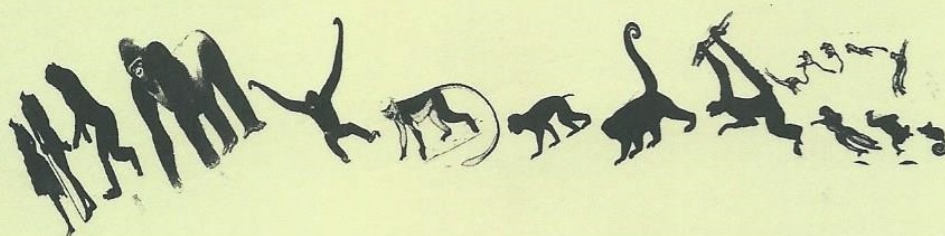


Theory, Knowledge, Development and Politics:

What Role for the Academy
in the Sustainability of Africa?



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Chapter Seven

Yoruba Playwrights and Politics in Nigeria: An Examination of Selected Yoruba Written Plays

Layò Ògúnolá

Introduction

The large geographical expression that metamorphosed into an entity christened Nigeria by 1914 has indeed come of age. Since her birth in 1914, Nigeria, the most populated "Black" Country in the world, with two protectorates namely the Northern and Southern protectorates, amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard. Sixteen years earlier, Flora Shaw, later married to Lugard, first suggested that the several British Protectorates on the Niger be collectively known as Nigeria (Kirk-Greene, 1956). a land of diverse and multiple ethnic nationalities endowed with good climate, fertile soil for agricultural activities and rich mineral resources had weathered and is still weathering different crises socially, politically, religiously and economically to survive as corporate entity.

Before the amalgamation of 1914, no place would be defined as the Nigeria society but by 1914, there developed the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba societies with existing ethnic boundaries which were altered during the period of the colonial rule (Ike 2000, p.2). Although the creation of Nigeria was as a result of European ambitions, it would be wrong to assume that its people had little history before its final boundaries were negotiated by Britain, France and Germany in the twentieth century. Like it was in other nations at the time, Yoruba society had its own system of government as an ethnic group. The system was based on king's ownership of land as explicated in Marxism. Under this system, the King was the head of the political, religious, economic and social administration of his domain. For instance, as the head of judiciary, all cases, no matter the magnitude, ends with the king's verdict. Whatever the king said was binding on both the prosecutor and the defendant.

Like in some African countries like Zimbabwe and Tanzania, the local constitution provides for checks to curb excessive use of power by the king. (See Posselt, 1935, Spierenburg, 2004), the Oba's council such as the Òyómèsì in the Old Òyó Empire were there to checkmate the King's misuse of power. Their roles could be likened to that of the present day Houses of Assembly and Representative who rather than checkmating the President's misuse of power are themselves corrupt, autocratic and despotic.

Today, the situation in Nigeria has changed. Yorùbá say "*ibi tí a bá pè ní orí, a kú fí ibè tẹ̀lẹ̀*" literally meaning "it is improper to walk with one's head on the ground". This infers that a leader/elder should not be underrated or insulted. Such saying is no more respected among the Yorùbá. The kings and community leaders in general have lost this value and this is not doing the society any good. The traditional rulers of today, are prepared to mortgage the sacredness of their throne to the highest bidder. They bestow chieftaincy titles on the rich regardless of the source of their wealth. It is this corruption-ridden society that forms the themes of the two selected plays under study.

This implies that some factors such as Western Animism have disturbed African Indigenous knowledge as we shall see later in this work. In the arduous task of building a virile and egalitarian Nigerian society, successive Nigerian leaders since independence (military and civilian), had mapped out plans and strategies that have not seen the light of the day because of exigency and lack of clear vision of the type of Nigeria of their dreams.

Àláo (2006, p. 248) notes that democratic principles as exercised before and even after independence show that many of the Nigerian politicians are yet to be politically matured. This political immaturity was responsible for series of political crisis over the motion for self-government by Late Chief Anthony Enahoro in 1953, Kano riot of 1953, census crisis of 1962. Other political crises were the Action Group crisis of 1962, Federal election crisis of 1954, the Western Nigeria election crisis of 1965, the general election crisis of 1983 as well as the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election. These crises had indeed thrown Nigeria into political instability at various times and had created problems of national integration and loss of confidence in democratic institutions.

