

Authority and Moral Conflicts in the Films of Adébáyọ Fálétí: *Àfọ̀njá*, *Gáà*, *Şawo Şẹ̀gbẹ̀rì* and the Yorùbá Cosmopolis

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In this piece, I examine the role of authority in Yorùbá society and how authority is subverted by moral conflicts generated in the political evolution of the Yorùbá state from city state to empire, leading to disastrous consequences in the society at large as presented in the films of Adébáyọ Fálétí, specifically in *Àfọ̀njá* (2002), *Basọrun Gáà* (2004) and *Şawo Şẹ̀gbẹ̀rì* (2005). I argue that such pains and pangs of transformation are not unique to Yorùbá society but mirror similar political evolutions in other societies such as Rome and Greece. Such political upheavals led to the celebrated assassination of Julius Caesar in Rome and Alexander the Great of Macedonia. In particular *Àfọ̀njá* and *Basọrun Gáà* dramatize evocatively the poignancy of the attendant confrontations. In addition, I evaluate Adébáyọ Fálétí as a Nigerian and African foundational practitioner in the global field of cultural studies and his use of cultural postmaterialism in his work.

Adébáyọ Fálétí can be regarded as the father of modern Nigerian Cultural Studies and in Africa in general in line with the way that the discipline is understood the world over standing, as it were, on the cusp of traditional Nigerian and African drama and modern drama in African mother tongues. In addition, Fálétí epitomizes what modern cultural studies world-wide represent as a cross between the traditional discipline of drama and the television

industries as well as filmic industries, along with advertisements, which together constitute what is today known as the culture industries. As defined in the words of Chris Barker, “Culturalism focuses on meaning production by human actors in a historical context.”¹ Fálétí’s historical drama and films fall within such category. Barker added that Culturalism focuses on interpretation as a way of understanding meaning.² These are the hallmarks of the historical drama that formed the basis of two of the films by Fálétí being examined here. In addition, he stated that cultural studies deal with subjectivity and identity or how we come to be the kinds of people we are. Fálétí’s *Afọnja* and *Gáà*’s thematic preoccupation is how the Yorùbá subjectivity has been constituted over time through its political evolution. The three films also demonstrate what Stuart Hall considers to be the connection that cultural studies seeks to make to matters of power and cultural politics.³ With regards to the role of Fálétí as pioneer in the area of radio-vision cultural industries the broadcasting mogul narrated the manner in which he pioneered the phone-in radio broadcast in Nigeria on the programme “Èyí Àrà” at the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State, Ibadan (BCOS) after pioneering Yorùbá broadcasting on Africa’s first television station Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) twenty years earlier.⁴ Fálétí’s career spanning close to seven decades dovetails public services with private engagement with drama production. He was one of the earliest organizers of a drama performing company in 1949 to produce his own plays. His career development can be divided into three phases: the formative traditional drama performance phase, the literary drama phase which dovetails into his career as a public servant in a symbiotic relationship and his post public service movie production phase which coincided with the efflorescence of the Nollywood. The three works examined here straddle Fálétí’s second and third phases of engagement in drama production. Both *Basorun Gáà* (to be hereafter referred to as *Gáà*) and *Şawo Şẹgbẹ̀rì* were first staged in the second phase of Fálétí’s development as a theatre practitioner. In addition to being staged in the theater, *Gáà* and *Şawo Şẹgbẹ̀rì* were produced for television audiences as dramatic thrillers and became household favourites in the ‘70s and ‘80s at the time of his career as a radio/television broadcaster. Fálétí’s retirement from public service provided the opportunity needed to build on the experience gained in the television industry to launch a full-blown film production career for which his earlier experience seems to have been a tutelage. *Àfọ̀njá* (2002), *Gáà* (2004) and *Şawo Şẹgbẹ̀rì* (2005) are part of the products of this final phase. Although *Àfọ̀njá* preceded the other two in movie

1 Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage, 2012.

