

THE ALÁRÍNJÓ THEATRE:

(The study of a Yoruba theatrical art from its earliest beginnings to the present-times).

by

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P R E F A C E

This is the first systematic study ever to be made of the origin and development of a theatrical art that is indigenous to African culture. The Alárinjé Theatre is the product of the civilization of the Yoruba peoples of Western Nigeria.

My interest in the Alárinjé Theatre was first aroused when first as a student of the drama in Great Britain and later in the United States of America, I became absorbed in the study of the theatrical art of the Italian Commedia dell' Arte. I recalled the occasions when the Alárinjé troupes visited our town and lodged in our compound. My grandfather was the Bábánisàngó and my granduncle was the Alágbàá. I remember particularly the live-long day performances of the troupes of Olúfálé Àjàngílá from Ìrágberí, the late Ìsòlá Àró from Ìrèè and Àlàbí of Ìbòkun when they came, each on their yearly rounds. The impression they made on me was profound. It is, therefore, my greatest pleasure and privilege to have the opportunity that has enabled me to make this study.

This thesis attempts to provide a general conspectus of the art of the Alárinjé Theatre from its earliest beginnings to the present times. For convenience, the work is divided into six parts: Part One establishes the background of the study. It emphasizes the central importance of the Òbà clan to the development

of art and masquerading, and the emergence of the theatre from ancestor-worship. Part Two is devoted to the origin of the theatre from the egúngún as ancestor-worship tracing this through three developmental phases. In Part Three the growth of the theatre is examined as a social institution; first as a court entertainment and then as a people's theatre. Certain factors affecting the professional aspects of the theatre are also discussed. In Part Four the art and practice of the theatre are described within the framework of Yoruba aesthetics. Part Five is an outline of the background of the artistes who contributed to the professional growth of the theatre and Part Six examines the extent to which the style and form of the theatre relate to and are affected by modern developments in Nigeria.

In order to realise both the historical and analytical objectives of the study the methodology adopted is as follows: The historical reconstruction from Oral Tradition is based on concept formation and content analysis for the purpose of interpretation. Some questions are asked, some points of reference are made and a system of concepts is formed. Some generalizations are, however, ineluctable.

The analytical approach is reinforced by a system of interview based on the 'discussion approach' rather than the use of the 'questionnaire'. Two categories of informants are used: professional

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

artistes talk about their own background, describe their work and refer to other artistes they know or have heard about. The other informants who are non-professionals discuss their personal knowledge of the activities of the egúngún and the operations of the troupes. The process of analysis includes direct observation of live performances and photographs of previous ones. Recordings of chants and songs made on tapes are also analysed. Personal experience and intimacy with the subject of study are, however, an asset. (See Appendix 9 for research plan).

It is not the express purpose of this study to prove Gustave Cohen's postulate on the theatrogenic nature of religion and religious practices, albeit the study examines how the Yoruba egúngún as ancestor-worship, and by its own nature, originated and developed the Alárinjé Theatre. The significant aim, however, is to use this work as an attempt to draw attention to the importance of a hitherto neglected field of study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This presentation is the climax of an opportunity which I received in 1959 to study Speech and Drama in Great Britain and the United States of America. My first especial gratitude is due therefore to the Federal Government of Nigeria for the scholarship award, the first of its kind, which made this possible; and to Professor G.J. Axworthy, now Principal of The Central School of Speech and Drama, London, for paving the way for my studies abroad and for sharing his great store of knowledge with me in this study as a co-supervisor.

I wish to express my deep sense of obligation to Professor J.F.A. Ajayi, Head of the Department of History, University of Ibadan, for his great interest in the study and, particularly, for his inspiration and painstaking supervision of the finished work.

For field-work, I owe a lot of thanks to the following people, especially: Alàgbà Agboṣá Adéniji of Kájòlá Street, Iwo, formerly of the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ife, for his deep interest in the study and, in a very important way, for his valuable assistance in undertaking certain enquiries on my behalf on the Oral Tradition aspects of the study; to Ògbéni Adébáyò Fálétí and Ògbéni Wándé Abimbólá, who severally accompanied me to Oyo and who, in many ways, deepened my knowledge of Yoruba Oral Literature; Ògbéni Ségún Adégbìjì who introduced me to his people and the troupes at

Ìmálà; Ògbéni Alan Aróyèwún and Kólá Oládípúpò who introduced me to operations in Abeokuta and Igbomina areas respectively; Ògbéni Àdísá Balógun, N.B.C., Ibadan who provided me with materials on the activities of the troupes in Òtta; Chief J.A. Ayòrindé who enlightened me on Ibadan history and the operations of the troupes in Ibadan and area; Ògbéni O. Olajubu and J.R.O. Ojo, both of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ife for their collateral interests and to Ògbéni Wálé Ògúnýemí and S.A. Babáyemí, both of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan for providing me with some relevant manuscripts.

I cannot but mention my indebtedness especially to the following professional troupe-leaders: Òjélékè Aiyélabóla; Òduólá Àjàngílá; Fóyèké Àyòkà Àjàngílá (for honouring me with a beautiful rendition of my 'oríkì' - Elése Mòkò); Qyádojà Olúfálé; Òjéyemí Akéréburú and many others mentioned in the study including Chief Saláwù Adélekè, the Alápinni of Oyo.

My thanks are also due to Chief Ulli Beier, formerly of Oshogbo and now of the University of Papua, New Guinea, in very many ways; to Mr. Frank Speed for providing me with photographs; to Miss Peggy Harper for her collateral interest; and to the White Photographers, Crosby Photo Centre and the University Photocopy Section for the photographs used in the study.

This study describes the art and development of the Aláriná Theatre from its earliest beginnings to the present time. I also wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my friend Ayòḍejì Oní of 13, Granville Road, London N.4, England, who provided me with the 'haven of rest' that I used for writing the first draft; to Professor Fred Litto of the International Theatre Studies Centre, University of Kansas, Lawrence, U.S.A. for his kindness during my stay there; to Dr. Remí Adéléyé, Department of History, University of Ibadan, for reading through my second draft and offering very useful suggestions and to Mr. Raymond Odor of the School of Drama, for his fine work as a typist.

I hereby also acknowledge with thanks the assistance of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan for supporting the research with a grant of £100 when I started field-work in 1965.

Finally, a more personal word of gratitude is due to my father, Adédeji Adisa Arówóṣaiyé, for his never failing interest in my progress and to my darling wife, Lárín, whose sympathy and cheer sustained me during the arduous years of study and research.

J.A. Adedeji.

A B S T R A C T

This study describes the art and development of the Alárinjò Theatre from its earliest beginnings to the present times.

The origin and development of the theatre are traced to the descendants of the Ọ̀bà, believed to be the autochthones of Yorubaland and worshippers of Ọ̀bàtálá, the Yoruba supreme divinity. By giving material existence to Ọ̀bàtálá, they displayed an instinct for impersonation and ritualistic expression which leads to developmental drama. As a natural reaction to the deprivation which they suffered at the hands of their enemies (a party of immigrants), they had recourse to stratagems by which invariably, they developed the means of drama; namely, religion, art and disguise. /certain

The 'masquerade' was first used by the Ìgbó followers of Ọ̀bàtálá to terrorise and plunder the Ife city-state out of which they had been driven by a party of immigrants believed to have been led by Oduduwà. At a later period, the Nupe (supposedly under the influence of the descendants of the Ọ̀bà who had sojourned in that country after the dispersal from Ife) used the 'masquerade' to prevail upon the Yoruba of Oyo. The Yoruba who at that time worshipped the 'masquerade' as ancestral spirit had believed that the Nupe soldier-masquerades were ancestors who had re-appeared on the side of their enemy. They therefore abandoned the Oyo city-state and went into exile.

In a rapprochement that followed during the reign of Ofinran (c. 1544), it became clear that the descendants of Ọ̀bà who had returned to the fold from the Nupe country, had knowledge of the secret of the 'masquerade'. The Egúngún Society was formed as a conjoint association of two clans - the Ọ̀bà (Yoruba indigenes) and the Ìgbórí (Tapa extraction). With this association, both the worship of the ancestor as egúngún (masquerade) and the use of the egúngún for social action were brought together under a hierarchy.

The theatre emerged from three developmental phases - ritual, festival and theatre. The process shows the treatment and use of the egúngún for both ritual and secular occasions. It was Ológbin Ológbòjò, a descendant of the Ọ̀bà, who adopted the 'masquerade' for the purpose of furthering his duty as retainer and head of court-entertainers. With these court-masques, therefore, the third and final phase in the development of the theatre from religious dramatic roots was reached. By about the second half of the sixteenth century, the theatre had been born.

The theatre flourished extensively during the eighteenth century but mostly within Court circles and participated in the annual egúngún festivals. With Èsà Ọ̀gbín (who adopted the title 'Ológbòjò' for his professional role) leading a band of costumed-players, the theatre extended its operations outside of the Court and throughout the Oyo empire. Other professional masque-dramatists followed in his footsteps.

The fall of the empire during the early part of the nineteenth century did not adversely affect the fortunes of the theatre; on the contrary, it contributed to its artistic development and professional growth. The troupes travelled far beyond the Oyo areas and into the new Ibadan sphere of influence where they became popularly known as the 'Alárinjò'. Towards the end of the century and thenceforward, however, the corroding influence of Islam and Christianity on the structure of the Yoruba society questioned the continued existence of the theatre.

The form and style of the theatre arise from the generalised concept of Yoruba art, namely, that the artist proceeds by induction rather than by deduction. Although the artist, normally, operates within a transcendental frame of mind that inspires him to accomplish his objective, the results of his work seem superficial to the casual observer. The substance of what the masque-dramaturg wishes to communicate or share with his audience is revealed in the material of his creation which also underlines his main pre-occupations, namely, religion and human situations. Thus, in the theatrical 'repertoire', there are two types of masques - the spectacles and the revues. While the former are designed to meet religious objectives, the latter are sketched out as comments on happenings in the society. Although the spectacles are serious drama in intent, yet they are sometimes given satirical turns; but the

revues are always comical. It is bound to fade out of existence.

The root-elements of the theatre are the mask, the chant, and the dance; but a performance is the sum total of all of these and the unified product of gesture and costume. The theatre has specific obligations to the audience with whom it communicates. Its functions over and above divertissement include education and edification. But the art of the theatre can be better appreciated only within the framework of Yoruba aesthetics and the sensibilities of the people.

During the height of its influence, the theatre provided gainful employment for many people outside the original lineage that first developed the art. As time went on, however, it could not escape being affected by the forces of change which had been at work in the Yoruba society from about the middle of the nineteenth century.

With the introductions into the Yoruba society of other forms of entertainment based on European models towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Alárinjé Theatre faced a gloomy prospect. Traces of its influence have been found in the 'new theatres'. While it yet thrives by appealing to the taste of the uneducated masses, its means have failed to attract the rising generation of western-educated and acculturated people who patronise the 'new theatres'. With the increasing popularity of the 'new theatres'

therefore, the Alárinjé Theatre is bound to fade out of existence.

✓ It will, however, leave behind its own undying influence on the new forms.

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Introductory

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CHAPTER ONE

I. Definition of Terms:-

In this study certain working definitions have been used which are basic to it. Nicoll¹ has remarked on the confusion too often made in the familiar use of the terms 'theatre' and 'drama':

Again and again we hear these terms employed as though they were identical. ... 'theatre' and 'drama' are by no means the same ... even if they stand in a relationship to each other, they do not have their own boundaries. The 'theatre' extends considerably beyond the frontiers of the 'drama'.²

Introductory Notes

Theatre is a form of drama that involves a dramatic play or a 'dramatization' (being acted-out),³ by a group of persons who are called performers or actors, on a created area or space (that may be called the acting-area or stage), before an assembly of spectators (that may be called the audience). Nicoll goes on to explain that "a very considerable area of theatrical endeavour has absolutely

Allardyce Nicoll, The Theatre and Dramatic Theory, Harv., London, 1965, pp. 11-12.

1. For wider explorations on the separate distinctions between 'drama' and 'theatre', Nicoll, pp. 219-220, 22-31-35 are useful.

2. Drama is not primarily a literary art. Its essence is not words but action. (See John Halsey, Open Indecent, The Beacon Press, Boston, 1950, pp. 13-27).

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CHAPTER ONE

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Theatre implies a performance that involves a dramatic play or a 'dromenon' (something acted out),³ by a group of persons who are called performers or actors, on a created area or space (that may be called the acting-area or stage), before an assembly of spectators (that may be called the audience). Nicoll goes on to explain that "a very considerable area of theatrical endeavour has absolutely

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nothing to do with dramatic literature".⁴ Theatre includes among other things, the pantomime or mime,⁵ the opera,⁶ the ballet,⁷

The elemental roots of drama are embedded in sacred ritual. The accessories are the dance, the chant and the mask.

These are the manifestations of all theatrical developments

- 4. ibid., pp. 11-12.
- 5. The 'pantomime' which originated from the Roman word 'pantomimus' has acquired various theatrical styles. In Imperial Rome, it was a performance by an actor, who by means of 'mask and gesture', illustrated a narrative sung by the chorus. During the eighteenth century, the pantomime acquired a different proportion especially in the British Empire when the traditional Christmas entertainments came to be so labelled. The term is now sometimes used to describe, variously, what is seen in acting or dancing when words are not employed to convey the plot or idea. Modern exponents of the pantomime describe it as the art of 'mime' although this is originally another form of theatrical performance of classical origin. (See: The Oxford Companion to the Theatre, Ed. by Phyllis Hartnoll, 2nd edition, O.U.P. pp. 598-601).
- 6. The 'opera' is a theatrical art which originated during the Italian Renaissance, in an attempt to revive the musical rendition of classical drama. The French Revolution gave a startling impulse to the opera which had become an 'opera-ballet' at the instance of the Académie Royale des Opéras inaugurated in 1671. Opera in the second half of the nineteenth century was dominated by the powerful personality of Richard Wagner who set the basis of its modern form. (ibid. pp. 485-591).
- 7. The 'ballet' is a theatrical performance involving "a dramatic spectacle in which the action is presented in dancing and in mime to the accompaniment of music". It was originated in France in the seventeenth century as a court entertainment. Its impetus as a special dramatic form independent of the opera was given by King Louis XIV who was personally interested and took part in the dances. The ballet has magnificently flowered in Russia where it started as an entertainment in the Imperial Court. (See: ibid. pp. 47-54).

the *commedia dell'arte*⁸ and the masque.⁹

The elemental roots of drama are embedded in sacred ritual. The accessories are the dance, the chant and the mask.

These are the manifestations of all theatrical developments all over the world at the early stage.¹⁰ While in the case of some stagnant cultures the drama has not gone beyond these basic essentials, in Western drama such elements became greatly refined. "What began as spontaneity became formalised, what welled up from the subconscious became rationalized, what had

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8. The '*commedia dell'arte*' was another Italian development during the Renaissance. It was in fact, the major theatrical experiment of the age. As professional actors, the players travelled with their repertoire of scenarios or sketches of plots which were then improvised upon during performance. They used masked characters each of whom had a recognised individuality. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the '*commedia*', in a way, became the popular theatre of Europe. (See: *ibid.* pp. 398-403).
9. The '*masque*' or '*mask*' is an entertainment which was derived from ancient ritual - religious rites and folk-ceremonies. In England, it began as a Folk-play or the "Mummers' Play" and then later during the sixteenth century, it became an elaborate Court entertainment. At the hands of Ben Jonson it became a literary art and lost most of its social force. The '*masque*' has held an important place in the history of the theatre, mainly because of its influence on ballet, opera and pantomime and partly because of its contribution to playwriting. (See: *ibid.* pp. 518-519).
10. John S. Bowman, "Dance, Chant and Mask in the plays of Wycherley" *Drama Survey*, Fall, 1963, p. 181.

'Masque' has been used in this study to denote the art of been a social rite became an individual's art,"¹¹ even though the accessories in one form or another have always remained at the core.

The most important elemental accessory found in the Alárinjó Theatre is the 'mask'.¹² Originally, it was sacred and ritually bound up with ancestor worship. But later its essence changed in the hands of artists. The 'mask' became a disguise technique and a device for dramatic expression. Thus the 'mask' can be used for ritual and theatrical purposes in the Yoruba society. The 'ritual mask' belongs to a group or a lineage, and the 'character' is a representation of the family or lineage ancestor. It may be a carved wooden face-mask or a cloth face-mask with two holes or a network through which the wearer of the 'mask' can see. The 'theatrical mask' on the other hand, is consistently used as a form of disguising to dramatize a story or a poetic metaphor. The 'dramatis personae' are established and identified through their stock characterization.

11. ibid., p. 182.

12. In the early forms of drama, in most cultures, the mask was universally used not only as a device to disguise the face but also as an aid to the wearer in assuming the identity of the character he is impersonating. (See: Mowry Roberts, On Stage, Harper and Row, New York, 1962, p. 12).

'Masque' has been used in this study to denote the art of performance of the 'Alárinjó' during which a 'theatrical mask' is worn by the 'dramatis personae'. The Yoruba Masque, like the traditional English 'masque', is a form of Mummery which developed into a Court diversion for special occasions and later became the people's theatre in the hands of professional actors.

According to Bowman,¹³ the 'mask' is mere 'dramaturgy' only when it is thrust into a play, but when it is used consistently as a dramatic convention to express something "beyond the representation of the matter," and a great deal of the meaning is conveyed in this way, then the 'mask' becomes a rhetorical device. By the 'rhetoric of dramaturgy' is meant the employment by the dramatist of conventional expressive devices to project the ideas of a dramatic play by visual and aural means.¹⁴ The 'rhetoric of dramaturgy' brings the elements of dance, chant and masking into a unity which provides a tangible dimension for the meaning of the dramatic play of the 'Alárinjó'. In this study, therefore, the artistic leader who employs the 'rhetoric of dramaturgy' as an expressive device in the 'masques' to create a unit of theatrical

(the masque that performs plays).

13. Bowman, op. cit., p. 182.

14. ibid.

16. See part II, Chapter 3 for the origin of Alárinjó and sources of the Alárinjó.

performance, is called the 'masque-dramaturg'. He is the 'animator' of the 'masques' as well as the manager of the troupe.

The term egúngún, as we have seen, covers a number of concepts and can be a source of confusion in Yoruba culture. The egúngún, originally, was considered as being the re-incarnated spirit of an ancestor materialised in a human form during a temporary re-appearance in the world. But it has come to be erroneously used as a term to denote all forms of masquerading or disguise.¹⁵ The 'mask' facilitates the submergence of the masker's own 'persona' while at the same time it induces a measure of empathy from his spectators. The term egúngún is of Oyo origin and there it denotes the 'ancestral spirit', fully costumed or robed in 'agò', and manifesting human qualities or attributes. The ancestral spirit was originally called 'arà òrun' (a native of heaven) or 'èbòra' (deity) in non-Oyo areas of Yoruba. Egúngún has, nevertheless, become a generic term for all forms of masquerading. In this regard even the 'Alárinjò' which has almost severed its ritual link from the egúngún is still classified as 'egúngún apidán'¹⁶ (the masquerade that performs spectacles) or 'egúngún aláré' (the masquerade that performs plays).

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15. Masks and masquerades are forms of human artifice bound up with the ceremonial expression of the magico-religious systems of traditional societies.
16. See part II, Chapter 3 for the origin of egúngún and source of the attribute.

Masquerades¹⁷ are, of course, not limited to egúngún in the Yoruba society. Masquerading is identified with some religious groups and cultic associations like the Gèlèdè¹⁸, Èkìṅè, and Èpà.¹⁹ The Adámú-Òrìṣà is another form of masquerading connected with funerary rites in Lagos. It is believed to have originated from Awori but with Oyo and Iperu connections. The incarnated spirit is called 'èyò'. The ceremony is ritual drama held in honour of the memory of a distinguished person.²⁰ During the religious observance of several of the Yoruba deities some form of masquerading can also be seen; for instance in the annual festival of 'Òbàtálá', the arch-divinity.

By tradition the Oyo egúngún, or any egúngún that is derived from Oyo, is fully costumed; this means that no part of the body of the masquerader must be revealed to the public. Some non-Oyo egúngún expose certain parts of the body especially hands and legs. In the eastern half of Yorubaland, especially in Ondo province, the masquerade "is dressed in a

17. See plates, 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5.

18. Beier "Gelede Masks", Odu, No. 6, June 1958, pp. 5-23.

19. Oyin Ogunba, Ritual Drama in Ijebu Ode (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, June 1967), *passim*. Èpà masks are also found among the Ekiti people.

20. J.O. Lucas, "The Cult of Adamu-Orisa," Nigerian Field, 1943, pp. 184-196.



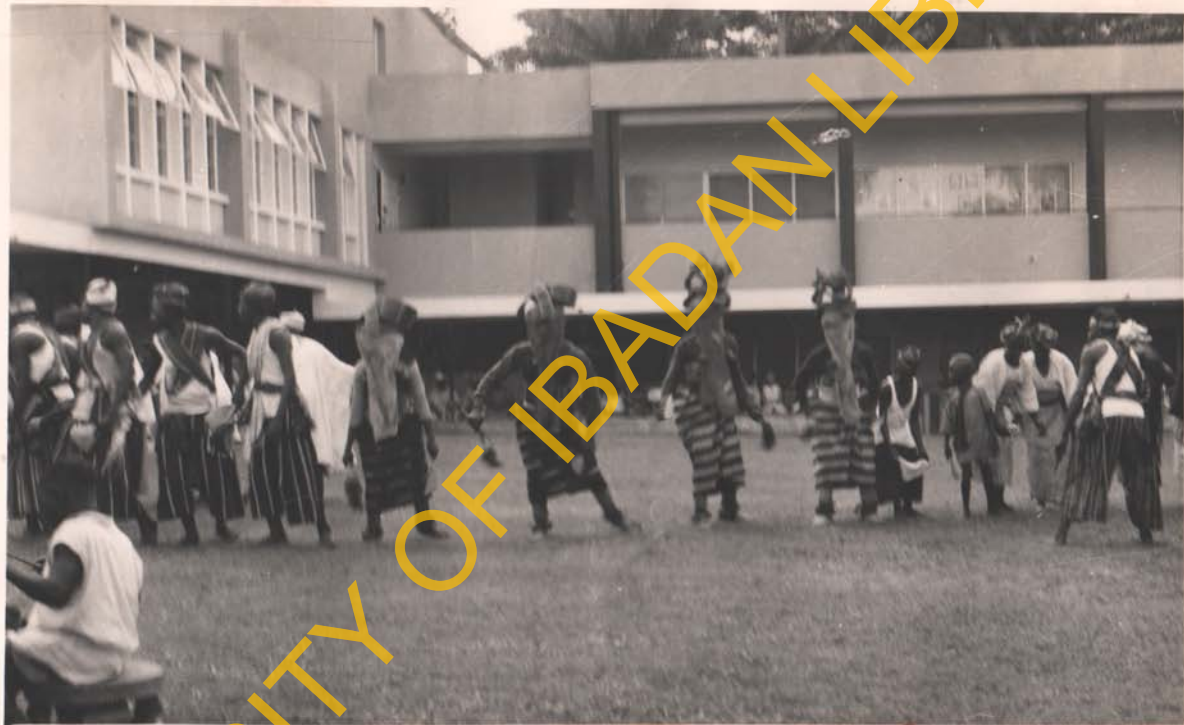
No. 1: Lineage Masquerade - Eégúnlá, Ijebu Igbo (Photo by courtesy of Dr. Oyin Ogunba).



No. 2: Èkinè Masquerade - Ijebu Waterside.
(Photo by courtesy of Dr. Oyin Ogunba).



No. 3: Èkìṅè Masquerade - Inland.
(Photo by courtesy of Dr. Oyin Ogunba).



No. 4: Gbede Masquerade - Ijio.
(Photo taken at a performance, Institute of African Studies,
University of Ibadan).



EYO MASQUERADE LAGOS.

No. 5: Eyo Masquerade - Lagos.

long grass-robe, and wooden mask depicting the face or head of an animal. He is a supernatural inquisitor who comes to enquire into the general domestic conduct of people especially that of women and criminals."²¹ During the Edì Festival at Ife, this form of masquerading is used to enact the mythology of 'Mòrèmi and the Ìgbò'.²²

In this study the term egúngún has been confined to its general use as denoting the 'masquerade'. The term "Egúngún Society" has been adopted to refer to the association formed by members of the egúngún cult-group. The egúngún of the deceased person who is brought home during the funerary rite is described as 'ghost mummer'.²³ The use of the term 'egúngún apidán', the classificatory name of the theatre-group has been noted but the attributive appellation of the group as the 'Alárínjò' (professional travelling dance troupe) has been adopted.

The term 'òjè' is another source of confusion. The 'Alárínjò' started in Oyo where it was first called 'òjè' - a minstrel who travelled about as an 'akéwì' (gleeman). He wore gorgeous costumes and was received at Court and in the compounds of the noble with gifts and money. The commonplace sayings "gbé òjè lq"

21. ibid., p. 150. This form of masquerading is believed to be indigenous while the cloth costumed masquerade is believed to belong to immigrants from Oyo. (No. 189, October 1948).
22. M.J. Walsh, "The Edì Festival at Ife", African Affairs, Vol.47, No. 189, October 1948, pp. 231-238. See plate, No. 6.
23. N.A. Fadipe, Sociology of the Yoruba (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London), 1939, p. 757.



No. 6: Igbò Masquerade - Ife.

(From African Affairs, Vol. 47, No. 189, October 1948).

(stroll out with gorgeous apparel) or "òjè mí ga" (my outfits rank high) are reminders of the earliest association of the word with 'gorgeous accoutrements'. In terms of classification, the 'òjè' is an egúngún lábala.

There is a great distinction between the 'òjè' and the 'egúngún' in the Igbomina area. The general class of egúngún is called 'pàáká' the special class is called 'elẹwẹ'²⁴ and the 'Alárinjọ' (the professional troupes) who are invited every two years to entertain the masses they call 'òjè'.

Every actor's first name includes 'òjè' as a prefix or a morph, for example: Òjèládé, Olójèdé and Òjèwùmí. In certain areas, however, both 'òjè' and 'egúngún' are synonymous and used indiscriminately. The elders of egúngún are called 'àgbà òjè'. For this study, the 'òjè' is synonymous with the 'histrione'.

The term "Yoruba" has been used in this study, generally, to denote the society and culture of the Yoruba speaking-peoples of Nigeria and certain parts of Dahomey. It includes the area where the Alarinjo Theatre is known to have developed and the areas in which the troupes operated. The origin of the word is dubious. Belief in its Arabic origin can be found in the chronicles of the learned Sultan Bello of Sokoto where it is described

24. See plate, No. 7.



No. 7: Eléwe Masquerade - Òró (Igbomina).
(From S.A. Oyinlola, by courtesy of Kola Oladipupo).

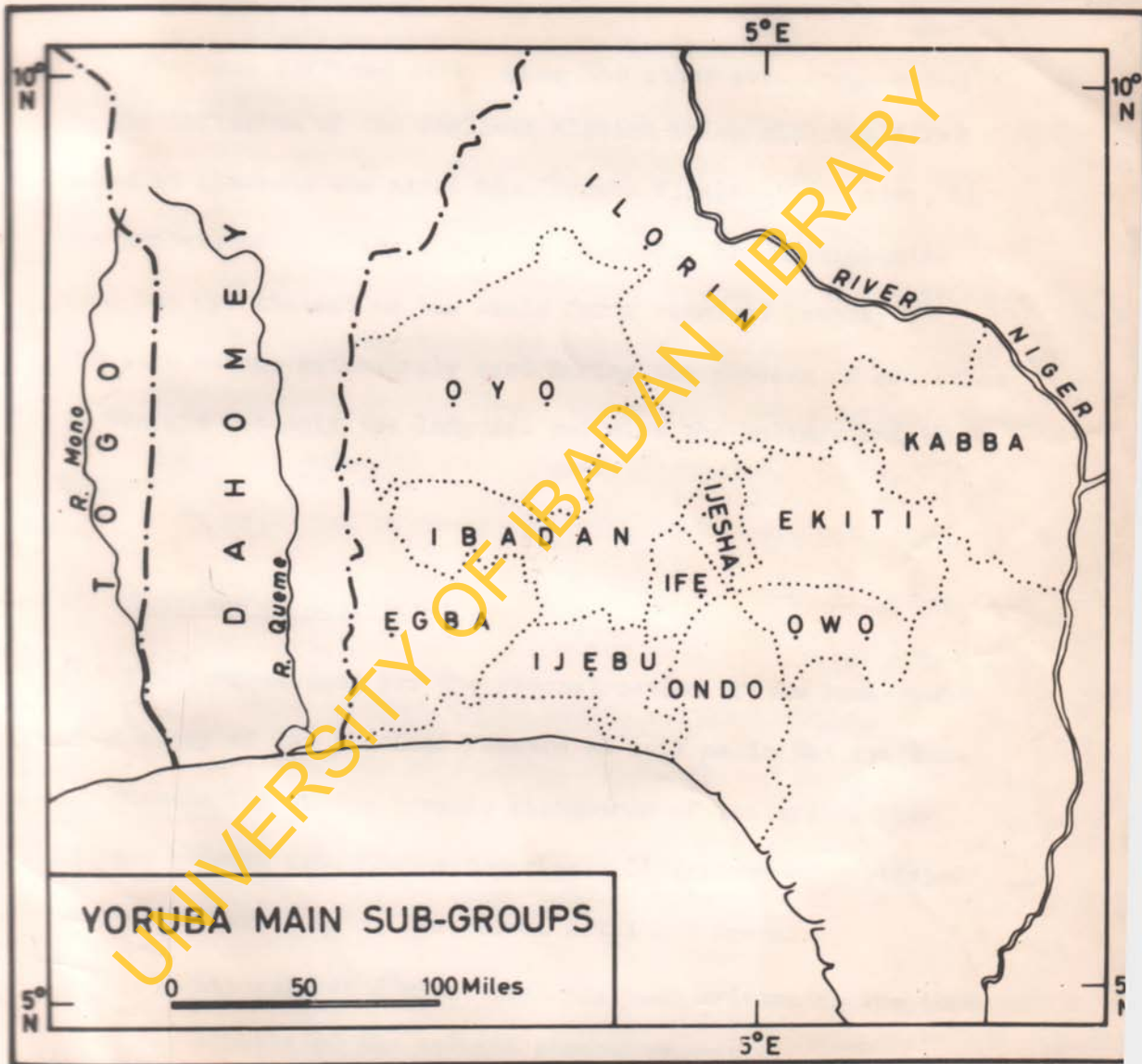
as 'Yarba'.²⁵ Sultan Bello's reference was in respect of the area settled by a group of people who "originated from the remnants of the children of Canaan, called Nimrod."²⁶ According to him, "Yarba is an extensive province containing rivers, forests, sands and mountains, as also a great many wonderful and extraordinary things."²⁷ The group is believed to have been led by Oduduwa, a Crown Prince, and after several wanderings across the Sudan they reached Ife where they finally settled. From them "sprang the various tribes of the Yoruba nation."²⁸ However, these various tribes in the sub-kingdoms in which they were found did not refer to themselves as 'Yoruba'. The name came to be identified with the Oyo sub-group in a sub-kingdom

25. A reduction of Sultan Bello's map of Central Africa reproduced opposite p. 571 of Major Denhan's and Captain Clapperton's Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the years 1822 - 1824, Vol. II, London, 1826, shows the 'Yarba' country. These early English explorers themselves referred to the country as 'Yarriba' and knew about the name through discussions with people in the Hausa - Fulani emirates of Sokoto. (See op. cit., p. 339). 'Yoruba' may, in fact, be the eponymous of "Yar-rooba, son of Kahtan" of Arabia. (See: Samuel Johnson, History of the Yorubas, C.M.S. (Nigeria) Bookshops, Lagos, rep. 1960, p. 5.

26. ibid.

27. ibid.

28. ibid., p. 7; see map, No. 1.



Map 1: Yoruba Main Sub-groups: By kindness of Dr. J.A. Majasan, Department of Education, University of Ibadan.

believed to have been founded by Ọráníyàn, the "youngest of Odùduwà's grandchildren".²⁹

The name diffused later among the other sub-groups owing to the influence of the Anglican Mission which although first based at Abeokuta was named the 'Yoruba Mission.'³⁰ Later, in the process of evolving a written language, the missionaries used the Oyo dialect as the basis for a standard language.³¹ The term became extensively used during the process of education to include not only the language but also the culture and the peoples.

II. Critique of Sources.

The sources used for the reconstruction of the background and history of the Alárinjé Theatre as well as in the systematic structuring of the dynamic phenomenon of its art can be divided broadly into four categories: Literature or published works; The Verbal Arts; The Visual Arts; and Drama:

- (i) Literature: A great deal has been written on the three aspects of the egúngún phenomenon, namely:

29. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 8 - 12.
 30. S.O. Biobaku, The Origin of the Yoruba, Lugard Lectures 1955, Lagos, p. 9.
 31. J.F.A. Ajayi and R. Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, 1966, p. 2.

- (a) the egúngún as a rite or Yoruba burial custom.
- (b) the egúngún as a cult or secret society.
- (c) the egúngún as divertissement or entertainment.

The Alárinjé Theatre in its developmental phases went through all three aspects.

Those who have written on the general subject of the egúngún include ethnologists, social anthropologists and certain nondescripts who came upon the Yoruba socio-cultural scene without the necessary equipment for handling the subject with any clear distinction. Among these are a number of missionaries, colonial administrators, explorers and tourists. As Dr. S.S. Farrow has said, "the chief works have been written by those who were not conversant with the language, and who ... did not live among the people. These writers had to get their information at second or third hand, and their work, praiseworthy as it is ... has suffered considerably from the serious difficulties which beset research of this kind"³²

Some of the ethnologists and social anthropologists whose works have been examined and cited include A.B. Ellis,³³

32. S.S. Farrow, Faith, Fancies and Fetich, London, 1926, p. 1. (This is the published book of a doctoral dissertation written after an intensive study of the Yoruba and a long stay in the country.)

33. A.B. Ellis, The Yoruba Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, Chapman & Hall, London, 1894, pp. 107-109.

The works of both the ethnologists and the missionaries R.E. Dennet³⁴ and P.A. Talbot³⁵ Ellis's work, early as it was, has served as a general reference for others who came after him; as a result, its main faults and weaknesses have been repeated by them; they have hardly furnished any fresh thoughts or ideas, or insight into the subject. The works of Darryl Forde³⁶ are a notable example in this regard. The concentration has been on the practice of egúngún as a secret society and as a funeral rite.

The missionaries, too anxious to reduce all forms of cultural activities to manifestations of barbarism in a pagan society, made scant references to the egúngún in their accounts and intelligence reports. Among them are T.J. Bowen,³⁷ Miss Tucker,³⁸ and Anna Hinderer.³⁹

34. R.E. Dennet, Nigerian Studies, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1910, pp. 18-33.

35. P.A. Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, London, 1926, pp. 760-762.

36. Darryl Forde, The Yoruba Speaking Peoples of South Western Nigeria, London, 1951, pp. 17-19.

37. T.J. Bowen, Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors 1849-1856, Charleston, 1859, (passim).

38. Miss Tucker, Abbeokuta or Sunrise in Tropical Africa, London, 1856, (passim).

39. Anna Hinderer, Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country, London, 1872, (passim).

The works of both the ethnologists and the missionaries have had great influence on the Nigerians whose studies have touched on the subject of egúngún generally. Some of the latter have offered criticisms of the works by foreign investigators and have used their knowledge of the Yoruba language and culture to advantage. Both Archdeacon J.O. Lucas⁴⁰ and Professor E.B. Idowu⁴¹ concentrate on the ritual base of the egúngún and furnish information on its funerary aspects. Chief I.O. Delano⁴² describes the yearly egúngún festival and the ritual play during the 'ìṣèkú', a burial rite. Reverend Samuel Johnson,⁴³ more than any of the above provides information on the origin and some aspects of the history of the egúngún. He describes the funerary rites as they extend to both the male and female heads of families.

The writings of Dr. E.G. Parrinder⁴⁴ on the egúngún as a funerary rite as well as the cult of ancestors are very useful;

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40. J.O. Lucas, The Religion of the Yorubas, Lagos, 1948, pp. 138-141.
41. E.B. Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, Longmans, 1966, pp. 191-193.
42. Isaac O. Delano, The Soul of Nigeria, Werner Laurie Ltd., London, 1937, pp. 111-117; 164-171.
43. Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, C.M.S. (Nigeria) Bookshops, Lagos, 1960 rep., pp. 29-31; 137-140; p. 160 and passim.
44. E.G. Parrinder, Religion in an African City, O.U.P., 1953, pp. 41-47.

and the articles of Professor William Bascom⁴⁵ and Peter Morton-Williams⁴⁶ are significant because they provide a careful treatment of the different categories into which the egúngún is sub-divided. Bascom presents a classification of the egúngún and describes the 'egúngún apidán' as the entertainment group, and states that egúngún generally, and the "onidán" in particular, are of Oyo origin. Morton-Williams gives an eye-witness account of an egúngún festival and the theatrical performance of the apidán group of egúngún.⁴⁷

The eye-witness accounts given by both Clapperton⁴⁸ and Lander⁴⁹ in their journals of a performance in their honour by one of the Yoruba travelling troupes at Old Oyo in 1826 have been of primary importance to this study.

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45. William Bascom, "The Sociological Role of Yoruba Cult Group", American Anthropologist (New Series) Vol. 46, No. 1, Pt. 2, Jan. 1944, pp. 50-59.
46. P. Morton-Williams, "The Egungun Society in South-Western Yoruba Kingdoms", W.A.I.S.E.R. Proceedings, 1956 (reprinted 1963), pp. 90-103.
47. See Appendix 6.
48. Hugh Clapperton, Journal of a Second Journey into the Interior of Africa, London, 1826, pp. 53-56.
49. Richard Lander, Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition To Africa, Vol. I, London, 1830, Chapter V: "Pantomimic Representations by the Yarribeans", pp. 115-121.

The performance was described as a pantomime.⁵⁰ The accounts give a general background to the performance, the details of the setting, the acts, the chorus and the orchestra. The obvious weaknesses in the accounts are those due to ignorance of the Yoruba language. The chants and the songs which are vital to the understanding of the plot of each act were not recorded.

Ulli Beier has so far done more work than any one else on the egúngún in general and the 'Alárínjò' in particular. He describes the 'Alárínjò' as the "Agbegijo" and said they "could be called the beginning of theatre in Yorubaland".⁵¹ He uses the term 'Agbégijó' as generic for the class of egúngún entertainers, the theatre-group: "there is a special group of egungun whose purpose is to entertain. These Egungun are called Agbegijo - we take wood to dance."⁵² The Agbégijó, in fact, is the professional name of the troupe that is stationed in Oshogbo where Beier lived. The troupe operates

50. The entertainment as described seems to resemble the Roman pantomime in which the performer acted his part by changing costumes and masks. He gesticulated and danced while a chorus sang to musical accompaniment. (See Roberts, op. cit., pp. 64-65).

51. Ulli Beier, "The Agbegijo Masqueraders", Nigeria Magazine, No. 82, 1964, pp. 191-199.

52. ibid., p. 191. Beier's interpretation of Agbegijo to mean 'we take wood to dance' should have been 'one who takes wood to dance' instead.

in Oshun division and travels widely. There is also a troupe at Otta with the same professional name that has no lineage connection with the group at Oshogbo. Every 'Alárinjé' troupe adopts a professional name which relates to a historical background. Other professional names are: Aiyelabólá, Ajàngílá, Ajóféèbó, Lébe, Eiyébà and others.

There are other obvious contradictions in some of Beier's conclusions which are unfortunate. In a recent book which he edited, he has a chapter on 'Yoruba theatre' where he remarks that "there is no conventional theatre in Yoruba tradition."⁵³ His idea of the 'conventional' apparently has to do with the modern manifestation of the Western theatre. He, however, fails to see that what he goes on to describe as the "Agbegijo theatre" is in fact the Yoruba conventional theatre - a development which has followed its own artistic traditions. Be that as it may, he provides much information in his study of the 'Agbégijó'. He explains how they are a separate group from the main body of the

53. Ulli Beier, (ed.) Introduction to African Literature, Longmans, 1967, pp. 243-245.

egúgun society; and states that "they have their own head and lead a fairly independent existence, often travelling far and wide as professional entertainers."⁵⁴

It is evident from the works cited above that previous knowledge on this subject is scanty and fragmentary. Sweeping generalizations have been made about the performances of the 'Alárinjó' described variously as: 'magical displays', 'tricks', 'transformations' and 'pantomime'. Often the performances have been explained without reference to them as a work of art. Most of the investigators exclude the chant, the song and the dance from their studies and, in consequence, miss the oral wisdom and verbal arts which are prominent features and special attributes of the total performance.

(ii) The Verbal Arts: According to Lloyd, "a knowledge of the Yoruba past must be gleaned from myths, legends, folktales, praise-song..."⁵⁵ Vansina⁵⁶ has explored the possibility, and examined the difficulties of reconstructing the history of non-literate people from their oral traditions, and has

54. ibid., p. 244.

55. P.C. Lloyd's introductory remarks in Chief Samuel Ojo's The Origin of the Yoruba, 3rd edition, Nigeria, 1953, (no page).

56. Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, Chapter VI.

surveyed existing literature on the subject. The elements used in the present study include the following:

- (a) The Oḍu Corpus.
- (b) The Èṣà or Ewì Egúngún (Poetic of the Egungun) chants
- (c) The Oríkì (Praise-poems).
- (d) The Myths and Tales.
- (e) The Wise Sayings or Oral Wisdom.

The Oḍu corpus is a body of recitals which belong to the intricate system of 'Ifá' divination, the cult of 'Òrúnmìlà' or the oracle of divination.⁵⁷ They constitute, in a systematic way, the religious philosophy of the Yoruba. "They belong to the most fixed and reliable section of the oral tradition"⁵⁸ and can be grouped among the types of religious poetry.⁵⁹ The Oḍu has an esoteric tradition and is usually recited and transmitted by the 'babaláwo', the priest of the cult: There are a total of two hundred and fifty six 'odu' including the sixteen main ones. When each 'odu' appears on the divining-board it reveals a story of a myth.⁶⁰ Before the story is told, the 'babaláwo' recites

57. Idowu, op. cit., p. 7.

58. ibid.

59. Vansina, op. cit., p. 150.

60. Rev. James Johnson, Yoruba Heathenism, James Townsend, London, 1899, p. 19. See also Idowu, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

a poetic opening which is a prelude to the story. The recital is always ended with the 'ẹbọ', or sacrifice which the enquirer has to make, depending on the nature of the revelation made to him. All 'Ifá' poems are historical, even though the historical and the mythical elements are mixed together in the lay-out.⁶¹ The origin of the egúngún is revealed in Odu Ọwónrínṣẹ (Ọwónrín + Ọsẹ) and how egúngún became a secret society is revealed in Odu Ọwónrín Mèjì.

The Èsà or Ewì chant can be classified as Oríkì or panegyric poetry.⁶² It is composed in order to give free expression to the feelings of the composer and it is usually a tribute. There are two main divisions: 'Oríkì Alẹ-Ilé' (lineage praise-poems) and 'Oríkì Orílẹ' (totemic poems). The poems are by nature a medley of select items (ẹṣà) and usually include the attributes of persons, places and things. The 'ẹṣà' has its own artistic style which differentiates its kind from the 'Ìjálá', (the Hunter's chant) or the 'Ràrà', (the Eulogy). It is believed to have been originated by the 'Ọjẹ' or egúngún lábala and popularised by Èsà Ọgbín, a native of Ọgbojò, the first masque-dramaturg.

It is of historical interest that this class of egúngún bards are

61. Wande Abimbola, "Ifa Divination Poems as sources for Historical Evidence", Lagos Notes and Records, University of Lagos, Vol. I, No. 1, June 1967, pp. 17-26.

62. Vansina, op. cit., p. 151.

descendants of Ológbòjò Ológbin, first known as the Alafin's 'Arókin', (panegyric poet) and then as his 'Ológbò' (staff-bearer).⁶³ Ológbòjò was the first court-bard to become 'Baba Eléégún' since it was he who instituted the egúngún festival⁶⁴ as the owner of what came to be called 'egungun' in Yoruba history.

The Oríkì or praise-poems belong to a unique system which is of an immense importance in the tracing of Yoruba pedigrees.⁶⁵ Sometimes these poems reveal the origin of certain Yoruba settlements.⁶⁶ It is believed that the poems were composed by men who led a guild or a group of bards.⁶⁷ The Oríkì poetry survives till today among two guilds:⁶⁸

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63. The Ológbò was sent out as a town-crier to inform the bereaved of their losses during a national calamity resulting from a war expedition. Obalokun was said to have done this about 1580. (See S. Johnson, History of the Yorubas), C.M.S. Bookshops, Lagos, (rep. 1960), p. 168.
64. S.O. Biobaku, "The Use and Interpretation of Myths", Odu, No. 1, 1955, p. 13. (Biobaku states that "during the installation ceremony of every new Alaketu, the Baba Eleegun recites the entire list before an assembly of all the people"). How Ológbin Ológbòjò instituted the annual egungun festival is described in Part 2, Chapter 3.
65. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 85-86. ("The Orile is not a name, it denotes the family origin or Totem.") See: S.A. Babalola, Àwọn Oríkì Orilẹ̀, Collins, 1967.
66. S.O. Babayemi, Àwọn Oríkì Alẹ̀ Ilé, (Unpublished Ms.)
67. Adebayo Faleti, The Totem Poems of the Yoruba, (Unpublished Ms.)
68. See the works of: Bakare Gbadamosi, Oríkì, Mbari Publications, Ibadan, 1961; S.A. Babalola, Àwọn Oríkì Orilẹ̀, Collins, 1967; D.A. Obasa, Iwe Àwọn Akewi, Ibadan, 1933.

the 'òjè or the mummers' guild and the 'ede',⁶⁹ or the hunters' guild. With these two guilds, the poetry has become a conventional mode of artistic expression. While each guild has its own stylistics or technique of recitation, the subject-matter is practically the same.⁷⁰ The poems include those addressed to the main family lineages of the Yoruba, those telling the history of the foundation of certain Yoruba towns, those containing place names and personal names, and salute to certain plants and animals. Most of the lineage poems, in particular, reveal certain social circumstances involving the lineage-heads. The poems seem to have been compiled as 'mementos'.

Of historical interest is the fact that a good deal of the lineage or totem poems are addressed mostly to the founders of the Yoruba settlements after the return from exile in the Bariba country and the Nupe captivity about the middle of the seventeenth century. The name of Alafin Abiòdun (c. 1770 - c. 1789)⁷¹ is often mentioned in the poems which is an

69. See the works of: S.A. Babalola, Content and Form of Ìjálá, O.U.P., 1966; Oladipo Yemitan, Ìjálá, O.U.P., 1963.

70. Ulli Beier, Yoruba Poetry, G.P.S., Ibadan 1959, p. 9.

71. See: A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire in the 18th century - A Reassessment", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. III, No. 3, December 1966, pp. 455-459.

72. Lloyd, Yoruba Epics, O.S., No. 2, 1958, p. 20.

indication of royal interest in or patronage of the artists. In the "Oríkì Ọ̀bà" we find indications that point to the Ọ̀bà as the antechthonous 'clan', the artists of the realm and the inventor of the 'mask'. In the "Oríkì Ìran Ológbin",⁷² the lineage which developed the Alarinjo Theatre, Alafin Abiodun is referred to as a patron.⁷³

The myths and tales include stories which attempt to explain the Yoruba world, its culture and society. According to Lloyd, these were "virtually the only source of Yoruba history for the centuries before the arrival of the Europeans."⁷⁴ The myths are religious in character and are usually narrated during ritual or festival occasions; transmitted by the priests or priestesses connected with particular 'orisa' or deities. They are usually intended to control the conduct of the worshippers and govern their faith. The myths connected with egúngún and its origin vary from one community to another. In most cases they relate to the founder of the settlement, or the

72. See: S.A. Babalola (1967), op. cit., pp. 91-103.

73. The reference to Alafin Abiodun does not seem to suggest that the poem was composed during his reign. Since there is evidence of accretion in the poems, it is likely that the reference was added at a later period by a descendant of the lineage.

74. P.C. Lloyd, Yoruba Myths, Odu, No. 2, 1956, p. 20.

salvation of the settlement from the ravages of an invader by a brave person who is then worshipped as egúngún after his death.

Tales are fictitious narratives drawn from imagination; but sometimes they contain allusions to historical episodes. Sometimes it is difficult to separate a myth or a legend from a historical narrative. The Yoruba do not separate myths conceptually from secular traditions and historical narratives. They have, in fact, the same name-word 'ìtàn' for both mythical and historical narratives whether the narration takes place during sacred or profane occasions. The 'ìtàn' is, of course, different from the 'àlò' which is a tale or a story meant for amusement and moral instruction. For example, Adebayo Babalola in his narrative on how egúngún came into the Yoruba world used the tale to draw out a moral lesson.⁷⁵

Lastly are the Yoruba wise sayings which, although they are not stories, yet each sums up a story. They are an essential part of Yoruba traditional lore and philosophy. Included in this category are the proverbs, riddles, epigrams and other such things for which the Yoruba are particularly noted. They, too, have been found to be of significant importance to the historical researcher.⁷⁶ The elements of Yoruba verbal arts

75. Adebayo Babalola, "Bí Egúngún Ti ǵe Dé Ilé Aiyé", Iwe Ede Yoruba, Apa Kinni, Longmans, Nigeria, 1962, pp. 38-42.

76. Biobaku, op. cit., p. 14.

are essentially intellectual in content and artistic in form. Although they serve as welcome diversions on occasions of their usage, one cannot fail to be intrigued by their influence. They are usually extracts or illustrations from history, observations on daily life and the creative imagination. What makes them significant is the link they form with other narratives included in Oral Tradition.

(iii) The Visual Arts: Father K. Carrol in a comment on Dr. L. Segy's book, African Sculpture, says that "a copious illustrated history of Yoruba culture could be compiled from Yoruba carving."⁷⁷ Sculptures, wall-paintings and other material artifacts of the Yoruba have been found to be of historical value to the study. They furnish illustrations of dress, ornament, material culture and, sometimes, the custom of the people. They are also helpful in tracing artistic growth over the long period of Yoruba history. Yoruba artists indulge in caricaturing.⁷⁸ Whether in reference to an imitation or a representation of a person or thing

77. Father Kevin Carrol, "African Sculpture Speaks", reviewing Dr. L. Segy's African Sculpture in Odu, No. 1, 1955, p. 35.

78. William Bascom, A Handbook of West African Art, Milwaukee Public Museum Handbook, October, 1953, pp. 40-41.

80. William Fagg and Frank Willet, "Ancient Ife", Odu, No. 8, p. 25. This is also referred to by R.S. Dennett, African Studies, London, 1910, p. 24.

in sculpting, chanting or performance, an element of ludicrous exaggeration is introduced as part of the total artistic picture. This art of deliberately distorted picturing relates to mythological characters and important social figures, as well as general types in the society.⁷⁹ A good example of the caricature of mythological characters is that of "Oni and his wife".^{79^a} Some observers have described the incident as a ritual occasion showing the Oni and his wife in a ritual dance, but this kind of thinking over-emphasizes the importance of the king's wife and her role as 'queen' in a monogamous culture. In the Yoruba setting this role is far-fetched. The involved posture has also been presumed as the caricature of "the brother-sister marriage simplified in the Ife royal house."⁸⁰

'Brother-sister marriage' would not seem to be the case but that of the royal personage who had sexual intercourse with his relation. The occasion would be openly dramatised in form of 'role playing' in the 'Ighó Orè', a place outside the town, where the two relatives involved in the act would be led in a

79. See plates, Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14.

The examples of modern caricature are taken from Bascom's book quoted above while those of old caricatures are taken from Frank Willet's book *Ife*.

79^a. See plates, Nos. 13 & 14.

80. William Fagg and Frank Willet, "Ancient Ife", *Odu*, No. 8, p. 25. This is also referred to by R.E. Dennett, *Nigerian Studies*, London, 1910, p. 24.



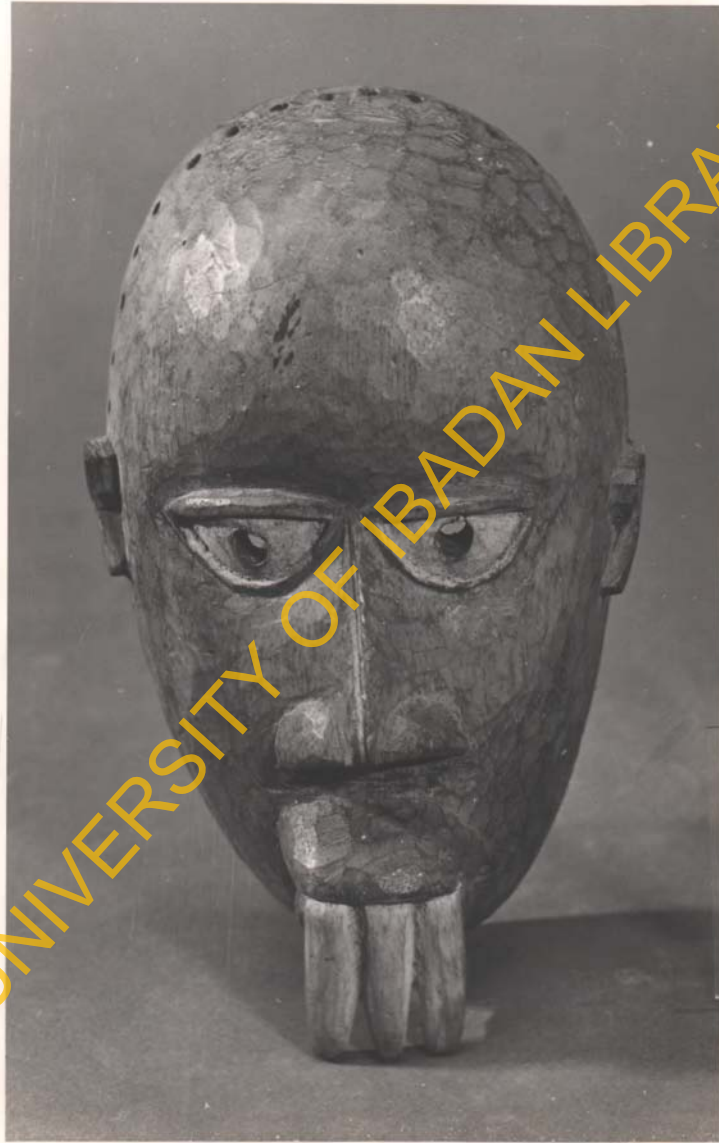
No. 8: Modern Caricature - Queen Victoria.
(Photo from William Bascom, A Handbook of West African Art,
Milwaukee, 1953).



No. 9: Modern Caricature - A Lawyer and a Missionary.
(Photo from A Handbook of West African Art, 1953).



No. 10: Modern Caricature - A Whiteman (face mask).
(Photo by courtesy of Doig Simmonds, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan).



No. 11: Modern Caricature - The Bucktooth (normal) [face-mask]
(Photo by courtesy of Doig Simmonds, Institute of African
Studies, University of Ibadan).



No. 12: Modern Caricature - The Bucktooth (abnormal) [face-mask]
(Photo by courtesy of Doig Simmonds, Institute of African
Studies, University of Ibadan).



An Oni and his wife.

No. 13: Ancient Caricature - An Oni and His Wife.
(Photo from Frank Willet: Life in the History of West African Sculpture, Thames & Hudson, 1967.)



No. 14: Ancient Caricature - An Oni and His Wife (front view).

procession through the streets of the town and asked to 'act it out' in a ritual ceremony of appeasement to the arch-divinity, *Òrìṣà-ńlá*, the god of ethical and ritual purity.⁸¹

Yoruba art, generally, is a record of observation of life. This artistic technique has been described by Carrol as 'humanistic' because "the artist sympathetically observes and represents the life that he sees around him".⁸² Examples of this form of artistic expression are found in door-panels,⁸³ bas-reliefs⁸⁴ and wall-paintings⁸⁵ mostly found in the royal palaces. Verger describes the historical episodes ~~seen~~ in the bas-reliefs of the royal palaces of Abomey as having a Yoruba influence. The figures allude to the wars which the

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81. J.A. Adedeji, "Form and Function of Satire in Yoruba Drama", *Odu*, Vol. 4, No. 1, July 1967, pp. 62-72. Caricature is an aspect of Yoruba satirical genre. The basic need for satire in ~~the~~ Yoruba society is the essential need for exercising certain controls, meeting the essential need for equilibrium and peace of mind.
82. Father K. Carrol, "Ekiti - Yoruba Wood Carving", *Odu*, No. 4, pp. 3-10.
83. ibid. See plates of door-panels, Nos. 15 & 16.
84. Claverton, op. cit., p. 58 describes the figures represented on the bas-reliefs he saw in the palace of the Alafin at Old Oyo.
85. Ulli Beier, "Yoruba wall Paintings", *Odu*, No. 8, pp. 36-39. Beier describes this important aspect of Yoruba art which has been neglected by observers and critics of Yoruba art.

See Verger, *Chapman*, 1967.



No. 15: Humanistic Art: Door Panel.
(Photo from Father Carrol, Yourba Religious Carving,
Geoffrey Chapman, 1967.)



No. 16: Humanistic Art: Door Panel.

(Photo from Father Carrol, Yoruba Religious Carving, 1967.)

people of Dahomey waged against the Yoruba in the early part of the eighteenth century.⁸⁶ In a way, they serve as a record of the Dahomeyan version of some of the happenings during their long drawn out engagement with the Yoruba.

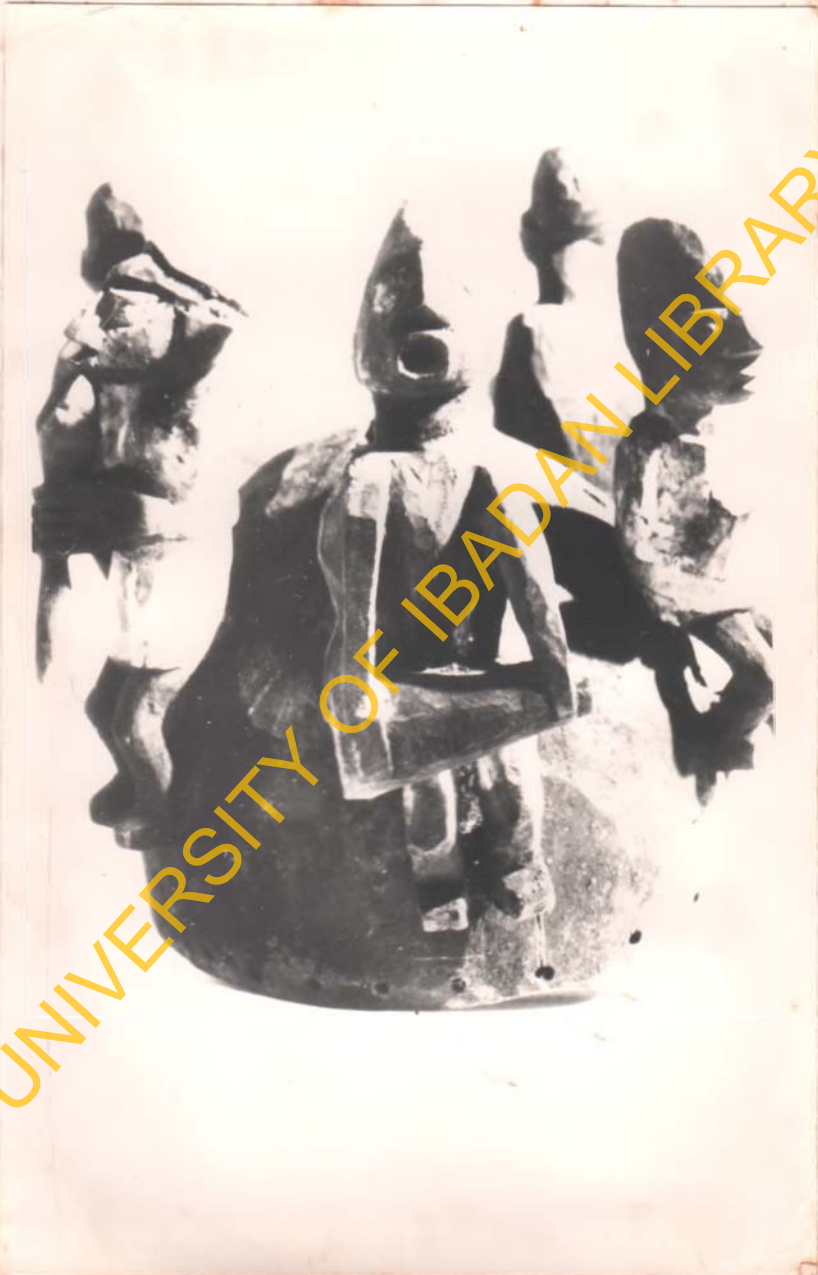
The Yoruba artists, both the representational and the theatrical, share or reveal the same 'humanistic' interests.⁸⁷ There is mutual compatibility in their disciplines. They draw their inspiration from the same environment and sometimes display the same artistic vision. For example, the figure-types displayed and the scenes depicted in the Yoruba door-panels, bas-reliefs and wall-paintings are dramatic and have also been found in the 'repertoire' of the theatre-troupes.

(iv) Drama:- Many Yoruba religious observances include enactments of historical scenes.⁸⁸ At many festivals and during the installation ceremonies of chiefs and priests, the events of history are revealed in a type of stage-acting which is part of the total ceremony. This form of dramatization

86. Pierre Verger, "Note on the Bas-Reliefs in the Royal Palaces of Abomey", Odu, No. 5, pp. 3-13.

87. See plates, Nos. 17, 18, 19 & 20.

88. I.A. Akinjogbin, "Enactment Ceremonies as a source of Unwritten History", Proceedings of Conference, N.I.S.E.R. 1958, p. 172.



No. 17: Humanistic Art: A Scene from Yoruba Life.
(Photo by courtesy of Frank Speed formerly of University of Ibadan).



No. 18: Humanistic Art: Wood Carving.
(Photo by courtesy of Doig Simmonds, Institute of African
Studies, University of Ibadan.)

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No. 19: Humanistic Art: A Gèlèdè Headpiece.
(Photo by courtesy of Doig Simmonds, Institute of African
Studies, University of Ibadan).



No. 20: Humanistic Art: An Egúngún Headpiece.
(Photo by courtesy of Doig Simmonds, Institute of African
Studies, University of Ibadan.)

very usefully helps to trace history even if the intention was not specifically to record history.

Conclusion:- In constructing the historical aspect of the study, we have had recourse to a methodology based on all of the above. At the back of our mind has been, of course, the assumption that "it is a common practice in every civilized community to set up, in brass or marble, in work of art or literature, in songs or traditions, worthy memorials to perpetuate the achievements of its scions with noble aims."⁸⁹

The arts of the Yoruba yield valuable source material which can be structured into a series of sequences to form themes or headings for the theatre historian. Their limitations, however, have been fully realised and no attempt has been made to depend on them exclusively. Conventions of style and medium may owe their origin to particular circumstances which cannot be easily perceived and may lead to generalizations. Interpretation can be faulty if other things are not taken into account during the process of observation and evaluation. Artistic canons change from time to time, even within the same

89. Chris. Johnson, in Nigerian Chronicle of February 5, 1909, p. 6. ina, pp. 215, p. 180.

historical period, depending on the existence of certain vital forces in the society. The theatre historian has to be critical as it is not sufficient only to record facts. To evaluate, we have attempted to recreate the circumstances in which they existed in the past, relying, of course, on calculations of probability.⁹⁰ Our efforts have been strengthened, however, by the details of contemporary history, by personal contacts and by experience. The presence of the Yoruba past in the present, significantly acts as a vital link between the ancient and the new.

90. Vansina, op. cit., p. 186.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction:-

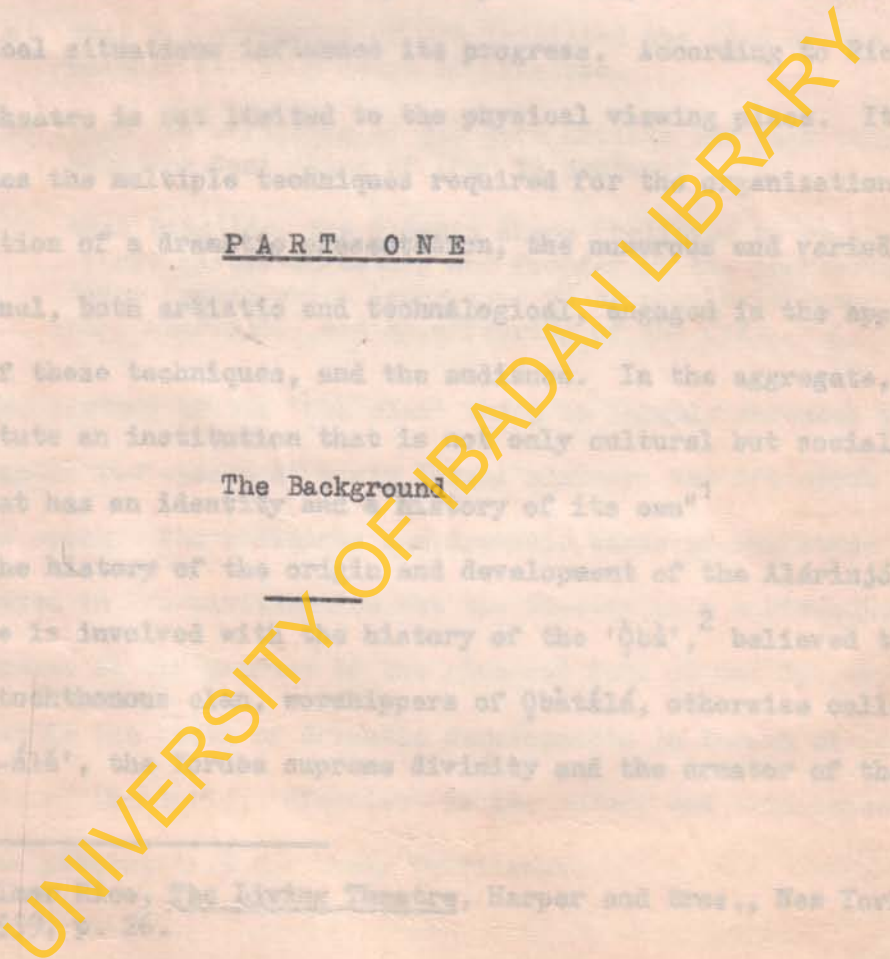
The theatre as an institution normally relies, for its development on several artistic elements which only appear at an advanced stage of civilization. Usually the political, economic and technological situations influence its progress. According to Rice, "the theatre is not limited to the physical viewing of a play. It includes the multiple techniques required for the organization and projection of a drama. PART ONE, the materials and varied personnel, both artistic and technological, engaged in the application of these techniques, and the audience. In the aggregate, these constitute an institution that is not only cultural but social; one that has an identity and a history of its own"¹

PART ONE

The Background

The history of the origin and development of the Alárinjé Theatre is involved with the history of the 'Qbá',² believed to be the autochthonous god worshipped by the worshippers of Qbá, otherwise called 'Orlá-Álá', the creator of the universe and the creator of the

1. Rice, The Living Theatre, Harper and Row., New York, 1953, p. 26.
2. Qbá is a legendary name given to the man believed to be the founder of life. As a deity, he became known and worshipped as Qbá, which is also the name mentioned in the 'myth of creation'. His descendants, or perhaps his worshippers, include the following: Olorin Qbákin, Qbákin, Qbákin, according to Yoruba tradition, and Qbákin, according to Ewe tradition.