Ethical norms and accountability, which are critical for every administrative system, were relegated to the background. Employment in the public service was seen as a route for accumulation of wealth rather than a means of providing services to the people. Politicians became business partners to the capitalist European businessmen. The large-scale corruption led to the first coup on January 28, 1966.

As earlier stated, Nigeria is made up of multiplicity of ethnic groups with varieties of languages, occupation and architecture and so on, yet bound together by several unifying factors such as economic and historical ties. However, the country's motto: *Unity and Strength, peace and progress*, seems to be the country's greatest problem which includes among others: marginalization, domination of political leadership by a section of the country. For instance, records have shown that the North has produced Nigeria President than any other tribe in the country. Religious bigotry, ethnicity and mediocrity have become the order of the day. The use of political thugs has put the entire society into undesirable unrest. With these factors present in the polity, the nation cannot grow in strength and unity.

Yorùbá literary writers have been addressing the theme of political oppression that often leads to various forms of undesirable unrest in their publications. They preach revolution and freedom from oppression through songs (protest or war songs), proverbs which are believed to arouse the feelings of pain, sadness and gives a stimulating factor to peoples' actions. It is a medium through which writers communicate with the readers.

The objective of this chapter is to examine and evaluate the present political system in Nigeria as presented by the selected playwrights and its consequences on the nation as a whole. It also discusses the solutions provided for freedom from oppression by the authors. In all, two Yorùbá written plays with political themes are chosen. They include Oḍúnjò's *Agbàlọ́yọ́mèrú Baálè jòntolo*, (1976) and Adeyemi's *Ìsẹ̀lú Oníreké Ògè*, (2014). Our choice of texts is based on the fact that the chosen texts have political themes with elements of colonialism going by the type of governance operating at the time.

The Yorùbá traditional system of government was based on the principle of *Oḅa ló nílẹ̀* meaning "the king has control over everything

and he has final say in all issues” though may be seen as a form of oppressive rule, it provides checks and balance.

The chapter evaluates how Yorùbá literary writers present Nigeria’s political situation in general and their views about it. The research methodology centres on text appreciation. The research employs the Marxist sociological theory of literature to put the record straight, that although Nigeria got her independence from colonial rule, yet colonialism is still noticed within the Nigerian society, and that in line with Karl Marx and his associates’ opinion, the society is not folding its arms, rather, it is rising and fighting for its freedom from oppression. The chapter observes that the political administration of Nigeria has changed from what it used to be in the past. One can ask if Nigerian leaders today are truly leaders. The chapter approves protest and revolutionary actions as the best means of freeing the society from oppression. It recommends that the device should be more effectively used to add aesthetic values to the portrayal of the cultural values of Nigeria.

Scholars such as Adélékè (1986,1995), Ògúndèjì (1988, 1989, 1990, 2001, 2009), Sheba (1995), Ògúnsínà (1995), Alùkò (1993), Arohunmólàṣẹ (1997), Abíólà (2005), to mention just a few, had worked on various Yorùbá written plays, but none of them to the best of our understanding has really addressed the political administration of the Yorùbá society as presented in the selected play texts with political themes hence, the need for this chapter. The scope is limited to the examination of the two selected written plays using the Marxist’s Sociological theory of literature as our theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework: Sociological Theory (the Marxist Approach)

A theory can be described as an instrument in the hand of a literary critic used to analyse the content and form of a literary work. It gives an insight into the thinking of a literary artist. Adéyemí (2006, p.4) is of the view that “òtẹ̀ tí lírírẹ̀ṣọ̀ bá dì, ogbón lámẹ̀yító ní tú u jáde sí gbangba” meaning “the secret in a literary work is exposed by the literary critic (a theorist)”. This implies that the thoughts of a

literary artist are best understood through the application of a literary theory. A theory exposes and publicizes the writer and his work.

A literary theory is a body of harmonized precepts needed to solve emerging questions from a literary work. A literary theory is necessary to guide the interpretation and analysis of a literary work so as to give the work associated meaning and interest. A theory helps in managing reality. Nevertheless, it has to be critically examined before it is adopted so that it would not distort reality.

Several literary theories are available to literary critics. Among them are: Formalism, Structuralism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, Marxism, New Historicism etc., but for the purpose of this study, we adopt the sociological theory of literature, the Marxist approach.

Adéyemí (2001) asserts that power tussle or power conflict between the rich, the average and the poor people is causing a lot of problem for the human race in general. Òpèfẹyítímí (1997) asserts that the few powerful, rich and highly influential people are using their positions to oppress others. This is the main focus of Marxist ideology. They are concerned with the situation of inequality within the society and this they want to find a solution to. They believe that the economic situation of a society determines her polity. Therefore, the two determine the relationship that would exist among the people of such society.

