Crime, Social Justice, and Moral Didacticism in Selected Films.

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Abstract

This study examines the thematic representation of criminality, social justice, and moral didacticism within selected Yorùbá video films. Literature acts as a reflective mirror of society, capturing its evolving norms, vices, and structural changes while serving as a tool for ethical instruction. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach, this research examines three primary films: Àkọọlẹ̀, Àlejò, and Oníbárà. The analysis explores recurring themes including forced betrothal (ìfọmọdọ́ṛẹ̀ẹ́), lack of courage, unrequited and social class-bound love, monetary greed, arrogance, and the tragic consequences of betrayal. The study traces the historical evolution of Nigerian and Yorùbá cinema from colonial exhibition roots to the modern home video era. Findings indicate that Yorùbá films serve not merely as commercial entertainment, but as vital instruments of social critique, moral didacticism, and cultural preservation.

Keywords: Video Films, Social Justice, Moral Didacticism, Morality in Film and Nigerian Film History.

1. Introduction

Our primary focus in this research work is the examination of themes related to criminality, social justice, and moral didacticism in selected Yorùbá films. Literature plays no small role within society, just as society gives birth to literature, allowing literature to reflect society and teach moral lessons. Home video films form a significant genre of Yorùbá media. This is why selected Yorùbá films were chosen to mirror societal events, given that literature itself serves as the glass or mirror through which we view society. Scholars generally agree that literature centers on human affairs, as no single individual can exhaustively articulate all aspects of life. Through this, we accept that literature is a true representation of society and a primary vehicle for moral instruction. As days turn into months and months into years, Yorùbá home video production continues to progress. This comes as no surprise, as nothing remains stationary. In times past, traveling theater held sway, which was a novelty to the people of that era; later, theater shifted to small cinema halls. Times changed further, bringing the era of home drama and video films. Time does not stand still it is constantly evolving.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the rapid growth and global reach of the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood), Yorùbá home video films are frequently categorized strictly as superficial entertainment or commercial melodrama. However, underlying these popular narrative structures are critical commentaries on criminal actions, community justice, traditional versus modern moral codes, and social decay. Issues such as forced marriage (ìfọmọdọ́rẹ̀ẹ́), spiritual fraud, monetary greed, and personal cowardice frequently manifest in contemporary stories but often lack systematic academic critique regarding their didactic and societal roles. Without deep analytical attention, the capacity of Yorùbá film to function as an instrument for moral didacticism and social justice reform remains under examined.

3. Aim and Objectives

Aim

The primary aim of this study is to examine the representation of crime, social justice, and moral didacticism in selected Yorùbá home video films.

Objectives

- To trace the historical growth and development of Nigerian cinema with emphasis on the Yorùbá video film sector.
- To examine how acts of crime, monetary greed, forced betrothal, and arrogance are depicted as societal vices in selected films (Àkọọlẹ̀, Àlejò, and Oníbárà).
- To evaluate how social justice and moral didacticism (poetic justice and ethical instruction) are portrayed as mechanisms for social order in the selected films.

4. Research Questions

- How has Yorùbá language cinema evolved from its traditional traveling theater roots to modern home video formats?
- In what ways do selected films (Àkọọlẹ̀, Àlejò, and Oníbárà) depict criminality, moral failure, and societal vices?
- How do the selected films employ moral didacticism and social justice to guide contemporary Yorùbá cultural ethics?

5. Literature Review

The Rise and Development of Film in Nigeria

Ibrahim (2022:62) points out that prior to the emergence of home video films, white colonialists used cinema equipment to influence Nigerian citizens regarding their homeland traditions and various aspects of their lifestyles. Adégbìdẹ́ (2005:5) clarifies that what we refer to today as films in Nigeria did not exist prior to August 12, 1903. The first film exhibited on August 12, 1903, was Edward VII, shown at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos. This is recognized as the first film viewed in Nigeria. The economic downturn that hit Nigeria from 1980 until recently led home videos to replace celluloid films used in the early stages of Nigerian cinema (Àlàmú 2010:4). Before 2009, films in Nigeria could not compete directly with those from India or America, mainly because the image quality and production techniques used in Nigeria had not yet met standard criteria. By 2010, however, film production in Nigeria had advanced to the point where films were exported abroad for sale, particularly to the United States and the United Kingdom.

