religious belief. Meanwhile, this notion has been proved wrong by renowned scholars in Yorùbá traditional religion and theology. 21

According to some of these scholars, Èsù can be likened to a Public Relations Officer or to the modern day police force. Jacob K. Oluponna (1985) even refers to Èsù as "the divine policemen and the messenger of the gods".²² In Yorùbá mythology, Èsù acts as arbiter between man and the spirits. Whenever there is any misunderstanding or animosity between man and the spirits (whether malevolent or benevolent spirits), Èsù keeps peace and

maintains security if the human being involved could offer prescribed sacrifices to the divinity or spirit whose wrath had been incurred. On the other hand, if a person proves headstrong or stubborn to the dictates and prescriptions of the diviner, and does not offer the sacrifice prescribed, he/she may invite the wrath of Èṣù who may send one of his malevolent messengers known as Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà (the devilish Èṣù) to discipline him/her accordingly. This is why Èṣù's malevolent messenger is occasionally referred to as Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà Aṣeburúkú sere (Devilish Èṣù, who does good and evil randomly). But if one performs the necessary sacrifices and rituals, it is believed that all will be well with him/her. Hence, the Yoruba people say, "Èní rúbọ̀ l'Èṣùú gbè" (It is those who sacrifice that Èṣù favours.).²³

In "Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà," Ọ̀gúnmọ̀lá seems to emphasize the fact that Olódùmarè's power and authority can never be equated with that of Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà or any other power either in heaven or on earth.

Despite the pride and stubbornness of Èsù Òdàrà in this play, it is pointed out that Èsù Òdàrà could not compete with Olódùmarè both in power and authority.

Moreover, Ògúnmplá tends to warn the people of his period to keep proper vigil over Èsù Òdàrà and his activities since he is always in attendance, particularly where peace and co-operation prevail. We realize from the play that, when Èsù Òdàrà discovered that he could not compete with Olódùmarè in power and might, he decided to descend upon the inhabitants of the world, particularly within the abodes of peaceful families, intimate friends and harmonious groups, causing confusion and misunderstandings among them.

As soon as Èsù Òdàrà entered the world of men, he started causing confusion all about. He encountered Dàda and Òkè who later argued over the colour of Èsù Òdàrà's cap and both became aggravated to the point where they wanted to use

their cutlasses in fighting each other, but for the co-incident and timely intervention of a woman customer, Èsù Ọdàrà's mischievous aim was able to be defeated.

Èsù Ọdàrà also confronted Dàda's father and was almost successful in his evil intention. This situation was averted by Dàda's mother by quickly driving away Èsù Ọdàrà who came to their house in human form.

Meanwhile, Ọgúnmọlá seems to believe that Èsù Ọdàrà is still present among us today. He (Èsù Ọdàrà) goes from place to place, causing confusion and misunderstanding among men and women, both old and young. However, Kọlá Ọgúnmọlá was probably warning the people of his period as well as the future generations to keep watch over Èsù Ọdàrà and his agents because Èsù Ọdàrà is believed to be ubiquitous in our society. This is probably why, according to general belief, the peace and



A scene in "Èsù Òdàrà" where Èsù, played by Kòlá Ogúnmòlá (middle), confronts Dàdà and his friend, Òké.

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

stability of the society is being continually threatened by Èsù Òdàrà's nefarious activities. Furthermore, some people are of the view that several people are being manipulated and mis-directed by Èsù Òdàrà to cause confusion and havoc everywhere and at all times. This is probably why, in its concluding song, the play warns all and sundry in the following words:

Lilé: Mọ m'Èsù o,
Mọ m'Èsù ù!

Ègbè: Èni rere,
Mọ m'Èsù seré!

Solo: Never play with Èsù,
Never play with Èsù!

Chorus: Good man,
Never play with Èsù,²⁴

. And

Lilé. Orí mi ò gbé e,
Àyà mi ò gbé e,
Èsù Òdàrà sòroó rí
Orí mi ò gbé e.

Ègbè: Orí mi ò gbé e,
 Àyá mi ò gbé e.
 Èṣù Òdàrà ṣòroó rí,
 Orí mi ò gbé e.²⁵

Solo: My head (power) cannot withstand it,
 My heart (strength) cannot withstand it,
 It is risky to encounter the devilish Èṣù,
 My head (power) cannot withstand it.

Chorus: My head (power) cannot withstand it,
 My heart (strength) cannot withstand it,
 It is risky to encounter the devilish Èṣù,
 My head (power) cannot withstand it.

The above songs lay emphasis on the devilish activities of Èṣù Òdàrà as believed by the traditional Yorùbá people and therefore give a note of warning to everyone to steer clear of Èṣù Òdàrà's influence.

The play starts with a type of music which readily gives the impression that a horrible being will soon approach. This is followed by a dreadful invocation, and Èṣù Òdàrà emerges, praising himself as,

Onilé kángun kángun ọrun

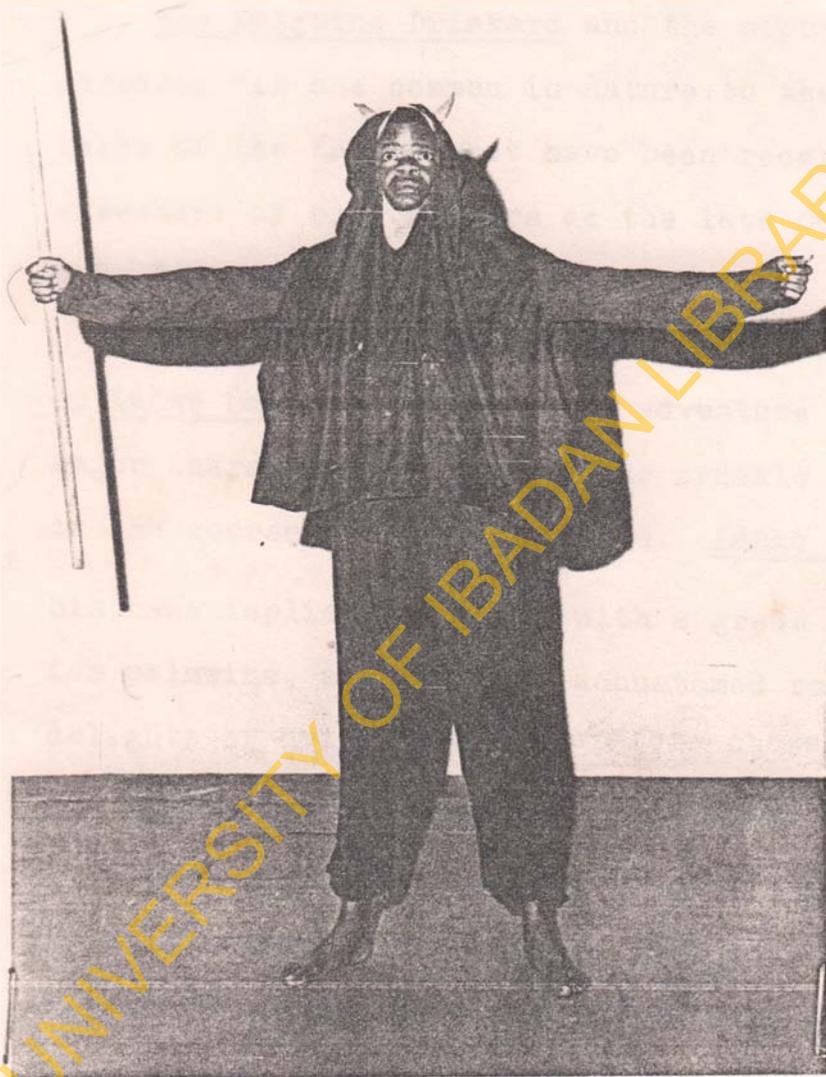
Ò lómi nílẹ̀ fẹ̀jẹ̀ wẹ̀

Possessor of innumerable houses in heaven

One who has water at home but bathes in blood.

One may be tempted to think that Ògúnmọ́lá has used the above praise-name of Ògún (god of iron) wrongly by applying it to Èsù Ọ̀dàrà. This may not be so for the fact that dramatists^{are} often in the habit of manipulating words to suit new situations. In this case, Ògúnmọ́lá might intentionally have used the praise poem in question for the aesthetic colouring of his play. It may also be contended that the story of Èsù Ọ̀dàrà challenging God's authority and power in the play reflects the Biblical tale of Satan, the devil and his purported claim to put himself above the Almighty God. Due to his pride, therefore, Satan was said to have been cast down from heaven into the world of men.²⁶ This is also a reflection on Ògúnmọ́lá's christian experience. The play is life-like for the fact that it progresses gradually and naturally as in real life, and one is carried along as it progresses.

206 103
151
233.



Stretching out in full: Eṣù, played by Kólá Ọgúnmólá, in "Eṣù Ọdàrà".

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies,
University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

x. The Palmwine Drinkard (Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu):

The Palmwine Drinkard and the story it narrates "is one common in nature to the folktales of the Yorùbá that have been recorded elsewhere by such writers as the late Chief D.O. Fagunwa." 27

The play opens on a drunk carnival hosted by Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu and narrates the adventure of the major character (Láńkẹ̀) and the ordeals he faced in the course of this adventure. Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu, as his name implies, is a man with a great appetite for palmwine, and had been accustomed to the delights of drinking and therefore chose Àlábá, the tapper, as his permanent companion.

Unfortunately, however, after a drinking spree, it was discovered that Àlábá, the professional and expert tapper, had fallen off from a palmtree top, and had died instantly. This death of Àlábá and the consequent ceasing of Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu's source of palmwine supply had brought a great blow upon the gathering of palmwine drinkers and upon

Láńkẹ in particular. Therefore, this sad incident made Láńkẹ to take a decision to go to the town of the "dead" in order to persuade Alábá to follow him and come back to the world of men and resume his palmwine tapping business. As we are made to understand in this play, Láńkẹ Ọmu encountered a series of ordeals during his adventure to the land of the dead but finally succeeded in accomplishing his aim.

Although the play is an adaptation of Amos Tutuola's novel, The Palmwine Drinkard²⁸, Ọgúnmọlá's production of this play has been continually commended by both scholars and lovers of drama, and the play has given him much fame and popularity throughout the world. According to Martin Banham and Clive Wake, the play

contains a fine mixture of thrills, satire, and broad comedy, and its success in performance stemmed not only from these qualities, but from the zest of performance and the familiarity of the material to the audiences.²⁹

Discussing the aesthetics of Ọgúnmọlá's The Palmwine Drinkard, Oyẹkan Owómoyèlá also stated

that Ògúnṣplá's form of theatre is essentially Yorùbá folklore in a dress more compatible with a new milieu.³⁰ Robert G. Armstrong (1975) also comments that "the whole opera is a satire on mankind's mad chase after food, drink and money."³¹ In this play, warm-hearted humanity and buoyant spirits are shown throughout the play. He was not just a 'palmwine drinkard' but a functioning member of any social group in which he finds himself. Láńkè gave himself up to heavy drinking and his whole life was immersed in palmwine drinking. This is deduced from the song,

Èmu laṣo mi,
Èmu laya mi,
Èmu lomo mi, aa,
Èmu nilèè mi!³²

Wine is my robes and garment
Wine is my beloved wife
Wine is the heirs I'll leave behind
Wine is my only true mansion!

It should be noted that palmwine drinking had become part and parcel of Láńkè's life to the extent that he decided to embark upon such a risky adventure to

the land of the dead, in search of Alàbá, his dead palmwine tapper. Though it seems that Lànké was a matured man when he was presented before the audience, we are not told, and he does not show that he has a family of his own until he met Bísí who he eventually married. He responded to Bísí's question and said, 'Èmu niyáwòò mi' (Palmwine is my wife). Without doubt, one may assume that Ògúnmọlá is trying to be sarcastic in this play and that he might have wished to pave the way to the notion among the Yorùbá people that it is mandatory for everyone to get married. This he does when, to everyone's surprise, Lànké Òmu finally married Bísí.

Meanwhile, we may submit that Ògúnmọlá keeps warning his audience and the Yorùbá people in general to desist from heavy and excessive drinking of alcohol which has caused many people to meet their doom. This has made many houses to become desolate and several families had disintegrated on account of its adverse effects. This experience can be favourably compared with happenings within the

contemporary Nigerian society whereby several people lose their lives and properties through excessive drinking of alcohol.

Perhaps, Ògúnṣọlá also sees the accumulation of material wealth as a thing of vanity. He probably discovered that many people of his period (like their present-day prototypes) are always anxious to get rich quickly. This anxiety has led many to fraudulent and criminal acts either in government establishments or within the private enterprises. Consequently, Ògúnṣọlá seems to be of the conviction that man should take life very simply and that acquisition of wealth should be left to fate. He probably agrees with the Biblical quotation which says, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity,"³³ and concluded this play with the song:

Mo lẹrú

Mo níwọfà

Mo láy: mẹfà

Mo bímọ mẹjọ

Mo lówó lówó

Mo ti kọlé

Àgbékà mẹfà nilée mi o

Àààà! asán o!

Asán ni gbogbo rẹ lójúú mi.³⁴

I have slaves,

I have pawns

I have six wives

I have eight children

I have plenty of wealth

I have built numerous houses

I have six storey buildings

Àààà! it's vanity!

All is vanity to me.

Ògúnṣọlá seems to re-echo, in this play, the traditional Yorùbá view that anxiety to accumulate material wealth without the possession of some basic necessities of life is worthless. It should be recalled that the traditional Yorùbá people believe that children, money and longevity are essential in human life. However, they also warn against excessive accumulation of wealth which often causes the termination of people's lives prematurely.

Meanwhile, it needs to be emphasized that several people in our contemporary society acquire their wealth through dubious means. Some are in haste to get rich and do not mind to cause harm or damage to

their neighbours' lives or properties in order to achieve their aim. Others vigorously pursue their aim by surrendering members of their families as sacrificial lambs to secret cults. This accounts for the daily increase of cases of armed robbery, kidnapping, murder, etc. in our society. Therefore, Ògúnṣplá ^{seems to} believe that, before our contemporary society could be brought to sanity, everyone should discard the idea of running after unnecessary acquisition of material wealth. He was ^{probably} of the opinion that, if we want a peaceful and coherent society, we must be courageous, honest and selfless.

In The Palmwine Drinkard, Ògúnṣplá also re-emphasized the Yorùbá belief in life after death or re-incarnation. That is, the traditional Yorùbá people are of the conviction that death does not terminate or put an end to man's life. They believe that man is capable of re-incarnating into the spirit realm where he continues to live a new life for ever. This belief, of course, is not peculiar to the Yorùbá people; it is shared

by all African peoples. Even Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Taoism and other world religions share the same view about life after death.

Meanwhile, we have seen the ordeals which Láńkẹ faced before he could get to Alábá, his dead palmwine tapper, at the town of the dead. Certainly, this was not an easy task. It involved a series of problems and catastrophes. The philosophical idea behind this experience is clear and worth explaining. It should be realized that Ògúnmọlá looks at the life of man on earth as an adventure where he (man) is supposed to encounter various seemingly insurmountable problems and difficulties. However, Ògúnmọlá seems to hold the view that, with determination, courage, and perseverance, one would sail through the seas of life without too much difficulty.

Ògúnmọlá, like some other Yorùbá people, probably believes that the world of men naturally is a mixture of both good and evil, and that each man must experience these things during his or her life adventure. This submission can be corroborated by a Yorùbá maxim which says, "Tibi tire la dále

ayé" (Life has its negative as well as its positive sides.). This is vividly deduced from Láńkẹ́'s adventure to the land of the dead. Sometimes, he came in contact with benevolent spirits who always assisted him and pulled him out of danger, while, at other times, he faced the wrath of the malevolent spirits who often tormented him and attempted to sacrifice him to their gods.

The play, however, reminds us that life is a mixture of sorrow and joy. Láńkẹ́ Omu lost Alàbá, his most cherished palmwine tapper, and decided to look for him at all costs. Therefore, he encountered series of problems during his adventure to the land of the dead because he was bent on seeing Alàbá and on bringing him back to resume his business. On the other hand, he met the benevolent Olúugbó (Head of the forest) and his followers who gave him some magical charms which he later used to protect himself and save Bísí from the evil machinations of the malevolent, weird creatures at Ìlú Ìkà (the town of the wicked). Láńkẹ́ and Bísí also met Ìyá onínúúre (the kind-hearted mother) who treated them kindly, and was responsible for organizing their wedding. The weird creatures in The

Palmwine Drinkard are similar to those found in some of Fagunwa's novels, especially the female one who exhibits and advertises her wares, the different types of ailments in Ìrìnkèrindò Ninú Igbó Elégbèje.³⁵

On a final note, Lànké accomplished his aim when he saw Alàbá, his dead palmwine tapper, and spoke with him at the town of the dead. Alàbá could not speak with Lànké face to face probably because of the Yorùbá taboo which says that a human being must not talk face to face with the dead if he/she does not want trouble. Although it was impossible for Lànké to bring Alàbá back to the world of men to continue his profession as a palmwine tapper, he (Lànké) was offered a magical egg which could turn ordinary water into palmwine, and serve as an alternative source of getting palmwine for him and his drinking companions. Unfortunately for Lànké Ọmu, this magical egg, after some time, got broken and became useless. Meanwhile, it appears that Ọgúnmọlá borrowed this idea from the Biblical story of the marriage at Cana of Galilee where Jesus was said to have turned ordinary water into wine.³⁶

The play is a morality fable which exaggerates actions and reactions to life and cultural behaviour. The activities within it may be compared with the experiences in John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress³⁷ and the anonymous medieval Everyman.³⁸ Ogúnmólá tries to bring it within the realm of comedy and fantasy probably to show his audience what should be expected in life.