To Marx and his advocates, to put a stop to oppression and colonization, the oppressed must fight and compete with the person or groups of oppressor involved. This is the bottom line of Belbeare's (1976: 193) suggestion that:

There must be in effect, little microcosms of a new society growing amidst the old. Small groups of people would act on it in the direction of the new and become different people (with evolving consciousness) as they did. Òpèfẹyítímí (1977: 48) opines that:

Tíorì Marx n fẹ kí ònkòwé lo isé, onà rẹ gégé bí agbára àtí irinṣé láti tú àsírí àwọn aládaànlá lánwùjò, ó sì fẹ kí ònkòwé sẹ akitiyan bí àwùjò sẹ lẹ ra ara rẹ padà tí inú terùtomò yóó fì dìn.

Marx's theory wants writers to use their works as an instrument to expose the secret of the Capitalists in the society. It also wants writers to make effort on how the society can free itself in order to make everybody happy.

This implies that capitalist activities had been in existence long time ago. This is not restricted to African countries rather, the world in general, but in different forms. What Marxists are advocating is that wherever such situation exists, the people should join forces together and fight it, the magnitude notwithstanding.

In like manner, Dolbeare (1976: 188-265) asks:

What kind of awareness must we see? Is it one section within each group in a society that must first experience a change before others or many people will experience the changes before it actually starts? How do we take power off the hands of the authority who presently holds power? Is it forcefully with war or gently? What will the new society look like? How do we make use of the change?

Answers to the questions above shall be used as a guide to the analysis of the selected texts to prove that Marxist theory is suitable for the work. We want to see if the selected authors actually used their works to expose the secret of their society, if they actually used their work to re-awaken the poor to their responsibility to free themselves from their oppressors or not.

Nigerian Politics as presented by the selected Authors

Most Yorùbá playwrights like the traditional poets regard themselves as the conscience of the society. They do not only reflect the socio-political, cultural and economic activities of the society, they also advocate social and political change. They resist and condemn the neo-colonial order with its manifestations of corruption, violence and oppression. Examples of such plays are the ones examined in this chapter.

The selected authors in their works opine that Nigerian Politicians (which their works depict), for instance, practice politics of oppression. They use their positions to oppress the masses and to lord over the less privileged. In *Ìsèlú Oníréké Ògè*, Kòyókòyó party under the leadership of Igúnṣẹ̀yí, the incumbent president of Bořípé, can be described as an oppressor. As the party's name implies, they are never satisfied. No matter their wealth, they would always want more, the means notwithstanding. They are driven by the id and ego personality.

The 'id' and ego in them would not allow them to think about others. The 'id' is the original source of personality, present in the new-born infant from which the ego and the super ego later develop. It consists of everything that is inherited, including institutional drives-sex and aggression.

Characteristics of the 'id' include among others: it is closely linked to the biological processes and provide the energy source (libido) for the operation of all the three systems. The 'id' seeks immediate gratification of primitive, pleasure-seeking impulses. The 'id', like the new born baby operates on the pleasure principle.

During the party's political campaign, a member of the crowd asks Igúnṣẹ̀yí to explain to the crowd what he achieved during his first term in office and what he forgot to do that he now wants to accomplish if re-elected? Igúnṣẹ̀yí is surprised to see somebody who is bold enough to confront him with such questions. He says:

*Págà! Lójú ayé mi náà? Láìkú èkírì, a ò gbóḍò fawo.
rè se gbèdu. Bí igbín ò tilẹ̀ dunbè, enu òpòlò kó là á
tí gbó. (o.i. 35)*

Ha! Even when I am still alive? Nobody uses the skin of a living 'èkírì', in making a drum. If the snail is sour in soup, it is not the frog who will say it. (p. 35).

To prove his oppressive ideology, Igúnṣẹ̀yí immediately gives a sign to one of his area boy, *Panápaná*, who pounced on the person, beat him mercilessly and forces him out of the campaign arena. His suspected enemies are not spared either. He is a good example of Nigerian politicians who operate and are driven by the lion archetype.

The lion archetype is characterized by selfishness, greed, misuse of power, jealousy and the like. In Yorùbá mythology, the lion is the brute, wicked and merciless king. Whenever it is hungry, it roars and catches its prey effortlessly. This best describe the average Nigerian leader and this is in line with the theme addressed by Léré Adéyemí in *Ìṣèlú Onírèké Ògè*.

