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A Comparative Analysis of Japanese and Nigerian Operatic Theatre¹

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Abstract

Several studies in Nigerian and in Japanese theatrical traditions have centred on various elements of either of the two dramatic and theatrical traditions. None so far has comparatively examined the two traditions with the intent of establishing distinct national identities, which are concealed in the theatres of peoples, neither has there been an attempt to comparatively institute universality, conformity or unorthodoxy or lack of it in both theatrical traditions. The interests and explorations, by critics of other far more developed national literatures into Japanese dramatic and theatrical tradition, is an indication that this research effort is pertinent. Most transnational and transcontinental comparative studies on Japanese literary traditions have also not ventured beyond the Western world. This pretermits, in the usual manner, the depth and value of African and indeed Nigerian theatrical traditions which are arguably and inextricably rich in comparatives such as trends and forms, elements which have also been globally acclaimed in the international communities. This paper is a comparative examination of *Alarinjo* and *Nōh*, the operatic theatres of Nigeria and Japan. This analogy is carried out by contrasts; distinguishing the specific features of the forms by comparing differences and is essentially written in counterpoint. This study of the oldest documented professional forms of theatre in Nigeria and Japan seeks to fill some yawning gaps of scholarship in comparative literature, and engage the age long theory of comparative literature as a suitable hypothesis and approach for establishing taxonomies in carrying out this study and other similar studies. It examines how national theatres reflect social, cultural and political issues and also explore the ancient operatic forms to highlight the value of evolving from cultural platforms that are supported by practices that preserve cultural and national identity. This comparatistic inquiry examines movements and trends, motif-types and themes and genre and forms in the operatic theatre of Nigeria and Japan.

Key words: Comparative literature, Opera, Universality, *Alarinjo*, *Nōh*

¹ This paper is a part of the preliminary research I carried out in Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan in 2007 while on fieldwork for my doctoral research.

1. Introduction

The essence of developing, nourishing and preserving national literature, culture and arts is to promote and preserve the identities of peoples. This identity is made up of the psychological, social, cultural, political and religious beliefs which are the primary features of national dramatic cum theatrical performances. This comparatistic examination explicates commonalities, differences and uniqueness of the operatic theatrical forms in Nigeria and Japan, to identify cultural idiosyncrasies and values that enhance the quality of lives of peoples. It engages two hypotheses as its spring board: that no way could the two operatic forms have influenced each other, and that in examining the universality of the topical issues such as identities, themes, literary and theatrical styles and movements, one distinguishes the identity of a people from another.

The theory of comparativism has had outstanding returns in spite of the polemics generated by its ideologies and approaches. Three major school of comparativists; the French, the Russian and the American have laboured extensively on different dimensions in the field of comparative literature but for the purpose of this study the assertions of Praver (1973) will suffice. Praver (1973) describes the theory as a comparative study of literature which engages comparison as its main instrument and establishes comparisons across international boundaries (2&3).

This contrastive study uses comparison, which Praver (1973) states is the main tool in comparative literature, in examining trends in the development of the operatic theatres in Nigeria and Japan. It considers selected features of *Alarinjo* and *Nōh* which includes characterization and casting, comic forms and philosophical ideology and carries out a textual analogy of Duro Ladipo and Komparu Zenchiku's *Oba Ko So* and *Kamo* respectively.

Studies have shown that nations that promote cultural values and identities of its peoples succeed in, most if not all, other areas of national life. Historically, restoration in most developed countries all over the world is influenced by cultural renaissance. Nations that have consciously engaged in cultural, economic and social rebirths include Japan, France, Italy, and Spain. Findings reveal that all four countries strategically intensified studies in the humanities, knowledge of their local and native languages, and engaged in deeper studies in philosophy, history and indigenous literature. The discoveries from their histories and culture brought about the genuine spirit of nationalism, which invariably culminates in the successes the nations continue to record in every facet of their national existence (Aguoru, 2008:214, Sogolo, 1981:112).

Although there is no evidence of contact between Nigeria and Japan in the ancient times, the nations share certain experiences in historical occurrences such as civil wars, world wars and military rule and foreign domination among others. However, Nigeria, for instance, did not experience the rebound of Japan's atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the World War II, neither did Japan experience the repercussion of Trans Atlantic Slave Trade which most African nations suffered. Nonetheless, wide gaps exist in the political experience, military exploration, technological advancement, and religious and cultural responses of these two nations. The success of Japan in almost every endeavour, particularly theatre, is intriguing, especially when one finds that in Nigeria there exists similar theatrical and cultural elements which have become extinct or have been largely undeveloped whereas Japanese theatrical traditions continue to evolve and flourish.

A critical principle such as universalism brings to the fore concepts and ideas that exist simultaneously in both theatrical cultures. Theatre plays several roles in the society, a dominant one is the ability to reflect distinct national and ethnic identities. Theatre can be ethnographic, in that it reflects the social, political and psychological issues as it affects and modifies the life of peoples.

2. Theatre in Nigeria and Japan

The significance of *Nōh* and *Alarinjo* theatres is that in the countries where they are practised, they are regarded as the earliest forms of 'professional' theatre. These forms developed from varieties of elements: dance, music and comical play. In Japan, the origins of theatre are traceable to the religious rites performed in the earliest communities. According to Noma (1996), the Japanese had in primitive times lived in family units, studies reveal that they were:

... hunter-gatherers, totally influenced by the powerful forces of nature. They worshipped nature and the gods of nature, and in order to survive, they prayed to them for abundance of nature's gifts such as a bountiful supply of food and good surroundings. Out of these

Japan's most popular art forms emerged from the various rites of primitive and early societies. These forms have become modified and are made up of elements such as dance, music and comical plays. *Nōh*, *Kabuki* and *Bunraku* are the most dominant theatrical forms that have been preserved to date in Japan. It is instructive to note that all these forms

have survived till date. This is because the people are committed to patronizing the arts, the government ensures conducive environs and provides relevant structures which includes institutions, print and electronic media that promotes the survival of the theatrical forms. *Nōh*, the Japanese theatre being examined, is an operatic form. Kanami Kiyotsugu and Zeami Motokiyo, his son, bestowed on *Nōh* the glory with which it is still known till date.

Nigeria, like most African nation states, is a nation of nations. 'Nations' here refer to the different ethnic groups that make up Nigeria as a nation. It is important to note that each of these ethnic groups possesses sufficient character and identity to be a nation state. This directly impacts on the theatre of Nigeria because there are as many theatrical forms as there are ethnic groups. The Yoruba *Alarinjo*, operatic form is comparatively examined in this study because of its significance to the success of Nigerian theatre and the uniqueness of its trends and form. *Alarinjo* is a term used for the second school of mask dramaturgy after the Esa Ogbin School. The travelling theatre of Hubert Ogunde took its cue from this traditional form covering the entire country and the West Coast of Africa on dramatic tours. Ogunde, the progenitor of the second generation of itinerant professional theatres, began the travelling theatre movement in Nigeria and it was operatic. Unlike the traditional performances in Japan, the *Alarinjo* theatrical form in Nigeria has not been preserved. It has become part of the history of Nigerian Drama rather than an integral part of the theatre that should form the bedrock of the contemporary theatre schools. *Nōh* and *Alarinjo* theatrical forms have been selected for this analysis because of the significant historical and cultural background they offer to studies in Nigerian and Japanese theatre.