2 Barker, 2012, 17

3 Barker, 5.

4 Nigerianfilms.com. February 17, 2008. Accessed Aug 10 2018.

production, it was the last to be written among the three and is organically a prequel which builds on the success of *Gáà* and extends a thematic continuum in the Fágúnwà-esque manner of the novels *Ògbójú Ọde Ninu Igbó Irunmọlẹ* and *Igbo Olódùmarè*. While *Àfọ̀njá* and *Gáà* are historical drama based on actual events in the history of the Yorùbá empire, *Şawo Şegbẹ̀rì* is purely fictional and is based on a postcolonial Nigerian setting. The movies therefore take a reverse order to the chronology of writing and stage performance while *Şawo Şegbẹ̀rì*, which was the first to be staged among the three, was not written for stage and television performance until it was script-written for film production.⁵ *Àfọ̀njá*, *Gáà* and *Şawo Şegbẹ̀rì* are each set in a cosmopolis where the Yorùbá citizens have to deal with other nationals in the context of Yorùbá mores within a broader cosmopolitan ethos. In *Àfọ̀njá* and *Gáà* that context is provided by the empire phase of Yorùbá civilization in which Yorùbá civilization was the dominant point of reference; in *Şawo Şegbẹ̀rì* the drama is situated in the context of postcolonial Nigerian city, in a nation that boasts large ethnic nationalities of which the Yorùbá are only one and in which Yorùbá culture is mediated by the postcolonial state with its symbol of the English language as the means of communication and its cultural spin offs. Fálétí demonstrates the mastery of dramaturgy in *Àfọ̀njá* and *Gáà* by juxtaposing the dynamics of running a state originally built on a confederation of city state structure very much like the Greek city state structure, at the latter's comparative stage of political evolution, with a new imperial structure and the conflicts generated by the flux of the two systems; whereas in *Şawo Şegbẹ̀rì* moral conflict is generated by interpersonal amatorial clashes as well as models of expertise.

In the traditional Yorùbá setting from which Dr. Sùnmọ̀là the main protagonist in *Şawo Şegbẹ̀rì* comes, on the job professional expertise matters more than paper qualifications which are not backed by practical expertise. Thus, authority is commanded by the professional who could demonstrate mastery through performance. Dr. Sunmola's work is of unquestionably high quality, but his authority to perform is put in question by the knowledge that he fell short of full medical qualification before returning home from training abroad. In the fictional Yorùbá postcolonial cosmopolis where his practice is situated, Dr. Sunmola could not invoke practical proficiency as qualifications which might be sufficient if he had been practising in a mono ethnic Yorùbá nation because practice has to be standardized into mutually acceptable and agreed standards externally imposed and symbolically expressed in the acquisition of paper qualifications. Dr. Sunmola's qualification predicament is exposed by Senior Nurse Abiola who trained overseas with Dr. Sunmola and

5 Nigerianfilms.com. February 2008.

was his lover on arrival back home before Dr. Sunmola met Junior Nurse Ibidun and fell for her charms, to nurse Abiola's chagrin. It is the moral conflicts generated in the love triangle that advances the plot and generates the moral dilemma of Dr. Sunmola. Should the services of Dr. Sunmola be terminated, putting an end to the lives that can be saved because he lacks the authority to save them? This is the moral dilemma posed by the movie. And the sub-plot poses its own dilemma: Should Dr. Sunmola abandon the long relationship with nurse Abiola without qualms on sighting the young vivacious nurse Ibidun?

The sources of moral conflicts and the nature and questioning of authority in *Àfọ̀njá* and *Gáà* are more profound and sublime and go to the very heart of Yorùbá Constitutional Monarchy. Let us examine these by chronology of events of history by starting with *Gáà*. The events of the movie start in the 1780s and as the written title of the adapted play portray, *Ìtàn Ìbànújẹ Gáà*, it is a tragedy.⁶ Songs in the play as well as songs in *Àfọ̀njá* portray these events as precipitated by curses incurred by the violations and sacrileges against sacrosanct codes of the unwritten Yorùbá Constitution. However, recent critical examination of these events indicates that overexpansion of a kingdom into an empire provoked a conflict of societal forces that were designed for city states polity rather than empire. Thus, these reading places the eponymous hero Bashorun Gáà as a tragic hero rather than a traitor against his Principal, the Aláàfin several, of whom Gáà despatched through regicide.