During one of his confrontations with *Wolé*, one of the leaders of 'Eyin nù dákùkò', a human activist group in *Borípe*, who he accuses of being vocal, *Òkèké* orders *Panápaná* to get rid of *Àrèmú* saying:

*E palè rẹ̀ mó ká rí nńkan mǐràn se. Ogbón inú omo.
nǐ rán omo lo eyin odi, òfun imòràn nǐ yan òmòràn
léro, imòràn àmòjù enu nǐ yoni. E gbé kinní jálajàla
bíi námo kúrò lágbo wa. (o.i.37)*

Clear him off so that we look for other things to do. The wisdom in a child sends the child out of town. The throat of the wise makes the wise a passenger, too much wisdom troubles one. Carry that rag out of this gathering. (p.37).

Panápaná also confirms the oppressive and despotic nature of *Igúnseyí* when he tells *Àrèmú* that Chief *Igúnseyí* has paid for the lives of people like *Àrèmú*. He then orders *Àrèmú* to disappear if he does not want to get lost as the public money disappears from the hands of politicians.

In like manner, in *Odúnjo's Agbàlónwómérí Baálè Jòntolo*, *Àgbàkànmí*, the Baálè of Jòntolo is presented as a good example of politicians who use their positions to oppress the less privileged. They resemble the lion in their handling of issues especially the ones that affect them negatively. For instance, *Àgbàkànmí*, the village head, on hearing that *Asere*, the main character, has plenty of gold in his custody, becomes jealous and would not believe *Asere* even when *Asere* tells him everything about the said gold. *Àgbàkànmí* threatens to impound *Asere's* main source of income (his truck) from him if he fails to disclose other items he gets from the dead blind man. He says:

[...] *Ọmolanke ẹ ti o fi maa n ru igi yoo lo si oran yii
nitori emi ko ri obun ti eniyan le fi iru apoti egbere
re yii se. Iwo ti o gba a ni yoo maa gbe e lo, sugbon
Ọmolanke ẹ yoo di die ninu wahala mi yoo si di ti
ilu lati oni lo. (o.i. 23).*

The truck you use to carry logs would be sacrificed.
Because I cannot think of anything useful the teetered
box you present can do. You brought it, and you are to
take it away, but your truck would pay for just a little of
my troubles and would become the community's property
from today onward (p. 23).

The use of language of threat is common among political leaders who see political offices as their birth right or their personal property and they do everything within their reach to hold on to their political posts. In *Ìsèlú Oníreké Ọ̀gè*, Igúnseyi, the incumbent president of *Bóripé*, sees the hand writing on the wall that he is losing out of the presidential race, he employs the services of political thugs and touts in the likes of *Àlùwó*, *Panápaná*, and *Abániwákú* to disrupt the election processes by beating up electoral officers, snatching ballot boxes and even killing a police officer without minding the negative consequences of their actions. This gives us the impression that Politicians use hoodlums who bear fake names probably to hide their proper identity and possibly to escape being arrested. Such names are dreadful and create fear in people.

It is an irony that the electoral officers collaborate with *Kòyókòyó* party to rig the election. A police officer stumbles on an electoral officer thumb printing on ballot papers in favour of the *Kòyókòyó* party. The electoral officer is confident and bold to invite the police officer to join him in the thumb printing exercise. He says: '*Ọ̀gá, ọ̀nà kan kò wọjà sà. Eyin náà, e bá wa dì í kó kún*' meaning "Sir, many roads lead to the market place. You can also join us in our effort to ensure that the boxes are filled up".

The case in Nigerian politics today is not different. There have been reported cases of missing ballot papers, ballot boxes or ballot papers already thumb printed in the name of one political party or the other before election days. It is however sad that no good result emanates from any investigation on such happenings, if they are

investigated at all. Quite a number of prominent political leaders have died in the hands of their political opponents. We have heard the case of a suspect who was reminded in police custody yet he won the senatorial election of his constituency even while in custody. Who dare ask how or why?

Another peculiarity about Nigeria political system is the several attacks launched on political opponents. Through the use of foul language, proverbial and inciting songs, lies, they castigate their political rivals even when it is glaring that they have nothing useful to offer the electorate.