Culturally, he brings in the Yorùbá riddles as part of the play to show some aspects of Yoruba practices that usually accompany the period of relaxation and enjoyment. Telling of riddles is one of the significant Yorùbá customs which persists up till today. Another genre in this category is the chanting of oriki (praise name) used on several occasions when people are being commended or indirectly reproached for some notorious actions. Drumming at the beginning of the play tries to prepare the audience well ahead of the real performance and this has contributed immensely to the aesthetic charm of the play.

However, it seems that Ògúnmólá is sounding a note of warning to his people and the future generation that ~~one's~~ anxiety to accumulate material

wealth may come to naught, and may even end one's life prematurely. On the other hand, it must be realized that man must be prepared to face the odds of life with full determination, audacity and perseverance in order to have a successful sojourn.

A careful appraisal of the content of the play above highlights the productive role the performing artists play in bringing the society to sanity and it has been discovered that they occasionally educate their audiences through fictional tales from whatever origin. These are simple stories that give the teller absolute freedom as to credibility, so long as he/she stays within the limits of local taboos and cultural norms.

XI. AN OVERVIEW OF THE FOLKLODIC PLAYS:

The Yorùbá belief and concept of Sùúrù (patience) as a complement to good comportment has been stressed in "Sùúrù làgbà" while the significance of Ọgbón (wisdom) as a requisite to Agbára (strength/power) has been revealed in "Ọgbón Ju agbára" (Wisdom is greater than power). Ọgúnmólá also re-emphasized the general belief in the

omnipotence of God in "Ọlọrun ló mejjọ́ dá" and "BỌlọrun ọ̀ pani, ọ̀ba kan ọ̀ lẹ̀ pani", where he showed that God is the only perfect and Immortal Being. He made the two earthly kings in these plays emerge as being less powerful than Ọlọrun (God) and thereby pointed out that He is both omnipotent and omniscient. In "Ojú la rí," "Ajé kí í gbé" and "Aṣoore-máṣikà," Ọ̀gúnmọ́lá tries to point out the significance of doing good and the repercussions of hypocrisy and bad behaviour.

In these folkloric plays, the Yorùbá cultural practices and beliefs have been brought into the limelight. Traditional religion and belief systems and some social and political institutions are given prominence while the people's economic activities are discussed at random. Therefore, it can be finally submitted that these folkloric plays have given us an insight into the Yorùbá traditional culture in its broad sense and have provided us with useful cultural materials and didactic messages which could be used for the development of the contemporary Nigerian society.

B. SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS
OF KÓLÁ ÒGÚNMÓLÁ'S FOLKLORIC PLAYS

As we could note from our submissions that the Yorùbá theatre of Ògúnmólá finds most of its subjects/themes in folklore, it is pertinent to analyse here the socio-cultural and economic scene which Ògúnmólá is trying to present before us in his folkloric plays.

(1) Yorùbá Marriage Institution:

It should be noted that marriage is one of the most important social institutions which, as in many societies world-wide, was highly cherished among the Yorùbá people. Within the traditional Yorùbá set-up, it was mandatory for every adult, male and female, to get married. It was then against the mores of the people for a man or woman who had reached the stage of adulthood to remain single. If this happened, such a person would continually court his or her people's reproach, and would be regarded as a social misfit. Even

those who were sexually impotent had no excuse to remain single. According to Fadipe,

Men get married even when they are sexually impotent in order to save either their own faces or the faces of their immediate relatives, as well as to get someone to look after the domestic establishment.³⁹

This cultural belief accounts for the reason why Bábá Orisà-Òkè in "Sùúrù Lágba" thought it was time for his daughters to get married, and therefore advised each of them to choose one out of the numerous men who had been proposing love to them. Here, Ògúnmólá, like many Yorùbá people of his day, believed that one should do the right thing at the appropriate time, and this conception falls in harmony with the Yorùbá adage which says, Ìgbà ara là á búra, a kí í bú Sàngo lérún (One should swear at the appropriate time, it is worthless to swear by Sàngó, the thunder divinity, during the dry season.). Bábá Orisà-Òkè envisaged the necessity to remind his daughters of the Yorùbá norm which stipulates that one should not keep silent when it is time for him/her to get married.

The traditional Yorùbá people regarded three things as most essential in their socio-cultural life. These are, owó (money), omọ (children) and àìkúléwé (longevity). They believed that, before man's life could be successful and meaningful, he/she must possess those three "basic necessities". However, it needs to be realized that the people believe in hard work as the only legitimate means of getting money with which one could marry a good woman from whom responsible children would emerge.

The marriage institution as practised among the traditional Yorùbá people was given prominence in Ògúnmọlá's folkloric plays probably because Ògúnmọlá himself knew its significance and worth within the Yorùbá social context. Consequently, in "Sùúrù Lagbà," Ògúnmọlá informed his audience about how Sùúrù (Kẹyindé), Omọ (Táyéwò) and Owó (Ìdòwú) were given out in marriage by their parents when they were ripe enough to get married. In "Ògbón jù Agbára," it seems that the war captain of Olódya had no wife who could have stood by him and given him useful advice; hence, the princess

of Onikánún was able to play her pranks successfully, and in "Ojú la rí," "Eṣù Ọdàrà" and "BỌlọrun-ò-pani," Yorùbá families feature prominently. In The Palmwine Drinkard also, there is a well organized wedding by the 'kind-hearted mother' for Láńkẹ and Bisi, and this was purely in the Yorùbá socio-cultural setting for the fact that all the major processes that usually accompany the Yorùbá traditional marriage ceremony were given due prominence.

Meanwhile it seems that Láńkẹ's life became a settled one soon after his wedding with Bisi. This explains one of the reasons why the Yorùbá people take the institution of marriage as a significant one. Among the people, any man or woman who fails to get a man or a woman as his or her partner would be continually queried as to why he or she has failed to comply with the age-old traditional norm. Men who are even sexually impotent get married in order to save their faces or the faces of their immediate relatives, ^{as pointed out above,} and also to get someone to look after the domestic establishment. In this case, we may say that

until he got married

Láńkẹ was a deviant from the Yorùbá custom which forbids a man or woman to remain single and without children, although there were exceptional cases whereby some men were customarily made impotent and permitted to live within the palace and among the ^{queens} in order to run errands. Despite that, the song at the early part of the play shows the Yorùbá traditional norm when it says,

Mọ jẹ n pòfo,
 Mọ jẹ n pòfo,
 Èdùmàrè fẹmi náà lọmọ.
 Mọ jẹ n pòfo.⁴⁰

Do not let me go empty-handed,
 Do not let me go empty-handed,
Èdùmàrè, please provide me also with children
 Do not let me go empty-handed.

Láńkẹ Ọmu seems to have deviated from this norm at the outset and started to show us that he was neither interested in having a wife, children nor houses, but he had to imbibe the tradition which he had apparently opposed earlier on.

However, it should be pointed out that marriage nowadays is no more strictly mandatory for any young adult of marriageable age, and there are a few cases of confirmed bachelors but these are a product of the influence of foreign beliefs. There is also the adverse effect of the Structural Adjustment Programme which is biting hard on individuals within the Nigerian cultural environment which must be reckoned with. It needs to be emphasized, however, that the number of such cases is, as of now, quite small. But the fact still remains that anyone, whether male or female, who has reached the age of puberty and marriage but fails to abide by this societal norm, always feels ashamed in the midst of his fellow men or women and contemporaries, especially during social gatherings and annual celebrations when every one starts counting his or her blessings.

It is also noteworthy that, among the present-day Yorùbá people, giving out one's daughter in marriage through the personal wish of the parents and, against the girl's consent, is no longer in

practice, except in^a few cases where traditional norms are still being adhered to. With the introduction of Western education and the European system of marriage in the Yorùbá society, notable changes have taken place and Western cultural ideas have drastically affected the indigenous marriage institution. Parents, on several occasions, do not possess authoritative power to interfere with their children's choice of husbands/wives or dictate to them. Instead, they now give what they feel could be useful advice to their children who have reached the puberty stage and sometimes warn them to be extra-cautious when looking out for husbands or wives. This may probably help the bachelors or spinsters to choose good and responsible future partners and avert future calamities or problems which may likely crop up within the matrimonial homes.

Unlike in the past, a Yorùbá boy or girl of marriageable age may now decide on his/her own volition to choose his or her wife or husband, sometimes without the prior knowledge of his/her parents. In some cases, young couples today just

present their partners in marriage before their family elders for formality's sake, and before their parents as a matter of courtesy and for final approval. This is probably why some people, especially the traditional elders within the Yorùbá community, attribute the present high rate of divorce and turbulent family life among our married youths today to the departure from the traditional marriage norms and practices.

In his folkloric plays, Ògúnmólá might seem not to be in support of polygyny in as much as he presents a picture of monogamous families in these plays, but one may assume that Ògúnmólá was trying to put before his audience the view held by many traditional Yorùbá man and women that a single woman/wife is ideal for a man who loves to live a peaceful and simple life. This is deduced in one of the Ifá poems which says that only one woman is ideal for a husband.

Ògúnmólá tried to focus the minds of his audience on the above concept of monogamy and to bring forth his personal view as entrenched in the Ifá literary corpus. Therefore, he presented some

monogamous family units in "Sùúrù lágba," "Ojú la rí" "BỌlọrun-ò-pani," "Èṣù Òdàrà" and The Palmwine Drinkard, to mention just a few plays.

The idea to choose Sùúrù (Kẹyindé) as a wife by Ògúnjána may not be a mere co-incidence. It seems that Ogunmọlá intentionally wove this into the plot to show the traditional Yorùbá practice which states that, under normal circumstances, the most senior daughter in the family weds before her younger sisters could think of engaging themselves in marriage. In this case, it was not often allowed to betrothe a younger daughter to a man when her senior sister had not been married to some-one. The plot in "Sùúrù lágba" makes it possible for Ògúnjána to choose Kẹyindé who is the most senior daughter of Bàbá Òriṣà-Òkè, despite the fact that Ògúnjána's father wanted his son to choose Kẹyindé's younger sister, Táyewò. This practice is similar in nature to what operated among the Hebrews of the Biblical record where Laban refused to give out Rachael to Jacob in marriage before Leah who was the senior daughter. When Jacob eventually demanded for

Rachael because of her beauty, Laban refused and said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born."⁴¹ In "Sùúrù Lágba," although Báábà Òrìṣà-Òkè was not strict in giving out any of his three daughters in marriage to Ògúnjána if he chose one out of the younger ones, yet he made us understand that the traditional practice was to wed the most senior daughter before the younger ones. This is deduced from his reaction to Ògúnjána's final selection when he says.

Ika tó tọ símú la fi í re é
 ... Èyí Kẹyindé (Sùúrù), òun náà lágba
 gbogbo won... Òun náà ló sí yẹ ká kọ
 sín lẹ lẹ ọkọ lẹsin lẹrà...

The nose is scratched with the ^{appropriate} / ~~the~~ finger

...Kẹyindé (nicknamed Sùúrù) is the most senior of them all ... And ~~it~~ ^{she} is she who should be accorded with all necessary things and procedures in marriage.

Meanwhile, the practice whereby a senior daughter must get married before her junior ones is no more

strictly observed. The reasons for this inevitable socio-cultural change may be attributed partly to the embrace of Western culture and the modern educational development. With regard to the issue of monogamy, it needs to be emphasized that majority of our contemporary youths now prefer to be monogamous rather than having several wives and incurring series of insurmountable problems that go with polygyny. This radical change may not be unconnected with the present economic crunch which, according to popular opinion, makes life most unbearable for all and sundry. Notwithstanding this fact, some affluent people in the society still delight in marrying as many women as possible, sometimes hiding their faces under foreign religious dogmas and teachings.

The social institution of naming a child is also significant in Yorùbá culture. In "Ojú la rí," the parents of Akinlâwón are very happy when the baby boy is delivered. Therefore, in line with the Yorùbá custom of naming, they named the boy Akinlâwón which semantically implies that the new

born baby has brought to an end, the incessant quarrels and misunderstandings which were earlier frequent between the parents. Consequently, this explains the Yorùbá practice whereby children are named according to the circumstances that are prevailing at the time of their birth.

ii. The Yorùbá Traditional and Modern Economies

According to O. Otite and W. Ogionwo (1972), land is a key item in any economic system.⁴²

Therefore, in discussing the Yorùbá traditional and modern economies, it is pertinent to look at 'land' as a central theme. It is an indisputable fact that Yorùbáland is naturally endowed with fertile agricultural land areas; hence, one could say that more than three-quarters of the traditional Yorùbá people are farmers. Despite the fact that many Yorùbá people have now acquired Western education and can read and write, majority of the people still engage in agriculture. In "Èṣù Ọdàrà"

Ọgúnmọlá reminds us of the Yorùbá traditional occupation when he presented Dáda and Ọkẹ as professional farmers who inherited the art from their fathers.

In "Aṣooremáṣiká," the occupation of the principal character has been well established at the beginning of the play. He brought into focus a typical farmer and craftsman in person of Aṣooremáṣiká who, we learnt, settled peacefully in his egàn,⁴³ cultivating crops and making baskets as pastime business. Aláidáa in "Ujú la rí" was a renowned farmer who always kept himself busy on his farm. Finally, in "Sùúrù Lágbá," Bábá Ọrìṣà-Ọkẹ was a farmer of repute. We learnt this when he was sharing his properties among his children. He gave all his landed properties, especially his cocoa and kola-nut plantations, to Sùúrù and ỌmṢ.

Ọgúnmọlá was probably of the conviction that, in spite of our educational development, we cannot do without farming. It appears that Ọgúnmọlá was reminding the Yorùbá people, especially those who have neglected this traditional occupation (farming), to go back and start tilling the land. In this case,

Ogúnṣọla seems to have joined several people of his days who held the opinion that, without taking to farming, a nation may face the disaster of famine in future. However, campaigns in support of the above view are constantly mounted by successive Nigerian governments and various projects in aid of this policy have been embarked upon. Generally, schemes seem to have started to yield expected results as more people are going back to farming and returning to the villages which they had deserted. This, of course, reminds us of a popular song which teachers in the elementary schools teach their pupils and which says:

Ìwé kíkò,
 Láísí ọkọ,
 Ati adá,
 Kò í pé o
 Kò í pé o
 Iṣẹ́ agbẹ́ ẹ́,
 Niṣẹ́ ilẹ́ wa.
 Ẹni kò ọ́ṣẹ́,
 A má jalẹ́.⁴⁴

Education

Without hoes

And cutlasses

Is incomplete

Is incomplete

Farming

Is our indigenous occupation

Any one who does not work

Will steal.

Apart from agriculture and the opportunities offered by the availability of land within the Yorùbá geographical environment, other professional occupations exist. These include, traditional crafts-making and designing, traditional brewing, warfaring and palmwine tapping, to mention a few.

In Ògúnṣọlá's play, "Sùúrù Lágba," we also discover from the outset that Ogúnjána and his father are traditional and professional blacksmiths. The actions of the two men establish the fact that blacksmithing is one of the major occupations of the people and the interactions between these two men and their customers re-confirm the importance of this occupation among the Yorùbá people. The

word "Àgbèdè" is a derivational word which probably evolved from the two root words, 'àgbè' (farmer) and 'òdè' (hunter), which become "Agbèòdè". During the process of contraction and ellision, the initial vowel 'ò' at the beginning of the word 'òdè' (hunter) is elided, and finally, this derivational noun (~~Àgbèòdè~~) becomes àgbèdè, which semantically means 'the smithy' or 'the blacksmith' himself.⁴⁵ Among the Yorùbá people, blacksmithing is basically a man's job. This may be due to the fact that the work needs a little bit of energy for lifting the heavy materials used in the smithy. Various tools and farming implements are produced from raw iron. This raw iron is melted in furnaces which are established in different locations throughout the Yorùbá country.⁴⁶ Articles produced include different types of sliding bolts for keeping doors shut, pins, stirrups and horses' bits, chains, bangles and rings, amulets and anklets, axe-heads, cutlasses and hoes for farming work, swords, and guns for hunting and warfaring, iron rods and traps. Apart from farming, the Yorùbá people usually engage themselves in hunting, either as a pastime or as a

special hobby. In this case, they get the instruments used for both their farming and hunting from the smithy. This may account for why the smithy and the blacksmith are often referred to as Àgbèdè.