Similar crises of political evolution occurred in ancient Rome and ancient Greece. As legend has it, Ancient Rome developed as a small dwelling nurtured by the duo of Romulus and Remus, became a kingdom and borrowed a leaf from neighbouring Greece to transform its political structure to a democracy with several legislative bodies, such as the Centuriate Assembly, with two Caesars (war generals) for the eastern and western sections who expanded the boundaries of the empire. One of such Caesars, the celebrated Julius, a late developer, lamented winning no major battles till his late 50s, but more accomplished general than his peers, sought to stealthily unite the two flanks under his rule. However, the Roman constitution forbade his goal and his fellow senators assassinated him on the grounds that Rome knew no kings. It was left to his nephew Augustus to complete the task due to his sagacity of stooping to conquer the Senate's misgivings.

Greece's path to political evolution was the closest to the events presented in Fálétí's *Àfọ̀njá* and *Başorun Gáà*. Greece had a city state structure like the early Yorùbá states but, by and large, it became transformed to an empire

6 Faleti, Adebayo. *Ìtàn Ìbànújẹ Gaà. Başorun Ilẹ Yorùbá Ní Aiyé Ọba Abiọdún*. Ibàdàn: Onibonoje Press, 1976.

under the leadership of Macedon. In its early political evolution, the Greek city states were led by Athens and Sparta of which the more warlike was Sparta while Athens became the home of cultural efflorescence. The Yorùbá city states on the other hand were led by Ọ̀yọ́-Ile and Ile-Ife of which like Sparta, Ọ̀yọ́ was the more war like. The Yorùbá Constitution forbade any city state to levy war on Ile-Ife, the ancestral home and its tributaries. Like Macedon Ọ̀yọ́ grew imperial and one of the causes of the catastrophes of Àfọ̀njá and Gáà is that the Aláàfin (King) of Ọ̀yọ́ levied war on Apòmù, an Ile-Ife tributary. Like Greece's Delian League, Ọ̀yọ́ entered into alliances with other Yorùbá provincial city states as well as non-Yorùbá states to build formidable armies and expand its frontiers which extended to the borders of present-day Ghana in the West and the Cameroons in the East. These alliances are dramatically depicted in *Afọ̀nja*.

It has been speculated that Alexander the Great was murdered in the course of his conquest to expand his empire by his generals but no one was able to pinpoint who did what. In the case of Ọ̀yọ́ Empire there were many Aláàfin, 'Julius Caesars' and 'Alexanders' murdered by the courtiers known as the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi, headed by the Basorun who were the legislators and interpreters of the Yorùbá Constitution. Their method of getting rid of an Aláàfin who fell out of favour was to ask him to abdicate via ritual suicide as stipulated in the Yorùbá Constitution. As was the case of Augustus in Rome, Aláàfin Abiodun checkmated the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi and their leader Basorun Gáà through initially stooping to survive long enough to mount an assault on the Basorun's metropolitan force by invoking his constitutional powers to assemble a foreboding imperial alliance of provincial forces. In this manner, the Yorùbá provision of checks and balances worked as designed by its formulators to forestall tyranny by any of the segments of the ruling classes, since the external alliance has worked to prevent the Bashorun and his team from hijacking power at the centre. The question is why did the Basorun and the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi scheme to subvert the Yorùbá Constitution and usurp powers at the centre?

Current socio-economic reading blames the root cause of moral conflicts and the undermining of the traditional concept of authority in Yorùbá culture on the introduction of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade on an industrial scale which brought in hitherto unknown wealth into the empire, wealth which, in turn, shook the socio economic fabrics of Old Ọ̀yọ́ to its roots.⁷ Other readings such as debates on USA/Africa Dialogue Series (August 2018) situated the impetus for empire on the collective need for self preservation by Yorùbá states and its non-Yorùbá neighbors such as Borgu Empire. It was

7 Odumorun. "Bashorun Gaa: Cruel Tyrant or Misunderstood Freedom Fighter." Nairaland Forum. December 19, 2012. Accessed August 7, 2018.