CHAPTER TWOIntroduction:-

The theatre as an institution normally relies, for its development on several artistic elements which only appear at an advanced stage of civilization. Usually the political, economic and technological situations influence its progress. According to Rice, "the theatre is not limited to the physical viewing place. It includes the multiple techniques required for the organization and projection of a dramatic presentation, the numerous and varied personnel, both artistic and technological, engaged in the application of these techniques, and the audience. In the aggregate, these constitute an institution that is not only cultural but social; one that has an identity and a history of its own"¹

The history of the origin and development of the Alárinjé Theatre is involved with the history of the 'Ọ̀bà',² believed to be the autochthonous clan, worshippers of Ọ̀bàtálá, otherwise called 'Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá', the Yoruba supreme divinity and the creator of the

1. Elmer Rice, The Living Theatre, Harper and Bros., New York, 1959, p. 26.

2. Ọ̀bà is a legendary name given to the man believed to be the founder of Ife. As a deity, he became known and worshipped as Ọ̀bàtálá, which is also the name mentioned in the 'myth of creation'. His descendants, or perhaps his worshippers, include the following: Ọ̀lọ́fin Ọ̀bámákin, Ọ̀bàlúfọ̀n, Ọ̀bàwinrin, according to Ife tradition, and Ọ̀bàńjà, according to Oyo tradition.

3. Rev. S. Bolaji Idowu, Oduduwa Legends, 1966, pp. 13-20.

4. See Appendix 1.

'earth', according to Yoruba 'myth'³

From the 'oríkì' (praise-chant) of 'Ọ̀bà',⁴ the following three significant points, which are crucial to this study, have emerged:

- (a) that the offspring of Ọ̀bà initiated the idea of the 'masquerade' as a means of disguise.
- (b) that the offspring of Ọ̀bà were artists and that they held the Ọ̀ṣun [king of Ife] in contempt.
- (c) that Babajide, the Ológbin Arẹ̀pa (believed to be the first masque-dramaturg and founder of the professional dance troupe which later came to be popularly known as the 'Alárinjò') was an offspring of the Ọ̀bà.

The history of the 'Ọ̀bà clan' which is largely shrouded in myth, spans two epochs of early Yoruba history: the Ife epoch and the Oyo epoch. The religious and dramatic basis of the study originated in Ife civilization but the theatre as a socio-cultural institution is the product of the rise and fall of the Oyo empire. Religion is the basis of dramatic developments in Yoruba as in most cultures of the world; 'disguise' is its means, and both depend on artistic propensities for their fulfilment.

3. Rev. E. Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare, Longmans, 1966, pp. 19-20.

4. See Appendix 1.

II. Myth of the Ọ̀bà:-

The central events in the life history of the primordial Ọ̀bà can be gleaned from several myths which are summarised, as it were, in a dramatization that has become a permanent feature of the annual Ọ̀bàtálá festival. During the ritual performance, there is an episode which depicts a conflict with an adversary, a defeat and imprisonment, and a return. The drama is a pantomime in three acts: In the first act, there is a fight between the Chief Priest of Ọ̀bàtálá (who impersonates the deity) and another priest (who impersonates the adversary). During the contest the former is overwhelmed, taken prisoner and carried off the arena. The second act shows an intervention for his release which is then secured by the payment of a ransom. In the third act, he is liberated and allowed to return to the fold. This the Chief Priest does in a triumphal dance.⁵

Myth is a way of interpreting a primordial act; in this case, the 'act of creation' which is a divine one. According to Eliade, "man constructs according to an archetype."⁶

In Yoruba mythology, Ọ̀bàtálá is a primordial archetype.

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5. J.A. Adedeji, "The Place of Drama in Yoruba Religious Observance", Odu, July 1966, p. 89.
 6. Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1959, p. 10.

The religious act of worshipping him as the supreme divinity includes an enactment which shows three crucial phases of his life when he was a mortal. This drama derives from three myths:

The first is the 'myth of creation' which claims that after Ọ̀bàtálá, at Olódùmarè's (The Almighty God's) command, has finished creating the 'earth' which he called "Ìfè", he then went on to create 'man' and peopled the place with both normal human beings and misfits, the latter when he became drunk and slumbered. The second, which is the 'conquest myth', recalls the arrival at Ife of a band of immigrants who under a powerful leader, believed to be "Odùduwà", invaded, settled and colonised the 'city-state'. The third myth, drawn out into several episodes, tells first the story of the civil war between the indigenes and the immigrants, then the imprisonment of Ọ̀bàtálá, then the recourse to stratagems and finally the 'rapprochement'.⁷

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7. The 'Ọ̀bamerì episode' narrates the events of the civil war and the imprisonment of Ọ̀bàtálá; the 'Ìgbò episode' reveals the planned strategy applied by the followers of Ọ̀bàtálá to revenge; the 'Mòrèmi episode' recalls how Mòrèmi sacrificed Èlà, her only son, as ransom for the restoration of peace to Ife; and the 'Aláiyémòore episode' shows how Èluyàrè, the Ìgbò king, finally returned to Ife.

The myths do not pronounce on the period of deification of Ọ̀bà, the mythical ancestor, into the god Ọ̀bàtálá or Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá, but it must have been after a considerable time-lag.

The enactment which dramatises the essential events of his life during the crucial part of the annual Ọ̀bàtálá or Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá festival must be seen as an act of commemoration. This probably took place after the 'rapprochement' between the indigenes and the immigrants in order to ensure a cosmic and cultural continuity in the life world.⁸ Although the 'conflict' has survived in the enactment ceremony as 'drama', it is the religious significance of the myth, not its historicalness, that makes the enactment more meaningful. For "man believes that life has a sacred origin and that human existence realises all of its potentialities in proportion as it is religious"⁹ Man participates in myth as though it is a reality; by dramatising the myth he makes the humanity of the god or deity even

8. This would be an example of 'sympathetic magic'. The re-enactment shows Ọ̀bàtálá's final victory over his enemies; by so doing, the worshippers are invoking the aid of the deity in fulfilling their own wishes.

9. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1961, p. 202.

more significant while, at the same time, it deepens his own involvement. The 'drama' brings a mythical occurrence (the life of Ọ̀bàtálá) into reality and as part of religious observance, it puts the worshippers in a state of belief and strengthens their faith thereby.

III. Religion and Ancestor-worship:-

By an 'imitatio dei' we see the divine behaviour of the god who created the 'earth' and 'man'; we see in the worship of Ọ̀bàtálá the core of a dramatic actualization of a mythical event. Role-playing has been used as a technique to give material existence to the arch-divinity. In the drama Ọ̀bàtálá is represented or impersonated by his chief priest, whose dignified portrayal of the deity reveals the hero, whose life-force and humanity brought order into a world disturbed by a party of invaders.

Yoruba religion is manifested in ancestor-worship. The phenomenon of ancestor-worship first originated at Ife, probably with the deification of Ọ̀bà, afterwards known as Ọ̀bàtálá (the great Ọ̀bà). This form of religion is called 'spiritism'. It is a system whereby the living community is drawn into communion with the 'spirit' of the dead. Even though the human instinct for impersonation and ritualistic expression is manifest in the dramatization which forms a part of the religious

worship of Obàtálá, and even though a conceptualized image of him is housed in his shrine (for he is believed to have metamorphosed into a stone statue), the real object of worship is not the stone or the artifacts in the shrine but his 'spirit'.

As a form of religion, ancestor-worship is based on the indestructibility of the 'soul'. A man's 'spirit' exists before his birth and naturally continues after his life. It resides in his body while he is living and survives him when he is dead.¹⁰ Although this 'spirit' can now be evoked during ancestor-worship, it did not at first manifest itself in a materialised form. It was at a later stage in ancestor-worship, at a special ceremony, that the 'spirit' or the 'manes' of the dead was brought to the homestead in a materialized identifiable human form.¹¹

The saying, "ó kú tán, ó d'òrìṣà, ó d'ẹni à-kúnlẹ̀-bẹ̀" (he [man] dies to become a deity to be worshipped on bended knees), cannot be taken too literally. An 'orisa', in common terms, is a person believed to have lived on earth when it was

10. Ulli Beier, "The Egungun Cult", Nigeria Magazine, No. 51, 1956, p. 380.

11. See below, Part 2, Chapter 3.

first created and from whom those who are living have descended. ¹² Only certain particularised ancestors were deified.

Of course, the incidence of migration in Yoruba history has been responsible for some confusion in the manner in which an individual became a worshipper of a particular 'òrìṣà', ¹³ but there is hardly any doubt about Ọ̀bàtálá being the first 'òrìṣà'. This is borne out by the reference to him as 'Òrìṣà-ílá', the supreme or arch divinity or simply an 'Òrìṣà' or 'Òòṣà'.

The worship of Ọ̀bàtálá is the most widespread in Yorubaland. The fact that he is the local deity of many Yoruba towns or settlements is significant. At Ikire, Ọ̀bàtálá is worshipped as 'Òrìṣà Ìkire'; at Ejigbo as 'Òrìṣà Ọ̀gìyán'; at Oko as 'Òrìṣà Ọ̀kò'; at Owu as 'Òrìṣà-r'Ówu'; at Iwofin as 'Òrìṣà Oluòfin'; at Ogbomòṣò as 'Òrìṣà Pópó' and in various other places throughout Yoruba simply as 'Òrìṣà'.

The theory of the dispersal from Ife of the descendants of the primordial Ọ̀bà, or the worshippers of Ọ̀bàtálá, is widespread

12. William Bascom, "The Sociological Role of the Yoruba Cult-Group", American Anthropologist, Vol. 46, No. 1, Pt. 2, January 1944, p. 21.

13. ibid., p. 5.

and significant. It may be explained from the existence and spread of the two most important and effective secret societies in Yoruba, namely, the 'Ògbóni Society'¹⁴ and the 'Masquerade'.¹⁵ Both function as politico-religious cults and have been traced to the Ìgbò. It is noteworthy that these secret societies are as widespread as the stories of migration would indicate.

The worship of Ọbàtálá has important consequences for the development of ritual drama and, finally, the emergence of the theatre. The religious concept of the deity, the rites and institutions are the results of the desires and ideals of the worshippers.

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14. The reason for the founding of the Ògbóni Society has been given as providing a strategy with which to fight Odùduwà, believed to be the leader of the invading group which settled and colonised Ife. (See Idowu, *op. cit.*, p. 28). The fact that the followers of Ọbàtálá claim ownership of the land may explain why the cult venerates the 'earth' (believed to be the creation of Ọbàtálá) and derives its sanctions from a mystical contact with it. 'Ògbóni' by folk etymology derives from "Ìgbò ló ni'lẹ̀" (Ìgbò owns the land).
15. The followers of Ọbàtálá after their defeat during the civil war at Ife, moved into the jungle in the outskirts called 'Ìgbò'gbò' (the grove of the Ìgbò). The Ife people referred to them as Ìgbò. Ọbàtálá is addressed by his worshippers as 'king of the Ìgbò'. Other appellations by which the Ìgbò was known are 'Èlú' and 'Àrè'. The leader of the Ìgbò masquerade during the Èdì Festival is called 'Èlúyàrè'.

16. Rev. Michael J. Walsh, "The Èdì Festival at Ife Ife", *African Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 105, January 1940, p. 237.

IV. Mask and Masquerade:-

The 'Ìgbò Masquerade'¹⁶ seems to be the first manifestation of this means of disguise in the Yoruba society. The followers of Ọbàtálá having been forcibly ejected from Ife by the immigrants, are known to have resorted to its use as a stratagem. By covering themselves from head to foot with "Ekan grass" (*Imperata cylindrica*) and bamboo fibres, with a 'mask' (èrè) depicting the face, the Ìgbò nicknamed "Eluyare" attacked Ife and successfully raided and plundered the city-state for a long period of time.¹⁷

The Ife people "attributed their affliction and distress to the displeasure of their gods, because those that attacked them from the Igbo territory appeared not to be human beings, but gods or demigods."^{17A} The idea of masquerading was at that time unknown in Ife and the 'Igbo masquerade' was called 'èbòra' (spirit). The eventual defeat of the Ìgbò through the heroic intervention of Mòrèmi and the 'rapprochement' which followed it bringing Ìgbò back to the fold in Ife is commemorated in the 'Edì Festival'.¹⁸

16. See plate, No. 6.

17. Johnson, op. cit., p. 147.

17^A. ibid.

18. Rev. Michael J. Walsh, "The Edì Festival at Ile Ife", African Affairs, Vol. 47, No. 186, January 1948, p. 231.

The 'Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n mask'¹⁹ is believed to be the only evidence of Ife bronze face-mask. It is said to be that of Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n Aláiyẹmọ̀ore, son of Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n Ọ̀gbódirin. Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n, credited with the introduction of bronze casting into Ife, is believed to have metamorphosed into a bronze statue at his death; hence his attributive name "Ọ̀gbódirin" (the Ịgbò who metamorphosed into iron).

The rite of human beings (heroes and royal personages) being replaced by stone images (dídọta) at their death was a funerary phenomenon during the early part of Ife history. Most of the great leaders, customarily, had stones carved in their effigies. Before they died, they kept them in secret places known only to their confidants. These latter buried their leaders' corpses secretly, while they revealed only their stone images to the public.²⁰

This 'Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n mask' has been described as one that was used during the funerary rite of the king for the ceremony of calling his 'spirit' to the homestead; some have suggested that it was a dedication to the memory of the one who popularised the art of bronze-casting in Ife. Boris de Rachewiltz has

19. See plate, No. 21.

20. J.A. Ademakinwa, Ife, Cradle of the Yoruba: A Handbook of the Origin of the Yorubas, Pt. I, p. 40.



No. 21: Obalufon Mask.

(Photo from Frank Willet, Ife in the History of West African Sculpture, Thames & Hudson, 1967.)

presumed that the Ife 'funerary statues' preserved the Yoruba custom of representing the features of the deceased during the funerary rites.²¹ The collection at Ife of 'heads' shows by their naturalistic style that the artist or artists who made them were fulfilling certain cult prerogatives - the "royal ancestor cult" which states that a great man dies to become 'ota' [stone] in order to live forever"²² It was this form of burial ceremony which created the necessity for obtaining the living likeness of the deceased; not the ceremony of bringing home the 'manes' of the deceased as a 'masquerade' which developed later.

The 'Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n mask', in all probability, was the face-mask of the 'Ìgbò Masquerade' of Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n Aláiyémoore²³ in which he returned to Ife after Mọ̀rẹ̀mì's 'rapprochement' with the

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21. Boris de Rachewiltz, Introduction to African Art, John Murray, London, 1966, p. 63.
22. R.E. Dennett, Nigerian Studies, London, 1910, p. 25. The principle behind 'dídota' (stone) or 'disìgìdì (terracotta) or 'dirin', (iron), as the case may be, has also been used to explain the Esie Images. (See Bamiro Adeagbo, "The Dilemma of Esie Images", Nigerian Sunday Sketch Review, Ibadan, February 23, 1969, p. 5.
23. In Ife Oral tradition, Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n II or Aláiyémoore is believed to have led a group of dissidents that worried Ife from outside. Ademakinwa, op. cit., p. 59 states that Aláiyémoore, Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n II was restored to Ife throne in reconciliation after he had lived in exile over a certain period.

Ìgbò people. The 'mask' has slits below the eyes for the wearer to see through; it carries holes round the hair-line and around the lips and edges which are clearly intended for the raffia grass that is used to build up the disguise. The 'mask' is believed to have been "kept in the Omirin chamber in the palace"^{23A} where probably, the Aláiyémooore's triumphal return to Ife ended.

The 'Ìgbò Masquerade' is believed to be the earliest form of disguise in the Yoruba culture. It has survived in the masquerades found in certain parts of Ekiti, Owo, Akoko, Ondo and in the former Benin empire. The existence of the Ìgbò type of masquerade in Benin was probably due to the contact she had with the most easterly part of Yorubaland when the area came under the Benin empire.²⁴

In these areas of Yorubaland the 'masquerade' is described as "omọ Olóbà" (offspring of the Olóbà).²⁵ Both the Olóbà and Obàlufon, the inventor of the 'mask' are believed to be descendants of the primordial Obà and are followers of Obàtálá,

23^A. Frank Willet, Ife in the History of West African Sculpture, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 29.

24. R.E. Bradbury, The Benin Kingdom and Edo Speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria, London, 1957, p. 22.

25. This information was communicated by Taiwo Arejigbon, a leader of the Egúngún Society in Ekiti, in a radio programme, WNBS, Tiwa-n-Tiwa 10/1/69.

otherwise called Òrìṣà-ńlá or Òrìṣà. The following extract from the 'Oríkì'²⁶ dedicated to the 'masquerade' credits Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n with its ownership:

"L'Ọ̀jọ́ tí gbogbo irúnmolè péjọ,

Tí nwọ̀n wípé kíni wọ̀n yi ó ẹ̀ kí wọ̀n lè ní'yì;

Ọ̀jọ́ nà ni 'Balùfọ̀n ránsẹ́ s'Iye ọmọ rẹ̀ l'Óko ọmu.

Ọ̀jọ́ nà ló padẹ̀ Ìbà ~~Ọ̀jọ́~~ ọmọ Òrìṣà l'ọ̀nà.

Iye ní ńṣe ọmọ Ọ̀lọ́fin.

Ìbà ọmọ Òrìṣà."

"The day when all the four-hundred²⁷ deities assembled,
And asked what they could do to be dignified;
It was on that day that 'Balùfọ̀n' [Ọ̀bàlùfọ̀n] sent for
Iye, his offspring from the palm-wine farm.²⁸
It was on that day that she met Ìbà ~~Ọ̀jọ́~~,²⁹ offspring
of Òrìṣà, on the way.
Iye is the offspring of Ọ̀lọ́fin,³⁰

26. I am grateful to Ọ̀ghéni Ọ̀lánípẹ̀kun Èsan for this 'Oríkì Eégún'.

27. It is generally believed that there are four-hundred deities or 'Òrìṣà' in the Yoruba pantheon. But there is some confusion about this census.

28. According to Ife tradition Ọ̀bàtálá is regarded as a palm-wine addict. His worshippers, however, abstain from drinking palm-wine.

29. It is believed that it was a woman who first discovered the 'masquerade' and brought it home from the bush.

30. According to Ife tradition, Nímọ̀sọ̀yẹ̀, a one time leader of the Ọ̀bàtálá group in Ife and worshipper of the deity, was nicknamed Ọ̀lọ́fin Ọ̀sángangan Ọ̀bàmákin (or Ọ̀lọ́fin for short).

*Ìbà is the offspring of Òrìṣà.*³¹

At Èjìgbò³² where Ọbàtálá is worshipped as 'Òrìṣà Ọgìyán', the deity is referred to in his praise-chant as "ó dé Ìkirè, ó d'éeégún à-kúnlè-bọ fún gbogbo wọn". (He [Ọbàtálá] got to Ìkirè to become an 'eégún' [masquerade] worshipped on bended knees by all of them).³³ During the Ikire festival of 'Òrìṣà Ìkirè' there is a masked procession and "some of the younger women in appropriate costume pantomime various birds and animals".³⁴ Also, at Abeokuta where Ọbàtálá is worshipped

31. 'Ìbà' referred to as the offspring of 'Òrìṣà' (Òrìṣà-ńlá or Ọbàtálá) may be Ọbàlufọn the founder of the 'masquerade'.

32. 'Èjìgbò' is derived from the 'diarchy' which was formed by Ọgìyán and Lágelú (two Ìgbò leaders) when the latter arrived there before moving to found his own settlement near the present Ibadan. (See E.A. Kenyo, Agbonniregun, Ibadan, 1968, pp. 80-81). He is believed to have used masquerading for gangsterism in this settlement and ~~this~~ this was responsible for the destruction of the settlement later. (See Chief I.B. Akinyele, Iwe Itan Ibadan, Egbé Àgbà-ò-tán, Ibadan, 1911, pp. 12 - 13.

33. Quoted from Bakare Gbadamosi, "Oriki Ogiyan", Oriki, Mbari, 1961, p. 9.

34. Bascom, op. cit., p. 34.

as 'Òrìṣà Ògbò', a masked man is paraded with a drawn sword.³⁵

Thus, for the followers of Ọbàtálá masquerading was not only a means of 'disguise' for the purpose of terrorization in order to achieve a political objective, but also a way of giving a material existence to the deity through impersonation.

V. Traditional Art:

The Ọbà clan, the indigenes of Ife, was the custodian of the traditional Ife art. Willet supporting this contention says that the fact that "the head of the family who represents the Igbo should be in charge of the two groves which have produced such a large proportion of Ife art in terracotta is striking, suggesting as it does that the art may really be that of the indigenous population who were employed in the service of the new ruling class."³⁶ If present evidence would give any indication, Ọbàwinrin, the priest in charge of the Groves of Ìwinrin and Ọsóngangan Ọbàmákin, is the head of the Ìgbò quarter at Ife.

35. R.C. Abraham, Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, University of London Press, 1958, p. 483.

36. Frank Willet, Ife in the History of West African Sculpture, Thames and Hudson, London, 1967, p. 123.

The often dramatic emphasis which marks out most of the terracottas and which is found missing in the bronzes (for it is believed that the immigrants introduced bronze as an art medium) put their artists in an advanced stage of sophistication. A number of the terracotta sculptures which represent, among other things, various diseases such as elephantiasis, rickets and so on, are unnaturally exaggerated and symbolical.³⁷ By their sheer numbers and variety of subject matter,³⁸ the terracottas were certainly not inspired and evolved at the same time as the bronze sculptures.³⁹

But the principle of re-incarnation which formed the basis of the philosophy behind the 'metamorphosis cult' and the funerary rite, developed the naturalistic style of art regardless of what material was used in casting the effigies.⁴⁰ The belief in mystic identification demanded that the anthropomorphic deities be made concrete and cogent. In this regard, the artist's preoccupation was evidently more on the side of religion than with the life around him.

37. ibid., pp. 61-63.

38. ibid., pp. 57-60.

39. ibid., p. 129.

40. ibid., p. 28.

Later, however, the ritual or cult imperatives which produced the naturalism of the art of the early period gradually weakened under a new social pressure which assumed control away from life. There emerged a greater variation of concepts and a new mode of artistic style. The basic differences between what Willet has called the 'Classical' and 'Post-Classical' periods of Yoruba art,⁴¹ were due to political and economic influences.⁴²

The Classical period showed art as the handmaid of magic and ritual, an instrument of religious propaganda and panegyric. The art was immortalised in stone, terracotta, and bronze sculptures with emphasis on royal and divine portraiture. The artists were anonymous. But the Post-Classical period of art is noted for its humanism. The works recorded show infinite variety both in medium and subject matter. They include works done in wood and ivory carving, brass casting and bronze in 'cire perdue' casting, batik and appliqué work in cloth and leather as well as wall-painting and bas-relief. The focus was on life, the life that the artist saw around him and which he

41. ibid., pp. 180-181.

42. The political and economic history of the Oyo empire when it emerged marked the beginning of a new epoch.

sympathetically represented in his work.

When Oyo emerged as a powerful state among the kingdoms of Yoruba, the Ọ̀bà clan, the precursor of Yoruba art and drama, was still at the fountain-head. From "Oríkì Ọ̀bà"⁴³ it is clear that wherever they were found, the descendants of Ọ̀bà engaged in the art of carving or sculpting and disguise. As will be seen in the following stanza from the 'Oríkì', reference is made to the primordial 'conflict' between the indigenous and the immigrant groups:

"Ọ̀mọ a gbẹ́ fún wọ̀n má ra ti Ọ̀nì.

Ọ̀mọ a gbẹ́ rẹ́kété f'Ọ̀bà kó fi jẹun.

Ọ̀mọ a pọ́ 'gi ní 'fun dà sí 'gbó.

Ọ̀mọ a tan 'nà irin jó 'gi l'ára.

Ọ̀wọ̀n, mo lè pa 'gi dà sọ 'gi

d'ònià l'Arè."

Offspring of one who carves but does not
carry his [work] to the Ọ̀nì⁴⁴

Offspring of one who carves the basin
for Ọ̀bà to feed out of.

43. I am grateful to Ọ̀gbéni S.A. Babayemi of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan for 'Oríkì Ọ̀bà'. (See Appendix 1).

44. This line alludes to the feud between the Ọ̀bà clan and the throne of Ife. For the followers of Ọ̀bà, Ife is 'Ifẹ̀ Ọ̀yẹ̀' or 'Ọ̀yẹ̀lẹ̀gbò' but for the supporters of Ọ̀dùdùwà Ife is 'Ifẹ̀ Ọ̀nì.' The former is another name by which Ọ̀bàtálá was called. (See Ademakinwa, *op. cit.*, Pt. II, p. 28).

Offspring of one who digs the entrails of the tree and throws them into the bush.

Offspring of one who uses hot iron to mark [design] the wood.

Ọwọn,⁴⁵ I can transform the wood into a human being⁴⁶ at Àrè".⁴⁷

Because of its focus on everyday life, the style of art which developed during the Post-Classical period has been referred to as 'humanistic'.⁴⁸ Since the artist sympathetically observed and represented in his work what he saw around him. Carrol who has made an extensive study of this artistic development among the craftsmen of Northern Ekiti,⁴⁹ claims

45. Ọlójowò, (known as Ọwò for short), was a descendant of the legendary Ọbà who established a great reputation as an artist in the Oyo kingdom. Both Làghàyí and Ajíbógundé the famous court-artists of the eighteenth century were his offspring. (For the praise chants of these great artists, see Babalọla, Àwọn Oríkì Orílẹ̀, Collins, 1967.

46. This is a reference to the connection of Ọbà and his descendants with portrait art and caricaturing.

47. 'Àrè' has been used here attributively to refer to a place of origin. In fact it is the other descriptive name of the Ìgbò used by the Ife supporters of Odùduwà to address the followers of Ọbàtálá on their return to Ife after Mọrẹmí's 'rapprochement'. In this regard 'Àrè' means 'stranger'. The term has survived among the Oyo artists as a name that relates to a great and an ingenious clan.

48. Kevin Carrol, "Ekiti Wood Carving", Odu, No. 4, p. 3.

49. Carrol, Yoruba Religious Carving, Chapman, London, 1967, (passim). See plates, Nos. 15 & 16.

that the artists are more interested in scenes of Yoruba life than in any attempt at time sequence or the building up of a narrative. interest, are without details, but they form

Yoruba humanistic art flourished in Oyo and became widespread with the expansion of the empire and even after its collapse.⁵⁰ It is the background which this artistic development provided for the emergence of the Yoruba theatre from its religious dramatic roots that is of significant interest. A sociological view of the art reveals a strong link between the fine arts and the drama. They both show a strong reflexion on, and expression of, the culture, linked closely by a belief system and a philosophy. Both art and drama are used as a means of communicating certain significant experiences which reveal the interactions of man with nature. Both the carver, for instance, and the dramatist, almost invariably tell the same story.⁵¹ There is convincing evidence that the latter

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50. Evidences of this diffusion have been found in the works of Àrẹ̀gún, Bámgbóyè and Bándélé of Òsì, all descendants of the great Oyo carvers, who settled in Northern Ekiti. (See Carrol, *ibid.*). Also in the Southwestern parts of Yoruba especially in the works of the carvers of the Egúngún and Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀ masks.
51. Kevin Carrol graphically describes the 'pageant of Yoruba life' illustrated in the carvings he studied. (See Carrol "Ekiti Wood Carvings" *Odu*, pp.3-10). The themes of the 'pageant' bear out the artistic relatedness between the carver and the masque-dramaturg.

The following paragonical processes yield evidences of the draws his inspiration from the former. The artistic representations whether they deal with subjects of historical, social or fictional interest, are without details; but they form links and are enough to stimulate the imagination of the spectator to fill in the outlines.

VI. Developmental Drama:-

The Yoruba, like any other people, were in quest of the right way of living and this begins from 'play'. According to Plato, "life must be lived as play; playing certain games, making sacrifices, singing and dancing; and then a man will be able to propitiate his gods and defend himself against his enemies and win the contests".⁵² Play begins when one steps out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity which has its own disposition.⁵³ It becomes drama when the action is symbolic or when it implies an imagined element in a make-believe situation and it is intended to develop or improve social relationships.

52. Plato, Laws, VII, 803, c,d,e.

53. Huizinga, Homo Ludens, p. 8.

The following ceremonial occasions yield evidences of the 'play-element' of Yoruba culture which in one way or another influenced the development of the theatre:

- (a) Social Play:- The Yoruba has a song for every event of life, and any social occasion creates an opportunity for improvisations. When celebrants intend to heighten the social tempo during a celebration, they indulge in music, song and dance. These are generally improvised to suit the occasion. An example is provided by T.J. Bowen, a Baptist missionary, who travelled through the Yoruba country about the middle of the nineteenth century. He remarked on how quickly the people could improvise in song and dance. When he was refused admission into Awaye, he said that the women were soon singing about it, the first line being, "The whiteman camped at the root of the tree"⁵⁴.

There are guilds known for their specialised entertainment in song and dance: the hunter's guild is known for 'eré oḍe', the 'alágbè' for its 'sèkèrè' music and acrobatics, and the 'òjè' for its 'èṣà' and improvised drama. Each time there is a social occasion that calls for great festivities, namely, a birth, marriage or death, any of the guilds could be invited

54. T.J. Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labors: 1849-1856, 1859, p. 285.

especially if it has to do with any of their members. But there are mendicants too who stroll about to give amusements.⁵⁵

Another form of social play is identified with children's group-drama - 'play-time under the moon'.⁵⁶ Folk-tales and

riddles are handled by the story-teller, usually an elderly person in the compound, during this monthly get-together: One

of the children acts as the 'call-boy'. He summons all his mates to the court-yard. When they are all assembled in a

semi-circle, he brings the story-teller around who sits in the semi-circle facing the group and opens the show with a song.

The group repeats the refrain and listens to the tale. This is occasionally interrupted by the story-teller singing the song of the tale and its refrain repeated by the group.

Riddle-time is the tail-piece. The 'play' is finally brought to an end by dance and song accompanied by percussion or drum music, or the rhythmic clapping of hands in the absence of an accompaniment.

- (b) Ritual Play:- Every ritual occasion calls up the spirit of 'play'. When a psycho-physical stimulus is evoked, it arouses

55. Sir A. Moloney, "Notes on the Yoruba and Lagos", Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, XII, September 1890, p. 609

56. Miss Tucker, Abbeokuta, pp. 22-23.

an excitement of a dramatic nature. The ritual play serves as a bond of unity among the worshippers. It is a symbolic reminder of common ideals during the rites, sacrifices and worship. The content and form of the ritual play, however, depends on the nature of the 'òrìṣà' whose feast-day is being celebrated. The ritual play normally grows out of a moment of ecstasy ⁱⁿ during which some aspects of the mythical life of the deity is enacted. It is not unusual to find satiric elements in the improvisations. The Yoruba sometimes maintains a joking relationship with his god⁵⁷ and does not draw sharp dividing lines between the sacred and the profane.⁵⁸

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57. Ulli Beier, Yoruba Poetry, Ibadan, 1959, p. 10. See also his "Gelede Masks" in Odu, June 1958, p. 9.
58. Beier, "The Agbegijo Masqueraders", Nigeria Magazine, No. 82, 1964, p. 189. There is a general assumption that there comes a time in human development when man treats with profanity what he had formerly held to be sacred. This manifestation among Yoruba worshippers which is still prevalent, especially during personal worship, may be an attitude of a transitional nature. However, when the Yoruba worshipper communicates with his object of worship "it is an ingrained habit to call his object of worship by attributive names ... appellations and personal epithets." (Idowu, op. cit., p. 9). These appellations and attributive names may be of a satirical nature and may also be one way in which the Yoruba humours his 'òrìṣà'.

Unlike in the social play where, sometimes, professionals can be brought around, the ritual-play is exclusively part of religious observance and is, therefore, handled by the worshippers and their priests. It is sometimes played through symbolic action, including dance and chant, and sometimes through a dramatic enactment. The play-form, normally, takes the following pattern: An evocation chant opens the ritual observance, then there are prayer and sacrifices followed by the communal meal and sharing; a dance-drama brings the gathering to an end. The presence of visual arts, namely, carvings, in the place of worship, and sometimes carried in the dance, may evoke particular excitement or emotions of an ecstatic kind.

- (c) Enactment Ceremonies:- There is 'play' during enactment ceremonies which are features of civic and religious festivals. An enactment ceremony has to do with an important historical event that bears directly on the life of the people. For all practical purposes, they serve as reminders of the past and provide a sense of security in the present. Civic enactments are observable during civic ceremonies, usually involving all the citizens in the community, for commemorating certain events:-

the founding of the settlement,⁵⁹ the crowning of the first ruler,⁶⁰ the enactment of the harvest-home⁶¹ or a celebration which employs 'sympathetic magic'.⁶²

Religious enactments are observable during the annual festivals of certain 'òrìṣà'.⁶³ They depict either certain events during the mortal life of the deities or certain conceptualised ideas about them. The play-form is not fixed and varies from place to place depending on the virtuosity of the priests or worshippers. Examples of religious enactments are found in the annual Ọbàtálá and Eḍì festivals.⁶⁴

59. Johnson, op. cit., p. 227.

60. Akinjogbin, op. cit., p. 176.

61. Johnson, op. cit., p. 49.

62. The expression of man's longings through an enactment that invokes the aid of the supernatural forces in fulfilling his wishes. Richard Lander has recorded an example of this form of ritual drama employing 'sympathetic magic' in Records of Blapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol. I, London, 1830. pp. 289-290. (See Appendix 2).

63. J.A. Adedeji, "Form and Function of Satire in Yoruba Drama", Odu, Vol. 4, No. 1, July 1967, pp. 67-68, see also I.A. Akinjogbin, "Enactment Ceremonies", p. 177.

64. Adedeji, "The Place of Drama in Yoruba Religious Observance" Odu 1966, pp. 88-94.

Professional entertainers developed especially during the Oyo period of Yoruba history. The 'Ọjẹ' masked entertainers developed into the Alárinjọ Theatre. Other itinerant groups like the Şàngó dancer and the 'Akíríbotó' ~~which~~ were noted for their magical displays, and the 'Alágbè' dancers for their gymnastics. In Old Oyo, there were the court-jesters who lived at the pleasure of the Alafin in the palace. The 'Ọlọṣà' (robber) was kept for the amusement of the king's spectators during certain civic occasions. As a clown the Ọlọṣà who, dressed in a flowing garment, crept about on all fours, performing acts of robbery.⁶⁵ Another was the 'Aṣa', the barefaced 'knight errant'. He acted out the king's message on his missions.⁶⁶ At court, there were also the 'Akùnyùgbà', the king's bards, whose entertainment was the chanting of the king's praises.⁶⁷

VII. Society and Societal Organization:-

Ife as the centre of a brilliant civilization which

65. Johnson, op. cit., p. 53.

66. Adedeji, (1967), op. cit., p. 70.

67. Johnson, op. cit., p. 65.

69. Richard Courtney, Play, Drama and Thought, Cassel, London, 1968, p. 148.

gradually spread in all directions to cover a vast territory was developed in consequence of the stratagems initiated by the indigenous inhabitants who were later politically submerged by an invading party. The new rulers succeeded in their colonization programme and Ife became a model city-state, the centre of religious activities whither all the peoples returned, at intervals, on 'pilgrimage' for spiritual inspiration.

The founding of the Oyo city-state in later centuries, however, marked the beginning of a new epoch in Yoruba history. The culture of the previous epoch developed and strengthened the new. The dramatic expressions which the socio-political and religious systems of Ife civilization helped to originate and develop, spread to Oyo where the Alárìnjó Theatre eventually emerged.

An inter-relationship between the dramatic developments and the culture patterns is necessary because "the relationship of any trait to its culture is important to the understanding of that trait"⁶⁸ According to Courtney, "the dramatic expression of a community and its social structure and beliefs are inter-twined".⁶⁹

68. H.B. Menagh, "A Way of Separating Theatre from Rite", Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. XIX, No. 2, May 1967, p. 120.

69. Richard Courtney, Play, Drama and Thought, Cassel, London, 1968, p. 148.

The conditions under which the Alárinjò Theatre emerged in the Yoruba society are not dissimilar ~~from~~ ^{to} those of other civilizations. The process of development, however, varies, and this is largely accounted for by the structure of the Yoruba society and the nature of its culture. The elements of 'total theatre'⁷⁰ namely, acting and dance, improvisation and stylization, dialogue and gesture, mask and make-up, music and song, costume and spectacle, which form the basis of the Alárinjò Theatre, are almost invariably present in any traditional theatrical setting. The main difference may be due to the emphasis which each society places upon these elements in consequence of its own social and historical developments.

The lineage system⁷¹ was a strong and fundamental factor in Yoruba social and industrial organization. It comprised ~~of~~ a named ancestor and his descendants in the male line, their wives and children. It was headed by the oldest man of the compound or 'agbo ilé'. He was called 'baba', in the same way as the ancestor buried within the homestead was described,

70. ibid., p. 150.

71. P.C. Lloyd, in "Yoruba Lineage", Africa, Vol. 25, No. 3, July 1955, pp. 235-251, discusses the significance of the lineage system.

for he was believed to be next to him. He was in charge of the ancestral cult and he led the others in the rites of worship. He also had some social and political powers attached to his status. Vital economic powers were centred in his hands and this tended to make for great solidarity within the lineage and also helped in preserving the compound as one great residential unit.⁷²

The compound contained a cluster of houses enclosing a large central area. A piazza ran right round it. The 'òde' is the grounds in front of the compound used for recreation. The size of the compound depended upon the size of the lineage. It was oblong in shape and had a gabled frontage over the central gateway. Its chief features were the 'ojútò', (impluvium), the 'àkòdi' (inner chamber), the 'kàà' or 'kàrà' (secret or retiring apartment in the court-yard), and the 'àgbàlá', (court-yard). For the individual as well as the family, the compound was the centre of life and the castle of refuge. Although all the compounds had certain distinguishing features which related one to another, there were certain peculiarities in design and decoration which made one more attractive than another.

73. Tucker, *Abbeokuta*, p. 22.

74. A.L. Mabogunje on "The Morphology of Ibadan" in The City of Ibadan (ed. Lloyd etc.), Cambridge, 1967, p. 47.

The court-yard was the centre of the recreational life of the compound. It was "the common place of resort for all the inmates, where, shut in among themselves, they can without fear of interruption, talk over any subject of family interest."⁷³ It was notably the 'school' within the compound where games, gymnastics and dance were practised. It was the scene of the moonlight shows: drama, story-telling, riddles and other amusements; also the place where children imbibed their rich mythology and learnt about their gods. Because of its importance to the compound, the verandah or piazza facing this court-yard was decorative. The walls were designed in bas-relief, the leading doors were carved with figures and the roof-posts were sculpted or ornamented.⁷⁴ Richness in designs, of course, depended on the distinction and status of the lineage in the community set-up. The lineage-head was normally chief of the compound and represented its interests on official occasions.⁷⁵

The Yoruba adage, 'Ilé la ti nkẹsọ rọde', means more than its English counterpart, "charity begins at home." The compound had within it an inherent method of educating the young.

73. Tucker, Abbeokuta, p. 22.

74. Clapperton, op. cit., p. 48.

75. Bolanle Awe in The City of Ibadan, op. cit., p. 115.

Within it, children were introduced to material culture, folkways and mores as well as religious beliefs and philosophy. The lineage chants or the totem-poems were mastered. This was particularly essential to the role of the wives of the compound during ritual, festival and social occasions when they had to chant the praises of their husbands. Whatever the individual could pride himself, or be credited with \angle on, outside of the compound, was the result of his education within the compound. 'Role-playing' was, for this reason, an essential aspect of training. Rhetoric was characteristically an important aid to social intercourse and communication. The verbal arts were useful in ingraining the traditional lore and they helped in developing rhetorical virtuosity.

The political organization was also based, to a large extent, on the lineage principle. The king ruled through a council whose membership was drawn from representatives of lineage organizations, secret societies and religious groups, as well as guilds and other civic associations. Since the function of the king combined both the civil and the religious it was, therefore, important that all group-interests were represented on the ruling council.

The king's Court was, to all intents and purposes, the centre of the religious, social and industrial life of the people.⁷⁶ Both the king's social and ritual celebrations called for amusements and dramatic enactments. Fashion began at Court and artists and craftsmen presented the best of their works first to the king. All ideas about the development of the social and economic life of the people were advanced from the palace. When the king was in state, he occupied one of the several gabled porticoes (kòbì) fronting the palace. He occupied the "Kòbì Aganju" the central portico on festival and social occasions. He retained the services of court-jesters and entertainers as well as musicians and rhapsodists who kept up the social tempo of the palace.

The existence of craft-guilds in the society was of social and religious importance. Crafts were highly developed and those who plied them were held in special regard. There was a strong relationship between the craft-objects and the religious beliefs with their ritual observances. Some notable craftsmen were honoured to live in the palace but the lineage-system contributed more to their influence. Guilds functioned mainly to protect the interest of their members and their

76. Wilfrid D. Hamby: Culture Areas of Nigeria, Vol. XXI, No. 3, Chicago, 1935, p. 458.

regular meetings were noted for festivities and amusements.⁷⁷

The society was held together and sustained by Yoruba religious beliefs. They furnished individuals with specific experience and stimulations.⁷⁸ The individual worshipped one or more of the deities in the Yoruba pantheon whether they were within his compound or outside. In its great complexity, Yoruba traditional religion did not have any theological or doctrinal basis but it was highly organized with a priesthood system. Certain days in the week were set aside for the rites

and observances of the deities and certain calendar months were dedicated to their festivals. Ritual acts were esoteric and confined to initiates but the festivals were public occasions when everybody gathered for communal sharing.

Shrines and temples were filled with ritualistic sculpture done in wood and bronze, and the walls were decorated with paintings and bas-relief. Masked dances and ritual drama featured during the observances of some deities and worship consisted of salutes, prayer and sacrifice.

77. Daryll Forde, op. cit., p. 16.

78. S.F. Nadel, Nupe Religion, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1954, p. 259.

Dramatizations and dramatic enactments as part of social and ritualistic life provided mental and psychological relaxation. As a means of vicarious interaction, they also provided the common ground for social and spiritual intercourse. Music and dancing were favourite pastimes and there were ballad-singers, the chief of whom was the Ológbo or Arókin, the king's cymbalist,⁷⁹ one such was Ológbin Ológbajo, the first masque-dramaturg.⁸⁰

VIII. Conclusion:-

The human instinct for impersonation and ritualistic expression which leads to 'developmental drama', was displayed to a large extent by the Ọ̀bà clan, the autochthones of the Yorubaland, apparently as a natural reaction to their vicissitudes. They gave material existence to Ọ̀bàtálá, the supreme divinity, whose humanity was responsible for the restoration of order and tranquility into a cosmos that was upset by the presence and activities of a party of immigrants. By a recourse to stratagems, they developed the means of drama, namely, religion, disguise and art. Through these they were

79. ibid., p. 125.

80. See below, pp. 133-4.

able to get a kind of release and other satisfactions; and even more, to lay the foundation for the emergence of the theatre.

Evidently, these indigenes were culturally developed, especially artistically, before the arrival and settlement of the immigrants in Ife. But in spite of their ingenuity and creativity, they were politically subjugated, scattered and isolated by the immigrants. Perhaps this was due to a lack of a strong centralised power at the beginning; although, later, they organised themselves into secret societies to achieve their political objectives. The effect and influence of both the 'Ògbóni Society' and the 'Masquerade' became more pronounced in the new settlements founded away from Ife. The 'Ògbóni Society' became a cult - "a priestly corporation that mediated between the king and his council and sanctioned their actions."⁸¹ The 'Masquerade' as egúngún, the materialised form of the spirit of the ancestor, became a cultic organization for the worship of ancestral spirits and from which the Alárínjò Theatre developed its essence.

81. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo" in West African Kingdoms of the 19th Century, eds., Forde and Kaberry, O.U.P., 1967, p. 42.

The development of a monarchical system of government and a religious hierarchy, and the concentration of both in the city-state were the starting points of Yoruba urbanism.⁸² The 'ilú' (town) was the centre of politics, religion, commerce and cultural activity. The governing council was called 'ilú', a term synonymous with that of the physical city-state or town.

Urbanism and a hierarchical form of social organization were strong contributing factors in the development of the theatre. The Old Oyo empire provided opportunities for general mobility and a system of communication between the metropolis and other towns and villages. Old Oyo, the metropolis and seat of the Alafin, Lord of the Palace, became the centre of light and civilization. It determined the pattern and the kinds of dramatic expression which the structure of the empire helped to spread, since the provinces followed the lead of the capital.

82. William Bascom in "Urbanization among the Yoruba", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 60, No. 5, March 1955, pp. 446-454, discusses the Yoruba settlement patterns.

element into
cult of ances-

I. Magistrates and Ancestors

The phenomenon of
life as 'spiritual'
The funeral rite
were supposed
objects

PART TWO

The Origin of the Theatre

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I. Masquerade and Ancestor-worship:-

The phenomenon of ancestor-worship which originated in life as 'spiritism' developed a materialized form at Old Oyo. The funeral rite which created the system whereby the ancestors were supposed to have metamorphosed into stone or other objects was changed. At Oyo, the ancestor could be evoked and called down into a 'costumed figure'. This took place during a special ceremony designed to give the impression that the deceased was making a temporary re-appearance on earth. The 'spirit' manifested himself in an identifiable human form. The development is believed to have been initiated by Sàngó when he was Alafin of Oyo.

(a) Sàngó's Reforms: The 'Funeralia'

Sàngó, the son of Oranyan by a Tapa woman, was born during the latter's military expedition in the Nupe country, by a Tapa woman. When he became the Alafin of Oyo, he immediately set about the re-organization of the city-state. He strengthened his rule over the governing council, re-organised the palace and appointed a number of courtiers and household officers of the crown.

1. Idowu, op. cit., p. 193.

As an act of filial piety, he introduced a new element into the rites of the Yoruba funeral ceremony - the cult of ancestor-worship.

Oranyan had died at Ife and was believed to have metamorphosed into a stone-staff, 'Òpá Òranyàn'. Šango tried to secure his remains for burial at Oyo, which Oranyan had founded and where he had reigned for a brief period before returning to Ife. When Šango failed to have his wish fulfilled, he designed, as an alternative, funeral obsequies for Oranyan at Oyo. At a special ceremony, Šango brought the 're-incarnated spirit' of his father to the outskirts of Oyo where he set up the 'Bàrà'² (the royal mausoleum) for his worship. 'Ìyámòdè',³ the old woman of the palace was placed in charge of the mystery. Her duty was to worship Oranyan's 'spirit' and during an evocation ceremony call his 'masquerade' out of a room in the Bàrà set aside for this purpose and screened off from view with a white-cloth.⁴ Šango looked upon the old woman with reverence and prostrated before her each time he came to worship his father's 'spirit'.

2. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

3. 'Ìyámòdè' is derived from "Ìyá-mò-Odédé"; ^{"Odédé" is} the other name of Oranyan (See ibid., p. 10). The old woman is believed to have had an acquaintance with Oranyan during the latter's brief reign at Old Oyo.

4. ibid., p. 65.

Later, the ceremony of bringing the 'spirit' of the deceased to the homestead as a 'masquerade' became widespread as part of the funeral ceremony of lineage-heads. It was also as the means of communion with the ancestor during worship. But instead of the 'Barà', where the evocation ceremony of the royal ancestor took place, that of the lineage was confined to the 'Kàrà' or 'Káà', a secret chamber in the court-yard within the compound. It has since become the retiring apartment for the repose of the 'spirit' of the lineage ancestor or his 'soul'.⁵

This 'funerary rite' takes place on the seventh day⁶ after burial and is performed only for the lineage-head and certain distinguished citizens, male or female. As soon as the 'masquerade' appears during the rite, he is hailed, "ará òrun kẹ̀kẹ̀n; Òrìṣà òun aṣọ̀ rẹ̀ méjì," (the direct visitor from heaven; the deity who is inseparable from his two garments).⁸ After the ceremony,

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5. Dr. Olumide Lucas, Religion of the Yorubas, p. 378.
6. P.A. Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. III, p. 476.
7. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 138-140.
8. The two garments referred to cannot be interpreted literally. This deity during his temporary visit to the earth only materializes in a robed figure and wherever he goes he is seen in the garments that disguise him.

the deceased is believed to have become an ancestor and his 'spirit' can therefore, be worshipped in the compound occasionally. The 'spirit' continues to influence the life of his people, and during the time of worship, prayers and supplications can be made to him.

Şàngó, by creating the 'masquerade' of his father and setting him up as an 'òrìṣà' to be worshipped, reformed the Yoruba funeral ceremony and introduced a new element into ancestor-worship - the concept of re-incarnation in a materialised form. His Tápà origins influenced him in this regard. However, by associating the 'mask' with the ritual worship of the ancestor, he seemed to have preserved the sanctity of a device believed to be used for a different purpose by the Tápà. His Yoruba followers, in consequence of this reformation, adopted the system for ancestor-worship and believed in the reality of the appearance of the 'masquerade'.⁹

(b) Ọfinràn's Reforms: The 'Cultus'

During the reign of Alafin Onigbogi, the Yoruba had to evacuate Old Oyo because of the menace of the Nupe 'masked

9. Johnson, op. cit., p. 160.

warriors'.¹⁰ Morton-Williams has suggested that this evacuation took place between c. 1516 and c. 1549.¹¹

The Yoruba who had since the time of Ẓàngó worshipped the 'spirit' of the dead and had believed in the reality of the 'masquerade' as the re-incarnated spirit of the ancestor, took the Nupe masked warriors to be ancestral spirits fighting on the side of their enemy. Rather than fighting the 'arà òrun' (heavenly beings) whom they revered, the Yoruba fled their city-state and went into exile in Gbere, a Bariba settlement in Borgu.

The Nupe had used the 'masquerade' in the same way as the Ìgbò did at Ife several centuries before. It is, however, not unlikely that the Nupe and the Ìgbò had influenced each other in this regard. The Ìgbò as indigenes of Ife would, indeed, be the traditional neighbours of the Nupe. This was made clear when later the Ọlóbà¹² with others 'emigrated' from the Nupe country to join the exiled Yoruba at Kuṣu.¹³ According to

10. Robert Smith, "The Alafin in Exile: A Study of the Igboho period in Oyo History", Journal of African History, VI, I, 1965, p. 59.

11. Cited in R. Smith, ibid., p. 72.

12. The 'Ọlóbà' referred to appeared to be a lineage representative of the 'Òbà clan'. He may, in fact, be a descendant of one of the Ìgbò leaders, followers of the primordial Òbà, who migrated to the Nupe country following the Ìgbò dispersal from Ife.

13. Johnson, loc. cit.

Johnson, the Yoruba had allowed themselves to be imposed upon by the Nupe masked soldiers because they (the Yoruba) believed in the "reality of the so-called [Nupe] apparitions."¹⁴ If one would accept this explanation as to the reason why the Yoruba were defeated by the 'Nupe masquerade', it would then appear that the memory of the 'Ìgbò masquerade' and the mythical role of Mòrèmi had been effaced or did not in fact penetrate into the Oyo kingdom; on the other hand, this explanation could be accepted as an excuse conveniently proffered to defend the Yoruba defeat. But what seems more probable is that Şango, by associating the 'masquerade' with ancestor-worship when it was first created at Oyo, had given it a religious essence. Under this influence, it is possible that the difference in concept and belief between the 'Oyo masquerade' (confined to ancestor-worship and funeral obsequies) and the 'Nupe masquerade' (influenced by the Ìgbò through cultural link), was responsible for what then seemed to be a state of confusion.

The 'Oyo masquerade', was ritualistic. The 'costumed figure' was a realistic representation believed to be the 'spirit and image' of the deceased when he was living. After his appearance on the last day of the funeral obsequies, the 'image' was

15. *ibid.*, pp. 211, p. 212.

16. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

14. ibid.

never seen again in any materialized form. He was believed to have gone to live in the other world - the 'spirit' world; and his worshippers maintained communion with him during ancestor-worship. The 'Nupe masquerade' like the 'Ìgbò masquerade' on the other hand, was cultic. It was a symbolic representation - a disguise that had no identifiable human form. Since it was designed for the achievement of a political objective, it probably looked weird and grotesque.

It was not until the reign of Alafin Orinran, who succeeded his father, Onigbogi, in exile in Gbere at ~~1544~~ c. 1544,¹⁵ that the Yoruba adopted the 'masquerade' both as a means of ritual and political action. In order to respond to the threat posed by the Nupe, the Yoruba camped at Kusu, near the Sanda hill. It was here that the mystery behind the 'Nupe masquerade' was made known by a group of 'Nupe-nized' Yoruba who had come out from Nupe to re-join the remnants of the Yoruba who had returned from the Bariba country. This emigrant group comprised the first Alápinmi with the Olóbà, Aládàtá, Olójè, Eléfi and Olóhan.¹⁶ The meeting resolved to reconcile the concept of the 'masquerade' with the belief in

15. Smith, op. cit., p. 24.

16. Johnson, op. cit., p. 160.

ancestor-worship and constitute both into one organization that should exist to give expression to the cult of ancestor. For ritual guidance, acts of worship and instruction, the emigrant groups from the Nupe country were allowed to form themselves into the hierarchy of the society,¹⁷ (hereafter called the Egúngún Society).

The emigrant groups were, however, comprised of two distinct lineages: the Ìgbórí and the Ọlóbà. Since they were both responsible for the constitution of the 'cultus', Ọfinran appointed them as officers and priests of the ancestral cult. The Alápinni, the representative of the Ìgbórí lineage, was appointed to the Oyo Mesi, the council that advised the Alafin on political matters. Both the Ọlójẹ and Aládafà, two principal members from the Ọlóbà lineage, were given posts at Court as the 'Arókin' (rhapsodist) and 'Ológbo' (sword-bearer), respectively.¹⁸

By this appointment, the Alafin had given the Alápinni (whose lineage was of Tápà extraction), precedence over the Ọlóbà (whose lineage had claimed to be the autochthones of

17. ibid.

18. When Ológbin, offspring of the Aládafà succeeded his father Ọwónrín at Court as the Ológbo, it is believed that he occupied the two offices by being both the Ológbo and the Arókin of the Alafin. (See Below).

Yorubaland). This arrangement became the basis of a protracted conflict within the 'cultus' as to which of the two lineages owned the 'masquerade'.¹⁹

The most significant of Ofinran's reformations and political re-arrangement, however, was the restoration, as it were, of the 'Obà clan' once more to the Yoruba fold, this time to the Oyo Court. In this case, however, the two principal chiefs from the Olóbà lineage were made court-officials with chieftaincy titles. The Olóje, by nature of his avocation, was assigned to court-entertainments and rituals. He came under Ìyámòde, the old woman in charge of the royal ancestral cult at the 'Barà' (an outhouse of the palace). By this assignment, the Olóje became responsible for seeing to the arrangement and organization of the 'ritual play' - the bringing home of the 'manes' of the dead as a 'masquerade' during the last day of the funeral obsequies of the deceased lineage-head.

Thus, an opportunity was created for a chieftain from the 'Obà clan' to combine the facilities of his post at Court

20. *Journal of the Yoruba Language Society*, 1928, p. 141, has accused both Colonel S. Hillis and Dr. S.S. Farrow of ignorance of Yoruba accentuation marks because they had interpreted 'egungun' to mean 'bone' or 'skeleton'. At the least he himself should first have checked with Bishop Ajayi Crowther's interpretation contained in his *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language*, London, 1852, p. 89.

19. The conflict was resolved in favour of the Olóbà lineage through a contest believed to have been organized by King Abiodun, the Alafin of Oyo a century later. (See below).

with his own traditional creativity to lay the foundation for the development of a dramatic art. The 'ritual play' of the Yoruba funerary rite formed the dramatic roots from which the Alárinjò Theatre later emerged. It was as a result of the highly placed position of the Olójà at Court that the theatre was eventually put on the direct road to professionalism.

(c) The Origin of the Egúngún:-

The ancestral spirit which was formerly known in Yorubaland as 'ẹ̀bọra' or 'ará òrun' became 'egúngún', an appellation which, by folk etymology, derived from 'egungun gún' or 'eegun gún' ('formed bones' or 'straightened skeleton').²⁰ The following 'Oríkì Egúngún',²¹ not only furnishes the explanation of this but also describes graphically how 'egungun' (bone) became 'egúngún' (the ancestral spirit) with Tápa connection and setting.

20. Dr. Lucas who describes 'egungun' as meaning "a luminous spirit", (Religion of the Yorubas, Lagos, 1948, p. 141), has accused both Colonel B. Ellis and Dr. S.S. Farrow of ignorance of Yoruba accentuation marks because they had interpreted 'egúngún' to mean 'bone' or 'skeleton'. At the least he himself should first have checked with Bishop Ajayi Crowther's interpretation contained in his A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language, London, 1852, p. 80).

21. This 'Oríkì' was recorded by the late P.O. Ogunbowale and is contained in his Àwọn Irúnmolè Ilẹ̀ Yoruba, Evans' Bros., London, 1962, pp. 75-76.

Oríkì: "Egúngún A jùwón,
 Làkùlùkù gbùù-gbùù!
 Arágò gbá lẹ,
 Egúngún kíkì egungun
 T' Ògògò!

Òkú yi gbé'rí!

Èni ará kan,
 Tí níjójó awo.

Ọ̀sọ̀ràn l'okùn ńdè l'Ágburè.

Ìgbà tí ńkò s'ọ̀ràn okùn,
 Kí lẹ m'ókùn so mí l'ápa sí?

Ọmọ kẹkẹ mo sá.

Mo mú s'èwe l'Ápínni.

Àbàjà ní mo bù,

Mo mú s'èwe l'Ágburè.

Ọ̀m̀bọ̀ ní mo wà,

Mo mú s'èwe n'Ígborí

'Torí Ìgbórí mi l'Ọ̀yọ̀ M̀dọ̀.

Baba Arúkú,

Baba Arúkú,

Ọmọ, aròkú-rojà-mátà.

Òkú tã gbé rọjà

22. According to the informant, the name 'Baba' means 'bone', 'Baba' 'skeleton' and 'Arúkú' means 'bone' to be a son from the 'dead'. (See also p. 107).

23. The name 'Aròkú-rojà-mátà' is a traditional facial name. In the context of the traditional impersonation, the informant has to say that he has these facial characteristics on them ready for his impersonation.

T'a ò tà, the one who sees death,
 Father of the one who carries death,
 Òun l'a d'áṣọ fún the corpse to the market
 T'a npè l'égún. was carried to the market
 That did not tell,

Ikú 'i l'Ódò.
 Around was built for,

Ọmọ atókí jeun,
 You can make the dead for a living,
 Ọmọ at'aiyé sọlẹ n'Ígbalẹ. order to make
 Baba Ato kékeré
 With the jagged mouth.
 A-benu wẹjẹwẹje!"

Thou ancestral spirit that surpasses all,
 Thou powerful one,
 With the shroud to sweep the ground.
 Thou ancestral spirit that is all bones.
 These of Ogogo!

This corpse resurrects!²²
 One who receives the pains of death,
 Who dances to the beat of the cult.
 It is the criminal offender
 Who has the noose round his neck at Agbure.
 When I've not divulged the secret,
 Why do you strap my hands?

I have put on the 'kéké' marks,^{22A}
 And spent my youth at Apinni.
 I have the 'àbàjà' marks,
 I spent my youth at Agbure.
 I have the 'gòmbó' marks,
 I spent my youth at Igbori
 Because Igbori is also my Oyo.

22. According to Ellis, "Egungun means 'bone', hence 'skeleton' and egungun himself is supposed to be a man risen from the dead". (See A.B. Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 107).

22^A. The marks referred to are in respect of the traditional facial marks of certain areas of Yoruba. To complete his impersonation, the masquerader has to have masks that have these facial characteristics on them ready for his performance.

Father of the one who sees death,
 Father of the one who carries death,
 Son, who carries the corpse to the market
 for sale.
 The corpse that was carried to the market
 That did not sell,
 Was what a shroud was built for,
 And was called 'egúngún'.

Death has no stream,
 Thou son that sells the dead for a living,
 That sells the world in order to make
 merry at the sacred grove.
 Father of the little Ato
 With the jagged mouth!"

The origin of the egúngún²³ phenomenon is contained in 'Odu' Òwónrínṣẹ'.²⁴ It narrates how the bony skeleton of the deceased Òwónrín of Ìsányín was brought home in disguise. It also marks the beginning of the handling of the 'funerary

23. In consequence of Yoruba migration pattern, there exist several local versions of the myth of the origin of the egúngún especially where particular deceased individuals are mentioned as the 'Egúngún'. For instance, Adesola in "Burial Customs in the Yoruba Country" Nigerian Chronicle, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 4, 1908, narrates the story of 'Arago Májà' as the name given to 'egúngún' by Ifá, his exploits which led to his deification. Whereas Pierre Verger narrates how in 'Odu' Òsá Méjì the origin of the egúngún, for example, in the Southwestern kingdoms of Yoruba is credited to 'Odu', a woman. (See Pierre Verger in "Grandeur et Decadence du Culte de Iyami Oloronga", Journal de Société des Africanistes, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1965, pp. 200-218.)

24. The narrative contained in the 'Odu' is popularly held to be the origin of the egúngún in Oyo. I am grateful to Ọgbeni Agboola Adeniji, formerly of the Yoruba Research Scheme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ife, now of Kajqla Street, Iwo, who narrated this 'Odu' to me (13/9/67).

rite' by the Ìgbórí (Tápà) people who later organised the worship of the lineage-ancestor into a cult under their management:

Odù Ọwónrínsé:-

Verse: "Arúkú,

Arúkú,

Aròkú-rojà-mátà.

Òkú t'a gbé r'ọjà tí kò tà;

L'a gbé sọ s'ígbó.

Ọun l'a tún gbé wílé,

T'a d'aşọ bò,

T'a ñpè l'égún.

A dífá fún Ọwónrín Ìsányín

T'ó kú tí àwọn ọmọ rẹ

Kò r'ówó sin í."

"Arúkú, Arúkú, Aròkú-rojà-mátà.²⁵

The corpse that was carried to the market
which did not sell;

Was thrown into the bush.

The same was brought home,

Covered in a shroud

And called 'egúngún'.

25. Names of Ọwónrín's three sons: Arúkú (One who sees Death), Arúkú (one who carries the Corpse), Aròkú-rojà-mátà (one who carries the Corpse to market but fails to sell it).

Thus decreed the Oracle
 To Ọwónrín of Ísányín
 Who died, and whose children
 Did not have the money to do
 his obsequial rite."

Narrative:-

When Ọwónrín of Ísányín died, his three sons could not find the necessary sum of money to cope with the huge expenses that the funeral obsequies entailed. Arúkú, the elder son, when he first saw the corpse, fled. Arúkú, the second son brought the corpse outside and proffered the suggestion for selling it.²⁶ But he too fled after the suggestion because the deceased was a man of high standing in the society. The youngest son was left with the corpse. He decided to carry out the suggestion, nevertheless. Aròkú-rojà-mátà as he was called, could not find any one to buy the corpse after plying several markets away from home. He was aggrieved, but he decided not to bring the corpse back home; in utter despair, he threw the corpse into a nearby bush and went his own way.

The eldest son became the head of the family, was appointed to his father's post and became the Ológbin of Ọgbín, a position

26. According to tradition, the corpse of poor people were sold in the market in the olden days and were bought by those who needed parts of the body for medicinal purposes.

which made him the 'Ológbo', the Alafin's staff-bearer and rhapsodist. Despite his hump (for they all belonged to a family of hunch-backs), the Alafin gave him a wife, one whose name was Ìyá Mòsè.

For many years the marriage was not blessed with a child. There was a growing concern especially as Ìyá Mòsè was becoming old and a successor would be needed in the Afin when Ológbin died. Ìyá Mòsè went out of her way and consulted with Amúsan, a native of her own clan at Ìgbórí. Amúsan predicted that Ìyá Mòsè would certainly have a son. Ológbin, the husband himself went out to consult with Ifá, the Oracle. Ifá accused him of negligence, said that the reason for his plight was due to his failure to do his deceased father's funeral obsequies.²⁷ Ifá predicted that he would have a son only after he had completed the funeral obsequies of his late father. Ifá called for sacrifice and said that, as atonement, he (Ológbin) would have to worship the spirit of the dead in the compound. But Ológbin pleaded that he could do the sacrifice but could not bring back home the corpse that had already decomposed with only the skeleton remaining. Besides

27. The Yoruba belief in re-incarnation extends to child bearing. The son usually born after the death of 'baba', is normally believed to be the deceased who has blessed the family with his presence.

it was quite unusual to do the funeral obsequies of the head of the compound so long after the usual time had passed. As the priest could not find him an alternative, he left in disappointment.

Meanwhile, Ìyá Mòsè had taken to heart Amúsan's prediction that she would have a child. She went to the Asà Stream one day to fetch water. There, coming out of the bush suddenly, was 'Erò', a species of the gorilla. The monkey grabbed her and succeeded in raping her.²⁸ Ìyá Mòsè grew sore afraid of the consequence of this affair, but kept things in her heart. Soon she discovered that she had become pregnant. As she did not know what to do, and knowing the source of her pregnancy, she left her husband secretly and went back to her clan to live with the Ọlọpọ̀ndà of Ọpọ̀ndà. She was taken in and given good care until her child was born. When she was delivered, it was discovered that the baby was a hybrid son - half human and half beast. Ìyá Mòsè was quite ashamed of this 'Ìjímèrè' and could not be persuaded to stay with the Ọlọpọ̀ndà who, nevertheless, was willing to foster the child. She had a good

28. This notion of the Chimpanzee [gorilla] was common in the olden days. (See Smith in "The Alafin in Exile" Journal of African History, Vol. VI, 1965, p. 64). He quotes one of the Alafin's wives who was raped as she was drawing water.

mind to return home to her husband; so she stole away from Òpòndà. While close to Ògbín, she threw the baby into a bush and returned home, concealing the secret.

But the child did not die in the bush. On the seventh day, he was discovered by Ato, the wife of Ògògó, native of Ìgbórí. She dashed home in amazement and told her husband about the abandoned baby she had seen on a dung-hill in the bush covered up by soldier-ants. Ògògó raised an alarm in the community. Ìyá Mòsè who could no longer control herself told her husband that the abandoned child was, in fact, his son. The Ológbin was flabbergasted to know that he was the father of the strange child. However, he went to consult with the Oracle once again. The priest said that Ifá was pleased with the child and that he, as 'Amúludun', would grow up to make everybody happy. He, however, insisted that Ológbin should perform his late father's funerary rite before things could go on well with him.