It needs to be emphasized, however, that, in spite of the fact that imported iron and steel have greatly influenced the technological development in Nigeria generally, it is an indisputable fact that the traditional Yorùbá blacksmithing is still a craft to be reckoned with today, particularly among the people themselves. Majority of the Yorùbá farmers and hunters still make use of the indigenous farming and hunting implements.⁴⁷ This is due to the nature and system of agricultural production which is yet to be mechanized and modernized. In addition, majority of our peasant farmers could not afford to purchase even the imported hoes and cutlasses because of the exorbitant prices put on them. The hunters also are not legally allowed to possess modern rifles, unless under strict licence. These reasons, among others,

account for the inability of our numerous farmers and hunters today to possess and use the imported materials/implements for their activities.

Therefore, Ògúnmólá seems to believe that the traditional blacksmiths and their products are still relevant and useful in the contemporary Yorùbá society. He probably believed that, if this craft could be developed, there is no gainsaying that the majority of the Nigerian populace would benefit immensely from its technological growth. This is probably why he presented before his audience, in "Sùfùrù Làgbà," a smithy where Ògúnjǎnà and his father were seriously working as professional Yorùbá blacksmiths.

Basket-making is another popular craft among the Yorùbá people even up till today. Ògúnmólá therefore presented Aṣooremáṣíkà in "Aṣooremáṣíkà" as a specialist in basket-making. It should be realized that baskets are used generally by many Yorùbá men and women, either for business transaction or to harvest crops in the farm.⁴⁸

Despite the fact that various types of baskets made with different materials are being introduced into the modern Yorùbá economy today, the

traditional types which are made with the outer cover of the palmtree branches are still popularly in use both in the villages and in the urban centres, especially by women who sell ágídí, as we have seen in "Aṣooremáṣikà". Consequently, Oḡúnṣplá seems to hold the opinion that this type of craft and others of a similar nature should be developed to boost our economy. Apart from this, it will provide employment for our secondary school leavers who now roam about the streets.

Brewing of different types of traditional liquor is another significant occupation of the Yorùbá people. Liquor being produced include emu (palmwine), òḡlurò (raphia wine), sèkèté (corn wine) and àḡàdà-ḡídí (plantain wine). Meanwhile, emu (palmwine) is the most popular and widely taken among these kinds of liquor, and one could claim that emu is found in almost every part of Yorùbáland even up till today.

According to information, emu is taken by more than eighty per cent of the Yorùbá people, probably due to the conception that it prevents and cures some



Kólá Oǵúmólá (right) as Asooremásikà in his hut making a basket for one of his customers (left).

Photo by courtesy of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Photographic Division, 1968.

common tropical diseases⁴⁹. This might account for the reason why emu features prominently in some of Kòlá Ògúnmòlá's folkloric plays. Emu is even made a central theme in The Palmwine Drinkard where the central figure is Lànké Òmu.

Looking critically at some of his plays, one may hold the view that perhaps Ògúnmòlá is trying to point out the advantages or the disadvantages of taking alcoholic drinks excessively. In "Ògbòn Ju Agbára," for instance, Ògúnmòlá used palmwine as a bait to entice the war captain of Olóòyà to his doom. Here, the intoxicating effects of alcohol (palmwine) made the captain lose his senses, "revealing the secrets behind his overwhelming success in war."⁵⁰ In this case, excessive drinking of alcohol (palmwine) made the war captain fall prey in the hands of the princess from Onikánún. Also in "Ajé ki í gbé," palmwine was used by one of the three robbers to murder his two other colleagues when he mixed it with poison. In The Palmwine Drinkard, of course, Lànké Òmu would have met his doom in his adventure to find his

dead palmwine tapper. He embarked upon this unnecessary and risky venture due to the fact that he had been accustomed to excessive palmwine drinking.

Ògúnmplá seems to focus his attention on palmwine for the fact that it is a brand of liquor which has been part and parcel of the Yorùbá social life. He looked at this, first from the economic viewpoint by presenting Alàbá before his audience, as a professional palm-wine tapper. Àlábá earned his living basically from palmwine tapping, and was known by all and sundry as a tapper of great repute. Also, in the same play, we realized that palm-wine is commonly produced and found in almost every market and farmstead throughout Yorùbáland. In "Ajé ki i gbé," palm-wine featured prominently as a popular brand of liquor.

Although it is necessary to bear in mind and note the adverse effects of palmwine on human health and on the totality of man's social and economic life, one should not be so blind as to miss seeing the advantages of this primordial brand of liquor in the socio-cultural life of the Yorùbá people and

of the Nigerian nation in general. Recent research has revealed that palmwine is therapeutic in nature, and that it could perfectly cure peptic ulcer.⁵¹

It has also been revealed that it contains medicinal and nutritional contents and could be a beneficial addition to the local diet which tends to be lacking in vitamin B. It is also believed that palm-wine is a useful source of Vitamin A, B, and D.

Meanwhile, with the modern technological development, apart from the local ones, several palm-wine factories are being established within the southern states of Nigeria; and palmwine is now being preserved in bottles like the imported alcoholic drinks and beverages. However, it would be worthwhile if the Nigerian governments could encourage and assist in establishing more palmwine factories which would produce and preserve qualitative and quantitative wine for local consumption and for exportation.

From the remote past, trading has been the chief occupation of the majority of Yorùbá womenfolk. Apart from these few literate ones who are now employed as government officials or those who take

up white-collar jobs in factories and private establishments, majority of the Yorùbá women are traders. According to Ojo (1966),

Trading grew apace, Yorùbá women being the trade specialists, as they always had been traditionally. The enterprising and astute ones connected one market circuit with another on trade journeys covering up to one hundred miles and taking between four and five days...⁵²

As found in "Aṣooremáṣikà", some Yorùbá women are noted for producing and trading in ẹ̀kọ/ágídí, which is still one of the major food items of the indigenous Yorùbá man or woman today. Despite the fact that several types of local and foreign foods are being introduced daily, ẹ̀kọ/ágídí is still found in the menu of many Yorùbá families up till today. Also, in "Ajé kí í gbé," Bàbá Aláwújẹ and Iyá Aláwújẹ (the cowpea merchants) feature prominently. Apart from this economic business, ^{there} is also petty trading in food and food-stuff as observed in the play. Various types of foods are seen being advertised for sale. Among these are iyán (pounded yam), ẹ̀bà (one of the

foods produced from cassava product), àmàlà (cooked cassava or yam flour), and such meat as sàkí (tripe), ifun (intestines of animals) and eran igbè (bush meat).

The foodsellers are seen advertising their trade or business to boost their sales, and this reminds one of the Yorùbá custom of trade advertisement. Hence, one hears in the play,

Èbà rée,

Èran rée,

Iyán àn gbóná wá fí bí o.

Èbà is available,

Meat is also available,

There is hot pounded yam here.

This type of technique and language employed to advertise business or trades is common in the traditional Yorùbá economy. Though the advertisement in The Palmwine Drinkard where one evil spirit displays her wares is not true to life, it also portrays the Yorùbá custom of advertisement. Ògúnmólá only imitates the plot in Irinkerindo Nínú Igbo Elégbèje⁵³ to terrify the victims.

Finally, in "Ojú la rí" Ajífowówè and Àbèbí (his wife) trade in tobacco, kolanut, gun powder and potash. These are some of the major economic activities found among the traditional and the modern Yorùbá people.

Despite his religious influence and leaning, Ogúnmplá did not hesitate to point to the fact that the Yorùbá Ọbas (kings) once wielded enormous power and authority over their subjects. They were regarded as final authorities whose utterances carried unlikeable authority. This is probably why the ọba (king) in "Ọlọrun ló mejjọ ọdá" is seen being praised in the following manner.

...Kábiyèsí!

Oríṣá kò pé méjì,

Èkún!

Kábiyèsí! ọba tó ju gbogbo ọba lọ!

Iwọ lọba tí í gèni í jẹ,

Tá à gbọdọ mí fin-in

Iwọ lẹgbàgbà tí n gbará àdúgbò.

...Almighty!

God without rival

The leopard!

The Almighty, king who is above all other kings,

You are the king that bites,

And one must not whimper in pain,

You are the saviour who saves all and sundry.

The above praise poem is similar to those we always hear in Yorùbá royal palaces. Like other Yorùbá kings, homage is paid to the oba in "Ọlọrun ló mẹjọ́ ọ́ dá" in form of praises. The oba is believed by his subjects to be the possessor of an unparalleled authority and the second in command to the gods or the divinities. Whenever disputes or any misunderstandings occur among the people, the oba mediates because he was regarded as the equitable judge. Instances of this are found in "Ọlọrun ló mẹjọ́ ọ́ dá" and "Aṣooremaṣiká" where the obas mediate over disputes and pronounce their judgements which must be unreservedly obeyed. It may be recalled that the institution of obaship is still a significant one among the Yorùbá despite the incessant feuds

and disagreements among the present day traditional rulers. The Obas still play a prominent role as the spokesmen of the people at the grassroots level and are still highly respected among their subjects.

The Yorùbá people believe in destiny and re-incarnation, and this may be briefly discussed here. According to this conceptual belief, every human being has chosen his destiny in heaven before he/she proceeds into the world and that anything which may happen to a man/woman in life (good or bad) depends on what type of destiny he/she has chosen. This is why the oba's messenger in "Olórun. ló mejjòó dá" comments that the purported innocent blindman should, in another world, choose a favourable destiny. The explanation on the blindman's fate reminds one of the Biblical rule in Exodus which states partly that, God will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation...⁵⁴

The belief in bird familiars and the use of incantations are also worthy of note. The people believe that bird familiars often carry bad omen and that whenever these strange birds cry, unfavourable incidents often follow. This belief

manifests itself shortly before Lánké was about to go to the house of Ikú (Death), and his grim encounter with Ikú shows the authenticity of this belief. The use of incantation, on the other hand, also plays a significant role in the play as it deals with the Yorùbá cultural belief in the existence of supernatural beings and the notion that their evil machinations can be controlled by the use of incantations, which is believed to be one of the most potent methods of subduing the powers of these spirits.

The custom whereby visitors, may be friends, relations, or strangers, are entertained among the Yorùbá people emanates from the belief that an angel or creatures from the spiritual realm may pose as human beings and appear before a man. The Yorùbá people are usually of the view that these strange people must be fairly treated in order to avoid future catastrophes. Therefore, the idea whereby visitors are entertained in some of Ogunmólá's folkloric plays may not be unconnected with the age-old traditional belief. In The Palmwine Drinkard, Lánké entertains his guests with palmwine but the unfortunate thing is that

the entertainment is excessive, abnormal and uncalled for. In "Ajé ki i gbe," Bábá Aláwújé gave five shillings to Íyá Aláwújé for her entertainment, and this reminds the audience of the Yorùbá custom of hospitality to strangers.

iii. Yorùbá Religion and Belief Systems as Presented in Ogúnṣplá's Folkloric Plays

Like in some ethnic groups throughout the world, studies in Yorùbá religion and belief systems produce a complex theory. Several scholars of repute⁵⁵, both local and foreign, have discussed the Yorùbá religion and belief systems. Therefore, it is quite unnecessary here to bother ourselves with a discussion of the Yorùbá traditional religion and belief systems, but to look critically at Ògúnṣplá's philosophical thought on the Yorùbá religious beliefs and customs. However, it would be necessary to mention that the Yorùbá religious life is emshrined in their folklore and folklife.

As we have been made to believe by past writers and scholars, Olódùmarè and his primordial divinities have been in existence since the beginning of creation. According to Idowu (1962),⁵⁶ Olódùmarè was instrumental to bringing into being the primordial divinities and the spirits who dwell in the spiritual world, and that all natural phenomena like trees, mountains, valleys, rivers or streams, lakes, etc. are inhabited by spirits which may be either benevolent or malevolent to the human species. This view is still being held by many Yorùbá men or women today. According to the Ifá corpus,⁵⁷ these divinities and spirits are four hundred and one in number, but there are variants to this number in some other oral traditions.

In Ogunmọlá's folkloric plays, the Yorùbá religious practices and belief systems feature prominently. For example, River Àbùùbùtán in "Ojú la rí" was believed to possess a water goddess which usually blessed its worshippers, or those who approached it, with children. Among the Yorùbá traditional and contemporary societies, similar requests are not unknown. Women who had not

succeeded in becoming pregnant for a long time after their marriages go to worship Ọsun, Ọbà, Ọya or other river goddesses and beg for children.

In "Ojú la rí" Ajifowòwẹ's wife who had a problem of barrenness consulted the àwòrò (priest) of river Àbùùbután who assured her of getting a child from the river goddess, but warned that the child must not be allowed to go near the bank of the river throughout his life. The success of this couple in getting a male child (Akinlāwọ̀n) confirms the faith of the traditional Yorùbá man or woman in the omnipotence of these river goddesses in procuring children. In "Sùúrù Lágbà," although Ọgúnmọ́lá did not show where Ọgún is being worshipped, he made it clear that the Yorùbá people believeⁱⁿ the existence of Ọgún as a divinity when he gave one of his major characters (Ọgúnjándá) a name that shows us that he was from a lineage that worships Ọgún (the god of iron).

However, Ọgúnmọ́lá was reluctant in presenting the spirits found in The Palmwine Drinkard as those to be propitiated or worshipped by human beings.

He just presented them as spirits which possessed extraordinary power which could be harmful to the human species. They were not depicted as supernatural beings capable of being venerated probably because the majority of them were malevolent in behaviour and action or for the simple fact that they were generally inimical to the welfare of human beings. The wicked spirits at the town of the "evil-doers" can be cited as a typical example. On the other hand, it should be realized that there are two sides to a coin. There were also a few among these spirits who are benevolent towards man. Olúugbó and the "kind-hearted Mother" of the forest whom Iánkè and Bísí met in The Palmwine Drinkard are notable examples,

The Yorùbá belief in the existence of spirits also features in "Ojú la rí." The plot whereby Ajifowòwè hoots to Aláidáa at the farm is intentionally woven into the play in order to remind the audience of the Yorùbá belief that malevolent spirits may harm one if one's name is shouted at

the dead of night or in the lonely forest or jungle.

Apart from the religious belief and faith in the Supreme Deity and His supernatural agents, several things which form the basis of the Yorùbá traditional beliefs can also be deduced from Ògúnmólá's folkloric plays. For instance, the traditional Yorùbá man believes that Sùúrù (patience) and Iwà Pèlẹ (gentle and good behaviour) are very essential for a successful life. This may explain why Ògúnmólá chose and personified Sùúrù as a major character in "Sùúrù Lágbà" and made her behave in like manner. Perhaps, Ògúnmólá's preoccupation in this play is to call back into memory the Yorùbá belief that patience is the best form of human behaviour and that those who possess Sùúrù are always peace-loving people and could perform some tasks which may seem difficult to accomplish. This conception can be corroborated by a Yorùbá proverb which says, Onisùúrù ní í fún wàrà kinniún (It is the patient man who milks the lioness). Consequently, Ògúnmólá probably re-emphasized the significance of patience in Yorùbá belief and philosophical thought and

submitted that patience is the best form of human behaviour. It is also believed among the Yorùbá people that, with patience, some knotty problems which may seem insurmountable could be solved. This is evident in a popular Yorùbá maxim which states that Sùúrù lè se òkúta jinná (With patience, one can cook a stone to the point of its softening).

In "Ogbón Ju Agbara," the traditional Yorùbá belief and philosophy which states that wisdom surpasses power is re-affirmed. According to a Yorùbá popular maxim, Alágbára má méré, baba òlẹ ni (A strong but senseless person is the father of all indolent persons). Meanwhile, this does not indicate that one should be lazy and idle but it means that some of the major problems in life could be tackled with agility, a sense of commitment and abundant wisdom. In this case, therefore, the traditional Yorùbá people are of the conviction that, before a man could be competent enough to face the odds of life, he must be as wise as the aşarun (tsetse fly)

and be knowledgeable like òpèlè (i.e. Ifá, the oracle divinity).

iv. Yorùbá Political/Administrative System.

The Yorùbá political/administrative system is a complex one which needs proper study and analysis. It should be noted from the outset that the prevailing system of government among the traditional Yorùbá people was hierarchical, that is, it starts from the family unit and moves up to the village level, and finally to the town level, where the position of leadership becomes monarchical. The Yorùbá political control starts with the family unit where the father is automatically the Head and controller of the family. He gives every instruction which must be obeyed by each member of the unit, although he may delegate power to another member of the family who is next to him in age. The father, assisted by his wife, maintains the family and sees that there is peace, harmony and concord within the unit. This can be corroborated with

Ajayi's submission which states,

The most basic unit of the Nigerian Society is, of course, the family and it is through the family that we all first experience authority. The concept of authority transmitted through family life is fundamental to any political culture as it tends to be embedded within the deepest level of our psyche.⁵⁸

With regard to this, Ògúnmọ́lá presented Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè in "Sùúrù Lágbà" as the Head of his family and compound. He controls the family with the assistance of his wife. Anything he says is final, and his wife and her children listen and obey his instructions. None of them was bold enough to oppose him or his wish when he shared his properties as he liked among his children. Kéyindé, the eldest daughter, did not oppose her father's wish when she was given out in marriage to one of the sons of his father's friends. Probably, this custom was still in operation within the locality during Ogúnmọ́lá's time, because there was no one who could oppose Bàbá Orìṣà-Òkè among members of his family.