demonstrated how such alliances between the 16th and 19th centuries led to the establishment of Ogbomoso another Yorùbá city state by the duo of Akin Ogundiran and Bolaji Aluko.⁸ In Yorùbá culture political heads (baálẹ̀ or full-fledged kings) of communities hold power and exercise authority only as representatives of ancestors who were the real source of power overseeing the well-being of such communities in an animistic setting. Unjust rule therefore means ancestral trust has been betrayed for which atonement must be sought in rituals to restore societal as well as cosmic equilibrium. Total despotism or wholesale calamities are avoided by asking the ruler in which such events are experienced to abdicate through ritual suicide since a king cannot be deposed and asked to continue life as an ordinary citizen. This system places immense burden on crowned heads which makes the adage literally true for Yorùbá monarchs that ‘uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.’ This is where the role of Baṣòrun Gáà comes in.

Yorùbá culture pragmatically ensures that despotism is avoided by appointing a group of chieftains called Ọ̀yọ̀-Ìmèsì (this number is six for certain kingdoms in Èkìtì province like Ìmèsì ‘lášhìgídí’ Èkìtì and called ‘iwàréfà méfà’ and seven in Ọ̀yọ̀). Baṣòrun Gáà presided over the seven Ọ̀yọ̀-Ìmèsì whose members oversaw the seven districts into which Ọ̀yọ̀ metropolis is divided and they are the touch stones for the just rule of each monarch through whom the expectations and demands of the citizenry are channelled to the monarch and through whom social and economic justice is secured in the Yorùbá brand of traditional democratic practice. This time honoured arrangement was put under strain with the advent of the Trans-Atlantic trade in which the authority of the Ọ̀yọ̀-Mesi was increasingly eroded in favour of the rulers of the outlying provinces who became more prominent as their fortunes increased with the wealth secured through the Trans-Atlantic trade. According to this reading, because the Ọ̀yọ̀-Mesi came from the lineages of the original settlers of Old Ọ̀yọ̀ from whom the monarchical lineages were selected, the Ọ̀yọ̀-Mesi set up parallel structures of governance in the imperial domains outlying the metropolis to take advantage of the new trade. Rulers of these provinces owe allegiance to the Aláàfin but deny direct allegiance to the Ọ̀yọ̀-Mesi and their agents in the cosmopolis seeking to limit their influence to the Ọ̀yọ̀ metropolis.

In setting up parallel structures of governance in the imperial domain, the Ọ̀yọ̀-Mesi have challenged the authority of the Aláàfin whose sole prerogative the overarching governance of the provinces was, and this represents the source of the moral conflicts which threaten to tear the empire apart. Aláàfin’s sole prerogative and authority to collect taxes in the Yorùbá domain and

8 Aluko, Bolaji, Ogundiran, Akin. USA/Africa Dialogue Series. August 26 2018.

to authorize the declaration of war has been challenged by a body whose role was constitutionally limited originally to the metropolis thereby sparking a constitutional crisis in Yorùbá culture. Bashorun Gáà far from being the sole ambitious power monger that he was portrayed to be was probably the arrow head of friction in the mode of governance. Seen from this perspective, the real reason for Gáà's regicide was to abuse the constitutional provision that places the power to remove a despot in the hands of the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi. Thus, any Aláàfin who wanted to question the constitutional impropriety of the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi to usurp the monarchical role is interpreted as not acting in the best interests of the people whom the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi represent, and is advised to abdicate.

To be sure, this moral conflict is real because, as representatives of the people of Ọ̀yọ́ metropolis, if the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi did not actively participate in the new trade and bring its riches home, the outlying districts would be better developed economically at the expense of the original Ọ̀yọ́ metropolitans. Added to this, was the fact that a number of Aláàfin who reigned shortly before the appointment of Gáà were indeed growing despotic and unpopular as a result of their increasing wealth such as the case of the lecherous Aláàfin Amúniwáyé. This was the context in which Gáà and the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi deposed the four Aláàfin who preceded Aláàfin Abiọ̀dún: Lábísí, Awọ̀nbíọ̀jú, Agboluaje and Májeógbé.