Both forms emerged from religious worship and cults. Archaeological discoveries of the remains of the *Jomon* era in Japan include 'earthen masks and earthen dolls wearing masks' which signify that certain transformations took place from the natural to the supernatural during the ritual performances. Other archaeological sources claim that the *Yayoi* era introduced agriculture, iron and bronze works into Japan. As it was with most cultures, religious ceremonies that were used to entreat the supernatural beings for bountiful harvest were held with respect to the planting and harvest seasons. Excavated objects such as wooden musical instruments, bronze bells, and bronze mirrors, that were found in the tombs that hold the remains of the dwellers of the *Yayoi* era, further confirm this. According to Noma:

Clay figurines representing men and women singing, playing instruments, or dancing merrily, have also been excavated mainly from the tombs dating from fourth to sixth centuries. These figurines appear to

have been religious totems which were modelled after people who participated in the rituals and these were used as possessed Shaman in religious ceremonies to help him or her communicate with a deity or a spirit (1996:2).

A more popular account of the origin of ancient theatrical performances in Japan describes the performance of Ame-no-uzume, a goddess, who had given an unusual performance in the presence of hundreds of gods who had assembled for a meeting. It was said that she was divinely possessed and had:

...bound up her sleeves with a cord of heavenly *PI-KAGE* vine, tied around her head a head-band of the heavenly *MASARI* vine, bound together by bundles of *SASA* leaves to hold in her hands and overturning a bucket before the heavenly rock-cave door, stamped resoundingly upon it. Then she became divinely possessed, exposed her breasts, and pushed her skirt-band down to her genitals. Then *TAKAMA-NO-PARA* shook as the eight hundred myriad deities laughed at once (Donald, 1969:84).

Kagura, *Gigaku*, *Bugaku*, *Sangaku*, *Ennen*, *Degaku* and *Saragaku* are some of the older forms of Japanese traditional performance. *Dengaku Nōh* and *Sarugaku Nōh* were the closest forms from which *Nōh* developed; the latter being the most dominant form from which *Nōh* was refined. Cavaye *et al* corroborate this idea, agreeing that 'Noh has its roots in the early forms of entertainment called *Saragaku*, which was largely made up of dancing, singing and comical amusements' (Cavaye *et al*, 2005:164). The birth of the *Shogunate*, a strict feudal system of government replaced the imperial secular authority. It placed the theatre of Japan in the limelight. A major influence in the history of *Nōh* is the fact that it enjoyed the patronage of the *Shogunate* for several years.

From this period till the 19th Century Japan was under the system of an inflexible government. Under this dispensation was a new social stratum and order. The *samurai* (the warriors), the *damiya* (the feudal chiefs) and the *hatamoro* (the lesser warriors), headed by the *shogun* (the military dictator), were rated the highest in Japan national order. The status quo attained through the military was also subject to the ability of an officer to sustain this status; for instance, the *samurai* who lost their status in the society for one reason or the other, became *ronin*, men adrift. These persons and the other ranks that included the shonin (the merchants), *shokunin* (craftsmen and artists), *hyakusho* (farmers) and peasants replaced the characters in Japanese drama (Brokette, 1999:612).

The rise of the Ashikaga family to the *Shogunate* from 1338A.D. up till the late 17th century brought about a rediscovery of the Japanese heritage

that had been dominated by imported culture. It was an era marked with a burst of creative energy, '...foreign and native elements were mingled in new and distinctive ways' (612). The *Shoguns* and the feudal lords, the *Damiyo*, were the greatest patrons of the arts. This also defined the cultural awareness and invariably carved a cultural identity that became national. Therefore, *Nōh*, the greatest Japanese theatrical form, emerged under this dispensation in the late fourteenth century. Brokette (1999) succinctly sums up Shogun Ashikaga's influence on the establishment of *Nōh*:

In 1374 Kiyotsugu Kanami (1333-1384), a major performer of the *sarugakuno*, appeared before the *Shogun* Yoshimitsu Ashikaga (1358-1408), who was so impressed that he took *Kanami* and his son *Motokiyo Zeami* (1363-1444) under his patronage and granted them privileges that placed them among the highest officials of the court. Within this rather refined atmosphere, *Noh* assumed its characteristic form (Brokette, 1999:612).

Kanami and Zeami originators of *Nōh*, engaged elements of *sarugaku kuse*, a narrative song adapted to dance in establishing the form and employed *Zen* Buddhists ideals as focus in designing theatrical pieces that suited the taste of the *Shogunate*. *Zeami* developed the *Nōh* practice and performance in several ways. He authored more than a hundred of the approximated two hundred and forty *Nōh* repertory.

Zeami envisioned *Nōh*'s aesthetic goals and was able to propound 'twenty six theoretical treatises' (612) which are the theories of *Nōh*. Buddhism, its practice and principles, constitute the major influence on *Nōh* theatre; the themes and characterisation in particular, reflect Buddhist beliefs the foundation of the teaching posits. In Brokette's opinion, the encapsulating ideology is a reflection that:

....ultimate peace comes through union with all being, through acceptance that individual desire must be abandoned, and that nothing in life is permanent (1999:216).

He further notes that:

The most typical *Nōh* plays have as protagonists, ghosts, demons or obsessed human beings whose souls cannot find rest because in life they had been devoted to worldly honour, love or some other goal that keeps drawing the spirit back to the physical world (216).

Nōh drama is traditionally classified into five types: *kamimono* (plays

celebrating the gods), *shuramono* (plays about warriors), *kazuramo no* (plays about women), *zatzu* (miscellaneous plays, in most of which brainsick characters particularly women, who have had grievous experiences, spirits or unmasked living persons are portrayed), and lastly *kirimono* (plays about spirits, ghosts or other supernatural characters). Traditionally, the programme of a *Nōh* performance is made up of the combination of these five types of plays in the order in which they are listed. The post-war era, however, prodded a rethink and re-evaluation of the lengthy duration of a *Nōh* programme where after the performances became a collection of two to three plays which still portray, in essence, the values of the older arrangement.

Nōh plays task the audience because of their esoteric components. These includes: re-enactments of the past, the mood, narrative choruses, collaboration of several groups of performers, the *shite*, the chorus, the *kokata*, the *waki* and the *kyogen* actors. Properties that enhance the realisation of these performances include masks, costumes, hand properties and other accessories. By 1615, the *Nōh* stage had become fully developed and standardized. Divided into three principal areas, the stage enhances the esoteric nature of the performances; it also accommodates the musicians, the chorus and the performers. Contemporary *Nōh* theatres seat audiences that number between three hundred and five hundred people.

The influence of the *Shogun* in the history and development of *Nōh* is of interest to this study because Japanese arts are still promoted by the ruling dynasty and the government of the day. The Shogunate, which were the patrons of *Nōh* theatre, gave full support and protection to *Nōh* actors. The profession was accorded *samurai* status, and the actors and leaders of the schools were granted stipends from the funds raised through national requisitions. Five of such schools are recognised nationally and the headship of the schools are hereditary.

