

Yorùbá Films in Time Perspective: Past, Present, and Future

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Abstract

This essay (re)views the development of Yoruba films according to the Yoruba traditional worldview about time: a term used synonymously with life, season or period, for it is not linear but cyclical, just as life, it is not straight. Therefore, the present trend in the Yoruba film industry, whereby skilled film producers now have their films premiered at and release to only cinemas where they could be watched legally and piracy is prevented, is seen in this paper as a return to the origin of the development of the Yoruba films. The Yoruba films started in 1976 at the cinema (past), metamorphosed into video mode in the 1990s which is still in place (present) and gradually going back to the cinema and the stage mode (future from now), which was its origin because the Ogunde dramatic tradition: a stage medium, is agreed as Yoruba film precursor.

Introduction

Film is one of the electronic media of presenting acted drama to audience. Other media include stage, Prints (photo play, magazines and texts), radio and television. This film medium has been referred to as motion picture, celluloid, video, movie, and cinema and so on. According to Àlà mú (2010), the use of each of these terms, in lieu of film and as a distinct drama medium, have always generated arguments in terms of appropriateness. Àlà mú (2010) submitted that these terms, including film, have been used to distinguish one cinematic production from the other. From his opinion, cinematic production is used to conceptualise drama presentation other than stage medium. Thus, film, motion picture, celluloid, video, movie and so on are individually distinct cinematic production.

In line with this, Gaston (1992) has explained that differences exist between the term cinema and film, though the two terms have been used interchangeably. Differentiating between the two terms, Gaston (1992) asserted that the sum of films that have been made so far and the language or art which gives form to those films is the cinema while films, on the other hand, are particular concrete instances of cinema and that when film does not refer to a specific movie, it means the language and art of the cinema. To buttress this position, Metz (1982) asserted that there is synthesis of cinematic and non-cinematic codes in a particular film, stressing that to have films that are predominantly theatrical, musical or pictorial is not impossible, for cinema is a conglomeration of all sorts of films.

However, Àlà mú (2010) observed that to aggregate to cinema the totality of films produced, is a total misconception of the terms cinema and films. To him, film and cinema are the same and can therefore be used interchangeably, for both uses the same codes which include montage, image, and sound so on primarily employed for visual effects. Similarly, Ascher and Pincus (2008) observed that there is no single term that can rightly describe a type of production because of the various formats that can be employed for its production. As observed by Àlà mú, the name people call a production is not only in line with how it was produced or the instrument employed but also has more to do with how the end product is distributed. As he concluded, whatever a production is called nowadays (whether film, movie or a video), it is only for convenience because it is not meant to imply any limitation in terms of media, format or equipment used to make or distribute the production. In this light and because whether films, videos or movies, all can now be distributed in form of VCD, DVD, flash disk and so on, it will no longer be a misconception to use those terms (films, movies and videos) interchangeably.

However, caution should be exercised while using cinema in lieu of those terms because cinema has a long time socio-linguistic usage. Ever before the emergence of video modes, cinema has been a place where people watched acted Yorùbá plays produced in whatever mode. As such, the term cinema has a close affinity with “theatre”, which Crow (1983) and Adélékè (1995) have explained to comprise both human and non-human materials such as a performance place, performers (actors and actresses), action, masks, props, make-up, costumes, music, dance and the audience usually employed in a performed play. The only noticeable difference between cinema and theatre is that all things happen live at the theatre. The cinema is also now used in lieu of “the movie” or “the film house” in the social context of a place where produced films, movies or videos are shown to a set of audience who have paid the gate fee. In this light, Àlà mú’s critique of Gaston and Metz’s positions, on the difference between cinema and film, is not sacrosanct. A bombshell would

have been dropped on Àlà mú's position here, if not for his silence on the relationship between "the cinema" and the set of terms like films, movies and videos. This could however be termed "an intellectual cunningly craftiness."

Nevertheless, the terms films, videos and movies, in their current usage, share much affinity, with the seclusion of the term cinema. In these lenses, films in this paper is used interchangeably with video and movie. As such, Yorùbá films could also be called Yorùbá home videos and Yorùbá movies. Yorùbá film, conceptually, is that film acted via Yorùbá language, about and for the Yorùbá people. In other words, such films are produced by Yorùbá film producers, acted by Yorùbá actors and actresses, acted in Yorùbá language and about the Yorùbá people. It is also a Yorùbá theatrical performance or Yorùbá drama recorded on VCD/DVD cassettes for easy distribution to and accessibility by homes and families.