As stated earlier, Aláàfin Abiodun soon put a stop to the unchecked reign of the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi and Gáà through a series of alliances with the leaders of the outlying provinces by exploiting the situation that these leaders resent the fact that Gáà and his council encroached on their territory and schemed to deliver Ọ̀yọ́ metropolis from their strangle-hold by orchestrating the invasion of Ọ̀yọ́ by the provincial armies at the head of which was Ààre Ọ̀nà Kakanfò, the overall Yorùbá field commander and to whom the Aláàfin was constitutionally the supreme commander. However, in authorizing war on Ọ̀yọ́ in exercise of his constitutional powers, Aláàfin Abiodun let the moral conflict genie out of the bottle: it is forbidden for any Yorùbá city state to declare war on Ọ̀yọ́. Thus, Aláàfin Abiodun had broken a time-honoured taboo in a bid to defeat Gáà's forces and revive his authority in Ọ̀yọ́ metropolis.

This is where the screening of *Àfọ̀njá* the movie takes over. Fálétí's choice in the opening scenes of *Àfọ̀njá* is a cultural materialist approach in the depiction of the economic activities of the cosmopolis. According to Raymond Williams, culture is a productive process⁹ and Fálétí's depiction in the opening scene is a slice of the economic activities of the cosmopolis. In addition, Fálétí has used *Gáà* and *Àfọ̀njá* to inscribe the Yorùbá values of cooperative industry

9 Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1963

to achieve laudable national goals. As the Yorùbá adage puts it, *omódé níṣẹ̀ àgbà níṣẹ̀ ní a fi dá ilẹ̀ Ifẹ̀*” (The foundation stone of Ife civilization was laid with the labor of the young and the old). Moreover, several actors who have featured in Fálétí’s television production work were drafted into his movie production cast such as Lérè Paimọ and Akínwùnmí Ìṣọlá. The ubiquity of these movies by instant demand on Youtube has been described by Allocca as “creating entertainment in the auto-tune era.”¹⁰ Allocca’s views on Youtube as an empowering media is at variance with the Marxian view of the Frankfurt school on mass communication in a televisual world. Adorno, for instance, compares the schema of mass culture to sporting events, which it parodies and sees aesthetic images as partaking in imagelessness.¹¹ He sees the subjected masses as celebrating their lack of freedom. However, Fálétí in these films, has gone beyond the neo-Marxian theorizing involved in Williams position to reposition African critical thinking and production, including artistic production, for life after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the re-opening of Eastern churches’ doors. Fálétí’s works together with a large swathe of Nollywood products have recentered the importance of the unpredictable, and the unseen in human lives and have problematized how these affect the final outcomes of human activities. These are aspects governed by, Èṣù-Èlegbara, the Yorùbá God of chance, numerology and communications. New realities confront the certitudes of modern science with the uncertainties of human nature. In sum, these depictions are to be referred to as cultural postmaterialism. Thus, in *Àfọnjá* the Chorus sings of the reign of maledictions. In the coming of the Eso the market women sing praises of their liberators in a scenario in which one segment of the ruling class is seen as delivering them of the tyranny of the other unlike the mass victimhood theorized by Adorno.

In *Afọnja*, the outlying provinces knowing the real power of the empire rested in their hands after the first invasion of Ọ̀yọ́-Ile soon begin to clamour for their independence from the metropolis. *Àfọnjá* is the Aare Ona Kakanfo who succeeded Oyabi the hero of the first Ọ̀yọ́ invasion. *Àfọnjá* basked in the fame of the new status of his command as the saviour of the empire and benefactor of Ọ̀yọ́. After the demise of Gáà, and the Restoration, the Ọ̀yọ́-Mesi became a tool in the hands of the Aláàfin whose authority grew correspondingly. In view of the unchecked power, the next Aláàfin continued in the tradition of immediate pre-Gáà monarchs of increasing autocracy. In line with the economic perspective of the whole crisis, the movie opens with a market scene depicting Ọ̀yọ́ cosmopolis in conflict with the idea of metropolis. The