In "Ojú la rí" and "Èrú yátò sọmọ", Ògúnmọ́lá presented Ajifowòwè and Aniyikáyé as Head and

Authority over their respective families. Ajifowówè and Aniyikáyé have the final say in all discussions with their wives and they dictate their wishes to them.

The next level of political/administrative hierarchy is the position of the Head of the household (Baálé ilé). He may be in charge of a compound, particularly in an urban area, or a Head over a village (Baálé abá) usually comprising people of the same kinship ties or affiliation. However, it should be noted that age was an important determinant in becoming a Baálé among the Yorùbá people. They believed that an old person or an elder who had got series of life experiences must be capable of solving many of the socio-cultural and economic problems that might surface within the household. ^{probably} Ògúnṣẹ́lá/saw this as the concept during his period and hoped that, if this could be maintained, peace would reign supreme in the society.

Unfortunately, majority of the contemporary youths do not take elders' advice or wisdom as relevant. They do not support the popular maxim that says, "The words of the elders are words of wisdom." This, according to some youths, are no more applicable in the present jet age. Therefore, they tend to free themselves from what they regard as the conventional yoke of the elders, and they are always ready to snatch power from the old men/women as much as possible.

The next rung in the hierarchy after the Baálé is the position of the compound chief (ijòyè àdúgbò). In some towns, these people are known as Mógàjí. He controls all the family units in his compound, whether they are related by blood or otherwise.

After the Mógàjí comes the Baálé of small towns who are usually under the sovereignty of another bigger town. The Baálé was directly responsible to the Oba, and he pays annual or periodic tributes to him (Oba). In "Sùúrù Lágba," Ògúnjána's father

(Àgbèdè-Ògún), mentioned that Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè was an authority who had a wide area of jurisdiction and that his order must be instantly obeyed.

The Oba was at the apex of the hierarchical structure of authority. All power was vested in him, and he is usually referred to as Kábiyèsí.⁵⁹ In "Ọgbọn Ju Agbára," the Oba of Oníkánún and the Oba of Olódya were traditional rulers of their subjects and directed them in all national events. In "BỌlọrun-ò-pani-ọba-ò-lé-pani," "Ọlọrun ló mejjòò dá," and "Aṣoore-má-ṣíká" the Oba were presented as the sole authorities that were omniscient, omnipotent and they could do anything they wished with impunity.

Although Ògúnmọlá agreed that the Obas of his days were very powerful and wise, he did not believe that the Obas were all-powerful, omnipotent and omniscient. In a nutshell, Ògúnmọlá disagrees with the notion that Obas could be equated with Ọlọrun (i.e. God) especially in wisdom and impartial judgement. Therefore, in "Ọlọrun lo mejjòò dá,"

Ògúnmọlá pointed out that only God is the equitable Judge, and that earthly judges only make efforts;

also, in "BỌlọrun-ò-pani-ọba-kò-lẹ-pani" and "Aṣooremáṣiká," Ògúnmọlá hinted that there is no power greater than God's and that only God can provide succour for human beings. Here, it was emphasized that human beings are ordinary mortals, and that only God is immortal, omnipotent and omniscient.

However, since the colonial period, several changes have occurred within the Nigerian political culture in general and the Yorubá political tradition in particular. Authority and power had since shifted from the traditional rulers, and now the government, the judiciary, the executive and the legislature wield enormous power. The weakening of an Oba's authority over his subjects is a foregone conclusion, and the relevance of traditional rulers in the governance of the Nigerian societies is a controversial issue. Practically, the Oba now reigns but does not rule. They are only representatives of their people at the grassroots level.

Although some people, especially among the literate elites, are of the contention that the traditional rulers are no more significant in the political administration of the country, yet the existence and relevance of the Obas in the Yorùbá political/administrative set-up should not be underestimated. The government and people of Nigeria in general should heed the warning of J. Smith who says,

He who attempts to resume the stability which chieftaincy provides without first ensuring an even greater stability is courting disaster...Present day Nigeria can no more do without the chief than the British could.⁶⁰

In view of this, Ògúnmlá seems to support this claim by presenting the Yorùbá Obas as significant people in the political and administrative systems.

v. Yorùbá Traditional Science/Medicine

Like any other nations of the world, the Yorùbá people are a force to reckon with, as regards scientific knowledge in traditional medicine.

Medical knowledge was not unknown among the people from the remote past, and the Yorùbá man has been preventing himself from and curing various ailments and diseases before the advent of the colonialist. In other words, Ògúnmólá seems to point out in his plays that the knowledge of medicine and health-care delivery is not a monopoly of any race or any society of the world.

In the traditional era, the Yoruba hunters, who also served as warriors for their towns, were believed to possess potent medicine and supernatural powers. They made use of these when occasion demanded, especially in battles against neighbouring towns or villages or during hunting expeditions. Therefore, evidence abounds in Ògúnmólá's plays, showing that the Yorùbá people have developed a highly sophisticated medical technology prior to the arrival of the European Missionaries who first introduced the Western medicine and medical system in their colonies.

Ògúnmplá shows that the Yorùbá, like other people throughout the world, use various herbs and roots for medicinal preparations. Therefore, the use of roots and herbs for therapeutic and curative purpose is hereby brought into the limelight. As we have observed in "Ojú la rí," Dáwódu goes into the forest in search of inábiri (*plumbago zeylanica*) root for the preparation of some medicines. Although we are not told in the play what inábiri root is used for, the present writer discovers from another source that, among the Yorùbá people, inábiri root may be used as a tonic while its leaves may be manipulated to cure intestinal worms (aràn). The seeds are also used by circumcisers for tattoos and facial marks.⁶¹ Also, in The Palmwine Drinkard, when Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu was approaching the house of Ikú (Death), he started to chant some incantations which thereafter made Ikú become unconscious and submissive. The chanting of incantations is a common incident in this play. Another period worth noting was when Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu chanted some incantations to free Bísí from the wicked spirits of the forest

who could have killed her. With these incantations, Láńkẹ̀ Ọ́mu was able to cast a spell on the weird spirits, and they could no more talk but went away dumbfounded, leaving Bísí unhurt. It is also pertinent to note, in "Ọgbọn Ju Agbára," the efficacy of traditional medicine and magical objects, especially during war periods. During this period, magical charms are displayed and manipulated with the belief that they would work wonders for their possessors. In this play (Ọgbọn Ju Agbára"), we discover that the Olóòyà war captain was able to have an edge over his opponents probably due to his magical power. Unfortunately, however, the secret of his magical power was disclosed to the Oníkánún warriors as a result of his : (Olóòyà Captain's) carelessness and drunkenness. In this case, the áásó (the coiffure consisting of hair plaited into horn-shape) on the head of Olóòyà captain which served as his protector against the enemies, was rendered impotent. Also, it is the general belief among the Yorùbá" people that everything or everyone has one taboo

or the other being associated with one. In the case before us, the àásó on the head of Olóòyà's captain must not be hit with the òsépòtu (*sida carpinifolia*) plant. Otherwise, it will become impotent and this may adversely affect the possessor of the magical object. The òsépòtu plant was therefore used by the people of Oníkánún to hit the Olóòyà war captain on the head and this rendered him impotent, and he was immediately captured.

Lànkè Òmu and Bísí also used egbé⁶² to save themselves from the hands of the "evil spirits" who wanted to sacrifice them to Ògún (god of iron). Lànkè Òmu was also given a magical egg which could turn ordinary water into palmwine.

Although some people may argue that incantations belong to the realm of magic, since the spiritual forces are occasionally involved, it should be noted that, sometimes, the physical and the spiritual intersect and cut across each other's planes. This is one of the mysteries of life which

even Western sciences have not been able to decipher or explain.

Now, the majority of the Yorùbá people embrace foreign religions, and therefore reject the traditional norms and practices. They are embracing alien cultures to the detriment of the indigenous ones. Some who embrace Christianity or Islam, which are the two popular foreign religions in Nigeria today, are so fanatical in their faith that they do not take traditional medicine or patronise/consult traditional doctors whenever they fall ill. Some even reject both the Western medicine and the traditional one due to their religious convictions.

Be that as it may, there are many people today, particularly the so-called Yorùbá Christians and Muslims, who secretly consult the herbalists or traditional healers, especially after they had made unsuccessful efforts to get cured by Western medical practitioners. Despite the fact that some Western-trained medical practitioners are always in the habit of criticizing the potency of traditional medicine, the Yorùbá traditional healers are making a headway and projecting the age-old cultural heritage.

Moreover, it has been discovered that studies in traditional medical practices have now been entrenched in the curricula of several higher institutions of learning in Nigeria and in Africa generally. Research works by renowned scholars in traditional health-care delivery are in progress, and it is expected that useful reports will, in the near future, be got from these research works.

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N O T E S

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5. See Appendix I, No.3 for the scoring of this song.
6. See Appendix I, No.4 for the scoring of this song.
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14. See Appendix I, No.8 for the scoring of this song.
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CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE AND OTHER COMMUNICATION MEDIA
IN KOLÁ ÒGÚNMÓLÁ'S FOLKLORIC PLAYS

Language is an integral part of a people's cultural heritage and a medium of conveying thoughts, ideas or feelings by means of the spoken word. It is the most intimate and pervasive of all human creations which reflect in their totality the ways of life of a people. It serves as a vehicle for the transmission of societal norms and values from one generation to the other, and each ethnic group is identified as a distinct entity by her language. According to Sapir:

Language is a guide to social reality..... human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social reality as ordinarily understood but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society... The real world is, to a large extent, unconsciously built up in the language habit of the group.¹

In this case, language remains the pivot upon which the identity of every group of people and their

cultural heritage rests.

In his plays, Ògúnṣọlá showed his expertise in using the Yorùbá language. He had a good command of the language and manipulated it to get his message across to his audience. These plays were produced in Yorùbá, and this accounts for their wide acceptance by the indigenous people for whom they were originally conceived. The dialogue is, in part, sung, bringing out the aesthetics and tonal characteristics of the Yorùbá spoken word. Through an effective manipulation of the Yorùbá linguistic medium, Ògúnṣọlá was able to forge a mutual relationship with his audience. He used his Yorùbá linguistic artistry to enhance the performer-audience relationship and the entertaining and communicative aesthetic values of his performances. The language is manipulated to show a considerable degree of linguistic artistry that explores the rhetorics of Yorùbá, his indigenous language, thereby giving his audience the didactic and philosophical messages he originally intended to infuse into their minds.²

The above appraisal emanates from our critical study of Ògúnmplá's stylistic use of the Yorùbá language in his folkloric plays, and how he had artistically manipulated the language to achieve his aim. Apart from a study of the spoken word, we have also delved into how Ògúnmplá employed some other communication media in his productions. These various media of communication are discussed and analysed. For the sake of clarity of expression, we shall categorize them as follows:

Proverbs, Riddles, Praise poems (oríkí), Characterization, Folksongs, Figures of speech, and other media of communication.

(1) PROVERBS (OWE)

Despite the fact that Ògúnmplá was a very young man when he started his career as a dramatist, he had a good command of the Yorùbá proverbs. However, it should be recalled that the use of proverbs is common among the elderly people who have acquired a vast knowledge and experience of the cultural environment. According to Dàpò Adelugba in his

study of Ama Ata Aidoo's The Dilemma of a Ghost, "the degree of ease in the use of traditional saws, proverbs and imagery is determined by the age of the users."³ This observation hold equally good for Ògúnwólá's dramas. Knowledge and experience of one's traditional environment is highly necessary for one to be competent in decoding proverbs. This is why a Yorùbá adage says, "Omodé ló lorin, àgbà, ló lówé." (Songs are primarily meant for children while proverbs are for the elders.) No youth is competent to tell proverbs without permission from the elders. According to Ben Amos, "Yorùbá etiquette dictates that a younger person's use of a proverb in the presence of an ^{elderly} person must be marked by a prefatory apology."⁴ Therefore, before a young person tells a proverb in the midst of elders, he would first acknowledge their authority and experience and thereafter beg for their approval. In this case, the young person can only proceed to tell proverbs in the midst of elders after he/she has been duly permitted to do so.

This is because he has to acknowledge the elders who are believed to be the custodians of the traditions.

Ọgúnmọlá, though a young man, was capable of using proverbs effectively because he was said to have moved very close to the aged people around him.⁵ With utmost respect and politeness, he associated himself with elders and shared from their wealth of experience and their vast knowledge of the Yorùbá language and culture. This is in harmony with a Yorùbá proverb that says, "Bí ọmọdé bá mọ ọwọ wẹ, yóó bá àgbà jẹun." (If a child or a young person knows how to keep his/her hands clean, he/she would be allowed to dine with the elder.) This connotes that, if a young person could be respectful, humble and polite to the old and the aged people, he/she would be nurtured with their deep knowledge and experience, and this is one of the effective means of imparting knowledge into the minds of the youths. Proverbs are also pieces of wisdom or wise sayings which traditional judges used in their arbitration or settlement of disputes.

They are community property which perhaps started with one man, and then was transmitted through the community and eventually came to be accepted by all. In this case, a proverb is an entity which in itself sometimes speaks volumes.

In The Palmwine Drinkard, for instance, the drinking companions of Lááké Òmu, after the death of Alábá, told him, "Bí a bá ti f fapárí isu han àlejò, òwe ilé tób lo ni." (When it reaches the stage when the yam-head has to be shown to a visitor, it is an indirect way of telling him/her to go home.) Since the only source of their palmwine is blocked due to the sudden death of Alábá, their professional palm-wine tapper, these people realized that nothing would be more befitting to them than to disperse from Lááké's house. This reminds one of a Yorùbá maxim which says, Esè girigiri nilé ànjòfè, ànjòfè tán, esè dá. (Many people usually assemble where free food and drinks are available, but as soon as everything available is consumed, they disperse without notice.)

In like manner, the drinking companion of Láńké left him even without considering the agony of his palm-wine tapper who died on active service.

But before they left, they communicated their opinion to their host in a proverb which is a direct but disguised way of expressing their feeling.

It should be recalled that, in Yorùbá socio-cultural life, the use of proverbs during important discussions plays a very significant role. For example, proverbs have always been an important source of African law because they embody the moral truth and ideas of justice of a given community. This is why they are brief utterances with didactic intents. Moreover, proverbs are a restrictive form of communication, the message of which can be deciphered only by people who share a common frame of reference. Abstract opinions based on familiar ideas taken from the immediate environment are expressed through proverbs. Afọlabi Ojo confirms this claim when he says that the Yorùbá people are adept at spinning philosophical and poetical

proverbs around ordinary things or natural phenomena.⁶ Meanwhile, hundreds of traditional proverbs are still with us, and through this medium, one can see the picture of the environment that contributed to the moulding of the people's thoughts. In "Sùúrù Lágba," Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè confirmed that Kéyìndé (nicknamed Sùúrù) is a well-behaved and responsible child when he says, A kì í mọwá ilẹ kó kúni nìṣu. (One does not know the nature of one's land and get thin yam out of it) Here, he stated that Kéyìndé is a reliable, well-behaved child. In all the folkloric plays produced by Ògúnmọlá, proverbs, maxims and adages abound.

It is also pertinent to show that Ògúnmọlá uses the title of his folkloric plays as proverbial themes which have deep and figurative meanings, and which only the wise can explain or decode. For instance, "Sùúrù lágba," "Èrú yátọ sọmọ" and "Ajé kì í gbé" are proverbial. These titles have given us brief information and have presented the basic idea behind each of the plays. Here, Ògúnmọlá has drawn inferences from the Yorùbá socio-cultural beliefs to express his philosophical ideas.

In the real dramas, however, he presented these ideas in practical terms. The performances therefore add new dimensions to the messages conveyed by the plays.

In other words, the late Kòlá Ògúnmólá used several Yorùbá proverbs in these plays to comment on Yorùbá socio-cultural life. Some of these proverbs talk about the Yorùbá family, the relationship of parents to children and of husband to wife, the position of elders and the individual's duty to the society. They concern manners and customs, and the vices and virtues of human beings. They are occasionally used as statements for the wise to think about.

ii. RIDDLES (ÀLÓ)

The etymology of the word àlò may be difficult to explain but the word is probably derived from the combination of the morpheme /à/ and the verb /lò/ (to twist). Thus, /à/ - /lò/ becomes the derivative noun /àlò/, a twisted statement or a riddle.

A riddle is a type of puzzle often rendered partly in poetic language and partly in a prosaic form. The Yorùbá likened àlò to something naturally put in a pod and which should be carefully broken to know its content. Someone who is knowledgeable in the way it is broken must handle it to avoid waste. This is why they use the Yorùbá word pa before àlò or òwe. Hence, they say, Mo fẹ pa àlò (I want to break a riddle) or Mo fẹ pa òwe (I want to break a proverb). This shows that àlò and òwe cannot be decoded by unintelligent beings, but by people who are culture-conscious, and who have a wide knowledge and experience of their social and cultural environment.