Yorùbá films, as Àlà mú (2010) opined, could be conceptualized, in the context of the Nigerian film, as a distinct regional variation of the Nigerian film. As much as this opinion of seeing Yorùbá film as a regional genre of Nigerian film is true, Yorùbá films must also be seen as a distinct form of Yorùbá drama which evolved from masque-dramaturges and developed through the Ogunde dramatic tradition (Adédèjì, 1966; Clark, 1981; Jeyifo, 1984; Ògúndèjì, 1988, 1992, 2014; Adélékè, 1995; Àlà mú, 2010; Ọmọlọlá, 2013 and Adágbádá, 2014). Besides, the history of films in Nigeria cannot be said to be complete and objective without recourse to the development of Yorùbá film through the impact of various travelling theatre groups. For this reason, this paper focuses on the conceptualisation of the evolution and the development of Yorùbá films from the perspective of time. In the perspective of time, here, relates to its evolution and development overtime, as related to the Yoruba worldview about time. This will avail us the opportunity of recalling the past, understanding the present and illuminating into the future of the Yoruba films.

The Concept of Time in the Yorùbá Traditional Milieu

Time, in the Yorùbá circle, does not exist traditionally as an abstract concept, but as period, duration, era, term, season, and especially, reign of a *ọba* (Ògúndèjì, 2014). Ògúndèjì posited that the belief about time in the Yorùbá circle is traditionally cyclical and later became both linear and cyclical, with their contact with westernisation. According to him, Yorùbá believe that time moves cyclically, so that when a cycle is completed, it begins again and re-runs itself, moving forward on the linear axis spirally. This belief is reflected in various Yorùbá adages, for instance: *ìgbà kì í lọ bí òréré, ayé kì í tọ lọ bí ọpá ìbọn*, which means "time is not horizontal" or "life is not straight like a dane gun."

Because of this, the perspective of human activities and natural phenomena is used to reckon time in the Yorùbá native belief and not in the Mathematical term of the western civilisation (Mbiti, 1969; Booth, 1975 and Ògúndèjì, 2014). Holding to this conceptual view of time in the African indigenous thought, the history of most African societies could be, first and foremost and before assigning the western Mathematical form of dating, categorised into pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras, if colonisation is agreed to be a significant human activity or phenomenon common to most African societies. In the light of this categorisation, the history of anything, whatsoever, can be told. Consequently, the evolution and development of the Yorùbá films spanned through the pre-colonial era, colonial era and the post-colonial era in a linear-cyclical manner. This is, subsequently, presented in a logical manner.

The Pre-colonial Time

Though, there was no Yorùbá films in existence during the pre-colonial era, there was something that the Yorùbá film was an off shoot of. The Yorùbá people had been known for various rituals and festivals, in which the various dramatic features were manifested at the background. This has been seen as the source of Yorùbá dramatic performance and the progenitor of the Yorùbá films (Adélékè 1995, Ògúndèjì 1992, 2014 and Ọmọlọlá, 2013). In other words, what was in existence during the pre-colonial era was the Yorùbá oral drama, which Ògúndèjì (1992) has subcategorised into traditional drama (masque-dramaturges-*Eégún Aláre* and traditional festivals-*ọdún ibilẹ̀*) and the Ogunde dramatic tradition. The traditional drama preoccupied the pre-colonial time while the Ogunde dramatic tradition, an off shot of the traditional drama, spanned through the colonial time to the post-colonial time.

Though, some scholars have argued that various traditional festivals of the Yorùbá should not be seen as dramatic performance, Ògúndèjì (2014) has dropped a bomb shell on such school of thought, claiming that the various Yorùbá traditional festivals have some forms of “dramaticity” embedded in them. According to Ògúndèjì, if the several images used in the worship of gods and goddesses were first and foremost carvings (works of arts) and their use for religious worship would not remove their aesthetics, so also are the various traditional worships in which songs, dance, chants and other dramatic displays are featuring elements. He therefore argued that their religious, cultic, ritual and other utilities do not remove their aesthetic qualities, just as the liturgical purpose of *Ẹ̀sù pípè*, *Ọ̀ya pípè*, *Ẹ̀sù pípè* and others and the divinatory purpose of *ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ Ifá* as well as the magical purpose of *ọ̀fọ̀*, do not prevent seeing them as poetry.