Ifá suggested that the funerary rite of resurrecting the deceased father should take place in the bush where the hybrid child had lain abandoned. The rite would take the form of a procession from the bush where the 'spirit' of the father would materialize as a costumed figure with the hybrid child carried on the back of the impersonator in the masquerade as a good

camouflage of the deceased's hump. The ritual sacrifice included 800 'àtòrì' (whips), 800 'àkàrà' (rolls of bean-cake), 800 'èkò' (solid pap) and drinks. Everything was got ready in the bush which came to be known as 'Igbó Ìgbàlè' (the sacred grove). Aláran Òrì, Ológbin's kinsman, brought their father's garment (agò òdòdò) for the mummery. Ògògò was asked to be the impersonator and to carry the rescued hybrid child who would be strapped to his back like the hump which Ológbin's father carried. Amúsan was asked to wield the whip in case some one became too anxious and curious and wanted to touch the masquerade. Ológbin then made a public announcement that he was going to perform the funerary rite of his late father and would bring the deceased home from the bush wherein he had been abandoned a long time ago.

The procession from the bush took place in the night and ended at the 'Ilé Ìsányín', the secret-chamber of the late Òwónrín, Ológbin's father, where the rites were performed. The next day, there was a grand procession of the 'ghost-mummer' or the materialized costumed-figure of the deceased, through the main streets for all to see. People surged round and seeing the apparition acclaimed:

È wo beegun èni ó ti kú ti gún tó!

Egungun na gún lóòtò.

Egungun gún! Egungun gún!

See how the bones of the dead have perfected!
 The bones have perfected indeed.
 The bones have perfected, the bones have perfected!

The ghost-mummer went round blessing the people and finally departed into the 'Káà', the secret-chamber in the courtyard where the spirit of the dead was believed to have become 'disembodied' within.

Ato was called upon to continue caring for the mystery child under the name of 'Ìyá Àgan' (mother or foster-mother of Àgan). The name by which the child was called were Olúgbèrè Àgan. He was confined within the 'Káà' where Ògògò, Ato's husband, visited them frequently as 'Baba Maríwò' (father who know the secret). He was described as 'Alágbò wá' (one who heard and came to the rescue); from then on he was hailed as 'Alágbàà, baba Maríwò' (Alagbàà, father of all who know the secret).

It must be recalled that before the merging of the ancestral rite into the 'cultus' to become the Egungun Society, ancestor-worship and masquerading were handled by two separate lineages. According to the following account, it seems that the organization of the cult of the ancestor as the Egúngún Society (embracing two lineages namely, Ògbín [Òbà] and Ìgbórí [Tápá], both of which had laid claim to the ownership of the 'masquerade'), came about probably at the instance of Olúgbèrè Àgan. This development is narrated in 'Odu Òwónrín

Méjì':²⁹

Odu Owonrin Méjì:-

Verse: Ngó re Ògbín lọ rè é s'égún.
 Ngó re Ìgbórí, ngó rè é s'awo.
 Ngó wá kó ikíni ì mi wéré-wéré,
 Ngó re Oyó rè é da.

Adifá fún Olúgbórí

Tí ó nsókún ài r'ómọ bí.

Nwón wá nda'sọ b'orí,

Nwón wá nwipé, 'Onípon dà'?

I will go to Ogbin to create the
 masquerade /mummery/.
 I will go to Igbori to learn the cultus.
 I will then collect all my appurtenances,
 And go to Oyo to build them up.

Thus decreed the Oracle,
 When Olúgbórí was mourning
 His lack of a child.
 He then entered into a shroud,
 Asking about, 'Where is the Onípon'?

The Ìgbórí people could not organise the egúngún 'cultus'
 without the Olóponḁ, who was Olúgbèré Àgan's foster-father.

29. This 'Odu' was narrated to me by Chief Oròḁjì, the Oósà of Ìwó, to whom I am greatly indebted. (1/4/68).

Olúgbèrè, the hybrid child of Ìyá Mòsè who was herself the daughter of Olúgborí, grew up among the Ìgborí people where he trained in Ifá worship and medicine. He also became a great dancer and acrobat. But because he was a hybrid, he could never really come out in the open unmasked without people raising an eyebrow. Thus, he lost the opportunity of having a wife and rearing children.

He decided, one day, to go to Ológbin, his step-father at Ògbín and ask if he could act as a mummer, or a costumed-actor, otherwise called 'Lábala'. In this form his animal features would be covered up and he would have the grand opportunity of putting into practice his training as a dancer and acrobat. He could also play some tricks. Ológbin gladly accepted his son's proposition, made him a mask and a costume and sent him on a dancing tour of Oyo. This was a visitation that pleased the king who, consequently, agreed to the Ológbin's proposition that an annual festival be inaugurated during which period every lineage-head could bring his 'ghost-mummer' to a communal gathering. This gathering, like an 'All Souls' festival, became an important cultural event in the Yoruba calendar. In spite of it being in a sense a festival of mourning for the dead, it became a joyous occasion, "giving a firm assurance that the spirits of the dead are alive and are

capable of manifesting themselves in the form of Egungun.³⁰

With the egúngún festival inaugurated, Olúgbèrè Àgan, who had spent most of his early life in concealment, could afford to walk the streets, at least periodically, as the Ológbin's masquerade, with his entertaining displays. Ológbin, was in a very favourable position to use his post and influence at Court as the king's sword-bearer and rhapsodist, to set his actor-son up as a 'strolling-player'. This he did, later.

Olópòndà agreed with the people of Olúgborí, who sought his permission, to organise the egúngún worship, including the rites of the dead and the annual "all souls" festival, into a secret society. When the cultus was organised, it had its own hierarchy embracing mainly the people who had taken part in the organization of the funerary rite of Ológbin's father. Thus, Ògògò, the first impersonator and the custodian of the baby Olúgbèrè Àgan, became the 'Alágbàá, baba Maríwo', ritual head of the cult; Ato, his wife, who was also the baby's minder, was officially recognised as 'Ìyá Àgan', mother-protector of the cult; Amúsan, the whip-wielder, who led the first procession from the bush became the 'Atókùn', the whip-man. 'Òpé', the call-boy was placed in charge of organising the assembly. The

30. Lucas, op. cit., p. 139.

Aláran Òrì became the costumier. Other offices were added later, including that of the Alápinni who became the political head, a powerful agent of the king and the representative of the cult in the king's council. But Ọlọpọ̀ndà's position as the nominal head of the society remained unquestioned.

The following extracts from the lineage-chants of the Ìgbórí,³¹ narrate the Tápà origin of those who became the important officers of the Egúngún Society when it was first organised. The chant describes vividly how, living amongst the Yoruba, the Ìgbórí people stabilized the influence of the egúngún as a social and political arm of the state:

"Èni tó bá kí Ilé Ìgbórí Mòkọ,
Tó bá fí Tápà sí 'lẹ,
Okò igi tó lẹ."

Whoever chants the lineage-poem of
Ìgbórí Mòkọ,
Who neglects Tápà,
Is beating about the bush.

Ọlọpọ̀ndà: "Akéwì tó bá k'Ọ̀bà-ńjà,
Tó bá f'Ọ̀lọpọ̀ndà sí 'lẹ;

31. I am grateful to Mr. S. O. Babayemi of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan for his ms. Awon Oriki Alé Ilé, from which the extracts were made from 'Oriki Ìgbórí'.

32. The relationship between the Ìgbórí and Ọlọpọ̀ndà lineages. The conflict between them is also implied.

È pé kó tún lọ kó 'sẹ̀ rere.

Ọlọpọ̀ndà, Kújénrà."

Any bard who chants Ọ̀bà-ńjà's praise,
Who neglects to mention Ọlọpọ̀ndà,
Tell him to go and learn the art anew.
Ọlọpọ̀ndà, the live-wire of the cult of the dead.³²

Ògògò: 1. "Ògògò Mọ̀kọ̀!

Ọmọ a kú má sun òrun Ìgbórí!

Bí mo bá kú l'áàrò,

Ngó sìn d'éégún l'ọ̀jọ̀ alẹ̀

Ògògò ọ kún, 'mọ̀lẹ̀ Àpínmí!

Ìgbórí l'ọ̀jà, Sọ̀unbẹ̀ ní'lé."

2. "Ògògò Mọ̀kọ̀!

Ìjí, a gbé kò jọ olè.

Ògògò ọ kú Ìbòrí.

Olúgborí wọn kò l'ódò,

Omi ikú ni nwọn ípon mu."

3. "Ọ̀kan Olúgbèrẹ̀

Ọmọ Àgan kò bí dúdú.

Ọmọ gánrín-gánrín dī m'ókún;

Egúngún l'ọ̀mọ gánrín-gánrín sá lé."

32. This stanza creates the impression of the association between Ọ̀bà and Ọlọpọ̀ndà lineages. The conflict between them is also implied.

3. "Òtìkó o lé è f'èsè y'agò n'Ígbalè.
 Ìgbalè kò ní iná,
 Òtútù 1'omọ awo nýá.
 Àwọn 1' Ògògò pá a.
4. Orin méta 1'à nkọ n'Ígbalè:
 Kòdóró, orin awo ni,
 Òkòrò, orin awo ni."
1. "Ògògò Mòkò!
 One who, when he dies,
 Does not rest in Ìgbórí's heaven.
 When I die in the morning,
 I resurrect in the evening as a ghost-mummer.
 Ògògò, thou minder of the ghost at Apínni,
 Ìgbórí becomes your market
 Sounbé, your home."
2. "Ògògò Mòkò!
 To impersonate and carry Ìjí,
 The hybrid child
 Does not amount to stealing.
 Ògògò, greetings for the mask you carry.
 Ìgbórí people have no streams.
 They drink the water of death."
3. Òtìkó cannot tear the shroud with his feet in
 the sacred grove
 Because the sacred grove has no fire.
 The cult-members only make do with cold shivers.
 They are the ones Ògògò shields.
4. We sing three songs at the sacred grove:
 Kòdóró, is the song of the cult,
 Òkòrò, is the song of the cult."

Ato: "Ato Òfòrí, omọ Kúlódò,

Awúsi àyò.

Ato Òfòrí t' Élu gbè."

"Ato Òfòrí, daughter of Kulódò,
 One who honours the masquerade.
 Ato Òfòrí, whom Èlú³³ helped to prosper.

Alaran: 1. "Ládimmò!

Ọmọ aránṣọ b'eégún l'ára.

T' átorí ẹ gbẹgbẹ p'ekùn

Tí mbe l'óna ti Ìsán.

2. Ọpópó méta l 'Árán ndá ni'lé Onítewúre;

Bé ẹ ni àrùn won ọ p'adié ọtòsì.

Ọní l'a ó d'ókùn so ọmọ awọ.

Ọní gbóná gidigidi.

Àjànkoro Dùgbẹ!

Ọgbèrì ọ mọ iyí tí mbe l'óna t' Ìsán.

Ládimmọ ni aránṣọ b'eégún l'ára!"

1. "Ládimmọ

One who builds the shroud of the ghost-mummer,
 With a heavy and threatening head-gear
 To kill the lion

Who lives on the way to Ìsán.

2. Aláran builds in three parts in the
 house of Onítewúre;

Yet their illness never requires the
 killing even of a poor cock.

33. 'Èlú' is another name by which the Ìgbò is called.

Today will we strap up the children of the cult.
Today is grave indeed.

Àjànkoro Dùgbè!

The novice does not know the honours that
abound on the way to Ísán.

Ládimò is the costumier of the ghost-mummer!"

Alápínni: "Eégún mēta ni t'Àpínni -

Ìkan ná'ádé owo,

Ìkan níw'èwù ilèkè,

Ìkan gbé dddó b'orí,

Ó rē é jó l'Ọjà Ọba.

Nwón wá ñkọrin báyi pé:

'Ara Ìgbórí Mọkọ ò!

Omọ eleégún 're!"

"There are three mummies at the Àpínni -

One wears a crown,

Another wears a beaded garment,

Another is shrouded in colourful robes,

And goes to dance at the Ọba's market.

Then people started singing:

'Thou Ìgbórí Mọkọ!

Son of the best ghost-mummer!"

The story in 'Odù Ọwónrínsẹ' describing the origin of the egúngún, must be seen as an allegory. It helps to explain the background of the cultural link between the Yoruba and the Nupe as well as the origin and composition of the hierarchy of the Egúngún Society. The relationship between the Ìgbórí (Tápà) and the Ọgbín (Ọbà) lineages is vividly underlined by

the dual citizenship of Olúgbèrè Ágan, the hybrid child. His strange birth draws the two lineages together into a compromise symbolised in his existence as the 'masquerade'. The 'masquerade' is comprised of the 'actor' (an Ìgbórí body) and the 'mask' (an Ògbín face). The second story narrated in 'Ojú Òwónrín Méjì' outlines the developmental phases for the emergence of the theatre; with Olúgbèrè Ágan as the central character.

(a) Developmental Phases

The process of theatrical development showed three phases: ritual, festival and theatre. These phases seemed to have summed up three crucial events in the life of Olúgbèrè Ágan, the hybrid step-son of Olófin, the Alafin's Olófin (a) the death of Òwónrín Méjì and his funeral procession which

II. The Emergence of the Theatre:-

The theatre emerged from the dramatic roots of egúngún as ancestor-worship. The existence of a schism within the Egúngún Society was largely responsible for the two lineages constituting the Society to develop in two distinct directions: the Ìgbórí (Tápà) lineage maintained jurisdiction over the cultic aspects of the Society's function while the Ògbín (Òbà) lineage developed the dramatic aspects under Court influences. Thus the two sub-groups became differently known as the 'Awo' (cultus) and the 'Òjè' (divertissement), respectively. While the former had their meeting-place at the 'Ìgbó Ìgbàlè' or 'Ìgbó Awo' (secret grove), the latter was based at the 'Bàrà' and occupied one of the 'Kòbì' (porticoes) for their performances. The two sub-groups however, pooled their resources together during the annual communal worship of the 'spirit' of the ancestor, and also co-operated in matters of general concern to the Society.

(a) Developmental Phases:

The process of theatrical development showed three phases: ritual, festival and theatre. These phases seemed to have summed up three crucial events in the life of Olúgbàré Àgan, the hybrid step-son of Ológbín, the Alafin's Ológbò: (a) the death of Òwónrín Onísanyín and his funeral procession which

incorporated the bringing home of Olúgbèrè Ágan from the bush where he was abandoned after birth; (b) the inauguration of the 'All Souls' festival to enable Olúgbèrè Ágan as a 'masquerade' to carry the 'eégúnlá' or the lineage-mask of Ológbin and thus to parade about; and (c) the role of Olúgbèrè Ágan as a 'costumed-player' at Court and later as a roving performer. The process also reveals a trend in development from the sacred to the profane; with the two polarities of ritual and theatre linked by a 'festival phase':

(1) The Ritual Phase: The process began with Şango who created the ancestral masquerade and on whose initiative it became wide-spread as a permanent feature of the Yoruba funeral ceremony. With Ofinran's reformation, the arrangement and design became the responsibility of the Olójè, an official at Court and a member of the Egúngún Society. The Olójè introduced a 'ritual play' as climax to the funerary rite.³⁴

34. The 'ritual play' is based on a plot which reveals how the funerary rite became institutionalised in Yorubaland. (See: Adeboye Babalola, "Itan Kan Nipa Bi Egungun Se Ber Iwe Ede Yoruba, Apa Kinni, Longmans, Nigeria, [n.d.], 38-42) See Appendix 3 for a reconstructed version. 'Igbágan'.

When later Ológbín succeeded his father Òwónrín at Court as the Alafin's Arókin and Ológbó, he displayed certain initiatives which brought distinct changes and modifications into the form and design of the 'ritual play' as well as the general arrangement of the funeral ceremony. He included Olúgbèré Àgan as a 'dramatis persona' for the opening act of the 'ritual play'. This like a 'prologue' took place at the 'Ìgbó Ìgbàlè', the sacred grove beside the community, during the night preceding the manifestation of the dead person at the threshold of his compound as 'egúngún'. It was called the 'Ìgbágan' (the lifting of the Àgan), when he appeared in a disembodied form. Secondly, he himself led the procession from the grove to the homestead with a chorus of masquerades; chanting the 'iwì' (praise-song of the dead) ahead of the ghost-mummer. Finally, he involved the Ìgbórí members of the Society in the cultic aspects of the ceremony.

(ii) The Festival Phase: This was the second developmental stage when the ancestor as a masquerade had to make a periodic visit to the homestead and walk the streets of the community for a certain period during the 'All Souls' festival. It was inaugurated at the instance of Ológbín who wanted to create the opportunity for Olúgbèré Àgan, the masquerade. The festival was ushered in the night before by the 'Ìgbágan'.

But in this case, the disembodied Àgan led the procession round the community pursued by a chorus of chanting attendants. The procession started at midnight and ended before dawn. The arrangement of the festival was the prerogative of the Alágbàá, the ritual head of the cultus and of the Egúngún Society.

During the gathering of all the 'eégúnlá' or the lineage egúngún at the market-square fronting the palace, there was a display of dancing, chanting and acrobatics. Usually, Àgan, Ológbin's masquerade, stole the show. It was at one of his performances that he was nicknamed 'apidán' (killer of the 'odán' tree).³⁵

(iii) The Theatre Phase: This developed when, at the invitation of the Alágbàá, Olúgbèré Àgan stepped into the arena as leader of a band of 'costumed-players' set up at Court and invited to take part in the contest of the 'eégúnlá' during one of the annual festivals. Their position as court-entertainers had given them the opportunity that made them popular.

35. 'apidán' = a-pa-odán. The 'odán' is a type of fig-tree usually used as shade in the Yoruba market. The word 'idán' is now used to mean magic: conjuring and tricks. How Olúgbèré Àgan became 'apidán' is described in 'Odù Ogbèsé'. (See: Appendix 4, "Olúgbèré Àgan: The First Yoruba Costumed Player").

Becoming a 'strolling-player' was the only way by which Olúgbèrè Àgan earned his keep since masquerading was the only means by which he disguised his identity. In this way, however, he became the first professional actor of the Yoruba theatre.³⁶

(b) The Dramatic Form and Style:-

The developmental phases outlined above are still in evidence in Oyo and in areas settled or influenced by the Oyo people, whether during the funeral ceremony of certain individuals or the periodic egúngún festival. In spite of modifications, to be noted in the description below, and except in the general arrangement, both the form and design of the 'play-element' have not changed much. Both the 'ritual play' and the 'festival play' are performed as re-enactment ceremonies that recall the Ọ̀wọ̀nrín Onísanyín (Ológbin's father) and Olúgbèrè Àgan (Ológbin's step-son) episodes, respectively:

37. Both Chief Delano and P.A. Talbot have recorded the 'Iṣáki' ceremony taking place on the fortieth and third day, respectively. Talbot has, however, explained that the ceremony took place on the seventh day in the past. (See Delano, *The Soul of Nigeria*, pp. 111-112 and Talbot, *op. cit.*, p. 176).

36. The theatre troupes still carry Olúgbèrè (symbolised by the red-monkey) with them when they travel about. It is said that they draw inspiration from the animal. Olúgbèrè's totem is Ìjímèrè, the red-monkey.

A. The Ritual Play:

It is the last and final ceremony in connection with the funeral obsequies of the deceased. The ceremony is called 'Ìṣèkú' (the creation of the dead) or 'Fífa eégún òkú wọ'lé' (bringing home the masquerade of the deceased). The ritual play is handled by the òjẹ on the seventh day of the funeral ceremony.³⁷

(i) The Rehearsal: According to Delano's account,³⁸ the arrangement takes forty days to set up. During his lifetime and as soon as the old man shows signs of dying, those who will be responsible for the ritual play will get certain things ready:

They practice quietly, sometimes in 'Igboro' or 'Igbale', the gait, movement, and characteristics of the old man; and the man, who will act on the day of the deceased person's resurrection, usually moves close to him. Sometimes he is one

37. Both Chief Delano and P.A. Talbot have recorded the 'Ìṣèkú' ceremony taking place on the fortieth and third day, respectively. Talbot has, however, explained that the ceremony took place on the seventh day in the past. (See: Delano, The Soul of Nigeria, pp. 111-112 and Talbot, op. cit., p. 476). It seems that modification in respect of the day of the 'Ìṣèkú' ceremony has been influenced by Islam and Christianity, respectively.

38. Delano, op. cit., p. 113.

First Act: The Entrance. (The Waking Night).

of his faithful slaves, a neighbour or an
'Iwofa' (sic.), but never the son of the
deceased.³⁹

(ii) The Setting:- There are two acting areas or 'stages':
the 'Ìgbàlè' (sacred grove) and the 'Agbo'lé' (compound).
In the first setting at the sacred grove, the priests of the
Egúngún Society assemble to lead the 'Àgan' in procession
to the second setting in the compound where members of the
deceased gather.

(iii) Characters:- The 'dramatic personae' are: the
Àgan who is disembodied but has a Voice during the night of
the first act of play; the Ghost-Mummer or the 'Image' of
the dead person who resurrects on the second day for the
second act of play; the Atókin who is the body-guard who
carries the whip. He is not disguised; as an important
egúngún official he sees that the 'Image' is not touched or
assaulted. There is a chanting chorus, usually relatives of
the deceased, and lastly there are the widows and children
whose roles are important to the action of the play.

(iv) Performance:- The play is in two acts and takes two
days for the cycle:⁴⁰

39. Delano, "The Iseku Ceremony in Yoruba Burial Customs", Odu,
No. 5, p. 26.

40. Owing to modifications, the ritual play may take place in one
day, at night or in the day time, depending on those in charge.

First Act: The Entrance. (The Waking Night).

The Agan's entrance began with a procession from the sacred-grove where the stage was set for the first part of the rites of the dead. At the entrance to the sacred-grove, the women of the cult gathered as Chorus to sing the Agan ritual song:⁴¹

1. Kóóro, Kòòro!

Òkòrò! (2ce.)

Bí ojú mi kò k'òba,

Àiyà mi kò balẹ̀ (etc.)

2. Mo rí 'bi obìrin m'awo

Awo!

Ìgbórí ni ilé awo

Awo (etc.)

3. È gb'òba, è gb' Ágan!

Gẹ̀gẹ̀ (etc.).

1. Oh Kóró, Kòrò!

You Okoro! (2ce.)

If I do not set my eyes
on the king,

My heart will not feel at ease. (etc.)

41. I am grateful to Chief Sáláwù Adélékè the present Alápinní of Oyo and his housefold for singing this to me on the occasion of my visit 17/9/65. (Full recording on tape).

2. I've seen where women
 know the secrets of the cult.
 Secrets!
 Igbórí is the home of all secrets.
 Secrets! (etc.)
3. Carry the king, lift up Àgan!
 Gently, (etc.)

The setting in the compound included the wives, children and other relations of the deceased who used the courtyard as the scene of their own welcome of the dead and his party. They engaged in dances and songs, usually the praise-chants of the lineage were rendered. From the latter the special attributes which the deceased possessed were known. Before the gathering in the courtyard a dance procession round the town was held by the women of the household forming a dancing Chorus as a striking feature of this first act:⁴²

Chorus: A niran òní,
 A niran òla!
 Gbogbo ògbàgbà,
 A niran òla.

42. I am grateful to my father Alagba J.S. Adedeji Arowosaiye for singing these songs to me. They were those in connection with the play of the funerary rite of his own father Chief Òṣúnwẹ̀nú, The Lẹ̀jùwà of Okemesi, one of a first generation Oyo settlers, who had introduced both the Egúngún and Sàngó into the town and was the Babaniṣango. The 'ritual play' has been reconstructed after Chief Òṣúnwẹ̀nú's which took place in April 1936.

Solo: Repeats.
We can't find him!

Chorus: À n'wá a,
Solos: Whether it's here,
À wa ò ri!

Solo: Bí níhín ni,
We don't know whether he'll pass!
Tàbí l'òhún ni,

Chorus: À n'wá a, à wa ò ri,
À wa kò mò 'bi yí ó gbégbà o!

Chorus: We are seeking him,
We can't find him,
Solo: Bí níhín ni,
We don't know whether he'll enter.
Tàbí l'òhún ni.
Father departed the secret-chamber.

Chorus: À n'wá a,
À wa ò ri,
À wa ò sun,
À wa ò wò,
À wa ò mò 'lè t'ó wò.
Baba wò kàrà lọ.

Chorus: We remember today,
We remember tomorrow!
All you, people,
We remember today.

Solo: Repeats.
The words were all concerning the dead man. Two men starting singing, invoking the spirit of the deceased man's father

Chorus: We are seeking him
We can't find him!

Solo: Whether it's here,
Or it's yonder.

Chorus: We are seeking, we can't find him,
We don't know whither he'll pass!

Solo: Whether it's here,
Or it's yonder.

Chorus: We are seeking him,
We can't find him,
We can't sleep,
We can't peep,
We don't know which ground he'll enter.
Father departed into the secret-chamber.

Back into the courtyard, the Chorus Women formed themselves into three circles, with each circle with a lighted lamp; they continued with improvised songs and danced round the circles of light. Then they stopped dancing as, "two men danced out from the house to each of the circles, and then back again. On their return a few women accompanied them, as if to act as an escort, and then they rejoined their companions... The music stopped and the songs with it. Then two women started singing solos in rich soprano voices. The words were all concerning the dead man. Two men starting singing, invoking the spirit of the deceased man's father

and mother. This continued for a long time... The songs ceased... Then all of a sudden the crowd swayed and someone shouted: 'He is coming' ... The man came slowly. His gait, his action, his movements and dress. He even carried a walking-stick. He was in very truth the man who had departed the life forty days ago."⁴³

The 'Agan' party arrived from the 'Igbàlè' and the actor (unmasked) symbolizing the 'shade' of the dead, entered the threshold without the women identifying him, and then into the apartment of the deceased where he hid in the ceiling and there awaited the evocation. The 'Òpé' (caller), beat the ground three times with a stick, and called out loudly the name of the deceased:

The 'Conclamatio'⁴⁴

Priest: Lágbájá ò! [Òsúnwemí]

Chorus: Ó dení!

Priest: Lágbájá ò!

Chorus: Ó dèjì!

43. This is an extract from Chief Delano's eye-witness account. (See: Delano, The Soul of Nigeria, pp. 114-115).

44. After Parrinder, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

Priest: Tí o kò bá dáhùn lèèketa

Ò ó di òpìpì,

Ò ó di àpáàdì tí a fiifon 'ná,

Ò ó di aṣa.

Èketa ni ng ó pè yí o!

Dáhùn, má jẹ ki nkan ó ṣe

Àwọn oṃo re,

Àwọn iyàwó re,

Àwọn àbúrò re.

Jé kí inú ilé yi kó tu wá lára o!

Lágbájá ò!

Agan (Impersonator): 0 0 0 0 !

Priest: So and so! (Calling [òṣúnwẹnú] the deceased's real name)

Chorus: This is the first call!

Priest: So and so!

Chorus: This is the second call!

Priest: If you do not answer the third call,
You will become a featherless fowl,
You will become a pot-shepherd,
You will become a shameless person.⁴⁵

45. 'Aṣa' is capable of being interpreted to mean 'an ugly fowl', according to Parrinder's translation. Originally the word is used to describe the action or behaviour of someone who has no shame, hence, 'ó y'aṣa'.

This is the third call I will make!
 Answer, let nothing happen to children,
 Your wives,
 Your younger brothers.
 Let us find comfort in this house!
 So and so!

Agan: Yeah! (answering from the ceiling!)

At this, the orchestra sounded and every body was excited. Later, the music and songs stopped and the Voice of the deceased was heard through a disguise making certain pronouncements⁴⁶ and blessing his people. Then suddenly, amidst great tumult, the impersonator dashed out with great speed and vanished into the midnight, followed by the priests of the cult, back to the grove.

Second Act: The Exit (The Next Morning).

The egúngún priests gathered at the 'Ìgbàlẹ̀ Stage' where the mummery was arranged. The actor was costumed in one of the dresses of the deceased believed to have been put into the grave and buried with him. In the compound of the deceased where the second stage was set, the relatives

46. According to other sources, it is the 'Lóko', the actor-guide, who speaks and not the impersonator. But Talbot says that the 'shade' if asked "pronounces judgment on any matter of dispute about his property and finishes by giving his blessing." (op. cit., p. 477).

relaxed into a state of general festivity; only the widows remained in mourning, dressed in rags with their hair clean-shaven. The women of the house formed a chorus of singers, as usual, improvised and danced at the threshold, awaiting the return of 'baba' to the homestead. One of such songs went as follows:

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú ọ̀mọ̀ afòwúró s'ọ̀mọ̀.

Solo: Èmi ò l'ára ẹ̀ má mà bú wa.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú ọ̀mọ̀ afòwúró s'ọ̀mọ̀.

Solo: Kò s'òhun t'ó dùn bí ará ẹ̀ni.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: Ọ̀rí aláde k'í gbófo.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: Owo n'já sùn l'ọ̀rí aláde.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: Awo rẹ̀rẹ̀rẹ̀ k'áwo má mà d'awo.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: È má jẹ̀ kó dùn nyín,

B' áiyé ti n'şe n'şen.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú, you who showed very early
the qualities of greatness.

Solo: Those without brethren, don't revile us.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: Nothing brings satisfaction more than
the presence of one's brethren.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: The head that wears the crown
is never empty

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: Lots of money abound
in the crown.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: The cult is expansive but let no
cult-members let each other down.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

Solo: Don't be saddened by it,
It's just the way people
do things.

Chorus: Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú etc.

After the dancing and singing at the 'Agbo'lé Stage'

had been going on for some time, the Dùndún⁴⁷ orchestra was

47. How 'Dùndún' became part of the ritual play of the funerary rite is contained in 'Odù Irẹ̀tẹ̀sé' narrated to me by Alàgbà Agboqlá Adeníji of Iwo. (See Appendix 5).

accomplished; and with him alone and the other oràngún sent to fetch 'baba' home from the grove. Then, a solemn procession proceeded amidst the following Dùndún rhythmic beat:

Ìrètè'sé,

Sín-sín.

Ìrètè'sé,

Ó dé,

Baba dé,

Sínsín.

Ìrètè'sé,

Sín-sín.

Ìrètè'sé,

Sín-sín. (rattles).

He's arrived,

Father's arrived,

Sín-sín.

The women of the compound waited in silence at the threshold to receive their resurrected father. When the procession wound up at the main entrance, the women knelt and the men prostrated themselves before the 'Image' and raised their voices in prayer. The 'Image' nodded and gestured without speech. He entered the compound, passed through the rooms and the courtyard, blessing his wives and children as he passed them by, and wound up at the 'àkòdì' where his grave was located. Here the remainder of the ritual ceremony was

accomplished; and with him alone and the other egúngún priests, the food and drinks already placed in the chamber were consumed. The women of the household still singing and dancing at the threshold, rendered their 'exit' songs, as follows:

Chorus: 1. Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú, ọ́ n' lẹ̀!

Àwa rẹ̀ ni! (Repeatedly)

2. Báyí lá ñṣe,

Bàyì là ñṣe,

Báyì là ñṣe ní 'Rèṣé'

Am'awo m'òrò o! (Repeatedly)

1. Ọ̀súnwẹ̀nú, he's leaving!

We leave with him! (Repeatedly)

2. This is how we do things,

This is how we do things,

This is how we do things at Ìrèsé⁴⁸

We, who know all secrets. (Repeatedly)

The widows and children waited in their rooms, wailing their farewell and praying for the repose of the soul of their 'baba', and mournfully hoping for him to be transmigrated, and chanting as follows:

48. The reference to Ìrèsé indicates the ancestral home of the deceased.

Chorus: "Ó di gbéré!

(i) The Ó dà rìn - nà - kò.

(ii) The O dǒjú àlá.

(iii) The O dǒrun alákeji."

(1) The Enactment: The setting is at the 'Igbé Igbá'

(sacred grove). "It is a long farewell! All night

It remains a chance-meeting

on life's way.

It remains meeting in dreams.

(the kneeling), It remains meeting in heaven

of transmigration."

Whole night in the sacred grove on their knees while they

The ritual play was over. The resurrected person was believed to have returned to his grave inside the 'àkòdì' or 'kárà'. And with that the transition from the status of lineage-head to that of the ancestor was complete.

The 'ritual play' is not as widespread as it was the custom in the past. Modifications in arrangement and performance have been the result not only of the incidence of Yoruba migration but also of the influence of Islam and Christianity which has gripped ~~the~~ Yorubaland since the nineteenth century. Neglect in certain places has also been due to the high expenses which the arrangement entails.

49. This is a term that encompasses the play-concept in games, recreation, contests, literary and theatrical representations. The semantic base of the word is Latin, from 'lud' which denotes the broad great public games. (See: Hastings, pp. 211, pp. 34-36). It is used here to refer to the games and theatrical representations on the last day of the omun festivals.

50. Talbot, op. cit., p. 70.

B. The Festival Play: - It has three stages:

- (i) The Enactment
- (ii) The Pageant
- (iii) The Ludus.⁴⁹

(i) The Enactment: The setting is at the 'Igbò Igbàlè' (sacred grove). It is the waking or vigil night called 'Igbágan' (the carrying of the Agan) or the 'Ìkúnlè', (the kneeling), since "the principal members spend the whole night in the sacred grove on their knees while they hold communion with, and pray to, the ancestors".⁵⁰ The 'Igbágan' is, in fact, a re-enactment of the episode of the hybrid child Olúgbèrè' Agan, when he was picked from the bush where he had lain abandoned and then brought home in a procession.

The cult-members keep vigil past midnight, then suddenly, the 'Agan' cries out loudly:

Agan: È gbé mi - i - ì!

Priests: Gbémi-gbémi l'à ns'Agan;

Ìrù Agan ò gbọ̀dò ba'lè n'Igbàlè.

49. This is a term that encompasses the play-concept in games, recreation, contests, liturgical and theatrical representations. The semantic base of the word is Latin, from 'Ludi' which denotes the Roman great public games. (See: Huizinga, op. cit., pp. 35-36). It is used here to refer to the games and theatrical representations on the last day of the egungun festivals.

50. Talbot, op. cit., p. 761.

Àgan: Gbé mi - i - i'!

Àgan: Pick me up!

Priests: The only way to praise the Àgan
Is to pick him up;

Àgan: Àgan's tail must never touch the ground
of the sacred grove.

Àgan: Pick me up, then!

Àgan is then picked up and carried round in a procession through the main streets of the community. Of course, for this performance, Àgan is invisible; under the benefit of the darkness and the strict injunction which forbids the uninitiated to come out, there is no attempt made to designate an impersonator for this act. Àgan's 'Voice' is the only signal the people get to know the time of his arrival in the community. The 'Mariwo' (children of the Cult) pursue him through the streets ^{with} a very dramatic chanted duologue:⁵¹

Àgan: Mo dé wéréwéré bí òjò alé.

Mariwo: À-à-gan ò'!

Àgan: Mo dé kùtùkùtù bí òjò òwùrò.

51. This Àgan's arrival chant is recorded in Peter Morton-Williams, "The Egungun Society in South-Western Yoruba Kingdoms", W.A.I.S.E.R Conference Proceedings, Ibadan 1956, (reprinted 1963), pp. 93-94. (The translation and modifications here are mine).

Mariwo: À-à-gan ò!

Àgan: Mo dé pàpàpà bí eji iyálèta

Mariwo: À-à-gan ò!

Àgan: Ojú aláró kò tó ilé aró.

Mariwo: À-à-gan ò!

Àgan: Ojú amòkòkò kò tó ilé àmò.

Mariwo: À-à-gan ò!

Àgan: Ojú alágbèdè ko tó ilé aró.

Mariwo: À-à-gan ò!

Àgan: Mariwo o-o-o!

Mo dé o-o-o!

Mariwo: À-à-gan, ò!

Àgan: I come like the spluttering
rain at eventide.

Mariwo: Yea, Àgan!

Àgan: I come like the drenching
rain at the break of day.

Mariwo: Yea, Àgan!

Àgan: The eye of the dyer
sees not the bottom of the vat.

Mariwo: Yea, Àgan!

Àgan: The eye of the potter sees not
the inside of the clay.

Mariwo: Yea, Àgan!

Àgan: The eye of the blacksmith sees not
the nodus of the forge.

Mariwo: Yea, Àgan!

Àgan: Yea, Mariwo!
I've arrived, indeed!

Mariwo: Yea, Àgan!

The procession returns to the grove before twilight.

It is the signal to every one in the community that the 'Àgan' has preceded all the lineage ancestors of the community to the feast of the 'All Souls'. It is believed that the ancestors return to the community through the gateway of the 'Ìgbàlẹ̀' and that they then proceed to the 'kàrà' of the compound of each lineage. The procession to the king takes place by noon.

(ii) The Pageant: This is the procession to the king and the assembly takes place before him at the 'òde' (open space or square) before the palace, normally adjoining the central market. All the lineage-masquerades, otherwise called 'eégúnlá', take their positions on this 'All Souls' day, to pay their homage to the king in a certain order.

The pageant is marked by "the type and magnificence of the

particular egunla [éégunlá] of each lineage, and its distinguishing characteristics, such as a right to the crown, or the priesthood of a particular deity or descent from a renowned warrior."⁵²

Each 'éégunlá' is surrounded by his 'omólé' (children of the compound), dancing and chanting the lineage praise-songs, all dressed-up for the occasion.⁵³ Each 'éégunlá' bears a name, usually the ancestral cognomen, or an attributive name that is an illustration of the lineage. Some costumes are elaborate and usually reflect the resources of the lineage and their conception of the ancestral image.

At the stage of performance, each lineage-pageant is marked by a dance-display, sometimes presenting an enactment-story with appropriate local themes. After this formal salute to the ruler, each pageant recedes and winds up in the different lineage homes where feasting and merriment continue. The 'éégunlá' parades round, blessing and receiving gifts from his children.

52. Morton-Williams, op. cit., p. 101.

53. See plates, Nos. 22, 23 & 24.



No. 22: Egúngún festival at Okemesi - Children of the Compound, chanting the praise-songs of the 'Egúnla' (the lineage-masquerade).



No. 23: A lineage masquerade at Ijebu-Igbo. Every masquerade brings his own music to the festival. (Photo by courtesy of Dr. Oyin Ogunba)

(iii) The Ludus: This development started on the initiative of the Alágbàá as cultic-head of the Egúngún Society. It was intended to provide an opportunity whereby the lineage 'eégúnlá' could, in a form of competition, demonstrate and display their dexterity in dance and improvisations. The contest was voluntary and was merely intended to raise the voltage of the festival. It took place at the 'òde' in front of the Alágbàá's compound. "Presents were given and the 'play' was repeated in the various quarters of the town."⁵⁴ This special performance took place on the last day to bring the festival to a close.

As time went on, however, the spirit of the 'ludus' was cast overboard. Tempers of participating masquerades ran high, charms were introduced freely and magic displayed above the normal expectations of the games. To ameliorate a deteriorating situation, the Alágbàá inaugurated another 'command performance' this time organised by the Ológbin lineage, with Olúgbàré Àgan and his band who had been known to stroll about with their 'iwì' (chants), acrobatic dances and dramatic improvisations. With this group stepping into the arena, the third phase of the theatrical development began.

54. Talbot, op. cit., p. 761.

To begin with, the annual egúngún festival had a named month, 'oṣù egúngún', in the Yoruba calendar. It took place at a time when the crops were ripening in the farms and the first fruits were beginning to come in. It was, in effect, the festival of the 'new yam'; but was, normally, preceded by the festival of Ọbàtálá, the arch-divinity, who, as 'primus inter pares', had to eat the first yam.⁵⁵

Nowadays, the festival month has changed and the idea of the 'new yam' has broken down. While in certain areas of Yoruba, in Oyo and Ibadan, the festival still takes place annually, modifications have been noticed in the Igbomina and Southwestern parts. The dates vary from between April and August to between December and March and the festival is no longer an annual event. Nevertheless, the festival is still of major importance to the communities wherever it is held. People from abroad return home to partake of the rites of worship and the festival feast and to rally round their 'eégúnlá'.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-105. (See Appendix 6 for list and description of plays in this account).

58. The actor normally appears in three dresses. First is the 'eégúnlá' which looks like an overall dress, second is the 'ibáin', which is a tunic over a pair of pants which serves as under-dress but is used for dancing and acrobatics; then, lastly,

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 760-1.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

C. The Theatre: they developed as "mendicants who travel from

At the early stages, when the 'Apidán' group was invited to perform as part of the annual egúngún festival, it came strictly under the jurisdiction of the Egúngún Society.

Whatever gifts and money were given to the actors during performance, were shared out by the officers of the Society.

An actor received not more than forty cowries.⁵⁶ Morton-

Williams,⁵⁷ describing a performance by the Apidán group

during one annual festival which he witnessed said:

the 'apidan' dancers and mimes perform such feats as appearing in three dresses in the course of a dance;⁵⁸ act little morality plays; caricature types of people and mime odd creatures and sing egungun songs... They go round the town during the festival, singing to people, calling chiefs and the wealthy by their praise names, recalling their forbears and expecting these gratified men to reward them.... In the olden days while the egungun were dancing and performing 'idan', people would throw cowries for them; the 'oje' would leave them on the ground until the dancing was finished when someone would collect them all in a basket or hat.⁵⁹

56. Peter Morton-Williams, op. cit., p. 97.

57. ibid., pp. 90-103. (See Appendix 6 for list and description of plays in this account).

58. The actor normally appears in three dresses. First is the 'agò' which looks like an overall dress, second is the 'lábala', which is a tunic over a pair of pants which serves as undergarment but is used for dancing and acrobatics; then, lastly, the 'òjè' dress, the real costume of the character that he plays in any particular act.

59. ibid., p. 97.

Later, they developed as "mendicants who travel from one town to another giving entertainments in hope of receiving gifts of money from their audiences."⁶⁰ At Ife, when they arrived there to perform, they were looked upon simply as beggars from Oyo who had no standing as a religious group.⁶¹

Beier, who made an extensive study of the group, has described them as 'Agbégijó', meaning: "we take wood to dance"⁶² because of the carved face-masks which they don for their various improvisations. He described them as masqueraders who "do not represent ancestors";⁶³ they "dance"⁶⁴ just for "entertainment on the occasion of funerals, marriage ceremonies, wedding feasts, annual sacrifices of orisa

60. Bascom, op. cit., p. 53.

61. ibid.

62. Beier erroneously uses this term as generic for all the theatre-groups. In fact 'Agbégijó' is the professional name of the company based at Oshogbo. (See: Beier, "The Agbegijo Masqueraders", Nigeria Magazine, No. 82, Sept. 1964, pp. 189-199)

63. Whereas the funeral masks and the lineage egúngún of the annual festival are all impersonations of the ancestor or a deceased individual.

64. The 'dance' of the theatre-group involves acting. According to Beier, the "dancer does not merely display the mask; he acts the part." (See Beier: Introduction to African Literature, Longmans, 1967, p. 244). The Yoruba has no equivalent for the word 'act' and uses 'dance' as an all inclusive term.

worshippers etc. In short, they come whenever they are invited by anybody who is willing to pay for the entertainment given. But they also have their own festival when they dance for Alágbàá"⁶⁵ The 'Apidán' group has maintained a fairly independent existence as "professional entertainers"⁶⁶ with their own 'Baálè'.⁶⁷ At the very beginning of their existence and as members of the Egungun Society, they came under the authority of the Alágbàá; later, however, he only maintained a form of suzerainty over the group.

With the 'Apidán' group thus began the theatre in Yorubaland. The group comprised of three artistic units: Akéwì (Bard), Olókìtì (Acrobat) and Òrèbè (Costumed-dancer). Olúgbèrè Àgan, the first actor and leader of the group, was both acrobat and dancer. Because he did not have the voice to be a bard, he relied on a chorus of 'Akùnyùngbà', the palace bards, as accompaniment. As a dance-troupe or 'Alá-rìnjó', they entertained both the Court and nobility.

65. Beier, (1964), op. cit., p. 191.

66. The professional aspect of the 'Apidán' group started with the role of Olúgbèrè Àgan, whose only means of existence depended on masquerading about and entertaining spectators.

67. From the very beginning the Ológbin of Ògbín who founded the group was also its 'Baálè' or governor. Till today the theatre-groups have their own 'Baálè' separate from the Alápínni or the Alágbàá, principal chiefs of the Egúngún Society.

III. Perspective:-

So far, the three phases in the development of the theatre have been described with emphasis on their presentational aspects. There are certain artistic developments which are mutually inclusive and which have to be explained. For instance, during the first phase - the ritual phase, the resurrected image is manifested, somewhat obviously, through a realistic portrayal of a particular deceased individual. To the uninitiated, the element of disguise is never contemplated, he sees the whole ceremony as a mixture of religious worship and ritualistic symbolism.

Secondly, there are certain important and significant developments which distinguish the ritual phase from the festival phase. In the first instance, the funerary rite had involved a representation which attempted a realistic portrayal of the character in the 'ritual play'. The preparation had entailed patient and loving care devoted to certain details of characterization and procedure. But on the other hand, the ancestor that was portrayed at the 'festival stage' was not particularised. The form and style of performance had changed considerably from realistic to abstract or symbolic. The ancestral image remained only in concept and inner substance. The symbolism conveyed only

the idea that the 'mask' was that of an ancestor; but it was the 'non-persona' of any particular ancestor. The ancestral image with identifiable features had changed to become only a 'masquerade'. The solemn ceremonial rite of 'calling the dead' had given place to a commemorative rite handled and directed by a cult-organization.

The presence of the guild of artists and craftsmen in the 'festival phase' caused considerable changes in the general conception of the ancestral image. Instead of realistic and concrete forms in the presentational aspects, we had signs, gestures and symbols. Taste dictated form and style. As soon as the direct phenomenon of the ritual performance of the first phase changed or was modified in emphasis, and solemnization gave place to rollicking and magic display in the second phase, then the 'real person' of the ancestor changed to an imagined character. With the element of mimicry thus introduced, what then succeeded was the artistic improvisation of an individual animator or dancer (actor).

A deviation from concrete reality was also manifested in the artistic carvings, whether face or head masks, as well as the decorative costumes which were worn for the pageant. These hardly furnished any solid information about the nature of a

Before the Olófin's group was invited to perform for the amusement of those who congregated for the annual festival, the dramatizations of the 'céjialá' were all-embracing and all-enveloping

particular ancestor. Even the names which the 'masquerades' bore were no longer specific and related. It would be too presumptuous to claim that the artists involved in the designing of the 'masquerades' were allowed to dominate their assignment with their own virtuosity. It was, however, possible that they had a certain amount of freedom to improvise and that they, therefore, wanted to derive a certain amount of aesthetic satisfaction from their works. Hence, we missed the cult imperatives that dominated the artistic design of the early phase.

There are certain other features of the 'festival phase' which are of dramatic importance. The pageant performance which manifested in dance (with an enactment-story at the base of its pattern), changed in quality and character to magic displays and the use of charms. Thus modifying the primary aim of the 'ludus' which, at best, was to celebrate and display certain distinctive characteristics which marked one family or lineage from another. The idea of the 'ludus' was to afford people at the festival a period of entertainment through contest. It was remarkable for its abuse by the 'eégúnlá',

the lineage masquerades, but it was also noted for the opportunity it created for the theatre to emerge.

Before the Ológbin's group was invited to perform for the amusement of those who congregated for the annual festival, the dramatizations of the 'eégúnlá' were all-embracing and all-involving

The performers were not separated from the ritual obligations of ancestor-worship and the requirements of the cultus. In fact, the performance was a 'symbolic ritual',⁶⁸ the purpose of which was to enable the 'impersonator' to achieve some form of union with a supernatural power. Since the impersonation was symbolic of the doctrine or belief of ancestor-worship, it had a function similar to that of contagious magic; and the impersonation, though possibly commemorative, was not creative and therefore not theatrical.⁶⁹

But during the 'theatre phase', an attitude of detachment had developed. The masks used were acting devices and no ancestors were being impersonated for the purpose of performance. Three guilds were directly responsible for the arrangement and design of the performances of the Ológbin group: Alárán Òrí, the costumer, who was said to have been Ológbin's kinsman, was responsible for building all the costumes needed for the different acts of performance; Olóké or Olójówò, the master carver, was responsible for carving all the wooden face and head masks that were used in the transformations; and lastly, of course, was Ológbin himself,

68. H. Beresford Menagh, "A Way of Separating Theatre from Rite", Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. XIX, No. 2, May 1967, p. 123.

69. ibid.

the animator, who must have handled the improvisations, the dances and the chants, drawing on the *Akùnyùgbà*, the palace rhapsodists, which he headed.

The performance of the *Ológbin's* troupe was, of course, creative and theatrical. By developing an attitude of detachment from the ritual, their performance led to the gathering round of a crowd of people whose purpose was to see a performance by a troupe of performers and not participate in a rite. These spectators (audience) judged the success or failure of each performance on the basis of how far they were amused and diverted. Participation at this level became aesthetic. The ability of the spectator to perceive and discriminate actions and visual symbols arising from a creative force, is due to the development of 'histrionic sensibility'.⁷⁰ By this development the spectator or audience was directly or indirectly cultivating interest in the new art.

Individualism in art breeds secularism. As soon as the *Ológbin's* or '*Apidán*' troupe became detached from the umbilical cord of the *egúngún* cultus, it sought its own patronage from the

70. Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theatre*, Anchor Books, New York, 1949, pp. 250-253.

71. *Idea of the Theatre*, Faber, London, 1962, p. 62.

Court, where in fact it had matured. It was allowed to travel out to the Oyo principalities or metropolitan provinces, to entertain the king's vassals, ruling princes and chiefs. This scope for performance must have increased their mode of experimentation and encouraged the introduction of 'satire' which they widely indulged in. For according to Southern,

PART THREE

a time comes, especially when the play of gods and heroes develops to gigantic proportions, when the spectator must feel the need for relief from the high concerns of great immortal themes; and a pathetic consciousness begins to form of little man confronted by these things - seeming by contrast comic in his limitations, yet peculiarly valiant in his one invincible power to take knocks... His only defensive resource is a jest or scurrility..71

71. Richard Southern, The Seven Ages of the Theatre, Faber, London, 1962, p. 82.

The Theatre in Historical Perspective:I. At-Court Entertainment:-

The first stage of the development of the theatre seemed to have emerged about the middle of the sixteenth century at the Court of Alafin Egunjo, the founder of Oyo Igboko. Alafin died at Kuga and was succeeded by his son Egunjo who brought his father's

residence with him from Kuga to Oyo. Oyo Igboko became a centre of refuge and seat of government for Oyo. Yoruba for some time quarters of a century.

PART THREEThe Theatre in History

Olofin Olofin (Perspective) probably succeeded the Olofin at Court as the king's Olofin and head of the Alafin, the king's rhapsodists. The Olofin was responsible for training the Alafin. They provided entertainment at the king's pleasure and on special festival occasions. When Olofin Olofin died he was succeeded by Olofin his eldest son as the king's Olofin and rhapsodist. It was he who brought up

1. Journal, op. cit., p. 164.

2. Journal, op. cit., p. 59.

3. This seems to be the period narrated in 'Olofin Olofin' (See above, pp. 82-88).

The Theatre in Historical Perspective:

I. As Court Entertainment:-

The first stage of the development of the theatre seems to have emerged about the middle of the sixteenth century at the Court of Alafin Egunju, the founder of Oyo Igboho. Orinran died at Kusu and was succeeded by his son Egunju who brought his father's remains with him for burial at the new capital. Igboho became a castle of refuge and seat of government for the Yoruba for some three quarters of a century.²

Ọwónrín Onísányín, the hunch-back, probably³ succeeded the Olójà at Court as the king's Ológbo and head of the Akùnyùgbà, the king's rhapsodists. The Iyámọ̀de was responsible for training the Akùnyùgbà. They provided entertainment at the king's pleasure and during special festival occasions. When Ọwónrín Onísányín died he was succeeded by Ológbin his eldest son as the king's Ológbo and rhapsodist. It was he who brought up

1. Johnson, op. cit., p. 161.

2. R. Smith, op. cit., p. 59.

3. This seems to be the period narrated in 'Odu Ọwónrínsẹ'. (See above, pp. 82-88).

Olúgbèrè Ágán, the masquerade, as a costumed-player at Court with the Akùnyìngbà as chorus. They knew that, as was customary, the

King Ògbólú, otherwise called Abípa,⁴ was the last of the kings who reigned at Igboho. He acceded to the throne about 1590.⁵ He made a firm resolve to return home to Old Oyo, the metropolis, and set his mind and energy towards its accomplishment. But he did not find things easy. Most of his people, especially those who had been born in exile could not be easily persuaded to accept the fact that returning to Oyo was a worthwhile proposition and venture. Igboho had been well settled and had given a firm security to those who had spent a good part of their early life wandering around the marches of Borgu and Nupe on the lower banks of the Niger. The Oyo-Mesi, the king's council, was strongly opposed to the move. When they knew that the king could not be persuaded to change his mind, they resolved on using the element of disguise as a stratagem to foil the attempted move.

The Alápinni, one of the Oyo-Mesi and the representative of the Èrúngún Society on the king's council, was the brain behind

4. Abípa is a contraction of 'enití a-bí-sí-ípa' (one born on the wayside). He was also hailed as 'Akòhùn Bísà' (one who refused Bísà's entreaties).

5. R. Smith, op. cit., p. 74.

the dramatic strategy. At his initiative, the Oyo-Mesi planned to stop the king's move. They knew that, as was customary, the king would send emissaries to inspect the abandoned sites, propitiate the gods and make sacrifices before the final move-in took place. As they were resolved on thwarting the king's will, they thought the move could be stopped by frightening the emissaries off the old sites by a company of ghost-mummers. They got masked actors or ghost-mummers ready and secretly despatched them to Old Oyo to precede the king's emissaries.

There were six stock-characters each representing a coun-
cillor: the hunchback (Başorun), the albino (Alápinni), the leper (Aşipa), the prognathus (Şamu), the dwarf (Láguna) and the
cripple (Akínikú).⁶ Their presence at the sites, indeed, fright-
ened the first batch of emissaries on the hill, Ajaka. "Abipa was at first distressed, but the Ologbo (the royal cymbalist and aroken [arókin] who had some inkling of the truth, advised him to send a group of trustworthy men from Igboho to investigate the matter. Six famous hunters set out and they soon rounded up the
secretly and departed. They thought to have been

6. These stock-characters are caricatures of humanity believed to have been created by *Orisà-ńlá* (*Ọbátálá*), the Yoruba arch-divinity, under the influence of wine. They are called 'eni *Orisà*' (those of the Deity).

bogus phantoms."⁷ The King's Ológbó (Ológbin) would certainly be privy to the secret design of the Councillors, he himself being a member of the Egúngún Society. But his decision to reveal the secret of the cult in this regard might have gone to strengthen the clash of interests and personalities that had existed between the two main lineages which had been uneasily wedded together to form the Society. Thus the strategy of the reluctant Councillors was destroyed and the King earned the nickname, 'Ọba Mórò' (catcher of ghosts).⁸

On the king's orders the ghost-mummers were brought to Court and were placed under the charge of his Ológbó (Ológbin). They lived "in a special building within the Afin"⁹ to entertain the king. At the weekly meeting of the king and his Councillors for the Jakuta sacrifices, they retired into the banqueting hall for the usual refreshments that followed the religious ceremonies. Here the king, in a mood to surprise the Councillors, arranged for a show in which the ghost-mummers waited upon their creators! The councillors were dumbfounded by this but they took the show good-humouredly and departed. Those they thought to have been

7. Smith, op. cit., p. 70.

8. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 165-6.

9. Smith, op. cit.

in ass's skin to be taken to Oyo for interment."¹¹ When the final move back to Old Oyo was completed, Ológbòjò's body was buried in a Court dedicated to his memory and called 'Òde Ògbólú' - "Eni ti Ògbólú fi Òde-ilé kẹ" (one whom Ògbólú honoured with a Court).

Old Oyo was reoccupied in the twentieth year of the King's reign, about 1610.¹² The story of the 'Ghost Catcher' was re-enacted at Oyo three times annually: first during the Òrìṣà Oko (farm god) festival, secondly during the festival of Òrìṣà Mònlẹ and thirdly at the Odùduwà festival. It is also enacted during the installation of a new Alafin when it takes place privately in the royal reception hall (Aganjú) at night.¹³

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the 'Òjẹ', the name by which the ghost-mummers came to be popularly called, had become well established at Court and had been responsible for the management of the 'ritual-play' of the funerary rite. During the reign of King Jayin (between 1655 and 1670),¹⁴ Olusi, his son,

At the approach of a company of chanting ghost-mummers to the shaman, King Jayin buried his head in a shroud [died].

11. ibid.
12. Smith, op. cit., p. 73.
13. ibid., p. 70.
14. Chief Isaac Delano, Iranti Anfani: Itan Oyo, Evans Bros., London, 1964, pp. 20-21. See also: Chief S.O. Ojo, Bada of Saki, Iwe Itan Yoruba, I, Ibadan, p. 69.

became popular with the masses because he was kind and generous, against his father's wickedness and weakness. The king consequently ~~grew~~ jealous of his son's popularity, and succeeded in getting rid of him by poison.

When the people learned of the prince's death, they were gravely aggrieved. For them the hope of a better future under the prince had been dashed to the ground. He was universally mourned and the whole public took it upon themselves to perform his funeral obsequies. "His egungun was brought out, that is, an appearance of his apparition, clothed with the cloths with which he was known to have been buried".¹⁵ When the king heard that the egungun of his late son was on its way to the palace, and knowing what the consequence of such a visitation would be, he quickly took poison and died:

"O ku dèdè kí a kó iwí wọ Akèsán,
Ọba Jáyin tẹ 'rí gba 'şọ."¹⁶

At the approach of a company of chanting ghost-mummers to the Akesan, King Jayin buried his head in a shroud [died].

15. Johnson, op. cit., p. 171.

16. ibid., p. 171. See also Delano, op. cit., p. 21. Delano explains that this ritual ceremony was contrived because the Yoruba funerary rite was never done for young people.

21. ibid., p. 179.

But the 'ritual-play' was certainly a stratagem designed to get rid of the vile king, as it was not customary to perform the 'ritual-play' during the death of a young man.¹⁷

By 1698, the golden age of imperial conquest that saw the phenomenal expansion that established the Oyo empire had begun.¹⁸ Normally, stable government and civil justice encourage the cultivation of leisure which in turn favours the operation of the theatre.¹⁹ When King Agboluaje, the grandson of King Ògbólú²⁰ came to the throne about 1750, his grandfather's tradition of keeping the court-masques, seems to have been adhered to. During the 'Bẹ̀bẹ̀'²¹ festival which he celebrated because of the peace and prosperity that prevailed all over the kingdom,²² it is said

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17. For this reason, according to Delano, the performance took place on the twenty-first day after the prince's burial.
18. I.A. Akinjorbin, "The Oyo Empire in the 18th Century", Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. III, No. 3, December 1961, p. 452.
19. Hugh Hunt, The Live Theatre, O.U.P., 1962, p. 67.
20. By folk etymology: "A-rí-Ògbólú-Ọlọpọ̀n-ajé" was compressed to 'Agbólúajé'.
21. The 'Bẹ̀bẹ̀' is akin to a jubilee or golden age of a king's reign. During the celebration, liberty of speech and action is granted every one. Everyone appears in his holiday dress and goes to Oyo for the festivities and displays which mark the festival period. (See Johnson: op. cit., p. 163).
21. ibid., p. 179.

that the 'Ọjẹ' performed their masques till day-light turned into darkness! King Agboluaje's 'oríkì' is full of pictures of this grand 'Bẹbẹ':

"Agbólúajé ẹ̀ Bẹ̀bẹ̀,

Ó yanjú kétékété.

Ọ̀gbólú t'a kí tí kò jẹ́!

Baba, ikú fò!

Gbé owó rí owó ná,

Baba, ikú pin.

Àrán kì í sá, baba Alóndù.

B'ènià lówó-lówó, kò le è ní àlò-yé;

Bí i ti gh'owó ka rí owó ná kọ́,

Baba, ikú pin!

Bí ènià pé òun bímo,

Kò le è bí Jìmìs'òwò bí Abúdu;

Bí ènià ní aṣọ́ rí-lá-rí-lá r'lé.

Kò le è ní à-tí-wù-mí,

Bí ti Kọ̀gilédè kọ́;

Baba wa Agbólúajé,

Ọ̀rọ̀ Ọ̀yọ́ ti kàn Bẹ̀bẹ̀ kàn Bẹ̀bẹ̀!

Agbólúajé ẹ̀ Bẹ̀bẹ̀ -

Bẹ̀bẹ̀ yanjú kété-kété.

Agbólúajé ni baba.²³

Agbólúajé celebrated the Bebe,

It went off without a hitch.

Ògbólú whom we salute in vain!²⁴

Father, flown off by Death!

Carry money on you, and have for a
spending spree,

Father, finished off by Death!

The velvet never fades, ~~show~~ father of Alóndù.

One may be very rich, but may have no fittings;

Not the one who carries money about

For his spending spree,

Father, finished off by Death!

One may be blessed with children,

But may not have one like Abúdu,

his rich merchant-son.

One may have plenty of big clothes;

He may not have one that fades not.

Not like Kógilédè.

Our father Agbólúajé,

Oyo's fame is beyond the Bebe jubilation!

Agbólúajé celebrated the Bebe,

It went off without a hitch.

Agbólúajé is our Father.

King Agboluaje, surprising all his admirers, committed suicide

and was mourned for a long time. But royal patronage of the

arts proceeded unabated.

23. I am grateful to Alàgbà Agboqlá Adeniji for chanting this 'Oríkí' to me.

24. The allusion to King Ògbólú, his grandfather, is an indication of resemblance between the two monarchs.

By the time King Abiodun, whose mother was King Agboluaje's daughter, came to the throne of Oyo in about 1770,²⁵ the empire had become very extensive and had reached the apogee of its fame. Abiodun was bent on re-establishing Oyo as a great commercial centre. The trade-routes between the capital and the coast had suffered neglect during the troublous times of Gãhã, the Başorun of the empire. To revive and strengthen them Abiodun established outposts, notably at Ilaro, Ijana and Jiga and succeeded in making Porto-Novo a beach-head.²⁶ He placed vassal rulers in these towns "all recruited from the staff of the palace in Old Oyo."²⁷

Because of his patronage of the arts, Abiodun has been credited with organising the craft-guilds into technical specialities and encouraging each to contribute its best product to

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25. According to Dr. Akinjogbin, the "date of Abiodun's accession is unknown. Tradition, however, relates that he had been on the throne for some time before the civil war in which he defeated Gãhã, his chief opponent. (See: "The Oyo Empire in the 18th Century - A Reassessment," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. III, No. 3, December 1966, ff., p. 455.
26. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic Trade, 1670-1830," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, No. 1, December 1964, pp. 38-41.
27. Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo," in West African Kingdoms in the 19th Century, (eds. Forde and Kaberry), O.U.P., 1967, p. 41.

enhance the prestige of the Crown. He is also believed to have put the theatre on the ~~direct~~ road to professionalism. The court-entertainers were expected to travel with their masques to the metropolitan provinces of the empire to entertain the distinguished members of the royal family. According to Johnson, a great number of them did not reside in the metropolis.²⁸ It is said that it was during this period that the operations of the troupes extended to the southwestern kingdoms of Egba, Egbado, Awori and others.²⁹ Also during this period, "the egungun spread to Dahomey and are found among the Gu and Fon where egungun is called Kujito or the French word 'revenants'.³⁰

After the overthrow of Gaha, the powerful Baṣorun of the empire, and his regime of terror about 1774, King Abiodun proclaimed a one-day 'Bẹbẹ' festival to mark the dawn of a new era.³¹ The last time the 'Bẹbẹ' was celebrated during the reign

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28. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 67-68.
29. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Egungun Society in South-western Yoruba Kingdoms" W.A.I.S.E.R., 1956, p. 90.
30. E.G. Parrinder, West African Religion, The Epworth Press, London, 1961, pp. 130-1.
31. Johnson, op. cit., p. 185.

35. Ulli Beier, A Year of Sacred Festivals, p. 75.

King Abiodun's mother was a great patroness of the arts. of King Agboluaje, it was a big occasion for the masque-artists who became involved with the ceremony for the first time. On this occasion, the troupe performed to the King at the Bàrà which he visited for the thank-offering sacrifice to his fathers.

Abiodun, whose 'oríkì' is 'Àjàmú oṃọ̀ Şàngó',³² is said to have imposed the worship of both 'Orìṣà Şàngó' and 'Orìṣà Egúngún' on all the areas under his jurisdiction. Both Şàngó and egúngún worship became widespread as a result of the Alefin's resident officers entrenching themselves by assuming the roles of the chief priests of Şàngó and also making their presence felt through egúngún sanctions.³³ It was common belief that Egúngún was Şàngó's divine guardian.³⁴ During Şàngó festivals the Baba Eléégún is connected as chief performer.³⁵

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32. It is possible that Abiodun is linked or identified with Şàngó and credited with great achievements simply because his reign, said to be long and the most prosperous, is also the most remembered in Oral Tradition.
33. S.O. Biobaku in Egba and Their Neighbours, 1957, p. 8, refers to the situation as was extended to the Egba kingdom.
34. Şàngó as the creator of egúngún, the ancestral masquerade, has been discussed above. Şàngó was also a reputed magician. But one day as he was performing to his courtiers, his clothes ripped and he was stripped naked. He evoked the Egúngún, and his ancestral masquerade appeared and gave him a piece of his material to cover his naked parts. This is said to be the origin of Şàngó's 'làbà' or kilt.
35. Ulli Beier, A Year of Sacred Festivals, p. 75.

36. See Chapter Seven for his biography.

King Abiodun's mother was a great patroness of the arts.

Because of this, the occasion of her death and funeral obsequies was turned into a great feast for the arts! The King commissioned three notable guilds of artists to contribute of their best to the burial ceremony. *Làgbayí*, a descendant of the famous carver *Olójówàn*, was invited to carve the image of his mother on all the doors and posts of the palace, and two hundred of such posts were carved in figures. *Aládéjobí Asofálà*, the descendant of the famous costumier, *Aláran Òrí*, was charged with making enough costumes to dress up all the posts. Last, but by no means least, *Èsà Ògbín*,³⁶ offspring of *Aládáfà*, and the celebrated masque-dramaturg of the realm, was asked to prepare a mummer for the 'ritual play' of the funerary rite. The occasion was a memorable gala and has since been perpetuated in the following praise-chant:

Ọba Abiodun,
Ọba Gàn-án-òjíṣé!
Ọba a-dùn bí k'á rò!
Nwọn ní kí oníkalukú
Kíó má a gbé ọpó r'Ọyó.

Bí ẹ bá sìn sẹ́gún ẹ́ ní' lẹ́ yí,

Sẹ́ b' gúnkàn ò lẹ́ ò mú nyiá?