In a similar vein, the *Alarinjo* theatre has a history that is equally awe-inspiring and profound. The masque cult in Nigeria and particularly Yoruba land are cults that supernaturally connect the ancestors with the people popularly known as 'ancestor worship' (Adedeji, 1981:221) or *Egungun* Cult. In Ogunba's words:

An *Egungun* is often the spirit of an ancestor within a particular lineage... for *Egungun* are spirits of deceased ancestors and relatives on visit from heaven (1967:88).

In an account of the modification of the cult, the council of an Oyo King, *Alaafin* Ogbolu, also known as *Abipa*, had put up a 'strategic' plan to dissuade the king from relocating the seat of Oyo back to *Katunga*, the

ancient capital. Six 'stock characters', disabled persons or persons who were regarded as 'unnatural' in the society, and who were usually dedicated to the worship of deities (Adedeji,1981:222), were secretly commissioned by the nobles. The group included dwarfs, hunchbacks and albinos, these persons were disguised and sent on the 'scare mission'. Drama ensued when the king's emissaries got to the site and were set to offer sacrifices as instructed by the Alaafin. Samuel Johnson's records has it that:

...counterfeit apparitions who, according to instructions had posted themselves on the hill Ajaka, at the foot of which the palace was built, by a preconcerted plan began to shout '*kosi aye, kosi aye*'...hooting and cooing with lighted torches in hand...they were taken for the spirits of the hill refusing them admission to Oyo (2001:165).

The *Alaafin* caught whiff of the conspiracy and the fellows, who were later rounded up by six famous hunters employed by the king, were made to entertain the king and the king's noblemen who had conspiratorially sent them to old Oyo. This demystification led to the 'deritualisation' of the mask cult (Ogundeji -2004). The *Alaafin* placed the 'ghost-mummers' (Adedeji 1981) in the custody of Ologbojo, who had masterminded the 'disarmament of the spirits'. They were accommodated in a special building within the *Aafin* (palace) from where they entertained the *Alaafin* (Adedeji, 1981:222; Smith, 1965:74). This story which became the first in the repertoire of the 'ghost actors' was re-enacted during the annual festivals in Oyo: the *Orisa Oko*, *Orisa Mole*, and *Oduduwa* festivals, and during the installation of every new *Alaafin* (Smith,1965:74).

About two decades later, the school of the 'ghost-mummers' had acquired a popular name '*egun apidan*' and had also become fully established as a form of court entertainment with its own organisational structure. It had also become a part of the annual *egungun* celebrations. In this manner was the *Alarinjo* theatre founded: Ologbojo took charge of the costumes and masks and provided animation and choral chants for his theatre. At his death, Esa Ogbin became his successor and he excelled. Ologbojo had limited his patronage to the royal court, while his predecessor, Esa Ogbin, popularised the theatre and became famous by taking the theatre to the grassroots. Ogbin's art drew members of other lineages who desired to develop careers in mask dramaturgy (Adedeji, 1981:224).

The *Alarinjo*, founded by the *Alaafin*, enjoyed royal patronage which further established it as a theatrical form that thrived for several decades. Several schools sprang up and the theatre continued to flourish alongside

the masque cult. It became a travelling or itinerant theatre until the incursion of Christianity and Islam. *Alarinjo* lost the patronage and followership of the chorus, drummers, and fans it had enjoyed to the two foreign religions christianity and Islam that became more popular and were rated higher than the traditional religions and ancestral worship.

Aguoru (2011:64) describes the professional and second movement of the itinerant theatre in Nigeria as *Alarinjo*. This assertion is predicated by a number of reasons: the precursor of the modern theatrical movement, Hubert Ogunde, had been greatly influenced as a child by the *Alarinjo* theatre. After his first successful year in Lagos Province, he adopted the itinerant style of *Alarinjo* by taking to the road as a travelling theatre practitioner (Clark, 2001:148). Ogunde, it was gathered, performed in, at least, 85 cities in 19 states of the then Nigeria and in 43 cities in West African countries. These include Republic of Benin, Togo and Ghana. The Ogunde Theatre travelled extensively, apparently more than any *Alarinjo* before him. The Ogunde theatre's organisational structure was patterned after the *Alarinjos*. Adedeji in his study of Ogunde's theatre observes that:

As a travelling theatre he adopted the repertory system and enshrined the tenets of the *Alarinjo* theatre especially with regard to certain aspects of its presentational procedures and theatre organisation. The significance of the *Ijuba* (salute), the entrance song of the traditional theatre was in evidence in Ogunde's opening glee... (Adedeji, 1981:244).

This operatic movement, spearheaded by Ogunde was closely followed by the theatrical activities of Kola Ogunmola and Duro Ladipo.

Diverse circumstances surrounding the origin, sources and influences of *Alarinjo* and *Nōh* are major factors in the conception of the plays and in the types of stage and costumes employed in the production of the plays. The *Nōh* stage is constructed in Shinto shrine style with a permanent painted wall with a stylised twisted pine tree. The stage construction and set are simple but the grandeur is unmistakable. The *Alarinjo* stage is mostly the proscenium stage type constructed to suit the form and theme of the play. For instance, the stage of Kola Ogunmola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* changes rapidly with the different cultural, religious and archetypical settings portrayed in the journey of the main character. Within the *Alarinjo* context, shrines are depicted on stage when a play centres on the personality or worship of a deity. The *Alarinjo* experience as earlier stated, was originally, a propaganda tool conceived by a conspiracy and was not intended for entertainment or for religious purposes, however, it evolved and became suitable for court entertainment. The ultimate

success of both forms was predicated by the patronage of the ruling class: *Nōh*, the *Shogunate* and *Alarinjo*, the *Alaafin* and *Oyo Mesi*.

Nōh and *Alarinjo* are operatic forms. An opera is simply described as a musical drama. Kupferberg (2007) describes it as a staged drama which has its text set to music. In most operatic performances the lines rendered by the actors are predominantly musical recitations, and themes and events (acts/scenes) are mostly presented in songs rendered by the chorus. The chorus here is not in the Aristotelian sense, but in a group-responsorial and dialogic sense. The chorus employ musical rather than spoken dialogue. A universal quality that is present in *Nōh* and *Alarinjo* is the use of music, chorus, chants, songs, incantations, recitatives and other operatic components such as mime and dance. The musical instruments used are, in some instances, similar and are employed in similar circumstances.

The thematic preoccupations of the two forms constitute another angle to this study. Thematically, *Nōh* performances focus on Buddhist teachings that are philosophical and spiritual rather than plain aesthetic display intended solely to entertain. In other words, entertainment in *Nōh* is a means of impacting philosophical, metaphysical and religious teachings to make man reflective during and after a performance. These issues are involuted through the portrayal of the themes and characterisation. The *Alarinjo*, adopts some of the spiritual and philosophical tenets of the Yoruba along with other perceptions and necessarily has a wider thematic coverage. Some *Alarinjo* productions concentrate on selected themes, and others on specific forms of drama. In essence, the *Alarinjo* has a similar reflective didacticism as *Nōh* while it utilises entertainment as a means to an end. *Alarinjo* is dynamic in matters of (i) form-comedy, tragedy, spiritual (metaphysical \ magic) (ii) history and philosophy.