The thought of seeing Yorùbá traditional festivals as Yorùbá drama is sacrosanct to the understanding of the etymology of Yorùbá moving images. Though, the traditional festivals were not totally dramatic, the various features of drama that were embedded in them contributed a whole lot to the development of Yorùbá drama. In a bid to show the level of the drama in Yorùbá traditional festivals, Ògúndèjì (2014) has further categorized the Yorùbá traditional drama into Sacred Ritual Drama, Festival Ritual Drama, De-ritualising Drama and the De-ritualised Drama. This categorization could be seen as the apparition and chronological development of Yorùbá drama during the pre-colonial era. Ògúndèjì (2014) described it as a spectrum. The Sacred Ritual developed into Festival Ritual and later to De-ritualising until we had a de-ritualised drama, which was purely dramatic without any or with microcosm traces of rituality.

According to Ògúndèjì, the religious cultic aspects are foregrounded while the aesthetic aspects are backgrounded in the Sacred Ritual form of Yorùbá traditional drama. The Festival Ritual form, on the other hand, has the religious cultic and aesthetic aspects emphasised equally. While the De-ritualising drama has the religious cultic aspects backgrounded and aesthetic aspects foregrounded, the De-ritualised drama has the religious cultic aspect removed or in very remote background and the aesthetic aspects foregrounded. Ògúndèjì also observed that the Sacred Ritual form, for its rituality nature, had a secluded place of performance and restricted audience while the other three forms, for their own peculiarity too, had open place of performance and general audience.

For instance, *Eégún Aláre* can be said to have experienced the gradual growth from the sacred ritual stage through the festival to the de-ritualising stage, though rudely halted by the effect of colonisation and the new religions (Ògúndèjì, 2014). But for this reason, the de-ritualised *Eégún Aláre* dramatic performance would have gained credence during this time, though Adélékè (1995) has noted it as the precursor of the modern Yorùbá drama. Adélékè explained that the *Eégún Aláre* (masque-dramatarges), which etymologically were for the entertainment of the court, with time extended their performance beyond the king's palace, resulting in to the springing up of many troupes who travelled from village to village and from town to town to perform for the kings and later, the British District officers. It is in this sense that we can talk of the traditional drama (*Eégún Aláre* and later, *Alárinjò* theatre) spanning through the pre-colonial and colonial time. However, the Ogunde dramatic tradition, its off shot, enjoyed much pre-eminence during the colonial era.

The Colonial Time

Nigeria colonisation experience cumulated into a strong western influence on Nigerians and their ways of life, in which the entertainment scene was not left unaffected. Two notable activities related to the development of Yorùbá film during the colonial era were the colonial government film-showing activities and the Ogunde dramatic tradition. According to Ọmọlọlá (2013):

...the colonial government which ruled Nigeria until October 1, 1960 allowed the importation of foreign movies which supported its mission in the country. Consequently, the colonial government had a strict control over what movies Nigerians would watch and how the movies would be distributed. The first movie shown in the country was premiered in August 1903 in the Glover Hall in Lagos (30).

The above assertion by Ọmọlọlá shows the intent of the colonial government in showing films during the colonial time. The various films shown were those that showcased the strengths of Britain and their triumph during the second world war of 1939. The major reason for showing films was the promotion of colonialism and social development, though the former gained much premium than the latter (Ọmọlọlá, 2013). We could, therefore, say that the showing of various documentary films was a strong weapon in the hands of the colonial masters to brainwash Nigerians and make them accept colonisation as an act of God.

However, all these colonial activities set the pace for certain Nigerian artistes to refine their theatre practices. Hubert Ogunde has been identified to be the foremost Nigerian artiste, whom colonial film experiences and prior exposure to the Yorùbá traditional theatre have cumulated into and informed his stage acting practices during the colonial era (Adélékè 1995, Àlà mú 2010, Ọmọlọlá 2013 and Ògúndèjì 2014). In other words, Ogunde fully exploited the new situation of civilisation to reshape the structure of Yorùbá theatre, because he has experienced both the African theatrical tradition and the western theatrical civilisation (Adélékè, 1995). Buttressing Hubert Ogunde's root in the Yorùbá culture and traditional theatrical performance, Ògúndèjì (2014) reported that Ogunde, himself, declared to have been initiated, at a very tender age, into not less than sixteen different cults and that he took part as a drummer and dancer in many performances of the *Dáramó'jọ* and *Èkùn-ọkọ Eégún Aláré* Theater Troupes.