36. See Chapter Seven for his biography.

Ìyá Abíọ̀dún Aláfin àkókó

'Un l'ó kú, l'ó f'orí oyè sí'lè.

Nwọn ní nwọn ó d'ówó jọ,

Kí wọn ó ró'gi l'ásọ.

Ni nwọn d'ówó jọ,

Ni nwọn ró'gi l'ásọ.

Nwọn wá ké sí Làgbàyí

Omo Olójowòn;

Ọpómúléro wá ró 'gba igi l'ásọ.

Ó pa igi dà, ó sì s'ogí d' ènià."

"Kí l'Èsà ògbín y'orí rọ b'orí

r'òde rẹ é jọ ní'jọ ọjọ bá tó?"

Gbogbo eégún ilé wa

Àrán nà l'ásọ!

Ní'jọ ọpó fọ'hùn, l'ójú èmi ni.

N'lé sé'gi l'áafin Ọyọ,

Èlérú níjogún erú,

Oníwọ̀fà ní'ogún lẹ̀wọ̀fà,

Alásọ ní'ogún asọ.

Ọpó wá ró'şọ, ọpó wá gbà'já.

Bí ẹ bá sín eégún jẹ ní'lẹ̀ yí,

Şẹ̀ b'ẹnikan ò le è mú nyín?

37. This 'Oríkí' is extracted from 'Oríkí Ìran Ọ̀pómúléro' in Àwọn Oríkí Oríkí by Adéboye Babalola (1967), pp. 40-46.

Baba nyin ló l'ènití m̀bẹ́ nínú aṣọ"37

The age long recurrent feud between the Iḡbórí and Ọ̀bà class

each of whom the ownership of the egúngún, in spite
of their joint Society, came to a head
during the

King Abiḡdun,

King Gàn-án-òjísé!

Thou who are of good report!

They asked that every artist should

bring a carved post to Oyo.

Mother of Abiḡdun, the foremost Alafin,

She it was, who died and left the throne,

They called for all [artists] to pool

their resources -

To dress her image with a costume.

Then all resources were pooled,

The images were costumed.

They called in Lągbayí,

Offspring of Ọ̀lójwòn.

Òpómúléró then costumed the

two-hundred images,

Transformed the posts into human beings!

'What will Èsà Ọ̀gbín have to put on

When his turn comes to take his

Mummer out?'

All the mummers in the house were

already costumed in velvet!

When the Image made a pronouncement

I was there as a witness at a

close-up in the palace at Oyo:

Some inherited slaves,

Some inherited vassals,

Others inherited clothes.

The Image was then dressed with a

wrapper and waist-cloth.

'If you choose to mimick the egúngún

in this town, who will charge you?

Your father owns the impersonator in the mask!'

Wọ́n ní k' Ọ̀lópọ̀nà

K'ó tó kókó etí aṣọ;

Wọ́n ní k' Alarín Ọ̀rí

K'ó tó kókó etí aṣọ.

37. This 'Oríkì' is extracted from "Oríkì Ìran Ọ̀pómúléró" in Àwọn Oríkì Orílẹ̀ by Adebayo Babalola (1967), pp. 40-46.

The age long recurrent feud between the Ìgbórí and Ọ̀bà clans each of whom had contested the ownership of the egúngún, in spite of their joint membership of the Egúngún Society, came to a head during the reign of King Abiodun:

"Àwọ̀n àgbàgbà mẹ̀ta ni
 Nwọ̀n níjìyàn nítorí Awo.
 Ọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ndà dàhùn ó ní
 Ọ̀un l'òun l'Awo.
 Ọ̀lógbojò ná a ní
 Ọ̀un l'òun l'Egúngún.
 Aládéjọ̀bí èrò Àràn
 Ọ̀mọ̀ Aşófẹ̀lẹ̀ dàhùn
 Ó l'óun l'òun l'Egúngún.
 Işé à'işé akitiyan!
 Nwọ̀n k'ẹ̀jọ̀ ó di'lé Ọ̀ba.
 Ọ̀ba ní k' Ọ̀lógbojò
 K'ó ta kókó etí aşọ;
 Nwọ̀n ní k' Ọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ndà
 K'ó ta kókó etí aşọ;
 Nwọ̀n ní k'Àláràn Ọ̀rí
 K'ó tú kókó etí aşọ.
 Ìgbà tí Àláràn Ọ̀rí

Tú kókó etí aṣọ,

Igba abéré wéréwéré

Ḍun l'ó jáde níbè.

'Emi ni igba abéré lè dá

se nínú oko?'

Nwón l'Álárán Òrí,

'Ìwo ni yíó má a ránṣọ

fún gbogbo Maríwo'!

Ọlọpòndà, Àrè Ọjé!

Nwón ní kó tú kókó etí aṣọ.

Ìgbà t'Ọlọpòndà tú kókó etí aṣọ,

Igba ẹranko l'ó jáde.

Nwón ní Ọlọpòndà,

'Ìwo l'ọmọ ẹranko yáyo,

A l'ìgbà ja'lè awèrè!

Ọlọpòndà, Kújẹnrá!'

Nwón ní k'Ólógbojò

Kó tú kókó etí aṣọ.

Ìgbà t'Ólógbojò tú kókó etí aṣọ,

Igba ọmọ eégún l'ó jáde.

'Òdèdè mi kò gbà'yè.

Níbo ni ngó kó

Egbèrin eégún sí!³⁸

Ológbojò, ọmọ Arólú-ẹjì!

Ògínní Èsà.

Èsà l'ó tí m' Óghin dùn

Mọn-mọn-mọn.

Ológbojò, ọmọ a kú yi 'wọ!

Ògínní Èsà,

Sòlò àmúró Aládafà.

Ọmọ a rí gboro b'ajá l'ény.

Èsà Ògbín tí Arójò-joye.

Bí a ò r'ó jò,

Ológbojò ní. 'È jé kí

Á maa wá a lọ!'

Ọba ò hùn ó l'Ólogbojò

Òun ló l'Egúngún."³⁸

"Three³⁹ elders were
Having a dispute because of the Cultus.

38. The chants of the 'conflict' has been extracted from D.A. Obasa, Iwe Keta Awon Akewi, Egbé Agbà - Ọ - Tán, Ibadan, 1945, pp. 150-152; 165-166, 163-165.

39. The Alárán, the costumier, has stepped into the feud as the third party. His claim was that he created the clothing material used as the means of disguise.

40. ... have stolen from the Alápirá and ran away into the forest to hide his head in shame.

Olópondà said

He owned the Cultus.

Ológbojò also said

He owned the Masquerade.

Aládejobí a native of Àrán,

offspring of Aṣófelá said

That he owned the 'Mask'.

The job of solution became one of confusion!

They took the case before the King.

The King asked Ológbojò

To tie a knot at the hem of his cloth.

He asked Olópondà

To tie a knot at the hem of his cloth.

He then asked the Aláran Òrì

To untie the knot of his cloth.

When Aláran Òrì

Untied his knot,

Two-hundred small needles

Came out of it.

'What can two-hundred needles
accomplish on the farm?'

He said to Aláran Òrì,

'You will be the one to sew
clothes for all the children
of the Cult!'

Olópondà, the stranger at Òjé!

He asked that he should untie
the knot of his cloth.

When Olópondà untied the knot of his cloth,

Two hundred animals came out.

He said, 'Olópondà,

You are the offspring of an animal indeed.

The light-fingered adult!⁴⁰

Olópondà, Kújenrá!'

He asked Ológbojò

To untie the knot of his cloth.

40. This is a reference to Olúgbèrè or Ijímèrè. He is said to have stolen from the Alápinni and ran away into the forest to hide his head in shame.

See Ògbín, a descendant of Aládafà, who was a maternal relation

of Ológbòjò, When Ológbòjò untied the knot of his cloth,
Two-hundred young masked actors came out.

to Ológbòjò: 'My verandah is not spacious. Ori, the costumer,

Where will I put

and of Ológbòjò: Eight-hundred masked actors!' shouted by Ògbín's

posturing. Ológbòjò, descendant of one who knows

the secret of the rain!

Ògínní Èsà.

It is Èsà who has enlivened Ògbín. the right of

ownership of Ológbòjò, descendant of one who dies

to enter the shroud!

Ògínní Èsà,

The King The heir, sustainer of Aládafà, he forward with

a performance Offspring of one who gags the

dog with a club. what was performed in the

Èsà Ògbín of the one who is made

a chief when the rain is seen. each

contesting If we do not get the rain,

Ológbòjò says, 'Let an improvised drama with

their special Us go in search of it.'

The King then answered that the 'circle of play'

Ológbòjò indeed owned the Masquerade."

with his carvings. But there were all faces and head-masks which

had no salutation in the Ògbín line forward with his thread

consistently claimed that the 'masquerade' belonged to the

and head-masks and costumes but there was

indigenes of the land, while the Ìgbórí lineage, of Tápà extrac-

no life in the Ògbín line stepped into the arena and in a ritua-

tion, had persisted in their assertion through Olóponḍà their

chieftain, that the egúngún belonged to them through the 'cultus'.

changed only the dancing animal. Èsà Ògbín was then asked

Besides, matters within the 'Òjè', the entertainment guild,

to go. He trooped in with his train of actors in pagantry;

which had been established as a sub-group of the Egúngún Society,

some were picked up a face or a head-mask and formed a costume;

concerning the leadership of the guild since the death of Ológbín

and in a brilliant combination of dance, wine and chant, there

Ológbòjò, the founder of court-masque-dramaturgy, had worsened.⁴¹

the spectators and stole the show.

41. This 'contest' has been described in the lineage chant to the Ológbín. (See: Adeboye Babalola, "Oríkì Ìran Ológbín", in Àwọn Oríkì Orílẹ̀, Collins, 1967, pp. 92-97).

Èsà Ògbín, a descendant of Aládafà, who was a maternal relation of Ológbòjò, had imposed himself on all others and had laid claim to Ológbòjò's mantle. Descendants of Aláran Òrí, the costumier, and of Olójowòṅ, the great carver, had felt cheated by Èsà Ògbín's posturings. Amidst all this, the descendants of Olóponḍà, representing the cultus, came forward and established their right of ownership of the egúngún.

The King invited the contesting groups to come forward with a performance each. He laid down that whoever performed in the manner of the great Ológbòjò had the legitimate claim. Each contesting 'òjè' was asked to perform an improvised drama with their specialities: Olójowòṅ stepped into the 'circle of play' with his carvings. But they were all face and head-masks which had no animation in them. Aláran came forward with his thread and needle and spread out his masses of costumes, but there was no life in them. Olóponḍà stepped into the arena and, in a ritualistic manner, invoked 'Àgan', the foremost ghost-mummer. 'Àgan' emerged but only as a prancing animal. Èsà Ògbín was then asked to perform. He tramped in with his train of actors in pageantry; then each picked up a face or a head-mask and donned a costume; and in a brilliant combination of dance, mime and chant, thrilled the spectators and stole the show.

The King without any further ado, announced amidst plaudits from all sides, that Èsà Ògbín undoubtedly had the right to Ológbòjò's mantle. He then made him an investiture and honoured him with the 'Òde Ògbólúkẹ́', the royal mansion that was set up in memory of the late Ológbòjò. This episode has been enshrined in the following chant said by Èsà Ògbín:

"Èsà Ògbín, ará Ògbòjò.

Èsà Ògbín tí mo gbàgò,

Mo tà'dí réké, mo dúró rẹ́gí

ní abé asọ,

Mo m'ówó bebe mo fi k'ásọ mọ'ra.

Èsà Ògbín, ará Ògbòjò,

Ará Òde Ògbólúkẹ́.

Omóbosádé."

"Èsà Ògbín ará Ògbòjò.

Aláàfin Òyó,

L'ó ransé wá o,

Sínú ilé ará Ògbòjò.

Ó ní nwón ó k'ẹgbèrin

eégún wá fún òun.

42. This chant has been written down from Babalola's "Oríkí Èran Ológbín". Akókó t'a lo Òyó l'áàfin,

Igba eégún péré la rí mú lọ. in people

Aláàfin ni àyàyà - àyòyó! There were not eight-hundred masks!

Ó joun bí kò s'éeégún l'óde King Abiodun

òrun mọ ndan!' boost to profes-

'Òdèdè rẹ kò gbà'nià. judicious intervention, the theatre-group was released from the

N'bo l'o ó k'égbèrin eégún sí? 42 multio obligations of the Egun Society and became a perma-

"Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò. of the contest that the actor required the aid of the carrier

I, Èsà Ògbín, donned my costume, and the costumes

I took a dance step and made of the two girls

a brilliant pose under the costume. developed their

I spread out my arms and gathered my contrasts with

clothes round in a flourish. Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò.

Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò.

Son, who has stepped into the favour of the Crown."

"Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò, After the most stuporous period of Oyo history, King

The King of Oyo, Abiodun's reign

He, it was, who sent a message prosperity which

To the house of the citizen of Ògbojò. to the country. The revo-

He said they should come with eight-hundred masks. lutionary

The first time we went to the palace at Oyo, good p

We could only take two-hundred masks. in 1789,

The King said, 'I am surprised!' but it must have been a large one.

Aren't there any more masks professors had painstakingly and courageously built, was already

in the Court at heaven?'

42. This chant has been extracted from Babalola's "Oríkì Ìran Ológbín" op. cit., pp, 92-3.

'Your verandah cannot contain people
Where would you put eight-hundred masks?'⁴³

Old Oyo had a constitutionally accepted head.⁴⁵ The relevance of King Abiodun, it seems, gave the first boost to professionalism and individualism in masque-dramaturgy since, by his judicious intervention, the theatre-group was released from the cultic obligations of the Egúngún Society and became a permanent part of court-amusements. It is also clear from the outcome of the contest that the actor required the mask of the carver and the costume of the costumier and therefore the co-operation of the two guilds for his dramatic improvisations. But what developed thereafter was that the masque-dramaturg had to make contracts with the other guilds for his needs.

After the most auspicious period of Oyo history, King Abiodun's reign came to an end and with it the tranquillity and prosperity which had prevailed in the Yoruba country. The revolutionary wars which ensued, wrecked the empire and devastated a good portion of Yorubaland. King Abiodun died in April 1789, but within two years of his death, the citadel which he and his predecessors had painstakingly and courageously built, was already

43. There is no doubt about the exaggeration in the figures as to the size of the company of actors managed by Èsà Ògbín, but it must have been a large one.

showing signs of cracks.⁴⁴ In 1797, eight years afterwards, Old Oyo had no constitutionally accepted head.⁴⁵ The relevance of this is that with the chaos at Court and the unrest in the reign of King Awole, the successor to Abiodun, the operation of the theatre troupes had to be focussed elsewhere, outside of the royal court of Old Oyo.

From about 1800, "numerous Oyo citizens had started to desert their homes and look for new settlements in other, more secure, parts of the Yoruba country where they would not only have political stability, but would also be able to satisfy their economic needs."⁴⁶ The Fulani invasion has often been blamed for this unprecedented misfortune; but it would seem that desertion and the earliest wave of migration from the northern frontier of Yoruba were the result of panic and frustration. "The beginning of the disintegration of the Oyo Empire owed nothing to Fulani pressure or to the Fulani Jihad"⁴⁷ since "authority had broken down in Oyo at least seven years before the start of

44. I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars", *Oyo*, Odu, Vol. 1, No. 2, January 1965, p. 27.

45. *ibid.*, p. 38.

46. *ibid.*

47. *ibid.*

to include a travelling troupe in their entourage during their the Jihad. Indeed it was the breakdown of authority in Oyo annual visit to do homage to the Alafin. According to Clapperton which enabled the Jihad to affect the Oyo Empire to the extent that it did."⁴⁸

In the 1820s, the anarchy that had been a feature of life in the empire must have convinced the Fulani that the impetus of the Jihad which had conquered the Hausa states could be carried southwards into the Yoruba country. Between 1822 and 1830, the empire faced the Afonja rebellion⁴⁹ which allowed the Fulani emirate to be created at Ilorin. King Majotù, described by

Lander as the "pusillanimous Mansolah", was blamed for having "neither foresight, nor wisdom, nor resolution", to put the people in a posture of defence. There was no doubt that the Oyo administration was supine in the face of the Fulani threat.⁵⁰

In spite of these circumstances, the theatre troupes flourished and kept up their custom of acting plays in the metropolitan provinces as well as in the Yoruba sub-kingdoms to the south.

Beginning from the Onikoyi down to the Onijana, it was the custom of the 'ilàrì' (resident governors) in the areas under Oyo,

48. ibid., p. 44.

49. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 197-200.

50. Richard and John Lander, Journal of an Expedition to explore Course and Termination of the Niger, London, 1832, pp. 134-5, 142-3.

to include a travelling troupe in their entourage during their annual visit to do homage to the Alafin. According to Clapperton, "it is the custom, during the time that the caboceers⁵¹ place chosen for the pastime was 'the King's Park, fronting the from the different towns remain on their visit to the king, to act plays or pantomimes".⁵² On this particular occasion, Alafin Majotu had invited his provincial governors to come to Oyo to meet his august visitors: Captain Hugh Clapperton and his Cornish manservant Richard Lander, both of whom rendered vivid and glowing accounts of the show.⁵³

During their seven weeks' stay in the capital, the king invited his guests to see a masque performance provided by one hundred yards square. Under

51. 'Cabocceer' comes from the Portuguese word 'cabeceiro' which means a headman. (See: Archibald Dalziel, The History of Dahomey, Frank Cass & Co., 2nd printing, 1967, p. XI.

52. Clapperton was not quite certain in his classification of the theatrical art they were privileged to see. What they saw in fact, were the court-masques which by descriptive definition qualify as 'pantomime', according to the Roman development. (See Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 1957, p. 600).

53. Hugh Clapperton, Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa, London, 1829, pp. 53-56,

54. Richard Lander, Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol. I, 1836, Chap. V: "Pantomime Representations by Yaarribeans", pp. 115-121.

of the theatre-troupes, probably the leading troupe at that time.⁵⁴

The day of performance was Wednesday 22nd February, 1826 and the place chosen for the pastime was "the King's Park, fronting the principal door [Kōbi Aganjū] where his majesty usually sits.

A fetish house occupies the left side, to the south are two very romantic and large block of granite, by the side of which is an old withered tree. On the east are some beautiful shady trees; and on the north his majesty's house from whence he views the scene."⁵⁵

The arena or performing area had two beautiful clumps of trees in the centre; "the space may include some seven or eight hundred yards square. Under the clumps of trees were seated the actors, dressed in large sacks [agō], covering every part of the body; the head most fantastically decorated with strips of rags, damask, silk, and cotton, of as many glaring colours as it was possible."⁵⁶ The actor's dressing room was a temporary fence, (in erected round the trunk of the fan palm-tree which screened them

54. Ajalá Amúgbekún was the leading masque-dramaturg of this period. But there were other travelling companies under Lomónikùn, òjòngbòdú and others.

55. Clapperton, op. cit.

56. ibid.

from observation, whenever they chose to remain concealed."⁵⁷

The court musicians who occupied the fifth 'kòbì' to the Aganjú were in attendance and "a most astounding din from drums, horns and whistles was the signal for the performers to begin."⁵⁸

(Every performing company, of course, had its own Bata orchestra in attendance as accompaniment when on tour). The orchestra not only supplied music for the dances and songs, it also created the emotional strain and the aesthetics of the performance.

The performance was staged in three acts. The first act was acrobatics, it "consisted in dancing, capering and tumbling by about twenty men enveloped in sacks, which novel and elegant diversification was continued with admirable spirit for a full half-hour."⁵⁹ At the end of this act, the actors returned to the dressing-room to prepare for the next act.

The second act which commenced almost immediately after was "Catching the Boa-Constrictor": first, one of the actors in sack (aqè) came out of the dressing room to play the Boa and "knelt down on his hands and feet, falling down gently and most conveniently"; then came out another actor to play the Catcher, "he was a tall

57. Lander, op. cit.

58. ibid.

59. ibid.

represent.⁵⁵
 majestic figure which baffled all description: it was of glossy black colour, sometimes like a lion couchant over the crest of a helmet; at another like a black head with a large wig; at every turn he made it changed its appearance,"⁶⁰ like "the enchanted Turk in the English puppet-shows."⁶¹ This character held a sword in his hand and appeared, from his superior dress and motions as well as "the commanding attitude he assumed over the other actors, to be the director of the pageant."⁶²

The act was in 'pantomime', "not a word was spoken by the actors."⁶³ The Catcher started waving his sword with flourish when the Boa started to crawl out, thrusting its head and attempting to lay hold of the Catcher. The Boa "went through the motions of a snake in a very natural manner, though it appeared to be rather full in the belly, opening and shutting its mouth, which I suspect, is the performer's two hands in the most natural manner imaginable."⁶⁴

By reason of the "painted cloth with which [the Boa] was covered, it might easily be mistaken for the animal it was intended to

60. Clapperton, op. cit.

61. Lander, op. cit.

62. ibid.

63. Clapperton, op. cit.

64. ibid.

represent."⁶⁵

The Catcher and the Boa then engaged, the former waving the sword and the latter attempting to bite him. At length, at a given signal, a whole troop of actors rushed to the circle of play, where the Catcher, "approaching the tail of the Boa, made flourishes with his sword as if hacking at that part of the body"⁶⁶ in a shocking and most unmerciful manner. The Boa "apparently writhed in agony, and convulsively twisting its body for a few moments whilst it endeavoured, without effect to be revenged on its formidable adversary by extending its neck to bite; when life seeming to be extinguished, it was borne off on the shoulders of the [masked] actors to the fetish-house [dressing-room]"⁶⁷

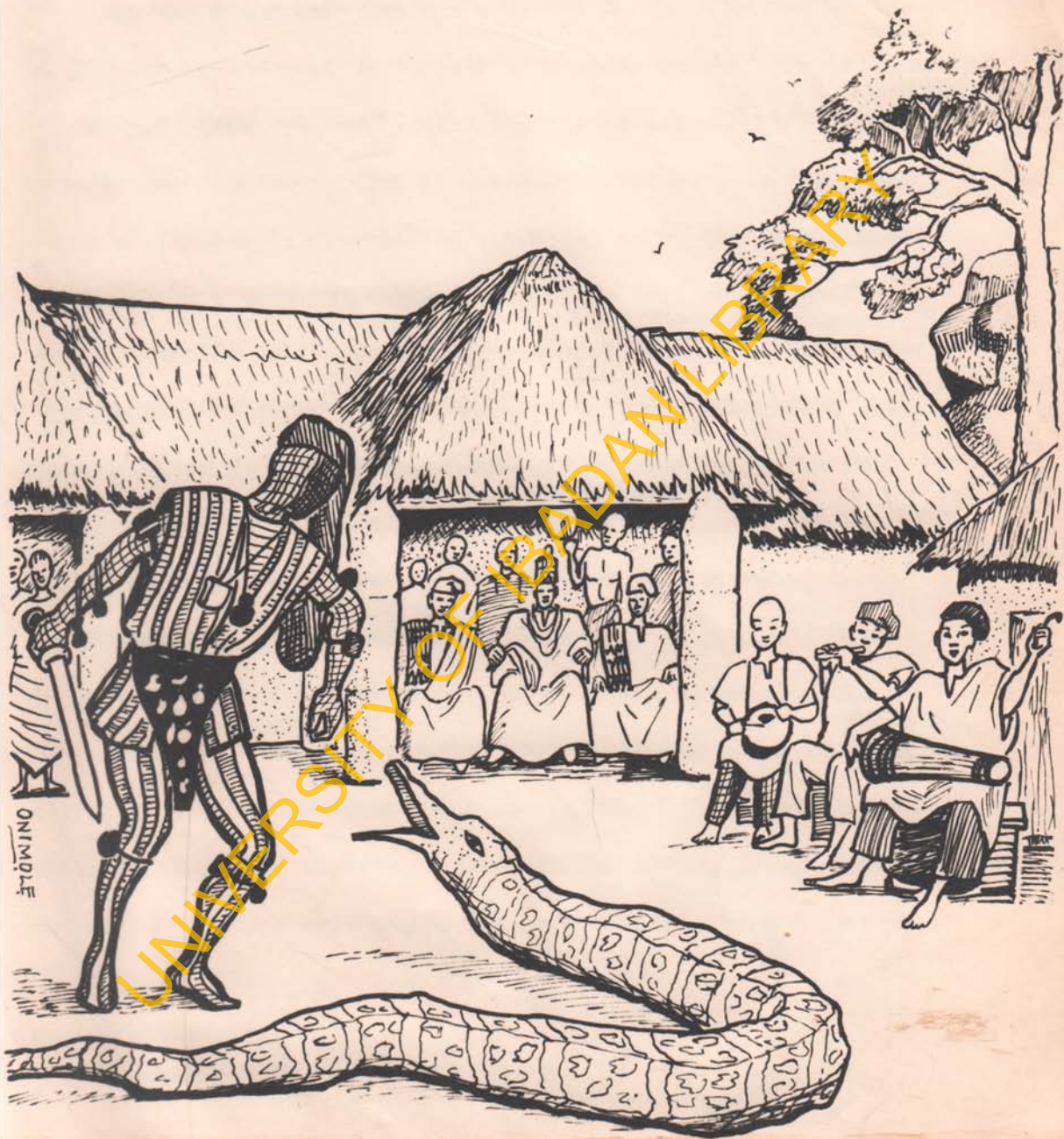
65. Lander, op. cit.

66. Clapperton, op. cit.

67. Landar, op. cit.

Note: This pantomime is the re-enactment of a familiar folk-tale - "Catching the Boa-Constrictor." The two main characters in the drama are the Catcher, costumed as a powerful hunter, and the Boa. The other masked actors are the Village Characters. In Yoruba, the rainbow is linked with the boa, which is its messenger. It is popularly believed that at the end of the rainbow could be found the dung of the boa and that those who find it get great riches. It is also believed that the foam of the boa forms the seven colours of the rainbow. (See: Parrinder, op. cit., p. 173).

In this drama, the Catcher or the Hunter sets out in search of the Boa. He finds it and there is a fight during which he succeeds in catching the Boa. Later, the Hunter calls up the Villagers who arrive to carry the Boa triumphantly to the village. (See plate, No. 25).



No. 25: Catching the Boa-Constrictor. [Described by Hugh Clapperton, Old Oyo, February 22nd, 1826] (Illustration by kindness of Mr. M.O. Onimole, Graphic Artist, Ministry of Economic Planning & Social Development, Ibadan).

of which the people generally joined."⁷¹

The third and last act was a sketch - "The Whiteman". One of the actors, "placed by himself on a clear spot of ground, near to the palm-tree, gradually detached his covering [ago], and exposed the figure of a man of a chalky whiteness, to the fixed looks of the people [spectators], who set up so terrific a shout of approbation that it startled us".⁶⁸ He "was of the middle size, miserably thin, and starved with cold. It frequently went through the motion of taking snuff, and rubbing his hands; when it walked it was with the most awkward gait, treading as the most tender footed whiteman would do in walking barefooted for the first time, over new frozen ground."⁶⁹ The figure walked but indifferently well, and mimicked our actions as badly.⁷⁰ The

spectators often appealed to us, as to the excellence of the performance ... but at the end of the scene, all eyes, swimming in tears, were directed first to us.... Between the acts we were entertained with a concert of drums and whistles, as well as country songs from the females who were present, in the choruses

⁷¹ Ibid. note: "The sketch could not have been a burlesque of a white man, as the Yoruba chief from near Futa, on first seeing him in 1825, had told his 'we get all good things from white man, and we must therefore be glad when whiteman comes to visit our country.'" (See Clapperton, *op. cit.*, p. 3).

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Clapperton, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ Lander, *op. cit.*

⁷² Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-218.

of which the people generally joined."⁷¹

The theatre-troupes were known to have lived in Ògbín, Ìgbórí, Òkò, Ìrẹ̀sà, Ìkòyí, Şungbé, Òjé and other towns located along the northern frontier with the Borgu and Nupe countries. With the fall of the metropolis which took place a few years after the visit of Captain Clapperton and his party, the theatre-troupes had no choice but to abandon their homes and areas of operation. When Oyo capitulated and the Ilorin invaders entered and sacked the city, Jimba, one of the head slaves "took away all the Egungun dress, and forced the citizens to accept the Koran, which necessitated every one to change his name for an Arabic name, the only alternative being the sword."⁷² For the theatre-troupes and their court-masques, this

71. ibid.

Note: "The whiteman" sketch could not have been a burlesqued imitation of either Clapperton or Lander since they had not been in the neighbourhood for long. Yoruba traders, were of course, in contact with the coast through a trade-route to Badagry and had been in contact with Europeans on the coast over a long period. Snuff-taking had become fashionable by the middle of the nineteenth century in England, enjoyed by all very important people.

In all probability, the sketch was an enactment. According to Clapperton, a Yoruba chief from near Puka, on first meeting him in 1825, had told him "we get all good things from the whiteman, and we must therefore be glad when whiteman comes to visit our country." (See Clapperton, op. cit., p. 3). The troupes perform as far south as the Oyo out-posts in Porto-Nove and later Badagry.

72. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 217-218.

calamity must have been their hardest blow. For the 'Jihad' was intolerant of their type of activities, in any case.

With their homeland thus invaded, the troupes moved with their accoutrements and founded or settled in new settlements to the south some of which bore the names of the old. They were, however, unable to operate or perform successfully in the areas occupied or established by the Fulani. Since the capture and devastation of Old Oyo and its supercession by Ilorin,⁷³ the troupes had no alternative, at first, but to try and operate there. But the Ilorin Moslems would not entertain them within their gates, and would of course have nothing to do with the egúngún:

"Ìlórín baba-ńgèrí!

Ìlú tó yí kò léégún!

Èsín l'èégún wọn,

Okò l'orò ibè.

Ìlórín, bèrè kí o tó wò ọ.

Ènití kò gbón 'nú, gbón l'èhìn,

Kó má wò'lú Ìlórín.

Ìlú tó yí kò ní'gbó Ilé!"⁷⁴

73. H.P. Harmon-Hodge, Gazetteer of Ilorin Province, London, 1929, p. 68.

74. This chant comes from 'Oríkì Ìlórín' chanted to me by Alàgbà Agboolá Adeniji.

Ilorin, chief of cities!
 A city as big as this has no masquerades!
 The Horse is their masquerade,
 The Spear is their cult.

Ilorin, ask before you enter therein.
 Anyone who is not wise and cunning,
 Must not enter the town of Ilorin. 75
 A town as big as this has no grove!

It was for religious reasons that the theatre-troupes were banned by the Muslims. This, however, did not deter Àjàlá Amúgbekún, the leading masque-dramaturg of this period. When Abdul Salami became the first Emir of Ilorin about 1831, Àjàlá Amúgbekún insisted on performing to the Emir. The Moslem chief was overwhelmed and Ajala's feat earned him the following praise: 76

"Àjàlá Amúgbekún

Omọ erù 1'Ọfà [Ìkòyí],

Àm'Olúgbèrè la òde Ìlórín,

Ọ-f'amèrè la ọjà Sàlàmi lọ.

Ọjè yí gba lówàní,

Omọ Amúgbekún gba lówàní

1'òde Ìlórín.

75. This refers to a belt of forest used as the sacred-grove or secret precinct and reserved exclusively by the Egúngún Society. It was a feature of every Yoruba settlement in those days.

76. By Alàgbà Agboolá Adéníjì.

Ọ̀jẹ̀ tí ńgun ẹ̀sin kò wọ̀pọ̀,

Ọmọ Amúgbẹkún ló gb'ẹ̀sin,

l'ó gb'obìrin l'ówọ Ọjúẹkùn!"

"Àjàlá Amúgbẹkún

Offspring of the most feared

one of Ọ̀fà /Ikòyí/,

One who took Olúgbẹ̀ré⁷⁷ in a procession

through Ilorin,

Took his mummery through the

market of Sàlámi.⁷⁸

This 'Ọ̀jẹ̀' (histrione) got a turban.

Son of Amúgbẹkún brought the

turban from Ilorin.⁷⁹

Not very many histrions ride

on horseback,

Son of Amúgbẹkún took a horse

as well as a wife from

the watching eyes of the Tiger!"⁸⁰

-
77. Olugbere Agan was the first Yoruba actor. He was a hybrid and is now synonymous with the red monkey who has become the totem of the masque-troupes (see: Johnson, p. 29). They take the animal along with them when they travel. Every performance is preceded by a procession through the streets as an announcement of the arrival of the troupe in the town.
78. Performances normally took place in the main market-square in front of the royal palace. The Emir under reference was Abdul Salami.
79. It is said that the Emir gave him or invested him with a turban as a gift or as a mark of honour. This could also mean the Emir's wish that he be converted to Islam.
80. Actors receive many gifts from their performances. But they are also notorious for absconding with women, usually wives of the nobles, who force their company on them, in admiration.

Note: 'Ọjúẹkùn' is Abdul Salami's appellation.

land were invited to return to the new citadel. It was at the
 Àjàlá Amúgbekún and his troupe became so well known that
 when the title of Baṣorun was conferred on Olúyòlé of Ibadan, the
 latter invited him to entertain him. Some of the Oyo emigrants
 had settled in Ibadan and built it into a great fortress against
 any possible Fulani thrust southwards. Between 1829 and 1832,
 Ibadan had been consolidated as "a military headquarter for
 marauding and other expeditions."⁸¹ Olúyòlé born of a noble
 parentage at Old Oyo,⁸² was among the band of marauders living
 in Ibadan and carrying on expeditions into the Egba and Remo
 farms.⁸³ "He was fond of dancing and acquired a false reputation
 as an idler".⁸⁴ By 1837, New Oyo had been rebuilt by King Atiba
 as the centre of a new crusade to restore the dignity of the Old
 empire. All the leading Oyo families scattered all over Yoruba-

81. Johnson, op. cit., p. 244.

82. Akinyele, (in Iwe Itan Ibadan, etc. op. cit., p. 36),
 describes Olúyòlé as the son /descendant?/ of Gáhà who
 escaped the massacre of the Baṣorun's children and relatives
 because he was then a nursing baby. But according to
 Johnson (p. 281), his father was Olokunoye Okolo Ogun, a
 descendant of Baṣorun Yamba. His mother was Agbònrin,
 daughter of King Àbíòdun. Thus he was related to King Atiba
 as a nephew.

83. S.O. Biobaku, Eminent Nigerians of the 19th Century,
 Cambridge University Press, n.d., p. 42.

84. ibid.

85. Akinyele, op. cit., pp. 35-6.

land were invited to return to the new citadel. It was at the grand ceremony of conferring of titles by the King that both Oluyole of Ibadan and Kurumi of Ijaiye became impressed by the masques of Àjàlá.

After the ceremony at Oyo, Oluyole asked Ajala to accompany him to Ibadan. The Ibadan people were very pleased to see that, included among the Baṣorun's entourage on his return to Ibadan after his investiture, was a company of dancing masquerades; hence the remark:

"Èhìnkùnlé ará Òyó

L'eégún ti sẹ̀ wá'lé Ibadàn!"

"Through Oyo's backyard
The masquerade emerged into Ibadan!"

Lágelú,⁸⁵ believed to be the founder of the first settlement in Ibadan, incurred the ire of Šango because of the role of his 'masquerades'. The settlement was sacked as a consequence, and since that incident no masquerades had emerged in Ibadan. Part of Oluyole's 'oríkì'⁸⁶ however, shows him as an Ìgbò descendant:

85. Lágelú is said to be one of the Ìgbò descendants and worshipper of Obatalá who left Ife with his followers in search of a new settlement.

86. Akinyele, op. cit., pp. 35-6.

1. Olúyòwón, Baṣòrun!

A rí 'tèlè òkò fùlú ará,

Onlogbò! Iba aṣe-burúkú-ṣe-rere,

Olóbèlè! Ìgbò! Atabatìbì!

A rí tokòsì f'Àgan l'ènu,

A f'adámò t'orò láiyà.

A lé tẹ̀bẹ̀lẹ̀kun jìnà

Bí ẹ̀ ni pé kó lọ kú sí'gbò,

Baba Orídagogo!"

"Olúyòwón,⁸⁷ Baṣòrun!

One who relaxes like a lord
in the deck of the boat.

Onlogbò! The chief who does evil
and does good.

Olóbèlè! Ìgbò!⁸⁸ Atabatìbì!

One who finds the 'tokòsì'⁸⁹ to drag

the Àgan in the mouth,

One who in defiance confronts the cult.

One who drives conspiracy away

As though he should go and die in the bush.

Father of Orídagogo!"

87. An appellation which describes Olúyòlé's disposition.

88. By hailing Olúyòlé as an 'Ìgbò' we get a direct hint of his ancestry as of the indigenous stock. Also, this is an evidence of his interest in the 'masquerade'.

89. It is probably a weapon (a gag) but the real meaning is obscure.

Oluyole is believed to have carried the 'mask' himself and, his [during
 marauding days, to have introduced the 'masquerade' into the
 Ijebu area:

"Egúngún kan kò dé Jèbú rí;

Iba l'ó m'eégún wọ 'gbó Rémo.

Egún f'asọ, Iyándá si f'asọ.

Èbè l'à mbe 'Yándá kó tó f'agò 'lè."⁹⁰

"No masquerade ever went to Ijebu;

Iba [Basorun], it was, who took the
 masquerade into the Remo jungle.

When masquerades wash their cloths,
 Iyándá too washes his.

We had to be begging Iyándá before
 he left masquerading."

Before Atiba's re-organization of his new kingdom one of the
 chiefs he had won to himself was Losa Oluwaiye, the Alágbà,⁹¹ and
 during the conferment of titles, he invited Aiyewun from Iseyin
 to be the Alápinni, the political head of the Egúngún Society,
 instead of Eniyewu, the Alápinni of the ancient city who was still
 alive.⁹²

Knowing the importance of the Society in his new establish-

90. *Journal of the Nigerian Historical Society*, (Co-authors:
 J. A. Ajayi and R. Smith), Cambridge, 1964, pp. 33-36.

90. Akinyele, *op. cit.*, Part of Oluyole's 'Oríkì'.

91. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

92. *ibid.*, p. 280.

ment he felt it necessary to surround himself with his own

through as the few earlier kings who had celebrated the 'Bẹ̀bẹ̀' favourites.

festival had died soon afterwards, King Atiba was entreated not to

Early in 1858, King Atiba was resolved on celebrating the
celebrate it. But he insisted and prepared the ground for the
'Bẹ̀bẹ̀' festival. He felt that, since the country was, at least
festival. He said, "Well, I am old enough and do not care to live
temporarily, free from foreign incursion once again, the Fulani
at Ilorin having been permanently checked at the battle of
Oshogbo by the Ibadan army,"⁹³ he should take advantage of the
new circumstances to have a jubilee. "Atiba never lost an oppor-
tunity to emphasize to his audience the importance of tradition
and authority."⁹⁴ He had, at least partially, succeeded in recon-
structing Oyo on the lines that King Abiọ̀dun, his father, had
taken. He "reinstated the annual cycle of the ancient rites
for the principal gods important to the kingship."⁹⁵ He re-esta-
blished the effective importance of the worship of Orìṣà Sàngó
and egúngún, and practised religious tolerance since a substan-
tial proportion of his subjects was Muslim.

96. *ibid.*, pp. 329.

93. R. Smith, in Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century, (Co-authors: J.F.A. Ajayi and R. Smith), Cambridge, 1964, pp. 33-36.

94. (See: Dr. J.F.A. Ajayi in ibid., p. 66, footnote).

95. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo" in West African Kingdoms in the 19th Century, 1967, p. 48.

99. *ibid.*, p. 330.

II. Inasmuch as the few earlier kings who had celebrated the 'Bẹbẹ' festival had died soon afterwards, King Atiba was entreated not to celebrate it. But he insisted and prepared the ground for the festival. He said, "Well, I am old enough and do not care to live much longer."⁹⁶ Notification went round to all parts of the Yoruba country and delegates came pouring into the new capital.⁹⁷ It was a big occasion for the masque-dramaturgs and "from Saki alone came about 200 Egunguns and so from other towns around Oke-Ogun for the ceremonies."⁹⁸ During the main performance of the 'ritual play', the masque was 'Àgan', "the supposed spirit of his father dressed in the skin of the red monkey; the King prostrated before his father"⁹⁹ and was blessed by the ghost-mummer. Thus, in fact, the King made the celebration a dramatic enactment of his own funerary rite. He died a year after.

96. Johnson, op. cit., p. 329.

Note: The 'Bẹbẹ' is sometimes termed the 'Ikú' or funeral rites, as if intended to mark the close of a long reign. (See: Johnson, p. 164).

97. The festival took place between February 15 and March 1, 1858. (See: Ajayi, op. cit., p. 75 and footnote).

98. ibid., p. 329.

99. ibid., p. 330.

II. As People's Theatre:-

With the break-up of the Oyo empire and the disruption of court-life for a good part of the first half of the nineteenth century, the place of the masques as a feature in court-entertainments weakened. Since Èsà Ògbín became a professional masque-dramaturg, other lineages set up rival touring companies. Names of troupes or companies like Èiyébà, Lèbè, Aiyelabólá, and others, emerged. Other masque-dramaturgs like Ajálá Amúgbekún, Lómònikùn, Òjòngbòdú, and others, came to be mentioned as leaders of their own theatre-troupes. Since the troupes did not have to stay at Court any longer, they were free to spread out and to entertain any one or any group who invited them. Besides, they were still part of the egúngún festival in certain areas even though the cultic dependence on them had weakened.

It is, in fact, their participation in the annual egúngún festivals that launched the troupes as a popular form of entertainment. On non-festival days, they were able to satisfy the people's desire for entertainment and diversion; whether the occasion was the celebration of a birth, a marriage or a death, they were specially invited to perform. But they also organised their own itineraries and visited places.

From about the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, Ibadan had risen as a power and had become a force quite independent of the Oyo hegemony. In fact between 1861 and 1893 there was an 'Ibadan empire' extending from Igana in Egbado through Ife to Akoko districts.¹⁰⁰ Following the success at the battle of Oshogbo in 1840, Ibadan had "began gradually to reconquer from Ilorin the Old Oyo provinces east of the Ogun, as far north as Offa; then they turned east towards the Ijesha, Ekiti and Akoko countries. At each place they conquered they appointed an Ajele to supervise the local rulers and collect tax".¹⁰¹

An Ajele, as resident official, was responsible to a war chief in Ibadan; but the system offered "a centralised administration and a standing army based on Ibadan".¹⁰² It also established cultural links between Ibadan and the dependent towns, and enabled the people to visit Ibadan especially during the important festivals. Since "the Ajele themselves were living examples of the style of living of the metropolis", their position was such as to

104. *Ajéle* means a professional dancing troupe (See: Abraham, p. 569). The theatre troupes were so called during the Oyo invasion. The Oyo invaders themselves

100. See map of Ibadan empire in Bolanle Awe, The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power in the 19th century, Thesis, D.Phil.

105. Oxford, 1964, p. 120. The wooden bridge that crossed River Ogun during the decisive stage of the war. The Ibadan army

101. Ajayi, op. cit., p. 69. The sudden swelling of the river caused a flood, but the bridge sank the enemy attempting

102. ibid. across it.

enable them to make social and cultural impact on the dependent towns.¹⁰³

For the theatre-troupes the rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba power marked a new phase of expansion. They became popular not only by serving as court-entertainers of the *Ajéle* in the various and vast areas in which they were located, but even more so, by playing to the general public in these areas at the invitation of the *Ajéle*. This, in fact, was the period when the troupes came to be popularly called the *Alárinjò*.¹⁰⁴

The battle of Ikirun, otherwise known as 'Ogun Jálumi'¹⁰⁵ was the first organised attempt by the Ekiti, Ijesha, Igbomina and later Ilorin (joining the alliance), to free themselves from Ibadan's occupation of their territory, and molestation of their liberty. The Ekiti actually started the revolt by murdering the *Ajéle* and second *Ajéle* led by Tijuní, were known to have been *Ajéle* during different phases of the war

103. B. Awe, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154. Mrs. B. Awe (on pp. 141-160) discusses the 'Ajele system', its derivation and operation.

104. The 'Alárinjò' means a professional dancing troupe (See: Abrahams, *op. cit.*, p. 569). The theatre troupes were so called during, and only in, the Ibadan empire. The Oyo innovators themselves still call the troupes 'Apidán'.

105. A stampede occurred on the wooden bridge that crossed River Otin during the decisive stage of the war. The Ibadan army believed to have contrived the sudden swelling of the river to cause a flood, cut the bridge and sank the enemy attempting to flee across it.

Ibadan Ajélè.¹⁰⁶ Àjàyí Ògboríṣẹ̀fọ̀n, who had spent a good part of his soldiering days during the Ijaye War raiding the Egba and Meko towns,¹⁰⁷ led the Ibadan army as the Balogun. When he reached

↳ Ikirun in October 1878, Òjélàdé, the masque-dramaturg of the Aiyélabólá troupe based at Inisha, welcomed him with an entertainment. But Àjàyí was more concerned with his pressing assignment to stop the revolt against the Ibadan empire. He succeeded in persuading Òjélàdé to follow him into the battle. By November the battle had been fought and won by the Ibadan army.

To celebrate his victory, Àjàyí invited Òjélàdé and his Aiyélabólá troupe to entertain the Ibadan war-lords. Thus they became the first theatre-group to operate at the war front. During the time of the 'Kírìjì War', which was a sequel to the 'Jálumi War', two theatre-troupes: first, the Aiyélabólá led by Olóṣẹ̀dé, son of Òjélàdé and second, the Àjàngílá led by Tijúkú, were known to have been travelling around the camps during different phases of the war to entertain the Ibadan soldiers. At the end of that interminable and indecisive war in 1893, Balogun Àjàyí Òṣúngbékún invited the

106. A classic example took place at Okemesi where Fábunmi, who later in 1881 became the Balogun of the Ekiti Confederates, murdered the Ajélè for forcibly cohabiting with his wife. (Cf. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 425).

107. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

Aiyélabólá troupe to live permanently in Ibadan in recognition of their contribution to the morale of the Ibadan army during the long war-years.¹⁰⁸

III. The Rise of Professionalism:-

The masques flourished within a guild system which helped to ensure that the secrets of the art did not pass beyond the lineages which followed it. Professionalism is known to have been started by the Ológbin lineage, and later, other lineages followed, by building up their own troupes. There never really emerged an all-embracing guild or actors' union (until fairly recently), and individualism markedly distinguished one lineage-guild from another. Even though each group watched the others jealously and quickly picked up new ideas from them,¹⁰⁹ it was clear that certain lineages were identified with certain artistic specializations. For instance, the Lébe troupe was renowned for poetry (iwì) and dance; Eiyéba was popular for acrobatics and dance; Agbégijó

108. I am indebted to Alagba Ojeleke Aiyelabola and Oduola Ajangila for being my informants.

109. Beier, "The Agbegijo Masqueraders", Nigeria, No. 83, September 1964, p. 191.

was famous for sketches and Aiyélabóla for 'tableaux vivants'.

The masque-dramaturg was mainly an animator who had to rely on the carver for his artistic inspiration. The carved masks had to be bought as the carvers belonged to a different lineage craft-guild. In most cases, the Bata-orchestra accompaniment was provided by a different lineage; historically, only the costumier had always been a member of the troupe's lineage. Of course, there were occasions when the masque-dramaturg built his own costumes. The Bata-leader as a matter of form collected fifty-percent of all proceeds at the end of each performance since the success or failure of the performance depended largely on his part in the total pattern. He had to be involved not only with the shape of each act but also with the communication line that runs through the performance. He, in fact, formed the linking channel of communication between the actor and the spectator. He also had to show his skill in relating and reflecting the histrionic capabilities of the dramaturg. He therefore had to take part in training and was present in all rehearsals.

Professionalism had encouraged many an artist, were he the carver or the masque-dramaturg, to exhibit his own individualism through self-expression and experimentation. The element of competition, which became a functional part of the annual egúngún festivals where every masque-dramaturg was expected to contribute

directly or indirectly, had improved the general style and form of each group. On the other hand, by working within the general convention of the egúngún, the extent to which an individual artist could carry his freedom had been limited. One significant break-through, nevertheless, was the emergence of the profane element with its increased interest in the sketch or 'revue'.¹¹⁰ According to Read, it was during the time the artist tried to depict his personal vision or fantasy that he deserted the sacred legends and turned to the rich field of profane mythology. Then finally, the artist dispensed with legend altogether, and resorted to the final phase of introspection - the expression of his individual vision.¹¹¹

The masque-dramaturg who, by demonstrating his genius, was able to move the taste of his spectator, had in a way, transcended the tradition of the egúngún. His modification of the original

110. Revue originated with the French. It is a mixture of songs, sketches, burlesques, monologues etc. describing contemporary events mainly on satiric lines. As a form of theatrical art, it varies from culture to culture. (See Oxford Companion to the Theatre, O.J.P. 1957, p. 666).

111. Herbert Read, Art and Society, Faber (paperbook) London, 1967, p. 68.

concept was made possible by his venturing out from the Court as well as from the fixed pattern of the religious festivals in order to appeal to and meet the taste of a wide undifferentiated public. In the past he had lived by flattering the elite, that is, the Court and the nobility, for their amusement; now he could include them in his satirical sketches if he so desired.

The rise of professionalism in masque-dramaturgy has been examined in three different areas of Yoruba, for convenience called circuits:

1. Oyo-Ibadan Circuit: This is the area of intensive professionalism. It is linked with Old Oyo where the masque developed and where it had its first independent existence through court-patronage and the promotion of provincial governors (*ilàrí*) and, later, the residents (*ajéḽè*). The theatre developed by being the social arm of the state. Most of the extinct and extant professional repertory companies were located in this circuit and are known to have exhibited a large amount of independence from the cultus: The *Lébe* and *Ajóféèbó* at Oyo, *Aiyélabólá* in Ibadan, *Àjàngilá* in Èdè, *Agbégijó* in Oshogbo, *Olúfálé* in Aiyédadé and a host of small units located in the Shaki and Oshun areas. Extensive touring must have affected their style and form because their performances present a remarkable degree of repetition and staleness.

Their 'répertoire' are filled with stock-plays.

2. Igbomina Circuit: The Igbomina is a branch of Yoruba stock whose origin is doubtful but who paid her allegiance to the Alafin during the Oyo empire. The area is located east of Ilorin and south of the Nupe country. It includes Òró, Àjasse, Òkè Ọ̀dẹ̀, Igbàjà, and Òmù.¹¹² During the period of the Yoruba Wars it existed as a semi-independent state under the sovereign kingdom of the Ọ̀ràngun of Illá,¹¹³ until it was raided by Ibadan from about 1876.

It has become customary for more than a century that a touring theatre-group visit Òró once in every two years at the invitation of the Egungun Society in the area to mark the festival.¹¹⁴ The group ~~is~~ lodges with the Abéégún who acts as the chief sponsor. It is the responsibility of the Abéégún to see to their feeding and accommodation. The group is under a contract to perform for five days, the duration of the festival, between the hours of three and seven o'clock in the evening.

112. Hernan-Hodge, op. cit., p. 39.

113. J.A. Atanda, The New Oyo Empire, (Ph.D. Thesis, Ibadan 1958), p. 9.

114. At the Igbomina area there is a distinction between egúngún and Ọ̀jẹ̀; while the former is used to describe the masquerades (including 'pàáká' and 'ẹ̀wẹ̀'), the latter is used exclusively to denote the theatre-group.

The travelling theatre-groups that visit the Igbomina area are part of the arrangements of the egúngún festival, performing on professional days to entertain the public at the command of come from Illa, others from Oshun division. What is significant is that the Abeégún family pay for the cost of inviting them, as well as caring for their feeding and accommodation. After the festival performances are over, the group shares whatever proceeds the metropolis was destroyed. The Ilaro groups were probably accue to them with the Abeégún. This is a feature which looks more like a token of appreciation of his hospitality than a contract based on a fifty-fifty sharing.

In spite of the fact that the visit is in connection with the egúngún festival, the guest-troupe has no ritual obligations to the resident cult-group. They set up their own booths where they dress up and do not repair to the cult-house. They are less secretly guarded.

3. The South-West Circuit: This area includes the Egba, Egbado, Ketu and Awori divisions of Yoruba. It is remarkable for its "sedentary professionalism", that is, that the theatre-groups do not indulge in extensive touring unless they receive special invitations from individuals or groups who want their entertainments. They still preserve the traditions of the lineage guild-system and keep to the ritual obligations of being a functional

115. See p. 183 above.
116. Kola Poluyan, *Egbado and Yoruba - A Power Politics: 1832 -*

117. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

part of the arrangements of the egúngún festival, performing on certain specific days to entertain the public at the command of the Alágbàá.

The theatre-groups interviewed all traced their origin to Old Oyo and said they migrated to their present settlements when the metropolis was destroyed. The Ilaro groups were probably established ~~some time before~~ the early part of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ It is said that the founders of this area of Egbado were members of the Alafin Royal family who migrated from Old Oyo during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹¹⁶ The Ìmálà group probably migrated a little later. There were some who moved about the early part of the eighteenth century and were said to have done so with "the Alafin's blessing under Gaha"¹¹⁷ Others probably moved very much later after the destruction of the metropolis. By the third decade of the eighteenth century, however, the various kingdoms of Egbado owed their political allegiance to the Alafin of Oyo.¹¹⁸

115. See p. 143 above.

116. Kola Folayan, Egbado and Yoruba-Aja Power Politics: 1832 - 1894, (M.A. Thesis, Ibadan), 1967, pp. 7-8.

117. ibid., p. 9.

118. ibid., p. 23.

According to another account,¹²³ Adele's children introduced the egúngún into Lagos by keeping a Court Masque. But the Oyo overlordship of Egba went on for a long time. Before Liṣabi's liberation, which must have taken place between 1775 and 1780,¹¹⁹ "the Alafin's 'ilàrí' had entrenched themselves in the different Egba towns."¹²⁰ Even after Liṣabi's liberation of the Egba people from the tentacles of Oyo, refugees from Oyo settled in the Egba area with the result that the Oyo influence in the area persisted.

In all probability, the egúngún reached Lagos from the Egba-do-Awori area.¹²¹ It is not clear in what form. But by the nineteenth century the Egúngún Society had acquired a strong political status and had been functioning as a weapon for social action. Adele I of Lagos is believed to have introduced the egúngún into Lagos. He came to the throne after his father Ologunkutere had died about 1811. Esilogun his elder brother, was not happy about being superceded on the throne by his younger brother. He tried to gain control and in a coup d'état succeeded in outsting Adele who escaped to Badagry in 1821.¹²²

119. Bicbaku, op. cit., p. 8.

120. ibid.

121. Peter Morton-Williams, "The Egungun Society in the South Western Yoruba Kingdoms," W.A.I.S.E.R. Proceedings, 1956, p. 91.

122. J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The British Occupation of Lagos 1851-1861," Nigeria Magazine, No. 69, August 1961, p. 98.

According to another account,¹²³ Adele's children introduced the egúngún into Lagos by keeping a Court Masque. But the Lagosians, probably the Oba's enemies, looking for an excuse to bring him into disfavour, condemned the Oba for allowing the egúngún to live in the palace. It is also said that the "mohammedan religion" was established during this period.¹²⁴ Assuming this was so, a probable ground of attack against the king could have been offered to the Muslims who had no respect for the egúngún and who might have suspected that the king could mobilize the egúngún cult against his enemies.

Thus, the indications are that by the nineteenth century, the Egúngún Society had been firmly entrenched in the Egba, Egbado, and Awori areas of Yorubaland. The annual egúngún festivals were great occasions during which the lineage-guilds in charge of theatrical performance were invited to take part. Since the theatre-groups in these areas featured more prominently as part of the festival than followed their professional calling by travelling about with their troupes (as is the case in the Oyo - Ibadan circuit), there is no doubt that these groups were still

125. The annual egúngún festival in this circuit takes place between December and March in the various places. Even in the strong influence of mohammedanism has brought about dramatic changes as to when the festival has

123. John B. Losi, History of Lagos, African Education Press, Lagos, 1967, p. 19.

124. ibid.

carrying on with the tradition as they had inherited it before the collapse of the Oyo empire and the subsequent development of intensive professionalism. This also meant that the groups had reached these areas before the middle of the nineteenth century.

Significantly, the theatre-groups bear the names of troupes that emerged after the demise of Èsà Ògbín. At Ìmàlá, there are three lineage-groups: Aiyélabólá, Lébe and Ajórébo. (There is the fourth: Akérésoḷá, which sprung out of the Aiyélabólá group). At Ilaro there is an Agbégijó and Aiyélabólá at Ìgbógilà. Also at Otta, there are three families of the Agbégijó, who perform under three locally differentiated names. 'Lábòò', the name of their place of origin. At Abeokuta there are two important theatre-groups: Aiyélabólá and Ajórébo each in the different quarters of Itoko and Gbagura, respectively.

The groups in this circuit, apart from keeping up their ritual obligations by performing (in rotation where there are more than one group) during the annual egúngún festivals,¹²⁵ have their own guild meetings during which they entertain the public.

125. The annual egúngún festival in this circuit takes place between December and March in the various places. Even in certain areas, the strong influence of mohammedanism has brought about dramatic changes as to when the festival has to be held, whether annually or periodically.

When they perform during the annual festival, however, the 'Iyá Àgan' otherwise called 'Iyá Mòde' sits watching to ensure that the actors are safe.¹²⁶ Even though the performance is given at the command of the Alágbàá, the ritual head of the Egúngún Society, who sits with his officers on one side of the arena,¹²⁷ the performers pay special tribute to the Iyá Àgan who sits on the other side of the arena.

It is in this circuit that the original style and form of the theatre-masques can be observed and well appreciated. The sketches or revues are more topical and historical and their repertory changes from time to time by new additions. The performance takes place in the market-square and the actors normally use the cult-house located nearby for their dressing-room. The 'odán' trees in the market provide the needed shade for the audience who sit or stand round a large circular space reserved as the arena of performance. The opening show is ritualistic and begins with the 'salute'.

One would expect the professionalism and individualism of the masque-dramaturgs to have affected their style and their form to the extent of a total break with the cult and to the ultimate emergence of

126. See plate, No. 26.

127. See plate, No. 27.



No. 26: Iyá Àgan or Iyámọ̀dẹ. Aiyélabọ́lá Troupe - Ìmálà. (Performance a part of Egúngún Festival).



No. 27: Officers of the Egúngún Society - Ìmálà. (Performance was at the Alágbàá's command: 5/3/68).

'the actor without the mask'. But this is far from happening. The masque-dramaturgs still go by their original descriptive name, egúngún apidán, and their classificatory name, òjè, and do not even take kindly to being called the Alárinjò - a name which originated as an abuse and which more or less picks them out and labels them as 'rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars'. For the purpose of appealing to their mass audiences and influencing their psyche, it is expedient for the masque-dramaturgs to be identified as egúngún; as they "cannot very well ignore the shaping and restraining influence of the cult."¹²⁸

The troupes are exposed to all kinds of dire situations and, sometimes, awful experiences when they travel from place to place. They need the cultus as a bulwark to shield them and as a watchful eye to superintend their performance. They never perform without the permission of the Alágbàá of the town or village they enter. In fact, they lodge in his house and he arranges for their feeding and, in most cases, helps with their publicity. He gets a certain percentage of all the proceeds; but, sometimes, only a token or a gesture of appreciation is made to him. To avert some of the dangers and temptations to which the troupes are exposed

128. Denis Williams: "The Nigerian Image", Odu, Vol. 1, No. 2, (a review), p. 87.

during performance, the Alágbàá provides them with masked body-guards as 'atókùn' to attend on them. There are reports of charms having been used on the performers by some unknown persons in the audience especially during the performance of tragic or serious plays.¹²⁹ It is said that, on one occasion during the performance of the Masque of the Boa-constrictor, the actor was unable to remove his costume at the end of the act.¹³⁰ To maintain their prestige, therefore, the actors also arm themselves with counter-charms. The 'atókùn' or body-guards can also wield the whip against any one suspected of being too inquisitive.

It is important that a performance is opened with 'a salute to earth':

Earth existed before the gods (òrìṣà).
 Earth is the mother to whom the dead return
 Earth and the ancestors are the
 sources of moral law.¹³¹

129. "There are cases when outsiders or competitors of a different Egungun branch in civilian robes, test the miraculous powers of the Egunguns [theatre-troupes]." (See: Delano, The Soul of Nigeria, 1939, p. 163).

130. Lucas, op. cit., p. 139 refers to another account and said the actor was believed to have been affected by a tester who directed charms against him.

131. Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo" Africa, **XXX**, No. 4, October 1960, p. 364.

The masque-dramaturgs are members of the Ògbóni Society.¹³²

Since the Society is concerned with the mystical aspects of Yoruba life, the theatre-troupes need the guidance of the 'earth spirit' when they travel out. Their membership of the Ògbóni Society gives them certain privileges and advantages. The Yoruba adage, "Awo ní gb'áwo ní gbònwò" (A cult-member is the one to raise the arm [support] of another cult-member) provides the necessary incentive for professional people to belong to certain cult or secret associations, especially the Ògbóni Society. It is imperative that a cult-member shall not be let down. By seeking to support him, the secret of the cult is protected thereby.

Sometimes the masque-dramaturgs were charged with vagrancy and robbery and were refused permission to perform on account of these allegations. Sometimes they were received with open arms and were well loaded with gifts including new wives! They were also notorious for being fond of women, even though, in most cases, it was the women who flocked to them out of sheer admiration for their performance. The following narration from 'Odu Òtúrúpongbè'¹³³ accounts for the popularity or notoriety of the actor:

132. Some of them hold important offices in the Society.

133. I am grateful to Mr. Wálé Ògúnymí of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, for helping me to record this 'Odu' at Oshogbo.

The words have been formed from the sound of the bata-drum. In the 'Odu Òtúrúpongbè', however, Òtúrú represents one who impersonates. The 'lgbá' and 'lgbá' are used as 'lgbá'.

"Ó ní bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní ẹ̀nyin ò gbọ́'fá

Bí ó tí nwọ̀n perí yì bí?

Ó ní Òtúrúpongba, Òtúrú-pọ̀n-kete.*

A dífá fún ọ̀mọ-atakiti-gbẹ̀/egbẹ̀wá,

Tí ó t'akítì t'ó fi lọ rẹ́ é dọ́ 'yàwó

Ọ̀lọ́fin l' Ọ̀tùn-Ifẹ̀ Ilé.

Ìgbà t'ó t'akítì, ibi t'ó ti gbẹ̀'ra

Ìjìn gbún-gbún-gbún bi ọ̀jọ́;

N'bi tí ó ta é sí ná

Ìjìn gbún-gbún-gbún bi kàngá.

Ọ̀lọ́fin wá dá'hun pé ọ̀un kò mọ́

Ìdí rẹ́ tí gbogbo àwọn obìrin

Ọ̀un se l'ọ̀yún .

Ni babaláwọ ní kó lọ rẹ́ é tọ́jú egbẹ̀wá owo;

Nwọ̀n ní kó kó ọ̀;

Kó wá kẹ́sì àwọn atakítì tí mbe

l' Ọ̀tùn-Ifẹ̀ Ilé.

Èni ó bá lẹ́ t'akítì nínú káá

tí ó bá lẹ́ tú s'ẹ̀hin gbàgede,

Ọ̀un ni yì ó gb'egbẹ̀wá yì.

Gbogbo wa ẹ́ jẹ́ ká ma dá'wó ọ̀.

Ni olókítì bá de lati t'akítì gb'egbẹ̀wá.

*The words have been formed from the sound of the bata-drum. In the 'Odu Òtúrúpongbe', however, Òtúrú represents one who impersonates. The 'igba' and 'kete' are used as 'pun'.

B'ó ti gbéra nínú ilé, ló bá bọ́ sínú káà.

Nwón l'èni tí híé 'bírín Ọba rè é!

Ní nwón bá mú u.

Ọba ní kí nwón lọ rè é pá.

Àwón ilú d'ójú ọ̀nà,

Nwón l'áwón kò ní sẹ́ irú èyí.

Atàkítì ti d'Agemo!"

"He said, 'don't you understand what the Oracle is saying?"

He said the impersonator Ọtúrú has carried his calabash, he has carried his receptacle.

Thus decreed the Oracle on the Acrobat, who receives two-thousand cowries for his show.

Who went to display and later cohabited with the wife of the Ọlọfin at the first Ọtùn-Ifẹ.

When he tumbled, he took off from a height farther than the sun;

When he landed, he ended up on a spot deeper than the well!

Ọlọfin then remarked he didn't know why all his wives had become expectant mothers.

Then the Oracle priest asked him to find two-thousand cowries and put them together,

And then invite the Acrobat who lived at Ọtùn-Ifẹ.

'Whoever is able to tumble from the inner-chamber and land on the outer-wall, Shall receive this two-thousand cowries.'

134. The
135. According to my professional informants, they had themselves experienced such disgrace from one or two village heads.

Let us all collect our two-thousand
 cowries and put them together.
 Then the Acrobat arrived to display and
 collect his fee.
 He took off from the house and landed
 in the inner-chamber.
 Then they knew he was the man who had
 made love to the Oba's wife.
 They grabbed him; the Oba ordered him
 to be killed.
 When the chiefs set out, then they decided
 that action was beyond them.
 The Acrobat had transformed into the Agemo!"¹³⁴

The troupes travel^{led} mostly during the dry season and spent the
 rainy season as sedentary medicine-men after the manner of Olúgbèré,
 the first actor (ghost-mummer) ~~was~~ with whom they were all spiritual-
 ly connected. They trafficked in charms and medicines and many
 people were easily gulled by them. It was difficult, of course, to
 resist their posturings, especially, as most of the people they
 imposed upon in this way, believed that their 'transformations' were
 made possible by means of magic and charms. There were reports¹³⁵
 of occasions when the troupes had been refused permission to perform

134. The Agemo is a cult among the Ijebu and manifests itself in a
 masquerade. In the theatre the Agemo is a satirical sketch.
 It is customary during the order of a theatrical performance
 for Acrobatics to be followed by the Masque of the Agemo (Agemo
 Eléni). The incident explained in this 'Odù' may have provided
 the original source of the order of performance. (See plate, No. 28).

135. According to my professional informants, they had themselves
 experienced such disgrace from one or two village heads.



No. 28: Masque of the Agemq: A satirical sketch on the Agemq cult.
The dancing actor is inside the 'keéré' or fàáfá (raffia mat).

in a place and had left promising vengeance on the people; and later when the place had become infested with small-pox, the people had believed that the 'Alárinjò' who were refused permission to perform, had sent the 'god of small-pox' to punish them!

There were also cases of troupes who were banned from performing in certain areas on account of their unrestrained flair for social criticisms. Sometimes when their sketches were in bad taste they were stopped in the middle of the act and chased out and ordered never to return again. A classic example¹³⁶ was that of the troupe of Abidogun of Agborako's house, Oyo, in the twenties. King Ladigbolu I, the Aláfin of Oyo, banned the troupe from further performance of the masque of Kudèfù because it was a satire on the institution of the 'àrè'. The play was a historical sketch on Kudèfù, the famous 'àrè' of Aláfin Adelu. Johnson, narrating the story of the act said:

Kudèfù, the king's favourite Ilari and head of all his slaves on the morning of the death [King Adelu] before it was officially announced, went to know of

136. This information was contained in the accounts of the Alárinjò theatre given to me by Alàgbà Ojèbísí one of my professional informants who is himself a masque-dramaturg and leader of the Ajóféébó troupe at Oyo.

137. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

his master's condition, and learning he was dead he was going home sad at heart to die of his own accord.

Alega the keeper of the gate on seeing him coming from the inner apartments, being inquisitive, approached him to learn of their master's condition. Kudufu at once unsheathed his sword saying, "You go before, I am coming at your heels to be attendants on our master in the other world," and in one stroke he cut off his head and then coolly went home to die.¹³⁷

In spite of the popularity of the masque with the audience, Abidogun was rounded up by the king's valets who protested that the masque-dramaturg had flagrantly exhibited a lack of respect for the Alafin. Abidogun was summoned before the King who declared him guilty of disrespect. He paid the 'itàjẹ' (ransom fee) and was ordered to drop the sketch from his repertoire.

Whether he was hailed or denounced and chased out, the 'Alérinjó' was undeterred in his desire to appeal to and amuse the masses. Sometimes in his enthusiasm, he violated the propriety of the cultus and had to face the penalty of the Egúngún Society for having gone beyond the bounds of what they regarded as a 'sacred art'. A classic example was the incident at Ikirun after the Kírìjì War. Balogun Ajayi Oşungbekun had invited the troupe of Aiyélabólá, then managed by Olorójẹdé, to entertain him before the palace of the Akirun. Tijákú Àjàngílá, the leader of the Agbégijó troupe, who was a follower of Ojélàdé Aiyélabólá but had become famous since the death of

the latter, was displeased that the invitation was not given to him. He demonstrated his resentment by ruining the performance. First, he invoked rain to stop the show; the Balogun who was aware of what was happening sent to Tijúku' and warned him not to spoil his pleasure. Then, during the 'àpadà' dance, Olojèdè overplayed himself and accidentally exposed his body to the full view of the audience. The officers of the Egúngún Society dispersed the crowd and the show ended abruptly. At Tijúku's pleasure, the Society insisted that Olojèdè should pay the penalty of death in the sacred grove. Olojèdè reconciled himself to his fate.

The next day, the officers of the cult gathered at the sacred grove waiting for the culprit. Olojèdè, before appearing before them, set out on a masque-parade round the town chanting his farewell 'salute'. When he reached the Afin where the Balogun of Ibadan was staying, he was surprised to see the Chief and all the important Ibadan war-leaders waiting with gifts and praises for his reception. In a moving and soul-subduing chant he narrated the story of his own end and then the end of the great Aiyelabóla'. The Balogun stopped him and said he recalled his (Olojèdè's) father and his great contribution to the Jalumi War and remarked:

"Ojelàdè, a d'eégún d'ènià

A d'ènià d'eégún!

B'òjè bá boóde,

Kí pààká ó má a tẹ̀le.

Aiyélabólá d'òjẹ̀ Olúbàdàn

lát'òní lọ!"

"Òjẹ̀ládé, one who becomes a masquerade
and a human being,

Or a human being and a masquerade
as he pleases!

When the Òjẹ̀ (masque-dramaturg) steps out,
Let all minor masquerades follow him.

Aiyélabólá has become the Olúbàdàn's masque-
dramaturg from today onwards!"

Ọlọjẹ̀dé never reached the sacred grove. News went out that he and his Aiyélabólá troupe were, rather, on their way to live at Ibadan accompanying the Balógun and his court.¹³⁸

The degree of independence of the theatre from the cultus varied from area to area. It is clear from all accounts, however, that the Oyo - Ibadan theatre-groups, since becoming travelling-troupes and attaining a high degree of professionalism, had ceased to have any strong obligations to the cultus though they did not sever connections completely. The cult-members and the masque-dramaturgs are still bound together by ancestor-worship and meet during the funeral ceremony of any member of the Egúngún Society. The

138. I am grateful to Alàgbà Òjẹ̀léke Aiyélabólá for giving this account of his father and grand father.

members of the various theatrical companies can also, as individuals, carry the serious or the 'eégúnla' masks without question. But the theatre-guild is a separate organization from the Egúngún Society. Consequently, large masses of people find in the

The masque-dramaturg built his repertory and filled it with playlets especially with 'efè' (satire) - items which diverted his patrons and spectators alike. It was to them that he directed his greatest appeal. He knew that 'everything that breaks over the social taboo is funny'. His spectators reflected with amazement when they saw the restrictions of the Egúngún Society trampled upon in the arena of play, and laughed when their revered gods were revealed in sketches as caricatures. His jugglery, acrobatics and his skill in dance, chant and mime excited wonder and admiration in his spectators. These were features for which the 'Alárínjò' was remembered long after he had tramped away and until the next time when he showed up his face once again.

IV. Missionary Impact:-

Before the onset of missionary activities in the southern part of Yorubaland, the traditional social, political and religious ideas and institutions of the Yoruba had been weakened.¹³⁹

139. J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891, Longmans, 1965, p. 19.

Many large towns and villages of Northern Yoruba had been destroyed following the attack of the Fulani armies after they had occupied and settled in Ilorin and destroyed the citadel of the Oyo empire. Consequently, large masses of people fled southwards in search of new settlements and also in the hope of finding a means of countering the effects of the Fulani invasion that was then pushing southwards. But apart from this threat, the slave trade and the internecine wars which were still plaguing the Yoruba during the first half of the nineteenth century, gave the missionaries, and later the British administration in Lagos, an excuse to entrench themselves in the country; while the former vowed to stop the slave trade, the latter professed to restore peace and order by their presence.¹⁴⁰

According to some missionary reports between 1840 and 1850, "the coming of the whiteman who would herald in an era of peace and prosperity" had been prophesied to the Yoruba.¹⁴¹ But, ironically, the presence of the whiteman was meant to shake the Yoruba confidence in his own gods and divert him from taking pride

140. See: J.F.A. Ajayi and R. Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth century, Cambridge, 1964, passim.

141. J.F.A. Ajayi, Christian Missions, p. 20.

in his own culture. Between 1852 and 1857, Ibadan, Ijaye, Oyo, Ilesha and Ogbomosho had received missionaries.¹⁴² Missionary activities in the society were a disruptive force from the very beginning. In their evangelical fervour the missionaries found ritual ceremony intolerable, they made no efforts to understand the traditional forms of religion and set out to transform the mental outlook of their converts.¹⁴³

Their irrational contempt for valuable features of Yoruba traditional culture must have caused them not to have any regard or taste for traditional forms of entertainments. Bowen, a Baptist Missionary, who operated between Oyo and Abeokuta from 1849 to 1856, described the Yoruba people as being by nature very fond of religious festivals and processions, and that several times (said) in a year, the whole population enjoyed the recreations of religious festivals with all forms of amusements.¹⁴⁴ But these were constantly interrupted by die-hard missionary converts. "A Yoruba convert to the Christian Faith was expected to renounce dancing and all traditional rituals, ancestor-worship, membership of

142. E.A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria; 1842-1914, Longmans, 1966, p. 10.

143. ibid., pp. 329-331.

144. T.J. Bowen, Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors, 1849-1856, Charleston, U.S.A., 1859, p. 302.

secret-societies...etc."¹⁴⁵

The real conflict which had developed between the 'converts' and the 'non-converts' came to a head about the beginning of this century. By then the arrogance of the Christian converts especially in the interior of Yoruba had become insufferable. They took liberties with tradition - with native laws and customs - and very frequently, acted in open defiance of them because they felt safe under the protection of "Christian" British Administrators. The chiefs and traditionalists, especially in certain parts of Egba, Ekiti and Ijebu resorted to the Egúngún Society for a means of confrontation. The Society serving as the executive power of the civil government became vindictive. It organised gangs of masquerades, invaded church premises, pestered the lives of votaries, prevented the Christians from congregating and, sometimes, burnt down their churches.¹⁴⁶

As the missionaries and their converts did not distinguish between the cultic-group and the theatre-group*, the two distinct classes of egúngún within the Egúngún Society, they had condemned both as works of the devil. As a consequence, the theatre-troupes

145. R.H. Stone, Yoruba Concepts of the Natural World, (Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1967), p. 58.

146. Ayandele, op. cit., pp. 162 - 164.

* See diagram: The Egúngún Family Tree, p. 402.

faced certain privations during their tours. Apart from the constant interruptions of their shows by the die-hard Christian converts, they were also losing the allegiance of the women-folk who used to constitute the chorus of every public performance. In certain areas the women, especially the young, could no longer freely and openly participate either because the bulk of those in a position to do so had been converted to Christianity and therefore regarded participation as taking part in a pagan rite or because, as pagans, they feared that the die-hard male converts would molest them.

As a result of the missionary impact on the theatre certain changes were noted. The Christian converts and the 'élite' class that had emerged in certain areas of Yorubaland maintained an attitude of indifference to the theatre and looked down on its kind of amusements. The Egúngún Society became a strong factor to reckon with. It increased its influence on the theatre in certain areas by offering 'protection' during performances in open places and preventing it from being assaulted. This 'presence', however, reduced the effect of women audience—participation which had been the practice; on the other hand, it increased the involvement of the wives and daughters of the masque-dramaturgs in the shows and encouraged their ultimate emergence as professional 'chorus women'. Thus, the present leaders of the extant companies

were inspired by their mothers.¹⁴⁷

of the former and the late nineteenth and early part of the

V. Conclusion: The history of the Alárinjó Theatre cannot be separated from the rise and fall of the Oyo empire. Its development and growth were closely associated with the political and social history. But the fall of the empire, however, did not adversely affect the fortunes of the theatre; on the contrary, it contributed to its artistic development and professional growth.

The separation between the theatre and the cultus was widened by the rise of professionalism in the theatre. This developed during the nineteenth century in Court and outside. Nevertheless, a symbiotic relationship with the cultus was maintained. The effect of the break-up of the Oyo empire was felt in the dispersal of the theatre from Court but it consequently expanded its operations in new areas away from Oyo. Professionalism resulted in proliferation of troupes and encouraged competition which in turn improved the theatrical art.

The corroding influence of such external forces as Islam and Christianity in the first half of the nineteenth century in respect

147. This is borne out by the biographical notes made during interviews with them.

of the former and the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century in respect of the latter, questioned the existence of the theatre. There were conflicts which put the Egúngún Society on the defensive. This period, however, marked the beginning of the process which disrupted the growing influence of the theatrical art as a means of entertainment in the Yoruba society.

The onset of western civilization on the traditional culture had far-reaching consequences. From the middle of the nineteenth century foreign theatrical forms of entertainments had been introduced into certain strategic areas of Yoruba and had become the exclusive privilege of a developing class of 'élite'. These new forms of entertainments developed and spread out with increasing Christian European civilization and education. As a consequence, they dealt a disintegrating blow on the generality of practitioners of the traditional theatre.

Theatre Organisation and Training:I. Publicity -

During the period of intensive professionalism, the theatre was organised by three types of promoters: the first was the Alághá of the Egúngún Society who invited the troupe to perform. The two occasions when this occurred were the festival of the Egúngún Society and the festival of the Alághá following the death of a member of the Society. The second type of promotion by the Court; when the play was performed at the Court of the populace, the invitation was made by the Alághá or the Chief. The third was when the troupe itself planned this on its itinerary and invited the towns and villages without having been previously invited. The publicity arrangement varied in respect of the type of invitation. There were no formal notices. Instead, troupes announced their shows through contacts with persons. Whatever the type of promotion, the role of the Alághá was important whether as a patron or an agent.

PART FOURThe Art of the Theatre

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Theatre Organization and Training:I. Publicity:-

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Performances sponsored by the Alágbàá were usually ritualistic in nature and were similarly organised. If the troupe lived in the same village or town, the Alágbàá sent the 'Òpé' (Caller), one of his officers, to invite the head of the troupe and put the proposal before him. If the troupe lived out of town, the same officer was

sent with an 'àrokò', a token, indicating that a proposal had been made calling for a performance. When everything had been decided upon as to date and time of performance, the publicity for the show was placed in the hands of the officers of the Society.

It was usual that the procession took place on the day of performance. It started from the 'Igbó Ìgbàlè' (sacred grove) led by the 'Òpé' to the 'Òde' (open space) fronting the Alágbàá's compound where the performance took place. Costumed in their 'agò' (overall garment), the troupe processed, accompanied by the Bata-orchestra, dancing and chanting. The chants were usually those in praise of Èsà Ògbín, the progenitor of the theatre, as well as those in praise of the egúngún in general. Before the procession wound up the troupe paid a homage-visit to Sàngó's shrine.

The Court promotions were usually meant for the pleasure of the Ọba or Baálè; whether the occasion was a commemoration or an anniversary or just entertaining an august visitor, the troupes came with a view to entertaining a public. The Ọba, of course, as a gesture, invited the Alágbàá to make the necessary contacts or consultations with the troupe-manager. If they lived out of town, accommodation was arranged for them, usually at the palace. Sometimes they had to go with the Alágbàá who put them up for the duration of their visit. Since the occasion of such a visit was

civic and non-ritualistic, the troupe had very little to do with the local egúngún cult-group. They made two processions: one took place the evening before the day of performance, as soon as they entered the town. Only the Batá was used in publicising their arrival. They did not dance or chant. Usually, they looked tired and worn out having trekked long distances. The second procession took place on the day of performance. A short time before they were due to set up, the actors went round the town in procession. Costumed in the 'agò' and carrying their 'èkú' (dressing-up boxes), and accompanied by the Batá, they chanted, danced and tumbled as they processed.

Lastly, when the troupes planned their own itinerary, they invariably sent an 'àrokò', a token, to the Alágbàá of each of the places they planned to visit. If the visit was not welcomed the Alágbàá sent back to them not to come; otherwise, when the troupes promoted themselves, they used the Alágbàá as their professional agent and placed in his hands all arrangements for publicity, accommodation and feeding. He in turn received a certain percentage of all the total proceeds after the engagement. As this performance was usually designed for the public, it was helpful to find in advance some lineage-heads and some important people who might be present at the public performances so as to know which totem and praise-chants to have ready. This the Alagbaa helped in

providing. He also provided body-guards in case something untoward happened to the troupe during performance.

On such itinerant visits, three processions were arranged. The first took place immediately the players entered the town; when the Bata struck its music everybody knew the troupes had arrived. They made straight for the Alagbaa's house where they lodged, usually chanting the 'oriki' of the place as they processed. In the evening, the Alagbaa led the second procession to the Oba's or Baale's palace for formal introduction of the leader of the troupe and for a pre-view entertainment; usually, chanting, dancing and tumbling. They wore the 'agò' but did not carry the dressing-up box. After this formal introduction and the welcome ceremony, the Alagbaa led them away, round the town to visit some other important local chiefs and nobles. They received gifts, usually money but sometimes clothing, from this outing. The third procession took place on the actual day of performance when the players were led by their own leader to the place of performance, the main market-square, and then waited in a booth already set up for use as their 'dressing-room'.¹

1. See plates, Nos. 29 & 29^a



No. 29: Procession: The Àjāngilá company troops into the Courtyard of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan - (4/11/67).



No. 29^a: Dressing-room: Actors wait in a booth prepared for the occasion of performance

II. Presentation:-

Depending on who was promoting the show, choice of programme varied tremendously. In each case the form of the performance was that of a 'variety show' and the troupe-manager relied very much on a large 'repertoire' to pick and choose from. Usually, the religious performances sponsored by the Alágbàá took into account the sanctity of the egúngún and, therefore, concentration was more on spectacles rather than on sketches.^{1^a} The secular performances, however, were the most popular and the troupe-leader invariably took liberties with the cultus without fear of any sanctions.

The duration of any performance took into consideration the amount of money that had been paid by the promoter or sometimes, the extra amount of money the players expected to get at the end of the engagement. When they were invited to perform at births, marriages, deaths, or some such social ceremonies, they usually charged a fixed amount for the engagement. However, they expected the patron to give them something more, and this encouraged them to spend extra time with him, and to give of their best. Some of these private performances were limited however, because not everybody was privileged to see them, especially if they were held in the courtyards of the patrons who wanted them for private showing.

^a 1. See below, pp. 222-225.

(a) Staging: Performances took place in any of the following places depending on who had commanded the performance: Court performance² (the palace quadrangle or inner courtyard, or the piazza in front of the palace); Alágbàà's performance (the 'òde' in front of the gabled frontage of his compound); lineage-heads, chiefs and other important persons (in the courtyard or the 'òde' in front of the gabled frontage of the compound). No raised platform was necessary for any of these performances. An open space was all that was needed. A 'circle'³ was always formed by the spectators as they assembled round the open-space (arena) to watch the show.

The 'stands' were important features: the 'royal' stand (in the case of a royal command) or 'promoter's stand'; and the 'orchestra stand'. On each of these 'stands' seats were provided. The orchestra stand was placed very close to the 'booth' (dressing-room) of the actors, and generally not too far away from the promoter's stand. The actors' 'booth' was normally an improvised rig-up from anything that could give shelter and privacy. In

2. See plate, No. 30. See also illustration: plate, No. 25

3. Southern calls this the spatial relationship between a circle performance and the audience; the gathering-round of crowd to look at an incident: (See: The Seven Ages of the Theatre, Faber, 1962, p. 57).



No. 30: A Court Performance: Oba Gilbert Fawole, the Olotan of Otan Aiyegbaju, seats in a 'royal stand'. The performance took place in the park fronting the palace on the occasion of the Oba's first anniversary - April 1965.

certain cases to set up a booth was not necessary; for example, at a royal performance, the palace had a 'kòbì' (portico) which was made use of; sometimes a cult-house or hut nearby was used, and many times especially during the itinerant visits the troupes improvised their own dressing-rooms by changing in their 'agò'.

There were two types of 'movement' in the action of the plays. One 'movement' was circular, that is, the action moved round the 'circle' or the arena from the booth in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction; the other 'movement' was straight: the actors came out of the booth and went directly to the middle of the 'circle' and moved back again, describing a radius. The 'circular movement' was used in the plays that involved audience participation, usually the sketches; the 'straight movement' was usually for the serious plays or spectacles, to enable the spectators to appreciate them from an aesthetic distance. In certain cases, for this movement, the actor or actors involved in the action of the play, were shielded in the centre of the 'circle' (which then became a temporary dressing-room) by other actors holding up a number of their costumes for concealment.

No scenery was necessary except that, occasionally, the genius of a masque-dramaturg manifested itself in the use of symbolic leopard suddenly bursts out from underneath a pile of costumes, suggesting a sunlit background. (See: Balar, "The Yoruba Masqueraders," *Nigeria Magazine*, 1964, p. 195).

See plates, Nos. 31 & 32.

scenery.⁴ But generally, the objective in staging was not the simulation of a locality but the creation of an atmosphere.

(i) The Chorus:⁵

The Chorus called 'Akùnyùngbà' was an essential part of the performance. During the early part of the development of the theatre when the masque-dramaturg was yet an officer at Court, the Chorus was composed mainly of the women of the palace. Later, when the theatre moved out of court-circles and the troupe had to travel about entertaining the general public, the masque-dramaturg had to rely on his younger actors to play the Chorus, sometimes his wives and daughters also joined. There were occasions of course, when spectators joined the Chorus, especially when the action involved a particular song that was familiar to them.

The chief function of the Chorus was to provide the 'song element' which was, invariably, part of the plot. It therefore helped to form links for full understanding of the episodes. In another role, the Chorus, especially the Chorus Leader who is supposed to be a rhapsodist, acted as the interlocutor by participa-

4. Beier describing the scene at a performance says, "The Leopard suddenly bursts out from underneath a pile of grass," suggesting a scenic background. (See: Beier, "The Agbegijo Masqueraders," Nigeria Magazine, 1964, p. 195).

5. See plates, Nos. 31 & 31^a.



No. 31: The Chorus: 'Wives of the Family' as Chorus. The performance was by the Aiyélabólá Group at Imàlá as part of the Egúngún Festival - (27/3/67).



No. 31^a: The Chorus: 'Old Women of the Family' as Chorus. (The Aiyélabólá Group at Imálà).

ting in the dialogue and action of the play with both the actor and the spectator.⁶ The Chorus Leader may be one of the wives or a daughter of the troupe-leader. She went round the 'circle' during the performance of each act and chanted the praises of the players and gave credits to the performance, among other things.⁷ The importance of the Chorus to any performance was never in doubt since without it the drama was fragmentary, episodic and incomplete.

(ii) The Orchestra:⁸

The Orchestra is made up of the Batá-set. The set contains four drums:⁹ the 'Ìyá Ìlù', the 'Èmele Abo', the 'Èmele Akọ' and the 'Kùndi'. The 'Ìyá Ìlù' is the talking-drum, but "he" is a stammerer and difficult to follow without previous familiarity. It has two membranes, both are played together to produce tone. A leather strap is used to strike the left membrane while the palm of the right hand is used to beat the right membrane. The 'Èmele Abo', the supporting drum, repeats what the 'Ìyá Ìlù' says.

6. See plate, No. 55^a

7. See plate, No. 32.

8. See plate, No. 33.

9. See plates, Nos. 34 & 34^a

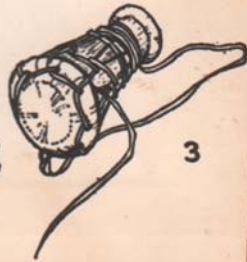
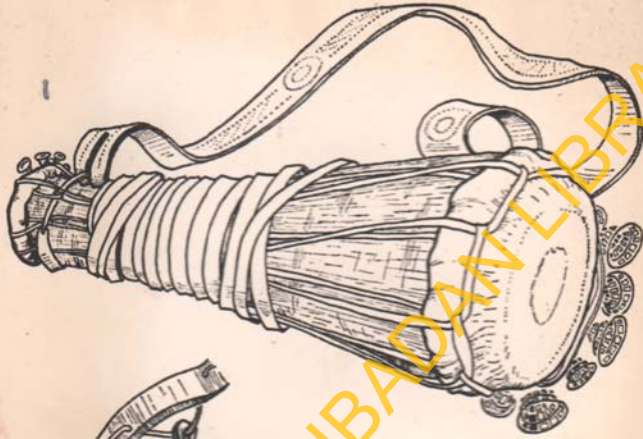


No. 32: The Chorus Leader [Foyèkè Ajàngilá] comments on the performance to the audience by chanting: (The Ajàngilá Company at Ibadan).



No. 33: The Orchestra: (Aiyélabóla, Ìmálà).

The Bata Set



No. 34: The Bata Set: 1. *Ìyá Ìlù* 2. *Emele Abo* 3. *Emele Akọ* 4. *Kùndi*
(Photograph from "Yoruba Drums", *Odu* No. 7).



No. 34^a: Apprenticeship.

The other two drums are accompaniments.¹⁰

It is said that Bàtá was a mythological ancestor deified and worshipped as an 'orisa' after his death; that he was a relation of both Sàngó and Egúngún; and that the three as ancestors are ritually inseparable. It is not known when Bàtá became the ^{the} Orchestra of the Alárínjò Theatre to the exclusion of all other types of Yoruba drums. It is known, however, that the Bàtá is the drum played for the ritual worship of 'Òrìṣà Sàngó' and that other forms of drums are played during egúngún worship, especially the lineage masquerades. It seems that the link between Bàtá and the theatre may have been formed when, at the festival of 'Òrìṣà Sàngó', 'Baba Eléégún' participated as the principal actor dancing Bàtá music.¹¹

The drama of the masques was essentially a poetic image; the actors indulged in very little dialogue or story-telling. The chief function of the Orchestra was to provide the vital links. It streamlined the operatic form of the masques and furnished its life-line. The Bàtá Leader had a number of duties during a performance. He served as the 'call-boy' for the actors and communicated with the audience by announcing what scene or act they were going to see next. He also warned the actors when they were

10. Oba Laoye I, Timi of Ede, "Yoruba Drums", Odu, No. 7, March 1959, p. 10.

11. Beier, A Year of Sacred Festivals, p. 75.

exceeding their limits with the usual:

"Má s'áfara!

Bó bá burú tán,

Ìwọ̀ nìkan ni yíó kù!"

"Don't get slack!
If the worst comes,
You'll be left to your
own devices."

The Bàtá-Leader pin-pointed the highlights in the action of the play and occasionally added a few embellishments of his own. He always followed the action of the play around the circle.¹²

The Bàtá-Leader was versed in Yoruba verbal art which he rendered by means of his drum. It was conventional that every 'dramatis persona' had an 'oríkì' or attributive chant as part of the dramatic form. Besides, every act ended in a dance. As both the 'oríkì' and the dances were distinctive features of the masques, so they were also the essence of the Orchestra.

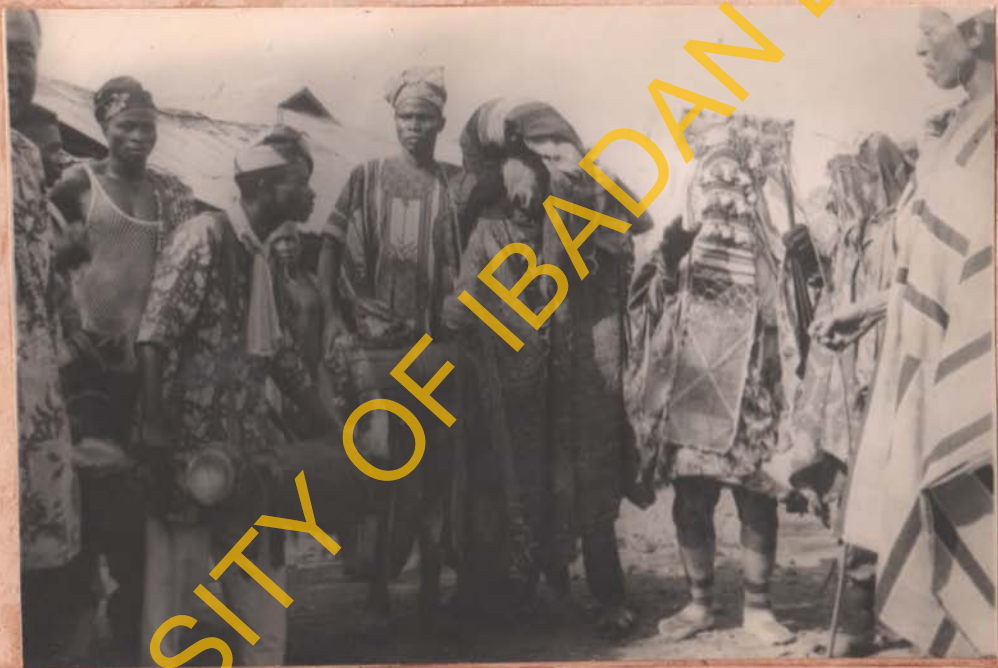
(iii) The Programme:-

The programme for every performance, was that of a 'variety show' but, invariably, followed a particular set order:

12. See plates, Nos. 35 & 35^a



No. 35: The Bata Leader follows the action of the play around with his talking-drum. (Ajàngilá, Ibadan).



No. 35^a: The Bata Leader acts as an Interlocutor as part of the action of play. (Aiyélabólá, Imala).

1. The Ìjúbà.
2. The Dance.
3. The Drama: (a) Spectacle.
(b) Revue.
4. The Finale.

1. The Ìjúbà: This was the formal or ceremonial opening very much like an 'opening glee'. It contained the 'pledge' and the 'salute'; ~~both~~ chanted together sometimes in a particular order of succession, sometimes in any order. The pledge called 'Ìpèsà', was addressed to Èsà Ògbín, the foremost masque-dramaturg and the founder of the first professional guild. The 'salute', as a form of acknowledgement, varied from troupe to troupe. It was, however, important that the troupe-leader paid certain respects or homage: first, he acknowledged the lineage from which he drew his inspiration or the leader from whom he received his training; he then addressed the unseen forces and lastly praised himself. Sometimes when a performance was called by special command or invitation, the important personage in whose honour the performance was being staged had his praise-chant included in the 'salute'.

The content of the pledge as well as the focus of the 'salute' varied from troupe to troupe. At a performance in Otta and Imala,

both in the southwestern area of Yoruba, the Ijùbà took the following form and order:

The Bata-orchestra opened the show with an 'evocation' and drew the attention of the actors to the fact that the audience was waiting for the show to begin. The Bata-leader then walked up to the booth or dressing-room, stopped at the threshold and beat the 'oriki' of the masque-dramaturg. At this a masked actor came out of the booth, wearing the 'agò'. He knelt by the side of the Bata-leader facing in the direction of the booth and chanting, called on the leader to come forth. He called once, twice and at the third calling, the leader answered and emerged into the 'circle' in his 'agò' amidst the chanting of the other masked actors and the beating of drums.

When he had seated himself in front of the Orchestra, the music stopped. Then he began his homage. First he pledged his loyalty to Èsà Ogbin, praising him and acknowledging him as his lineage-head. The Orchestra broke in occasionally with complimentary ejaculations. Then came the 'salute'. He saluted the 'earth', the owner of the land on which he was going to perform. He saluted the unseen eyes that were watching his performance - 'Iyami Oṣoròngà'¹³ He introduced himself and finally praised his promoter.¹⁴

This ritualistic opening was brought to a close with a dance tune by the Orchestra. And with that the young actors trooped into the 'circle' for the second item on the programme - the Dance.

13. Pierre Verger in "Grandeur et Decadence du Culte de Iyami Osoronga", Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1965, pp. 200-218, "Odu Osa Meji", describes the important position of 'womanhood' in the Yoruba society. 'Iyami Oṣoròngà' is believed to be the custodian of the Earth's key.

14. See plate, No. 36.



No. 36. The Ijùbà: An example of the ritualistic form of 'Opening Glee'.
(Aiyelabólá, Ìmálà).

2. The Dance: This was in two parts: ritual and social dance. The actors changed into the 'lábala', the undergarment, which looked like a kilt over a pair of pants. (This was the costume which the 'òjè' wore when he strolled about as a gleeman or troubador).

The ritual dance was 'orìṣà dance'. The Bàtá played in honour of the notable deities of the locality in which the performance was taking place. The actors danced and at the same time chanted the 'oríkì' of each deity. After the ritual dance came the social dance. This was based on the current 'beat' in fashion and was full of sex appeal. Social songs were also sung with the Bàtá leading in every case. The dance finally dissolved into acrobatic display. (Acrobatics of course, may form an aspect of the specialization of a particular troupe. Not all the troupes are now known for this feat). While the acrobats performed, the Bàtá described their skill as in the following chant.

Alántakùn! Alántakùn!

B'ó bá f'inú ta,

A f'èhìn ta.

Alántakùn!

Spider! Spider!
 When he spins with his inside,
 He spins with his back.
 Spider!

(The Batá's allusion to the Spider is, of course, a compliment of the skill of the acrobat and a description of his 'back and fore' spinning and tumbling in the air). The Dance ended with the Orchestra playing the 'interlude' to enable the actors to get ready for the next part of the programme.¹⁵

3. The Drama: There were two distinct genres: the 'Spectacle' and the 'Revue' and the presentation was in that order;

(a) The 'Spectacle' was a form of theatrical presentation that was remarkable in dimension. It was always performed chiefly by the troupe leader as a solo mime. Sometimes other minor characters joined, but the masques concerned mainly mythological or totemistic characters. The mythological dramas were enactments based on myths of deities like Şàngó, Ọbátálá and others or some local heroes like Àròní. Sometimes, however, the masque of a mythological character could become a satirical sketch.

The totemistic dramas were animal 'motifs'. Totemism as a system seemed to have been practised in the Yoruba society in the olden days when "animals had an effect on the imagination and

15. See plates, Nos. 37, 38 & 38^a



No. 37. The Dance: The actors do the dance in the Lábalá dress.
(Ajànglá, Ibadan).



No. 38: Acrobatics: (Àjàngilá, Ibadan).



No. 58^a: Acrobatics: (Agbégijó, Oshogbo).

thoughts of the people."¹⁶ (But at present there does not seem to be any conscious link with the system.)¹⁷ There is, however, no doubt that certain animals like the elephant, the lion, the leopard and others like the snake, the monkey, the crocodile or alligator and also some birds, were at one time taken as family symbols.¹⁸ Besides, the role of animals in Yoruba folklore is an indication of their significance for theatrical presentation. The folklore is full of tales about the closeness of Yoruba life to animal life. This has probably led to the belief that living persons could metamorphose themselves temporarily into birds and animals.¹⁹ This belief was extended to the spectacular masques and made them very popular.

In each case, the characters were never really fully developed. Presentation was sometimes haphazard. Whether in pantomime or, as in some cases, as tableaux, the Chorus and the Orchestra supplied the missing links of the plot of the masques.

16. G.J.A. Ojo, Yoruba Culture, O.U.P., 1966, p.218.

17. Beier, "Before Oduduwa", Odu, No. 3, p. 10.

18. Parrinder, Religion in an African City, p. 173.

19. Ojo, op. cit., p. 220.

20. Vere Roberts, op. cit. p. 56.

Added to the category of spectacle was the 'Pure Show' also performed by the leader mainly to demonstrate his manipulative skill. Examples of this were found in the 'Àpadà' (changeling), 'Ijó Orí Odo' (mortar-dance), among others.

(b) The 'Revue' was very much like the form which grew up in Rome and which Livy called the 'satura' or medley.²⁰ As a comic sketch, music, dancing and singing were its main features. There were three categories of the 'Revue': abstract, sociological and historical. The abstract sketches were sometimes solo and sometimes group mimes. Some represented odd physical features in the society, others were caricatures of human frailties. Examples included Dìdìrìn (Moron), Èlèkèdidi (Mumps), Onímu Orù (Nosey) among others.

The sociological sketches analysed the Yoruba society and highlighted its vices, pests and morals. 'Stranger' elements in society were isolated and treated satirically while 'village' characters or 'non-stranger' elements were sketched and treated humorously. Examples included the Tápà (Nupe), the Panşágà (Adulteress), respectively, among others.

The historical sketches, though at one time sociological, had psychological implications either because they seemed to have been

20. Vera Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

introduced to influence social cohesiveness as for example the Àtíngà (a cult-group for exorcism) and the Ìdàhòmì (Dahomeyan General) masques. erated on a form of repertory system, namely,

All the revue-masques depended for their effect on "audience participation". The sketches were mainly improvisational and capable of infinite changes. Their songs were topical and in most cases familiar. The dialogue included jokes and ribaldry. Lack of pre-meditation and any carefully worked out 'scenario' affected the shape of the masques as, sometimes, the enthusiasm of both the actor and spectator resulted in unrestrained indulgence in farce.

4. The 'Finale': This, known as Ìdán Àpa-re'lé', was usually the Ìyàwó Masque (the Bride).^{*} It was the most beautiful and the most expensive to dress. It was always acted by the leader of the troupe to display his flexibility and versatility. The masque was improvisational like the sketches and could vary from one performance to another. However, there were certain distinctive features in it which described the way the bridal procession was organised in Yoruba society in the past. so that he could

By the end of the performance, while the Bride still continued her 'song and dance' round the 'circle', the other actors repaired into the 'tiring-room', collected their properties and costumes into the 'èkú' (dressing-up box) and followed the Ìyàwó Masque out of the arena in a recessional dance round the streets of the community.

^{*}A man plays the role of the Bride and usually not very successfully.

III. The 'Repertoire': The Masques

The theatre operated on a form of repertory system, namely, that a company could have several productions from a stock-pile of plays ready at the same time. Every company had a stock of masques which were performed over and over again, and from place to place. It was not easy to divide the masques into the two basic classical dramatic genres, namely, tragedy and comedy. This was because although most of the mythological masques were serious in nature, yet the artist was free to base his masque on a satirical motive and change the original popular conception of the deity. By comparison, however, the totemistic masques were tragic while the abstract and sociological masques were comic. The following examples have been recorded or observed in actual performance:

(i) Mythological Masques:-

1. Agemo: This is a satire on the Ijebu Agemo cult.

The popular myth is that of an old man who hid in the bush and was able to change his form so that he could not be seen by human beings. When he died he was deified and became the chief ancestral spirit worshipped by the Ijebu.²¹

21. Lucas, op. cit., p. 133.

In the theatre, the Agemo is a masque that excites great wonder and admiration. The actor (usually the leader) wraps a 'fàfà' or 'keèrè' (raffia mat) round himself and pretends to be invisible inside. The mat wheels and whirls round the 'circle'. But instead of the phantom that the 'fàfà' is supposed to be, the actor, a full-grown man, can be viewed inside the concealment by special permission or the payment of a token. Sometimes one mat is made to divide into three dancing mats. This masque belongs to the category of pure show.²²

2. Sango:²³ As a deity, Sango is worshipped as the god of thunder and lightning, but as an ancestor he was the third Alafin of Oyo. His tempestuous reign and restless nature have been the subject of countless myths. Versed in medicine and the practice of magic, he was much feared and respected.

In the theatre he is a popular satirical masque always cast as a practising magician. In one sketch

22. See plate, No. 28.

23. The Sango Masque is forbidden at Oyo and Ede, because of the ritual link between the 'Egúngún' and 'Sàngó'.

while displaying magic he is interrupted by a policeman who questions his authority to practice sorcery and so on. He bribes the police, gets out of trouble and dances away. In another sketch he instructs his children in the art and practice of magic. One of them becomes possessed in a ritual dance. Šàngó begins to utter an incantation and revives him with his magic wand.²⁴

3. Gèlèdè: The Gèlèdè is a society in the Southwestern part of Yoruba organised for the expression of the mystic powers of women. The purpose of the dance is to "placate the witches", to appease "our mothers" and to compensate them.²⁵ The head of the Gèlèdè society is 'Ìyálàṣe', 'bird of the night', in other words an 'Àjé'; unlike the witch in medieval Europe who personified evil, she represents the mystic powers of womanhood.²⁶

In the theatre the Gèlèdè Masque is a sketch on 'Ìyálàṣe'. Her headmask is that of a bearded woman who

24. See plates, Nos. 39, 39^a & 39^b

25. Beier, "Gelede Masks", Odu, No. 6, June 1958, pp. 5-7.

26. ibid.



No. 39: Şàngó and Child: (Ejòn'gboro, Ìkirè).



No. 39^a: Sàngó as a Magician: (Aiyélabólá at the Gymnasium University of Ibadan, August 1965).

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Plate 39

No. 39^b: 'Iyàwó Sàngó [Sàngó's devotee] accosts the Policeman. (Agbégijó at F
Photograph by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 41: A Gbede Masque: In this sketch, Iyálàṣe wearing a man's dress acknowledges the respects of a spectator. (Àjàngilá at Èḍe).

In the theatre it is sketched as a bearded old man, wicked and surreptitious in manner. He does the Ògbóni dances and sneaks around. There is nothing spectacular about him. Its performance is forbidden at Abeokuta.

6. Àròní: The legendary Àròní was an 'Èṣọ' (a warrior) selected by the Oníkòyí to be his chief physician as well as his military chief-of-staff. He accompanied the Oníkòyí on his war expeditions. Hence the saying:

"Àròní ò gbé'lé;

Oníkòyí ò simi ogun 'lẹ."

"Àròní does not stay at home;

Oníkòyí does not stop going to war."

The Àròní Masque is a dramatic symbol. The physical mask is that of a half-bird, half-human being with one leg drawn up. He trots about the 'circle' displaying all his medicines by wearing them. He spouts some incantations followed by an attendant who chants his praises.

(ii) Totemistic Masques:-

1. Èrè or Òjólá (Boa-Constrictor):

This is a tragic masque and commonly found in the 'repertoire' of all the troupes. The masque varies from one troupe to another with regard to plot and

characterization. Clapperton in his account described the masque of Catching the Boa-Constrictor.²⁸ Another masque re-enacts a folk-tale, The Boa and the Tortoise:

Batá: Iró ni.

Òjòlá kò le gb'áhun m̀.

Iró ni.

It's a fib.

The Boa cannot swallow the Tortoise.

That's a fib.

In spite of the boasts of the Tortoise, the Boa succeeds in swallowing the Tortoise but dies in the end from choke.

The most popular masque is the one that re-enacts the story of a powerful hunter who metamorphosed into a Boa but owing to circumstances beyond his control he could not change back to a human being.²⁹ It is believed that another actor who had boasted of such metamorphic powers tried it and failed to change back. Evidently, someone among the spectators had charmed him, and having swooned, he had to be carried off the 'circle' into a nearby bush where he was secretly

The actor, now the Boa, lay on the mat and cried

28. Already cited. See above pp. 162-164.

29. See: "Ògúnṣéfun d'èrè, ó b'èrè ló", Aworérin, No. 27, 1956, p. 15. 'Ògúnṣéfun' is the name of the said hunter. But in the theatrical performance of the story, the name of the hunter is replaced by that of the actor who plays the role, hence: "Olúfálé/Aiyélabólá/Ajóféébo etc. "d'èrè, ó b'èrè ló"

resuscitated. But as far as the spectators were concerned he had changed completely into the animal and had gone into the bush to live like the Boa for the rest of his life.

At Abeokuta and Imálá³⁰ the tragic masque was enacted thus:

The actor (leader) walked out of the 'tiring room' costumed in the 'agò' having been summoned by the Bàtá. A mat was spread out in the 'circle' for him to lie on. First he sat down and was completely surrounded by the other actors who concealed him from the view of the spectators. He quickly put on the costume of the Boa which he had carried inside his 'agò' and waited for the Orchestra. The Bàtá sounded and the Bàtá-leader beat the praises of the Boa and masque-dramaturg. But warned the latter to be careful. Then the concealment was cleared.

The actor, now the Boa, lay on the mat and cried out:

Actor: Ikú rẹ é l'órí mí o! (thrice)

Behold Death is on me!

30. See plates, Nos. 42, 42^a & 42^b.
I am indebted to Ọgbéni Ségún Adégbíjì for his assistance during my field-work at Imálá.



No. 42: Masque of the Boa: [A tragic play]. First Act: Behold, Death is on me!
(Aiyélabólá, Imàlà).



No. 42^a : Masque of the Boa: Second Act: The Slumber! (Aiyélabóla, Ìmálà).



No. 42^b: Masque of the Boa: Final Act: The Acclaim! (Aiyélabòlá, Ìmálà)

Then he went into a deep slumber, (indicating that he was now in the animal world).

Bàtá: "Aiyélabólá! Aiyélabólá!

Mo ní Aiyélabólá d'erè ó b'erè lọ!"

"Aiyélabólá! Aiyélabólá!

I say Aiyélabólá transformed into a Boa;
He went off as a Boa!"

Then the Chorus began to chant:

Chorus: "Nwón ní b'a bá wí fún ni,

Nṣe là ngbọ.

Bí a bá s'òrò f'ènià,

Nṣe là ngbà.

Àwí ì gbọ, s'òun ló

m'òwọ òtá ba Aiyélabólá.

Aiyélabólá d'erè,

ó b'erè lọ!"

"They said, 'If one is warned,

It is proper to take heed.

If one is talked to,

It is proper to take advice.

Stubbornness, this was the cause of Aiyélabólá
playing into the hands of the enemy'.

Aiyélabólá transformed into a Boa.

He passed off with the Boa!"

Refrain: "Aiyélabólá d'erè,
Ó d'erè l'òní,

Àdàmò d'erè!

Ó d'erè, Ó d'erè l'òní o!

Àdàmò d'erè!" (Repeated several times).

"Aiyélabólá has transformed into a Boa,
He's a Boa, he's a Boa today!
The changeling is a Boa!" (Repeated several times).

as follows:

Bata: Aiyélabólá Ò!

Má jáfara alé nlé lẹ!

Aiyélabólá Ò!

Bó bá burú tan,

Ìwọ̀ nìkẹ̀n nì yíó kú.

Aiyélabólá Ò!

Aiyélabólá!

Don't be careless, evening is approaching!

Aiyélabólá!

If the worst comes,

You'll be left to your own devices.

Aiyélabólá!

The Chorus then hailed him back:

Chorus: Aiyélabólá Ó,

Aiyélabólá ò-ò-ò!

Aiyélabóla, *... is a Boa -*
 Oh, Aiyélabóla! *... a Boa today,*
... is a Boa!" (Repeatedly).

The actor had completed his mission in the animal world and had returned, he indicated this by answering the call:

Actor: ò - ó - ò!

Yea!!!

Then the Bata praising his complete transformation beat as follows:

Bata: òjòlá a-dú-mòṣín.

Ọlá là nká.

Ọmọ, a gún bí ewé-agogo!

"Boa, you black one with the pleasant gait.

We are counting our honours,

Child, as straight as the 'bell-leaf'!"

There was great joy when the actor made pantomimic gestures in the manner of the Boa, opening and closing his mouth, wriggling and dancing in the animal mask and people in admiration of his feat threw money and gifts into the 'circle' for him, singing:

Refrain: "Àdàmò d'erè!

Ó d'erè, Ó d'erè l'óní o,

Àdàmò d'erè!" (Repeatedly)

"The changeling is a Boa,
He's a Boa, he's a Boa today,
The changeling is a Boa!" (Repeatedly).

The act was brought to a close when the other actors surrounded him as before, covered him with the 'ago' which he used to change his Boa costume and then walked back to the booth.

2. Ekun (Leopard): The masque of the Leopard is capable of many improvisations:

Two Leopards Fighting:-

A Leopard suddenly burst out from underneath a pile of grass, rushed through the spectators and disappeared and was suddenly seen on the top of a nearby roof, where he made threatening gestures. Someone in the audience produced a chicken which was thrown to the Leopard.

The Leopard pounced down to grab the chicken when another Leopard stalked his way. They both fought for the possession of the chicken when a Hunter appeared, chased them away and took the chicken for his gain.³¹ The following is another

improvisation: The Leopard and the Hunter:-

The Leopard prowled about in the arena, a Hunter came along and searched for the Leopard. The Leopard seeing the

31. Beier, "The Egungun Cult", Nigeria Magazine, See plates, Nos. 43 & 43^a



No. 43: Masque of the Leopards: (Agbegijo, Oshogbo - Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 43^a: Masque of the Leopards: Fighting over a rooster! (Agbégijó, Oshogbo).

Hunter pounced on him and they fought. The Hunter was careless. The Leopard pulled him down, rolled him over and scampered off. The Hunter picked himself, collected his scattered charms and walked off ashamedly.

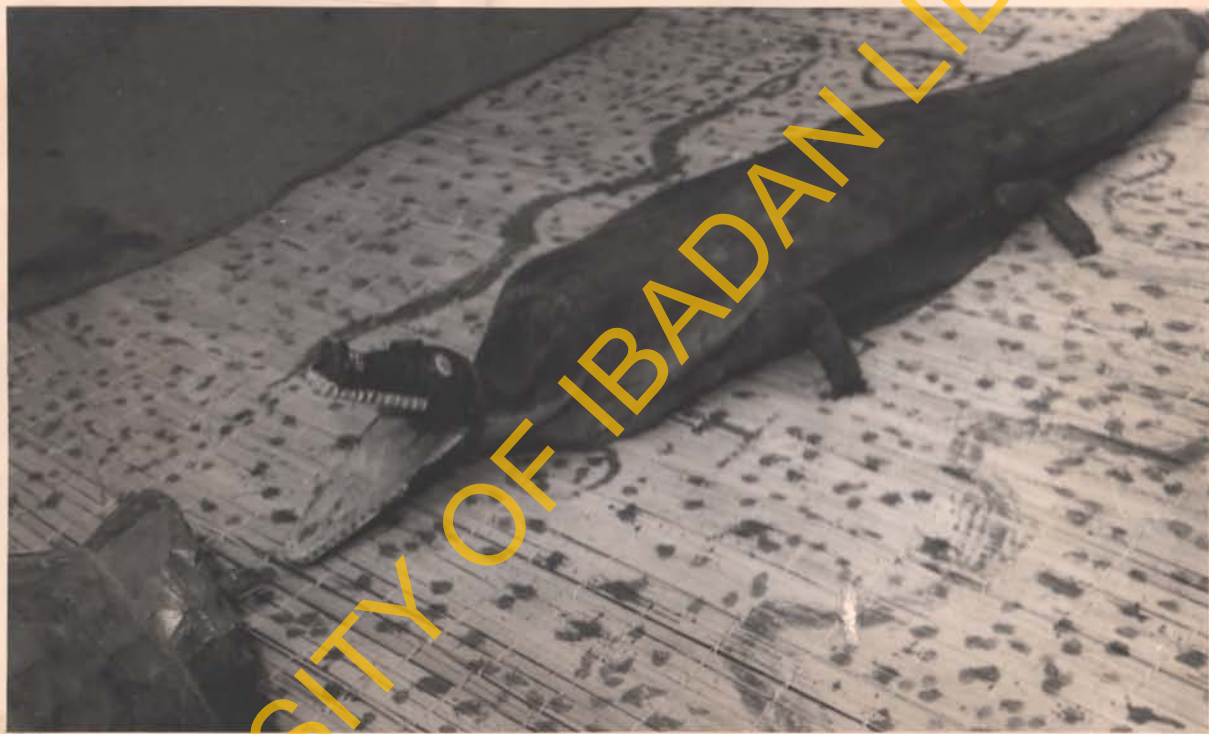
Other totemistic masques popularly seen in the 'repertoire' of the troupes include, the Crocodile or Alligator, the Baboon, the Cow, the Elephant and the Horse, among others.³²

(iii) Abstract Masques: These masques are mainly 'solo mimes' and the dramatic effect is obtained from the extent of audience-participation:

1. Didirin (Moron): He is represented by a face-mask with a drooping mouth and wearing a fancy-dress, he drags about aimlessly. As a nit-wit he is jeered at by the spectators who taunt him and call him all sorts of names. He drawls and droops and makes gibberish speeches trying to win the sympathy of the spectators.³³
2. Ekekédidi (Mumps): There are two popular improvisations on this disease. One masque is that of a boy with two swollen cheeks; he lazes about in the arena and is taunted by other boys in the crowd. One of them drags him about asking him to go to the farm and work like all other good

32. See plates, Nos. 44 & 45.

33. See plate, No. 46.



No. 44: The Alligator: (Ejón'gboro, Ìkírè).



No. 45: The Baboon: The mask is an example of the ingenuity of the masquerade dramaturg. (Agbégijó, Oshogbo).



No. 46: Didirin [The Moron]. (Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).

boys. He eats mud and flings some at the boys who jeer at him as follows:

Bàtá: "Èlèèkédidi!
Kò ɛ é mú r'oko.
Èlèèkédidi!"

"The Mumps!
He's unfit to be taken to the farm.
The Mumps!"

In another masque (at Ìmálá)³⁴ the Mumps was a house-wife who got the disease as a consequence of her being vile in her relations with the other wife of her husband. (This is a sketch based on the jealous wife). She was dragged round by a Chorus of taunting women:

Choral Song: "Má gbe yẹn wá o é!
Má ko tírẹ bá wa,
Dindi ẹ̀ẹ̀ké!
Èkẹ̀ ẹ̀ méjẹ̀jì,
Ó tún gbe dé!"

"Don't bring that here!
Don't affect us with yours.
Swollen cheeks!"

34. See plate, No. 47.



No. 47: Èlèkèdidi: [The Mumps]. This sketch performed at Ìmálà was that of jealous house-wife.

Her two cheeks,
She's brought it again!" (Repeatedly).

She pleaded for their sympathy but was refused it.

Later, she was rescued by a man in the audience who gave her money to go and cure herself.

3. Onímú Orù (Nosey): The face-mask is that of a man with a pot-nose. He goes round the arena with his nose in the air, snooping and sneezing. The spectators in a taunt sing:

Choral Song: "Onímú orù!
A ò tọ̀rọ̀ imú rẹ̀ s' àlùwàlá.
Onímú orù!" (Repeatedly).

"Pot-nose!

We didn't beg for your nose [kettle]
To do the ablution,*
Pot-nose!"

The Nosey is disappointed; he does not get the attention of the spectators.³⁵

Other abstract masques include the following:

4. Elénu Róbó (Gossip)³⁶

Choral Song: "Elénu Róbó,
Ta nít'enu è bọ́."

35. See plate, No. 48.

36. See plate, No. 49.

* This reference is a skit on Islam; before the latter's influence in Yoruba, "A ò tọ̀rọ̀ imú rẹ̀ s' èwà jẹ" (we did not beg for your nose to cook beans with) was heard.



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No. 48: Onímú Orù: [The Nosey] (Agbegíjò, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 49: Ẹlẹnu Róbó: [The Gossip]. (Agbegíjọ, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).

Ş'enu fofó!"

"You with the round mouth,
Who pushed your mouth into it.
Your sharp edged mouth!"

5. Òkánjúwà (Avarice):³⁷

Choral Song: "Òkánjúwà!

Gba gbogbo è,

Olè, gba gbogbo è!"

"Avarice!
Takes all,
Rogue, takes all!"

6. Èlènu Wàmbò (Buck-tooth):³⁸

Choral Song: "Kò r'òhun f'álejò;

Ş'enu wàmbò.

Kò r'òhun f'álejò;

Wa 'hín kún 'lé."

"Has nothing to offer her guest;
Spreads out her teeth.
Has nothing to offer her guest;
Fills the home with her teeth."

7. Èlétí Kolobo (Eavesdropper):³⁹

Choral Song: "Ş'etí Kolobo!

37. See plate, No. 50.

38. See plate, No. 51.

39. See plate, No. 52.



No. 50:

Òkánjúwà: [The Avarice]. (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Frank Speed).



No. 51: Elénu Wambò: [The Buck-tooth]. (Aiyélabólá, Ìmálá).

òfofo,

òdàlẹ̀ ọ̀kúnrin,

S'etí Kolobo!"

"Spreads ears like cups!

Tell-tale,

Treacherous man, look at him.

Spreads ears like cups!"

(iv) Sociological Masques: In these masques more characters

than one are usually involved; but in cases where the character is a 'solo mime', audience-participation is resorted to for dramatic effect:

1. Àbíkú: An 'Àbíkú' child is believed to have been possessed, 'in utero', by one of the company of elf's who inhabit the 'spirit' world. They live near the 'Ìròkò-tree' where they attract other children to join them. If a woman loses several children in infancy and it is recognised that she is visited by the same child repeatedly, the child is an 'Àbíkú'. She has to adopt a means of making the child stay through sacrifices and other devices.

In the theatre the sketch is that of a mother

40. See plate, No. 53.

who bears a baby on her back, the baby is Àbíkú. She takes

41. See plates, Nos. 54, 55 & 56.

the baby off her back to feed him. During the process the baby dies. She beats him (a rag-doll) to revive him and in frustration throws him away to the crowd. The crowd refuses to have him and he is flung back at her. She takes a long look at him. The baby has revived. She picks him up and dances off with him in her arms.

2. Òmùtí (The Drunkard):⁴⁰ He staggers on, coughs loudly, thrashes about and falls. A Policeman picks him up; beats him and drags him away as he pleads with the crowd for help:

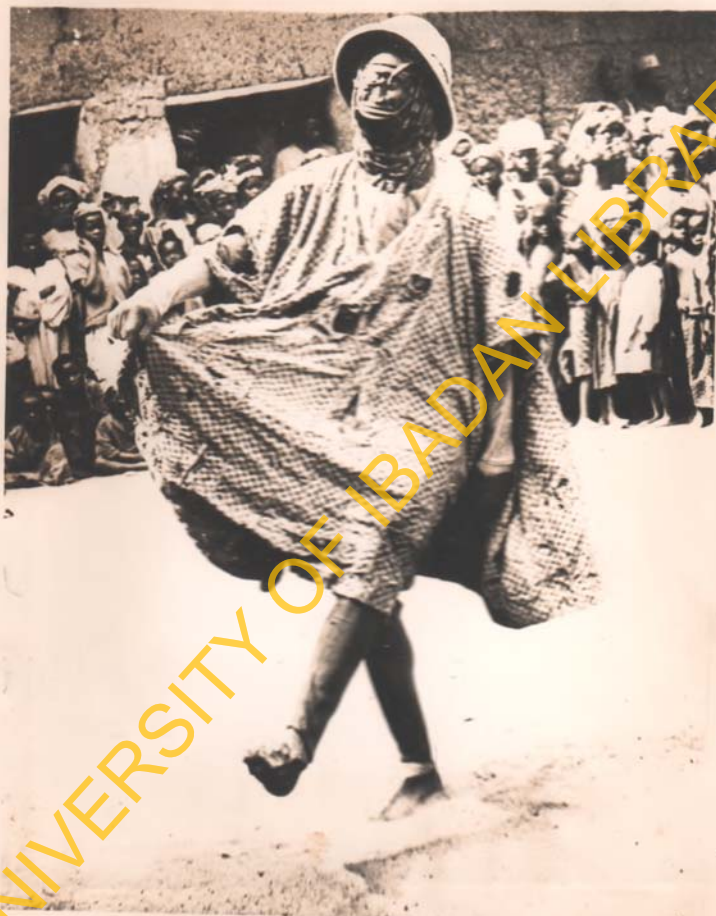
Bàtá: "Òmùtí f'ara s'òfò,
Igida!"

"The drunkard wastes himself about,
'Tis a pity!"

3. Pansaga (Adulteress):⁴¹ She goes round the arena inviting any of the spectators to step inside! She makes herself up many times and adjusts her wrapper. She sits down in the middle of the 'circle' and takes

0. See plate, No. 53.

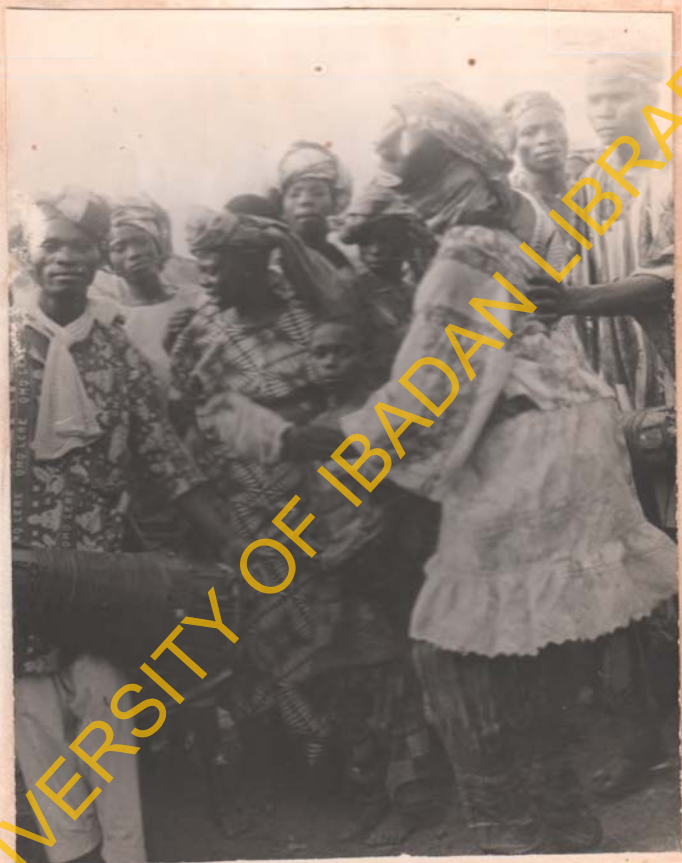
1. See plates, Nos. 54, 54^a & 54^b.



No. 53: Òmùtí: The Drunkard. (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Uli Beier).



No. 54: Pansàgà: The Adulteress. (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 54^a: The Panşàgà Masque: This sketch performed at Ìmálà was a scene at Panşàgà (Adulteress) and Àpón (Bachelor).



No. 54^b: The Pansáǵé Masque: The Àpón (Bachelor) reveals his phallic symbol which frightens the Adulteress. Wèré-wèré gb'òde! (The adulterers are out!)

off her wrapper. A young man, Àpón (bachelor), comes along. She asks if he is strong enough for the exercise.

The man answers and approaches. She searches him to feel his purse. The man drains his purse and the woman is pleased. They indulge in romance and then the woman lies down. The man undresses and reveals a huge red-painted phallic symbol. The Adulteress frightened by it yells out. The man chases her around:

Àpón: "Gbà tó ñgba pòun-pòun

Ta lo ké sí?

O wá ñse hé-hè-hé,

Okó tóbi!"

"When you were collecting the pounds
Whom did you call?
Now, you are hollering,
Penis is too big!"

Pansàgà: "Má ri mi fín ó é!

Má rí mi fín.

Èmi kí í s'egbé màrà rẹ.

Má ri mi fín!"

"Do not insult me, hear!

Do not insult me. I'm older than your mother. I am indebted to God!
Do not insult me!"

The man struggles with her:

Choral Song: "Wèré-wèré gb'òde!

Bí ti ns'akọ,

Bẹ ní ns'abo;

Bẹ ní i sẹ'yawó

olòsùn l'ése.

Wèré-wèré gb'òde!"

"Adultery is now in vogue!
As it involves the man,
So it involves the woman;
And so it involves the newly
wedded bride.
Adultery is now in vogue!"

The Police comes on to the scene and arrests both of them.

4. Lòkóláyà (The Lovers):⁴² A young Braggart comes on and brags about a beautiful Girl. The Girl breaks in, hears the brag and is annoyed with the Boy. The Girl walks off and vows never to see the Boy again. When the Boy is alone he resumes his brag. The Girl returns and the Braggart rushes to her and on his knees begs her:-

Girl: "Gbẹ'ra n'lá o síde,

42. This improvised drama is found in the 'repertoire' of Aiyelabola troupe in Abeokuta. I am indebted to Ogbeni Alan Aroyewun for his assistance.

Braggart: "Kùrukùru kò jé nrí'gbó,

Igbó ò jé nri kùrukùru.

Ìlèkè ò jé nri'di òrè mi,

Adúmaádán!

Bèbè ò jé nri yàrá rẹ.

Mo kà 'lèkè dé bi ogófà;

Òrè mi.

Mo ní, 'kóo, kí ntun kà lèèkan sí'.

A-dú-máa-dán mi,

Gbà mí o rí'kẹ.

Dúdúyẹmí mi, jòwọ o."

"The mist prevents me from seeing the bush,
The bush prevents me from seeing the mist.
The beads prevent me from seeing the
waist of my friend.

The shiny ebony-black beauty!

The beads prevent me from seeing your room.

I counted them up to a hundred and twenty;

My friend.

I said, 'pick them up so I can count them
again'.

My shiny ebony-black beauty,

Accept me and see how you'll be petted.

My Dúdúyẹmí, forgive me."

His song disarms her:

Girl: "Gbé'ra n'ìlẹ o dide,

Òrè mi.

Ng ò ní torí gbígbó p'ajá.

Ng ò ní torí kíkàn p'àgbò.

Gbé'ra n'ìlẹ̀ o má a kálo."

"Pick yourself up,

My friend.

I will not kill the dog because it barks,

I will not kill the ram because it kicks,

Pick yourself up and let's go."

The Braggart stands up and both of them dance away.

5. Òṣómàáló: This masque is a satirical sketch on the Ijesha cloth-dealers who operate a system of 'hire-purchase' as a means of attracting buyers. Because they do not demand ready cash they add a certain amount (interest) to the normal selling price of the material and allow the buyer a respite.

The following improvisation was recorded with the Àjàngílá Troupe:⁴³ A young Ijesha (identified by tribal marks on the face-mask) comes on with some cloths. He tries to sell them to the spectators who tease him appropriately. Soon a character comes along, (in this another particular case it was one Baba Olóògùn, a medicine man). Both bargain and a deal is made. Baba Olóògùn goes off and Òṣómàáló tries his luck with the spectators

43. This masque was performed at my invitation in the courtyard of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan by the Àjàngílá troupe, (4/11/67).

See plates, Nos. 55, 55^a & 55^b.



No. 55: The Òsòmàáló Masque: The Òsòmàáló prepares for his customers.
(Ajàngila, Ibadan).



No. 55^a: The Ọ̀sómáńlọ̀ Masque: The Chorus Leader interlocutes with Ọ̀sómáńlọ̀.
Baba Ọ̀lọ́ogun (the medicineman) looks on.



No. 55^b: The Òsómáàlò Masque: Òsómáàlò lies fainted. Baba Olóáàgùn tries to revive him while the Chorus looks on.

once again.

Baba Olóògùn returns not to honour his bargain but to peddle his own medicines. Òṣómàáloré demands his money. But Baba Olóògùn denies any knowledge of the bargain. He reports Òṣómàáloré to the spectators as the former squats dragging at him to demand his money. Baba Olóògùn is ashamed of Òṣómàáloré's attempt and, in annoyance, strikes him with a poisoned waist-band. Òṣómàáloré totters and falls into a swoon.

When Baba Olóògùn realises the consequence of his action, he tries to bolt away. The Chorus pleads with the spectators to prevail on Baba Olóògùn to revive his victim. Baba Olóògùn manages to bring Òṣómàáloré back to life, whereupon he picks himself up and grabs the culprit again, taunting him:

"Òṣómàáloré gb'owó mi!

Onígbèsè aborùn kòkò-kíkí,

Òṣómàáloré gb'owó mi!"

"I'll squat till I get my money!

Debtor with stubborn neck,

I'll squat till I get my money!"

When the Chorus again pleads with the spectators to intervene, money is thrown into the 'circle' from

all sides as ransom. *Òsómàálo'* gets his due and dances away jeering at Baba *Olóògùn*.

6. *Àtìngà*: This was a cult formed by a band of people called *Alatinga*. About the beginning of November 1950, they arrived in *Mèkò*, a small Yoruba-Ketu town on the Dahomey frontier of Southwest Nigeria. The cult was famous for its dance and song during which witches were exorcised. Its activities caused great excitement in Western Nigeria and an Order in Council of April 12, 1951, prohibited the worship.⁴⁵

The first skit on the *Atinga* cult was introduced into the 'répertoire' of the *Lébe* troupe at *Ìmálà* in the same year. The *Àtìngà*, wearing a black singlet and a pair of dark jeans, led a group of his cult-members into the arena, dancing and singing. Then the *Àtìngà* stopped the music and looked for a Witch among the crowd. He held up his sword and blew his whistle, all of a sudden the Witch (an actor) emerged from amongst the crowd. Amidst dancing and singing the Witch was

44. Morton-Williams, "The *Atinga* Cult among the South-Western Yoruba", *Bulletin de l' I.F.A.N.*, T. XVIII, Ser. B. Nos. 3-4 p. 316.

45. Farrinder, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

exorcised in a mad rage which broke up the crowd.⁴⁶

7. Ìdàhòmì: (The Dahomian General): The masque was originally developed among the troupes in the South-western circuit. Because of its popularity, it is now found in the 'répertoire' of almost every troupe included in our investigation. It is believed to have been devised in Abeokuta, probably by the Aiyelabólá troupe of Gbagura, to stiffen the Egba people who, before the middle of the nineteenth century, had been victims of the terror of the Dahomian invaders.

The Ìdàhòmì masques which were found in the 'répertoire' of most of the troupes varied in concept and plot from one area to another; but always the character was that of a hunter or a soldier.⁴⁷ He looked very frightful, wearing charms all over his tunic and holding a 'dane-gun'. With face painted black and eyes red and fiery, he trooped into the arena looking for the enemy:

46. This masque which was recorded at Ìmálà during field work has not been found in the 'répertoire' of the troupes in the Oyo-Ibadan-Igbomina circuits.