This visible development can be seen across Nigerian films today. Emerging Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá films demonstrate that the country's movie industry has moved beyond its infancy. Many films produced in Nigeria display local culture and traditions. For this reason, we can boldly state that Nigerian cinema has become a major pillar in film production. Ekwuazi (1987) notes that in Nigeria, movies showcasing foreign cultures initially captured the interest of Nigerians, who predominantly watched Indian and Lebanese films at the time—a period corresponding to pre-independence era media. In those early times, Nigerians enjoyed watching foreign imagery without expecting instructional value from such cinemas. Prior to independence, films highlighting African society included footage documenting the Alákẹ́ of Ẹ̀gbá's trip to the United Kingdom. This exhibition delighted viewers at Glover Hall in August 1903, organized by Mr. Stanley Jones. Lagos residents consequently developed a love for cinema-going, which spurred the construction of various theater halls across Lagos. Indian films, Chinese films, and American "Cowboy" movies dominated this period. After the World War of 1914, film screenings grew popular in Lagos, despite relying on foreign imports. Among these, Empire Films were most prominent. By around 1949, film exhibitors like Terry Bishop released a film titled Daybreak in Udi, which was well received by audiences. After independence, Nigerian films began appearing, such as Kongi's Harvest, produced by Calpenny Nigeria Films Limited under Francis Oládẹ̀lẹ́ in the English language. The movie Son of Africa was released by Fed Films in 1970 through Ṣẹ́gun Olúṣọ̀lá. The film directed by Ọ̀lá Balógun, titled Amadi, is recognized as the first feature film shot in Nigeria in the Igbo language. Dramatic performance was not foreign to Nigerians prior to the arrival of Europeans.

Rise and Development of Yorùbá Language Film

Ibrahim (2022:50) In the beginning, what we now call film was referred to as drama/theater performance. Its origins lay in traditional masquerade (Eégún Aláàrè) performances and indigenous festivals, where actors gathered to use social events or life experiences as core themes, adopting methods used by traditional masqueraders and festival performers. However, adapting drama performance to modern contexts without relying on masquerades or traditional festivals served as the foundation of modern theater, akin to what Westerners term drama. If we conduct a conceptual analysis of terms like "Film," Drama, Story-play, and Stage play, only minor differences exist; as previously noted, their primary difference lies in presentation styles, while the core art form remains the same. Ajíbóyè (2002) states that "what the English call Drama is what we term Eré-oníṣe or Eré-onítàn." Yorùbá linguistic texts translate "Drama" as Eré-oníṣe and "Play" as Eré-onítàn, showing that while nomenclature varies, the underlying content remains consistent.

Scholars have made efforts to classify stage drama based on performance spaces and setups. Among them, Ọlátúnjí (1990:58) terms it stage performance or theater. However, my observation is that scholars often categorize drama based on its venue of presentation. All these point to the presentation methods derived from Eégún Aláàrè masquerades used by traveling theater troupes, whether performed in community centers or theaters—such as those led by the late Hubert Ògúndẹ́, Oyin Adéjọbí, Mr. Akin Ògúnvè, the late Ìṣọ̀lá Ògúnsọ̀lá, and others.

Ajíbóyè (2000:121) reports that the first person credited with staging drama recorded on camera was the late Hubert Ògúndẹ́, who composed Agbéyẹ̀wò (or Agbélèwó). This represents early recorded video plays shown in hall theaters. Later, comedians like Baba Sàlá (Moses Ọláìyá) emerged, utilizing comedic techniques to deliver social commentary on stage, often presenting marital themes to entertain audiences.

