

## Film Review

# ***Jagun Jagun*, Nigeria, 2023. Produced by Euphoria 360 Media. Netflix. 129 minutes, Yoruba (with English subtitles). No price reported. Directed by Tope Adebayo and Adebayo Tijani**

Adebayo Salami (aka Oga Bello) is the patriarch who has had his experience from the Yoruba Travelling Theatre before its transmutation to what is now called Nollywood. He is the father of Tope Adebayo, Adebayo Tijani, the first and second directors and Femi Adebayo. It is important to note that the Nigerian cinema is characterized by different cultural and ethnic colorations in the sense that the Nollywood or the African cinema cannot be defined by the perspective of the “great auteurs and expressions of an ethnically and linguistically homogenous national culture in the sense of nineteenth-century European romanticism”<sup>1</sup>. But the Nollywood is the umbrella that houses other cinemas like Yorubawood, Kannywood, Igbowood, Tivwood, and others thriving through their different cultural and linguistic perspectives.

*Jagun Jagun*, a story narrated by Femi Adebayo, an actor like his father, Adebayo Salami. The script was written in poetic rendition full of imageries and puns by Adebayo Tijani, the second director. This points to the fact the “Yorubawood” is characterized by “family-tree” as it was in the days of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre, like the doyen of the Nigerian theatre and a cineaste, Hubert Ogunde, when the leader of the company would have his many wives and children as the members. Tope Adebayo has made his mark in film directing. He had directed *Jelili* (2019), *Esin*, (2021), *Inside Life*, (2022), *King of Thieves: Agesinkole*, (2022) - had eight nominations and won one award of the AMVCA, 2023.

## **1. Hedger, Vinzenz 42, Online, *African Studies Review*, 2023**

A first successful thriller which indicates the innovative artistic creativity and cinematic emblems of the “New Nollywood”, in the somewhat category of the works of Tunde Kelani, Kunle Afolayan and Biyi Bamidele. These innovations of the New Nollywood are remarkable transformation as Chidi Oguamanam posits that the “evolutionary interface between technology and entrepreneurship as a dynamic process in the progress and transformation of Nollywood”<sup>2</sup>. In development of film making in Africa, Tope has recently entrenched in a systemic approach that operates in constant artistic fluidity between borderline of formal and informal frameworks in postmodernist style.

*Jagun Jagun* opens to a vibrant voice-over done by Jimi Solanke, a veteran actor and folkloric musician, to relay the main thematic preoccupation in the film about the vagary of power and its misuse. Ogundiji (taken by Femi Adedayo) is the eponymous Jagun Jagun, who is employed as a tool in the hands of the powerful, corrupt and megalomaniac political leaders in traditional garb (Monarchs) to traumatize and destroy powerless kingdoms for their inordinate political expansion and for material accumulations as being demonstrated in many countries in the modern “totalitarian” politics in Africa. It is in one of such warfare that Ogundiji captures a girl, Iroyinogunkitan (Bunkunmi Oluwasina) at aba Oniyo, as his adopted daughter, however, for self-adulated interest, turns her to a mysterious instrument to be used as his strongest magic-power in the war. Ogundiji, in expanding his private army fans the political interests of Kings and Regents, establishes a military academy to train youths from various Kingdoms. Such an instance influences some weak Kingdoms to find reason to ask their youths to be trained by Ogundiji, in order to defend their territories against the constant attacks from the stronger Kingdoms.

## **2. Oguamanam, Chidi 14, *Journal of World Intellectual Property*, 2020**

Ogundiji with the backing of the royal figures (alluded to the modern African leaders) rises to become power drunk. His drive is to conquer and overrun any dissenting voice becomes symbolic ego-assuage and malevolent vision to crush any obstacle on his way. Such a situation occurs when Gbogunmi (Ibrahim Yekini), from Larint Kingdom, as his deputy commander, decides not to embark on a suicidal mission, due to the persuasion from his wife and sister, he pays for it. So are other generals in his army suffer untold hardship of incarceration, burning at stake or require to embark on a journey of perfidy to fight war in order to get rid of him. A stance is the conflict that arises between Ogundiji and Gbotija (Lateef Adedimeji), a carver whose lineage communes

with any trees like Iroko, Omo, Araba, Ose, or any wood. A young military trainee in Ogundiji's War Academy. Gbotija is a brave young man and very conscious of his right, through the demonstration of this that he becomes closer and later a lover to Iroyinogunkitan/Agemo. The First time Gbotija demonstrates his mysterious power is when he saves the life of Ogundiji's wife, Efunfunto (Fathia Balogun), and second time is the moment he demonstrates his uncanny knowledge as a super archer and shooter, the skill that no other than Ogundiji has ever been able to achieve in history. One of the Kings calls his attention to be weary of Gbotija. Consequently, he is given three tests of fate by Ogundiji in order to eliminate him. Gbotija is able to survive and overcome the three tests including defeating Agemo in a fierce battle, and ironically unmasks her to know that the egregious Agemo is his lover, Iroyinogunkitan. Finally, in a combat, Gbotija, heroically defeats Ogundiji to end his terror.

*Jagun Jagun*, is not a work which depicts the political situation in Nigeria alone, but in Africa, where it is noted why the modern political leaders in their visionless Machiavellian ideology appropriate means and power to themselves in postcolonial experiences. Some Nigerian critics condemn *Jagun Jagun* as a poor work of history and tradition for inappropriately mingling of both traditional and modern visual effects. My conversation with Tijani Adebayo confirms that *Jagun Jagun* is not a work of history but of fiction. One of the major shortcomings is the inability to clearly define and properly situate the work in postmodernist ideas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as Tijani Adebayo claims. So, *Jagun Jagun* is greatly influenced by Western style filmic framing, composition, sound, music and war combat mode.

Yemi Atanda  
Department of Performing Arts,  
Olabisi Onabanjo University  
Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria  
[yemiatandaa@gmail.com](mailto:yemiatandaa@gmail.com)