This study examines works of Komparu Zenchiku and Duro Ladipo, dramatists that share certain affinities in: form, ideology, characterization, archetypal imagery and symbolic representations though portrayed from different perspectives. Historically and according to the trend, Zenchiku is the third in the lineage and in the assumption of the leadership of the *Kanze* School following Zeami who had taken over from Kannami, the precursor of *Nōh*. Ladipo also is third in line within the framework of the modern *Alarinjo* pioneered, by Ogunde, who was closely followed by Kola Ogunmola. A significant point, which reinforces universality in literature, is the dependency of the two dramatists on culture, history and religion in their thematic preoccupations.

Authur Waley (1962:63) explains the significance of the delicate fusion of Shinto and Buddhist worship in Japan. The *tendai* sect which had its headquarters on Mount Hiyas preached an eclectic doctrine which aimed at becoming the universal religion of Japan. It combined the cults

of nature gods with Buddhism which is tolerant in dogma, towards the magical practices of *Shingon*. These religious ideologies and tenets of the different sects of Buddhism reflect consistently in *Nōh* plays.

Nigeria's Duro Ladipo, whose work maintains a historical and religious depth, remained close to Oshogbo, the cultural capital of his nation during the period of the cultural awakening that heralded the independence in the country. His works, particularly, *Oba Ko So*, portrays the cultural and religious idiosyncrasies of the Yoruba people, the Yoruba religion and the intricacies of the Yoruba system of government.

3. Selected Features of *Nōh* and *Alarinjo* Theatres

3.1 Characterisation and Casting

A feature that remains striking in *Nōh* is its character types and casting. The list of the cast is often made up of the same characters or archetypes. *Nōh* employs 'a few actors, masks, a chorus and gorgeous costumes' (Noma, 1996:22). It focuses on a chief character and develops the play around the character while maintaining a religious atmosphere. The chorus play essential roles in the production of *Nōh*, and the scenery and stage décor employs a permanent back wall or backdrop.

The *Alarinjo* operatic form employs larger members of cast. The programme usually begins with an opening glee or a dance session typical of the *ijuba* of the ancient *Alarinjo*. However, the chorus in the *Alarinjo* is usually incorporated into the cast of the play to double as praise singers, on lookers, townspeople, wives of an affluent king, and so forth. The costumes are also according to the dictates of the theme of the play or the characters portrayed and, are therefore either elaborate or simple.

In *Nōh*, the central character determines the class of the play. The plays are classified into those about gods, men, women, mad people, or demons (Cavaye *et al* 2005). *Nōh*, is also sub-divided into *Genzai Nōh*, and *Mugen Nōh*, meaning realistic *Nōh*, and dream *Nōh* respectively. The characters that appear in *Genzai Nōh* are real people while the *Mugen Nōh* attributed to Zeami portray characters who are ghosts and spirits from the other world (Cavaye *et al*, 2005:165&170). Plays in the *Alarinjo* operatic form are hardly determined by the members of the cast though there are basic distinctions between tragedies, as it is in the mythico-historical plays of Duro Ladipo (Ogundeji 1988), or comedies or magical realism as it exists in the works of Kola Ogunmola (Jeyifo 1984) and the varieties of Hubert Ogunde's production (Clark, 1976, 1985, 2008). The central characters in *Alarinjo* are not genre specific. There are male and female lead roles as well as roles of ghosts and humans taken to represent the natural and supernatural realms of existence.

Brazell (1998) explains that the 'two-act *Nōh* play in which a spirit or ghost appears in its true form of an ordinary person in Act I and in its true form as a deity or dead person in Act II owes much to shamanistic practices, memorial services and records of dreams and visions:

Plays featuring the ghost of dead people often include depictions of suffering in a Buddhist-style purgatory and when demons take centre stage, exorcism is almost sure to follow. Some of the main characters in *Nōh*, plays are ordinary living people, but even then the experiences enacted are usually extraordinary, with altered states of consciousness caused by obsessive grief, love, loyalty, or devotion, a favourite subject (Brazell, 1998:10).

3.2 Comedy; *Kyōgen* and the 'Awada' Tradition

Another distinct feature of the *Nōh* is *Kyōgen*, a comical interlude performed in between the *Nōh* production. This form developed into a full blown comical genre from the musical interludes of *Nōh*. Contrary to the stone-faced performances of the classical Japanese theatre, *Kyōgen* offers hilarious and rib-cracking sessions. The establishment of *Kyōgen* as a genre brought to being a clear distinction between the *Nōh* and the *Kyōgen* players. The costumes and stage business of both (though offered on the same stage) differs greatly (Cavaye *et al* 2004).

Kyōgen is similar to the *Alawada* comedy of Moses Olaiya, a.k.a Baba Sala, in Nigeria. This *Alawada* genre in Nigerian theatre has been described by Olu Obafemi (1996:55) as the *Yeye* Tradition. Aguru (2011:102) avers that the term *Awada* connotes the very essence of *Alarinjo* comedy which is deliberately calculated to provoke humour unlike *Yeye* which largely connotes playfulness or lack of seriousness. This comical tradition is not performed as a comical interlude in *Alarinjo* but as an entirely different genre of the Yoruba *Alarinjo* theatre. There are, however, instances where comic characters and comical responses are introduced into the *Alarinjo* operatic plays but it is not a convention as it occurs in *Nōh* or with *Kyōgen* and the *Kyōgen* players.

The costumes of *Alawadas* are usually exaggerated: oversized bowties, sunglasses, absurd make-up and so forth. Some of these *Alawadas* do not employ excessive use of make-up or elaborate costume but engage in light-hearted comedy like the comedy of Jacob and Papilolo (Adedokun 1981). As noted above, *Alarinjo* performances often begin with opening glees and ends with closing glees. These musical openings and closings described by (Ogundeji 1988) as extra-plotal beginnings and endings that lead to the curtain call are the other forms of interludes that

feature in *Alarinjo* performances.

3.3 Thunder God in Nigerian and Japanese Theatre

Universally and particularly in literature; concepts, themes and styles that occur as patterns of natural occurrences are used to achieve varieties of purposes. The instructive dimension to this is that they are available in each literary tradition and are appropriated by specific writers for specific purposes. Irrespective of the bias of several critics, Dasylyva in spite of other arguments sums this up astutely:

The whole concept of universality has to do with the sense within a play in which characters whether individualized and recognisable as persons or presented as types or symbols reach beyond their circumstance to wider implication (2004:35).

It is clear that the circumstances and experiences of these character types which may or may not be archetypal can be replicated or duplicated by other persons in portraying the experiences of humans or supernatural beings in any other part of the universe in relation to their cultural experiences, religious or philosophical beliefs.

A common element that this study examines is the portrayal of the gods of thunder in the theatres of these two countries. The concept of thunder god in both traditions exists as a belief. This concept has become an archetypal occurrence, image and personality. Since 463 A.D. storm gods have been dominantly portrayed in Japanese art and literature (Brazell, 1997:39). Historical records indicate that Emperor Yuraku had instructed that a certain deity of Mount Miwa had to be captured. The god, an enormous serpent, had been captured and presented to him 'roaring thunderously and flashing flames ... The emperor, greatly terrified, had it returned to the mountain but not without renaming it Ikazuchi, meaning a 'powerful, fearsome thing' (39).