However, Ògúndèjì (2014) also pointed to some efforts prior to the Ogunde's 1944 debut. Ever before Ogunde started, settler communities of liberated slaves from Sierra-Leone, Brazil and Cuba introduced into Lagos, a thriving,

though foreign dramatic trend, in which the indigenised forms called “Native air opera”, “Sacred catanta” and “Service of songs” developed from (Ògúndèjì, 2014). These performances such as *Princess Àbẹ̀jẹ́ of Kòtànṅùrà*, *The Jealous Queen Oya of Oyo* performed in 1903 and 1905 respectively by the Ègbé Ìfẹ́ (Church Society) and the various English performances of the Lagos Glee Singers before 1910, were primarily musical entertainment and secondarily dramatic, with churches and schools (which were, then, owned by the church) as its respective patrons and patronages (Ògúndèjì, 2014). Original plays in Yorùbá language with I.B. Akínyelẹ́’s *Àwọn Ìwàrẹ̀fà Mẹ́fà* performed in 1912, under the directorship of D.O. Oḃasa, and continued with the efforts of the other pre-Ogunde’s artistes like A.B. David, G.I. Onimole, A.A. Láyeṇi, H.A. Olúfoyè, P.A. Dáwódù and T.E.K. Philips (Adédèjì, 1973 and Ògúndèjì, 2014).

With all these pre-Ogunde’s frantic and fantastic efforts, the question to ask is why Ògúndèjì (1988, 2008 and 2014), Adélékè (1995), Àlà mú (2010), Oṃolọ́lá (2013) and other Yorùbá film scholars did ascribe the development of the modern Yorùbá drama, in which film is one of its media, to the Ogunde’s debut of 1944? What did Ogunde do differently that accorded him such recognition and honour, especially with the fact that his much overrated debut of 1944, as identified by Ògúndèjì (2014), was also a stage performance of an English titled play (*The Garden of Eden*), on the occasion of a church building fund-raising ceremony, under the umbrella of the Church of the Lord, Èbúté Mẹ́ta, Lagos, on June 12, 1944. However, one of the things Ogunde did differently, as found in literature, was the ingenious blending of the traditional and the new dramatic styles, in contrast to other contenders of his time, who only adopted the foreign mode. Not only that, he established, in 1945, his African Music Research Party, first of its kinds, and voluntarily resigned from the police profession, so that he could go professional, which he did in 1946 (Ògúndèjì, 2014).

For these reasons and many more, like that he extended the patronage/audience of Yorùbá drama beyond church, adopted and adapted the itinerant nature of his eégún aláre experience together with the use of the tripartite format of presentation (Opening glee-Play-Closing glee) among other efforts, Ògúndèjì (1987, 1988, 2008 and 2014) has named this tradition after him, claiming inadequate and faulty, all the labels with which other scholars have identified it. Ògúndèjì argued that nomenclatures like *Folk Opera*, *Popular Travelling Theatre*, *Modern Travelling Theatre*, *Contemporary Travelling Theatre*, *Modern Theatre and Professional Itinerant Theatre*, which past scholars have used to identify it, do not distinguish between this drama form and others. He therefore suggested that the form be named after Ogunde as Ogunde Dramatic Tradition.

However, as Ògúndèjì himself noted, this new name does not totally suffice, for just a person's name is used when, actually, many individuals were involved in its development. Nevertheless, the fact that the name makes a distinction between the form and other forms of drama makes it imperative for one to agree with Ògúndèjì's view, since the main purpose for finding a nomenclature was to distinguish between various forms of drama and show to the colonial government officials that Africans too have their modernised way of dramatic entertainment. Ogunde and his contemporaries like G.T. Onimole, A.A. Láyeṅi, Oyin Adéjòbí, Akin Ògúngbè, Dúró Ládiípò, Kólá Ògúnmólá, Àyìnlá Olúmègbòn, Moses Ọláiyá Adéjùmò, Sẹgun Olùbùkún, Ọlá Ọmọ̀nìtàn (Ajímájásán), Òjọ Ládiípò (Bàbá Mèró) and the succeeding generation of dramatists like Adéyemí Afọláyan, Léré Pàímò, Ìṣòlá Ògúnṣòlá, Sùpò Kòsemánìí, Ọlátúnbòsún Ọdúnsì, Jídé Kòsókó, Charles Olúmò, and Ayox Arísekólá, should be also credited for the rise and development of the Yorùbá media drama (Ògúndèjì, 2014).