47. See plate, No. 56.



No. 56: ̀Idàhòmi: [The Dahomian General]. (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).

generally known, seems to have originated in Florin

Bàtá: "Jagun-jagun wò 'lú,

È f'ara balè!

Ìdàhòmi kọ,

Ìdàhòmi ni,

È f'ara balè!"

"The warrior has come to town,

is said to be Don't panic!

It's not the Dahomian,

It's the Dahomian,

Don't panic!"

Dàhòmi: "Mo dé, mo dé!

È ò paramó?

'Dàhòmi dé!

È ò paramó?

O dé, kìnùún dé,

Èkùn, paramó!"

"I arrive, I arrive!

You don't hide yourself?

The Dahomian's arrived!

You don't hide yourself?

He's arrived, the lion's arrived,

Tiger, hide yourself!"

8. Gàmbàrí (The Hausa): The term 'Gàmbàrí' by which the

Hausa and other people of Northern Nigeria are now

generally known, seems to have originated in Ilorin Yoruba society by the Gambari. The popular masques where bands of Hausa Jama's were first known as 'Kamberri'. Perhaps the word originated from the Kamberri inferior person in endless improvisations involving the slaves in Ilorin. Sarkin Gambari (Chief of the Kamberri) who played an important part in the local affairs of Ilorin and established himself before the arrival of Shahu Alimi (the first Fulani ruler who died c. 1824) is said to have been born at Zanara. The post now ranks next to the Emir of Ilorin. The Kamberri migrated from Warra, Bussa, and Kontagora.⁴⁸ They were a poor, despised and abused but industrious and hard-working people; persecuted by their more fortunate and powerful neighbours who affirmed that they were fitted by nature only for slaves, and invariably treated by them as such.⁴⁹

A Gambari, as a stereotype of the Kamberri, was subjected to scorn and derision by the Yoruba who used him as a drawer of water and a hewer of firewood. It is believed that prostitution was introduced into the

48. Hermon - Hodge, op. cit., p. 53.

49. Richard and John Lander, Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, Vol. II., John Murray, London, 1832, p. 88. The Landers called the Kamberri "Cumbrie". (See: pp. 85-92).

Yoruba society by the Gàmbarí. The popular masques caricatured the Gàmbarí as an immoral, dirty and inferior person in endless improvisations involving the male and the female.

At Imálà the Gàmbarí was sketched carrying a load on to the arena. He put it down and lay to rest. He ate 'górò' (cola-nut) and began to count the money he had made for the day. Apparently pleased with the size of the purse he showed his rapture in a dance:

Bàtá: "Gàmbarí dé,
Wúkù - wúkù dé
Gàmbarí dé!"

sketches "Here comes Gàmbarí,
Here comes Wúkù-wúkù
Here comes Gàmbarí!"

The Chorus Women unimpressed, came along and taunted him:

Chorus: "Gàmbarí!
Bí o ó joyè

30. This improvisation is repeated by the Ajingidá troupe except for minor details. See plates, Nos. 57 & 57.

51. See plates, Nos. 58 & 59.

"Gàmbàrí!

If you want to be made a chief
To Hausa you must go." (Repeatedly).

Embarrassed for being jeered at by the women, he picked up his load, carried it for a while and then slumped down on it again. Suddenly he noticed his female counterpart called Àsúnmodètẹ́. He invited her to go to bed with him. After she had picked some lice from her hair, she readily agreed and both satisfied themselves on the spot. The Chorus once again jeered at them:

Choral Song: "Gàmbàrí dé!
Wúkù-wúkù dé!
Gàmbàrí dé!"

They picked themselves up and danced off.⁵⁰ In other sketches the Gàmbàrí could be a Blindman or a Beggar.⁵¹

9. Tápà (The Nupe): The Yoruba theatre presents two aspects of the Tápà; as a social pest and as a 'Gunu', a Nupe

50. This improvisation was similar to the one performed by the Àjàngilá troupe except for minor details. See plates, Nos. 57 & 57^a

51. See plates, Nos. 58 & 59.

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No. 57: The Gàmbarí Masque: (Àjàngilá, Ibadan).



No. 57: The Gãmbàrí Masque: The courtship scene. (Àjàngílá, Ibadan).



No. 58: The Gàmbarí dances: 'Gàmbarí dé!' (Here comes the Gàmbarí! [Hausa], Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by Frank Speed).



No. 59: The Gãmbàrí Masque: In this sketch the Gãmbàrí [Hausa] is a blindman led by another man [Yoruba]. (Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).

ritual ceremony. What the Yoruba called the 'Ìgùnnù' is in fact the 'Ndako Gboya'. This masque is a satirical sketch but the masque-dramaturg is more anxious to exhibit his own cleverness in manipulation through dance and spectacle:⁵²

Song: "Ìgùnnù-kó!

Ìgùnnù gègè.

Gàmbarí ta Fúlání o!

Ìgùnnù gègè" (Repeatedly).

"Gunnmu-ko!

Gunnmu, softly.

Gambari sold Fulani!

Gunnmu, softly."

In other sketches of the Tapa, he could be improvised as a Profligate, a Beggar or a Cripple.⁵³

10. Òibá or Èébó (The Whiteman): 'Odù Òtúá-sàá',⁵⁴ gives in the following description, the Yoruba conception of the Whiteman:

52. See plate, No. 60.

53. See plates, Nos. 61 & 62.

54. I am grateful to Alàgbà Agboṣṣá Adéniji for this 'Odù'.



No. 60: Igannu-ko [Ndako Gboya]: A sketch on the Tapa (Nupe) cult. It is an example of pure show. (Akereburu, Inisha).



No. 61: The Beggar: A sketch on the Tápà (Nupe). (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by Frank Speed).



No. 62: The Cripple: A sketch on the Tápà (Nupe). (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).

"Kánwín l'ọmọ Haúsá jẹ ẹ yó;

Aásàà l'ọmọ Èèbó fín yó,

Ọpá l'ọmọ Fúlàní rù ú kiri!

Ifá ló ta gbogbo wọn, tó ra gbogbo wọn.

Ọrúnmilà ló ta 'hun dúdú, ra 'hun dúdú.

Ifá ló ta 'hun dúdú, ra 'hun dúdú.

Ọrúnmilà ló ta 'hun pupa, ra 'hun pupa.

Ìrìgiálò ló ta Fúlàní,

ló fi owo rẹ ra Èèbó.

Ọun ló ta kánwín tó fi ra kírá;

Ó wá ta ọ̀dọ̀, ó f'owo rẹ ra abẹ̀rìrì-sẹ̀sẹ̀.

Tani kò mò pé Ifá ló ti m'Èèbó l'ẹ̀rú?

Ní 'jọ tí Èèbó ti wá fi Ọ̀gún gbé e,

L'ẹ̀rú wọn ti m̀bà ní."

"The offspring of the Hausa eats potash to his fill.

Snuff-taking fills the offspring of the Whiteman.

The offspring of the Fulani was fated to carrying a stick about!

Ifá was the one who sold all of them, And bought all of them.

Ọrúnmilà it was, who sold something black, and bought something black.

Ifá it was, who sold something black, and bought something black.

Ọrúnmilà it was, who sold something red, and bought something red.

guard of 56 The huge and good-natured man it was,
 Policeman. who sold the Fulani, and used the
 money to buy the Whiteman.
 He it was, who sold potash and bought snuff.
 the Aiyel He then sold something rosy to buy
 something darkly.
 Masque of Who didn't know that it was Ifá
 who had enslaved the Whiteman?
 Recently Since the day the Whiteman came to lift
 him with Ogún, god of iron,
 the Masque Has fear been struck into people.

It seemed likely that this conception of the Whiteman was the plot of the Masque of the Whiteman which was described by Lander in the records of Captain Clapperton at Katunga in 1826 as "the caricature of a whiteman".⁵⁵ There is no doubt, however that this conception of the whiteman was the result of the early contacts of the Yoruba with the Europeans.

The Whiteman masque changed considerably in the 'repertoire' of the troupes over the years of contact. The important thing noted was that the masque-dramaturg always designed the Whiteman masque to reflect contemporary conception. Some of the masques included the District Officer accompanied by his family welcomed by an Oba during an official visit, later inspecting a

55. Lander, Record of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition, Vol. I, London, 1829, p. 120.

guard of honour mounted by a handful of Akòdà or Policemen.⁵⁶ After the Royal visit to Nigeria in 1956, the Aiyelabola troupe in Abeokuta brought out the Masque of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.⁵⁷

Recently, the image of the Whiteman has changed from the dignity of the Colonial official to the casualness of the Peace Corps and the tourist.

11. Ìyàwó (The Bride): This is the most beautiful of all the masques found in the 'repertoire' of the troupes. Usually acted by the leader for the 'finale', the masque is improvisational like all other revue-masques.

In the one observed, the Bride, as she prepared to leave home collected all her costly apparel - 'ìró' (wrapper), 'bùbá' (blouse), 'gèlè' (head-tie) and 'ìborun' (shawl) and put on as many as she could manage. Later in 'song and dance' she bade farewell to her people (the spectators) as she left for her husband's house, her new home. Soon, the Husband emerged on the scene. The Bride resumed her song and dance, but this time she started taking off her dresses one after the

56. See plate, No. 63.

57. See plate, No. 64.

58. See plates, Nos. 65 & 65^a.



No. 63: Mesque of the Whiteman: A Colonial Visitation. The District Officer visits the Qba with his family. Policemen are on guard. (Performance at Qtan Aiyégbajú, 1965).



No. 64: Masque of the Whiteman: The Duke of Edinburgh and Her Majesty Queen. This was a sketch on the Royal Visit to Nigeria in 1956 (Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 65: Masque of the Whiteman: This is a sketch on the new conception of the whiteman. (Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 65^a: Masque of the Whiteman: The dalliance scene. (Aghégijó, Oshogbo)
Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).

other, giving them each to the important people she spotted in the audience until the penultimate dress. She then knelt before her husband amidst choral chanting and removed the last set of dresses which the Husband paid for. She revealed a baby (a decorative doll) on her back which she handed over to the Husband and collected the 'owó omọ' (money for the baby).⁵⁹ She then performed the feeding of the baby, handed him over to the Husband and amidst choral singing and dancing, went round collecting money from those who got the dresses:

Song: "Omọ l'èrè ojà o,
Omọ l'èrè ojà.
Olúwa kó fún wa l'ómọ,
Omọ l'èrè ojà."

59. The baby-doll, a dramatic symbol, signifying fertility, was an indication that the Bride had brought with her children to fill the new household. Her most important blessing from her parents had been, "òs f'èhin pọn 'mọ" (You will have children to carry on your back). See plates, Nos. 66, 66^a, 67, 68, 69, 69^a & 69^b.



No. 66: Iyawó: Masque of the Bride (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Frank Speed).

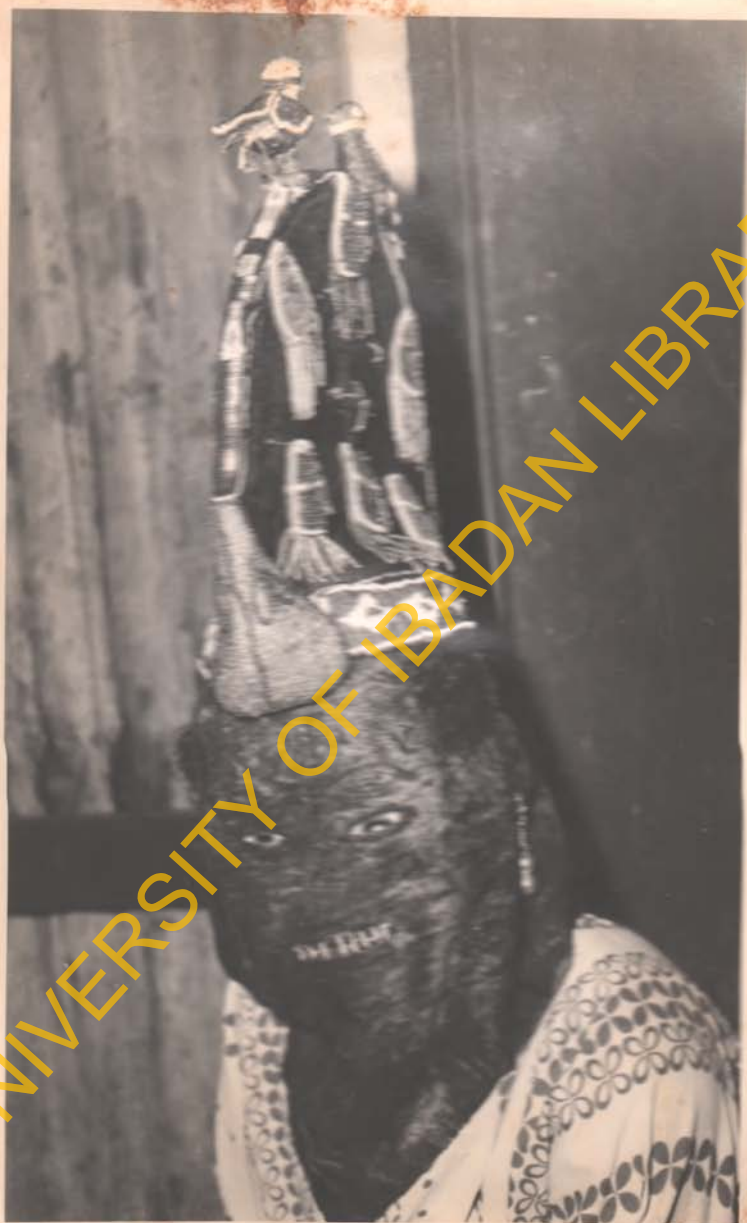


No. 66^a: Masque of the Bride: The Husband accepts the Child. (Agbéjío, Oshogbo: Photo by Frank Speed).



No. 67: Masque of the Bride: Qyádojà's (Olufàlé) conception of the Bride
Note: The head-mask is carved from wood.

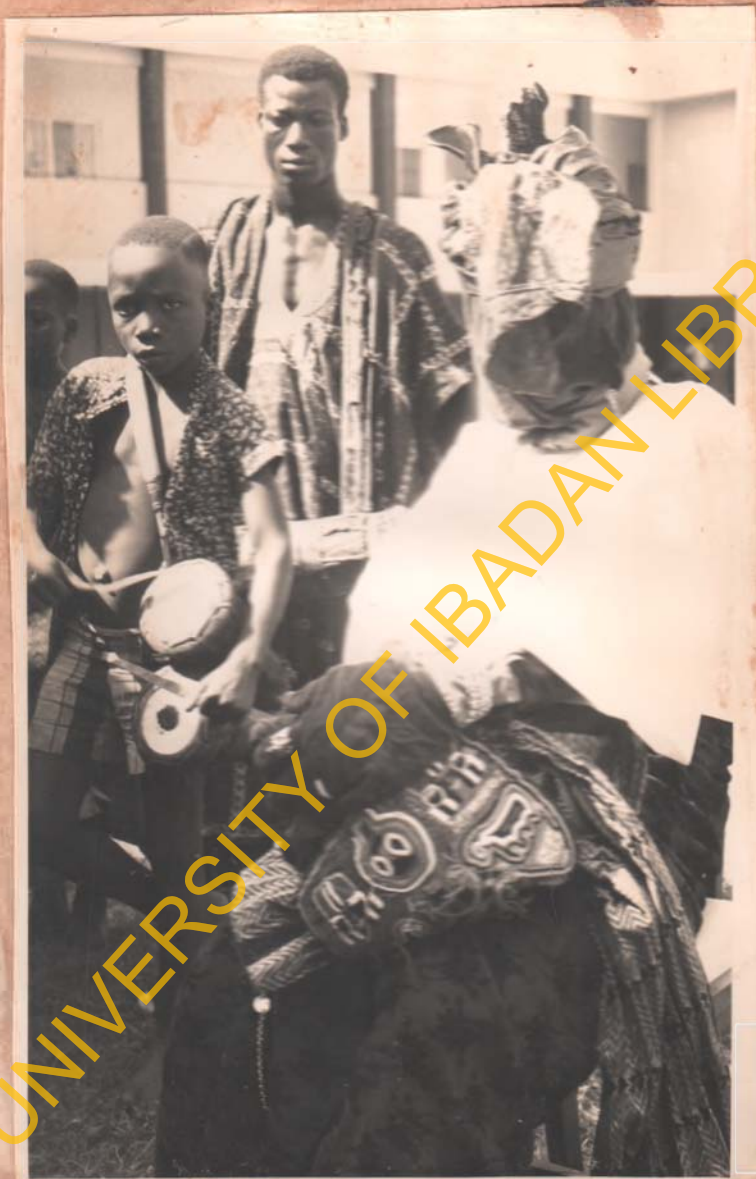
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No. 68: Masque of the Bride: Ejòń'ghoro's (Ìkire) conception of the Bride.
Note: The head mask is a unique design. The hair style is made of assorted beads.



No. 69: Masque of the Bride: Bride and Bridegroom - (Àjàngìlá's performance at Ibadan).



No. 69^a: Masque of the Bride: The Bride feeds the Child [a decorative baby doll]. (Ajàngilá, Ibadan).



No. 69^b: Masque of the Bride: The Bride - an example of audience participation.

"Child is the profit of the market,
 Child is the profit of the market.
 Lord, give us Child,
 Child is the profit of the market."⁶⁰

Then the Bàtá beat the 'finale':

Bàtá: "Ó tó, ẹ ká re'lé,
 Ilé ti tó lọ;
 Ọjẹ kan kò s'awo-s'awo
 K'ó gbàgbé ilé."

"Enough, let's go home,
 It's time we went home;
 No histrions ever carried on the
 secrets of his trade
 And forget home."

Chorus: "Ó tó ká re'lé!
 Ilé là nọ.
 Ọjẹ kan ò s'awo-s'awo
 K'ó gbàgbé ilé."

60. 'Market' is used in the song as a poetic image. The Yoruba's belief that the world is a market where people collect and barter may be implied. The Yoruba's quest for 'child' is an evidence of his concern for continuity in procreation. After the necessary labours and the bargaining which takes place at the market of life, the transaction yields a profit only if a child is left to continue the process before the return journey to the other world is undertaken.

"It's time we went home!
 It's home we're going.
 No histrions ever carried on
 And forgot home."

Bride (Chief Actor):

"Ó tó o!

Àwá nìlò,

Ó ògbà-ò-ṣe!

K'á má f'ojú y'ara wa,

K'á má f'osè y'ara wa."

"It's enough!

We are leaving.

Adieu!

May our eyes not miss one another,

May our feet not miss one another.

Chorus: Repeat.

The songs went on in many verses as the Bride led all

the others out of the arena of play into the community,

collecting gifts as she danced along.

Other masques which were found to be of sociological signifi-

cance were the political sketches on the late Chief S.L. Akintola,

Premier of Western Nigeria, the late Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the

Sarduana of Sokoto and Premier of Northern Nigeria and Chief

Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group, an opposition party:

At Gbagura, in Abeokuta, the Aiyélabólá troupe, in their 1966 annual performance, brought out a satirical sketch that reflected the political sympathy of the masque-dramaturg. The masque sketched out how Chief Akintola, as Premier of Western Nigeria went to Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, his counterpart in Northern Nigeria and formed a political alliance aimed at liquidating the political party of Chief Awolowo.

The scene opened with Akintola and Awolowo in heated argument. The Police came and took Awolowo away. Ahmadu Bello arrived on the scene. Akintola went straight to him and prostrated. Then both of them in dance and song went round the 'circle' amidst shouts of political slogans from the spectators.⁶¹

At Imala, there was a different version of the same political tussle. The performance was by the Lébe troupe. Awolowo and his supporters trooped into the arena chanting political slogans, next came Akintola with two thugs. Then came the confrontation; both Akintola and his two thugs were beaten up and left writhing in pain. A Policeman came to the rescue. He settled the differences by making Akintola stoop before Awolowo. Both in reconciliation danced away amidst the applause of the spectators.⁶²

61. This improvisation was recorded during interview in Abeokuta, 18/4/67.

62. This improvisation was recorded in Imala, 27/3/67.

Other masques which were recorded basing on contemporary social scenes include the following:

1. The Cattle Fulani and his Cow.
2. Return from Mecca: Sàlám-àlèkú.
3. The Jealous Woman.
4. The Horse-rider.
5. The Mother.

All these masques were improvised dramas. Sometimes a combination of characters was involved. The use of the Policeman was found to be an important means of resolving conflict but sometimes the audience were appealed to by the Chorus to help in finding solution. When 'dialogue' was used it was impromptu and attempts were made at characterization especially with regard to the language and accent of 'stranger' elements in the Yoruba society. Sometimes the acts dragged helplessly in spite of the controlling influence of the Bata.

The masque-dramaturg uses the masques of his 'repertoire' to demonstrate two main aspects of his own skill: first is the use of the serious masques to assert his super-natural attainments and second is the use of the comic masques to satirise. But his desire to dance and sing is by no means inhibited since he utilizes both effectively to complement his total performance. Realistic acting and costuming are natural concurrences. All ~~this~~ combine to give

the masques in performance their variety and vitality.

Their membership of the Egungun Society was made a precondition

IV. Training:-

Training for the theatre provided that the actor distinguished himself in three distinct, but mutually inclusive, artistic disciplines. The actor was expected to be an 'Akéwí' (Gleeman), then an 'Olókítì' (Acrobat) and finally an 'Orèbè' (Dancer). But the training programme did not emphasize any particular order. Thus an actor who had a flair for gymnastics concentrated on acrobatics and dance. Since the gleeman had to know all the different categories of Yoruba 'Oríkì' (panegyric, totem, place and personal poems), he also had to match this by developing a good chanting voice. The actor's accomplishment was based on the successful completion of the three units of training. Nevertheless, not all the troupes became distinguished in the three. Some troupes were known to be famous for balladry, some for acrobatics and others for dance.

(a) Apprenticeship:-

Training was not formal and was run on the basis of apprenticeship without a formal contract. The theatre-guilds used to be lineage-guilds, that is, any person bent on an acting career had to be himself a member of a lineage which followed the profession.

Later, others from outside lineages came in for training. Their membership of the Egúngún Society was made a precondition and a trainee was first initiated into the cult before he went on to the training. The Yoruba custom of consulting the Oracle after the birth of a child to know his Odu, to determine the kind of life that he would lead, opened the theatre-guild to outsiders. Thus, there were two categories of people who trained as actors: the 'Ọjédìran' and the 'Ọjẹwùmí'. The first included all those who were descendants of the lineage-group of theatre practitioners. The second included all others from outside.

There was no age limit for apprenticeship; but usually, boys began their training from the age of six or when they were old enough to walk to the farm. Their period of apprenticeship ended when they were old enough to get married and stand on their own feet. Apprenticeship, though it had no formal contract or agreement, was not without some obligations, moral or other. Once a person was apprenticed to an artist he moved home and lived with his master. He served him entirely and this included running errands, working on the farms and sometimes assuming certain responsibilities which amounted to serfdom. The master, on the other hand, apart from training his apprentice, fed and clothed him. Throughout the duration of the apprenticeship, the trainee could only occasionally visit his own

people and serve them and this he did with permission from his master.

The Player's Resources:-

There were people who came to train when they were already fairly advanced in age. This category of apprenticeship varied from the first one only in details of service. Candidates served for a limited period, spelled out in terms of years, and paid a certain amount of money to secure their freedom. In the past the amount was fixed at 'egbòkànlá owó' (two thousand, two hundred cowries - about six pence half-penny in sterling). This form of apprenticeship was not without its problems both for the master and the apprentice in so far as personal dealings and human relationships were concerned. Sometimes a trainee found he had to learn the elements of acting from someone younger in age but more experienced. In some cases training had been cut short because of misunderstanding.

The actor used the period of apprenticeship not only to learn the art and craft of his trade but also to equip himself mentally and sometimes spiritually by learning the use of certain protective charms in order to counter the effect of charms that might be used against him. He had, in fact, to be a medicine-man as he was expected to traffic in medicines during the rainy season when the actor became, normally, a "sedentary professional".

(b) The Player's Resources:-

During his training the actor has to develop the following personal resources: voice, gesture (including dance), appearance and accompaniments.

1. Voice: The development of the actor's voice is the most important part of training. He does not use the egúngún voice,⁶³ but has to learn the special technique of chanting the 'èṣà' or 'iwí' (the ballads). The poems are many and varied: poems of all important Yoruba lineages; poems about all important Yoruba ~~Opa~~ towns and settlements; poems on totem animals and objects; poems which form a kind of humorous commentary on Yoruba life - its attributes and weaknesses. Then he has to learn the 'ìbà' (the pledge and ~~the~~ salute) chants which form the 'opening glee' of every performance. It is said that an actor needs a sharp mind to be able to accomplish these memorizations successfully, so he has to learn a mnemonic 'ofò' (incantation).⁶⁴

63. The egúngún voice is the Àgan's voice. Since Àgan Olúgbèré, the hybrid, had a guttural voice, this became known as the egúngún voice, but was confined to the cult-group.

64. See Appendix 7 for an example.

When an apprentice has mastered this aspect of his training he becomes an 'akéwì' and can engage in minstrelsy. He wears the 'Lábala', the costume of the troubador and occasionally travels about collecting gifts and money which he brings back to his master.

2. Gesture: The actor has to develop a flexible body since he is expected to play many distinct character roles, male and female,⁶⁵ in the same performance. His movements and dance techniques are developed over a long period of training. The 'oriṣà' or ritual dances are many and varied and the actor has to learn to dance at least the important ones. Acrobatics form an important aspect of the actor's stock-in-trade. It requires a special skill and discipline to acquire its various patterns: forward and backward somersaulting, leap and sky-rolling, tumbling sideways, whirling and cart-wheeling among others.

He must learn to make precise and realistic gestures to characterize the different portraits he depicts in action. The gestures must not detract from the face-mask and the costume that he wears for each particular scene.

Forbidden.

65. There are no female performers except in the Chorus; but they do not masquerade in this role.

He must be careful not to let any part of his body be visible to the public during performance. He has to develop a manipulative skill which can help him in his quick changes and tricks.

3. Appearance:- He has to learn how to wear his masks and costumes. Ecstasy and rapture are a distinguishing feature of every performance; to obtain this, the actor must feel himself transformed into the character that he depicts and the spectators must be swept along with him. His masks are not just visors, they are character-ports and dashes' added by the Bata' leader. The apprentice has to gain mastery to be accomplished. His costumes are not decorative dresses, they depict the type and nature of the character he represents. His acting must appear consistent, especially in the sketches and it must match his appearance.

His training includes painting of the masks, making and mending of costumes. He also has to learn how to convert old costumes for new character types.

There are very few cases when the trainee has to learn the art of carving the masks; carving is within the exclusive preserve of another craft-guild and may be forbidden.

4. Accompaniment:- The actor has to train in 'ensemble' work. This requires that the Bata' (orchestra) has to

be in attendance during training. As they belong to another guild, there is always a contract or a form of agreement to retain the services of a Bâta' group. The actor must learn to understand the difficult language of the Bâta'. By its nature, it is diffuse and complicated in pattern. This imposes a burden on the actor-trainee who has to be very familiar with this accompaniment.

To be a good dancer is to learn to be familiar with the stylistics of the Orchestra. The dance patterns are many and varied and there are an infinite variety of 'dots and dashes' added by the Bâta-Leader. The apprentice has to gain mastery to be well accomplished.

Every masque has its own music, song and dance. Improvisation which is the basis of the dramatic art forms a great part of the training and rehearsal periods. In fact, new ideas of form and style are known to have been created during rehearsals. By training in 'ensemble' fashion problems of harmony and discord are resolved. The masque-dramatist explains outlines of plays and suggests possibilities for comic business especially for the revues and for stock chants for the spectacles. In all respects, the Bâta'-drummer is allowed freedom to add his own improvisations to demonstrate his own virtuosity. But all this is accomplished

during training and rehearsals. Versatility is the virtue

The Theatrical Art and its Audience:
of the player.

any theatrical art developed within a particular cultural matrix has a combination of artistic qualities and aesthetic values peculiar to it. Apart from the presence of certain signals which are likely to convey universal meanings, for an appreciation is concerned, the full meaning of any work of art can only be achieved by the spectator whose sensibility it reflects. A theatrical performance can have an objective value for any spectator if the experience that the play evokes gives him aesthetic pleasure. According to Gordon Craig, "the objective of the theatre is neither intellectual nor emotional but is the evocation of aesthetic pleasure derived from the presence of imaginative beauty."

Aesthetics "deals with" not exclusively with beauty but with all things in relation to each other and to culture as a whole. It is based on observation and ideas derived from the arts of various cultures. One can talk about "Yoruba aesthetics" only to the extent that the Yoruba culture is different from other cultures, and so far as differences are found as a result of the people's religious beliefs and philosophy. However, there has been no systematic

1. Gordon Craig: On the Art of the Theatre, London, 1911, pp. 255-6.

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CHAPTER SIX

The Theatrical Art and its Audience:

Any theatrical art developed within a particular cultural matrix has a combination of artistic qualities and aesthetic values peculiar to it. Apart from the presence of certain signals which are likely to convey universal meaning as far as art appreciation is concerned, the full meaning of any work of art can only be achieved by the spectator whose sensibility it reflects. A theatrical performance can have an objective value for any spectator if the experience that the play evokes gives him aesthetic pleasure. According to Gordon Craig, "the objective of the theatre is neither intellectual nor emotional but is the evocation of aesthetic pleasure derived from the presence of imaginative beauty".¹

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1. Gordon Craig: On the Art of the Theatre, London, 1911, pp. 295-6.

study of Yoruba philosophy, and present studies of Yoruba religious beliefs are scattered and inconclusive. The art of the Alarínjò Theatre is full of obscure metaphors and allusions to such an extent that only an understanding of its aesthetics can help those who want to appreciate it. To be able to do so they have to recognise the form and style and other distinctive characteristic features of the theatrical art and these will help them to judge or evaluate the merits of a performance.

I. Form and Style:

The form and style of the theatre arise from the generalised concept of Yoruba Art, namely that "the artist often tends to proceed inductively, rather than deductively."² This is a form of artistic expression which according to Fagg is based on "selective generalization."³ It is designed to bring out certain

2. William Fagg: African Art: The Contrast with Western Tradition. "The Times Review of the British Colonies", July 1951, p. 6.

3. ibid.

The Yoruba maxims, "àbò ọrọ̀ là nṣọ́ f'òmọ́lúnwábí" (one has only to spell the word half way and its full meaning is comprehended by the gentleman or, a word to the wise is sufficient) and "a kì í sọ́ fún ọ̀mọ̀ràn kí ó sọ́ mọ́ ọ́" (we do not have to tell the wise before he knows), may be used to explain this concept. What the Yoruba artist wants to say is more 'unsaid' than 'said'. One has to acknowledge the values of economy, indirectness and allusion as factors influencing Yoruba concept formation to appreciate fully what is meant by "selective generalization".

qualities at the expense of others and to represent certain particular aspects, be it of man, nature or object, rather than the whole. To understand the reason for this tendency in Yoruba art, one has to find out about the artist's intention as well as his cultural and philosophical backgrounds. The Yoruba artist normally operates within a transcendental frame of mind that inspires him to accomplish his objective. His penetration lacks depth however, and his subjects are borrowed mainly from a social and material environment which excites him emotionally.

The substance of what the masque-dramaturg wishes to communicate or share with his audience is revealed in the material of his creation which also underlines his main pre-occupations - namely, religion and human situations. His themes depict first, his faith in the ancestor and the emotional influence that the ancestor exerts on his life; they also indicate some vagueness in his own conceptualizations of the ancestor or the deities and this may qualify the fact that he operates within the realm of allegory and symbolism; and secondly, his humanistic interests are not without some reference to his general concern for the continuity and survival of society; for they reveal deep psychological motives.

The form that he uses must not only be such that it can help him to record his vision of a suprasensible reality; but such also

as can meet the eyes of the group to which he belongs and with whom he wants to share his experience. The shape or structure of his art-medium must, therefore, include certain accepted principles that help to produce the desired result. This means that his technique must fit or blend his subject-matter with his form. All these elements combine to give the Yoruba masque a style of its own. Thus, the spectacles are designed to meet religious objectives while the revues are sketched out as comments on the state of society:

The spectacle-masques are ritual enactments and are in many respects, pure show. The style of staging is theatrical and is based on illusionistic presentationalism.⁴ The themes are episodic. There are no acts or scene divisions but, instead, poetic links provided by solo and choral chanting as well as by Bata music. The mythological and totem masques are designed to exploit the realm of magic and they rely on symbolic action for expression. The action derives its meaning from certain events connected with it but the details of these are usually missing. Consequently, the spectator's imagination is duly stretched while at the same time

4. This term has been used to denote the type of staging which emphasizes the presentation of a story in theatrical forms with the actors in direct contact with the audience, psychologically. (See: John Gassner, Producing the Play, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New Ed., January 1967, p. 349).

and character is, unquestionably, the more important element. he gets carried away by the spectacle - the magic of transformation! sketched out in the masque that they become easily intelli-

The revue-masques tend to create the illusion of reality as there is an attempt to imitate life; but this is only 'selective realism' because no more ~~real~~ realism is employed ^{than} will ensure an impression of reality. In spite of the naturalness brought into the acting, both the stylised mask and the realistic costume are fixed, expressing only prevailing characteristics of stereo-the types rather than specific individuals. The simple plots or themes on which they are set are not without some pre-meditation. This means that the improvisations always fit the character-sketches. The revues are farcical and easily display the comic spirit of the Yoruba, but there is more emphasis on dramatic action than on the working out of plot. Imaginativeness and resourcefulness are needed for their full development both by the actors and the spectators who mutually participate in the action of the revue-episodes.

(a) The element of plot:

The Aristotelian canon of the central importance of plot in the drama is hardly contemplated by the Yoruba masque-dramaturg. In his technique, the plot is not an indispensable element; the drama is basically the presentation or representation of an action

and character is, unquestionably, the more important element.

Character traits and motives are so clearly defined in the acting and so sketched out in the masque that they become easily intelligible to the audience. Type-characterization is a technique which keeps the character within the group rather than seeks to make him an individual. In Yoruba traditional beliefs the individual has no separate existence outside of the group. The masque-dramaturg therefore spends more time on making his characters into portraits with visual appeal than leaving them as plastic models who shape up in different several dimensions during element of the drama; as a matter of fact, most of the dramatic performance. Dialogue is minimal, chants and dance are somewhat fixed elements and the mask-character does not crystallize in performance. It is the 'song-element', in the main, that generally provides the plot-lines.

(ii) The chant or the poetry: The chant is an important element of the drama; as a matter of fact, most of the dramatic performance. Dialogue is minimal, chants and dance are somewhat fixed elements and the mask-character does not crystallize in performance. It is the 'song-element', in the main, that generally provides the plot-lines.

The root-elements of the theatre are the mask, the chant and the dance; but a performance is the sum total of these and the unified product of gesture and costume:

(i) Masks: The characters of the drama all wear masks. Masks were first used as an extension of the egúngún myth, a supernatural vital force; and later employed for the sublimation of the 'ego' of the impersonator. In order to make his themes real as well as create an illusion that the egúngún (spirits of the departed ones) see the faults and foibles of those in society and

laugh them to scorn, the masque-dramaturg added points of emphasis which separated the 'persona' of the actor from the character of his mask. The masks bear ideas or themes that are meant to be communicated; sometimes they are expressed in realistic forms, sometimes they are expressed in symbolic and abstract forms. Symbolism is an essence of Yoruba aesthetic theory. It is the projection of an idea through the means of visual and verbal modes.

(ii) The chant or the poetry: The chant is an important element of the drama; as a matter of fact, most of the dramatic themes and ideas derive their sources from the 'oríkì' and 'orílẹ̀' chants, (panegyric and totem poems, respectively). Both the actor and the Bata-drummer use the chants to lay the scene, convey the sense-impressions and communicate the thematic points. Although the chant has a basically fixed element, it is capable of accretion.

(iii) The Dance: Dance is the accompaniment of song and a component part of performance. The Chorus usually participates in the action of the drama through songs. Most of the songs are topical and improvisational and are in evidence especially during the revues. The dance not only enlivens but interprets the dramatic action and, naturally, flows from the plot. It is not independent of the drama except where it forms a part of acrobatics and becomes a pure show. Every dramatic situation is enlivened by

the music of the Bata, the traditional orchestra of the theatre and an inseparable part of the masque.

A most significant area of aesthetic appreciation of the masques is the balanced fusion of all the three elements of mask, chant and dance; with their adjunctive qualities, they communicate meaningful signals and excite ecstasy or rapture among the spectators. The total experience which they transmit derives from a 'gestalt' of the visual and aural patternings or configurations which are part of and confined within the dramatic form and the style of acting.

(b) The Dramatis Personae:-

The 'masks' of the masques are distinguishing in their characteristics. There are three types of character-portrayal: Mythological, symbolical and sociological characters. Each type is distinguished by its mask:

(i) Mythological characters: The character is depicted usually through a wooden head-mask carved to reveal certain prevailing characteristics of the deity or mythical hero. Attached below to the head-mask is a face-cover, usually made of cloth and worn like a sack with two holes bored through to enable the actor to see. Examples are: Obatala, Sango and sometimes Gbede.⁵

5. See plates, Nos. 70 & 71.



No. 70. Head-masks: Qbàtála and Şàngó. (Akéréburú, Ìnìshà).



No. 71: Head-masks and Face-masks: Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀, Ọ̀risha-Ọ̀ko, Tápà, Ìpà-Ọ̀dẹ̀, Sàngó and Èlẹ̀nu-Wàmbò, respectively. (By kindness of J.R.O. Ojo, University of Ife).

Where the mythological character is a totem animal, a realistic attempt is made to create a representational image through the use of a head-mask made of wood, leather or cloth and a painted costume. Examples are: The Leopard and the Alligator.⁶

(ii) Symbolic Characters: These are mainly satirical characters. Some represent the living riddles of the times symbolically portrayed while others are personified slogans with abstract concepts. Examples⁷ are:

1. The Gossip
2. The Nosey
3. The Avaricious
4. The Buck tooth
5. The Mumps
6. The Moron
7. The Prostitute
8. The Drunkard
9. The Dunce.

The carved face-masks are made of wood. The head-cover is distinguished by the wearing of a hat or a head-gear by male and female characters, respectively.⁸

6. See plates, Nos, 72 & 73.

7. See plates, Nos, 74 & 75.

8. See plates, Nos, 76 & 77.



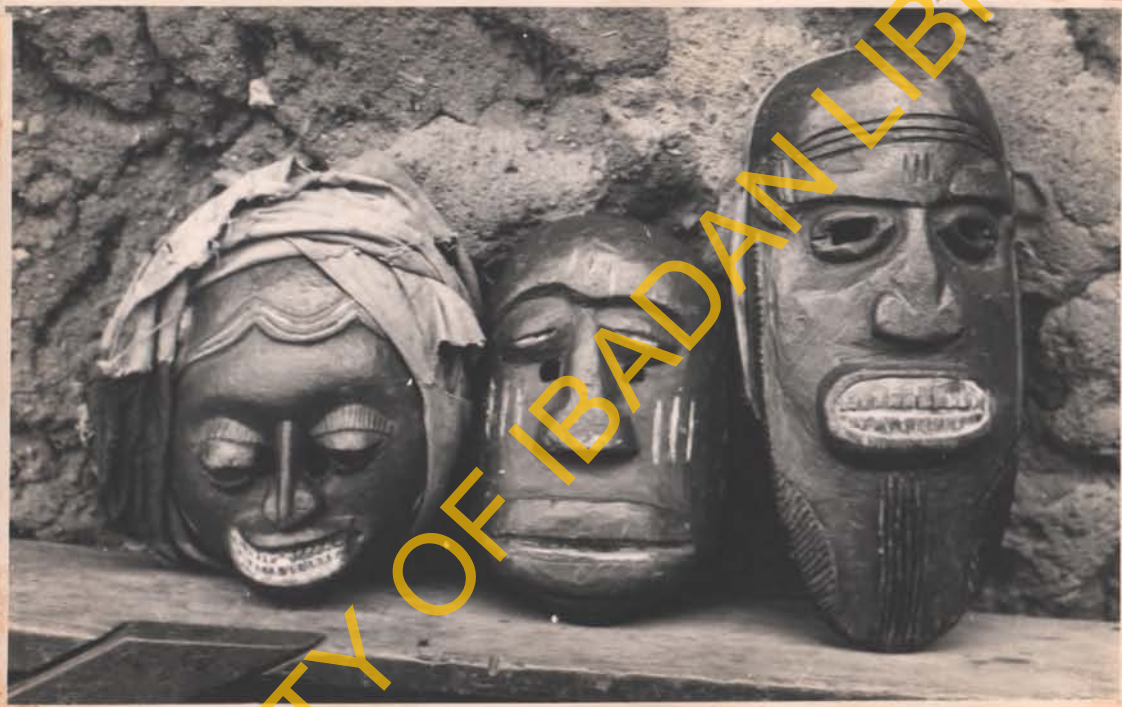
No. 72: Animal Masks: The Leopard. (Ejòń'gboro, Ìkirè).



No. 73: Animal Masks: The Alligator (Agbégijó, Oshogbo: Photo by courtesy of Chief Ulli Beier).



No. 74: Face masks: Personified slogans with abstract concepts. (Akéréburú, Iníshá).



No. 75: Face-Masks: The Buck-tooth, the Glutton and the Butcher, respectively. (Akéréburú, Ìnìshà).



No. 76: Òdẹ [The Imbecile]. Note: The use of a felt-hat as head-cover.
(Agbégijó, Oshogbo).



No. 77: The Female Gàmbàrí [Hausa]. Note: 1. The use of a head-gear: the scarf is tied under the jaw. 2. The 'kòbì' [portico] of the palace of the Ọlótan of Ọtan Aiyégbájú is in the background.

(iii) Sociological Characters: There are two types of characters under this category: 'Stranger' elements and 'non-stranger' elements of the Yoruba society. The 'stranger' elements wear carved face-masks bearing distinctive tribal marks or other characteristics. Examples⁹ are:

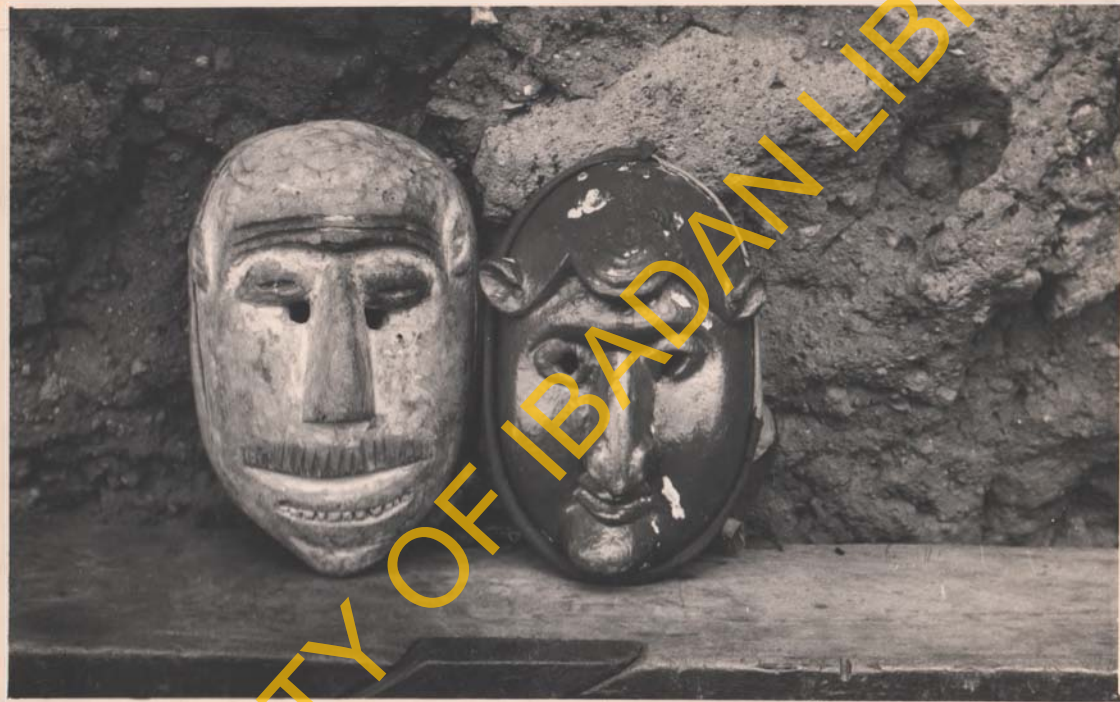
1. The Whiteman
2. The Tápà
3. The Gàmbarí
4. The Ìdàhòmí.

The 'non-stranger' elements are mainly Yoruba village and institutional characters. No carved wooden masks are worn. Instead, the face is covered by a cloth-mask and the character is distinguished by a typical head-cover. Examples¹⁰ are: The Bride and Groom, the Policeman.

At Ìmálà, there was an interesting difference between the representation of the living and the dead 'dramatis personae'. The artists wished to portray three well-known political figures, one alive and two recently assassinated. The living figure (Chief Awolowo) wore a cloth face-mask distinguished by a brass-rimmed pair of spectacles and a fez hat. One of the dead figures (Chief Akintola) had a carved wooden face-mask showing his tribal face

9. See plates, Nos. 56 - 68; also plate, No. 78.

10. See plates, Nos. 69 & 39^b.



No. 78: Stranger Elements: The Whiteman face-mask - Two different conceptions.
(Akeroburu, Inishà).

marks on the face while the other (the Saruana of Sokoto) had a white turban as the head-cover. What is significant in these differences is the conception of the Yoruba artist of the 'persona' of the living and the dead.

(c) Convention:

The Yoruba view of drama can be summed up in Hamlet's famous advice to the players:

...The purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature; to show Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.¹¹

The purpose of the masque-dramaturg is both revelatory and didactic but his meaning is only comprehensible if his technique is familiar. The interpretative element is indispensable to any medium of communication and to the theatre most especially. The language of the Yoruba theatre is peculiar to it but it is utilized through a form that is common and familiar. All Yoruba art-forms are based on poetic imagery and symbolism. The masque is a 'symphony' combining the resources of mask, chant and dance. While the whole masque is improvisational, the three root-elements are fixed or static. The artist makes a statement; sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit. But his portrayal of the illusion of truth is aided by the fact that his dramatic technique is the essence of the

11. Shakespeare: Hamlet Act III, Sc. 2.

theatre - a synthesis of imagination, manner and material.¹²

Everything performed for the benefit of an audience in a theatre (of whatever type), "must contain elements of artificiality and illusion - degrees of enlargement and trickery."¹³

The dramatic art is based on a convention of presentational and representational action with wide gaps in its surrounding circumstances left open to be filled up by the imagination of the spectator. But the Yoruba spectator has a capacity for mental illusion and this is a proof of the sharpness of his imagination. The masque-dramaturg is interested in presenting an imaginative truth in his masques and in making a great demand on his spectators through this mode of expression. The Yoruba language is also. The poetry of the Yoruba theatre is evocative, that is, it elicits mental images, calls upon the experience - beliefs, fantasies and emotions - of the spectator without the exuberance of a narrative element. As the theatre exists for communicating poetic truth by impinging on the imagination and since the narrative element is minimal, the reliance is on metaphorical statements and symbolism. The Reverend Ajayi Crowther puts the case clearly as follows: The 'masks' as poetic images draw out emotions when

14. Rev. S. Crowther: *A Grammar and Vocabulary of Yoruba Language*, London, 1852, p. 18.

15. *Enter: Three Yoruba Plays: Duro Ladipo*, Mbari Publications.

12. Robert G. Newton: *Magic and Make-Believe*, Dobson, London, 1959, p. 12.

16. Crowther, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

13. *op. cit.*, p. 18.

The Yoruba are used to brevity and elegance... The poetry are in the main metaphorical. Some object is selected, to which the character intended is attributed, and some quality or other accident, is predicated of that object of sense, which is designed to figure the intended predicate.¹⁴

Although the poetic chants speak in very brief allusions, they usually refer to a long story, which is sometimes familiar. According to Beier, the "Yoruba speak in proverbs and allusions. Often they find it sufficient to voice the beginning of a proverb - they can assume that their learned [knowledgeable] audience is able to complete the phrase."¹⁵

An appreciation of the stylistics of the Yoruba language is almost invariably synonymous with the appreciation of the art of the Yoruba theatre, because, as Crowther puts it, "it should seem that there is scarcely an object presented to the eye, scarcely an idea excited in the mind but is accompanied by some sententious aphorism founded on close observance of men and manners, and in many cases, of a decidedly moral tendency."¹⁶ There is scarcely an experience which the theatre does not explore and make statements upon. The 'masks' as poetic images draw out emotions when

14. Rev. S. Crowther: A Grammar and Vocabulary of Yoruba Language, London, 1852, p. 18.

15. Beier: Three Yoruba Plays: Duro Ladipo. Mbari Publications, Ibadan, 1964, (postscript).

16. Crowther, op. cit., p. 17.

forms which combine to aid the understanding and appreciation of they are projected; both the actor and the Bata-orchestra communicate poetic statements which are vivid to the spectator who, as convention demands, actively participates, by joining in the refrains. The poetry of the Yoruba theatre, therefore, can be described as a dramatic art, based on a poetic language, that works through images and allusions; with a Bata-orchestra, that talks with and to actors for their appropriate reaction, in gestulation, chanting and dancing; with a Chorus that joins in songs and refrains; all expressing feelings and communicating thoughts; all sharing common experiences about nature and the state of the society.

The major dynamic force behind any traditional art is its power and influence upon emotional life, its sacredness and mysticism.¹⁷ The desire to form an image and project that image for the purpose of identification, is an overriding force that prompted the masque-dramaturg to form images of everything that was worshipped and everything that affected social life; and to attach to that image, the sanctity of its medium of projection. The juxtaposition of the two - the ritual and the secular - in the theatrical situation, increases the instances of vicarious participation.

II. Yoruba Aesthetics:-

It is necessary to make an analysis of the various artistic

17. Dr. T.A. Lambo: "Mysticism: A Major Buttress to African Art", Nigerian Daily Express, January 9, 1965.

forms which combine to aid the understanding and appreciation of the Yoruba theatrical art. If the primary objective of the Yoruba artist is the mutual sharing of aesthetic experience with his spectator, it is presumed that the creative artist and the spectator share a common background. It is believed that a work of art has aesthetic value only to the extent that it communicates an intelligible, experiential message to its spectator. By assuming the appropriate mood, the spectator comes into contact with the personality of the artist. As a result, the spectator shares the artist's experience and vision and empathises with the work of art.

What the masque-dramaturg puts into his theatrical art is a selection from a number of art elements each of which has its own independent existence but which, through the process of synthesis, are fused together to form one distinctive art-form. For the all spectator to feel aesthetic emotion with the masques he must share with and react to the same impulses and instincts as the artist. Past experience or similar historical background as much as a common environment are salient factors in aesthetics.

Generally, Yoruba art is intimately bound up with social behaviour and religious life. Its aesthetics cannot, therefore, be separated from the people's concept formation and value systems. In his conceptualization, the Yoruba projects beyond the boundary of the known into the unknown. The phenomenon of 'ancestor worship' helps him to transcend himself and to commune with the vital elements

that inhabit the unseen world. Thus, his aesthetic conception is disciplines. The creative arts on the one hand, as well as the under certain influences and his thought processes are similarly cross-currents of religion, politics, psychology and medical affected.

There are, no doubt, certain universal qualities of aesthetics

It is the fusion of all these elements that forms the Yoruba aesthetic theory. The fusion is, however, established by which can be used to judge the theatrical art; but the values diverge. For instance, the following art-forms are evidences of state of mind which conditions the individual as well as the group the Yoruba creative genius:

- (i) The verbal arts (proverbs, riddles, folktales, epigrams etc.).
- (ii) The fine arts (carving, painting etc.).
- (iii) The performing arts (dancing, singing and drumming and dramatizations).

They are the basis of socialization and social control. But the theatre utilizes all three categories in a synthesis. Thus, to understand and appreciate the form and style of the theatrical art an analysis of the functional attribute of each category of art-form will have to be made.

A Yoruba aesthetic theory can only be meaningfully based on the 'gestalt' formula, namely, that the whole is more than the total sum of its parts. The Yoruba is not anxious to tell a long story or delve into complicated plots. He deals in understatements, he illustrates and explicates by symbolic gestures and metaphorical allusions. He is interested in episodes and he is skilful in improvisation.

18. There is mutual compatibility among all artistic and cultural

disciplines. The creative arts on the one hand, as well as the cross-currents of religion, politics, psychology and medical practice on the other, are all concatenated into one whole system. It is the fusion of all these elements that forms the Yoruba aesthetic theory. The fusion is, however, established by myth - a state of mind which conditions the individual as well as the group to adopt a system of belief and a way of life, with problems and their solutions left to those with specialised knowledge and the direct intervention of the gods. Thus, the importance of periodic consultation with Ifa (Oracle) and the significance of what the 'Odu' reveals.

For instance, the difference between the image or face-masks of the 'stranger' and 'non-stranger' elements¹⁸ in Yoruba society can only be explained through an aesthetic principle. The difference lies in the way the Yoruba perceives himself and the others in his society. The 'non-stranger' is a human being while the 'stranger' is a caricature of humanity. Religion and politics influence artistic expression quite a good deal and "a holier than thou" attitude is a recognisable Yoruba trait. Stranger-elements in society usually break the social taboos and are despised for deviant behaviours. On the other hand, the desire to be commemorated as an individual is one of the spurs to success in the Yoruba

18. See above, p. 280.

culture. This is achieved through egúngún, the last ritual phase that transforms the individual into an ancestor or deity. But before this final stage is reached, the Yoruba individual is a 'non-persona' and cannot, therefore, be conceptualized by means of carved wooden face-masks.¹⁹

It is often difficult to decide whether or not a work of art has a certain symbolic meaning. One's reaction would have to depend on one's whole philosophic world-view. Yoruba symbolism has a transcendental basis and an artist can, consciously or unconsciously, express a spiritual meaning in his art through divine or cosmic inspiration. It ~~requires~~ ~~an~~ an enlightened mind to appreciate this.²⁰ One cannot therefore be so sure that a work of art has no allegorical meaning simply by looking at it, and in the case of the theatrical art, symbolism may be explained in gesture, chant and song.

Also, a hierarchical conception pervades Yoruba aesthetics with the result that some art forms are more meaningful than others. In this regard watching a 'spectacle' will provoke in the spectator an emotion very ~~much~~ different from watching a 'revue'; the former is ritualistic in essence while the latter is humanistic. It must be explained that the dominant value-system in Yoruba aesthetics was, at a certain time, hierarchical. Yoruba civilization developed a

19. This is explicated by the differences in the face-masks of the three political figures described above. (See p. 280).

20. See plate, No. 79.



Intellectual rapport

A YORUBA wood-carving exudes intense emotionalism and intel-

lect typical of African art.

Here His Highness the Timi of Ede, Oba Laoye II a Yoruba intellectual in his own right, seems to be deriving emotional and intellectual delight from this masterpiece, as could be seen by his expression



No. 79: Wood-carving: emotionalism and intellect. (Dr. T.A. Lambo: From Nigerian Daily Express, January 8, 1965).

hierarchical system and in Yoruba culture there was a hierarchical way of thinking and organising things which, no doubt, extended to the arts. For instance every theatrical performance divides sharply into two - the 'idán' or 'spectacle' and the 'èfè' or 'revue'. In the first category the most important aspect of action is suggested (presentational style); the characters are mainly mythological and heroic figures. In the second category action is represented (representational style) and the characters are drawn from life. The actor of the 'spectacle' has to put himself in the right state of mind so that what he does can be seen by the spectator from a distance and be believed. The actor of the 'revue' and the spectator co-mingle and both share the fun of dramatic participation through interplay.

In spite of the fact that Yoruba religion was also hierarchical, it allowed for flexibility and consequently the disposition of the individual became fluid. The reason for this flexibility might be the result of the thinking in Yoruba that both 'Olódùmarè' or the Supreme God and the 'òrìṣà' or deity lived in separate spheres. All the 'òrìṣà' or the 'irúnmọ̀lẹ̀', men and animals operated within the same sphere of influence, namely, 'ilẹ̀' (earth) and affected one another variously while 'Olódùmarè' operated in 'òrun' (heaven) and judged all things. The belief in rebirth and transmigration were also important factors. So, the individual was capable of having mystic experience which could provide him with unusual knowledge

and he could, therefore, attribute the source of his creativity to communion with the supernatural. The dichotomy in the Yoruba's perception of things can also be used to explain the simultaneous existence of the profane and the sacred as elements within the same plane. Thus, the artist can treat a mythological character satirically without reservation.²¹

No attempt has been made in this chapter to write a Yoruba aesthetic theory.²² Since it is recognised that a work of art only communicates intelligibly with its beholder if the latter shares the same aesthetic values with the artist, it is only logical that the philosophical and religious concepts which condition the thought process of the artist and which also affect his world-view be examined. This we have done in an empirical way in order to recognise, for instance, the value of the dramatic event of the theatrical art to the spectator.

III. Audience:

The Yoruba theatre has specific obligations to its audience with whom it communicates; the audience is the necessary and

21. See above, pp. 226 - 228.

22. The study of aesthetics has now been extended to include the arts and related types of behaviour and experience. In the past it dealt exclusively with the philosophy of beauty. (See: Thomas Munro, Oriental Aesthetics, Cleveland, Ohio, 1965, p. 10).

inevitable condition to which dramatic art must accommodate its means. They are not in the theatre to see life but an illusion of it. They cannot have this illusion if they are confused by artists who change their natural sentiments and sensibility.²³ The Yoruba drama started with a symbol - the egúngún. The medium afforded a natural communication-link between the individual and the ancestor. When the theatre emerged, however, the symbol took on many aspects - through presentation and representation of valid visions and vagaries of life. The new projections did not in any case change the symbolic meaning originally attached to the egúngún presence. To the spectators, the masque-dramaturg was still using the egúngún, the departed ones, to point out their own faults and foibles and laugh them to scorn. But the theatre has since then established its audience and, yet, a deep-lying religious motivation still pervades.

(a) The Significance of the Theatre:

The theatrical art is a vital force in society and its functions over and above divertimento are several: A society which has no formal system whereby its younger generation can imbibe the elements of its culture and strive to perpetuate them, has to invent devices which rouse as well as the aesthetic appeal which they present, provides the audience with an edifying experience.

23. Francisque Sarcey, "A Theory of the Theatre" in Papers on Playmaking ed. Brander Matthews, Hill, and Wang, New York, 1957, pp. 124-125.

whereby it can pass on information which is necessary for security and survival. A close look at the subjects of the improvisations and the themes of the dramatic enactments, gives indications that the Yoruba theatre, among others, functions to provide the instructional needs of society by imparting knowledge and information in one form or another. Observation of the environment for events of social importance and their transmission, criticism of or comments on certain behaviour patterns, are features of the theatrical presentation which, no doubt, influence the life of the individual as well as the group in society. The inclusion of moral principles in entertainment through the medium of art is a source of moral development.²⁴

The theatre has developed its artistic form purely on the principle of emotional pleasure. Its interest in ritualistic expression is an evidence of its basic concern for raising the spiritual voltage of the community. The ritual symbols and images of the mythological and totemistic masques for example, draw out emotion and influence habits of thought. The emotional force which they rouse as well as the aesthetic appeal which they present, provide the audience with an edifying experience.

24. Dr. T.A. Lambo: "African Art infuses Intellect and Emotion" Nigerian Daily Express, January 8, 1965.

The ceremony of communing with ancestral spirits provides a therapeutic weapon for the management of psychological disturbances in the African society.²⁵ A masque performance which enacts or re-enacts an incident or situation that provides a discharge or catharsis, plays a therapeutic role in society. The Atíngà and the Ìdàhòmi masques are two cases in point. It has been mentioned that these masques were intended to stiffen the Yoruba spectators. Previously the ravaging activities of the 'Ìdàhòmi' army and the 'Àtíngà' cult in certain parts of the Yoruba society were frightening. Considered within the social situation, therefore, these masques were intended as 'learned' patterns of response to 'stress'. By exposing the spectators to experience ~~their~~ aggression through the masques, they were being conditioned to the therapeutic theory of catharsis which suggests that playing out evil lets off steam and that any cathartic discharge of emotion can produce a lasting psychological adjustment. Since the masques are still regarded by the spectators as influenced by the spirit of the ancestor, any manipulations of the material world by the masque-dramatist, play a decisive part in the life of the people; emotional sharing is a factor in group psychology.

25. ibid.

(b) Magic and Make-Believe:

The Yoruba spectator knows very well that there is a human being inside every mask, but he believes that the mask is potential and that once an individual enters into it, he achieves a state of psychic fusion with the ancestor and, therefore, becomes able to demonstrate supernatural attainments. By the same token, the 'transformations' in the theatre are variously believed by traditional spectators to be real transcendent manifestations of the metamorphic power which the masque-dramaturg possesses.

There are various reasons why a traditional spectator maintains these attitudes. Firstly, as long as the spectator is going to identify the theatrical show with acts of the ancestral spirit or the egúngún, so long is he going to find it difficult to separate the element of theatrical make-believe from the incidence of magic; both of which assume the semblance of reality in their effect on the spectator.

Secondly, the Yoruba's belief in transmogrification is carried into theatrical experience and the spectator sees the theatrical transformations as the effect of magic which changes the shape and appearance of the individual actor into the actual character of his portrayal. This belief is explained in the following dirge:

Ó kú tán,

Ó d'ewúré olú-jewé.

Ó kú tán,

Ó d'àngùtàn olú-j'imò.

Ó kú tán,

Ó d'alámò tí'jẹun l'ébá ògiri.

He is dead,

He becomes the goat that feeds on leaves.

He is dead,

He becomes the sheep that feeds on palm-leaves.

He is dead,

He becomes the lizard that feeds along the walls.²⁶

Since the spectators accept the theatrical performance as being provided by the egúngún or masked ancestral spirits, they do not therefore, have to challenge or question the 'disguise' and 'pretence' elements which are the essence of performance.

Thirdly, the belief in magic and the acceptance of the premise that all creation is spectacularly imbued with vital force, override the spectator's disposition. For him magic has a utilitarian purpose and there is truth in the use of charms. Gáhà, the powerful Bashorun of the eighteenth century Oyo empire, was famous for his transformation charms. "He was credited with the power of being able to convert himself to a leopard or an elephant, and on this account was much feared."²⁷

26. Cited in Idowu, Olodumare, p. 200.

27. Johnson, op. cit., p. 178.

Fourthly, a non-literate society is non-self-analytical in the following sense: The individual cannot easily anatomise his societal institutions in terms of the logical and the non-logical, the empirical and the ritual, or the scientific and the mystical.²⁸ He therefore actualizes rather than intellectualizes, normally. His world is undifferentiated and he hardly draws the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the abstract and the concrete. He carries the same world-view into the theatre where animals, plants, objects, natural forces and abstract entities like laughter, disease and hunger are humanized in performance.

According to Lucas, the "Egunguns claim the power to metamorphose themselves to animals and to change their sex"²⁹ and this imposture is taken in by the gullible spectator who ~~can~~ not see "a ~~do~~es make-believe by means of dress or skin of animals"³⁰ worn by the actor. The story of metamorphosis having taken place during theatrical presentations in the past are widely circulated; among those often cited are:

Olúfàlé d'erè, ó b'erè lq!

Aiyélabólá d'erè, ó b'erè lq!

28. E.N. Obiechina, "Transition from Oral to Literary Tradition", Presence Africaine, No. 63, 1967, pp. 158-9.

29. Lucas, op. cit., p. 138.

30. ibid., p. 139.

Olufalé metamorphosed into a boa,
 he passed away with the boa!
 Aiyélabólá metamorphosed into a boa,
 he passed away with the boa!

When the spectator is wholly detached from a work of art, either through the skilful manipulations of the artist or through some form of clever artifice, the unperceiving spectator is swept off his balance and carried away with the make-believe. Detachment can be the result of a psychical or an aesthetic distance. But in this case, the distance does not permit of total detachment from the spectacle because the spectator is empathically involved.

In the theatrical arena, the actor assumes the personality of the character he portrays but his transformation into this character takes place off-stage at a place concealed from the gaze of the spectator. It is, of course, the theatrical make-believe that persuades the spectator that things are not what they seem. The element of illusion which works on him like magic, catches up with his belief in the reality of the theatrical transformation. Thus, by the process of aesthetic distance and the result of a psychic fusion with the product of the dramatic actualization, the spectator is confirmed in his belief that some vital force is present in the theatrical arena.

(See: *op. cit.*, p. 124).

In the cultic arena, on the other hand, there is no spectator, there is no visible impersonator; every one present is a participant in the ritual observance or ancestor-worship. Therefore, every one comes under the spiritual influence of the 'ancestral mask' who is believed to possess a metamorphic power. He can be disembodied, he can be materialised. By an act of faith, the participant believes in the reality of the transformation of the ancestor into a masquerade. He is forbidden to move near or touch this masquerade for fear of incurring the death penalty.

The organisers of the theatre while still retaining their association with the cultic group and going under the classificatory name of 'egúngún', cannot but strengthen the impression which still persists in the mind of their unperceiving and indiscriminating spectators. It is true that this position helps them to influence their spectators in many respects and so none of the artists would like to expose the source of their 'theatre tricks' that help them to build up the illusion they sell off readily to the gullible spectators.

Theatre tricks are devices which can be used to heighten theatre experience.³¹ When tricks, as a method of achieving

31. Sarcey believes that as part of the convention of the theatre, certain tricks should be inherent in the drama and should be established as laws. (See: op. cit., p. 124).

34. Leake, "African Art infuses Intellect and Emotion", op. cit.

illusion, are used cleverly and effectively, they can help bring about the moments of magic which illuminate all theatre experience.³²

"The quality of magic in the theatre is indefinable, yet it can, more than anything else perhaps, make theatre-going an unforgettable experience, transforming in an instant any aspect of theatre-craft."³³

Imagination is the life-blood of the Yoruba theatre; 'magic' is its particular enchantment; both are achieved through the way and manner the masques are presented to the audience. For a long time many an unperceived spectator could not recognise the 'magic and make-believe' of the theatre as an element of illusion. He formed identification with the ancestral spirit whose 'mask' has been carried into the masques and he believed that the theatrical occasion was designed only to enchant and edify him. Increased sophistication has, however, relieved him of this primeval belief; and now the magic-wand is broken! However, the moment of 'willing suspension of disbelief' which constitutes poetic faith still persists in this theatre. This is also strengthened by the fact that, for the Yoruba, "there is an intense and emotional link between magic, religion and social organization and creativity",³⁴

32. Newton, op. cit., p. 21.

33. ibid.

34. Lambo, "African Art infuses Intellect and Emotion", op. cit.

and he believes in the inter-dependence between artistic creation and the manipulation of the unknown world.