Subsequent versions of the Japanese tale modified the fiery serpent to dragon, a god and a traditional dispenser rain; and others portrayed the transformation of spirits seeking revenge into thunder gods. The gods target their enemies with strikes of bolts of lightning. The archetypal portrayal of this god includes images of the ferocious, the friendly, the absurd, and the terrified character-type. Each production employs physical transformation as well as a thunderstorm to reinforce the ideas. *Kamo* by Zenchiku basically retains the traditional religious beliefs about the thunder god.

In Nigeria, the thunder god amongst the Yoruba is known as *Sàngó*. An historical account in the Oyo Kingdom claims that *Alaafin Sàngó* was

the fourth king in the Oyo Kingdom. His palace and courts were built around Ajaka hills where he frequently went to concoct magical potions and perform magical exercises. He was also known to be a warrior who had conquered several kingdoms and had replaced his relatively weaker brother as king.

In Samuel Johnson's account, Sàngó had gone up Ajaka Hills with his nobles to work out mysterious potions which had potentials to stir thunder storms. Upon his return, he decided to try the efficacy of the potions which appeared harmless. This he did in the direction of his palace. The consequence of the experiment was devastating as Sàngó practically lost his entire family. He decided to go into exile, despite pleas from his noble men and subjects who even pledged to replace his wives with a hope of him procreating and recovering his major losses. Sàngó insisted and left for exile. Getting to Koso, still on his way to exile, his faithful servants desert him. Sàngó finds this unbearable and he commits suicide by hanging.

Duro Ladipo adopted the story of *Alaafin* Sango recreating the cultural milieu and glories of his reign as *Alaafin* of Oyo. This he wove around the powerful personality of Sàngó, who transmogrified into the god of thunder. *Oba Ko So* and *Kamo* draw their materials; concepts, personalities and universal ideology from these legends. The dramatists however, employ their artistic license in weaving the plots and conflicts around the thunder gods to achieve their purpose. It is important to note that some other dramatic forms such as Brecht's epic theatre or Osofisan's neo-rationalist theatre do employ legends, myths and stories of divinities. However, while Zenchiku Komparu and Duro Ladipo stick faithfully to the original text, Brecht and Osofisan deliberately deconstruct the original text for the purpose of subverting the status quo (Dasylyva 2004).

3.4 Professional Bio Data of Duro Ladipo and Zenchiku Komparu Nigerian *Alarinjo* Dramatist: Duro Ladipo

Duro Ladipo was born on 18th December, 1931, in Oshogbo in current Osun State, Nigeria. The same place is also taken to be his place of birth in an official bulletin published on him during his collaborative work at the University of Ibadan (Ogundeji, 1988:94). It was assumed that Ladipo was a spirit child, an *abiku*, because of the pattern of the deaths of the nine children his mother was bereaved of before his birth and his own mysterious survival. Ladipo's death to an extent confirmed the suspicion that he was an *abiku*; though he had become an adult, his death predated his mother's (Ogundeji, 1988:77, Onibonokuta, 1983:6).

Ladipo's ancestors were professional drummers and his family's ancestral deities were *Sango* and *Oya*. Duro Ladipo's father had become converted under the Anglican Christian mission and had also become a

catechist. Ladipo studied in Otan Ayegbaju and Ila Orangun where he obtained his Government Middle Two Certificates (Ogundeji, 1988:99). He was a member of his school choir and as a student he composed his first play, *Naman the Leper* (Odusanya, 1981:3). He was able to combine keen interest in Christian religious practices with the traditional and indigenous practices of the people outside the vicarage where he grew up (Adedeji and Ekwazi, 1998:87).

Duro Ladipo had numerous mentors amongst whom were Alex Peters, A.J Odunsi, head-teachers of schools under which he served, and Hubert Ogunde whom he greatly revered. Duro Ladipo sojourned in the northern region of Nigeria where he staged an adaptation of Shakespeare's *As You Like it*. Back in Oshogbo, Ladipo taught and ran a restaurant called 'Popular Bar'. This bar drew several people from the entire social strata. Ulli Beier, a German born 'Yoruba acculturated' man was one of his clients. Their friendship, Beier stated, was as a result of Ladipo's stimulating company. This relationship would later influence Ladipo's career tremendously (Ogundele, 2000:60).

The rejection of Duro Ladipo's 'Nigerianized' cantata began the Beier involvement in Ladipo's theatre. He facilitated Ladipo's performance of the same cantata at the Mbari Club, Ibadan, where it recorded a great success. The popularity it gave the young dramatist and the unpopular image it gave Ladipo's church led to his suspension from the leadership roles he had played in the church before the production in the Mbari Club, Ibadan. Ladipo continued writing, such that he produced several historical, religious and mythical plays in his life time.

3.5 Japanese Nōh Dramatist: Komparu Zenchiku

Born in Nara 1333, Kanami Kiyotsugu began his dramatic career writing and acting for Yuuzaki-za, a Yamada temple based *Sarugaku-Nōh* troupe. Kanami continued his career in this troupe which was famed for its comical dance and mime until he became the head (Noma, 1960:19, Cavaye *et al*, 2005:164). Kanami incorporated varieties of elements from traditional performances in his environment such as the *kusemai* dance rhythm and *oomi-sarugaku* graceful dance. Moving from Nara to Kyoto (Noma, 1960:19), Kanami and his son, Zeami, in 1374, performed before the *Shogun* at Imagumano shrine in Kyoto. *Shogun* Yoshimitsu's admiration for Kanami's artistic skill and his attraction to young Zeami encouraged the *Shogunate* to patronise their art' (Brazell, 1998:10).

Zeami, who was twelve years old at the time of the 1374 performance, enjoyed 'both the artistic patronage and long lasting personal friendship with the *Shogun*...' (Cavaye *et al*, 2005:165). Kanami died in 1384 and his son, Zeami, took over as the second head of the *Kanze Nōh*

School. Working with his father through his most productive years and his own formative years was a great advantage for Zeami. He inherited his father's repertoire and more significantly an understanding of the *Nōh* conventions which he developed into the modern *Nōh* (Yerima, 1981:15). Zeami, is said to have received more education than the average impoverished actor thereby attracting the attention of arbiters of court and litterateurs like Nijo Yoshimoto (Brazell, 1998:10).

His compositions and performances were so impressive that they enhanced and increased the poetic and cultural ideals of the time. Although Zeami incorporated several materials and techniques from the poetic tradition into *Nōh*, he also included materials from classic literatures which included historical records of the heroes of Japan. An example is the *Tale of the Heike* from where the story of the play *Atsumori* was taken. Other sources include tales literatures, sacred texts, and religious practices and beliefs (Brazell 1997).

The theories of *Nōh* propounded by Zeami are regarded as treatises on Japanese drama and theatre. *Yugen*, dimensions of beauty, was a major thought in his ideological postulation (Brazell, 1998:10). In his time, Zeami was regarded and is still regarded as a fine actor, director, choreographer, musician, theatre scholar, critic and prolific playwright. He was reputed to be a fine teacher who imparted knowledge and skills to his generation. His treatises are amongst the first in the world to concern themselves with the art and profession of the actor and theatre as a form (Noma, 1996:20).

With the death of his patron, *Shogun* Yoshimitsu, *Nōh*, and Zeami suffered certain setbacks particularly under *Shogun* Yoshimochi. The death of his son, Zenshun, also known as Motomasa was a great loss to Zeami and to *Nōh*. Zenshun had already started establishing himself as an incomparable master of acting and the *Nōh* performance before his sudden death. This, among other things, contributed to Zeami's own death after his return from exile (Yoshimitsu Series, 1960:221).