Àlò is a form of evening entertainment preliminary to the telling of stories usually accompanied by songs. In the traditional days, àlò was usually told after the day's work when people were relaxing, prior to the evening meal. It was then a taboo to tell riddles during the daytime, except in the evenings or at night. This is why a Yorùbá adage says, Ení rólẹ ní í pàlò òsán (Only an idle man tells

riddles during the daytime.) But nowadays, this is no longer the case. Telling of riddles is no more limited to evening or nights; riddles are told at any time of the day, especially by school children in their classrooms or during organised television or radio programmes. The traditional practice whereby young children and few adults assemble before or after the last meal of the day to tell riddles is fast diminishing. Except in the rural villages and hamlets where few children can still be found, children in urban settlements do not keep late nights to tell riddles. Instead, each child of school age reads his or her note-books or faces the assignment or homework given to him/her by the school teacher. They only read the riddles in books or hear them in classes during the school periods,

Telling of áló in The Palmwine Drinkard reminds us of the age-old Yorùbá tradition used to educate children (and adults alike) in quick thinking and intellectual skill. Láńkẹ́'s first riddle is:

Kí ló wà lórí òkun tí kò sí lórí ilẹ̀?" (What is it

that appears on the sea but cannot be seen on the ground?). To decode this riddle, one needs deep reasoning and a working knowledge of the cosmology of one's geographical environment. Without this experience, no one could solve or decipher the riddle, no matter how wise he/she is. Lànké probably told this riddle, in order to give his drinking companions a preliminary entertainment to open the drinking spree. From daily experience, it is discovered that the moon usually mirrors itself in small or big waters and people see it both in the sky and on the surface of water while it is impossible to get its mirror on the bare ground. This is why this type of riddle is woven to make people think deeply of what they are conversant with within their environment. Lànké also told several riddles which were decoded by his friends. In some of these riddles, the nature of people's behaviour was delved into. For instance, Lànké continued his riddles and said, Iyàwó oníkòbò kan àbò tí lé onígba òkè jáde (A bride got with one and half kobo who drives out that who is married with a hundred naira). The

solution to this âlô is emu (palmwine), a liquid substance personified here as a "bride". Therefore, it is discovered that the telling of riddles involved the projection of human characteristics to non-human and sometimes abstract objects or ideas. Often, it involves personifying inanimate objects and making them behave like human beings. The peculiar and irrational behaviour of drunkards overtaken by the alcoholic effects of emu is drawn out from this riddle. For instance, the physical appearance or alcoholic action of fresh palmwine can be likened to that of an aggressive human being who is taken up by annoyance. The emu foams exceedingly and its appearance looks like someone in an angry mood. If such wine is taken in excess, the effect on the drinker may be likened to that of a possessed person.

Therefore, Lânké being a 'drinkard' of no mean standing was able to visualise and personify palmwine as an envious and aggressive bride 'married' with an insignificant amount of money (as bride price) who is able to influence the expulsion of the legitimately

wedded wife with a wave of the hand. This idea is borne out of a common experience among palmwine addicts or drunkards, who, after a drinking bout, have disputes with neighbours and friends and especially with their wives. Due to the alcoholic effect of emu, some of these people often flog their wives or even drive them out of the matrimonial homes. In other words, the action of fresh palm-wine has been likened to the behaviour of an aggressive bride who is after her neighbour or co-wife with the motive of pushing her out of the home.

Another riddle worthy of mention is found in "Sùúrù Lágba". Here, Ògúnjána asked Ìsòlá, his friend, whether he knew the best part of an animal and the worst part of it. The answer to this riddle is ahón (tongue). Deciphering this quiz, Ògúnmólá explained that the tongue is always used to sing the praises of people while it is also used to slander them. The father of Ìsòlá was really excited about this ^{analysis} philosophical and therefore commended him for the wisdom. Here, Ògúnmólá showed that he had been

in the company of elders for a long time and had benefited immensely from their wisdom.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the language of riddles is sometimes said to be archaic and certainly often contains apparently meaningless words.⁷ But, like proverbs, riddles represent a concise form of conventionally stereotyped expression, and most significantly the imagery and poetic comment of even the simple riddle are clearly part of the general literary culture.⁸ Therefore, we can see clearly that Ògúnṣá employed the use of riddles to serve dramatic ends.

iii. PRAISE NAME/POEM (ORÍKÌ)

Oríkì among the Yorùbá people has psychological and socio-cultural functions. It is often used as a succinct and oblique way of commenting on those addressed. They contribute to the literary flavour of formal or informal conversation, adding a depth or a succinctness through their meanings, overtones,

or metaphors.⁹ According to S.O. Babayemi, "Oriki is an all-embracing form of Yorùbá genre. It forms the bedrock of all Yorùbá poetry."¹⁰ In this case, oriki (praise name/poem) gives insight into the socio-cultural events among the Yorùbá people.

Meanwhile, oriki in Ògúnmolá's folkloric plays can be classified under the following headings.

(1) Personal Oriki: Personal oriki serves as subsidiary names for the bearer, particularly among the Òyò Yorùbá people. These oriki carry specific messages and communicate socio-cultural information which can be used as historical data. For instance, in "Sùúrù Lágba," Isòlá is a praise-name (oriki) which traditionally depicts someone born of a royal family.¹¹ Isòlá's royalty can be deduced from the discussion between him and his friend Ògúnjána.

Here, he spoke like someone who came from an affluent family, but in Ògúnjána's case, it is quite the reverse. This can be detected from the pronouncements of Ògúnjána's father who, when advising his son as to who he (Ogúnjána) should

choose among the three girls of Bàbá Òrìṣà-Òkè,
said,

Kí lo ó fi Sùúrù ṣe ?

Kí ni eléyíí tí ọ̀n ló fẹ́ran ọ̀mọ ?

È ẹ̀ mọ̀ pé owó lágba gbogbo ẹ̀ ?

Èni tó bá lówó lẹ̀wọ̀

Ó ti ní sùúrù.

Ó sì ti lẹ̀mọ̀

Nítorí náà eléyíí tí ọ̀wọ̀ rẹ̀ yá owó

Tí ọ̀ò kó owó wọ̀lẹ́e wa.

Oun ni kí o mú taa bá dọ̀hùn-ún o.

What will you do with Sùúrù (Patience) ?

What benefit will you derive from that one who,
they say, loves children ?

Don't you know that money surpasses them all ?

Anyone who has owó (money),

Has got Sùúrù (Patience),

: And also Ọ̀mọ (children).

Therefore, the girl who is blessed with money
Should be your choice when we get there.

In the above quotation, we see how Ògúnjána's father strongly advised his son (Ògúnjána) that he should choose Táyewò nicknamed Owó as his bride-to-be.

Àyìnké, the praise name of Bàbá Orìṣà-Òkè's wife in this same play, depicts someone who is worthy of praise and favour. Àyìnké is seen as a responsible mother who is blessed with good and reliable children of whom one can be proud. What Ògúnṣàlá probably tries to teach his audience is that peaceful and responsible families contribute immensely to the building of a virile and progressive nation. Unlike many families in the contemporary period, the family of Bàbá Orìṣà-òkè is peace-loving and of good comportment. This is deduced from the pronouncements, actions and behaviours of the children and their parents. The children are respectful, humble and obedient while the parents are simple, accommodating and responsible. There is, indeed, deep affection, love and understanding within the family. Consequently, Ògúnṣàlá believed that, if

the Nigerian families and lineage groups could borrow a leaf from Bàbá-Oríṣá-òkè's family, we might be able to make Nigeria a better place to live in.

(ii) Naturally-derived name and oríkí

One of the techniques used by the late Kòlá Ògúnṣàlá in his folkloric plays is the manipulating of naturally-derived names and oríkí to bring out his ideas and his philosophy. For example, in "Sùúrù Lágba," Ògúnṣàlá gave us the names Kéyíndé, Táyéwò and Ìdòwú which are names resulting from extraordinary births. These names, according to him, symbolize Patience, Money and Children respectively. The names are not initiated by the parents of those who bear them because they are naturally derived. Kéyíndé and Táyéwò are names given to twin babies among the Yorùbá people. While Kéyíndé is the last to come down from his/her mother's womb, Táyéwò is the first to be delivered. Ironically, however,

Táyéwò is customarily assumed to be the younger while Kéyindé who is delivered later is taken to be the senior.

An oral tradition states that, when these two babies (twins) are preparing to come into the world of men, it is Kéyindé who usually sends his/her younger brother/sister to see and inspect the suitability of the universe into which they are to be born. Getting to the world, Táyéwò will signal back to Kéyindé whether to follow him/her (if he/she finds the world to be suitable to live in) or to go back to the spiritual realm or heaven (if otherwise). If Táyéwò's signal is a negative one, Kéyindé will come as a stillbirth or fail to come out of the mother's womb, thereby causing the death of such unfortunate mothers.¹² Táyéwò on its own will later fall sick and return to meet Kéyindé in the abode of spirits. However, the word /Kéyindé/ semantically connotes "one who comes last," while Táyéwò connotes "one who comes to taste the 'sweetness' of the world." This customary belief in twins is not peculiar to the Yorùbá people alone. There are similar phenomena of

this kind world-wide. For instance, the Biblical record shows Esau and Jacob as twins. While Esau was the first to be delivered, Jacob came later but was taken as the elder of the two.¹³

Also in "Eṣu Ọdàrà", Dàda and Ọkẹ are naturally derived praise-names. While Dàda is a child born with curled hair on its head, Ọkẹ is a baby wrapped by a net at the time of birth. The above two names are used in this play probably to show that bearers of such extraordinary names are not easily subdued by the malevolent actions of spirits or human beings. Dàdà and Ọkẹ could have beaten each other to death in the farm before the co-incidental intervention of one of their women customers who separated them and settled the misunderstanding for them.

It should also be noted that all these naturally derived Oriki or praise names have some peculiar praise poems attached to each of them. For example, in "Eṣu Odara", Ọkẹ's father showered chants of praises on Dàda, his son's friend, when he says, "Dàda Àwuru, onimọgannà" (Dàda Àwúru, a wonderful child). We also see that Eṣu Ọdàrà in this play has his own oriki which he chanted by himself when he says,

Èmi Èṣù Láálú

Onile Orita

Èni mò ọ̀n, kò kò ó

Èni kò ó, kò mò ọ̀n

A-ko-lọ̀nà ṣenu pòmù pòmù

Ọ̀ba aláde iná

Ọ̀ba aláde ọ̀gbun....

I, Èṣù Láálú

Possessor of a house at the crossroad,

Those who know him do not come across him

Those who come across him do not know him

Someone who is met on the road with firmly
shut mouth.

King, possessor of a spacious crown....

The above oriki of Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà depicts him as a dreadful
being who is always full of evil machinations.

Although we should note that Ogunmólá had earlier in
this play given to Èṣù some of the attributes
and praise poems of Ọ̀gún (the Yorùbá god of iron)
when he credited Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà with the praise poem,

Onilé kángunkàngun lórun

Ò lómi nílẹ̀ fẹ̀jẹ̀ wẹ.¹⁴

Possessor of innumerable houses in heaven

One who has water at home but bathes in
blood,

This practice often occurs in drama.

In The Palmwine Drinkard, Àlábá is another naturally derived praise name. For example, in the funeral dirge chanted by Láńkẹ̀ Ọ́mu to commemorate the death of this professional tapper, he (Àlábá) was referred to as Alábá of Èdú (or Alábá, native of Èdú). Èdú here shows the lineage from where Àlábá comes. Often, lineage poems are used as historical source material and, in some cases, woven round divine providence. Here, Àlábá has been turned into a hero and has joined the ancestral realm. Meanwhile, it seems that Ọ́gúnmọ́lá is warning his people to look back to their past since a river that forgets its source will dry up.

Another example worthy of mention is the derivational oríkí being given to Asooremásikà in "Asooremásikà". Due to his kind deeds and philanthropic behaviour, people started to call him "Asoore-bí-ẹ̀ni-gò" (He who does good like a stupid person or a fool). Here, Ọ́gúnmọ́lá reminds his audience of people's reaction to issues. He emphasized that doing good does not always free a person

from people's reproach because evil-doers will continually envy such kind-hearted persons, and call them ugly names, and would shower unhealthy comments on them. However, Ògúnmólá re-emphasizes in this play the Yorubá belief that, no matter what people may say or do to the innocent persons, such people would always come out victorious.

(iv) THE APPROPRIATE USE OF NAMES IN KÒLÁ
ÒGÚNMÓLÁ'S FOLKLODIC PLAYS

Apart from the spoken word, Ògúnmólá makes appropriate use of names to communicate his idea and his message directly or indirectly to his audience. He gave the major characters in the plays names which portray their roles at first glance. In this wise, he saved many members of his audience the trouble of identifying who a character is and what role he/she is intended to perform. In "Sùúrù Lágba," Ògúnmólá personifies Sùúrù and gave her a naturally derived name (Kéyindé) which symbolises patience. In this

play, Kéyìndé or Sùúrù behaves as a true symbol of patience, endurance and perseverance. Also in the same play, Bàbá Òrìṣà-òkè behaves in conformity with his name. For instance, we discover in this play that he is an old man who controls power and authority in his domain. This is probably why he has Sùúrù, Owó and Omo as children. With all these children, he commands respect and honour among his people. Semantically, Òrìṣà-òkè means "god of the sky". Ògúnṣàlá probably created this name for him in order to show the extent of his authority in his domain.

In "Ojú la rí," the principal characters are Ajífowówè, Aláidáa and Akínláwọ̀n. Ajífowówè symbolizes someone who is rich. However, the traditional Yorùbá people share the belief that the wives of those who are very rich or those who have too much wealth often face the problem of barrenness. Here, Ajífowówè is a typical example. The name connotes that he "swims" in money, and many people, particularly among the traditionalists, would believe that the acquisition of too much wealth has contributed to his problem. On the other hand,

Aláidáa depicts someone who is dishonest, mischievous, wayward and irresponsible. His hypocrisy and waywardness has been unveiled even from the genesis of the play, and this dishonest behaviour of Aláidáa is seen throughout the play. Aláidáa semantically connotes someone who is not good in behaviour and actions. Therefore, immediately Ògúnmólá brought this man into focus, everyone knew what role he was designed to play. Finally, the name Akinlâwón is given to Ajifowóbù's child due to the conditions prevailing before his birth. This name emanates from the Yorubá custom and the proverb which says, "Ilé là á wò, ká tób, sòmọ lórúkọ" (Children are named in accordance with the prevailing circumstances in the family.) Therefore, Akinlâwón here symbolizes a male child who, by his birth, removed the indignation and reproach between his parents, caused by a long period of barrenness.

Another reference worthy of note can be found in "Ajé kí í gbé" where Ògúnmólá gave the principal characters such appellations like Aláparò, Jálèkìn-è

and Sáábádá. From the outset, these names have revealed that these men would play no other role than that of rogues. Such appellations are not uncommon among persons of dubious character even in our contemporary period. Sámo-ngongo in "Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà" is made to behave like Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà. He caused trouble between Ọ̀kẹ and Dàda who are intimate friends. He also went to Ọ̀kẹ's father to perpetrate his evil deeds. In these two incidents, Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà could have succeeded in his nefarious activities had it not been for the quick intervention of a woman customer who settled the misunderstanding between Dàda and Ọ̀kẹ, and in the case of Ọ̀kẹ's father, his wife (Ìyá Ọ̀kẹ) quickly drove away the disguised Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà from their house.

Symbolic names used to communicate some ideas or opinions, as we have seen above, are prominent in Ọ̀gúnmọ̀lá's folkloric plays. Names given to these symbolic characters serve as a communication device to reveal from the outset the roles such characters are bound to play in the drama. Ọ̀gúnmọ̀lá probably adopted this method in order to make it easier for

his audience to follow the trends of events as keenly as possible. This device contributed in no small measure to the artistic appeal of the plays.

(v) FOLK SONGS AND OTHER MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

Folksongs which are also a medium of communication found in these folkloric plays are fruits of traditional culture. Occasionally, people who have gone against the norms of the society are warned through folk songs and this serves as a means of social control. They are very significant in the daily lives of any community and are often used as a medium of communication throughout the world. They are used in every aspect of human activities, particularly during important occasions including ritual celebrations, religious festivities, social engagements, wars or coronations. There are songs in praise of chiefs or Obas while some songs are used to convey a general idea or to express one's sentiments. These claims can be substantiated by the way Ògúnṣọlá used folk songs to drive his points home. Therefore, songs in Ògúnṣọlá's plays deserve

careful study and critical analysis in order to understand the message they are meant to convey to us.

Firstly, Ògúnmólá adopts the use of the "Opening Glee" and "Closing ~~the~~ Glee" (songs) to introduce his plays and conclude his performance. From these songs, he quickly brings out his aims, beliefs and philosophy. Apart from using these songs to communicate his opinions to the audience, Ògúnmólá also employed the use of folk songs to remind the Yorùbá people of their cultural heritage and their religious beliefs. For instance, in "Aṣooremáṣikà", Ògúnmólá reminds the Yorùbá of their traditional belief in re-incarnation and retributive judgement. Therefore, he says,

È má ṣeká láyé,
 Tori a ó rọrun
 Bá a bá dé 'bodè,
 A ó rojọ.¹⁵

Do no wicked acts on earth,
 Because we shall all go to heaven,
 Getting to the gate of heaven,
 We shall all account for our past deeds.