In *Ìsẹ̀lú onírẹ̀ké ọ̀gẹ̀*, Igúnseyí, the presidential candidate of the *Kòyókòyó* party at a campaign says:

*... e má fẹ́tí sí àwọn alárinwo tí n pera wọn ní "Dádì,"
Dádì". "Dádì" mo ọmọ tó bí. Ara wọn nìkan ni wón n
dádì, wọn kù di ire fún elòmúran. E má fí ibò yín sọfò.
Egbé wa àti ìjòba wa se gudugudu méje. Ilé nlánlá pò.
nìgboro Àjùbà ju ti ayé ìgbà kan ló. Oṣò bọ̀lẹ̀ bọ̀lẹ̀ ni
ìjòba wa sètò kó pò ní ilú. Èyìn náà mò bí ìrẹ̀sì Kùtonu
se pò lójà tó... (o.i. 34-35).*

... do not listen to those talkatives who call themselves "Dádì" "Dádì". Dádì knows his children. They pack for themselves only but not for others. Do not waist your votes. Our party and our government have done wonderfully well. A lot of magnificent buildings can be found in Àjùbà town unlike in the past. Our government has arranged for the provision of heavy duty vehicles. You all know how plenty Cotonou's rice is in our markets... (pp. 34-35).

In *Agbàlónwóomérí Baálè Jòntolo*, Oḍúnjo presents Àgbàkànmí the political head of Jòntolo town who is supposed to guide his people right, as corrupt, autocratic, oppressive, dubious and greedy. When the secret behind Asẹ̀rẹ's 'wealth' gets to Àgbàkànmí, he plans and kills those who assist him to get the truth. He even plans to kill Asẹ̀rẹ to ensure that he takes possession of all the gold found inside the mysterious tree. Kìmí Àdúgbò, the only person who follows him to

the thumb where the gold is found is to be killed if not for the fact that they both perish inside the 'tree' as a result of the act of greed displayed by Àgbàkànmí.

Asẹ̀rẹ̀ and Àdìgún his friend have earlier advised that the quantity of gold packed is enough, more so, to save Asẹ̀rẹ̀'s truck from being spoilt. Àgbàkànmí responds:

*Kí omolanke má bàjẹ! Bí omolanke bá lẹ̀ bàjẹ kẹ́ ó
bàjẹ. Mo ní kẹ́ e lo kó kinní fún mí, e n sòrò omolanke.
Moríyíná àti Kímí Àdúgbò, èyìn e jẹ́ a lo o jàrẹ, kẹ́ a jo.
gbé erù náà síta, eni tí kò bá lo, kò ní pín nínú rẹ. (o.i. 52-53)*

If the truck will spoil, let it spoil. I ask you to go and pack the thing for me you are talking about the truck. Moríyíná and Kímí Àdúgbò, let's go and bring the load out, anyone who fails to follow us will not have a share (p. 52-53).

The authors also portray Nigerian politicians as liars and self-centred people. This is not different from the Westerners who pretended to bring civilization to Africa whereas they brought colonization. A clear picture of this can be seen by comparing the themes in Delano's *Lójó, Ojó, Un* and *Ayé Dayé Òyìnbó*.

In *Lójó, Ojó, Un*, the author presents the political and religious situation in Yorùbaland before the coming of the Europeans but in *Ayé Dayé Òyìnbó*, he gives an overview of the cunning methods used by the Whiteman to usurp power from the Yorùbá Traditional rulers. Before the people know this, things have fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold.

The 'id' always likes to form a mental image or hallucination of the object that will reduce tension-wish fulfilment. Anybody that is controlled by 'id' trait loves to satisfy his/her needs irrationally with no consideration of reality.

The ego develops out of the 'id' because of the necessity for dealing with the real world. The hungry man has to have food if the tension of hunger is to be reduced. Thus, the ego obeys the reality principle which requires it to test reality and delay discharge of tension until the appropriate environmental conditions are found.

Features of the ego include the following: it operates by secondary process of thinking which is realistic and logical. The 'id' seeks immediate tension reduction by such primary processes or direct gratification of impulses or wish-fulfilling imagery but the ego takes the reward into consideration. It delays gratifications until the conditions are appropriate. The ego is essentially the executive of the personality because it decides what actions are appropriate. The ego mediates between the demands of the 'id', the realities of the world and the demands of the super-ego.

The super-ego is the third party of the personality. The super-ego is the internalized representation of the values and moral of the society as taught to the child by the parents and others. The super-ego judges whether an action is right or wrong according to the standard of the society. The 'id' seeks for pleasure, the ego tests reality and super-ego strives for perfection.