Komparu Zenchiku, 1405-1468, was the third in succession of the Kanze *Nōh*, leaders. Though he was not a direct descendant of Kannami, he was Zeami's son-in-law (Yerima, 1981:41). Zenchiku, in another account, is described as his nephew and traced to the Kawakatsu decent (Brazell, 1997:44). It is not impossible that Zenchiku was his nephew and had also taken his daughter in marriage. The most important point being made here is that Zenchiku had closely associated with the leaders of the Kanze School and had first hand training and participation in the *Nōh* productions. It was he who became the artistic director of the troupe and heir to Zeami's teachings.

3.6 Zenchiku's *Kamo* and Ladipo's *Oba Ko So*: an Analogy

Duro Ladipo's *Oba Ko So* is woven around the historical figure of *Alaafin* Sàngó. The life of the mysterious King is portrayed along with the lives of his subjects. Sàngó's reign is marked with plots and counter-plots which eventually produce a rebellion against the king. In his anger, he destroys his people and commits suicide on his way to exile. His subjects hear his voice, amidst thunder and lightning, instructing them to worship him while still mourning his death and he is deified and worshiped. Zenchiku's *Kamo* is an enactment of the life of Wake-Ikazuchi, the significance of the thunder god and the mysterious circumstances that led to his birth and deification.

While *Alaafin* Sàngó states that he came from Igbeti and founded Oyo town (Ladipo, 1972:9), we are told by Gbòónkàà that Sàngó's birth place and his mother's land is in the land of the Nupes (1972:127), the god of Kamo is born of a woman of the Hata clan who dwelt in the hamlet of Kamo (Brazell, 1998:44). She was a devout worshipper at the shrine who drew water daily at the riverside to dedicate to the god in worship.

A white feathered arrow drifts down the stream and lodges itself in her pail on one of such days. She takes this home and sticks it in the eaves of her hut shortly after which she becomes mysteriously pregnant and bears a son (1998:51). Something even more mysterious takes place when the boy becomes three years old. People gather to ask him who his father is, he points at the arrow and there is a great thunderstorm. Thunder and lightning rise into the heavens and the boy becomes a deity, his mother a goddess, and the three become enshrined in the three Kamo shrines that remain in Kyoto till today. The history of Sàngó's birth is not included in Ladipo's *Oba Ko So*, though religious accounts among the Yoruba suggest that he was an offspring of Aganju, the god of fire, and Obatala, who had changed himself temporarily into a woman to find favour with Aganju.

A major dramatic element employed in the plays is the character portraiture of the thunder gods who are archetypically gods and deities that promote fertility. Thunder and lightning occur before, during and after rainfall. The worship of Sàngó and Ikazuchi share peculiarities which are portrayed in the worship of the thunder gods in *Kamo* and *Oba Ko So*. The rituals performed in *Kamo* shrines celebrate fertility, peace, the ruling class and the deities that reside in the shrine. The arrow in the bucket is a symbolic of the power of the *Shogunate* that patronised the *Nōh* plays. While the worshippers trust the principal deities for the fruitfulness that comes with the thunder storms (Brazell, 1998:44).

In the Yoruba religion, worship and folklore, Sàngó is perhaps the most popular Orisha. He is also known as the father of the sky father and god of lightning and thunder. Apart from his royal lineage, Sàngó is

worshipped in most parts of the world where Yoruba people live including countries like Cuba, Caribbean, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. He is also a major character in the divination literature of the Lukumi Religion. Sàngó hurls bolts of lightning at people he chooses to be his followers, leaving behind imprints of stone axe blade on the crust of the earth: phenomena that can be easily seen after heavy rains. According to the Yoruba belief, the worship of Sàngó enhances power and self-control. Duro Ladipo draws upon these values to create his Sàngó, the husband of many wives, the most senior being Oya who is known as the queen of the whirlwind and a goddess that is classified among the 'hot' *orisha* in Yoruba religion and worship. Ladipo's lead female character is Oya who counsels Sàngó on how to run the state affairs when things go awry.

Sàngó's personality is depicted in the appellations and the praise songs rendered by his wives and Eunuch in the play *Oba Ko So*:

Eunuch: Who has power over the obstinate!

Trouble over the heads of the disobedient!

Wives: Lord of life and being!

Eunuch: Giant sacrifice too much for the vulture to carry!

Wives: Commander second to the Gods!

Eunuch: ... Leopard's gaze, which frightens the hunter... (Ladipo, 1972:3)

His wives further describe him as a 'comely person, clear-eyed, with eyes like bitter kola, with ruddy, puffed out cheeks' (1972:3). To them, he is a masquerade personified, one who emits fire from the mouth. Cats are assumed to have supernatural powers, yet Sàngó, their lord, frightens the cat. Sàngó emits fire from the mouth as seen in his first entrance on stage. He is elegant and leisurely in his mien. He is a man who has the wherewithal to handle immodest and unruly citizens, particularly the rebellious ones.

Ikazuchi in *Kamo* is celebrated and he is not portrayed in any way as Sàngó is in *Oba Ko So*. Ikazuchi's personality reinforces the beliefs of his people about his abilities and his significance to their religious idiosyncrasies. He is colourfully costumed with gold flashing from his garments and mask. He rushes in with a purification wand, just like Sàngó's *ose*, on his left hand and introduces himself:

Shite: Here I am-
guardian of the capital,

protector of the way of the Lord and Subject

Wake-Ikazuchi, the thunder God (Brazell, 1998:58).

The chorus sing of his ability to exist in two worlds simultaneously:

Chorus: I become a heavenly being soaring through the skies

Shite: or take on earthly shape to save sentient beings (Brazell, 1998:58).

Ikazuchi and the chorus recall that in the rainy and windy seasons (autumn) thunder splits clouds and mists, sending bolts of lightning to rest on dewy seedlings. This culminates in the ripening of grains in a sacred land where peace reigns. The virtues of this god reveal his majesty (Brazell 1998:59-60). The thunder god's costume is flashy and the quick movement of the god on stage represents storms (Brazell 1998). His purification wand flashes like lightning as he dances, he is portrayed as a satiated and successfully deified personality who performs his supernatural tasks with relish.

Oba Ko So has a much more complicated plot because it is not a re-enactment of the virtues or worship of the deity alone but an account of *Alaafin Sàngó's* reign and transmogrification. The incessant campaigns of *Gbòónkàà* and *Tìmì*, Sàngó's war lords, begin to take their toll on the people of Oyo who appeal passionately to their king:

Townspole: Your Majesty!

How pleasant Oyo would be ... if wars, if plots,
if internecine struggles cease. Wars have claimed our
children, those who have house cannot live there. Those
who have money cannot spend it.

And *Gbòónkàà*...and *Tìmì* do not stop waging wars
(Ladipo, 1972:19).

The two war-mongering generals who have 'plundered sixty-two towns' (1972:19) defy the plea of the people and that of the king. They consider *Alaafin Sàngó's* reign a good one because they have acquired for the kingdom: slaves, clothes and beautiful women as spoils of war. Their actions and indifference prove to the town's people that Sàngó can no longer control their thirst for battle. Sàngó invites them to a closed door meeting where the generals continue to cry for war:

Gbòónkàà and *Tìmì*: We are ready for war, we want to go to battle!