It is in this sense that we claim that Ogunde and the dramatic tradition he founded is the progenitor of the Yorùbá films, since Yorùbá film is one of the media drama that rose and developed from and as a result of Ogunde and his other contemporaries. The media dramas, as identified by Ògúndèjì (2014), are radio, phono-disc, television, photo-play magazine and film. Of all the media, radio came first. With the establishment of the Lagos Radio Re-diffusion Service in 1945, Yorùbá drama went on air for the first time (Clark, 1979 and Ògúndèjì, 2014).

Yorùbá drama on the television could be said to be a post-colonial activity, because the first television station (Western Nigerian Television-WNTV) was established in 1959 and the first performance of Yorùbá play on television had been reported to be between 1959 and 1960, which was the verge of the end of colonisation and the inception of independence era in Nigeria (Adágbádá, 2014 and Ògúndèjì, 2014). These theatre practitioners, during the colonial era, however, maximised both the electronic medium of Radio and print medium of Photo-play to their fullest. Though, there was no film during the colonial era in tandem with the pre-colonial, the thriving activities of Masque drama-turge- *Eégún Aláré* (which quickly faded away with colonisation and civilisation), the colonial film showing activities, the Ogunde dramatic movement as well as the advent of the various media, of which radio and television were significant, during the colonial era, laid a solid foundation and paved the way for the rise and development of Yorùbá film in the post-colonial time.

The Post-colonial Time

Production of Yorùbá films started after 1960, when Nigeria became an independent nation. As we have seen, all the entertainment-related activities,

both indigenous and foreign, during the colonial time paved the way for the advent of Yorùbá films during the post-colonial time. Of outmost significance was the advent of media drama, with the establishment of first radio and television station in 1945 and 1959 respectively. Ogunde's contemporaries, who had been exploring the medium of radio, since the last decade of colonisation, also to a great extent, explored the use of television for presenting their performances, while Ogunde was not a popular radio and television dramatist but most of his plays featured on photo-play, especially during the first decade of independence (Ògúndèjì, 2014). Though much were being paid for foreign programmes compared to its local counterparts on television at the initial stage, a reason Ogunde did not so much patronise it, the indigenisation of television programmes policy of 1965 and the latter introduction of Yorùbá television drama series of 1975 motivated more dramatists to join the train of television drama (Ògúndèjì, 2014). This could be seen as the closest effort to the production of Yorùbá films, which came in to being in 1976 with the production of Àjàní Ògún by Ọlá Balógun (Jeyifo, 1984; Adélékè, 1995; Àlà mú, 2010; Ọmọlọlá, 2013 and Ògúndèjì, 2014 and Adágbádá, 2014).

While Àlà mú (2010) pointed to the documentary films (like *The Coronation of King Edward VII at Westminster*, *The Empire Day Celebration*, both in 1948 and *The Visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Nigeria*, in 1956) and feature films (like *Kongi's Harvest*, 1970) in English as the only prior technological effort that predated the production Yorùbá films, Ògúndèjì (2014) added Ogunde's waxing of the opening and closing glees of his plays before 1964 and the production of full length plays on phonograph in 1964. While both claims are relevant to the evolution of Yorùbá films, Ògúndèjì's claim is more suitable, for it points to Ogunde; a Yorùbá indigene. This, further, attests to the creative abilities of the Nigerian theatre practitioners. However, the production of the first Yorùbá film, as we have seen, was not by Ogunde but one of his contemporaries called Ọlá Balógun, who pioneered the Yorùbá celluloid film era.

The celluloid era spanned through the first decade of the Yorùbá film production, that is, 1976 to 1986. Àlà mú (1990 and 2010) has made a frantic effort to describe the features of the films produced during this time, starting from the Ọlá Balógun's Àjàní Ògún. Ọlá Balógun's success triggered members of the Ogunde Dramatic movement to delve into film-making, as Adéyemí Afọláyan's Friendship Motion Pictures, Ogunde Pictures and Moses Ọláiyá Adéjùmọ's Alawada Movies came into being and became prominent film-making outfits of the celluloid era, among other practitioners of the movement who also participated (Ògúndèjì 2014). To this end, Àlà mú (1990: 113-114) documented the following twenty-three (23) films as films produced during the celluloid era: Àjàní Ògún by Ọlá Balógun in 1976; Ìjà Òmìnira by Adéyemí Afọláyan in 1977; *Aye* by Hubert Ogunde in 1979; *Kádàrá* by