Features of the super-ego include the following: it is composed of the conscience. The conscience punishes by making the person feel guilty and the ego-ideal rewards by making the individual feel proud of himself. It inhibits the impulses of the 'id' particularly those that society prohibits, such as sex and aggression. It persuades the ego to substitute moralistic goals for realistic ones. The super-ego strives for more affection. The 'id', ego and super-ego should work as a team to produce integrated behaviour. Once the 'id' dominates a person, he behaves contrary to the values of the society. This is what most Nigerian politicians of today possess.

Because they found themselves in a capitalist economy, they bulldoze their way to the top and then use their position to overlord the less privileged. This is exactly what the theory is opposed to.

During a party meeting of Ìsòṣàṣà political party, Kóládé, a member of the party testifies to this in response to Apèràn's question. The conversation goes thus:

Apèràn: Sé alááánú kò sí mó nínú àwọn òsèlú wa ni?

Sé ibikan náà ni gbogbo wọn sùn tí wọn kórí sí ni?

Kóládé: Alááánú kè, nínú àwọn olósèlú? Ojú àánú wọn ti

fó ní kété tí òmìnira ti bó sówó wọn tán. Eni tó gbá

omọ re ní kòò tí orùn omọ fí wó, sé ó lè tìjù àtì bẹ.

omọ olómó lórí? Eto kí rìn kó pàdé oḍe alááánú, ejò

*kúú rí omo ènìyàn kó sàánú rẹ̀ lórò àwọn olóṣèlú òde
òní. Áánú kẹ̀? (o.i. 21).*

Apèràn: Are there no merciful people among our politicians anymore? Do they all sleep and face the same direction? Kóládé: Mercy! among politicians? Their merciful eyes are blind as soon as they assume office. He who knocks his child on the head and the child's neck bends, will he hesitate to behead another man's child? No antelope moves and meet a merciful hunter. Snakes don't meet a man and have mercy on him. This is exactly is the case of politicians of today. You mean Mercy?

This is just one out of the many negative comments about Igúnṣẹyí's government.

In *Agbàlówóoméríí Baálè Jòntolo*, the author presents *Agbàkànmi* as greedy and merciless. These traits change his name to *Agbàlówóoméríí* meaning somebody who forces the poor to give even the little he has. *Agbàkànmi* himself confirms this when he says:

*Bí mo ti ń sa gbogbo agbára mi to, isokúso ni
wón ń so sí mi káàkiri. Wón ní èmi "Agbàlówóoméríí"
Baálè Jòntolo". Wón se tíń, wón so ó di orúko mi
dípò Agbàkànmi tí mo ń jẹ. Èmi kò kúkú bìkítà fún
wón, kí wón máa wí. (o.i. 8).*

Despite my concerted efforts, they are talking rubbish about me all around. They call me "*Agbàlówóoméríí the Baálè of Jòntolo*". They even go to the extent of making it my name in place of *Agbàkànmi* which is my real name. Personally, I do not care, let them continue to say it (p. 8).

As earlier mentioned, *Agbàkànmi* cares not about the implications of his actions on *Asere* or *Adígún* his friend, his concern is to take possession of all the gold found inside the thumb. No wonder, he plans to get rid of his associates in the business. This can be referred to as "id" and ego personality which we have earlier discussed.

Further still, the authors describe Nigerian political system as a do-or-die affair. It is common in Africa in general that political office holders would always like to remain in power as long as they are alive even if the electorate does not want them. They would always find the means of retaining their positions even if it involves terminating another man's life. In 2011, the then Nigerian president would have gone for a third term in office if not for protest from stakeholders and various interest groups who vehemently resisted the move.

Recently, despite cries in most quarters that the political party in power has failed majority of Nigerians, they are hell bent on retaining the mantle of office. They use the media as megaphone to promote their ambitions through jingles and political propaganda which are exaggerated lies. They claim they have achieved all their electoral promises of 2011 even when they have not found a lasting solution to the Boko Haram insurgency, the abducted Chibok girls, the rising level of unemployment, bad economy and the likes.

There is no doubt that they are ready to go extra miles to stampede their opponents. When votes are counted and they lose out, they result to using their incumbency power either to reverse the election results in their favour or make the country ungovernable for the winner.

In *Ìsèlú Oníreké Ògè*, Igúnṣẹyí tries all available means to get rid of Wólé, one of the prominent leaders of *Ẹyin níí dákùkò* and other human right crusaders who he sees as stumbling block on his way and whom are outspoken, but all his efforts are thwarted by the youth organization. *Panápáná*, the leader of the assassin syndicate is killed.