Authorise it, we ask you to authorize it!

Sàngó:

Never!

Oh! Please!

Do not go to war!

Gbòónkàà and *Tìmì*: If we cannot fight, Oyo will be depopulated! (27)

Sàngó begs them earnestly but they threaten to rebel against him and finally leave in protest. After the fruitless deliberation, Sàngó,

who has fallen into disfavour with his council of chiefs, seeks counsel from Oya, his wife. She advises him to send Tìmì to Ede as the Town's gatekeeper; the hope is that the famous Ijesa warriors will kill him. Tìmì goes to Ede as instructed, he engages supernatural powers and through incantations he takes charge of the city, and he is crowned king. The stage instructions indicate his victory; 'Ede townspeople clothe Tìmì in royal robes, cap and beads; the royal horsetail is given to him.' The people of Ede also declare, '...all future kings of Ede, Tìmì is what we shall call them'(47).

The news of this development reaches Sàngó. He decides to send Gbòónkáà to kill Tìmì since his plans have been foiled. Gbòónkáà is able to make Tìmì fall asleep by chanting incantations; he captures him alive and presents him to Sàngó who is still dissatisfied and asks for a rematch that would guarantee the death of one or both of them. Gbòónkáà, suspicious of the developments, visits the witches' enclave and is empowered by the great women. In the second match which holds before Sàngó and the people of Oyo, he succeeds in making Tìmì fall asleep again and he cuts off his head to the dismay of all. Now certain of *Alaafin* Sàngó's conspiracy and plan to eliminate him too, he challenges him, daring him to throw him- Gbòónkáà- into a furnace of fire.

Gbòónkáà: You are now in my power! ...

I didn't know you arranged the first fight in order to kill me.
My first was at Ede and I won. I fought a second time and then
I conquered Sàngó (119).

The people of Oyo and Sàngó are infuriated at the brazen-faced Gbòónkáà. They carry out his wish by bundling him off into the fire with the intention of disgracing the one who has dared to confront the king. Gbòónkáà mysteriously comes out unhurt and further confronts Alaafin Sàngó. He gives him a five-day ultimatum after which he is to go on exile to his mother's town in the land of the Nupes (127). A turn in the story is that the townspeople who have accused Gbòónkáà of war-mongering and rebellion, and who prodded Sàngó to curb his excesses desert him for Gbòónkáà, the new champion. The leader of the Oyo people raises a song that justifies their loyalty to Gbòónkáà. This act of betrayal further humiliates and angers Sàngó who asks if their proverbial renditions are directed at him. The entire people of Oyo become 'brazen-faced' and affirm this. Sàngó, in a fit of anger, strikes the people dead. The situation becomes even more tragic; he laments:

Sàngó: Save me, o my head ! Oh my head, save me!...

Ah, I have killed my wives!

I have killed my chiefs!

If the bata drum is made to sound too high it is sure to tear in the end...

My end is getting near, I, Sàngó! Ah! (131)

Sàngó decides to leave for Nupe land in the company of his faithful wife, Oya. Mid-way, the queen resolves to move to Ira, her birth place rather than go with him. Sàngó considers this the last straw, and makes up his mind to commit suicide rather than proceed on the miserable journey to Nupe land.

In his words, the experience is:

Terrible!
A man dies only once
A man never dies twice...
Ah! I will hang myself.

Oya dissuades him to no avail; Sàngó finally hangs on an *ayan* tree at Koso. The *Mongba*, title holders and friends of Sàngó make swift arrangement for the burial of the *Alaafin* and refute the manner of his death. The *Mongba* advise the people, 'Let us meditate, so that we may refute Sàngó. If we cannot refute Sàngó it will be a great shame for all in this land'.(139) The *Mongba* sing Sàngó's praises and eulogise him with diverse appellations. Thunder, lightning and earthquakes commence shortly after their recitals and Sàngó's voice is heard:

As I did for the king of Ara and made him prosper
As I did for the king of Ijero and made him wealthy;
As I did for the Orangun of Ila, that his town was peaceful.
It is I Sàngó, who am speaking. (Thunder) Citizens of Oyo
and Natives of the land of the Yoruba
worship me from today Oh! I shall help you...I shall help
you (141).

The development of Ladipo and Zenchiku's plot structures unravel the manner and way in which Sàngó and Ikazuchi attain the status of deities in their respective kingdoms. Both personalities share historical, religious, political and cultural affinities and relevance even in contemporary times.

3.7 The Music of the Operas

A striking commonality in *Oba Ko So* and *Kamo* is in the rendering of lines by the chorus. In *Kamo* a chorus of about ten members with musical instruments (a flute, two hand drums) begin the play with *Shin no shidai* entrance music. The Music is played by the two hand drummers

with flute embellishments; the quickened pace of the music brings in the *waki* and the *wakizure* who are dressed as Shinto Priests. The priests get on stage and begin to sing about their trip to the Kamo Shrine.

In *Oba Ko So* drums roll as Sàngó's youngest wife comes in with his mortar-stool. The drums are *bata*, *dundun*, *aro*, *kerikeri* and *sekere*. The Eunuch is the royal praise singer and court entertainer; he enters to start the eulogy of the day. He leads and the younger wives of Sàngó who also double as the *akunyangba* chorus (Aguoru, 2011:113) dance to the *bata* drums that herald the entrance of Sàngó and his most senior wife, Oya. The chorus liken their gyrations to the movement of the worm, 'The worm makes his dance a thing of joy' (Ladipo, 1972:7).

The drumming and the dancing continue as the lines are rendered in recitatives or songs. In both plays light drumming punctuates all events. For instance, Sàngó's first line: '(Light drumming) I thank God...' In *Kamo* there is the chorus rendition of *Jitori* 'Chorus (in a-lower pitched murmur) clear and pure the spring we seek travelling to the shrine of *Kamo*' (Brazell,1998:47). *Kamo* also features *Ageuta*, a travel song rendered in the dynamic mode, along with the rhythm of the drum accompaniment (48).

There are also instrumental interludes (*uchi kiri*) *Tsukizerifu*-spoken without instrumental music *shin no issei* entrance music where two hand drummers take turns playing space beats preceded by long drawn out calls. This is embellished and enhanced by the flute and what is produced is a stately entrance music that calls forth the main actors (Brazell,1997:49). There is a similar instance in *Oba Ko So* where Gbòónkáà, accompanied by the Eunuch, goes to capture Timì, 'As Gbòónkáà recites the incantations, the Eunuch blows the *tòròmogbè* flute, using it to repeat Gbòónkáà's phrases' (Ladipo, 1972: 71).

There are also two similar performances of recitatives by the Shinto Priests; the *shite* and the *tsure* face each other and sing in the dynamic mode in the non-congruent (*hyoshi awazu*) rhythm to quiet drum accompaniment known as *issei*...(Brazell,1998::49). While the incantations rendered by Gbòónkáà have magical supernatural powers intended to invoke spirits. For instance, his first recital paralyses Timì and the people of Ede and overcome their resistance to his attack whereas the recitatives and chants of the chorus and the *shite* in *Kamo* have no such potent powers (Ladipo, 1972:71&73). In *Oba Ko So* the chant is also employed in invoking spirits as the case is in Timì's visit to the witches' enclave in Act II. In this scene, an invocation incantation is rendered by Gbòónkáà and the Senior witch's response to his request is interspersed with witch cries and responses to the Senior witch's incantations:

In ancient times! Yes!