The above song may be seen by some people as ordinary speech utterances, yet its form and contents give an

insight to Yorùbá cultural and religious beliefs. It contains cultural materials worthy of analysis, and warnings which can bring a society to sanity are highly accentuated in them. Therefore, apart from the aesthetics of these songs, they function as verbal communication which reflects both personal and social experiences within the cultural environment. In the above song, the Yorùbá belief in re-incarnation is brought into focus. It also reminds the audience of the Yorùbá belief in retributive justice and emphasizes the repercussions of wickedness and evil acts. Like every traditional Yorùbá man or woman, Ògúnmólá believed that man would automatically reap whatever seed he/she sows, and that there is a reckoner at the mythical gate of heaven who is always ready to pay everyone back in his or her own coin. It is also pertinent to note that this song is sung seven times, indicating a very serious warning to perpetrators of evil.

Another warning song worthy of analysis is that found in "Èsù Ọdàrà". Here, Ògúnmólá concludes the play with the song:

Mọ m'Éşù o,
 Mọ m'Éşù
 Ẹni rere, má mÉşù şerè!
 Mọ m'Éşù o!
 Mọ m'Éşù!
 Ẹni ibi ni
 Mọ m'Éşù şere!¹⁶

Do not play with Éşù!
 Never play with Éşù!
 Good man, never play with Éşù!
 Do not play with Éşù!
 Never play with Éşù!
 He is a bad being!
 Never play with Éşù!

In this concluding song, Ògúnmólá warned the Yorùbá people generally to steer clear of Éşù Òdàrà and his followers. He noted that there are people who may disguise themselves to seem harmless but who are wolves in sheep's clothing or green snakes under the green grass.

The folk song found in "Ojú la rí" can also be cited here. It gives us the information about the whereabouts of the missing Akinlāwọn. Thus we hear,

Lílè: Akinlâwọn ti ọmọ olówó
 Akinlâwọn ti ọmọ ọba
 Kèngbè yin n ẹẹ nigbèrí òkun
 Òkun lolórí omi
 Ọsà lalùgbalùwẹ
 Bẹẹ bá délé
 Kẹ ẹ sọ fàráa'lé
 P'Akinlâwọn mọ n sawo ẹwá o

Ègbè: Tokinni, tokinni.¹⁷

Solo: Akinlâwọn has become a child of the rich,
 Akinlâwọn has become a prince,
 Your gourd is at the upper edge of the sea,
 The sea is the biggest of all waters,
 While the lagoon is extensive.
 When you get back home,
 Tell everyone in the household
 That Akinlâwọn has joined the cult of the
 spirits.

Chorus: Tokinni, tokinni.

Apart from the fact that the whereabouts of
Akinlâwọn are known, the song also carries other
 information or messages worthy of note. Akinlâwọn
 is said to have become the son of the rich one.
 This reminds us of the Yorùbá belief that anyone

who dies a good death would be prosperous as soon as he/she leaves the world of men. Akinlâwón left the world of poverty and went and became a prince whose life had been completely changed. We also hear that Akinlâwón had been admitted into the spiritual realm. In this case, the Yorùbá people believe that the dead who performed good deeds on earth go to heaven where they enjoy themselves abundantly. Nevertheless, they are not always happy to miss any member of their family, whether old or young.

In The Palmwine Drinkard, Bísi was enticed by the beauty of the spirit in human posture. She jumped at him and followed him and insisted that she would marry him. Knowing Bísi's intention, the spirit started to sing this warning song:

Lílé: Oniyán dẹyìn lẹyìn mi

Tétè dẹyìn

Ègbè: Sin-inrinkúnsin

Lílé: Bó ò bá dẹyìn

O o kodò kan aró

Ègbè: Sin-inrinkúnsin

Lílé Bó ò bá dẹyìn,

O ó kodò kan ẹjẹ

Ègbè: Sin-inrinkúnsin.¹⁸

Solo: Pounded yam seller, leave me and go back
Quickly go back.

Chorus: Sin-inrinkúnsin

Solo: If you fail to go back
You will get to an indigo coloured river

Chorus: Sin-inrinkúnsin

Solo: If you fail to go back
You will get to a river of blood

Chorus: Sin-inrinkúnsin.¹⁹

Unfortunately, this warning fell on Bisi's deaf ears. It needs to be recalled that Bisi had ignored former warnings from her parents. She proved to be a stubborn child who would not listen to any advice or heed any warning. Likewise, she was too obstinate to listen to this warning; consequently, she found herself in "a land inhabited exclusively by all sorts of grotesque spirits who make it a point of duty to kill any human being who discovers their abode and their secrets."²⁰

Consequently, Bisi was tied to the stake, but, fortunately for her, she was about to be killed when Láńkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu arrived at the spot, put a spell

on the spirits, loosened the ropes with which Bisi was tied and escaped with her.

In the above song, valuable lessons can be drawn. Bisi got herself into trouble because she was a stubborn girl. She failed to heed simple warnings from the spirit in human posture, and this could have led to her death if Iánké Omu had not been opportuned to be there. In this case, Ogunmólá is probably emphasizing the notion that ancient voices should not be allowed to die unheeded. He probably believes that, if our contemporary society can heed simple warnings and listen to the elders' advice, it would not be like the fabled dogs, who got lost because they did not listen to the hunter's whistle which was blown to guide their movements in the unknown forest.

Other media of communication used by Ogunmólá in his bid to give aesthetic beauty to his performance script are hooting, invocation, prayer and ritual language. For instance, in "Ojú la rí," Ajifowówé hoots to Aláidáa in order to locate his whereabouts on the farm. Also in "Èsù Ọ̀dàrà,"

Òkè hoots to his friend, Dàdà, to inform him that he had already got to the farm, and to locate the spot where his friend was on the farm. It should be recalled that hooting is a common medium of communication used especially by farmers and hunters to call one another on the farm or in the forest/ field. This idea originated probably due to the Yorùbá belief that it is improper to call people's names in the forest or at the dead of night so that malevolent spirits might not seize the opportunity to harm the bearer of such names. Therefore, hooting to each other is believed to be the ideal method of calling a person in the farm, forest or at night. Although this practice was common among the traditional Yorùbá farmers and hunters in the past, the practice is still found in some Yorùbá local communities, especially in the countryside, up till today.

Besides hooting, invocation and prayer, ritual language is often used to communicate requests to the spirits. These statements may not always be understood, especially by novices, because they are directed to the spiritual world, and only the

priests who are close to the gods are capable of decoding the messages. Ògúnmólá used this medium in his folkloric plays. For example, in "Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà," Ògúnmólá invoked Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà, one of the Yorùbá primordial divinities, when he said,

Eriwo ooo, Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà !"

Eriwo ooo, Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà !!!

Eriwo ooo, Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà !!!!

Hail Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà !"

Hail Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà !!!

Hail Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà !!!!

Firstly, we must note that Èṣù Ọ̀dàrà is called three times here. This number is symbolic and it communicates a piece of information to the hearers. It is worthy of note that spirits are usually called three times during an invocation, or, in some cases, seven times. This indicates that a dreadful being/spirit is about to approach. Consequently, all those who are close to the spot must keep silent and make themselves reverent because the spirit

must be venerated.

In "Ojú la rí," the spirit of Iwinmi (water spirit) was invoked in the same manner. It was called three times after when the àwòrò (priest) shook his sééré (small medicinal gourd) and said,

Olóbó mi,

Ọlọwọ gbọgbọro

Tí í yọmọ rẹ lọfìn

My Lord,

Possessor of very long hands

Used to save her children from troubles.

Here, the priest of iwinmi pays homage to the river goddess with a shower of praises. Therefore, he appealed to the goddess to be merciful and to send Akinlàwón back to his parents. This request was granted after some rituals had been performed. This is in accordance with a Yorùbá maxim which says, "Àgbà mọta ló mọdi ẹta, òkúta méjì ló mède èkùrọ." (Secrets are known by the cult/parties concerned, two stones understand the language of the palm kernel.) In other words, no one could understand the process of bringing back

Akinlâwón except the àwòrò who knows how to communicate with the "Numinous".²¹

In The Palmwine Drinkard, Ògúnmólá also manipulated the language used by the spirits to create humour. Here he exploited the associational power of words, symbols, expressions and images drawn from the human, natural and supernatural worlds. Through the use of comic characters, he was able to build tension up to a very high point. The invention of a special language spoken by the spirits also captured the tense mood of the audience. Believing that human beings are incapable of competing with the spirits, he created a technique whereby the language of the spirits could only be understood by them, but the spirits could understand any language spoken by both human and non-human beings. The interpretations of the dialogue between Olúgbó (king of the forest) and Láńké Òmu are full of sensations and emotions which brought loud ovations and rounds of applause from the audience.

In our discussion above, we have endeavoured to illustrate how the late Kòlá Ògúnmólá had practically shown that the Yorùbá language can be skillfully manipulated to serve dramatic ends. Through the effective and imaginative use of mythical and cosmic characters, lessons are drawn from nature, satire is driven home, and the inner workings of the mind are explored, while riddles, proverbs, folk songs and other genres of the Yorùbá oral traditions are used to stress the dramatic significance of the performances.

NOTES

1. H.I. Dike, "Towards Bridging Communication Gaps Among the Various Linguistic Groups in Nigeria: Causes of Breakdown in inter-cultural Communication," Nigeria Magazine, Vol. 54, No.1, Jan.-March, 1986, p.63.
2. As a professional teacher of the language, Ògúnmlá made use of Yorùbá figures of speech to add colour to his performance script.
3. Dàpò Adelugba, "Language and Drama: Ama Ata Aidoo," Eldred Durosimi Jones (ed.) (1976), Drama in Africa, African Literature Today, No.8 (Ibadan), Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., p.78.
4. Dan Ben-Amos, "Folklore in African Society," Research in African Literatures, Vol.6, No.2, 1975, p.186.
5. Oral Communications with the late Kòlá Ògúnmlá's wives (Tayo and Dele Ògúnmlá) at Oşogbo in 1988.
6. G.J. Afolabi Ojo (1966), Yorùbá Culture (London), University of London Press, p.226.
7. Ruth Finnegan (1970), Oral Literature in Africa (Kenya), Oxford University Press Ltd., p. 437.
8. Ibid., p. 442.
9. Ibid., p. 472.
10. S.O. Babayemi (1988), Content Analysis of Oriki Orilè (Ibadan), Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Occasional Publication, p. 1.

11. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
12. Oral Communication with Madam Abimbólá Akintáyò (Alias "Mámá Ibejí") at her Elékùrò residence, Ibadan, on January 22, 1989.
13. Genesis, Chapter 25, verses 22-34.
14. Probably, Kólá Ògúnmólá mistakenly credited this praise poem to Esu Odàrà, but later, when he discovered the anomaly, he quickly corrected it.
15. See Appendix I, No. 7 for the scoring of this song.
16. See Appendix I, No. 11 for the scoring of this song.
17. See Appendix I, No. 17 for the scoring of this song.
18. See Appendix I, No. 18 for the scoring of this song.
19. The chorus, sin-inrínkúnsin has no meaning on its own. It only makes the song to have a melodious rhythm.
20. Oyekan Owomoyela, "Folklore and Yorùbá Theater," Research in African Literatures, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring, 1971, p. 131.
21. Rudoff Otto (1924), Idea of the Holy: an inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational, London, O.U.P., Chapters 4-6.

CHAPTER FIVE

Recommendations And ConclusionsA. CONTRIBUTIONS OF KÓLÁ ÒGÚNMÓLÁ'S FOLKLORIC
PLAYS TO AFRICAN THEATRE

The life and philosophy of the late Kólá Ògúnmólá, as read in this dissertation, reveal that he was a responsible director/manager, a renowned playwright and actor, a competent manipulator of the Yorùbá language, and a major figure in modern Yorùbá performing arts. Ògúnmólá excelled many of his colleagues in this field when we talk of rigorous acting, and language manipulation. In fact, Ògúnmólá has contributed immensely to the upliftment and development of the modern Yorùbá travelling theatre and drama in particular and the African theatre in general.

Ògúnmólá's expertise in organising his theatre group successfully has been reported upon in Chapter One. As we have pointed out earlier, he was

one of the best managers of theatre companies during his period and he was regarded as a pace-setter in this regard. With a sense of diplomacy and responsibility, Kòlá Ògúnmólá was able to control, with utmost success, members of his troupe without much difficulty. This is one of the good lessons which Kòlá Ògúnmólá had taught several people of his day and which future theatre practitioners should emulate.

It is also worth noting that, with the late Kòlá Ògúnmólá, the distinction between a presentational and a representational approach to acting becomes academic. According to Jeyifo (1984), as Adéléké in Ifé Owó and Lááké in Òmùtí, Ògúnmólá created the most memorable roles the Yorùbá Travelling Theatre Movement has thrown up to date. It is also spoken in his credit that "he worked by extensively cultivating and exploiting the mental, physical and emotional resources of the acting art and engaged the audiences directly by the intensity of his stage realizations, not cheaply by throwing gratuitous clichés and gags to the audiences, Perhaps the bane of most actors in the Travelling

Theatre performances."¹

It is further stated that it was Ògúnmólá "who fostered perhaps the most important acting development in the evolution of the Travelling Theatre movement, that of casting roles in terms of a troupe member's technical resources, capabilities and experience, not on the basis of his or her presumed standing within the troupe."²

In this context, Ògúnmólá is seen to be a humble leader who led by example. His special talent as a creator/innovator was not obsessed with the modern ideology of service to self. Délé Ògúnmólá, during my personal communication with her, said that, while many people praise their husband, Ògúnmólá's humility was taken for stupidity by some people of his time, but members of his family later realized the significance of this conduct when people started to reward them with series of gifts and assistance in appreciation of Ògúnmólá's humble behaviour.

Meanwhile, comments, remarks and submissions of distinguished scholars on the probable origin of African drama and theatre traditions have been thoroughly reviewed. While some of these men postulate that African drama/theatre traditions evolved from

traditional religious rituals and festival/celebrations, some added that the evolution of dramatic arts was a natural phenomenon that emanated from man's spontaneous acts and imitations of nature.

In the same vein, it is submitted that the Yorùbá Travelling Theatre evolved from the traditional masquerade drama, first as a court entertainment, and later taken outside the court by a guild known as Eégún Aláré, which subsequently became Eégún Alárinjò, and which was popularly believed to be the first professional Yorùbá Travelling Theatre.

It may be recalled, however, that the activities of the new Yorùbá performing companies came about as a result of the artists' cultural awareness and a bid to create an indigenous theatre and drama. At first, their productions in the 50s and 60s were based on Biblical themes or stories adapted to the indigenous Yorùbá socio-cultural setting. Later, these artists started to explore the rich Yorùbá oral traditions and adapt the Yorùbá folklore in

their performance scripts. They manipulated the Yorùbá folktales, folk songs, proverbs, riddles, drumlore and other communication media in replacement of the Western material, thereby creating an indigenous modern theatre and drama.

Ògúndé, who started it all, was famous for his innovative plays, majority of which are based on political satires, while the late Kólá Ògúnmólá, who was seen then by some people as Ògúndé's "second in command", was renowned for his folkloric and ethical plays. The late Dúró Ládipò was noted for legendary and mythical plays, as evidenced in Morèmi, Oba Kò so and Edá, to mention a few. Oyin Adéjòbí, for his part, is interested in social and ethical plays based on contemporary events.

As said above, Ògúnmólá was interested in Yorùbá folklore. He therefore used various genres of Yorùbá oral traditions to effectively get his message across to his audience. One can even categorically submit that Ògúnmólá was a pace-setter with regard to the use of Yorùbá folklore in Yorùbá performing arts.

Making a comparative analysis of the traditional theatre/dramatic performances, one realizes that artists like Hubert Ôgúndé, Dúró Ladipò and Kòlá Ôgúnmólá had, through radical innovations and new creations, integrated the old with the new to suit the yearnings and aspirations of the contemporary period. While there are marked differences in some respects, similarities abound either in performance techniques or in the productions and the motives behind them. For example, the basic objectives behind the performances are usually to entertain and teach morals or ethics. They may also serve as a technique to relieve tensions emanating from the socio-cultural problems of life or to uphold the cultural heritage of the people by reminding them of their traditional past.

On the other hand, there are marked differences in the techniques of stage management and methods of performance, even though some of the objectives of these two traditions slightly differ. For instance, unlike the traditional dramatists who were lineage

professionals, and were not keen on monetary reward, the modern performing artists have much interest in the amount of naira they could get from gate-takings which have now been formally institutionalized. The contemporary artists live on earnings accruing from the proceeds of their performances. Therefore, instead of staging their plays in public places like the open markets or the king's palaces, the modern dramatists hire big halls or large theatre buildings where fixed admission fees are collected at the entrance/gates or at the box office.