Igúnṣẹyí continues to make frantic efforts to rig the election in his favour. *Débi*, *Àlùwó*, *Òjó*, *Olójú Oro* are employed to disrupt the election process. It is a do-or-die affair because in the process of trying to carry out their diabolical plans, they kill a police officer but at the end, all their efforts do not materialise. They are overpowered by the combined efforts of security agents and the youth associations of *Bórípé*. This result in the election and subsequent swearing-in of *Dádì*, the presidential candidate of *Ìṣòkan* party and within his one year in office, *Bórípé* as a whole has changed positively.

From the foregoing, one could affirm that the authors provide ways out of political oppression in our society. When appeals, negotiations and dialogue fail, protest is the next likely option to

follow. Karl Marx and his followers believe that despotic and oppressive rule of any form should be protested. They believe that the society should not fold its arms waiting for divine intervention. Yorùbá say “*enu, eni ni a fi n ko mé je*” meaning: “it is with your mouth you reject what you do not want”.

This is exactly what the Youth Association under the leadership of Wólé do to remove the oppressive and despotic government of Igúnṣeyí of the *Kòyókòyó* party. Even at the point of death, they defy all threats to their lives to fight the oppressive rule of Igúnṣeyí.

As earlier mentioned, a spectator who asks Igúnṣeyí to explain his achievements for four years is rough-handled by Panápaná. Àrẹ̀mú who condemns their action is also spared from rough handling. The Youth Association arrives at this point and protests with guns and other fighting instruments. Wólé does not hesitate to confront Òkẹ̀kẹ̀ when he says:

*Alagbà Òkẹ̀kẹ̀, sé èyin kò mò pé omọ
egbẹ wa ni Àrẹ̀mú ni? E fi i silẹ kíákíá
bí, e kò bá fẹ́ kẹ́ ilẹ́ ó ga jù yín ló. (o.i. 37)*

Mr. Òkẹ̀kẹ̀, don't you know that Àrẹ̀mú is
Our member? Release him now if you don't
want to see yourself disgraced. (p. 37).

Òkẹ̀kẹ̀ requests that Panápaná should deal with Wólé for being rude to him, but Wólé is bold to respond:

*Panápaná mojú iná tó lè pa. iná bintín bí iná fítílà
ni panápaná lè pa. Bí iná bá búrẹ́kẹ́ tán, omọ
panápaná mewaá kò má ràn án. Búlà nì' ná ó bú
mọ́ on lójú. Sé inọ́ ò mò wá nílẹ́ yíi ni? Òròmódìe
ò mawòdì, iyáa rè ló mäsá. (o.i. 37).*

The fire fighter knows the kind of fire it is capable of putting off. The kind of fire from a local lamp is what the fire fighter can put off. If the fire kindles, ten fire fighters cannot handle it. If the fire fighter attempts to put it off, the fire will explode on his face. Don't you know us in this village? The young fowl does not know

the eagle, it is the mother who knows the eagle. (p. 37).

At this point, *Panápaná* breaks a bottle with his head and attempts to stab *Wolé* with the broken bottle. *Wolé* also brings out an axe and before *Panápaná* knows it, the axe has landed on *Panápaná's* hand. This results into serious fracas between the two and even other members of the "*eyin níí dákùkò* group". The author gives the impression that the successes recorded by the Youth Association are because the protesters are united. They jointly fight the battle against the oppressive rule of *Igúnseyí* despite the risks involved.

In *Agbàlòwóoméřii Baálè Jòntolo*, the people of Jòntolo jointly protest the oppressive rule of *Baálè Agbàkànmi* and rejected the suggestion that his heir be made to succeed him. Instead, they prefer to install *Ašere* as the new *Baálè* of Jòntolo. They unanimously say:

*A kò fé Àřemo Baálè rárá. Ašere la fé, e kó
erù Ašere fun un, olè gégé bí Baálè Agbàlò-
wóoméřii ni Àřemo rẹ yíi. (o.i. 70)*

We reject *Agbàkànmi's* heir. It is *Ašere* we want. Give *Ašere's* properties to him, *Agbàlòwóoméřii's* heir is a thief like his father (p. 70).

Following this joint protest, *Ašere* is installed as the new *Baálè* of Jòntolo town with the hope that he will change things for better for the people.