Ayé átijo! Héén!

I say you should take two kola nuts! Yes!

'Mi Kọọ móbì me'jì , Héén !

This scene is ended with witch cries and drums (Ladipo, 1972:102 & 103).

A feature that is not common to *Kamo* but dominant in *Oba Ko So* is the use of songs for affirmation of personalities of individuals. This is clear in the praise singing rendered for Sàngó for example:

Only whom a devil strikes,

Only whom Esu tricks

Could attack Esu

Could attack Sàngó!

Whom Sàngó will kill! (Ladipo, 1972:5)

Another instance is the song of joy rendered at Tìmi's enthronement:

(The drum starts the song)

Drum: I have got something sweet

Townspeople: The ribbon fish!

I have something sweet: the ribbon fish!

We are told of Ikazuchi's power and influence but none of the songs affirm his personality.

A variation is the song of war that is popular amongst the Yoruba warriors.

Gbòónkàà: Gidigbo, Gidigbo(Hip! Hip! Hip!)

Gbòónkàà: Today's battle.

Townspeople: A terrible battle.

Tìmi Àgbàlé with arrows of fire! ...shoot your arrows at
Gbòónkàà ... Today's
battle; A terrible battle (Ladipo, 1972:75).

Another musical form in *Oba Ko So* is a protest song against Sàngó after Gbòónkàà challenges him:

Townspeople: What an insult ... that such a person as this should disgrace one!

Leader: There is no more to be said! Whoever steals must go to prison! (Ladipo, 1972:127) Worthy of note is the fact that these musical forms are primarily poetic and in both national theatres perform specific roles, they are therefore celebrated elements in both literary histories; the *ewi*, *offo* and *ijala* are poetic elements employed in *Oba Ko So*.

3.8 Movement and Action

A conceptual distinction is evident in the movement and action in *Nōh* and in *Alarinjo*. While action and stage business that are particularly slow and stylized with deliberate delivery of lines are employed in *Nōh*, a faster tempo is used in *Alarinjo*. The difference is evident in the sage instructions in the texts:

- *tenno no mai*, the mother goddess dances a graceful, medium-tempo dance in the three parts to the accompaniment of the three drums and the flute playing repetitive pattern. During the dance which lasts five minutes, she reopens her fan (Brazell, 1998:57).
- Timì is over-excited. He dances vigorously, thus driving away the townspeople (Ladipo, 1972:93).

3.9 Casting

The members of the cast of *Kamo* are few which is in direct contrast to the cast in *Oba Ko So*. In *Kamo* some members of the cast play double roles; for instance, the *Shite* in Act I also plays the Thunder god in Act II, *Tsure* plays the young woman in Act I, and Mother goddess in Act II, other members of cast include: *Waki*, *Shinto* priest, *Wakisure*, three other priests and the *Aikogen*, a deity of a subsidiary shrine at Kamo, acts the *Kyogen*. The chorus and musicians are in the background and do not directly participate in the performance like the chorus in *Oba Ko So*.

In *Oba Ko So*, *Alaafin* Sàngó and Sàngó, the thunder god, is the same character. In the plot of the play, Ladipo does not present Sàngó, the thunder god, on stage but allows his voice to be heard unlike Ikazuchi who comes on stage in *Kamo*. Other members of the cast include Oya, the most senior of *Alaafin* Sàngó's wives, his warlords, Timì and Gbòónkàà, other wives of the king (who also form a part of the chorus that actively participate in the court entertainment), the Eunuch, the *Mongba*, the witches, the drummers, the people of Oyo, and the people of Ede.

3.10 Thematic Contrast in the Operas

Techniques associated with *Nōh* plays are linked with the philosophical and metaphysical content of Shinto and Buddhist worship. *Nōh* performance transcends entertainment or display of pure aesthetics. Embedded in the themes are religious values that the Japanese strongly identify with. A major theme in *Nōh* is that man ought not to be attached to the world because of the illusions the world offers. This is the reason for the minimal activities on stage which foreground other ideologies especially that which reconciles the audience with other harsh realities of life such as life and death, good and evil and other such thematic contrasts. *Nōh* is therefore simultaneously a performance and an act of worship.

The *Alarinjo* opera makes use of a combination of thematic contrasts that is rooted in diverse religious and socio-cultural values of the Yoruba peoples. For instance, *Oba Ko So* is a re-enactment of the life, the reign and the transmogrification of *Alaafin* Sàngó into Sàngó the thunder god. The dance, instruments, costumes and props used are of the Sàngó worshippers. (Ladipo specifically refers to the use of these elements in his production notes) The play therefore can be regarded as the celebration of the thunder god as well as a performance of the tragic reign of *Alaafin* Sàngó and his people. The movement of the members of the cast of the *Alarinjo* is more vigorous than that of the *Nōh* players. This is also symbolic of the people's mode of worship.

Worthy of note are the similarities and the differences in the portrayal of the thunder gods; *Ikazuchi* was transformed as a three-year-old boy while Sàngó was transformed as a fully grown man. The curiosity of the people in *Kamo* leads to the dramatic translation; therefore there was no tragic occurrence like death, unlike in *Oba Ko So* where series of deaths take place: death of *Timì*, the warlord and king of Ede, deaths of Sàngó's chiefs, wives and townspeople and, finally, the suicide committed by Sàngó.

4 Conclusion

This analysis is an introduction to extensive studies carried out in a comparatistic inquiry of Nigerian and Japanese operatic theatres. The commonalities and dissimilarities in the theatrical elements such as: forms, themes, playwriting techniques, affinities, trends in text and performance, theatre criticism and theatre management, establish the fact that there are comparative elements that serve as parameters for transnational comparativism. Findings reveal that irrespective of the distinct cultural identities, the universal function of art is realised in the recreation of events, which ennobles, enlightens and entertains peoples.

There are indications from this comparative analogy based on field work, audience participation, examination of critical literature and textual analysis that carrying out transnational studies exposes one to the cultures and identities of other nations. This is of great significance because as scholars and students of world literatures our literary experiences and exposure must necessarily transcend the confines of the writings of our European colonisers, our Black American relatives in diaspora and our African literary tradition.

This study recreates, in several ways, a renewed sense of value on the import of neglecting our theatrical heritage which should be a great resource and influence in the humanities and in the cultural rebirth of the nation. It is hoped that this study will spur further research and efforts in the appreciation, documentation and rebirth of national theatrical forms like the defunct *Alarinjo* theatre in Nigeria. From the Japanese example, it is evident that the arts enjoyed and still enjoy patronage from the nation and the nationals. A strategic repositioning is required to promote the arts in a bid to promote 'a national identity' that will produce desirable results in Nigeria.

Findings from this study have also thrown up vistas about the functionality of theatre as a tool for reinforcing national values. This, for instance, is exemplified by the decision of Alaafin Sàngó to quit the leadership of Oyo on the basis of his blunders. The portrayal of such legendary national characters will reinforce our depreciating value system and strategically position the arts, particularly drama and theatre as forces of social mobilization and enlightenment.

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