(c) Cultural Syncretism:

By the concept of cultural syncretism which persists in the Yoruba world-view, there is a harmonious co-existence between the theatre-groups who utilize the resources of the egúngún for the material promotion of their trade, and the cult-groups who seek to maintain the sanctity of the egúngún and its identity as a secret organisation. The two organisations do not seem to clash even though the theatre-group never makes a secret of the reality of the la man in his mask. It can probably be assumed that the Yoruba believe that the cultus is a deeply religious organisation which uses the theatre as one of its functions and therefore a member of one can participate in the other without infringement.

Moreover, the co-existence of the profane element within the matrix of the sacred in most Yoruba religious institutions can be explained in terms of the concept of cultural syncretism. It is customary that the individual maintains a joking relationship with his 'òrìsà'. He can humour or tease him while at the same time treat him with awe and reverence. This attitude admits of the existence of a philosophic mind which is both idealistic and pragmatic. There is nothing in the world-view of the Yoruba which is absolute and eternal. He believes that the world behaves like

a chameleon and changes all the time. This in fact is one of the passing remarks of the egúngún during his annual visitation:

"Bírí l'òkò òdà;

Yíyí l'aiyé òyí".

The canoe overturns suddenly;
Life is for ever changing.

Some people have taken the view that Yoruba cultural syncretism is an explanation of an ethos which speaks of ambivalence, to say the least; that there is lack of definiteness in the Yoruba 'image'. This is extended to the normal recourse he takes to expressing himself through metaphor and poetic images as meaning that he never wants to be matter-of-fact. The Yoruba theatre thrives on the same style of life.

Cultural syncretism may, by extension, account for the existence of religious syncretism among the present organisers of the theatre. A good many of the extant masque-dramaturgs that were interviewed, belong to the Muslim faith. One would not expect this situation to exist, knowing of course the Islamic view on image-making and caricaturing. Yet, the retort usually given is:

"Ìmàlè kò ní ká má ẹ̀

Orò ilé ẹ̀nì"

The Islamic faith does not prevent us
from performing our lineage rites.

Even the Yoruba Moslem recaptives of Freetown about the middle of the nineteenth century practised syncretism: According to Peterson, "the Aku [Yoruba] tended to be Moslem only in religious belief. Their pattern of life remained essentially Yoruba. A strong Moslem minority insisted on the continuation of the Agugu [egungun] secret-society within a Moslem context."³⁵

The concept of syncretism in Yoruba culture may, indeed, explain the reason why the theatre with its artistic freedom has not completely severed its ritualistic links with the cultus. This may also be the factor militating against the complete secularization of the theatre and the disposal of the 'mask' as a means of disguise.

35. John Eric Peterson, Freetown, op. cit., p. 294.

Biography of Great Professional Dramaturge:

In this chapter the background of some of the great artists of the theatre will be delineated. The purpose will be to indicate how the theatre has been promoted after the promulgation of the *Ọbà*¹ and established professional organisations, to show how professionalism has become an attitude of professionalisation as to bring in people from other disciplines to describe to what extent the *ẹmọ* of the professionalisation of the theatre has been perpetuated.

PART FIVE

The Artistes

1. Ọbà Ọgbin:-

Professionalism in masquerade dramaturgy has been traced to Ọbà Ọgbin, a native of Ọgbójó, also called Ológbin Arigbo. His real or personal name was Ọbà Ọgbin. It is not certain who exactly his father was, but he is referred to as "Ọbà Ọgbin ọmọ Aláde" (Ọbà Ọgbin offspring of Aláde). The Aláde lineage is said to have descended from Ọbà-Ọjọ, an offspring of the *Ọbà*.

Ọbà Ọgbin is believed to have lived during the reign of King Aláde about the latter part of the eighteenth century. The following synoptic structure from a collection of his 'Oríkí'²

1. Ológbin Ológbójó, founder of the theatre, is said to be a worshipper of Ọbatálá. (See also Adesoye Babalola, Amọ Oríkí Ọgbin, Collins, 1967, p. 47).
2. See above, pp. 76-77.
3. From 'Oríkí Iyan Ológbin'. See: Adesoye Babalola, op. cit., pp. 91-103.

Biography of Great Professional Dramaturgs:

In this chapter the background of some of the great artistes of the theatre will be delineated. The purpose will be to indicate how the theatre has been promoted after the progenies of the Òbà¹ had established professional masque-dramaturgy, to show how professionalism has become such an attractive proposition as to bring in people from other lineages and to describe to what extent the memory of the progenitors of the theatre has been perpetuated.

I. Èsà Ògbín:-

Professionalism in masque-dramaturgy has been traced to Èsà Ògbín, a native of Ògbojò, also called Ológbín Arèpa. His real or personal name was Babáfidé. It is not certain who exactly his father was, but he is referred to as "Èsà Ògbín ọmọ Aládafà" (Èsà Ògbín offspring of Aládafà). The Aládafà lineage is said to have descended from Òbà-ńjà, an offspring of the Òlóbà.²

Èsà Ògbín is believed to have lived during the reign of King Abiọdun, about the later part of the eighteenth century. The following synoptic structure from a collection of his 'Oríkì'³

1. Ológbín Ológbòjò, founder of the theatre, is said to be a worshipper of Obátálá. (See also Adeboye Babalola, Awon Oríkì Orílẹ̀, Collins, 1967, p. 47).
2. See above, pp. 76-77.
3. From 'Oríkì Ìran Ológbín'. See: Adeboye Babalola, op. cit., pp. 91-103.

reveals how Esa Ogbin stepped into the shoes of the great Ologbin Ologbojo, founder of the theatre.⁴ The dialogue went on like this:

Narrator: "Baba oníkálukú ti í mọ'lé

ará Ògbojò, ní àbá

Nwón ní níbo ní wón í-gbé

ibi [olóbi] ọmọ wón sí?

Nwón l'áwón kò mọ ibi nwón

gbé olóbi ọmọ wón sí.

Èsà Ògbín wá bi nwón n'ile

ará Ògbojò.

Nwón ní bo ni nwón í-gbé

ibi ọmọ wón sí.

Nwón ní ojú iná

Ni e má a gbé ibi ọmọ lọ

L'ẹrì n'jé ọmọ apá iná."

Èsà Ògbín: "Sòsòsò ti ẹ gèrèwù!

Wo iké Ológbojò l'ẹhin mi,

Bámkólé."

Narrator: "Páà, ọ kún!

Èsà Ògbín ara Ògbojò,

Ṣogbón-yoké!

4. See above, pp. 136-138.

Èsà Ògbín ará Ògbojò,

Ará òde Ògbólúkẹ́.

'Mòbòsádé, ọmọ oníkẹ́-bólumo.

Àti kòtò, àti kòrò,

Mérìndínlógún ní m̀be

lékùnlé Ògbín.

Gbogbo rẹ̀ ló gbé n̄s'awo.

Èsà Ògbín ará Ògbojò".

Èsà Ògbín:

"Ọwọ́ iyá mi, ẹ́ bá mi wá

̀sùkù sùkù ẹ́ja.

Àlèlè - àlèlè-àlèlè!

Bàràwì kan m̀be l'ona t'Èsà."

"Mo móókún mi ̀tún

Mo fi ka ̀dán irèrè-irèrè,

Mo móókún mi ̀sì

Mo fi ka ̀dán 'rèrè-irèrè.

Ainá n'iyá Ológbojò í jẹ́,

Mólámólà l'òbóge,

Narrator:

"Móládé ló b'èégún l'ọmọ."

Narrator:

"Òbídìran!

Obi ọ́ ní jọyè l'Èsà.

5.

Kàkà k'òbirin ọ́ j'oyè l'Èsà, mysteries of the
Ilésanmí l'obìrin yí ọ́ má a jẹ́!

Omóbósádé, then asked those of the
 Oníke-bólumọ, keep their 'after-birth'.
 Kèngbè àgbàlá, said that it's in front of
 Agbódò-yọ'kù!"

Sàà Oobín: N'íjọ aṣbéeḡún ti ns' awo,⁵

Àgbàtè baba rẹ di mẹfà,

Narrator: Won kò m'awo;

Èkú di mẹfà,

Won kò mò 'gbàlẹ,

Ilé ló ti kọ èkú rù

Orí pépéiyẹ

L'èkú gbé fàya.

Àgùtàn ló jẹ k'áwo ó bàjẹ

Sàà Oobín: L'ójú elékírí ní 'joun.

Igi baba ní í gbé s'awo,

Oba Olúsanyín.

Ogogó ló dá owó 'bodè sílẹ."

Narrator:

"Every lineage-head who knew the
 Ogbojò lineage

Was asked where they keep the
 'after-birth' of their children.

They all said they knew not
 Where they keep their 'after-birth'.

5. The word 'awo' which means 'secret' or mysteries of the 'egúngún' to the cult-group, means the 'secret of disguise' to the theatre-group.

Èsà Ògbín then asked those of the Ògbojò lineage, ⁶ where they keep their 'after-birth'.

They replied that it's in front of the fire-stove, That the after-birth is kept... That's why they call them those from the fire-side."

Narrator:

Èsà Ògbín: "I can bilk and bulk large! Look at Ológbòjò's hump at my back, Bámkólé."

Narrator:

"Wonderful! I salute you! Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò, The contrived hunch-back.

Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò, Dweller of the court at Ògbólúké,⁷ The one honoured by the Crown,⁷ The contrived hunchback.

With nooks and corners all told, There are sixteen at Ògbín's backyard. In them he performs all his secrets. Èsà Ògbín, citizen of Ògbojò."

Èsà Ògbín: "My mother's valets, Please fetch me the best of fish, So that people may know
There's a great actor in Èsà."

9. Kneeling on my right knee I folded resplendent masque-costumes. Kneeling on my left I folded dull ones.

10. There is an indication here that Èsà Ògbín and his theatre

6. By being told where the Ògbojò lineage kept their 'after-birth', Èsà Ògbín was initiated into the secret of the great masque-dramaturg, Ológbòjò.

7. This is a direct reference to the first Ológbín who was nicknamed Ológbòjò and honoured to live in that court by King Ògbólú. See above, p. 138.

Àiná is Ológbojò's mother,
 But Mólámqlá is mother of the dapper one;
 Mqladé is the masquerade's mother."

Narrator:

"Descent ⁸ by the female line!
 No female will be allowed to reign at Èsà.
 Instead of a female chieftain at Èsà,
 She will be titled 'one who lives
 well at home'.
 The one honoured by the Crown,
 The contrived hump,
 The gourd in the courtyard
 That bulges when dipped into water."⁹

Since the histrione started his trade,
 He has changed his shoes six times;
 But he does not know the egúngún cult
 He has acquired six dressing-boxes;
 But does not know the sacred-grove.¹⁰

"He learnt dressing-up since he was a child.
 It was when he played the duck¹¹
 That he was exposed when his costume came apart.
 The sheep had been responsible for leaking
 the secret

-
8. Èsà Ògbín was related to Ológbojò on the female line. His maternal connections gave him the right of succession.
9. 'Odù Òtúrúpongbè' reveals how Èsà Ògbín contrived to impersonate Ológbojò by wearing a calabash on his back to stand for a hump. Ológbojò was a hunchback but Èsà Ògbín was not. See below, p. 310
10. There is an indication here that Èsà Ògbín and his theatre troupe did not have any connection with the sacred-grove. It also points to the fact of his independence of the cult-group.
11. Oladipo Yemitan, "Òjẹwùmí t'ó ò di pépéiyẹ", in Ijálá, O.U.P. Lagos, 1963, pp. 12-14, narrated the story of one apprentice-actor whose body was exposed when he was playing the Duck Masque. As a result he was fined by the cult-group for violating the egúngún secret.

To all and sundry.¹² the ancestor of all those who
 He used his father's masks for his trade,
 King Olúsanjín. masque-dramaturgy. Before they
 Ògògò, it was, who introduced the toll".¹³
 begin any performance, they salute him and give him their pledge:

Èsà Ògbín depended on the inspiration he got from his
 carver for his masques. Fortunately for him, he had blood
 relationship with Làgbàyí, the descendant of the great carver
 Olójówòn, and Aláran, the great costumier: the Yoruba

"Kí l'Èsà Ògbín yí ó rí

rọ b'orí r'òde rè é jọ ni'jọ

ọjọ bá tó?

Gbogbo eégún ilé wa

Àrán mà l'aso.

Ọmọ iyá l'aja òun ọbọ!

Ọmọ iyá ni nwón, è ní ikó.

Wón kí í ẹ'seyekan".

What will Èsà Ògbín put on
 when the time comes for him to
 go out?

All the masqueraders in our house
 wear velvet.

The dog and the monkey are born
 of the same mother!

They are brothers not brethren.

12. The actors were exposed to being tempted on many occasions
 by members of other secret organizations who wanted to
 impose on them. When they fell prey, they were accused of
 exposing the egúngún secret and then penalised.
13. Ògògò, the Alágbàá, introduced the toll so that every troupe
 that wanted to perform obtained his permission by paying
 the necessary tax.

Èsà Ògbín has, indeed, become the ancestor of all those who have taken to the profession of masque-dramaturgy. Before they begin any performance, they salute him and give him their pledge: 'pe Èsà or (p'èsà). Consequently, they have come to be known as 'apèsà' (callers on Èsà). By coincidence, their poems which are a hotch-potch of selected themes on various aspects of Yoruba life, from the lineage down to the lowest animal in the Yoruba world, are called 'èsà'.¹⁴

How Èsà Ògbín was exposed as an Impersonator of Ológbòjò:

'Oùù Òtúrúpongè'¹⁵

Verse:- "Òtúrú, pòn'gbè!

Adifá fún Òtúrú

Tí ó pòn'gbè t'ó pè é ní iké.

Adifá fún Bàtá

Tí yíó fí iké Òtúrú hàn.

Bàtá l'Ológbòjò í-jó,

Ọmọ oníké rẹmọ-rẹmọ".

"Òtúrú has carried the gourd on his back!
Thus decreed the Oracle to Òtúrú
Who fastened the gourd round his back
And called it a hump.

14. In the Oyo dialect of Yoruba there is confusion between 's' and 's' (sh).

15. This 'Oùù' was narrated to me by kindness of Alàgbà Agboṣṣá Adéniji.

Thus decreed the Oracle to Bata
 Who will expose the hump of Oturu.
 Bata is Ologbojo's musician,
 Son of the one with the sharp hump."

Narrative: "Oturu is not Ologbojo's son. He is a liar.
 He mounted a gourd on his back and donned it
 and said, 'Can't you see Ologbojo's hump on my
 back?'"

Before Ologbojo died he had said that whoever
 came to dance with the hump on his back was his
 heir, and he should inherit his mantle. Oturu
 (Esa Ogbin), decided to snatch the mantle through
 the means of a disguise. He strapped a calabash
 round his chest and fastened a gourd on his
 back; then he donned a replica of the Ologbojo's
 garment and stepped forward. He danced and
 chanted after the manner of Ologbojo to the
 admiration of all the spectators. But he went
 to extremes and angered his Bata-drummer when
 he insisted on dancing before the Alafin, the
 King. 'I want to show all and sundry that I am
 the legitimate heir of Ologbojo', he insisted.
 When they stepped into the portico of the palace,
 Bata changed his tune and started saying:

Bata: 16

òtúró pọ́n 'gbè,

Pọ́n 'gbá!

òtúró pọ́n 'gbè,

Ó pọ́n gbá!

Ó pọ́n gbá!

-
16. In Esa Ogbin's 'oriki' he is referred to as "Esa Ogbin,
 ẹni Bata bà l'ehin jẹ" (Esa Ogbin, the one whose faked
 hump was ruined by the Bata).

Òtúrú carries a gourd,
 Carries a calabash!
 Òtúrú carries a gourd,
 He carries a calabash!
 He carries a calabash!

In spite of Bata's attempt, talking through his drum to expose the impersonator, a huge number of people surged round to see the splendour that marked Òtúrú's performance. The Alafin then quietly invited Òtúrú to the inner room to investigate what the Bata had been saying. The deceit was found out but Òtúrú was pardoned. The king announced that he had found Ologbojò's heir and he was pleased to give the mantle to Òtúrú.

Èsà Ògbín's 'Oriki':

"Èsà l'Ògbín, Ologbojò.
 Babájídé, omọ asúnké bi ẹ ní sún'wọ.
 Gukàn Cíhìn Àdafa.
 Èsà Ògbín, a tà'dí réké,
 A gún rẹgí l'ábé aṣọ.
 Ó d'onkò bàràwì l'óna Èsà.
 Kékeré Ògbín, nwọn jàre Ògbín,
 Nwọn á f'asọ b'orí,
 Nwọn á má a s'éeḡún je.
 Ọ bá má s'éeḡún je, ọ má s'órò je,

poises smartly under the shroud,
 Because the aziable stroller that

Babájídé, ọmọ asúnké bí ẹ ní sún'wọ. greatest Ògbín.

Iké rẹ kò jọ t'Ọya

K'á gbé ọ f'Ọya.

Gùkàn rẹ kò jọ t'Òrìsà

K'á gbé ọ f'Òṣà l'Àwẹ.

Ike òjòndà l'ódiké-àmúṣèyẹ.

Ọmọ oníké ẹhìn Ọba,

Igba eégún ẹnyín di 'rínwó!

Sòlò, sàlá eégún,

Babájídé,

Èsà, ò f'òde gbogbo l'Àkànrìn,

A r'eégún sin'mọ dé'lé ọkọ.

Ológbojò, Sogbonyoké, Ológbin Arẹpa,

Babájídé'mọ oníké 'lá-yeni.

Lèjà lèjò ará Ògbojò,

Eni bàtá bà lèhìn jẹ.

A r'eégún s'ire,

Ará Ògbojò ọmọ agè l'olú asọ."

"Èsà is Ògbín, Ológbojò.

Babájídé, son of one who carries the hump
like carrying a haversack.

The bulwark of Àdafa.

Èsà Ògbín, takes a dance pose and
poises smartly under the shroud,

Becomes the amiable stroller that

plies the road to Èsà.¹⁷

The least Ògbín, does better than the greatest Ògbín.
They get into a shroud and mimick the mummer.

Better not mimick the mummer,
don't mimick the cult.

Babájídé, son of one who carries
the hump like carrying a haversack.
Your hump is unlike that of Qya

For us to make you a gift of Qya.
Your posturings are unlike
those of Òriṣà

For us to hand you over to Òriṣà at Àwé.
A make-believe hump has now become a hump to
pride oneself on.

Son of the hunch-back at court,
Your two-hundred mummies have
become four-hundred!

The mummer who troops from place to place.
Babájídé,

Èsà, who makes every outing an occasion
for performance.

You who give away your daughter in marriage
with a company of mummies.

Ológbojò, contriver of the hump,
Ológbin, the carrier of painted masks.

Babajide, son of the one with a fitting hump.
The blusterer, citizen of Ògbojò;

One whose back was ruined by the
Bata-drummer,

Who uses ancestral masks for
entertainment.

Citizen of Ògbojò, son of the one whose best
outfit is the shroud."

Èsà Ògbín's troupe and 'repertoire' surpassed those of
Ológbin Ológbojò. While the latter had only entertained the
Court, flattered and amused the governing class, Èsà Ògbín took

17. Èsà has been used here to indicate the name of the place
of sojourn of Èsà Ògbín.

the theatre to the masses, the grass-roots. Through him the theatre became popular and attracted people from other lineages who wanted masque-dramaturgy as a career.

II. Extinct Professionals:-

All theatrical troupes or companies adopt professional names by which their 'òjè' are known. Some of these names have been identified as sobriquets; others are patronymic having derived from the lineages of great professional masque-dramaturgs. One main difficulty which has arisen in tracing the genealogies of leaders of extinct troupes has been that of telling the real or personal names from the professional ones. One example is that of Èsà Ògbín who is popularly but erroneously called Ológbín or Ológbòjò. The source of confusion has arisen from the fact that it was Èsà Ògbín who inherited the mantle of Ológbín Ológbòjò believed to be the 'father' of the theatre. In view of this, when the praises of Ológbín Ológbòjò are chanted, it is usual to include those of Èsà Ògbín or vice versa, with the result that the two personages appear to be one and the same, inspite of some hundred years that are known to have separated the former from the latter. It is clear from this that Èsà Ògbín adopted 'Ológbòjò' as his professional name.

King of the Histrions.

There are professional masque-dramaturgs whose names have been handed down; but it is still difficult to know whether the given names are those by which their troupes were called or were personal names. For instance, Àjàlá Amúgbekún¹⁸ the reputed masque-dramaturg of the first half of the nineteenth century is believed to be a descendant of Ológbòjò but was popularly called 'Amúgbekún' which seems like a personal name. In the case of Òjòngbòdú, however, the personal name of the masque-dramaturg is Òjètúndé. Òjòngbòdú, which seems like the professional name of the troupe, is also the name of the settlement where Òjètúndé lived as the following 'oriki' indicates:

"Ngó re 'gbó,
 Ngó lẹ m'òbo,
 Ngó r'òdán,
 Ngó lẹ m'awèrè.
 Ngó r'Òjòngbòdú,
 Ngó rẹ é m'Òjètúndé,
 Ọba níńú Lábala."

I'll go to the forest,
 To know the monkey,
 I'll go to the grassland,
 To know the ape.
 I'll go to Òjòngbòdú
 To admire Òjètúndé,
 King of the Histriones.

18. See above, p. 168.

Lòmònikùn is the professional name of another troupe. It is said that the masque-dramaturg was the originator of the Iyáwó Masque. From an analysis of the name 'Lòmònikùn', one gets the idea that it is a sobriquet and that the personal name of the leader is lost. When Lòmònikùn started his show, he came on as an expectant-mother, but was delivered of the baby at the end of the show. There is a masque at Imala which is a good reminder of Lòmònikùn's. It is performed by the Lébe troupe but the present leader cannot now trace their origin to the great Lòmònikùn. The fame of the Lòmònikùn troupe is summarised in the following 'oríkì':

Kiyéba is reputed for beauty in dance, mime and chant as the following 'oríkì'

Oríkì Kiyéba:

"B'o pídán-pídán,

O ò lè wọ 'lẹ̀ òkítì;

Bí i ti Lòmònikùn kọ."

"You may perform spectacular feats,
But you cannot sink into the earth
Like Lòmònikun."

There are great professional troupes whose names have been perpetuated either by their own descendants or by those of other lineages who have adopted them. This class of names has been described as 'patronymic' because they are derived either through an ancestral line or through a beneficiary. The two earliest

professional names which come under this category are Lébe and Eiyébà. Both names are mentioned in *Où òtúrúpòn Méjì*¹⁹ as those of great masque-dramatists:

Oríkì Lébe: "Irú Lébe kò sí nínú eégún,

Kò sí òrìṣà tí yí ó ṣe bí Ògún l'agbèdè;

Àfi Ijímèrè tí npe ara rẹ̀ ní olóògùn."

"In masquerading, there is none like Lébe.
In smithing, no deity can rival Ogun.
Except in magic which Ijímèrè²⁰ claims
to be a master."

Eiyébà is reputed for beauty in dance, mime and chant as the following 'oríkì' indicates:

Oríkì Eiyébà:

"Òkéké!

E jé kí Eiyébà ó rẹ̀'dí.

Eiyébà!

Eiyé a r'èdí ké!

Eiyébà!

19. I am grateful to Mr. Wánde Abimbólá, formerly of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, for mentioning this to me as contained in his *Où* collections.

20. Ijímèrè was Olúgbèrè Àgan's other name. He was an adept in transformation.

Ẹiyẹ a gb'órí igi d'ókọ,

T'òjò t'òdà l'Ẹiyébà rìn." once flourished in

"òkéké!

Let Ẹiyẹba shake his waist in dance

Ẹiyẹba!

The Bird that dances with his waist,

Ẹiyẹba!

The Bird that copulates on the tree-top,

Ẹiyẹba strolls, be it wet or dry."

The professional names of these earliest troupes have become attractive to and been kept alive by some living professionals none of whom could trace any lineage link with the original troupes. It is believed that the troupes flourished before the fall of the metropolis of the Oyo empire and that subsequent dispersal was the factor responsible for the difficulty which now exists in tracing pedigrees.

III. Extant Professionals:

Great professional names like Aiyélabólá, Agbégijó and Ajóféébó are widespread. They are found to be names of troupes located in Ibadan, Oshogbo and Oyo, respectively, which operate as travelling theatres. These names are also found among the troupes in Egbado division, Otta and Abeokuta areas which operate "sedentary theatres."*

*This refers to performances by players who, although professionals, do not roam about as a custom. Sometimes they operate as 'resident theatres'.

to be the professional names of troupes that once flourished in Old Oyo. The location in the Egba and Egbado areas of troupes with these professional names, and the nature of their especial sedentary roles, are indications of their historical past.²¹

The origin of Ajóféébo as a professional name is obscure. The name is obviously a sobriquet and must have been assumed by a troupe that first performed before a party of whitemen. It has been suggested that it was conferred on the troupe that performed for the amusement of Captain Hugh Clapperton and his party in 1826 at Old Oyo. Other troupes have been found to go by the name. The leader of the present Ajóféébo troupe at Oyo, for instance, said that he adopted the name for inspiration. Another group at Abeokuta was given the appellation after a successful performance before the Resident at an Agricultural Show²² at Abeokuta during the early part of this century.

The following is a biography of the leaders of some of the extant professional troupes. The selection has been made to indicate their particularity, the extent of the development of

21. See above p. 185.

22. The Agricultural Show was designed by the Colonial administration for the exhibition of crops by an assemblage of farmers. But it was also a great 'durbar' where the British representative met the Obas and Chiefs of a particular province amidst great festivities.

23. Interviewed on October 18th, 1965.

professionalism and the growth of the theatre:

1. Aiyélabólá: (Ìbàdàn):-

(a) Genealogy: Ọ̀jẹ̀dìjì

Ọ̀jẹ̀làdẹ̀

Olójẹ̀dẹ̀

Ọ̀jẹ̀lékẹ̀.²³

(b) History: Aiyélabólá is the professional name of the troupe said to have been founded by the Olówẹ of Ọwẹ. During the Fulani war Ọwẹ was attacked and burnt down; but the Olówẹ managed to escape with his children. Ọ̀jẹ̀dìjì whose former name was Omídìjì, was the son of the daughter of the Olówẹ. It was this woman who inspired her son to become an 'Ọ̀jẹ̀', histrione. At Inisha, near Ikirun where they lived, Omídìjì was started off by his mother, changed his name to Ọ̀jẹ̀dìjì and assumed 'Aiyélabólá' as the professional name of his troupe. When he died, his mantle fell on his twin son, Ọ̀jẹ̀làdẹ̀. It was through Ọ̀jẹ̀làdẹ̀ that the troupe became the most famous in the area.

It was while entertaining the Olókukù of Ọ̀kukù, near Ikirun, one day, that Ọ̀jẹ̀làdẹ̀ caught the attention of Àjàyí Ọ̀gbóríẹ̀fọ̀n, the Balogun of Ibadan, who was at that time staying with the Olókukù to prosecute the war against the Ijesha-Ekiti - Ilorin

23. My informant is Alagbà Ọ̀jẹ̀lékẹ̀ who is the present leader of the troupe. He is about 90 years old and remembers his grandfather very well. Interviewed on October 18th, 1965.

24. See above, p. 136.

alliance at the embarkment of the òtìn.²⁴ Àjàyí Ògbóríefòṅ was, however, more interested in finding a quick end to the war than being enchanted by Òjélàdé's divertissement. So the Balogun asked him for assistance to win the war and promised to reward him with a high office in Ibadan after the war was over in their favour.

It is said that Òjélàdé went to the war front disguised (costumed) as the Whiteman with a dane-gun in hand. This stratagem worked; the enemies fled before him as they could not fight the ghost of a whiteman! The battle ended in favour of Ibadan in December 1878. Àjàyí Ògbóríefòṅ was highly pleased to meet Òjélàdé who arranged to return to the camp in a great masque-procession, wearing, at that time, the mask of the Warrior, bearing his ancestral image:

Bàtá: "Aiyélabólá, ọ kú!
 Ò gbon'ra jìgì, ọ kú!
 Ò bá lé gada gbamú.
 Ò f'ẹja Ìjèshà j'iyán".

"Aiyélabólá, hail!
 A great shaker hail!
 If you can chase a dagger, grab it.
 You who ate pounded-yam
 With the fish of the Ijeshà."

24. See above, p. 178.

He became a court-entertainer to the Ibadan war-lords until his death at Ikirun, and was buried at Balogun Erinle's House. After his death, his son Olójàdè was installed in his place. The new Balogun of Ibadan, Àjàyí Òṣúngbékún, who had apparently heard of the famous Òjélàdè, invited Olójàdè to join the Ibadan army at Kírìjì camp to entertain them with the Aiyélabólá troupe. At the end of this engagement, he was honoured as the best masque-dramaturg alive. When the war was over, the Balogun brought him and his family to live at Ibadan and elevated him to the rank of head of all the other professional masque-dramaturgs in Ibadan province and all areas under Ibadan's jurisdiction.

Olójàdè died at Ibadan and the troupe was taken over by Òjélékè²⁵ one of the three sons and daughters who trained under their father. Òjélékè who lives at Ìdì Aró, Lábó, Ibadan, has travelled widely with the Aiyélabólá troupe and has trained many actors some of whom now have their own travelling companies. Òjélékè is the current chairman of the Guild of Actors of the Alárínjò Theatre.

(c) The 'Ìbà': (The Salute)

"Mo rí 'bá, mo rí 'bà -

Ìbà bàbá mi,

Ìbà Òjélàdè.

25. See plate, No. 80.



No. 80:

Ọjélékè Aiyélabólá: He conducts the Abiyamo [Nursing Mother] mask during the performance held in the Gymnasium, University of Ibadan, August 1965.

Ọmọ sù s'ágò èhìn ògùn.

Ọjẹ Àṣọlá, the leaden barrel with his left

Àṣọlá a m'ékù wu 'nìà dá.

Ómú aré ikú wu'mọ ẹ.

Ọjẹ tí n'ja'gun kò wọ pọ.

À fi Ọjẹ-là-nà-dé.

Ó f'òtún nyin bọn idẹ,

Ó f'òsì nyin ti bàbà.

(d) Repertoire

T'òtún t'òsì ni Àṣọlá fi nri àgbà ọjẹ.

Baba Ọyáwálé,

Ọmọ Olú ré-ke-ré-ke.

Ó fi àij'oyè yọ kọbì Ọgbẹ.

Eni Àjayì ẹ n'íka ló mọ.

Ire ni Odéfunso ẹ fún mi."

"Behold my pledge,* I submit my pledge -

Pledge to my father, Ọjẹlade.

Ọjẹlade,

Offspring of the one who wore the big robe

with its back filled with medicines.

Àṣọlá, the histrione.

Àṣọlá who uses his costume in a way that

makes people want to build one.

He makes ghost-mummy the

attraction of all children.

There are not many histriones who are also soldiers

except Ọjẹ-la-na-de.

He used his right hand to wield the brass gun.

He used his left to wield the copper one.

25. This is a reference to Ọjẹlẹ, the first costumed-player.

*It is customary for the masque-dramaturg to acknowledge the source of his inspiration. He addresses his 'father' in a ritual act wherein he submits himself as a pledge.

invocation: He wielded the leaden barrel with his left
and right.

song: Father of Oyéwálé,
Offspring of the smart Olú.²⁶
Without being a chieftain,
He had a 'kòbì' (portico) at Ogbè.
Only people who suffered under Àjàyí²⁷
can recount it.
Oḍéfúnṣò did me proud".

(d) Repertoire: The Aiyélabólá troupe is reputed to have introduced puppetry into their show. These are like stiff rod-puppets, manipulated manually by someone in concealment, so that they emerge ~~at~~ a great height where they are made to dance. The puppets are carved figures, usually male and female, and are called 'Erugàlè' or 'Ajólókèlòkè' (One who dances in the air). A typical scene is that of love-making or seduction. The carved figure of a man emerges. He is longing for a mistress. Suddenly the female puppet (mistress) emerges and a long and tedious conversation ensues. They fall into romance and sex; then there is a kind of misunderstanding between them which results into knocking each other about. The mistress, apparently unable to stand it any more, disappears. Before the puppets emerge the Bàtá strikes

II. The Puppets (Aḍitọrọ)

26. This is a reference to Olúgbèrẹ, the first costumed-player.

27. Àjàyí Oṣúngbékún, the Balogun of Ibadan during the Kírìjì War (1879-1893). See above, pp 198-200.

29. See plate, No. 32.

invocation chant and there is a chorus of:

Song: "Kó òdè o (2ce.)
Erugàlè kó òdè o."

"Let him (puppet) emerge (2ce.)
Let Erugàlè emerge."

When the puppets emerge the Chorus then sing:

Song: "Ó dé!
Ajólókèlokè dé,
Erugàlè, ijó dé."

"He has arrived.
He that dances in the air has arrived,
Erugàlè, it's time to dance."

The puppet-show is now very popular with the troupes, especially those located in Ibadan-Oshun areas.²⁸ It is usually shown as a form of 'interlude'.

The following are popular masques found among others in the repertory:

- I. The Gàmbarí (male and female scenes)
- II. The Panságà (Adulteress)
- III. The Boa and the Tortoise²⁹

28. See plates, Nos. 81 & 81^a

29. See plate, No. 82.



No. 81: Puppet Theatre: Aiyélabólá, Gymnasium, University of Ibadan, 196



No. 81^a: Puppet Theatre: Àjàngilá, Courtyard, Institute of African Studies,
University of Ibadan, 1967.



No. 82: The Tortoise and the Boa: (Aiyélabólá, Ibadan).

- IV. The Hunter (Erinlè, a deity)
 V. The Cattle Fulani and his Cow
 VI. The Whiteman and Dìdirìn (Moron).
 VII. Şàngó, the Miracle Worker.³⁰

2. Àjàngílá: (Írágberí):-

- (a) Genealogy:- Arídegbájú
 Àjàlá
 òjéyemí
 òduólá.³¹

(b) History: Arídegbájú, a native of Pása, was a Bata-drummer who played for the Agbégijó troupe led by Tijúku Àjàngílá,³² towards the end of the nineteenth century. Later, he decided to be a professional actor and trained under Tijúku Àjàngílá. He adopted his master's cognomen for his troupe when he became a professional.

During the Kírìjì War (1879-1893), Arídegbájú became famous for his feat in reviving tired bodies and downcast minds by

30. See plate, No. 39^a

31. Alàgbà Òduólá Àjàngílá, the present manager of the troupe was my informant, 2/8/67. He lives at Írágberí-Ede and is aged about 60. I am also grateful to Foyèké Àyòkà, his sister and Chorus Leader of the troupe for her very useful contributions. See plates, Nos. 83, 84 & 85.

32. See below, p. 347.



No. 83: Òkú-Òró Masque: [Raising the Dead] - A historical enactment.
(Ajàngilá, Ibadan).



No. 84: The Ajàngilá Company - (including Actors, the Chorus and the Orchestra).



No. 85: Ajàngilá: The Family Picture of the late Òjéyemí Àjàngilá, 1956.

entertaining them. By the time the Ibadan camp moved back to Ikirun on the intervention of the British, Arídegbájú had died and his mantle had fallen on his son, Àjàlá. Àjàyí Òsúngbékún, who was installed the Balogun of Ibadan in 1885, invited Àjàlá to bring his troupe to entertain the Ibadan war-lords in their camps at the battle ground at Kíríjì. After the Kíríjì peace settlement, Àjàlá was invited to perform in Ibadan where he became the closest rival of the Aiyélabólá troupe, already based in Ibadan. He did not choose to live in Ibadan but travelled with his troupe around making Írágberí, a village near Èdè, his permanent home. When Fájímí became the Baálè of Ibadan in 1897, he was so impressed by Àjàlá's performances that he invited him to live permanently in Ibadan. Àjàlá then moved to live at Òke Fòkò and the two became great friends.

At the death of Fájímí, in 1902, Àjàlá was so saddened that he decided to die with his friend. Although he was prevented from doing so, he died soon afterwards. The management of the troupe then became the responsibility of Òjéyemí, his son. The performances of Òjéyemí enhanced the status of the troupe to the extent that he was honoured with the title of Baálè Eléégún by Šítù when he was Baálè of Ibadan, (1914-1925). The enchanting personality of Fóyèké Àyòkà, the Chorus Leader of the troupe, was largely

responsible for the popularity of the Àjàngìlá. Invitations came to them from far and near, by people who wanted to hear Fóyèké, the gem of the troupe, sing and chant. With Òdùolá, her elder brother, the troupe waxed strong until Ojéyemí Àjàngìlá died on February 2, 1962 at the age of 82 years. Fóyèké has since become a professional bard in her own right, but occasionally joined Òdùolá, the present manager of the troupe, when there was any important engagement.

Àjàngìlá is believed to have produced more actors than any other living masque-dramaturg. At Ìlú Oràngún, one of Àjàlá's apprentices who had set up his own repertory there as Olúfálé, performed without the usual pledge to the masque-dramaturg from whom he had received his training and inspiration. Àjàlá was in town and went to see the performance, and was greatly shocked by the performer's show of disrespect. He contained himself until the actor was staging the Masque of the Boa and then he charmed him. The actor fainted inside the mask and could not finish the act; the crowd dispersed in panic and Àjàlá ordered that the actor be carried to a nearby bush: "Olúfálé d'erè, ó b'erè ló!" (Olúfálé played the Boa and passed away with the Boa) was the popular outcry. When the few people who had carried the actor into the bush got there, Àjàlá set about and restored the actor to life. He was shocked to find that the victim was one of his trained actors.

The matter was settled but the actor was made to pay a ransom because it was regarded as an unpardonable act if any actor omitted the usual 'ìjúbà'.

The following professional actors had at one time or other trained under the Àjàngílá: Àlàbí of Ìbòkún, Ìṣòlá Òpó of Èjìgbò, Àlàbí of Ìrèé, Atikékeé of Kútà, Lanlòyè of Telemù, Laminá of Ìjèbú, Òṣóbúkúnṣà of Ìrágbìjì, Adéefè of Èdè and others. Some of these people had no egúngún lineage connections and had trained because of interest in a theatrical career; some like Qyádojà of Ìkirè, on the other hand, came to improve their skill in the art because they wanted to resume a lineage tradition which had fallen into abeyance. A number of them had trained when they were old enough to manage their own affairs and so did not spend the usual long term of apprenticeship. Àjàlá organised group meetings, sometimes monthly, at which all his former apprentices met, shared ideas and discussed generally. This meeting was called 'otí òrun', (the heavenly wine). It gave them an opportunity to bind themselves together in one communion.

(c) The 'Ìbà' or Salute:

"Mo rí' bá, Mo rí' bà;

Emi ó má rí' bà babaà mi

Àjàngílá, baálè arèkú eléégún,

Ọba l'órí eleégún tí nǐdán kiri.

Ọjẹ tí m̀bẹ l'ódò M̀jẹ.

Afínjú ọjẹ tí ndún kòkò l'órí

Eleégún Onídán.

Pè'lú jọ má l'ótí;

A k'ótí ka'lẹ má s'òwè,

Àjàngílá, Já'gi-lé-gbó-s'ògùn,

Ọmọ ab'élépo pón.

Ọpó àjẹjẹ ará Iresà,

Àkókó, m̀dẹ Iresà.

Àjàngílá, a r'Éjì Ogbè òmú."

"Behold my pledge, I give my pledge,
I will always give my pledge to my father
Àjàngílá the governor of all costumed-players,
King of all masked 'strolling-players'.
The histrione who exists in the M̀jẹ River,
The copper histrione whose fame is a threat
to other masque-players.

He brings the community round (to entertain)
without having to offer them wine.

He offers wine without recompensing for
assistance rendered him.³³

33. There is a pun on the word 'ótí' (wine). The allusion, in fact, is on 'entertainment'. It refers to the performer whose popularity brings the crowd round for entertainment in much the same way as people come round for entertainment (drinks) usually given by the nobility after the people had done him the 'òwè' (communal service). On the other hand, Àjàngílá to show his nobility, provide wine for the entertainment of people without obeying this custom.

34. A lineage totem.

along, with the Ajàngilá, who brings down the tree to make medicine,
 invocation: One whose complexion is like the oil.
 Actor: The Post,³⁴ the mainstay of the people of Iresà
 The Akoko (Bird), prince of Iresà.
 Ajàngilá, who finds Eji Ogbe (the Oracle) for support.

(d) Repertoire: Òkú Òró (The Dead that stands) is a masque which is unique to the Ajàngilá troupe. It is a dramatic enactment of a historical episode said to have taken place during the Kiriiji War. Arídegbájú, founder of the troupe, was invited by the Ibadan war-lords to entertain them. He had bragged that his entertainment was potent enough to revive the soul of the dead. He was asked to show what he meant. He asked for a dead soldier and when he was brought, he started dancing round the corpse. At a certain stage he whipped the body of the dead three times with his horse-tail. Then suddenly, the dead soldier revived to the surprise of all the spectators. In their amazement the war-lords asked Arídegbájú to wait on them as their chief entertainer.

Ajálá, son of Arídegbájú first performed the Òkú Òró masque before Captain Bower at Oyo when he travelled there to entertain the Resident. It was an enactment of the episode at the battle-front: One actor lies dead on the ground, his feet tied with a rope and his body covered with a white cloth. A second actor comes

34. A lineage totem.

along, with the horse-tail to whip the dead.³⁶ He chants an invocation:

Actor: "Olúkòlò o o ò!

VII. O dá mi lóhùn o jáde.

VIII. O se bẹ́ fún Olúgbón,

IX. O se bẹ́ f'Arèsà.

Jáde ko má jẹ k'ójú ó tìmí.

Olúkòlò o o ò!"

(a) Genealogy:

"You Olúkòlò!
Answer me and come out.
You did this to the Olúgbón,
You did same to the Arèsà.
Come out and save me from shame.
You Olúkòlò!"

Then he whips the dead body once, twice and at the third time, the dead body stands up and strides off, (his fetters having loosened!). He shows himself to the spectators that he has risen from the dead³⁵ and collect gifts.

Other masques found in the repertory include the following:

36. See I. Àpadà (Dance with the costume).

37. See II. The Leopard and the Cock.

38. See III. The Cattle Fulani and the Cow

39. Alágbà Dájyáwá Àdròbúrú was my informant. He is the present manager of the group. He is about 65 years old. See Plate

35. See plate, No. 83.

(I am grateful to Ogbani O. Ojajube, Institute of African Studies, University of Ife, for his reference). Interviewed on April 13, 1958.

- IV. The Gambari and his Concubine.³⁶
 V. The White missionary.
 VI. The Woman with Lice.
 VII. Òṣòmàló and the Medicineman.³⁷
 VIII. The Bride.³⁸
 IX. Ṣàngó, the Fire-eater.

3. Akéréburú: (Inishà):-

- (a) Genealogy:- Ògúnṣínà
 Babárinde
 Ògúntúnjí
 Òjéyemí³⁹

(b) History:- Ògúnṣínà's mother was the one who had shown admiration for great masque-dramaturgs. She resolved that one day her son would follow the profession and become great. When Ògúnṣínà grew up, she made him the 'bàtà' (shoes) a symbol of masque-dramaturgy. Ògúnṣínà was her only son and she having experienced the

36. See plate, No. 57^a

37. See plate, No. 55^a

38. See plate, No. 69^b

39. Alàgbà Òjéyemí Akéréburú was my informant. He is the present manager of the troupe. He is about 65 years old. See Plate, No. 86.

(I am grateful to Ògbéni O. Olájubá, Institute of African Studies, University of Ife, for his reference). Interviewed on April 13, 1968.



No. 86: Ọjeyemi Akéréburú: Dressing-up for a show. (Inisha, June 15, 1968).

havoc of an àbíkú⁴⁰ for many years, thought that by handing her only son over to egúngún he would not die again. Ògúnsínà became an actor and was Òjélàdé's (Aiyélabólá) contemporary. They lived very close to each other at Inísha and acted together before Olójàdè who succeeded to the leadership of the Aiyélabólá troupe moved away to live in Ibadan at the end of the Kírìjì War. When Ògúnsínà died his son Babárìndé took over the troupe. When he too died, the troupe was managed by Ògúntúnjì, father of the present manager, Òjéyemí.

Òjéyemí is a very energetic and enterprising masque-dramaturg. Under him the troupe has not only improved but has been acknowledged as the best among those in existence. In 1965, he travelled to Ghana with his troupe (a company of thirteen including the Bata-orchestra). They held many successful performances in town-halls, school-rooms and open-spaces. They made Kumasi, capital of Ashanti, their headquarters and toured most of the surrounding towns and villages.⁴¹ The tour lasted over three months before they returned to Nigeria.

(c) The 'Ìbà' or Salute:-

"Mo rí 'bá, mo rí 'bà;

40. An 'àbíkú' is the child who is born again several times after each death. He is therefore labelled 'one born to die'.

41. See copy of Poster: plate, No. 87.

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Mo rí'ba bàbá mi, Àdígún.

Omoran⁴² Fájóbi, mo rí'ba bàbá mi.

Labalábá se bi ọkùnrin wò'lú.

Ọkọ Àtòdòrò.

Ọ kọ-dí-sílẹ-e-ẹlẹgàn jó gbùè-gbùè.

Ap'agbo-jo má bun ẹnìkan,

Af'èhìnti òkè má yè.

Omoran Babárìndé,

Mo júbà bàbá mi.

Omọ Àkàndé,

À bá pè rán ní'sé;

Babárìndé bàbá mi,

Tí ngb'órí ẹsin,

Ó nran ako, ó nran abo.

Ọguntúnjì Àkàno,

Mo wá júbà l'ówó re,

Ki ntó má a b'éré lọ.

Mo wá r'íba, mo rí'ba 'yè mi,

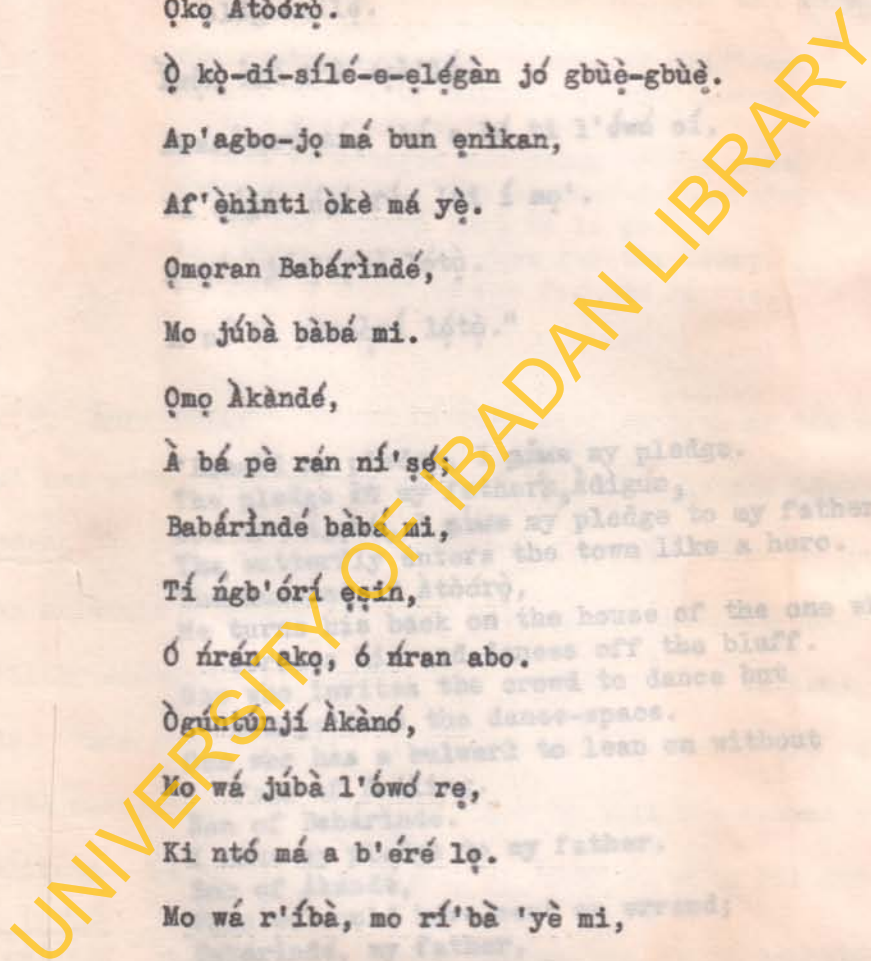
Ki ntó má a b'éré má a lọ.

Omọ Ọdẹwálé, omọ Amúníkò.

Ẹ jẹ k'ẹsin baba kò,

K'Ọláníhún má a r'íbi jòkó.

Ọtóní amọ l'ése bí ẹga.



42. Omoran means 'Omọ'. It is a poetical device to make up for rhythm during chanting.

Emi Akéréburú ọmọ Jálugun.

Ijó inú èkú, baba Ọjédìran.

Àkúkú didì ọjẹ tí nǝ bi

alágbàsílẹ̀.

Ìwòn ìlú l'à nǝ'lú,

Akéréburú ní, 'bí a bá ti l'ówó sí,

Ni eégún nǝ fún 'ni í mọ'.

A ní 'jó Ọlọjà lótò.

A ní ti sànmòrí lótò."

"Behold my pledge, I give my pledge.

The pledge is my father's, Adigun,

Son of Fájóbí. I give my pledge to my father.

The butterfly enters the town like a hero.

The husband of Atóórò,

He turns his back on the house of the one who
derides him and dances off the bluff.

One who invites the crowd to dance but

monopolises the dance-space.

One who has a bulwark to lean on without
fear of failing.

Son of Babárinde.

I make my pledge to my father.

Son of Àkandé,

Whom we would have sent on errand;

Babárinde, my father,

Who stays on horse-back,

And gives orders to the male and the female.

Ọgúntúnjí Àkandé,

I now come to give you my pledge

Before I begin my performance.

I, then, behold a pledge, my mother's pledge.

Before I go on with my performance.

Daughter of Ọdẹwálẹ, daughter of Amúnukò,
 Let father's horse give way,
 So that Ọláníhún can have a place to sit.
 Neat, with legs as clean as a swallow's.

I, Akéréburú, offspring of the one who throws
 his weight in battle;
 The costumed-dancer, father of Ọjẹdiran.
 Àkúkú, the plump histrione, who demands
 his fee before the show.
 A town is managed according to its size.
 Akéréburú says, 'the masquerade performs
 to the extent that he is paid'.
 We have a separate show for the Court.
 We have a separate one for the people."⁴³

(d) Repertoire:- Since he took over control of the repertory Ọjẹyemí has added many new masques one of which is the Gàmbàrí Husbandman.⁴⁴ The 'Gàmbàrí' (Namberri) is never known to be one who can maintain a decent living. Most of the masques portray him as a filthy debauched ignoramus, who is only fit to be sent on errands. This one, however, is a hard-working farmer who has travelled down south from Kano in order to till the ground and make a livelihood. He is well dressed. He comes on with his hoe and

43. Listing the genealogy in the 'salute' is an interesting development in Akéréburú's 'Opening Glee'. When he opens his show he gives his 'pledge' first to Ọgúnṣinà, the founder of the troupe and then proceeds to 'salute' Babárinde, then Ọgúntúnjí, followed by his mother who had inspired him, before finally announcing himself to the spectators.

44. See plate, No. 88.



No. 88: The Husbandman from Kano. (Akéréburú, Inisha).

Gànbàrí: Ó l'áun ó a'ogé (2ce.)

begins a song, showing himself to his crowd:

Gànbàrí: Ọlọkọ tuntun, (2ce.)

Gànbàrí ti Kánò dé,

Ọlọkọ tuntun.

She says she wants to be fashionable (2ce.)

Owner of a new hoe, (2ce.)

The Kamberri has arrived from Kano,

Owner of the new hoe.

Yet she wants to be fashionable.

Chorus: (Repeats the song)

He goes round singing until he completes the 'circle', then he moves to the centre to begin to till the ground. But the Bata

then begins to taunt him with the following abuse:

Bátá: Àgbè, s'ènu gbáko.

Àgbè: Àgbè!

Gànbàrí: Ówó ló n'áun ó a'ogé.

Ab'ènu gbáko-gbáko.

Chorus: Ówó!

Farmer, you've a crooked mouth.

Farmer! Farmer!

Your mouth is awfully crooked.

Chorus: Ówó!

The Farmer, however, disregards the taunt and busies himself with

hoeing and, later, harvesting. Then a girl (another Gambari),

comes along. She is ugly and scruffy. She is invited to carry

off the harvested crops. She is reluctant, at first, and the

Farmer taunts her:

Gàmbàrí: Ó l'óun ó s'oge (2ce.)

Omo l'óun ó s'oge;

Kò sí tòbí, kò sí yèrì;

Ó l'óun ó s'oge.

Chorus: Money!

She says she wants to be fashionable; (2ce.)

Gàmbàrí: The girl says she wants to be fashionable;

She has no girále,

Chorus: She has no skirt;

Yet she wants to be fashionable.

The girl makes up her mind and carries off the crops to the market.

She soon returns, well dressed, showing off a new outfit. The

Farmer, showing his admiration of the girl, now sings:

Gàmbàrí: È wá w'ohun owó se !

Chorus: Owó!

Gàmbàrí: Owó l'a ri níbí'mọ .

Chorus: Owó!

Gàmbàrí: Owó l'a fi nkólé .

Chorus: Owó!

Gàmbàrí: Owó ló nso'ni d'àgbà,

Owó ló ns'èwe d'àgbà.

Chorus: Ìbòsí owó ò!

Owó ò!!!

4. Alafale (Ikira):-

Gàmbàrí: See what money can afford!

Chorus: Money!

Gàmbàrí: With money we can afford to rear children.

Chorus: Money!

Gàmbàrí: With money we can raise a house.

Chorus: Money!

Gàmbàrí: Money makes an elder of you
Money makes the youth an elder.

Chorus: Holler every one, Money!

Money!!!

The Farmer and the Girl now dance round as husband and wife and

exit. Other masques include the following:

I. The Ìgùnùkó (Ndagbo Guya).⁴⁵

II. The Woman and the Bastard.

III. The Leopard and the Cock.

IV. The Boa-Constrictor.

V. Şàngó, the Trouble-shooter.

VI. The Prostitute.

VII. Husband and Wife.

following to open his show:

45. See plate, No. 60. Interviewed on August 26th, 1957.

4. Olufale: (Ikire):-

(a) History:- This theatre-group migrated from Oyo during the reign of Alafin Adeyemi Alowolodu in the 1890s and has been domiciled in Ikire ever since. When Adekanbi left Oyo he could not move with his troupe because the Alafin was not pleased with the decision; so he left alone. He stopped on the way and married the daughter of a Bata-drummer, who persuaded her family to migrate with her husband. They settled at Ikire and raised another troupe.

The present manager of the Olufale theatre company is Oyadoja Amao.⁴⁶ When he grew up, he found the costume-box of his grandfather Onisile Amoyodun, but his own father had not shown any interest in the profession; apparently, he had other interests, he was a good hunter and a successful weaver. Oyadoja later decided to train and he has succeeded in carrying on with the family profession. He did not need to seek the services of a Bata-drummer since he was related to one on his mother's side. Alabi Makinde has been handling the Orchestra of the troupe since he started.

He has made his own name as one of the great living masque-dramaturgs and is the current treasurer of the Actor's Guild.

One of the actors he trained is Jimo Ejongboro of Ikire, who left to found his own troupe about ten years ago. Oyadoja adopts the following to open his show:

46. See plate, No. 89. Interviewed on August 26th, 1967.



No. 89: Ọyádojà Àmàó' as Olúfàlé and his Chorus Leader. (Ìkírè, June 8, 1968)

(b) The 'Ìbà' (Salute):-

The Salute: "Bí ajá yíò bá la ohùn,
Yíó wo òkoro.

Bí àgbò yí ò bá la ohùn,

Yí o kàn sìsì.

Bí ọmọ tuntun b̀̀d̀jọ́ yíò bá la ohùn,

Baba r̀̀ẹ̀ níkọ́ ké sí.

Mo jí l'òní mo rí 'bà baba mi!

Ìbà l'ọwọ́ 'Lálùbí,

A s̀̀n r̀̀ẹ̀ r̀̀ẹ̀ re Òd̀. Apinni.

B̀̀d̀os̀̀n, ọ̀kọ́ Iwoye, ọ̀kọ́

Sab̀̀k̀nmi.

Ọ́ ná 'jà n'ẹ̀rú wá'lé.

Mo t̀̀n wá rí 'bà baba mi,

Awóḍolá, mo rí 'bà l'òḍò r̀̀ẹ̀,

Apónlọ́jú-k̀̀n-rí baba Morihun,

Elésé, ọmọ Wòyírà.

Ajíṣolá, ọmọ k̀̀l̀ẹ̀ ọgun.

Àl̀k̀ẹ̀ ọmọ r̀̀-ýí-r̀̀-ýí,

Ilé wá k̀̀n k̀̀-ẹ̀-ẹ̀.

Igbó dí gágá, ngó l̀̀ r̀̀ ẹ̀ d'òbọ́;

Igbó dí k̀̀ dí, ngó l̀̀ r̀̀ ẹ̀ d'ẹ̀bitì.

Emi ni Àm̀ò' Ọyáḍọ́jà,

The Salute: When a dog is about to raise its voice,

Àkóbí Oláṣṣé, ọmọ Oyáfúnmilólá

When a dog is about to raise its voice,

Àláké, ọmọ Fúúlàséde.

When the dog is about to raise

L'ójíjì ní mo r'óyún tí mo r'ómọ!

He first says to the owner's pledge:

A kì í fi owo du oyè ni Mòkọ

My dog has taken the owner's pledge:

Who like a dog goes to the

A kì í fi t'àgbà j'oyè ni Mòdẹ.

Indeed,

Eégún ni nwón fi n'j'oba ní ilé wa."

He goes

home with a dog.

Invocation: Olóde àgò o!

Address the owner's pledge.

Okíta àgò o!

You, the owner of Meritum.

Ènyin Olóde o!

Address the one who took care

of the dog.

È bùn wá l'óde o,

Aláṣṣé, one who bought

the dog.

K'áwa ó rí 'bí jó.

And the dog is to the brain.

The dog is to go and be a monkey.

Ó d'ọwọ́ ìrèlẹ̀,

Fast, thick or not,

I'll go.

Ó d'ọwọ́ ìtá,

I'll go.

Ó d'ọwọ́ Ọsanyìn,

Address the owner's pledge.

Ó d'ọwọ́ Ọgbojò tó l'Éégún.

One of the owner's pledges.

Nítorí Ọgèdèngbé, l'ó d'ọjẹ́ 'lẹ̀.

One of the owner's pledges.

Sọungbé ló ti kọ awo-ó se.

One of the owner's pledges.

Ìgbà tí a jí, l'a bá òketè gbóngbó,

It is when we are young,

Ni baba ní k'á má a b'eégún kiri.

When the father is the owner of the dog.

Invocation: You owner of space, give us space!

You rock, make way!

You owner of space, give us space!

The Salute: When a dog is about to raise its voice,
It makes a long steady look.
When a ram is about to raise its voice,
It stalks and shakes.
When the day-old child is about to raise
his voice,
He first calls on his father.

I awake today to behold my father's pledge!
My pledge is to you 'Lálùbí.
Who like a river flows to the
Àpínni Court.
Bédosùn, husband of Ìwòyè,
husband of Sabékúnmi.
He goes a shopping and returns
home with a slave.

I have come again to behold my father's pledge.
Awóḍḍá, my pledge is to you.
You, light-complexioned husband of Moríhun.
Elése, son of Wòyírà.
Ajíṣṣlá, son of the one who took care
in battle.

Àlàké, daughter of the one who bought
this and that
And the house became full to the brim.

Others: The bush is thick, I'll go and be a monkey.
Whether the bush is thick or not,
I'll go and set the traps.

I sa, Àmáḍ Qyáḍḍjà,
First-born of Qyáfunmilólá Àlàké,
daughter of Fuúlàṣedé.

Suddenly I saw the conception,
Suddenly I saw the child!

One doesn't have to bribe to be
made a chief at Mòkọ.

One doesn't have to be old before
one is made a chief at Mòḍè.

It is through the masquerade that one lays
claim to primacy in our lineage.

Invocation: You owner of space, make way!

You rock, make way!

You owner of space, give us space!

A space to put on our show.

We consign ourselves to Ìrèlè (a deity).

We consign ourselves to Ìtá (a deity)

We consign ourselves to Ọsànyìn, (a deity)

We consign ourselves to Ológbojò,
the owner of the Masquerade.

Because of Ọgèdèngbé,⁴⁷ he introduced
masque-dramaturgy.

He first learnt the secret at Soungbe.

When we grew up, then we saw the handy
costume-box,

And father said we should go round
with the masques.

All you who had done this and gone before us,
Come, and assist us as we perform.

(a) Répertoire: Apart from a new Horse and Cow masque which

he said he has devised, his 'répertoire' is not different from
the others.⁴⁸

5. Others: The following is an assortment of extant professional troupes which have been included in this study for various reasons. The list includes those of great leaders who have not descended from any of the great lineages of masque-dramaturgs but have gained their own reputation by dint of hard work after having served a period of apprenticeship; those who have assumed the professional names of the great troupes of the past, and others who go about in

47. This is another attributive name of Olúgbèrè Àgan.

48. See plates, Nos. 70, 74 & 75; 78.

their own personal attributes:

- (i) Agbégijó: (Oshogbo):⁴⁹ Agbégijó is the name of the troupe founded by Tijúkú Àjàngilá, a native of Ìrèè, near Oshogbo towards the end of the nineteenth century. As a contemporary of Olójèdè (Òjèlàdè Aiyélabólá's son) he struggled unsuccessfully to be installed the Baálè of all the existing troupes and recognised by Ibadan, a position which Òjèlàdè Aiyélabólá occupied after the 'Jálumi' battle.⁵⁰ When the Aiyélabólá troupe moved from Ìníshà to live permanently in Ibadan, Tijúkú also moved his Agbégijó troupe to Oshogbo where his protégés and their descendants still carry on with masque-dramaturgy. The main troupe is now being managed by Egúnfèmi.⁵¹ There are two other units in the town of Oshogbo and a few other smaller ones in Oshogbo division, but all are under one Baálè at Oshogbo.

49. This troupe has been well reported on by Ulli Beier. See "Agbegijo Masqueraders" Nigeria Magazine, No. 83, September 1964, pp. 191-199.

50. See above, p. 179.

51. See plate, No. 90.



No. 90: The Agbégijó Company, Oshogbo presently led by Egúnfèmi.
(Photo by kindness of Frank Speed).

- (ii) Lébe: (Oyo):- This troupe which had descended from a great past is now fading out of existence. Ọ̀jẹ̀lékẹ̀ Mámádé⁵² who has succeeded to the leadership of the troupe finds it extremely difficult to muster enough actors to form a company. He has resigned himself to farming and other petty jobs.

Lébe is the professional name of the troupe headed by the famous Ọ̀jẹ̀túndé who had himself trained under another Lébe at Okeiho in the nineteenth century. Adégbítẹ̀ Àfọ̀njá (Ọ̀jẹ̀lékẹ̀ Mámádé's grandfather) trained as a professional bard under Oníwídé, his father. When Àfọ̀njá later decided to become a masque-dramaturg, his father sent him to train under Ọ̀jẹ̀túndé's Lébe group. After training he adopted his master's professional name and became the leader of another Lébe troupe. This name has come down to be identified with the Àfọ̀njá family now living in the present Oyo. When Ọ̀jẹ̀lékẹ̀ opens his show he first addresses his pledge to Ọ̀jẹ̀túndé, the original owner of Lébe, as follows:

"Ìbà baba-babaà mi

51. Ọ̀jẹ̀túndé, ẹ̀lẹ̀gbẹ̀ ọ̀jìn-ǵìn-ni,

52. Ọ̀jẹ̀lékẹ̀ Mámádé who was my informant is about 50 years old. He now lives as a farmer near Jóbèlè, Oyo. He took me home to Oyo where he showed me his 'dressing-up box' safely tucked away in the ceiling of his mother's apartment. (I am grateful to Ọ̀gbéni Wánde Abímọ̀lá for his guidance, 20th August, 1965).

A bí'rìn gbèrè bí eni ègbé ndùn.

Ègbé kò dun Àwèdá,

Ègbé rè ni kò fẹ́ kí.

A-jáde-má-tán nínú ilé!

Baba Òjédòkun."

"The pledge of my father's father.⁵³

Òjètúndé, the one with the slender side,
Who strolls about as though he has
a wound in the side.

Àwèdá has no wound in his side,
Only he doesn't want to greet his companions.
He whose influence is felt in the family
even when he is not in the house."

- (iii) Ajóféebó: (Oyo):- Taiwò Àkànní Òjébísí⁵⁴ is in charge of this troupe of ten actors. He trained under one Òjédìran of Iròkò when he was about twelve years old and spent another twelve in training. It was his mother's wish that he should become a masque-dramatist. She it was, in fact, who taught him chanting and singing. When Bájídé's troupe came to per-

53. It is customary in Yoruba kinship classification to refer to a lineage-head of several generations back just as 'father's father'.

54. The leader of the Ajofeebo troupe was my informant. (I am grateful to Ògbéni Adébáyò Fálétí for his guidance, October 22nd, 1966).

form at Oyo, he became highly impressed, especially, by the way the actor was honoured by the British Resident before whom the performance was held. He vowed solemnly to create the same impression in the future. When he founded his own troupe he named it after Bájídé's, "Ajófóyìnbó-wòran-lènu-odi", (One who dances at the town-gate for the whiteman to see).

At seventy-eight, Òjébísí is still a success and is widely travelled. His 'repertoire' includes the Masque of Adédénde - the story of a madman who lived in Oyo many years ago. Other notable masques are: Return from Mecca, a skit on the Hajj and Islam; Ìbisatù, his own version of the Gàmbàrí and a sketch on Epilepsy.

(iv) Aiyélabólá: (female):-⁵⁵

This is a lineage-group that came originally from Olúko House in Iséyìn. The lineage migrated during the reign of Adeyemi I, Alafin of Oyo and first settled at Abeokuta before moving finally to Ìmálà, the present home. It was during the stay at Abeokuta that their theatrical interest was revived;

55. I am grateful to Ògbéni Ségún Adégbìjí who introduced me to his uncle, the present leader of the Aiyélabólá troupe and to the other troupes at Ìmálà. Interviewed on March 16th, 1967.

(7) because the ravages of war and disruptions within the lineage had not made it possible for anyone to continue with the profession, it was like making a fresh start when they settled at Abeokuta and trained with the Aiyelabola group there.

At Ìmálà, they found a flourishing theatre-group, the Lébe group, already settled; nevertheless, they have been responsible for the existence at Ìmálà of two other local troupes; the Ajófèèbó and the Akérésolá groups, having trained their leaders. Their successes have been due, largely, to the role which the 'women' (wives of the household) play as Chorus.⁵⁶ Female participation in their theatrical performances had been traced to Oláagbè, daughter of Tèllà who was a great Chorus Leader and the inspirer of the masques.