Findings and analysis

Our findings reveal that colonialism, oppressive rule and political domination had been in existence before the coming of the Europeans to the shores of Africa. As earlier mentioned, the inauguration of the *Òyómèsì* council provided some freedom for the people. The Judiciary in particular was free from oppression. The Poets also served as check against misuse of power by the powerful in the society. They render poems, songs and the likes which out rightly condemn any form of oppression. The '*egúngún alárínjò*' are

prominent in this area. Their motto then was “*n ó wì, qba kan kèi pàkqrin*” literally meaning “I shall say as no king kills the singer/poet”.

The Yorubá political system tagged ‘*Qba ló niḽ*’ meaning “the king owns the land”, allows for the king’s dominance and control of the judiciary, legislative and economic affairs of his domain but with adequate checks and balance. The name “*Kábiyèsí*” (*Ká bi ó ò sí*) meaning “who dare quarries you gives room for despotism. No wonder why in the Old Òyó Empire, the constitution of the ‘*Òyómèsí*’ council of chiefs was to act as checks and balance in order to curb the excessive use of power by the executive (the Aláàfin). This implies that the political scenario experienced in Nigeria today is an archetype of what had existed in part not only among the Yorubá but among several tribes in Nigeria.

Further still, the authors give the impression that the only language understood by political leaders at all levels of government is protest or revolution. This is the present situation in Nigeria where in some states, workers are owed up to six months salaries and when all appeals fail, they embark on total strike. Instead of paying them their salaries, government resorts to using the traditional rulers to appeal to hungry workers to resume work. This is unthinkable. They can be described as the lion archetype. Just as lions do, they endeavour to avoid pains and obtain pleasure regardless of any external considerations.

Although it is not all the time that protests work to solve problems of freedom from colonization, it is also evident that most political leaders at the Federal, State and even local levels do not respect negotiations, signed agreements, court orders and the likes. But since the oppressed cannot remain defiant to their uncomfortable situation, protest is the last option.

From the forgoing, we would like to recommend that: Nigerian politicians in particular and world politicians in general, should strive to uphold their pre-election promises. Experience has shown that only a few of them stand by their promises. They should desist from seeing the post they occupy as their birth right which should not be tampered with.

The electorate on their part should ensure that they thoroughly screen political aspirants before deciding on whom to vote for just as Dádì in *Ìṣèlú Onírèké Ògè* is scrutinized by the *Eyin níi dàkùkò* Youth

Association and he is found satisfactory before his candidature is supported. At the end, they are not disappointed.

As effective as protest is, its use calls for caution. This is because most protests result in loss of lives of innocent citizens and valuable properties. It may even lead to civil war. Despite the observation, and in Marx's opinion, we do not support that the oppressed should fold their arms waiting for divine intervention because the oppressors would never voluntarily surrender and give freedom to the oppressed.

It is unfortunate however that most electorates sell their conscience for money. This situation is attributed partly to the high poverty level in the society. In as much as we believe that poverty may give room for such action, it is pertinent that if the electorate cooperate and faithfully fight oppressive rules, they are likely to succeed.

Today, it is doubtful if there is any traditional ruler in Nigeria who upholds the integrity of the areas they govern. The sanctity of most religious leaders has been compromised, and they become examples of moral bankruptcy. They have all turned politicians and money mongers who sell their conscience for money and material gifts. Experience has shown that most Nigerian political leaders go through the traditional rulers by offering them money and material gifts with the promise that they would deliver their domain to a particular political party.

We have also heard of occasions when traditional rulers do collaborate with political parties to thumb print ballot papers illegally. Yorùbá say: "*hènu bá je, ojú á tì*" literally means "if you take a bribe, you cannot but do the wish of the one who gives the bribe" even if he is not the best candidate and if he is eventually declared as winner, such a person cannot complain if that candidate fails to perform. This accounts for why today, a governor appoints and deposes an *Oba* at will. This relegates both the tradition and the people that own such tradition to the background. As long as the *Oba* subscribes to political mismanagement, the governed would have no option than to follow suit.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the Nigerian political system vis-à-vis its presentation by the selected playwrights. We have established the fact that most Nigerian politicians can be likened to oppressors and colonisers who use language of deceit, who promise heaven and earth to the electorate but as soon as they get to power, they turn their back on the electorate who vote them in. Since the only language understood by most politicians the world over, is protest, we are of the view that people should protest any form of oppression noticed on the part of their leaders because this is the only way the society can move forward. However, caution should be made to ensure that such protest do not degenerate to the level of sacrificing innocent lives and valuable properties.

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