Adéyemí Afọláyan in 1979; *Jáyésinmi* by Hubert Ogunde in 1980; *Efúnsetán Aníwúrà* by Ìşọlá Ògúnşọlá in 1982; *Ọrun Móoru* by Moses Ọláiyá Adéjùmọ in 1982; *Àrọpin N Tèniyàn* by Hubert Ogunde in 1982; *Ìjà Orogún* by Adéyemí Afọláyan in 1982; *Owó Làgbà* by Ọlá Balógun in 1982; *Ìrèké Oníbùdó* by Báyo Adérónmú in 1982; *Taxi Driver I* by Adéyemí Afọláyan in 1983; *Aníkúrá* by Ayo Razaq in 1983; *Ààrẹ Àgbáyé* by Moses Ọláiyá Adéjùmọ in 1983; *Ìyá Ni Wúrà* by Adéyemí Afọláyan in 1985; *Ogun Àjàyè* by Adebayo Salami in 1986; *Kannakánná* by Báyo Adérónmú in 1986; *Lisàbi Àgbòngbò Àkàlà* by Ọlátóyè Àinà in 1986; *Ojú Oró* by Moses Omilaní in 1986; *Ogun Ìdílé* by Eddie Ugbomah in 1986; *Taxi Driver II* by Adéyemí Afọláyan in 1986; *Apálará* by Eddie Ugbomah in 1986; and *Mosebọlátán* by Moses Ọláiyá Adéjùmọ in 1986.

During this era of celluloid, film-making was very costly, for they were to be sent abroad for development. This high cost of production must have chased many other interested theatre artistes away from film production and restricted the producers of Yorùbá films to a selected few, who could get loans and sponsors for their productions. Another important feature of this era was that films produced were not directly distributed to homes but to cinema houses across the length and breadth of the country, because the gadgets required for the viewing of such films were too expensive for homes to procure. So, people often visited the cinema houses to watch an interesting film, to watch a particular actor of whom they are fans and most times, to recreate. The films produced were first exhibited in Lagos and later, in Ìbàdàn, as Lagos and Ìbàdàn constituted the most populous and commercial cities in Nigeria. (Adélékè 1995, Àlà mú 2010 and Ògúndèjì 2014)

However, the production of celluloid Yorùbá film was brought to an abrupt and drastic end with the economic recession the country experienced in the late 1980s. The cost of producing celluloid became unbearable for both the film producers and sponsors, because services rendered to them abroad, as usual, were to be paid in foreign currencies (Àlà mú 2010 and Ògúndèjì 2014). For this reason, Ògúndèjì (2014) has accounted that many resulted to the use of the reversal stock for mainstream film making instead of the costly negative stock but the quality of the reversal films were always very poor compared to the celluloid films. This led producers to a desperate experimentation of the video format of production, though, as Ògúndèjì (2014) rightly observed, they were not ignorant of the fact that it was almost a bizarre thing to do. With their enthusiastic audience, they managed to put this through and the Yorùbá video film came into being in 1990, with the production of *Igi Da* by Kọ́lá Ọlátúndé (Àlà mú 2010 and Ògúndèjì 2014).

Though, as Àlà mú and Ògúndèjì have explained, there is a controversy on the first Yorùbá video film produced, it is needful to stress that this is not, so

much, the concern of this present writer, as we are more concerned with what follows what in the development of Yorùbá films over time. The fact that video film succeeded celluloid is a land breaking achievement in the Yorùbá film industry. Films, with the advent of video, are being produced with a cheaper rate compared to the celluloid era, hardly call for any foreign involvement especially in the post-production because the technology needed was available and do reach thousands of viewers at once in the comfort of their homes (Àlà mú 2010). These and many more benefits of the video mode have contributed to the prolificacy of the Yorùbá films, that, in 2009, Nigeria was rated second in the world, next to India, in a UNESCO survey based only on the quantity of the video-films produced (Àlà mú 2010). A lot of Yorùbá films have been produced today, on VCD/DVD, that it may be impossible and a herculean task to account for the number of Yorùbá films in circulation.