Following this, we can point to figures like Aládé Arómirẹ́, Babatúndé Omidina (Baba Suwe), Ọlúwẹ̀ẹ, Baba Àwẹ̀ró, the late Monsurat Omidina (Mọ̀ladún), Aláwíyè Lẹ́rẹ̀ Pàístyle, Adébáyọ̀ Salami (Oga Bello), and others. It was during this era that home video films became widely accessible to the public on video tapes and cassettes, allowing people to watch them via VCRs and televisions at home without needing to visit cinema halls or theater venues.

Film constitutes a branch of literature or dramatic performance, presented either through written scripts or on stage, where actors convey deep thoughts. Scholars have tracked the progression of traditional performance into cinema as a modern form of entertainment. In April 1975, the film Amadi was released. Its success prompted the production of films in other indigenous languages, leading to the release of Àjànì Ògún in Yorùbá and Hausa in 1976. Àjànì Ògún, directed by Ọ̀lá Balógun featuring Dúpẹ́ Ládìpọ̀'s theater group and Adéyẹmí Afọ̀oláyan (Ade Love), stands as the first Yorùbá feature film released in 1976 (Ògúndèjì 1992, Adélẹ̀kẹ̀ 1995). From that period to the present, Yorùbá-language film production has grown continuously.

Àropín N Tẹ̀nìyàn was performed on stage in 1964 and 1970 at Glover Memorial Hall before being adapted to film. Jáyẹ̀sinmi, Agogo Èèwọ̀, and Òrún Mọ́oru are notable examples of films that impacted society. Movie actors in Yorùbá society broadly fall into two categories: first, those who adapted stage plays into films, including traveling theater groups such as Baba Suwe and Latin's comedic troupes, as well as Hubert Ògúndẹ́'s group. The second category consists of those involved in film production independent of traditional stage backgrounds, subdivided into trained filmmakers like Ọ̀lá Balógun and Eddie Ugbomah, and self-taught talent such as Ayọ̀dèjì Rasaq and Báyọ̀ Adéróhunmú.

Television has played a crucial role in developing stage drama, as noted by Olúṣọ̀lá in 1979 (Àlàmú, 1991). Influences were also drawn from Indian cinema, evident in song-and-dance sequences adapted into Yorùbá films like Taxi Driver (Parts 1 & 2) and Agogo Èèwọ̀. While foreign films previously dominated cinemas, the pioneering work of figures like Hubert Ògúndẹ́ and formally trained Yorùbá filmmakers shifted audience focus toward home video releases. This home video revolution expanded job opportunities within the creative industry and helped reduce unemployment.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Mimetic Theory (Mirror Theory of Art), Moral Didactic Criticism, and Sociological Criticism of Literature.

- Mimetic Theory (Plato & Aristotle): Asserts that art and literature are fundamentally imitative of real life. In this context, Yorùbá cinema operates as a mirror (dígí) projecting societal norms, cultural transformations, crimes, and moral dilemmas back to the audience.

- Moral Didactic Criticism: Evaluates artistic works based on their ability to impart ethical instruction, distinguish between right and wrong, and provide moral guidance (ẹ̀kọ́-ilé and ọmọlúwàbí) to the viewing audience.
- Sociological Criticism: Evaluates literature/film within its cultural, economic, and moral contexts. It asserts that dramatic creations are products of society that inherently critique social institutions (such as marriage, religion, and justice systems). This framework supports the analysis of characters' actions as expressions of real-world Yorùbá societal dynamics.

7. Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology centered on literary narrative analysis and thematic analysis. Primary data were gathered through a textual and visual examination of three selected Yorùbá home video films:

- Àkọọlẹ̀
- Àlejò
- Oníbárà

Key dialogues, character dynamics, narrative arcs, and visual motifs were transcribed, translated, and categorized into major thematic classifications (e.g., cowardice, greed, classism, betrayal, poetic justice, and moral didacticism). Secondary data were extracted from academic texts, historical journals, and critical works on Nigerian film history.

8. Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Plot Synopses of Selected Films

Synopsis of the Film Àkọọlẹ̀

Gbémisọ́lá had been Wọlé's wife for many years, but the couple had no children. One day, her elder relative advised her to buy a baby, subsequently helping her buy a child that one of her domestic workers had born for Gbémisọ́lá. Jùlí was the young woman who worked as a domestic help in Lagos, whom Kọ́lá impregnated and whose pregnancy he refused to take responsibility for. The child Jùlí gave birth to was sold to Gbémisọ́lá, who explained the matter to her younger sister, Ṣadé. Not long after, Ṣadé revealed her elder sister Gbémisọ́lá's secret to her husband informing him that the child was not hers, but rather one she had bought.

Wọlé met a young woman and kept her secretly until she informed him that she was pregnant. This news thrilled Wọlé deeply, and he eventually agreed to take her as his wife. However, Wọlé warned her never to let anyone know or recognize her as his wife.

The woman whom Gbémisọ́lá called her elder relative exposed this secret to her, revealing that her husband had married a woman in secret and even had a child with her. Gbémisọ́lá resolved to commit an evil act. She sent hired assassins to kill the wife and her child; however, good fortune favors the righteous. One of the hired assassins turned out to be the wife's older brother, so he spared his sister and her child. The matter came to light to Gbémisọ́lá's husband (Wọlé) and his parents, who intervened. Wọlé ordered the new wife and her child to move into the house and threw Gbémisọ́lá out.

Synopsis of the Film Àlejò

In the town of Lánlóyè, it was custom that whenever a princess wished to take a husband, the young men of the town would compete for her hand. A calabash of destiny (Igbá-ìwà) would

be hidden in the Akéréjùpọ́n forest; whoever managed to find and retrieve this calabash would marry the princess. It was also their custom that if anyone male or female died within seven days after the wedding preparations were concluded, the surviving partner would be killed as an atonement sacrifice. After the king publicly announced the competition for his daughter's hand, Chief Ọ̀tún sought a counterfeit calabash for his son so that he could secure the princess.

Princess Adéọlá was given to Àlàgbé, the son of Ọ̀tún. On the night they were to consummate their marriage, Àlàgbé died, making it mandatory for the princess to be killed according to custom. Certain cultists/priests insisted on executing the princess, while others sought an alternative way out for the king to prevent his daughter's execution. The alternative was to light a sixteen-burner lamp (fitílà olójú mẹ́rìndínlógún) in the open courtyard; the king would then enter the Akéréjùpọ́n forest to search for the ancient egg (ẹyin ìṣẹ̀ǹtáyé). The light had to remain lit, for if it went out, the king would never return.

The king consulted the oracle, and suspicions arose that certain people intended to put out the sixteen-burner lamp. Consequently, they moved the real lamp elsewhere and placed a replica back in the courtyard. Chief Ọ̀tún went and put out the light in the hope that the king would not return, enabling him to usurp the throne.

The author also presents Àyándọ̀tun, whose father was blind. Àyándọ̀tun met Oyinkánsọ́lá, and they pledged to marry each other. Throughout this period, Oyinkánsọ́lá's mother opposed Àyándọ̀tun, claiming he could not marry her daughter as she could not associate with a pauper. In the midst of this turmoil, certain youths attempted to lock Àyándọ̀tun in his house and burn him alive; Àyándọ̀tun fled the town that night into the forest. In the forest, Àyándọ̀tun found the ancient egg and attempted to roast and eat it, just before running into the King of Lánlóyè, who was searching for it. The king cleverly obtained the egg from him and returned to the palace, thereby sparing the princess from death. The king divided his estate into three parts, gave one portion to Àyándọ̀tun, gave him Adéọlá as his wife, and decreed that Àyándọ̀tun would reside in the town.