Like his colleagues, Ògúnṣá wrote his plays to suit the contemporary social needs. At times, modern-day theatre troupes may not follow the traditional pattern whereby homage must first be paid to members of the audience or to some elders who might be present. It may be recalled that failure to pay homage within the traditional communities might incur the wrath of the malevolent spirits of the aggrieved elders, and this might consequently draw calamity upon the troupe leader and his retinue

of actors. The paying of homage, they believe, was to solicit for the protection and security of the artists through the mutual co-operation of members of the audience. For example, reference was often made to past experiences in history when artists/dramatists who failed to honour and pay necessary homage to deserving people were humiliated. One particular point of reference was that of legendary Òjẹ Lárinnáká of the Egúngún Alárinjò fame on whom, out of sheer wickedness, some people among the audience inflicted a great blow, after he had transformed himself into a big boa-constrictor in a magical performance. The effect of the charm was so tense that he (Lárinnáká) could not change himself back to his former human form. Consequently, he was made to crawl into the river to join the company of reptiles.³ Although this incident may portray the perpetrators of the evil act as barbaric, devilish and unprogressive, one should realize, however, the significance of paying homage and acknowledging elders in Yorùbá culture. It also shows the extent to which the traditional Yorùbá

society frowns at pride and disrespect.

There are other features of both the traditional and the modern Yorùbá travelling theatre traditions which have been discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation and which show striking similarities or differences. Our main pre-occupation here is to note that the modern Yorùbá Travelling Theatre is being greatly influenced by socio-cultural changes and contemporary events in the society, but, since culture is not a static phenomenon, the African Theatre Movement is bound to adapt itself to contemporary societal changes.

Apart from his active participation in dramatic performances and in the production of plays, Kòlá Ògúnmòlá also contributed immensely to the advancement of the modern Yorùbá Travelling Theatre and African drama through creative publications. As a playwright he composed several plays which earned him much credit among the contemporary performing artists and theatre practitioners. Among the plays he produced which were later published are The Palmwine Drinkard, They are Enemies and Ifé Owó. The late Kòlá Ògúnmòlá and his group had

also staged more than fifty plays and several television programmes on various themes based on both traditional and contemporary events. Like his colleagues and pioneers in modern Yoruba drama, he also produced some plays based on the Biblical stories and the Judaeo-Christian folklore.

Ogúnmólá was an ambitious man who struggled relentlessly to create an enviable position and a name for himself before his demise, and his life was, in a sense, a replica of what transpired in The Palwine Drinkard.

With adventures in life, Ogunmólá encountered several problems which nearly put a stop to his early career and ambition, but with courage, dedication and perseverance, he was able to achieve much within a short period of life. Thus, Ogúnmólá's life may serve as a good practical lesson for many, and those who believe that a good name is more desirable than gold or silver should emulate Ogúnmólá's good behaviour and noble deeds. This is a great contribution which neither gold nor silver can provide.

The socio-cultural and economic messages of Ogúnmólá's folkloric plays have been highlighted and discussed. Here, it is shown that Ogunmólá was culturally inclined in his folkloric plays.

He showed practically that he was part and parcel of the Yorùbá society and that he had been interested in the culture of his forebears from his youth.

With regard to language manipulation, Ògúnmólá had indicated how an educated or literate dramatist can portray with veracity the different generations and levels of education in present-day Africa. In all his plays, Ògúnmólá had practically demonstrated how language could be manipulated to create humour, tragedy and comedy. He has proved his mettle in the various genres. For example, in The Palmwine Drinkard, Ògúnmólá created some comic characters whose appearances, actions and language created humour and emotion among the audience. The dialogue between the human and non-human beings was introduced here to the delight of the audience/readers.

Ògúnmólá's folkloric plays also contributed greatly to the development of the Yorùbá drama through an effective use of oral history and traditions.

Ògúnmólá adapted some Yorùbá legends and folktales for the effective teaching of moral and socio-cultural ethics and beliefs. These folktales and

other integrated genres of Yorùbá oral traditions are adapted and fused into plays in order to remind the people of the age-old belief that everyone will reap whatever he/she sows, either good or bad. They also try to show members of the society that hypocrisy is a cankerworm which must be got rid of in our society if we really want progress and harmony. In this case, it has been realized that Ògúnmólá was one of the few performing artists who adopted the use of oral traditions in their plays. Apart from his folkloric plays, Ògúnmólá also showed the richness of the Yorùbá proverbs, maxims, riddles and other communication media in other plays he produced. They are used to express abstract opinions based on familiar ideas taken from our immediate environment, while folk songs are used as a means^{of} popular appeal.

The folkloric plays of Ògúnmólá have been produced to portray a clear trend towards the revival of memories of the Yorùbá's past, the sustenance of her values and the affirmation of the

relevance of this past and its values to the contemporary scene. Therefore, one can say that Ògúnṣà had done perfectly well to challenge alien culture and practices through expressive forms like proverbs, riddles, narrative arts, praise poetry and music which he integrated into his folkloric plays.

B. THE FUTURE OF THE AFRICAN THEATRE AND DRAMA

Meanwhile, it should be realized that the African drama and the Yorùbá theatre had been established long before the advent of the Europeans into the continent of Africa. We also discover that they are being adapted to socio-cultural changes through time. This claim was supported by Atta Annah Mensah when he stated that:

Evidence from later days has shown that while some of the institutions requiring and promoting these arts have endured or merely gathered new features, others have either become defunct or progressively weakened, and the arts they sustain are steadily atrophying. At the same time, new incoming institutions have generated new performing arts and produced new men of arts whose creations reflect wider human spheres of thought, behaviour and technique.⁴

In the above submission, while Mensah has remarked that there are evidences of integration and socio-cultural changes in African art forms generally, he has also stated that this cultural heritage is on the verge of decadence and collapse. Therefore, something must be done urgently to rescue this situation. Since African performing arts are not merely for entertainment, but are also processes of edification, upliftment and the cleansing of mind and body, and for the fact that they grow out of images, symbols or ideas which express inner forces and impulses, they should not be neglected but be revived for the sake of posterity. They should be seen as forces that are themselves stimuli from the African environment. In this case, our contemporary society must take it as a matter of concern to put the developing African theatre and drama on a sound footing by striving hard to see that the modern artists, theatre practitioners and dramatists are given their proper place in the society. In other words, they should be morally and financially assisted when necessary. Many of

the present-day performing artists who could have performed creditably well and contributed to the upliftment of the African cultural heritage are financially handicapped from fulfilling their ambitions. This assertion can be corroborated by Mensah's remark which says:

... the currents of 20th century artistic scenes have thrown up luminaries and significant works that reflect prevailing influences, thoughts and actions.⁵

In Nigeria, notable among these African giants and luminaries in performing arts and in the travelling theatre movement are the late Hubert Ògúnḡde, the late Kòlá Ògúnḡlá, the late Dúrò Ládipò, Oyin Adéjòbí, Jimoh Alfiu, Moses Oláiyá Adéjùmò and a host of others. The troupes of these naturally talented men should be assisted and encouraged in the smooth running of their theatrical business and also in producing plays that would inculcate discipline into the hearts of our youths, and instil a sense of responsibility and good behaviour into the minds of old and young alike.

The decadent state of Africa's cultural heritage must be revitalised and African expressive ideas which usually brought peace and harmony within the traditional society should be made to survive. In fact, one may submit that Africa's future existence may probably depend on this cultural survival. Therefore, we should not allow our rich cultural values to become mere passing points of reference within the confines of alien imbibed culture and practices. As a matter of fact, we should heed the Yorùbá proverb which says, Odò tó bá gbàgbé orisun rẹ, gbìgbẹ̀ ni yóó gbẹ̀. (A river which forgets its source will certainly dry up). We must use our traditional values to build our society and train our youths in such a way that they would be able to identify themselves with their cultural heritage and be groomed to a point where they would be proud of their traditional heritage. The contemporary society must seek stabilising and reassuring elements in the African performing arts which are rich in oral tradition capable of being manipulated to inculcate discipline in the minds of our youths.

However, the contemporary and future performing artists must possess all the wherewithals that would make them competent to deliver their messages successfully. This is why Mensah submits that,

the new African performing artist of worth is the one who preserves and attains full command of material and technical resources imbued with the African essence and capable of scaling the heights of artistic expression for black peoples and for the rest of mankind.⁶

The future of the Yorùbá Travelling Theatre as a medium of encoding the philosophies of life for onward transmission to posterity must be given due recognition and proper attention. In this case, every organ of the society - be it religious, social, political, economic or cultural - must be harmonised in a way that would bring African virtues and values together. In the same vein, the modern Yorùbá performing art must be actively manipulated to capture and codify the society's impression of the people and their cultural environment. Our contemporary artists who consciously mould the thoughts and behaviour~~x~~ of the people, especially the youths, should be accorded maximum co-operation

and necessary assistance in their activities.

The extraordinary talents and the innate ambition of these great men of virtue should not be allowed to rot away carelessly, for the fact that the impact of their activities is being felt with regard to ethical development and moral upbringing in the society.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

(i) Recommendations

Governments in all African countries should, as a matter of urgency, look into the activities and the problems facing these seasoned and ambitious theatre practitioners with the aim of giving them necessary incentives to boost their morale and ego. They should be assisted morally and financially by both the government and the philanthropists alike in putting their productions in films, tapes and books for future preservation in our archives. In addition, governments should give artists adequate freedom to give free rein

to their creative urges. In this wise, the sayings of the elders which are regarded as sayings of wisdom, the elliptical proverbs and maxims which are fruits of thoughts and sentiments, folk songs and music, riddles and jokes, legends and myths and other forms of oral tradition or folklore which are part and parcel of ^{everyday} African speech, and which formulate the rules of conduct or behaviour should be properly documented and preserved for posterity. This would continually mould the conduct of individuals within the society and effect a harmonious and peaceful co-existence among its members, both now and in the future.

The Yorubá theatre and drama should be adapted to the socio-cultural needs of the people to protect its substance from being weakened by alien culture. It should be embraced by the people in as much as it is something that gives vitality to the psychology of existence and society. However, the theatre practitioners should be given adequate protection and freedom to manipulate their good ideas for the benefit of the society. There is a

general consensus that "organised theatre (contemporary and traditional), in the hands of dedicated and knowledgeable practitioners, has great potential for playing effective roles in contemporary African Societies. But to be able to do this, it must be given a good measure of opportunity, autonomy and protection by the modern government in which now rests the traditional powers of the society.⁷

Finally, to achieve a great measure of success in this way, there is need for co-operation from all and sundry. The current African governments, the performing artists or theatre practitioners and members of the public must therefore be committed to reviving and advancing the ideals of the African heritage through the effective utilisation of the unique attributes of traditional and modern African theatre and drama.

Finally, scholars from various disciplines should, as a matter of concern and utmost urgency, start making efforts to study the works of the past and contemporary performing artists in order

to encode the language and the philosophical messages they contain for the benefit of our society. As narrated earlier, the governments should also endeavour to assist these creative and ambitious men morally and financially. The lesson taught by the folkloric plays of the seasoned playwright and creative performing artist should not be allowed to lie fallow. Our cultural heritage should not be left to decay. Each succeeding generation should renew the struggle to uphold our socio-cultural legacy so that we would not be like those never do-wells who point to their father's house with the fingers of their left hands.

(ii) CONCLUSION

Kòlá Ògúnwólá's folkloric plays have been the major point of focus in this dissertation, and we have attempted to show how he consciously used the Yorùbá folklore to send his message across to the generality of the Nigerian populace and the Yorùbá

people in particular. He has clearly proved that this medium can still be successfully manipulated to infuse moral and good comportment into the contemporary decadent society. Ògúnṣọlá has made use of the folk narratives to uphold the Yorùbá traditional heritage whereby oral traditions are used to educate both the young and the old through the socio-cultural experiences of the elders.

It is emphasized that all genres of the Yorùbá oral traditions are effective media of communication used by the elders as methods of social control whenever there is a tense conflict within a homogeneous family or between two different lineages in the community. Where one party fails to make concessions to the other or both parties remain adamant, the apportioning of blame to either offending party is usually done through the use of proverbs, maxims, folktales, folk songs, riddles or other genres of oral traditions. In like manner, Ògúnṣọlá used the Yorùbá folklore as an effective means of modifying people's behaviour or as a method of deterring others from evil practices and acts. Through this medium, people who have gone against

the norms and ethics of the society are usually called back to their senses. Though the folkloric plays are primarily meant to entertain the audiences, folklore genres are used to teach morals. Within stories, for instance, parents infuse discipline into the hearts of their young ones, condemning all that is evil while recommending those things that are good. For example, in "Ojú la rí" hypocrisy is condemned when Aláidáa was punished for his acts of waywardness and dishonesty. Also, in "Aṣooremáṣikà," the good behaviour of Aṣooremáṣikà was highly commended when he was offered several valuable things by the king in compensation for his past good deeds. In the same play, the thief was punished for stealing. This is why C.C. Okonkwo remarked that the telling of folktales is an effective means of imparting morals to members of the society since stories are hardly forgotten due to their re-narrative quality.⁸

In Kólá Ògúnmólá's folkloric plays, it is proved that Yorùbá folklore is still relevant as a means to inculcate discipline into the contemporary and the future Nigerian societies. He therefore effectively manipulated Yorùbá oral traditions to teach morals within the society.

It is practically shown that Ògúnmólá had gone into the archives^{of} the traditional Yorùbá past to remind his audience of their cultural heritage. He was probably of the contention that the people need to explore their past and bring out the useful materials from their traditions. Therefore this is in harmony with Bólánlé Awẹ's view which says that before the African man could survive and progress, he must "hearken to the ancient voices."⁹ Bassey Andah¹⁰ also warns that there is the need for the African man to appreciate and appropriate his cultural values. He says further that it is pertinent that the African man should trace his roots and the course of his journey from the past to the present so as to achieve self-reliance and make meaningful progress in the future.

The folkloric plays of Ògúnṣọlá therefore portray a clear trend towards the revival of memories of the Yorùbá past, the sustenance of the people's values and the affirmation of the relevance of this past and its values to the contemporary scene. Like other renowned African scholars, composers, playwrights, authors, choreographers and performing artists, Ògúnṣọlá integrated smaller expressive forms like riddles, proverbs, narrative arts, praise poetry, maxims, songs and music, within larger musical and verbal dramas.

As we have already discovered, Ògúnṣọlá was deeply interested and involved in the culture of his people. Because he was born into the traditional community and was nurtured by experienced elders of the society, he knew several aspects of the customs, beliefs and practices of his people and practically manipulated these in producing his folkloric plays.

The late Kọlá Ògúnṣọlá had an innate ambition to propagate his people's cultural heritage, even from his youth. This is in harmony with a Yorùbá

proverb which says "Omo ti yóó jé àsámú, láti kékeré ni yóó ti máa jenu sámúsámú ló" (A child who will become^a rare gem in life would be recognized early from his/her youth.). Ògúnmólá's ambition had revealed the sort of person he was to become in future. Within a few years as pupil teacher, Ògúnmólá's activities had proved that he was to become one of the most popularly acclaimed performing artists and a teacher of a larger audience in twentieth century Black Africa. Therefore, we could say that Ògúnmólá started his teaching career in the small classroom and got to a peak when he taught thousands of his people how the society could be made peaceful and harmonious through good conduct and comportment. Apart from moral teaching, Ògúnmólá also delved into the Yorùbá cultural past, dished out useful materials in the Yorùbá culture in a bid to contribute his quota in reviving the Yorùbá customs, philosophy, beliefs and practices which are of immense benefit to the contemporary and future Nigerian generations. Therefore, "for as much as the Nigerian

theatre reflects the people's aspirations and appeals to them aesthetically, the initiative to entrench it must be backed, and its progress supported by Nigerians themselves.¹¹ Ògúnwólá's folkloric plays are, undoubtedly, an impressive contribution to the contemporary African drama and may serve as an indispensable tool for bringing the decadent modern society to a state of normalcy.

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 68/604 - Ajé ki i gbé
 68/621 - Ọlọrun ló mọjọjọ dá.
 68/622 - B'Ọlọrun ò pani, ọba kan kò lè pani.
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APPENDIX I

1. SURU LAGBA

Handwritten musical notation for 'SURU LAGBA' in G major, 12/8 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Ẹ-jẹa-ni Ẹ-jẹa-ni Ẹ-jẹa-ni Ẹ-jẹa-ni o su-ru la-gba Ẹ-jẹa-ni. The second line of music continues with: Ba-mọ-de ba ni o lo-hun gba gba Ba gba ba ni o lo-hun gba gba su-ru la-gba Ẹ jẹa-ni.

Ẹ-jẹa-ni Ẹ-jẹa-ni Ẹ-jẹa-ni Ẹ-jẹa-ni o su-ru la-gba Ẹ-jẹa-ni

Ba-mọ-de ba ni o lo-hun gba gba Ba gba ba ni o lo-hun gba gba su-ru la-gba Ẹ jẹa-ni.

2. ONI A RO

Handwritten musical notation for 'ONI A RO' in G major, 12/8 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: O ni-a-ro O ni-a-ro ko-lo-mọ ki-lo fo-mọ re-o O-ni-a-ro.

O ni-a-ro O ni-a-ro ko-lo-mọ ki-lo fo-mọ re-o O-ni-a-ro.