10 Allocca, Kevin. *Videocracy: How Youtube is Changing the World*. London: CPI, 2018, p. 29.

11 Bernstein, J.M. *Adorno: The Culture Industry*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 89

opening scene also depicts the reckless abuse of power by the Basorun with the knowledge that any Aláàfin that attempts to check his autocracy will pay with his life ultimately. Market women are deserting the market in a melee and emissaries are sent to the Palace. In addition, Gambari a non-Yorùbá national, has his wares confiscated by agents of the Basorun. The Aláàfin wades in on the side of Gambari as the authority responsible for peace in the cosmopolis to the disappointment of Ọ̀yọ́ citizens who want Gambari to be excluded from the privileges of the metropolitan citizenship. However, Aláàfin Aólẹ generates a moral conflict and the questioning of his authority when he unjustly exercises his authority to declare war by ordering the invasion of Ìwérré and Apòmù.

In *Àfọ̀njá* Fálétí facilitates dramaturgy through the constant shifts in scenery of opposing war camps in the battle field and Aláàfin Aólẹ's palace. Here the Bashorun's position has been degraded to that of the court messenger which he now shares with the Ìlàrí. He carries messages to *Àfọ̀njá* on the battlefield on Aole's determination to conquer Iwerre, Aláàfin Abiodun's maternal home, contrary to the constitution that Iwerre must not be militarily attacked. What is more Aláàfin Àjàgbó who constituted the post of Ààre Ona Kakanfò with the seventy Èṣọ generals had declared that any Aare who used his position to attack Iwerre, the birth place of the force will die a violent death? Finally, in declaring war against Apomu, an Ife territory, Aole had committed one of the most unforgiveable sacrileges of the Yorùbá Constitutional Monarchy that no Yorùbá force must attack any part of the territory of the Ife ancestral home. From these, it is clear that Aole had used his authority unconstitutionally and had grown into a despot thus sowing moral conflict in the minds of his army commanders. This moral conflict is depicted in the scene where the field commanders (the 70 Èṣọ) are almost in open revolt against their generalissimo, *Àfọ̀njá*, in the battle field. *Àfọ̀njá*, on his own part, declares that Aole deliberately ordered the sacrilege to get rid of him (*Àfọ̀njá*) knowing full well he is unlikely to survive the encounter. The Bashorun seizes his moment by allying with Ìwérré chiefs and the Aare Ona Kakanfo to demand Aole's abdication.

Aláàfin Aole's response to the call to abdicate is to defy his adversaries and prepare for war since he realized that *Àfọ̀njá*'s response might be to organize the invasion of Ọ̀yọ́ following the precedent established by Aláàfin Abiodun and Aare Ọ̀yabí. The preparation for war drives a heightened dramatic tempo with Ìwérré women singing the praises of the Èṣọ to the exquisite beats of bàtá drums:

Chorus:

Àwa Jagunjagun ti

*Jà Kiti Kata.*¹²

Chorus:

We come from a lineage of warriors
Who battle in diverse places where
Our military prowess is needed.

Bashorun tries to stave off invasion by reminding Aare's party that it is forbidden to declare war on Ọ̀yọ́ metropolis to no avail Àfọ̀njá and the provincial alliance succeed in their Ọ̀yọ́ campaign and interim authority is handed over to the Basorun to restore Ọ̀yọ́ to previous constitutional position.

Songs celebrating the conquest of Aole are depicted at this stage:

Chorus:

Ọ̀wọ́ tẹ̀ ọ́
Ọ̀wọ́ tẹ̀ ọ́
Aólẹ̀ tó wẹ̀wù àşejù
Ọ̀wọ́ tẹ̀ ọ́.¹³

Chorus: He is held captive

He is held captive

Aole decked in the garb of a despot

He is held captive.

The post Ọ̀yọ́ campaign status of Aare Àfọ̀njá has been enhanced. He takes the opportunity to assert the independence of Ilorin from Ọ̀yọ́ and all attempts to send emissaries to Àfọ̀njá by the Bashorun is rebuffed. What is more he sows the seeds of his own downfall by acceding to the request of Alimi an itinerant preacher that he forms a multinational army with Northern Nigerian elements in it in order to build a formidable army. Àfọ̀njá's calculations must have been that by raising a cosmopolitan army in Ilorin, he would be neutralizing the bonds of kinship in a regular Yorùbá army to the metropolitan army in Ọ̀yọ́-Ile, thus countermanding the Aláàfin's command. As things turn out the gambit backfires with disastrous consequences.