The masques include the classic Lomónikun masque - The Bride who conceives at the opening of show and is delivered of the baby at the end. Others are: the Àròní, the Ìdàhòmì, the Humpback, the Sanitary Inspector, the Tourist Whiteman, the Àtingà and such contemporary and political skits on Chief Awólòwò and the late Chief Akintólá.⁵⁷

58. I am grateful to Ogboni Adias Balogun of the R.B.C., for his assistance, January 1967.

56. See plate, No. 31. *Grandeur et Décadence du Culte de Iyaaí Osorogun* pp. 211. See p. 220, above.

57. See above, p. 261.

(v) Agbégijó Àjànkoroḍùgbè: (Òtta):-⁵⁸ Àjànkoroḍùgbè was a great warrior who had migrated with his troupe to live at Òtta after the end of the Yoruba Wars. There are at present three families of the Lábòó lineage with specialised interest in the theatre and have each set-up their own troupes: Lábòó /they/ Ìdiré, Lábòó Ìlawè and Lábòó Asasa. In the Lábòó Ìdiré group there are forty actors led by Làmidì Adélòwò, the manager of the troupe.

During the opening of their show, the ritualistic 'Ìjúbà' includes the solemn pledge to 'Ìyami Òṣoròngà'. Pierre Verger⁵⁹ has indicated that in the Ègùn-Àwòrì area of Yoruba, the 'Odù Òsá Méjì' reveals that the origin of the egúngún is connected with a woman called Odù. It was she who has decreed that:

"Kí nwón ó má a fi ìbà f'óbìrin,

Kí ilé aiyé le è tòrò;

Nítorí ogbón aiyé, t'obìrin ni."

"Let them give their pledge to the women,
So that there might be calm on earth;
Because the life's wisdom is the woman's."

58. I am grateful to Ògbéni Adísá Balógun of the N.B.C., for his guidance, January 1967.

59. Pierre Verger in "Grandeur et Décadence du Culte de Iyami Osoronga" op. cit. See p.220, above.

Besides, the role of women as Chorus is significant, especially, in the opening ceremony as is indicated in the 'Ìjúbà'. After the salute to Bàtá, Adélówò, Ifá and Ìyámi Ọ̀ṣòròngà has been made, in that order, the masque-dramaturg or the chief actor joins, in a form of 'versicle and responses', with the women chorus, as follows:

Female Chorus: "Ojú aiyé pé!(4 times)

È wá wo gbèdu àwa.

Ojú aiyé pé,

È wá wo eégún àwa.

Eégún àwa nínú Tápà,

Ó nínú 'Ijéshà.

Ojú aiyé pé!

Female Chorus: "The eyes of the world are set!(4 times)

Ita pé! our kettle-drum sound.

The eyes of the world are set.

Ará pé! see our masquerade.

È wá wo gbèdu àwa. They speak Ijéshà.

Ọ̀ṣ'èrè l'Ọ̀dìgbó."

Love and hear our kettle-drum sound.

Adélówò is a player,

Ọ̀ṣòròngà is a player,

Chief Actor: "Ibi ẹ́ rí, ẹ́ má a k'ígbe mi lọ!(2 times).

Chief Actor: Èmi Adélówò, ọ̀mọ Ọ̀sábí. you say!

Ibi ẹ́ rí o, ẹ́ kígbé mi lọ. (etc.)

Actors' Chorus: "The eyes of the world are set!

The outside space is filled!

Actors' Chorus: "Ojú aiyé pé!

Ìta pé!

Ará pé!

È wá wo gbèdu àwa.

Òjíkí, orúko

Ìyámi Òṣòròngà.

È mú aiyé,

È má mà mú wa.

È mú aiyé o,

È má mà mú wa.

È ní bá sè, l'áiyé mú,

Ò s'èrè l'Adélówò!"

Female Chorus: "The eyes of the world are set! (4 times)

Come and hear our kettle-drums sound.

The eyes of the world are set.

Come and see our masquerade.

Our masques speak Tápà, they speak Ijèṣhà.

The eyes of the world are set.

The square is filled,

Brethren are assembled,

Come and hear our kettle-drums sound.

Adélówò is a player,

Òdìgbó is a player."

Chief Actor: "Shout my name, wherever you may!

I, Adélówò, son of Šábí.

Shout my name, wherever you may."

Actors' Chorus: "The eyes of the world are set!

The outside space is filled!

Brethren are assembled!
 You've come to hear our kettle-drums sound.
 'Early homage', the name of
 Mother Ọsòròngà;
 You catcher of the world, do not catch us.
 You catcher of the world, please don't
 catch us.
 Whoever offends, the world catches.
 Adélòwò is only a player!"

- (vi) Eiyébà: (Ibadan):- Álímì Àkànjí⁶⁰ is a masque-dramaturg, aged about thirty eight, and lives at Ilé Olúbàdàn Kòbíowú, Ọrányàn, Ibadàn. He trained under Ọjélékè Aiyélabólá for five years and finished his apprenticeship two years ago. He does not belong to the lineage of masque-dramaturgs. It was his own wish to become one and when he mentioned this to a friend he was taken to the Aiyélabólá company where he trained. Because he was found worthy during training, his master Ọjélékè waived the normal 'apprenticeship fee' as an acknowledgment of his good services. He used to respond, occasionally, to the call of his master when the Aiyélabólá troupe had a big engagement and his participation was needed.

But his own troupe has become consolidated under the professional name, Eiyébà even though most people still preferred to call him Álímì Olókítì, the appellation he earned as a great acrobat during his days with the Aiyélabólá troupe.

60. Interviewed on October 7th, 1966.

He liked 'Eiyébà' as a professional name because the history of the theatre has described the first Eiyébà as the finest. It is his aspiration to achieve a similar fame.

He started his career with only two masques. He travelled widely performing 'solo' most of the time before he built up a reasonable 'repertoire' of masques. He had possessed his first two masks after serving the carver for six months because he did not have the money to purchase them. One mask he built into the Ìyàwó Masque and the other into the Gàmbàrí Masque. With these, he travelled to Lagos and returned with enough money to develop himself. He got married and built the Òrìsà-Oko Masque and then added the Erugàlè (Puppet Theatre). He now has a permanent lata-orchestra but started by hiring one.

- (vii) Ejòn'gboro (Ìkirè):⁶¹ Jímò Ejòn'gboro is an Apènà of the Òghóni Society in Ìkirè. He comes of a lineage of professional carvers and built his own reputation as a carver for over twenty-five years. Many masque-dramaturgs patronised him until about ten years ago when he decided to go into the acting career in addition to his regular profession. His connection with the egúngún was that his father once had an egúngún called

61. I am grateful to Ògbèni J.R.O. Òjó, Institute of African Studies, University of Ife for his reference. Interviewed on July 26th, 1968.

Olun'lago, an 'eégúnlá'. But since he had inspired many masque-dramatists by giving them ideas and helping them to create new masques, he wanted to have the thrill of donning a mask himself and so he went to learn the art of acting under Oyadoja, the leader of the Olufale troupe. He trained for only a few years as he was already old and knowledgeable at the time of his apprenticeship. He turned professional still bearing his former appellation, "Ejon'gboro"⁶²

Since becoming a professional masque-dramatist, he has been known in the area for inventiveness and craftsmanship. He has six regular actors and his three wives are his 'chorus'. Although he travels extensively with his troupe he has not abandoned his carving. When he begins his shows, however, he opens with a 'salute' to the Olojowon lineage (the ancestor of Yoruba carvers):

"Mo ri'ba, mo ri'ba baba mi.

Ìbà pèté ọwọ,

Ìbà pèté esè,

Ìbà àtélesè tí kò hu 'run.

Ìbà Làgbàí,

Ìbà Abógundé ọmọ agbégi-yági.

62. See plates, Nos. 91, 92, 93 & 94.



No. 91: Ejón'gboro: At work as a master Carver. (Photo by kindness of J.R.O. Ojo, University of Ife).



No. 92: Ejòń'gboro: As an Actor he displays the Abiyamọ (Nursing Mother) Mask. (Ìkirè, June 8, 1968).



No. 93: Ejón'gboro: The Chorus [Two of three wives]. The one with a ha
is the Chorus Leader.

Àrè, mo pa'gidà, mo so'gi d'ènià.

Gbígbe l'à ngbé, a kì í rù l'Ọwòn.

Ọmọ-ọlọmọ ní í f'orí ru'gi fún wá.

Làgbàyi, mo gbé, mo ru t'Ọḍni.

Làgbàyi, mo gbé, mo ru t'Ọòrè.

Bí mo gbé'nà, bí kò tà,

Bí mo gbé'nà, bí kò l'ówó-l'ówó;

Ni a bá wá òwò míràn ẹ,

L'a bá wá nd'aṣọ b'orí,

L'a fi npidán eleégún kiri."

"Ẹrú Ọlójé ti gbé'nà gb'egbèje,

Ìwọfà Ọjowòn ti gbé'nà gb'egbèfà,

Ọmọ bíbí inú Àrè Ọjé ni

ó gbé'nà gb'egbèédógún.

È ná pe Làgbàyi l'Àrè mọ.

È ní bá pe Làgbàyi l'Àrè yío f'eké na 'ra."

"I behold a pledge,

I behold my father's pledge.

The pledge of my open hand,

The pledge of my flat foot,

The pledge of the underfoot that grows no hairs.

The pledge of Làgbàyi,

The pledge of Abógundé, son of one who sculpts
and carves.

Àrè, I have changed wood into a human.

We only carve, we never carry them at Ọwòn.

Other people's children carry them for us.

MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS AND

Làgbàyi, I carved, I carried to the Oòni.⁶³
 Làgbàyi, I carved, I carried to the Oòrè.
 If I carved, if it did not sell,
 If I carved, if it did not fetch money,
 Then we sought for a new trade,
 Then we started entering the shroud,
 And became the travelling masquerade that act
 about."⁶⁴

"The slave of Olójà has carved and collected
 one thousand four-hundred cowries.
 The bondsman of Òjowon has carved and collected
 one thousand two-hundred cowries.

It was the real son of Àrè Òjé who carved and
 collected three thousand cowries.

Don't call Làgbàyi an Àrè [stranger] any more.
 Any one who calls Làgbàyi an Àrè will receive
 the thrash."

IV. Conclusion:- The location of the troupes of the Alárìnjó Theatre is widely distributed.⁶⁵ As an Oyo creation, it is significant that the concentration is in the Oyo-Ibadan-Oshun areas on the one hand and in the Egba-Egbado-Awori areas on the other hand. But historically both circuits have a direct link with the Old Oyo empire.

The names of the professional troupes are mainly attributive

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63. This is a departure from the tradition and the practice of his ancestors.
64. Ejàn'gboro here makes an apology for changing his profession and the cultic prerogatives of the lineage-guild of carvers.
65. See map, No. 2.

and are intended to have stimulating effect on the individual troupes. Similarity of names between one troupe and another may not necessarily be an indication of common origin. It may, in fact, be after the fashion of borrowing for the purpose of inspiration from a past master than the result of a formal christening.

The central importance of women, especially the mothers of the leaders of extant troupes, their contribution to the development of the theatre and growth in professionalism, cannot be overemphasized. This is indicated in the 'Ibà' (salute) of each of the troupes. The essence of this formal acknowledgement, which has become a permanent feature of performance, is an attribute of the Yoruba: "Bí a bá ẹ̀ 'ni l'òore, ọ̀pẹ́ l'á ń dá" (when kindness is bestowed on one, it is fitting to show one's gratitude).

The attraction of the profession to people other than those for whom it was a lineage career is an indication of the theatre's popularity in meeting the entertainment needs of the people and even more as a paying concern. It would have been possible to forecast ~~what~~ further developments the theatre ~~might~~ have manifested as a social institution but for the impact of western civilization which has not only been devastating its resources, but has also been providing its audience with other more ~~and~~ varied, sophisticated and and ted forms of entertainment.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Changing Society:

There is no more obvious cultural manifestation that reflects the society so fully and accurately as the theatre. In previous chapters the origin and historical growth of the African theatre were surveyed, but developments were related to the social background, the culture and the facts of her history. When the art of the theatre was examined, it was appreciated

PART SIX

The Theatre in the Modern Times

In the later period, the society was faced with certain disruptive external forces which had challenged traditional life and thought, the theatre had remained almost unchanged, except for the modifications devised to take account of some temporary events. But the factors of change in the society had the theatre was bound up within.

has spread rapidly far beyond the Fulani emirate of Futa, creating new ideas and terms hostile to the ancient. Focusing on the concepts of the arts and introducing new cultural patterns into the society by its own form of education. Even more powerful has been the spread of Christian education through Churches and Mission Schools, underlining belief in angels, rocks and

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Changing Society:

There is hardly any other cultural manifestation that reflects the society in which it appears so fully and accurately as the theatre. When in the preceding chapters the origin and historical growth of the Alárinjò Theatre were surveyed, both developments were related to the Yoruba societal background, the culture and the facts of her history. When the art of the theatre was examined, it was appreciated within the framework of the aesthetics and sensibilities of the people. When, at a later period, the society was faced with portents of change by certain disruptive external forces which had penetrated and challenged traditional life and thought, the theatre preserved its own traditions almost unchanged, except for the masques which were devised to take account of contemporary events. This looked like a respite. But the factors of change in Yoruba society ran apace and the theatre was bound up within.

Islam has spread rapidly far beyond the Fulani emirate of Ilorin creating new ideas and tastes hostile to the egúngún, focusing on new concepts of the arts and introducing new cultural patterns into the society by its own form of education. Even more powerful has been the spread of Christian education through Churches and Mission Schools, undermining belief in egúngún, masks and

transmogrification; introducing new forms of entertainment based on European models. With the extension of colonial rule and the expansion of trade in the interior, there have been the spread of external influences throughout the Yoruba and the subsequent increase in the number of the westernised Yoruba. With all this has come a shift in emphasis from the traditional to the 'modern'.

I. Cultural Nationalism:-

Cultural nationalism was built as a revolt against 'imperialism' in Church and State as well as against the colonial onslaught on the traditional culture which had been going on in Yorubaland since the middle of the nineteenth century.¹ By the end of the same century there had emerged a strong fervour for the evangelization of the Yoruba people through a Christian enlightenment programme that was basically Yoruba. This revivalist group was ready "to sweep the Yoruba within the walls of the church by almost any means possible; working through chiefs, secret societies, the Yoruba language and African music and drumming"². The liberal ideas of such cultural nationalists as the Reverend James Johnson, Edward Blyden, Dr. Mojola Agbebi and others became accelerated.³

1. J.B. Webster, "The African Churches", Nigeria Magazine, No. 97, December 1963, p. 266.

2. ibid., p. 256.

3. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact, op. cit., pp. 241-280.

4. Lynn Leonard, The Growth of Entertainments of Non-African Origin in Lagos: 1866-1928, (M.A. Thesis, Ibadan, 1967) pp. 120-147.

The 'back to the native culture' movement produced a new spirit in the churches which led to the development of secessionist churches - the African Churches. Apart from the introduction of traditional music, singing and dancing into church services, the most significant development was the "native dramas".⁴ It happened that the inspiration for these "native dramas" came from Abeokuta where similar experiments were found to be highly successful.

The rise of political nationalism in the 1930s gave not only a new edge to cultural nationalism but an added impetus which revived what some critics had described as misplaced enthusiasm of the 1890s. During this period the Ègbóṣé family, traced to Abeokuta, frequently presented their masques on Campos Square in Lagos. Also, the provincial travelling theatres of Aiyélabólá (Ibadan) and Àjàngílá (Iragberí and Ibadan) reached Lagos. They were known to have performed at the invitation of people like D.A. Qbasa, Andrew Thomas, Doherty and others and became very popular with the masses. Thereupon, it became a regular practice for the troupes to include Lagos in their itinerary. As part of his coronation festivities, Adele II, the Oba of Lagos, after the custom of his ancestor Adele I of Lagos, invited the Aiyélabólá troupe from Ibadan to entertain his guests. About the same time, an enthusiastic Nigerian made an appeal in the press for some African initiative

4. Lynn Leonard, The Growth of Entertainments of Non-African Origin in Lagos: 1866-1920, (M.A. Thesis, Ibadan, 1967) pp. 126-141.

to back a 'revue-troupe'.⁵

II. The Old and the New:-

The development of new theatrical forms of entertainment which began in Abeokuta in the 1860s had by the 1880s reached Ibadan and Lagos. These were mainly concerts and orchestral music with recitations and dramatizations thrown in. When the Christian missionaries recognised the importance of providing for the artistic impulse of the people, they extended their entertainments in order to appeal to non-English and non-Christian audiences. A significant development was the reliance on local resources for what came to be called the 'school concert'.

It seemed that the aim of these entertainments was more than a religious one. Having realised that in order to promote any religious fervour among the people ecstasy has to play a vital role, the missionaries and their new 'élite' class started using these entertainments to provide an integrating influence on the people through diversion. With the choice of songs and recitations based on traditional elements, with a few Yoruba farces and satirical sketches⁶ forming the core of the 'school concert', we see the

5. M.C. Echeruo, "Concert and Theatre in Late 19th Century Lagos", Nigeria Magazine, No. 74, September 1962, p. 74.

6. Lagos Observer, August 14, 1884.

beginning of entertainments based on or inspired by the style and form of the traditional theatrical art. For instance, a 'school concert' staged in Lagos by the Wesleyan High School Entertainment Society in October 1882, included sketches on the Ògbóni Court and the Egba-Dahomey War, (about 1844-1860).⁷ These entertainments were said to have been inspired by refugees from Abeokuta.⁸ Both the Aiyélabólá and the Ajófèèbó troupes at Abeokuta are known to have sketched the masques of the Ògbóni and the Jagun-jagun Ìdàhòmì in the 1850s to reflect the concern of the people at that time on their influence.⁹

The Anglican Mission in Lagos had some misgivings about the propriety of the traditional elements that were dominating the 'school concert'. It is said, however, that the Catholic Mission, on the other hand, had encouraged the development and that it had also exploited the medium to attract Protestant converts to the Catholic faith.¹⁰ It is also significant that at the same period

7. Lagos Observer, October 16, 1882.
8. The famous 'Ìfólé' (Housebreaking) of 1867 resulted in the migration of Egba refugees to Lagos. They were resettled in the 'Glover Layout' at Ebute Metta in 1868 (See: Ajayi, Christian Missions, 1965, pp. 201-204; also Akin Mabogunje, "Lagos - Nigeria's Melting Pot", Nigeria Magazine, No. 69, August 1961, p. 153).
9. These masques are still popular with the local troupes and have been found in the repertoire of other troupes in the Oyo-Ibadan-Oshun areas with certain improvisational modifications.
10. Echeruo, op. cit., p. 68.

a form of the traditional masques had appeared in Lagos through syncretic groups from Brazil and Cuba, in a Catholic disguise.

The Brazilian emigrants, mainly artisans, had by the 1880s taken over the artistic developments of Lagos both theatrically and architecturally. Apart from being less numerous, their little education, religion and cultural orientation had set them apart from their rather sophisticated and professedly educated Sierra Leonian contemporaries. The Brazilian Dramatic Company was a pioneer in the field of drama by setting up a non-traditional theatrical group of a professional calibre. The Company was under the management of Senhor P.Z. Silva, an influential builder.¹¹

An interesting theatrical development introduced by the Brazilians was the 'Carreta'. This theatrical art which was developed in Brazil was brought into Lagos but it was no less than the Yoruba theatrical art based on the egúngún masques which the slaves must have developed during their sojourn in Brazil.¹²

The masquerade displays were based on 'character sketches' which in Lagos became simply 'carreta' by corruption. From its style and

11. See Lagos Times, December 8, 1880,

Lagos Observer, May 8, 1882,

Lagos Observer, June 1, 1882,

Lagos Observer, April 26, 1883.

12. A.B. Laotan, "Brazilian Influence on Lagos", Nigeria Magazine, No. 69, August 1961, p. 157.

form, there is no doubt that while in Brazil the traditional theatrical art was modified under the strong influence of Portuguese culture and Catholic religion. In Sierra Leone on the other hand, the recaptives who had refused to be converted to Christianity but tended to be Moslem in religious belief, continued with the Yoruba theatrical art with little modification.¹³ The 'Drama of the Easter Tuesday' as it came to be popularly called later, reminded the Lagosians of the 'ludus' of the annual egúngún festivals. The Sierra Leone immigrants, mainly Protestant Christians, had formed themselves into the 'élite' of Lagos, domiciled in the Olowogbowo area of Lagos. On the other hand, the Brazilian Catholics, who had formed themselves into the artisan class of Lagos, lived around Campos Square. They masqueraded in 'fancy dress' with their 'carreta' on Easter Tuesday, carried their dramatic pageants round Lagos with their leaders riding on horse-back. When the two groups met they whipped each other.¹⁴

The following is a description of the 'carreta masquerade'. It was first introduced into Lagos in the eighties as a Christmas Pageant by the Brazilian Catholics. Later, it became an Easter parade. According to Laotan, it was the survival of the egúngún

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13. John Eric Peterson, Freetown: A Study of the Dynamics of Liberated African Society, (Ph.D. Thesis, Northwestern University 1963), p. 294. See also: pp. 318-321.
14. Akin Mabogunje, op. cit., pp. 136 & 153.

(the Yoruba sacred masquerade):¹⁵

The masquerade parade was composed of several figures - bull (sic. boe), horse, bird and fish. It was always a crowd - pulling parade. At every stop the stage was set for each figure to display before crowds. Carried by a hooded man, the fish danced with the fisherman while the band played lively tunes. When about to retire for another figure, the fisherman who had been dancing around and about the fish, hooked it, drawing it and dancing back to the group.

The bird which was also carried strutted out with the hunter carrying his gun and wearing a fancy dress. The dance followed the same pattern as that of the fish. And when the time came to retire, the hunter fired his gun and, at once, rushed at the bird tottering to fall, and helped it back to the group.

The horse also gorgeously draped was slung across the shoulders of the horseman who was also in fancy dress and delighted the crowds with a fine display of horsemanship, dancing forward and backward and prancing about to rollicking tunes.

But the most exciting display was that of the bull which always came out last with its attendant dressed in a frock or overcoat and top or bowler hat and carrying a club. Their appearance drew the prolonged applause of the huge crowd. With an adept carrier it was great fun, the bull now and again making for its attendant as if to butt him, while the attendant, also prancing about, dodged and fenced with his club.

16

15. Laotan, op. cit., p. 157.

16. ibid., p. 165.

The influence of the traditional theatre was also apparent in the style and form of the number of musical sketches and dances which became known as the 'native drama'. This form of entertainment was developed by guilds or societies of the Secessionist Churches in Lagos in the early part of the twentieth century. By the end of the first world war, however, enthusiasm for the 'native drama' had been on the wane giving way for the emergence of yet another theatrical art known as the 'Church Cantata'. This form was popularised by the new African Churches, especially the U.A.M. (Eḷéja), the Cherubin and Seraphim and other 'Aládura' (Apostolic) Churches, all located in and around Ebute Metta. Apart from helping the churches to raise funds the 'church cantata' also developed a new spirit of involvement in theology through the use of music, dance and drama to tell biblical stories.

In the early 1940s, some of the Choir-masters who had been involved in the conduct of the 'Church Cantata' moved the drama out of the church into places like the Liṣabi Hall, Ebute Metta and Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos. The 'Church Cantata' which for several decades had revived peoples' interest in religious drama, had also proved how profitable an undertaking the theatre could be. Thus, the 'Concert Party' was born out of the remnants of the 'Church Cantata'. Almost simultaneously in Lagos and Ibadan, names like A.A. Layeni, A.B. David, P.A. Dawodu and later Hubert Ogunde

came to be connected with the 'Yoruba Concert Party' movement. P.A. Dawodu's party based in Ibadan was the first to tour the Western provinces with King Ahab and Naboth's Garden. He was later followed by Hubert Ogunde whose Adam and Eve was a huge success.

As a theatrical art, the new 'concert' was a fusion of the 'cantata' and the Victorian 'Music Hall' (a variety entertainment of songs and comic sketches) - the two earlier forms of entertainment which had enjoyed tremendous popularity in Lagos over a long period of years.

The most significant influence of the traditional theatre on the 'Concert Party' was the use of the 'opening glee'. What came to be popularly known as the 'opening glee' was an adoption of the traditional 'Ìjúbà' with certain modifications especially with regard to the focus of the 'salute'. The following is one such modern 'Ìjúbà':

"È kú ìkàlẹ̀ ẹ̀nyin ará,

È kú ìkàlẹ̀ ẹ̀nyin ẹ̀nià.

Kí á tó má a b'éré wa lọ,

A f'ìbà f' Ọ́lọ́run.

Ọ̀ba Ọ̀run ar'áiyé-r'ọ̀run,

Àwa mà júbà l'ọ̀wọ̀ Rẹ̀ o.

Bí babaláwo bá jí,

17. This is part of the 'opening glee' which was popularised by Hubert Ogunde and his Concert Party from the very beginning.

18. See plate, p. 371.

A júbá lówó Ifá.

B'Óniṣègùn bá jí o,

A júbà lówó Ọsanyìn.

Onígbagbó t'ó bá jí o,

A f'ìbà f'Ólórún.

Ọba Ọrun ar'áiyé-rórún,

Awa mà júbà lówó Rẹ o."¹⁷

"Greetings brethren, hoping you are
seated comfortably.

Greetings people, hoping you are
seated comfortably.

Before we go on with our play,

This is our pledge to God.

King of Heaven who oversees earth and heaven,

This is our pledge to Thee.

When the priest of the Ifá Cult awakes,
He places his pledge in the hands of Ifá.

When the physician awakes,

He places his pledge in the hands of
the deity Ọsanyìn.

The Christian, when he awakes
makes a pledge to God.

King of Heaven who oversees earth and heaven,

This is our pledge to Thee."

The use of 'masks' for theatrical effect was popularised by
Hubert Ogunde and his Concert Party from the very beginning.¹⁸

17. This is part of the 'opening glee' which the Ọgúnmólá
Theatre Party used in the late forties.

18. See plate, No. 95.



No. 95: Ògúndé Concert Party: Note the use of masks for the 'Opening Glee'.

Launched in 1944, Ogunde Concert Party became the first professional troupe to travel out of Lagos and to tour the other provinces of Nigeria. He later travelled to other West African countries and visited Britain. By secularizing his plays, his 'Yoruba Concert Party' had a popular appeal for the masses; his most enjoyable recipe being "a mixture of social satire, slapstick humour and sex appeal."¹⁹ Recalling his experience and source of inspiration, Ogunde remarked, "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."²⁰

With Kola Ogunmola and his Theatre Party, which became a popular theatre group in Ekiti in the late forties, the 'Yoruba Concert Party' had adopted an 'opera' form without any elaboration.

Beginning with morality plays, Ogunmola moved on to fiction and imaginative plays based on the Yoruba folk life. With this development and its later popularity in the early fifties, the 'Yoruba Concert Party' came to be wrongly called the 'Yoruba Folk Opera'.²¹

Ogunmola has since distinguished himself as the best living mime

19. Beier, Three Nigerian Plays, Longmans, 1967, (Introduction), p. VII.

20. Hubert Ogunde in a personal note (21/8/67).

21. This descriptive title of what, indeed, is the 'Yoruba Opera', was first coined by Ulli Beier in 1954 (See: African Music, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1954, p. 32). The 'Yoruba Opera' both in style and form, does not resemble the 'folk operas' that were composed in Western tradition.

after the fashion of the traditional masque-dramaturg.

One of the pioneers of the 'Yoruba Concert Party' was A.T.O. Odunsi. As a schoolmaster at Otan Aiyégbajú in the early forties, he first introduced the 'cantata' and later found musical drama to be a useful means of teaching. In 1948, he wrote and composed a musical play, Mungo Park ati Odo Oya, based on the historic travels of the famous Niger explorer, Mungo Park. The development was the mainspring of Duro Ladipo who was a pupil in the school at that time. When Duro Ladipo ventured into the theatrical field in the early sixties, the experience and inspiration of the middle forties had matured in him; nevertheless, it was the theatrical art of the traditional theatre that meant much more to him. He decided to build on and improve the Sàngó Masque which was popular in the 'repertoire' of the travelling theatre troupes around Oshogbo where he lived. By extension, he created the first Yoruba historical tragedy, Oba Kòsò, (The King Does not Hang)²² using a musical dramatic form that has since launched him to great heights in the professional theatre.

Martin Banham, in his summary of the style and dramatic form of the 'Yoruba Folk Opera', comments in the survival of the dramatic arts -

a poetic language working through image and allusion, music that talks with and to the

22. See plate, No. 96.



No. 96: Dúró Ládípò Theatre: In the play *Oba Kòso*, Sàngó is depicted as 'the King who does not hang'. (From *Insight*, April 1968).

performers, dance to express and comment upon characters and events, and themes drawn from the culture and experience of the people....²³

According to him these significant elements of the traditional theatre have been borrowed to give the Folk Opera a vibrant dimension as a theatrical art.

The influence of the traditional theatrical art on the modern Nigerian theatre²⁴ is not confined to the 'Concert Parties' and the 'Yoruba Operas'. In 1960, Wole Soyinka founded the '1960 Masks' whose premiere production A Dance of the Forests was the result of the author's research into the traditional Yoruba drama. In this most important and unique play Soyinka calls upon the experience, beliefs, fantasies and emotions of the Yoruba and then successfully fuses these in an experimental dramatic form which has puzzled many of his critics. In 'the gathering of the tribes' the dead re-appear, reminiscent of the egúngún; mythological characters like Ògún, Àròndì and Èṣù become dwellers of the forest; and such village characters as Demokè, the carver, Rólá, the courtesan and other types are striking and point to the author's utilization of the basic element of the Yoruba traditional theatre - 'dramatic portraiture'. Music,

23. Martin Banham, "Nigerian Dramatists and the Traditional Theatre, Insight, No. 20, April, 1968, p. 30.

24. Michael Crowder, "Tradition and change in Nigerian Literature", Tri-Quarterly, No. 5, pp. 124-126.

dance and drama - the composite art of the traditional theatre, as well as 'masks' are common elements in Soyinka's dramatic plays.

The revue stands out as Soyinka's most distinguished form of using the theatre for direct confrontation to denounce the follies and vices of society. It is the one strong medium which he shares with the 'revue-masques' of the traditional theatre. It is, indeed, remarkable that with such revues as The Republican (1964) and Before the Blackout (1965) performed by his newly formed Orisun Players, we see the emergence of the reformist's conception of the 'revue-masques' of the Alárinjó Theatre and a development that urges well for the future of the theatre in Nigeria.

Prospects:-

In the Alárinjó Theatre we have found the universal in the particular. Its achievements are reflected in the form and style of the 'new theatres' with which it now struggles for existence.

The 'new theatres' are highly developed along the convention of Western theatre and are better organised forms of entertainment.

The 'Yoruba Folk Opera', particularly, has gained momentum and its appeal is becoming widespread with the increasing number of companies using its 'style and form'. It may one day replace the Alárinjó Theatre as the peoples' theatre due largely to the following factors:

The Alárinjó Theatre is ambitiously searching for a 'new audience'. Owing to the shift of emphasis from traditional rulers

to the educated 'élite' as the dictators of style and fashion, it is anxious to get their patronage. But the impact of western civilization on the educated 'élite' has also exposed them to new forms of entertainment which are more sophisticated, dynamic and intellectually appealing than the improvised dramas of the Alárínjò Theatre. Besides, the world-view of the westernised Yoruba has changed and with it his aesthetic tastes. Masking as a form of theatrical entertainment has lost its impact on his modern sensibility. Like Goldoni's contention, (advancing reasons why the Italian Commedia dell'Arte and its masks should be reformed), the wearing of masks always hampered the real effect that the drama should have on its audience because the same features were always exhibited. Theatre conventions are rules of the game and must be acceptable to both actor and spectator; a large proportion of the 'new audience' that the traditional theatre-groups seek to attract could not be easily excited by the 'gestalt' of their form of dramatic art.

The Egúngún Society is now looked upon with great disfavour in a rapidly developing modern society with its attendant sophistication in all cultural spheres. Both the educated Christian and Muslim alike take the view that "the egungun is a kind of impostor who takes advantage of the simple mindedness of illiterate people."²⁵

25. Beier, "The Egungun Cult", Nigeria Magazine, No. 51, 1965, p. 383.

The theatre groups still claim to be egúngún and are therefore bound by the imperatives of the Egúngún Society in some respects. Even in the Southwestern part of Yorubaland, the theatre-groups still take part, officially, in the local egúngún festivals. They still operate as "sedentary professionals" and only come out occasionally when they are invited. At other times, they concentrate their attention more on farming and other trades.

Attracted by the prospects of commercialism, many of the groups of professional troupes have resorted to sensational displays and shoddy performances which, instead of boosting their trade, have, unfortunately, weakened their impact on the very people they strive to attract. The strength of many troupes has now weakened as a result of young people's lack of interest in the profession. Many of the former big troupes cannot now muster enough for any impressive performance.

In spite of the bleak future which stares them in the face, those leaders of extant troupes who became aware of a new wave of cultural nationalism in the country, got together and formed an association a few years ago. Like the Guild of Dionysus, the first Athenian Actors' Trades Union, the association is a trades union and has been registered by the Government of the Western State of Nigeria as "The Association of Egúngún Actors, Western State". It has its headquarters at Ibadan and is administered by a paid

secretary. Òjélékè Aiyélabóla' is its first and current chairman. Membership is by payment of three pounds registration fee by every actor and five pounds by the leader of a troupe. Meetings are held at previously agreed times and from place to place. By its meeting of January 1967, which was held at the Alápinni's House in Oyo,²⁶ membership had risen to about a hundred.

The Actors' Association exists to protect and promote the interest of its members, whether as individuals or as groups, to improve the artistic standard of the profession and to remove and check abuses.

The abuses of the profession are manifest in the existence of mushroom groups of itinerant masqueraders who, after the traditional role of the 'Alárinjò', move from place to place with their amusements. The Actors' Association regards such groups as impostors who are out to ruin their age-long profession by indulging in tricks and shoddy displays.

In an interview, the leader of the 'Eléégún l'Áwé', one of such troupes from the Ilorin province,²⁷ disagreed with the suggestion that they are impostors but admitted the existence of fake strolling-players, people who have no special training and by tradition should not be actors of any kind and who use the privilege

26. See plate, No. 97.

27. See plate, No. 98.



No. 97: The Actors' Association: Meeting at the Aláínni's House, Oyo, January 1967.



No. 98: Eléégún M'Awé troupe: Performance was held in the Courtyard of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, June 9, 1968.

of the egúngún to impose on people. He explained that they, of course, as a professional troupe, have been in existence in Áwé, a village in Ilorin Province for many generations. He added that there were 'Apidán' or 'Alárìnjó' troupes in certain areas of Ilorin province but they were not as popular or as successful as the Eléégún l'Áwé. The reason being that their own egúngún emphasised 'dance and song' and were therefore able to entertain the masses who were Muslims and who were prevented from tolerating any form of dramatic mimicry. They had themselves devised their own form of entertainment in order to win the popular appeal of the Emir.

In a recent performance by the troupe, there were six masked actors, each with a characteristic name: Omó-mo'sé, Aiyédowó, Ajóféèbó, Ajófóba, Ajófóláwó, and Arijókúnlé. Arijokunle who did not wear a disguise, is in fact an imitation of the 'Aṣa' (a court-jester in Ilorin). He pantomimed many different character-roles; at one time he was a Snake, at another time he was a Sheep, and then a Motor-car. The popular appeal of the troupe was in their indulgence in 'àwàdà' or 'èfè' (satire) of a broad kind. Ribaldry was the basis of all the songs, and the dance which was non-ritualistic and dramatic tended to be monotonous. The Gangan drum was the accompaniment and the 'pàgangan' was their favourite beat.

Although the troupe professed to have no ritual connections with the 'Apidán' or 'Alárìnjó' group, yet as an egúngún group, it

Appendix 1

looked like a syncretic development of the traditional theatre.

Its style and form of entertainment seemed to have been conditioned by a strong and overriding Islamic influence.

Conclusion:-

Whether the existence of a trade union like the 'Association of the Egúngún Actors' succeeds in achieving its objectives or not, the success of any theatre depends on its ability to appeal to a mass audience. Since the use of 'masks' as a medium of entertainment is becoming too primordial for the modern audience to take, and since the whole myth surrounding the egúngún is now gradually being exploded, the mass appeal of the Alárinjọ Theatre which still lingers on at the grassroots level, will grow less and less with succeeding years and generations. But if and when the Alárinjọ Theatre fade out of social existence, it will be especially remembered for its undying influence on the 'new theatres'.

Appendix 1

Extracts from: ORIKI OBA*

1. Ọlọbà, Ọbèdú,
 Ọmọ kèngbè já, kèngbè so.
 Kèngbè so 'kùn, ẹmu mi d'eèrè l 'Ọbà.
 Ọmọ kèngbè, kúdú - kúdú - kúdú orí
 ọpẹ wònyí nkó?

Omi funfun ní ńbẹ nínú wọn.

2. Ọbà Ọbèdú,

1. Ọmọ Ayínkíní Ológun,

Ọmọ è è é l 'Ọbà,

Ọmọ ojú gbóná jon-jon.

Àwọn ní wọn kò dé gbó,

Tí nwọn mu ìdì t'agbọn.

2. Nwọn a sí fẹhìn t'Ìgbàlẹ.

Nwọn mú pópó Ìsányín tàsé 'lé.

3. Adię Ọgògò ńyẹ 'lẹ l 'Ọbà,

Nwọn l 'óko ní ńro.

Ọmọ sẹ l 'ókè,

Ọmọ a yọ bi oyún,

Ọmọ a t'ọjọ ikú mò 'de ọrun,

Ọmọ ọràn mi kò pọ k'á mú baálé s'ọfà.

Ọràn kò pọ k'á re ọrun rè é k'ówó.

* I am grateful to Ọgbéni S.A. Babáyemí for this 'Oríkì Ọbà'.

4. Oṃọ a gbẹ́ fún wọn má ru ti Ọ̀ni.

Oṃọ a gbẹ́ rẹ́kété f'Ọ̀bà kó fi jeun.

Oṃọ a pọ́ 'gi ní 'fun dà s'ìgbó.

Oṃọ a tan'ná irin jó 'gi l'ára.

Ọ̀wòń mọ́ lẹ̀ pa'gidà di ènià l'Arẹ̀.

5. Èni tó bá kí ilé Ọ̀bà-níjà

Tí kò kí ilé Babájidé, Ológbin Arẹ̀pa.

Eléyun oko igi ló lẹ.

1. Ọ̀lọ̀bà Ọ̀bèdú,

Offspring¹ of one who plucked the gourd²

Offspring of one who mended the gourd.

The gourd has a twine round its neck,

My palm-wine is undiluted at Ọ̀bà.

Offspring of one who asks, "what about these
many gourds on the palm-tree?"

White-water³ is contained in them.

2. Ọ̀bà Ọ̀bèdú,

Offspring of Ayínkíní, the warrior.

Offspring of the real one at Ọ̀bà.

Offspring of one with flaming eyes.

They are the ones who never reach the bush,

But lean against the coco-nut tree.

They then get the protection of the secret-grove.

They selected the Ísányín avenue and

missed the way home.⁴

1. Ọ̀lọ̀bà Ọ̀bèdú appears to be a progeny of the primordial Ọ̀bà.

2. The gourd is a container for palm-wine and has a remote reference to the 'Ìsà', Ọ̀bàtálá's wine-pot.

3. Palm-wine.

4. This stanza explains the difference between the first group of Ọ̀bà, namely the Ìgbò, who although masqueraded in the bush, 'Ìgbó'gbò', never knew the 'Ìgbógbàlẹ̀', the secret-grove which was a later development.

3. Ògògò's rooster picks the ground at Òbà.
 They accuse him of tilling the ground.
 Offspring of one who emerged from above,
 Offspring of one who is as fat as a
 pregnant woman,
 Offspring of one who knows heaven's forecourt
 on the day of his death,
 Offspring of the one who says his matter is not as
 bad as making the head of the household
 a bondsman.
 The matter is not as overwhelming as to
 go to heaven to raise a loan.
 I will raise mine in this world.
4. Offspring of one who carves but does
 not carry his [work] to the Òṣì.⁵
 Offspring of one who carves the basin
 for the Òbà to feed out of.
 Offspring of one who digs the entrails of the
 tree and throws them into the bush.
 Offspring of one who uses hot iron to
 mark [design] the wood.
 Òwòṅ, I can transform the wood
 into a human being at Àrè.⁶
5. Whoever chants the praise name of
 the Òbà-ńjà lineage,
 Who does not praise the lineage of
 Babájídé, the Ológbin Àrèpa,
 Is beating about the bush.⁷

5. An allusion to the feud between the Òbà clan and the Ifẹ̀ throne.

1. Richard Lander, *Records of Clapperton's Last Expedition to*
6. This stanza explains the long standing difference between the Ifẹ̀ (Òṣì) and the Àrè (Ìgbò). It also reveals the Òbà's connection with portrait art.
- 2.
7. This stanza throws light on the kinship between Òbà-ńjà and Babájídé, the Ológbin Àrèpa. Babájídé was the first to use the art of disguise for professional purpose.

SONG¹(An example of Sympathetic Magic)²

Our enemies tremble and are dismayed
 When they hear of our approach;
 and at sight of our arrows
 they die with fear!

See them fleeing like the doe
 from our fighting men!
 Behold them falling down and kissing the
 dust from the feet of our warriors!

Haste, haste, Yarribeans!
 Pursue and overtake your enemies,
 Slay them without mercy;
 Stop their voices, that they sing no
 more at eventide by the light of the moon;

They are swift of foot,
 But they shall not escape you;
 They are already weary;
 Their journey of life is almost at an end;
 They have fallen to the earth
 And will dance no more.

Weep ye widows of Houssa,
 and let the lamentations of your
 children be heard in the land,
 for they are fatherless, and your
 husbands have been pierced by the lance
 of the Yarriba!

-
1. Richard Lander, Records of Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol. I, London, 1830, pp. 289-290. The Stanza arrangement is mine.
 2. Man in the primitive state stresses the expression of his longings rather than his satisfaction. "He re-enacts his victory before he goes into battle, in order to invoke the aid of the supernatural forces in fulfilling his wishes." (See: Theodore W. Hatlen, Orientation to the Theatre, Appleton, Century, and Crafts, New York, 1962, p. 4).

Appendix 3

They are clothed in darkness,
as the worm in a storm.

Who can tell wither their spirits are
wandering?

Weep ye widows of Housa;
But your tears flow in vain
Your husbands will return no more.

Note:- This was sung and danced by a group of women in the
king's palace who took the opportunity of the presence of a party
of whitemen to celebrate and narrate the account of one of the
encounters of the Yoruba army with the Hausa-Fulani invaders.

Before the man died in
his old age, he had acquired a large amount of wealth, including
goods, lands and chattels. He died intestate. When the elder son
laid claim to all the wealth as 'de jure' successor to the lineage
headship, the younger son disputed the account of his own
large contribution to the legacy. The quarrel raged loud and long
and there did not seem to be any end to the problem posed by the
death of the man and the distribution of his legacy.

Meanwhile, the younger son went out to seek advice from a
friend as to what steps he could take to get his own share out of
the legacy. The friend suggested that the only way possible was
to call the dead man back alive so that he could make a pronouncement
on the legacy as to who should have what. The suggestion
was accepted by the younger son who set himself to carry out the
stratagem. By sheer co-incidence, his friend looked like the impersonator
he needed for he had all the required qualities that made
him fit into the role of playing the dead man.

When everything was ready, the younger son announced to all in
the household that in order to resolve the problem of how their
father's legacy was to be shared, he was going to evoke his dead

Appendix 3

father to come back to life so that he could make the pronouncement

The Funeralia

himself on how the legacy was to be shared. Every one was agast

The plot of the Ritual Play:-

when the apparition of the dead man suddenly appeared wearing the

A man had two children. The older was lazy and carefree; the younger was hardworking and painstaking. Before the man died in his old age, he had acquired a large amount of wealth, including goods, lands and chattels. He died intestate. When the older son laid claim to all the wealth as 'de jure' successor to the lineage headship, the younger son disputed this on account of his own large contribution to the legacy. The quarrel raged loud and long and there did not seem to be any end to the problem posed by the death of the man and the just distribution of his legacy.

Meanwhile, the younger son went out to seek advice from a friend as to what steps he could take to get his own share out of the legacy. The friend suggested that the only way possible was to call the dead man back alive so that he could make a pronouncement on the legacy as to who should have what. The suggestion was welcomed by the younger son who set himself to carry out the stratagem. By sheer co-incidence, his friend looked like the impersonator he needed for he had all the required qualities that made him fit into the role of playing the dead man.

When everything was ready, the younger son announced to all in the household that in order to resolve the problem of how their father's legacy was to be shared, he was going to evoke his dead

Appendix A

father to come back to life so that he could make the pronouncement himself on how the legacy was to be shared. Every one was aghast when the apparition of the dead man suddenly appeared wearing the dead man's clothing. The impersonator in a feigned voice made the pronouncement, gave everything he had to the younger son, blessed the wives and then disappeared.

Àwíṣá fún Faraṣá

T'á l'áṣun ṣiṣu orí ọ̀ṣáṣá rẹ́ 4 jé.

"Pick me up!

The only way to praise the Agan is to pick him up. Agan's tail must not be allowed to touch the ground in the sacred grove.

Thus decreed the oracle, When Faraṣá saw that he was going to dance on the 'áṣun-ṣiṣu'.

Narrative:

Olúṣégun Ijiféṣé was Ologbojé's chief physician and doctor. He carried the 'Agan' mask. One day on the last day of the *ogúngún* festival, Ijiféṣé spent all the morning divining and drinking. In the evening, when all the lineage-masks had assembled at the market-square for the final dance Ijiféṣé, who was to carry Ologbojé's 'Agan', was dead drunk by the time he arrived.

When it was his turn to dance, he ordered the drummer to beat a new tune:

1. I am grateful to Alagbá Agbẹ̀qáń Adóúnjì of Iwo for this 'odú'. 13/9/67.

Appendix 4

Olúgbèrè Àgan

(The first Yoruba Actor)

How Olúgbèrè Àgan became the first 'apidán':-Odù Ogbèsé¹:-

Verse:- "Gbé-mi, gbé-mi, là ns 'Àgan !
 Ìrù Àgan ò gbòdò ba' lẹ n' Ígbàlẹ.
 Adífa fún Pàràkà
 T'ó l'óun níọ orí ọdán rẹ é jó."

"Pick me up!

The only way to praise the
 Àgan is to pick him up.
 Àgan's tail must not be allowed
 to touch the ground of the
 sacred grove.
 Thus decreed the Oracle,
 When Pàràkà announced
 he was going to dance
 on the 'ọdán' tree-top".

Narrative:-

Olúgbèrè Ìjímèrè was Ológbojò's chief physician and actor. He carried the 'Àgan' mask. One day on the last day of the egúngún festival, Ìjí spent all the morning divining and drinking. In the evening, when all the lineage-masks had assembled at the market-square for the final dance Ìjí, who was to carry Ológbojò's 'Àgan', was dead drunk by the time he arrived.

When it was his turn to dance, he ordered the drummer to beat a new tune:

-
1. I am grateful to Alàgbà Agboolá Adéníjí of Iwo for this 'Odù'. 13/9/67.

Rhythm: È rí 'wó, yà!

Chorus: Àgan, yà!

È rí 'wó, yà!

Agan: Àgan, yà!

The crowd rallied him up and cheered him.

You behold the cult,

Make way!

Àgan, make way!

You behold the cult, make way!

It's Àgan, make way!

Everybody became anxious wanting to know what had possessed Olúgbèré. Then he announced he was going to dance on the top of the 'odán' tree. There was a protest, but he could not be stopped. He climbed the tree and danced from branch to branch to the admiration of all. Suddenly, one of the branches snapped and ~~people~~ left Ìjì dangling headlong. Then he cried:

Agan: Mo f'orí wo!

Mo f'orí wo!

Hà! há! È gbé mi!

È gbé mi-i-ì!

My head is earthbound!

My head is heading for the ground!

Ha! Carry me!

Pick me up!

Then the crowd applauded when they suddenly found him sommersaulting ~~on~~ to the ground:

Chorus: À-à-gan ò!

Àgán pìrìgìdì!

Àgan p'odán!

Agan: Wòmù-wòmù-wòmù!

Chorus: Yes Agan!
Agan has performed a feat!
Agan has killed the 'òdán' tree!

Agan: HmMMM!

The crowd rallied him up and cheered him.

Olugbere Agan was the first costumed-actor and professional troubador. (Even today, the theatre troupes keep 'Ìjímèrè', the red monkey, as a mascot. It is believed that they draw inspiration or receive instruction from the animal).² Dancing, miming, and acrobatics were his main specialty. The 'agò' (costume) was his main disguise wherein he hid his hybrid features. He was also famous for jugglery and charms. He divined for people when he travelled around. One day, during one of his solo performances, dancing, tumbling and performing tricks with his costume, 'àpadà', his body was accidentally exposed to the crowd. Being ashamed that he had been let out, he ran away into the bush where he lived till he died.

His Oriki: (Praise-chant)

"Olúgbèrè Agan,

Omo b'ókò ré,

Ègùn Anùmí ará Òpòndà.

2. Johnson, op. cit., p. 29.

Appendix 5

Omo a-ságúkó, a-rìn-gúkó.

Agò l'olú aṣo. (Aṣo: Aṣo of the Ritual Play)

Olúgbèré àdà,

How did you come to this area of the Ritual Play?

Omo b'òkò ré,

Oh, look!

Oní 'tẹ̀ eégún!

Verba:-

Abi ìdàko wéléwélé.

Bíó bá kú má mà gb'áwo lọ!

Omo eranko gbalaja l'órí igi".

"Olúgbèré Àgan,
Son of the one who reconciled
with her husband.
Ègùn Àmámí, citizen of Òpòndà.
Species of the one that gallops.
The shroud is the gem of your dress.
Olúgbèré, the uninhibited,
Son of the one who reconciled
with her husband,
You who play tricks with mummery!
You who are skilled in manipulations.
When you are dead, do not
carry the secret with you!
You animal at large on the tree-top".

What would be the consequence of
disrespecting sickness?

Disrespect sickness!
Never disrespect sickness

Never disrespect sickness by disrespecting

1. An allusion to Iyá Mòsè (Olúgbèré's mother) who reconciled with her husband Ológbin Ológbòjò after the birth of the hybrid child.

Narrative:

Dundun and Iyegbe were close friends. When he
later died, Dundun went to ask permission of his
relatives to allow him to perform the occupation
rite of bringing back the child from the sacred grove.

Appendix 5

He was laughing. But because of his impetuosity, they refused to let him do as he pleased; but should he fail in bringing their father home, they would

DUNDUN

(The Orchestra of the Ritual Play)

How Dundun became the 'drum' of the Ritual Play:-

Odu Irẹtẹsẹ:-¹

Verse:-

"F'ojú d'ikú!

Ngò gbọdò f'ojú di'kú.

Bí a bá f'ojú di'kú emi ní nṣeni?

F'ojú d'arun!

Ngò gbọdò f'ojú d'arun.

Bí a bá f'ojú d'arun

Kò le è hàn 'nié l'eemò.

Adifá fun Dundun

T'ó lo rẹ é p'òkú ní'pópó."

"Disrespect death!

Never disrespect death.

Should death be disrespected

What would the consequence be?

Disrespect sickness!

Never disrespect sickness

Should sickness be disrespected

The consequence cannot be anything serious.

Thus the Oracle decreed to Dundun

Who went to call the dead from the road."

Narrative:

Dundun and Irẹtẹsẹ were bosom friends. When the latter died, Dundun went to ask permission of his relatives to allow him to perform the evocation rite of bringing home the dead from the sacred grove.

He was laughed to scorn. But because of his impertunity, they agreed to let him do as he pleased; but should he fail to bring their father home, they would kill him.

Dundun went to consult with Ọrunmila, the Oracle, and asked for his help. Ọrunmila promised to help. He would ask Eṣu, the devil, to play the impersonator but Dundun must put some 'ṣaworo' (rattles) round his drum so that when he beat, the rattles would serve as a warning to Eṣu who would then answer the evocation.

Dundun left Ọrunmila quite pleased with the promised assistance. He summoned all the relatives to line the route of the procession on the day of the rite. This was done. The procession waited in front of the grove and Dundun moved forward to make the evocation. At the seventh call, he shook the rattles and Eṣu, the impersonator, answered and lurched forward to meet the crowd. Dundun sounded his orchestra and the impersonator joined in.

The processional rhythmic beat was:

"Ireṭe-se,

Sinsin.

Ireṭe-se,

O de.

Baba de,

Sinsin."

"Ireṭe-se,

Sinsin (rattles),

Ireṭe-se,

He's arrived.

Father's arrived,

Sinsin."

Note: From the time the impersonator stepped at the threshold where the leader was paid his fee and left. He was never allowed to go in.

for fear Dùndún then led the procession back to the deceased's compound.

known to be talkative

At the threshold, he demanded payment for his services. This was refused him by the relatives who insisted that the demand of a fee was not part of their contract. Dùndún went to report the matter to the king who ordered that he must be paid the sum of two-thousand cowries (sixpence sterling) as his fees. Dùndún thankfully got his fee and left to share his booty with Èṣù, the impersonator, sounding his drum, jestingly at the 'omólóókú' (children of the deceased) as he went off:

"Ènyin omọ Ìrètèsé,

È tẹ.

Ìrètèsé, ẹ tẹ.

Ìgbàtí ẹ mò,

È ti ẹ ẹ?

Omọ Ìrètèsé,

È tẹ."

"You, children of Ìrètèsé,

You're shamed.

Ìrètè-ẹ, you are shamed.

When you know,

Why did you dare?

You children of Ìrètèsé,

You're shamed."

Note: From then onwards, the orchestra became part of the ritual play; the music however stopped at the threshold where the leader was paid his normal fee and left. He was never allowed to go in

Appendix I

Extracts from an eye-witness account of a performance at Ibadan for fear he might reveal the secrets of the cult. Drummers are known to be talkative!

(Recorded by Percy Norton-Williams)¹

1. The Leopard and the Hunter:-

"A leopard is seen prowling in the arena when the hunter comes, in a white cloth and his head wrap, searches round and sees the leopard. They fight; the hunter is careless; the leopard pulls him down, rolls him over and seizes off. (p. 96).

2. Fangol:-

Dances with a bowl of fire on his head.

3. The Lady and the School Mistress:-

"The pupil school mistress in her overnight khaki uniform, the 'lady' (lady) dancing in her too fashionable European clothes." (p. 96).

4. She (Green Bird):-

"Represented by a small boy inside a cloth of sackcloth covered with chicken feathers and a black wooden bird's head. The bird does not dance, but flaps its wings in time for the drum rhythms."

1. N.I.S.E. Conference Proceedings, Ibadan 1966, (vol. 1, 1967) pp. 90-103.

Appendix 6

Extracts from an eye-witness account of a performance at Ilaro:

5. Ariki Sèki: List and description of Plays

(Recorded by Peter Morton-Williams)¹

1. The Leopard and the Hunter:-

"A leopard is seen prowling in the arena; then the hunter comes, in a white cloth and brown head wrap, searches round and sees the leopard; they fight; the hunter is careless; the leopard pulls him down, rolls him over and scampers off." (p. 96).

2. Sàngó:-

Dances with a bowl of fire on his head.

3. The Lady and the School Mistress:-

"The pupil-school mistress in her overnight khaki tunic and the 'ledi' (lady) mincing in her too fashionable European clothes." (p. 96).

4. The Agufon (Crown Bird):-

"Represented by a small boy inside a cloth of sacking covered with chicken feathers and a black wooden bird's head. The bird does not dance, but flaps its wings in time for the drum rhythms."

1. W.A.I.S.E.R. Conference Proceedings, Ibadan 1956, (reprinted 1963) pp. 90-103.

Training the actor (apprentice) in assuming the Taraba Gbiki
 5. Arígi Ségi: (the Pupa of a bag-moth, which encases itself
 and , he has to learn the nonsense 'Q' (imitation);
 in twigs)

"Represented by a boy wearing a cone-shaped cloth to
 which small sticks have been sewn. He puts his finger
 into a tube made for it at the top of the cloth, and
 stands motionless waving his finger only to the rhythms
 of the drums." (p. 96).

6. Àbíku's Mother:-

"Mother bearing a baby on her back. It is believed
 very dangerous to wear this person; it is like Abiku,
 the baby who will not stay with you, but dies and is
 born again, coming perhaps several times to the same
 mother, who consequently cannot bear an ordinary child
 which will grow up; and before she wears it again and
 again after she takes it off, the dancer beats this
 little rag doll soundly." (p. 96).

7. Other representations:

- (a) Pythons and crocodiles.
- (b) Horses and other animals.
- (c) Men and spirits.
- (d) Stilt dances and the mat.

Appendix 7

Training the actor (apprentice) in memorizing the Yoruba Oríkì and Èsà Chants, he has to learn the mnemonic 'Ofò' (incantation):

Ofò:-

"Mo ti j'éwé gbégbé;

Nwọn ti ní k'òhùn mi

ki ó má gbé.

Mo ti j'ògèdè;

Nwọn ti ní k'òhùn mi

ki ó rẹ̀ dẹ̀dẹ̀.

Mo ti j'orí àkèrè;

Nwọn ti ní k'òhùn mi

ki ó yè kerere.

Mo ti jẹ̀ kùkùndùkù;

Nwọn ti mú 'kù yè l'orí mi.

Oní mánámáná t'ó bá f'ara w'óká;

Á s'orí ara rẹ̀ n'iyonu.

À fòdànù l'obìrin n'fọ̀ sọ̀ àlẹ̀ jò."

Ó d'ífá fún ọmọ kékéré

Tí n'òde Ọ̀yọ̀,

T'ó n'lo kọ̀ èdèkédè.

Nwọn wá sọ̀ fún u pé,

Èdèkédè t'ó n'lo kọ̀ yì í

O kò mà ní i gbọ̀ ọ̀!

Ó ní, Ọ̀gbọ̀ á jẹ̀ k'óun ó gbọ̀ ọ̀,

Nwọn ní t'o ba gbó,

O kò mà ní i mò ọ!

Ó ní, Amòrán á jẹ k'óun ó mò ọ.

Nwọn ní t'o bá mò ọ,

O ó má a gbàgbé!

Ó ní, 'Eyítí mo bá gbàgbé,

Ewé Arán a má a rán mi l'etí.

kanran!"

"I have plucked the 'gbégbé'¹ leaf,
They^{1A} have said that my voice should not vanish.
I have eaten the banana:
They have said that my voice should be soft
and relaxed.
I have eaten the head of the frog;
They have said that my voice should be clear
and ringing.
I have eaten the sweet potato;
They have made death to shift over my head.
The non-poisonous snake who equates itself with
the Gaboon viper,
Will cause trouble for its own head.
Washing is what a woman does to preserve
her menstrual rag."

The Ifá (Oracle) decreed to the young fellow
Who was going to the city of Oyo
To learn the art of language.²

1. The 'gbégbé' leaf is believed to possess the power of causing invisibility.
- 1^A. The unseen (spirits) are being referred to.
2. 'Èdèkédè' is an abridged form of 'èdè kún-èdè'. It was customary in the olden days to send the young apprentice to Oyo to improve his knowledge of Yoruba verbal arts.

They then told him that
 This art that you are going to learn
 You are not going to hear and understand it!
 He said, the Ọgbọ (Periploca)³ will aid
 his hearing.

They said if you hear,
 You are not going to know it!
 He said, the Amọràn [Olúmọràn]⁴ will
 aid him to know.

They said if you know it
 You are going to suffer forgetfulness!
 He said, 'Those that I forget,
 The leaf of mnemonics will instantly
 jog my memory'.

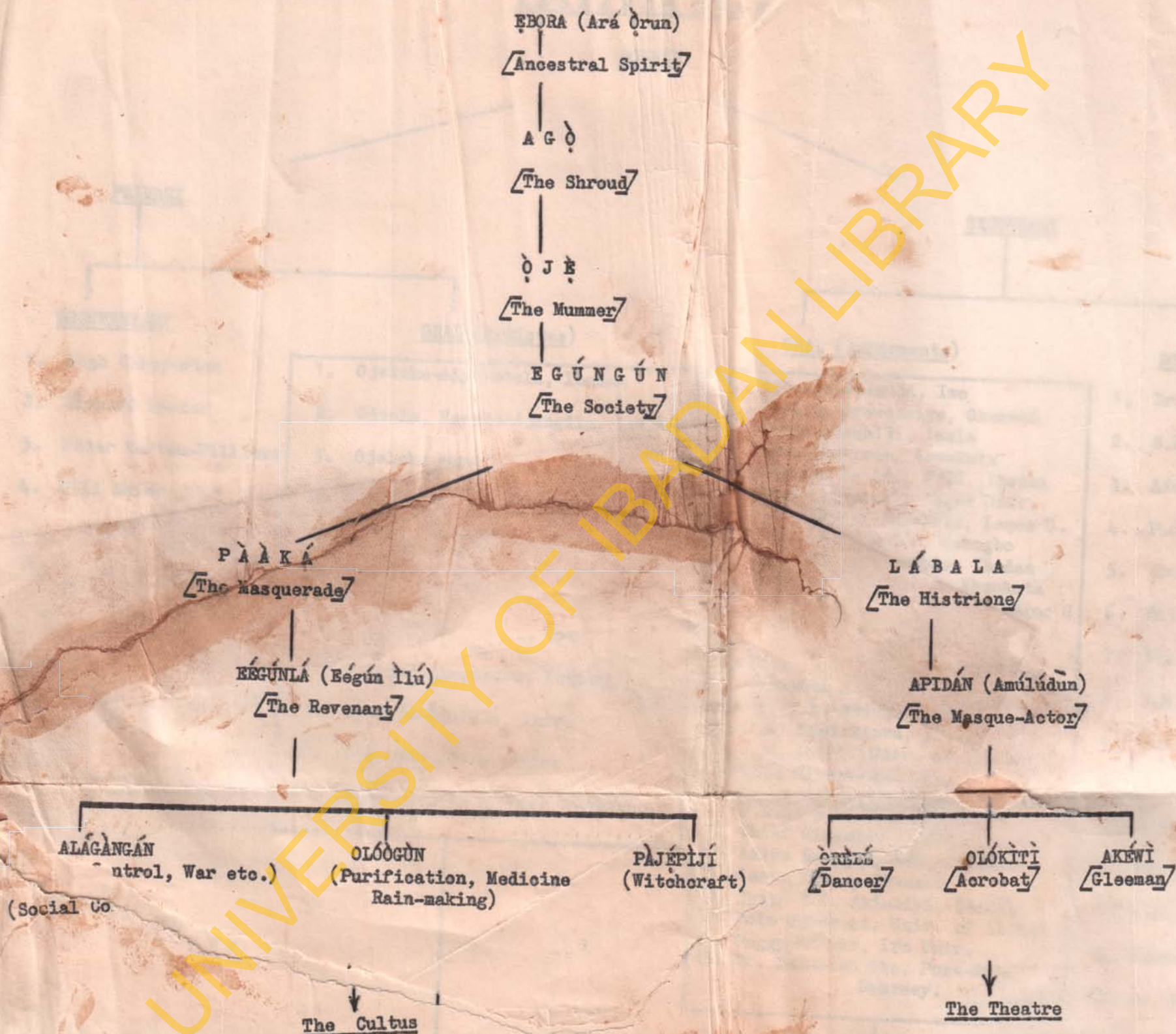
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3. The reference is either to the spirit of the 'Ọgbọ' leaf or to Ọlúgbọ, the Hearer.

4. 'Amọràn' means one who is 'all knowing'; but Olúmọràn, the Lord of Knowledge may be implied.

Appendix 8

The Egúngún Family Tree



Note:- The diagram shows the TWO differentiated classes of egúngún. The term egúngún is generic to both classes, but each functions under separate hierarchies. Olópondà as one clan-head developed the Cultus, while Ológbojò, another clan-head developed the Theatre. Both classes are, however, linked by 'ancestor worship'. The separation was the result of a conflict between the two clan-heads as to who owned the egúngún.

Appendix 9

RESEARCH PLANSOURCEPRIMARYSECONDARYDOCUMENTARYORAL (Artistes)

1. Hugh Clapperton
2. Richard Lander
3. Peter Morton-Williams
4. Ulli Beier

1. Ojeleke-Aiyelabola, Ibadan
2. Oduola, Foyeke-Ajangila, Iragbera
3. Ojeleke Mamade-Lebe, Oyo
4. Ojebisi-Ajofeebo, Oyo
5. Layisi-Onloge, Ijebu Igbo
6. Olojede-Lebe, Imala
7. Ojedokun-Arawogun, Oyo
8. Ojeyemi-Akereburu, Inisa
9. Oyadoja-Olufale, Ikire
10. Jimo-Ejongboro, Ikire
11. Alimi Akanji-Eiyeba, Ibadan

Live Performances, Photographs, Tape Recordings, Interview Notes.

ORAL (Informants)DOCUMENTARY

1. Agboola Adeniji, Iwo
2. Adedeji Arowosaiye, Okemesi
3. Segun Adegbiyi, Imala
4. Alan Aroyewun, Abeokuta
5. Adebayo Faleti, WNBS, Ibadan
6. Wande Abimbola, Lagos Univ.
7. Dr. Adeboye Babalola, Lagos U.
8. Chief Ulli Beier, Oshogbo
9. Chief J.A. Ayorinde, Ibadan
10. Chief J.M. Beckley, Abeokuta
11. P.O. Ogunbowale (late), Lagos U.
12. Chief Salawu Adeleke, Oyo
13. Chief Orodiji, Iwo.
14. Miss Ijaduola Ladigbolu, Oyo
15. Isramota Adegorite, Kuta
16. Dr. I.A. Akinjogbin, Ife
17. J.A. Adenakinwa, Ife
18. J.O. Abiri, Univ. of Ibadan
19. Kola Oladipupo, Oyo
20. O. Olajubu, Ife Univ.
21. J.R.O. Ojo, Ife Univ.
22. Chief Oloyede, Ibadan
23. Adisa Balogun, NBC, Ibadan
24. James Idowu, Okemesi
25. Chief D.T. Akinbiyi, Ibadan
26. Wale Ogunyemi, Univ. of Ibadan
27. Peggy Harper, Ife Univ.
28. Dr. Matthias Oke, Port-Novo, Dahomey.

Interview, Questionnaires, Tapes, Photographs.

1. Dr. S.A. Babalola
2. S.A. Babayemi
3. Adebayo Faleti
4. P.O. Ogunbowale
5. Chief I.O. Delano
6. William Bascom
7. P.A. Talbot
8. R.E. Dennet
9. Rev. E.T. Adesola
10. S. Johnson
11. Prof. E. Idowu
12. Dr. O. Lucas
13. A.B. Ellis
14. Wande Abimbola
15. Dr. O. Ogunba.

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