3. BO LE DOGUN

Handwritten musical notation for 'BO LE DOGUN' in G major, 12/8 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Bo le do-gun, ko do-gun, Bo le do-gun, ko do-gun O-jo pe-we ko ko, Bo-le do-gun, ko do-gun.

Bo le do-gun, ko do-gun, Bo le do-gun, ko do-gun O-jo

pe-we ko ko, Bo-le do-gun, ko do-gun.

4. BA O BA TI KU

Handwritten musical notation for 'BA O BA TI KU' in G major, 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Ba o ba ti ku, A o mọ ri-hun ro A-ji-fo-wo we, ba ba mi ka-reo.

Ba o ba ti ku, A o mọ ri-hun ro A-ji-fo-wo we, ba ba mi ka-reo.

5. BI O BA ẸRE

Handwritten musical notation for 'BI O BA ẸRE' in G major, 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Bi o ba ẹ-re, wa je re i-re Bi o ba ẹ-ka, wa-je-re i-ka.

Bi o ba ẹ-re, wa je re i-re Bi o ba ẹ-ka, wa-je-re i-ka.

6. OWO NIYI

O-wo ni-yi, Mo fun ẹ gbe A-ṣo wọnyi o ti-ẹ-ni
I-le o-lo-ke to n wo yẹn La-to-ni lo, ti-ẹ ni.

7. E MA SEKA LAYE

E - ma se-ka laye To-ri a o ro-run E-mase ki la-ye o To-
ri-a o ro-run Ba a ba da 'bo-de A-o ro-jo.

8. OLUWA LO MEJO DA

O-luwa lo me-jo da, ko lo-ni-ke-ji o O-ni da-jo a-gba Ja-re da-jo
mi re.

9. B'OLQRUN O PANI

B'olqr-un o pa-ni O-ba kano le pa-ni B'olqr-un o pa-ni O-ba kano le
pa-ni I-yan-ju ni mo gba O-lqr-un lo le nu-ku wa B'olqr-un o pa-ni o-ba kano le
pa-ni.

10. OBINRIN O SE E FINU HAN

O-bin rin o se fi-nu han, E-ni to ba fi-nu han wọni ro run.

O-bin rin o şe fi-nu han, E-ni to ba fi-nu han wonra - run

11. MO M ESU U

M_o m'E - su Mo m'E - su E - ni re - re

M_o m'E su şe - re.

12. ORI MI O GBE

O-ri mi o gbe A-ya mi o gbe E-şu o-da-ra şo-ro ri,

O-ri mi o gbe.

13. EMU LAŞO MI

E-mu la şo mi E-mu la ya mi E-mu lo - mo

mi A e-mu ni - le mi.

14. MO LERU

Mo le - ru Mo ni - wp - fa Mo la - ya me - fa No bi - me me - jo

Mo lo - wo lo - wp mo t' ko le A - gbe - ka me - fa ni - le mi o

A A-san o A-san ni gbo-gbo e lo-ju mi.

15.

MO JE N POFO

Mo je n po-fo, Mo je n po-fo. E-du-ma-re fe-mi-na lo, mo Mo je n

po-fo.

16. IWE KIKO

I-we ki-ko la-i-si o-ko A-ta-da ko i pe o

ko i pe o. I-se a-gbe Ni-se i-le-e wa E-ni ko si se A-

ma ja-le.

17. AKINLAWON

A-kin-lawon ma n sa-w'o-wa o To-kin-ni to-kin-ni.

18. ONIVAN DEYIN LEYIN MI

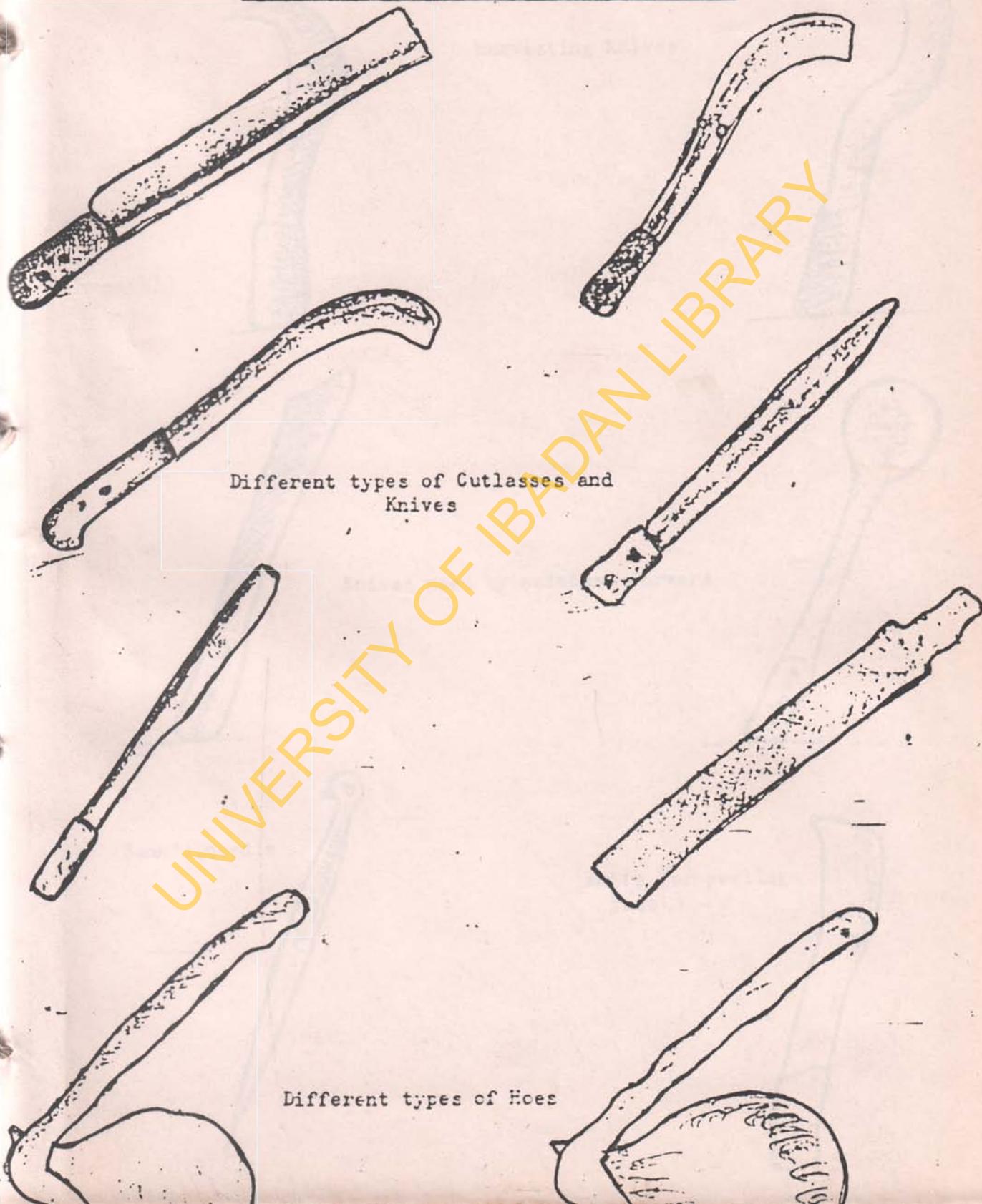
O-ni-yan de-yin le-yin mi, Te-te de yin Sin-in-rin-kun-sin. Bo o ba

de-yin o o ko-do kan a-re Sin-in-rin-kun-sin. Bo-o ba

de-yin o o ko do kan e-je Sin-in-rin-kun-sin.

PROBABLE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR KÒLÁ ÒGÚNMÓLÁ IN THE
MATERIAL CULTURE.

TRADITIONAL FARMING AND HUNTING IMPLEMENTS
PRODUCED BY TRADITIONAL BLACKSMITHS



Different types of Cutlasses and
Knives

Different types of Hoes

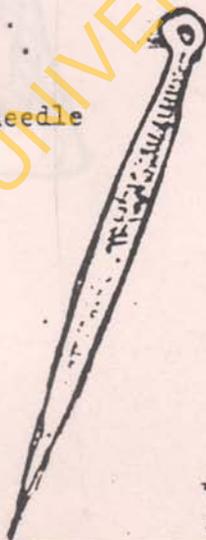
Harvesting Knives



Knives used by calabash carvers



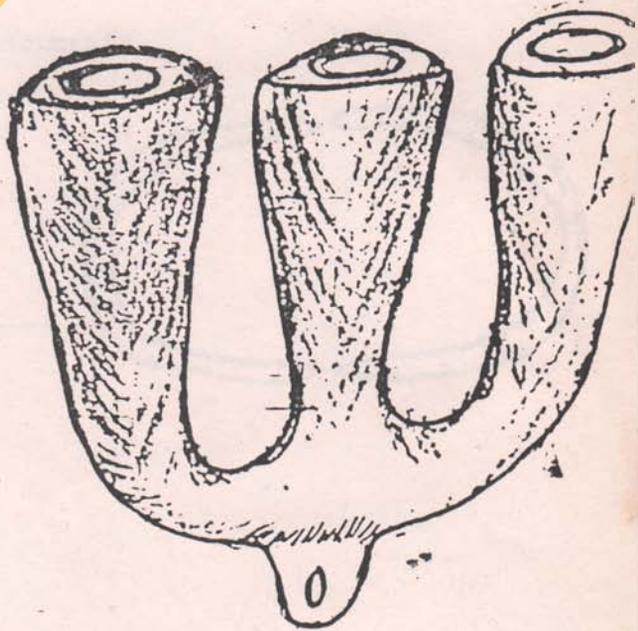
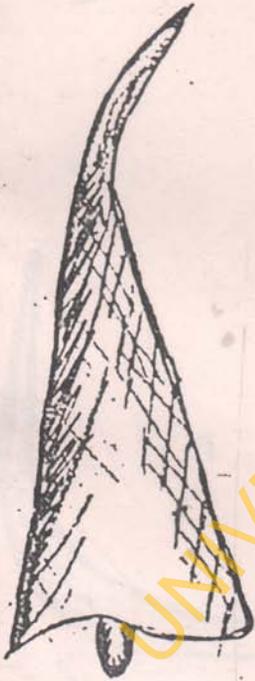
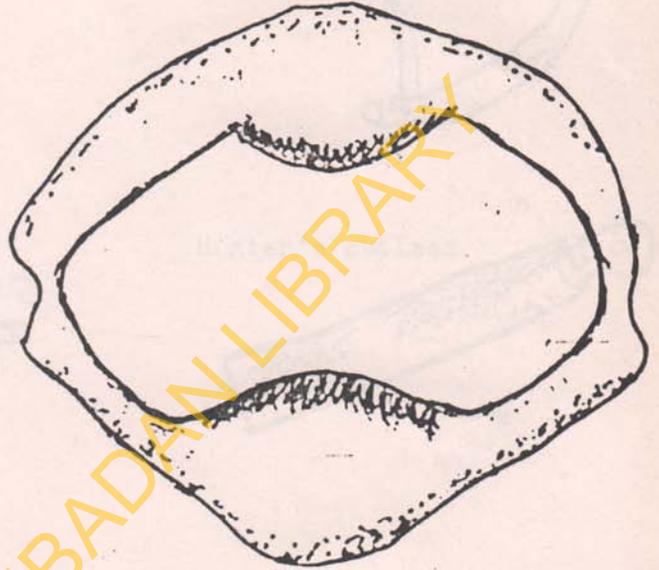
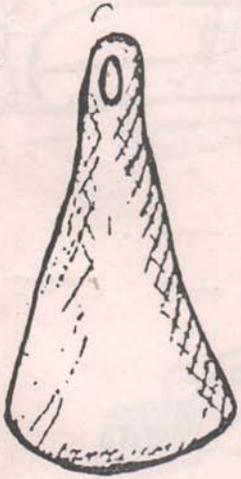
Sack's needle



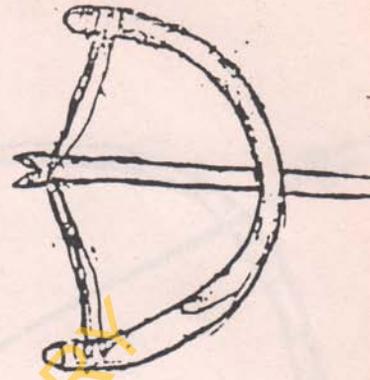
Knife for peeling yams



DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMBS



Bow and arrow



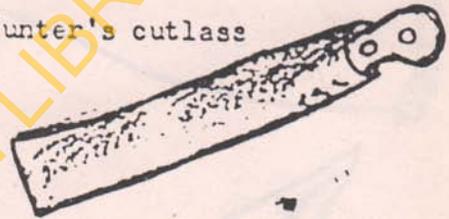
Iron trap



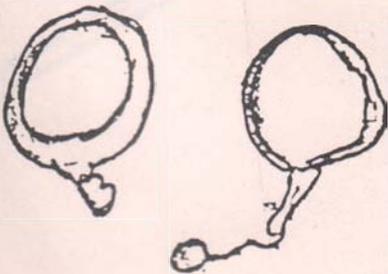
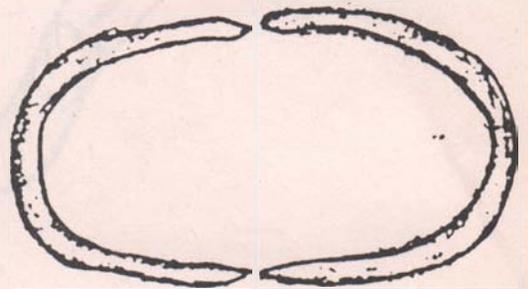
Dane gun



Hunter's cutlase

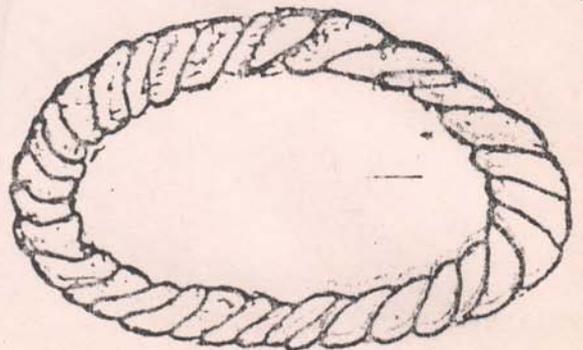
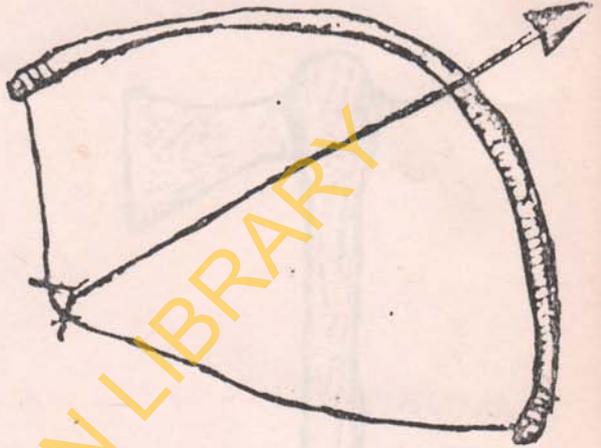
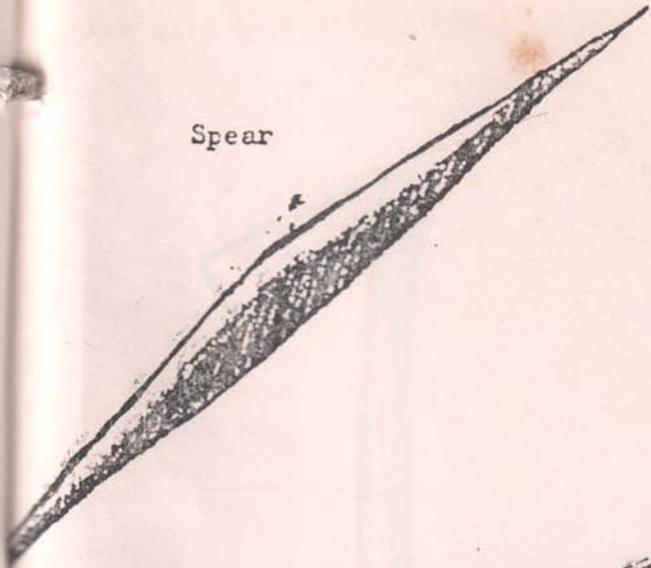


Medicinal/magical instruments



OTHER TYPES OF HUNTING IMPLEMENTS

Spear

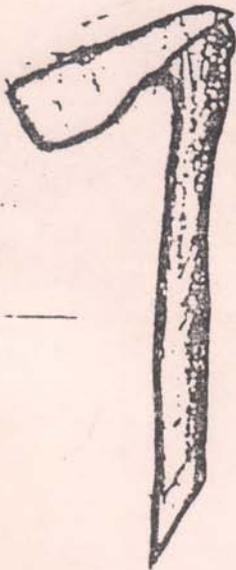


Magical Ring.

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Axe used for tilling the

ground



Axe used for breaking fire-wood



Axe used by palmtree climbers for
harvesting palmnuts



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