First signs of moral conflicts in Ilorin are shown in the fact that a sizeable number of Àfọ̀njá's following become Islamic converts bearing moslem names indicating that their cultural priorities have been vitiated. We soon hear northern trumpets and the shouts of *Allah akbir*. Although many of

¹² *Afonja*. Afan Productions. 2002.

¹³ *ibid*

Àfònjá's following still pronounce it a Yorùbá city, the environment progressively becomes northern in outlook with Islamic dress codes. What is more Àfònjá's new following begin to raid the Yorùbá compounds with stories of pregnant goats being stolen. Attempts by Àfònjá to mediate prove futile. He sends for Alimi to intervene because the bandits pledge loyalty only to Alimi despite the initial scenes where Àfònjá, in taking them, in asserts that they are his guests. Alimi, to Àfònjá's consternation, takes sides with his proteges. Some of whom now include Yorùbá and organises them into a confrontation with the rump of Àfònjá's Yorùbá supporters. Àfònjá calls on his old ally, the Oníkòyí for assistance and the alternating scenes of war preparation with war chants heighten the drama. Eventually the battle is joined and Àfònjá is slain in one of the clashes with Alimi's mercenary forces.

The closing dirge indicates the reason adduced for Àfònjá's loss. This is seen as the effect of maledictions following earlier sacrilegious activities, including the invasion of Iwerre, the birth place of Aare Ona Kakanfo office and his seventy commanders, the invasion of Ọ̀yọ́-Ile by a Yorùbá force and the levying of war against an Ilé-Ifẹ tributary state by a ruling Aláàfin:

*Káàárọ̀ oòjire, káàárọ̀ oòjii re
Èpè ló mà n jà yí o, à fi ká sọra
È wo ibi ọ̀rọ̀ ti wọ́ wá
È ò rí ìberẹ̀ ọ̀rọ̀ àwa ọmọ Yorùbá
Èpè ló mà n jà yí o, à fi ká sọra.¹⁴*

Hello, how are you; hello how are you?
This is surely the outcome of maledictions, beware!
Observe the root causes of transgressions
Behold our skewed past, Yorùbá people.
This is surely the outcome of maledictions, beware!

Are the tragedies in *Àfònjá* and *Gáà* the result of maledictions or are they the outcomes of insufficient preparations for systemic changes following political evolution? My comparative analysis of similar events in ancient Rome and ancient Greece suggests insufficient preparation for changes in the political set up following expansion of the limits of the society coupled with inordinate human ambition were responsible for catastrophe in the larger Yorùbá society and that Fálétí, as a seasoned film director, has captured these events ably on celluloid.

14 *Àfònjá* video film.

In the preceding, I have examined the role of authority and moral conflicts in three films by Adébáyọ Fálétí. I noted that in *Şawo Segberí* moral conflicts were generated by amatorial complexities in the work place which put his authority in question, and I added that the concept of authority in a metropolitan traditional setting is not invariably the same as in a cosmopolitan setting. On the latter authority is formalized, irrespective of professional efficiency. In *Àfònjá* and *Gáà*, the concept of authority is put under strain through diachronic political change which was not fully grasped and carefully reflected in governance because of premature greed to take advantage of new economic realities which seemed to be eluding part of the dominant class formations the Ọyọ-Mesi and its leader Başorun Gáà. There were encroachments on traditional demarcations of authorities with unavoidable moral conflicts and violations of the Yorùbá Constitution. The leadership of the Yorùbá communities at the time lacked the political will, foresight and courage to redraw the contours of political power and patronage, as it once happened in ancient Rome and Greece, as depicted in the films with disastrous consequences. I also examined the role of Fálétí as a pioneer in Nigeria and African culture industries as well as the study and practice of cultural studies.

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