Princess Adéọlá fell severely ill. They consulted Ifá, which revealed that Àyándọ̀tun had previously entered a sacred pact with another woman; unless that woman performed an atonement sacrifice, Adéọlá would not recover. The king sent for Oyinkánsọ́lá, who explained to the king that Àyándọ̀tun was her heaven-ordained spouse. They performed the ritual, the princess recovered, and Ọ̀tún was summoned. He confessed to providing the counterfeit calabash for his son to marry the princess before death claimed him, as well as extinguishing the lamp so the king would not return. The king ordered that Ọ̀tún be stripped of his title beads, declaring that from that day forward, the Ọ̀tún lineage would no longer hold chieftaincy. The chieftaincy title was instead bestowed upon Àyándọ̀tun's lineage, whom they had gifted land in the town.

Synopsis of the Film Oníbárà

In the town of Ọlọ́fin, the king had a son named Báyọ̀. A friend of the king named Wọlé had a daughter named Fúnmiláyọ̀. Both the king and Wọlé wanted their children to marry, operating under the principle that the wealthy associate with the wealthy. There was also a

blind young man named Ajíkawó, whose daughter led him everywhere he went. Her name was Àbẹ̀kẹ́. Báyọ̀'s friend observed that Wọlé's daughter, Fúnmiláyọ̀, would not make a suitable wife for Báyọ̀ because she was arrogant. He advised him instead to marry Ajíkawó's daughter. Àbẹ̀kẹ́ agreed to marry Báyọ̀; they spent time together, and she became pregnant. The king was furious to hear that Báyọ̀ did not want the woman chosen for him. Báyọ̀'s mother pleaded with the king to let their son choose for himself, but the king refused adamantly. Ajíkawó also came to the palace to inform the king that his daughter was pregnant by the prince.

The king grew extremely angry, stating he could not allow his son to marry a poor man's daughter and a blind man's child. Noticing that his son's heart truly belonged to Àbẹ̀kẹ́, the king banished Ajíkawó and his daughter Àbẹ̀kẹ́ from the town. He also ordered Báyọ̀ and Fúnmiláyọ̀ to travel abroad to cool off the affection Báyọ̀ held for the blind man's child. Following his banishment, Ajíkawó went to live with Íyá Àbíyè in the town of Faro, where Àbẹ̀kẹ́ gave birth to a baby boy before passing away. Ajíkawó endured great hardships while raising his grandson to adulthood.

The king eventually sent word for Báyọ̀ and Fúnmiláyọ̀ to return home for their wedding. However, their airplane crashed, and both died. The king was struck with severe illness from grief. The oracle was consulted, revealing that a royal descendant existed outside who must be brought home. The king sent an urgent plea to Ajíkawó, begging him to allow the boy to come to the palace. Íyá Àbíyè urged Ajíkawó to take the child to them, as he was indeed of royal lineage. Ajíkawó agreed and brought the boy to the palace. The king begged Ajíkawó for forgiveness and promised that Ajíkawó would suffer no more and would live with him in the palace.

8.2 Thematic Analysis of Crime, Social Justice, and Moral Didacticism

A. Personal Weakness and Moral Missteps: Lack of Courage

A central didactic message that filmmakers convey in contemporary Yorùbá cinema is that individuals must possess the courage to act on their moral intentions before opportunities slip away. A lack of courage to pursue honorable goals frequently leads to moral failure and regret. In the film Oníbárà, Ọ̀kìkíọ́lá lacks the courage to declare his love to Kòfówóróọ́lá directly. This stems from his position as her employee, despite signs that Kòfówóróọ́lá reciprocates his feelings. He fails to act until he resigns, by which time it is too late. He acknowledges missing his chance, stating:

> *Ọ̀kìkíọ́lá: Òkìkí Ajénifújà, what is your problem? You had such a massive opportunity before you, and you messed it up. When will you ever have the courage to speak to the person you love?*