However, with so much development the video mode brought to the scene of film production in Nigeria, and the Yorùbá film industry in particular, it has not been without its own disadvantages. Chief among these disadvantages and of most concern to the position of this present writer is piracy, which had become the cankerworm and a clog to the “prosperity” of most Yorùbá film producers. This is because, according to Àlà mú (2010), pirates do appropriate and reproduced various films without legal permission and for their own undeserved gain. In an attempt to curb the menace, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) and other related associations, like the Association of Movie Producers (AMP), Video Club Owners Association of Nigeria (VCOAN) and the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), have been working indefatigably to eradicate piracy since 1998, when AMP took the lead to launch a battle on piracy (Àlà mú, 2010).

The Future Time from Now

Despite their frantic efforts, feelers’ general observation has revealed that this issue of piracy is on the increase, placing film producers on the receiving end. For this reason, highly skilled Yorùbá film producers like Túndé Kèlá ní and Kúnlé Afòláyan, for instance, have stopped releasing films to the market as VCD/DVD but to cinema houses and on various digital television stations, where the films are shown to audience who legally want to have themselves entertained and recreated. This has caused a notable revival to people’s cinema going habit. For instance, Kúnlé Afòláyan’s *October 1*, produced in 2014, was premiered at the EXPO Centre, Eko Hotel and Suites on September 28 2014 and released to selected cinemas across the country on the 1st October, 2014. It was thereafter generally released to other cinemas on the October 3, 2014 and to homes, in December 2014, as DStv Explora’s Video-on-demand service.

Without legally releasing the film on VCD/DVD, Kunle Afọláyan, himself, in an interview with *Nigerian Entertainment Today* in February 2015, disclosed that the film had made over ₦100 million in 6 months (<http://thenet.ng/magazine-covers/>). Also, Tunde Kelani's last film released on DVD was *Maami* in 2015, the three films he produced (*Dazzling Mirage*, *Sídí of Ìlújinlẹ̀* and *Yéèpà Ṣólàrín N̄ Bọ̀*) from 2015 till date were only premiered at and released to cinemas across the length and breadth of Nigeria and beyond.

This act of releasing films to only cinemas, which has just been revived, could be seen as a return to the original, as it has been ascertained that the first decade of the production of Yorùbá films (1976-1986), also known as the celluloid era, was primarily an era of the cinema. Though, the advancement of technology has really helped the development of the Yorùbá film industry, it is the position of this writer that, as the world moves in a cycle and as the Yorùbá traditional concept of time is neither linear, we have moved to the time when the Yorùbá films, for the sake of technological advancement, would be totally taken back to the cinema, where it started from. This is because it was technology that brought about celluloid films and later videos. It is the same technology that the un-repentant pirates employ. It is, therefore, the opinion of this writer that it is only this technology that can come to the film producers' rescue, by them safeguarding the production of their films and releasing to only cinemas and television stations who demanded. This has started and we do hope that many more producers will take advantage of it, for it is the wave of the season.

However, if this does not solve the menace of piracy, it is the opinion of this writer that the Yorùbá entertainment scene, in question, may have to move back to the stage, where it originated from. Though, in recent time, few theatre practitioners have been talking about the resuscitation of the Yorùbá drama and some theatre troupes mainly dedicated to stage performance are re-evolving, it has not been found to have really resurrected. If it finally does, which is most likely, it will still be seen as the result of the cyclical nature of the Yorùbá concept of time, that time moves cyclically, so that when a cycle is completed, it begins again and re-runs itself, moving forward on the linear axis spirally. This may have to occur in respect to Yorùbá drama and, by extension, film. From the foregoing, it is clear that the Yorùbá film in time perspective is the various Yorùbá acted-dramas that originated from the stage and have been presented on the various media (that is, celluloid, VCD/DVD and various digital television stations) for easy presentation to audience in various places at the same time.

Conclusion

A review of the evolution and development of the Yoruba films in the perspective of time has been attempted in this paper. The review has revealed that it is possible that the mode of disseminating Yoruba plays to audience return to its origin, which was stage. This is consequent upon the piracy menace that had since the inception of video mode in the 1990s become a clog in the wheel of Yoruba film production. Now that Yoruba film producers are releasing films to only cinemas, which was how films started before the video mode came around, returning to stage may not be impossible if the menace of piracy does not stop. The return of films to the cinema and the possibility of the resuscitation of the stage mode indicate that events occur over time in a cyclical manner according to the Yoruba traditional concept of time, such that when a cycle completes, there is a repeat of it. This has occurred in almost all aspects of the Yoruba social life, like dressing, styles and entertainment.

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