This occurs after his friend advises him to leave a love letter on Kòfówóróọ́lá's office desk, an approach that fails to yield results. Rather than simply ignoring it, Kòfówóróọ́lá wanted Òkìkí to speak up directly, but Òkìkí lacked the courage. Believing love requires wealth, he resigned after Báyọ̀ insulted him in Kòfówóróọ́lá's office, seeking to make money elsewhere. Upon his return, it was too late Kòfówóróọ́lá had married Báyọ̀, a man she did not love. This prompts Kòfówóróọ́lá to say:

Kòfówóṛọlá: Òkìkí, you took too long to give me an answer to my question. You threw me into a pit of love; Òkìkí, you turned me into a woman who pines for love daily. You turned me into someone constantly pursued by a man who doesn't care about me; you caused me suffering.

Analyzing this dialogue demonstrates that the tragedy in this film stems from a lack of courage. This is the writer's primary didactic lesson to society: individuals must act courageously regarding their goals, as lost opportunities rarely present themselves twice.

B. Moral Representation of Love and Human Values

Love serves as a core moral theme in the film Oníbárà, particularly between Kòfówóṛọlá and Òkìkí. The writer highlights that regardless of socioeconomic status, the language of genuine affection operates independently of external class expectations. In Àkọọ̀lẹ̀, Bùnmi also experiences the complications of love. Bùnmi holds affection for Jídé, and Jídé recognizes this but lacks the courage to express his feelings. Consequently, Bùnmi attempts to prompt Jídé into speaking his mind. Bùnmi expresses this metaphorically:

"A movie I watched last night was very emotional; at the end of the film, they asked a question... Well! You are right, but this movie was very touching. It was about a young man who worked at a place where the person he truly loved was also located. Fear gripped him should he state what was in his heart or remain silent forever? Because if he spoke up, he feared he might be fired when he hadn't found another job yet. They then asked us, the audience, what we would do if we were in that situation. So I want to ask you as a man: if it were you, what would you do?"

Bùnmi poses this question to free Jídé from fear and encourage him to open up. Before Jídé can respond, her husband Báyọ̀ enters, interrupting their conversation. This scene illustrates that Jídé is affected by his feelings for Bùnmi, leading her to pose her coded question as a riddle.

In Àlejò, unrequited love drives Kúnlé to resort to heavy drinking. Upon discovering that Monílọ́lá has married, Kúnlé experiences deep distress. Despite her marriage, Kúnlé remains attached, holding onto hope. Love is presented as a universal human experience that affects individuals regardless of wealth. This is illustrated in Àkọọ̀lẹ̀, where Yẹmí rejects the wealthy Dérelé in favor of Démọ́lá, who lacks financial means. Yẹmí articulates her stance:

Yẹmí: I asked them to leave me alone so I could marry who I want. Even if he were a fisherman, I would follow him to the river to fish. But they said no! My father says the rich associate with the rich, and the poor with the poor; that a poor person seeks nothing from a rich person except money.

Yẹmí's devotion to Démọ́lá drives this statement, demonstrating that moral integrity and love transcend conventional social boundaries and financial status. Conversely, Báyọ̀'s treatment of Kòfówóṛọlá represents the opposite of genuine love, causing her continuous distress.

C. Social Injustice and Forced Betrothal (Ìfọmọdọ́rẹ̀ẹ̀)

Playwrights often highlight harmful social customs as issues of social injustice in home video films and literary works. In the selected films, forced or betrothed marriage (ìfọmọdọ́rẹ̀ẹ̀) is heavily criticized for didactic purposes. The narrative depicts this custom negatively to caution parents against forced unions. The marriage between Báyọ̀ and Kòfówóròlá serves as an example of forced betrothal that violates social justice and ultimately results in Kòfówóròlá's death. The author criticizes this practice due to its inherent dangers. In Báyọ̌'s household, Kòfówóròlá is treated like a servant, leading her to express regret over her father giving her away to an abusive partner. Kòfówóròlá's mother also opposes the arrangement, singing:

Íyá Kòfówóròlá: *Do good, let it be well / Do good, let it be well / You whose turn it is in this world, do good.*

Similarly, the marriage arranged between Bánkẹ́ and Òkìkí following Kòfówóròlá's death represents another forced union. This arrangement nearly causes further conflict, as Bánkẹ́ considers disowning her father for withholding the fact that she was being used to settle a debt with Òkìkí. Òkìkí states:

Òkìkí: What a pity, Bánkẹ́! Tell me, you went through all this suffering, this torment, and you still tolerated me... Oh! Dear God, have mercy on me. So I had gold in my house all this time while calling it suffering? Bánkẹ́, my hope, my faith, and my unblemished love return to you. And darling, I promise you that I will forever and ever love you and be faithful to you.

Bánkẹ̋'s devotion to Òkìkí prompts his realization, showing that moral resolution can emerge anew even after hardship.

D. Criminality and Greed: Spiritual Fraud and Extortion

Greed for wealth serves as a central criminal and moral offense in Àkọ̀ọ̀lẹ̀ and Oníbárà, whereas selfless behavior is highlighted in Àdó-Ẹ̀dan. In Àlejò, Pastor Ben's decision to seek a religious calling on the mountain is driven primarily by financial gain. Unemployment drives him into religious fraud, a criminal deception that remains clear up until his eventual imprisonment.

While on the mountain, Pastor Ben engages in fraudulent practices away from public view rather than focusing on spiritual devotion. Despite warnings that he lacked a genuine religious calling, he persists due to monetary desire.

Similarly, Àkànmú (Òkèlè), who works in Pastor Ben's church, prioritizes immediate financial gain over long-term consequences when accepting a garment on behalf of Pastor Ben. Knowing it is a bribe, he accepts the money and the garment without considering the potential harm to the pastor. This action leads to Pastor Ben's downfall. This is depicted in the dialogue between Àwẹ̀lé and Òkèlè:

Àwẹ̀lé: They said your pastor here doesn't accept things like this unless they receive land...

Òkèlè: Those who told you to build a house were not lying. When you were coming, you saw a Bugatti and didn't buy it; you didn't buy a Hummer or a Highlander. If those were brought to the Pastor, the Lord would accept them. If Jesus were on earth today, he would accept a ship... We are on the Lord's errand; we don't demand money, but if people give us money, we accept it. Before the Pastor can wear this garment, you must pay 20 thousand...

Àwẹ̀lé: Twenty thousand naira? Hi hi hi! I will give you 50.
Òkèlè: I didn't hear you clearly...
Àwẹ̀lé: I will give you 50 thousand...
Òkèlè: This is the garment the Pastor will wear next Sunday. I will simply hang it up the way PSG hangs Neymar's jersey.

This exchange between Àwẹ̀lé acting as an agent of malevolent forces and Òkèlè illustrates how greed leads to betrayal and criminal collusion. Òkèlè accepts the bribe, and the pastor wears the compromised garment on Sunday, undermining his miraculous powers and restoring his previous followers' afflictions. The author utilizes these events to critique real-world greed and moral corruption within society.

E. Moral Failure: Consequences of Arrogance

Arrogance is presented as a severe moral flaw that leads to personal and social downfall. In Àlejò, Pastor Ben's pride contributes to his ruin, driven by the belief that he possessed superior standing. Similarly, Mọ́yẹni acts arrogantly toward mystical forces by refusing to surrender the power of Àdó-Ẹdan, resulting in the death of one of the emissaries sent to retrieve it.
Furthermore, Rọ́mọkẹ́ exhibits arrogance toward Òkèlè when rejecting his advances, addressing him condescendingly:

Rọ́mọkẹ́: You say you want to marry me, Òkèlè? Just because we live in the same neighborhood? Keep quiet! What are you saying? I reject poverty. My Creator forbids it. Me, marry you? Listen and listen good: look around this house carefully, and don't let me ever see you in this house again!

Such arrogant speech is depicted as improper and lacking in traditional values (ọmọlúwàbí).

F. Criminal Acts, Betrayal, and Moral Retribution

The themes of crime and betrayal are further highlighted in Àlejò. The narrative frames betrayal as a destructive, criminal action that ultimately recoils upon the perpetrator. Mọ́yẹni's refusal to use the Àdó-Ẹdan power for good, as instructed by the elder, leads to his death. Íyá Àbíyè had explicitly warned Mọ́yẹni against misusing the power:

Íyá Àbíyè: Look at this power I have given you; it is great power. It is real power, and you must not misuse it. Do not use it for cruelty or fraud, because a true mother is not cruel. The day you use it fraudulently or cruelly, the outcome will not be good.

Mọ́yẹni's tragic end stems from violating this counsel—using the power fraudulently, inflicting harm, stealing money for a friend, and killing an emissary sent to retrieve the Àdó-Ẹdan. Eventually, the emissaries retrieve the Àdó-Ẹdan and kill Mọ́yẹni. Yábíiná reflects on this outcome in the film:

Yábíiná: Listen, all of you emissaries. Regarding Mọ́yẹni, please forgive him. It was youthful ignorance. If Mọ́yẹni had realized what the Àdó-Ẹdan in his possession truly was, he would have surrendered it to us long ago. He did not know. As for Àgbékẹ́, I am certain this was ordained by the Almighty. Let us drop the matter and grant forgiveness.

The author emphasizes through moral didacticism that every action carries moral consequences. Pastor Ben faces a similar fate after lying about Mọ́yẹni to Fálékè, leading to a series of events that result in his arrest by law enforcement for possession of human remains a direct portrayal of legal and moral justice. Finally, Òkèlè's betrayal of Pastor Ben by accepting a bribe leads to widespread consequences. As the pastor falls, those around him including Òkèlè are drawn into hardship, reinforcing the idea that crime and betrayal ultimately harm the perpetrator alongside the victim.

12. Findings

- Didactic Nature of Yorùbá Cinema: The analyzed films show that Yorùbá filmmakers use dramatic narrative structures primarily for moral didacticism delivering ethical instruction, discouraging criminality, and promoting traditional values (Ọmọlúwàbí).
- Rejection of Class-Based Betrothal: The narratives consistently depict forced marriage (ìfọmọdọ́rẹ̀ẹ́) as a form of social injustice, showing that unions built on economic interest rather than mutual affection lead to dysfunction and tragedy.
- The Inevitability of Moral Retribution: Across all three films (Àkọọlẹ̀, Àlejò, and Oníbárà), characters who engage in fraud, spiritual deception, or betrayal (such as Pastor Ben, Ọ̀tún, and Mọ́yẹni) inevitably face social disgrace, legal punishment, or death affirming the restoration of social justice.
- Cultural Continuity in Resolving Injustice: Despite shifts from stage theater to digital home videos, Yorùbá cinema continues to rely on indigenous folklore, divination motifs (Ifá), proverb-laden dialogue, and ancestral justice systems to instruct viewers and correct societal wrongs.

13. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Yorùbá video films are deeply intertwined with the criminal, moral, and social justice realities of their community. Through an examination of Àkọọlẹ̀, Àlejò, and Oníbárà, it is evident that contemporary filmmakers carry forward the legacy of early theater pioneers like Hubert Ògúndẹ́ by using film as a mirror (dígí) for moral didacticism and social correction. By highlighting the destructive consequences of cowardice, greed, forced betrothal, arrogance, and betrayal, these films reaffirm that individual actions carry ethical weight and societal consequences. Ultimately, Yorùbá cinema remains a powerful medium for preserving cultural heritage, critiquing contemporary vices, and upholding moral and social justice.

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