

Grass-Roots Movement and Propagation of Indigenous Culture in Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's Selected Plays

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Abstract

The interface between literature and culture is predominant in Yorùbá literary texts. Literature plays a vital role in the propagation of all aspects of culture in the traditional African society. Thus, the inclusion of cultural issues in the written form of Yorùbá creative writings is wittingly done. However, concerted efforts have been made by various bodies to revitalise the African cultural heritage. In this paper, the cultural thematic pre-occupations in two selected plays of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá are examined. The selected plays titled *Herbert Macaulay and the Spirit of Lagos* and *Madam Tinubu: The Terror in Lagos* are examined using the New Historicist approach to unearth the role of grass-roots movement in propagating the lost cultural identities of Africans. The textual analysis of the plays reveals that the fight for cultural revivalism is the underlying reason for some of the societal revolts witnessed in the name of socio-political and economic change in some parts of Nigeria. The paper also establishes that Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá engages in writing creative works that juxtapose different forms of propaganda in order to launch his ideological view on cultural revivalism. In conclusion, the paper advocates that Yorùbá literary texts are propagandistic; hence, writers should be committed to use their creative works



for reclaiming the lost African cultural heritage because human and economic development are closely linked to culture.

Introduction

Earlier scholars like Ògúndèjì (1988, 2000, 2008, 2014), Ògúnṣínà (1995), Ìṣòlá (1991), Aróhunmólàṣẹ (1997), Adéjùmò (2008), Oníyèlú (2011) and Oyèbámijì (2012) pre-occupied themselves with the definition, classification, critical analyses, as well as the issues of class and class struggle/leadership and emancipation in Yorùbá plays. Adélékè (1997) and Adú (2009) also examine the propagandistic nature of Yorùbá theatre and films. Therefore, this work analyses grass-roots movement in selected works of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá. Two plays written by Ìṣòlá, titled *Madam Tinubu: The Terror in Lagos* (1998) and *Herbert Macaulay and the Spirit of Lagos* (2009), are selected for the analysis of how literary texts have been used to propagate the cultural heritage of the Yorùbá. The New Historicist approach is adopted in order to use the hindsight to interpret the selected texts.

Specifically, the world at large has experienced different forms of societal revolt in the name of socio-political change. For instance, in several African countries, racial and cultural conflicts have been their bane. Conflicts are necessary for a significant social change because humans must have a means of expressing their grievances (Otite and Ogwuwu, 2003). Such expression may be in form of social movement and propaganda.

Social movement and propaganda have been established as weapons of emancipation. The concept of social movement has been defined and described variously by scholars, however, Ralph H. Turner's description of social movement is adopted in this paper. Turner describes social movement as:

Loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Although social movement differ in size, they are essentially collective.

(<http://www.Britannica.com>; accessed on 29 August, 2014)

Ellul (1993:v) regards "propaganda as a sociological phenomenon". The aim of propaganda is to influence the propagandee through the weapon of indoctrination. Propaganda has also been defined by various scholars, but this paper adopts Ellul's definition:

Propaganda is the expression of opinions or action carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulations. (Ibid: xii)

Drama has been established as one of the weapons used in grass-roots movement and propaganda. Zanto (1978:71-72) establishes that there are three types of theatre: "Theatre of Agitation Propaganda; Theatre of Integration Propaganda", and



“Theatre of Dialectical Propaganda”. The three forms of propaganda are deployed in the texts analysed. The playwright deploys Theatre of Dialectical Propaganda to re-tell the history of Lagos in the era of colonialism and the activities of Madam Tinubu and Herbert Macaulay in resisting some of the exploits of the colonial administration in order to entrench his own ideology on Yorùbá culture. However, the Theatre of Agitation Propaganda and Theatre of Integration Propaganda are deployed through the techniques used by the protagonists and some functional characters in the selected plays.

Madam Tinubu: The Terror in Lagos: A Critical Survey

It is a historical play that centres on the exploits of Madam Tinubu, an influential Lagos businesswoman who loved her people and the Yorùbá tradition and culture dearly. She hated the Yorùbá indigenes that imbibed Western culture, and as a result denigrated Yorùbá culture. She led the opposition against the white men who desired to take over the political power of Lagos. Campbell, the consul in Lagos, and other indigenes who had imbibed the Western culture plotted against her. Dòsùmú, the Ọba, aligned with this group and banished Tinubu. She refused to obey the Ọba’s order at first, but because of her love and respect for the Ọbaship institution and tradition, she decided to leave Lagos for Abeokuta.



Herbert Macaulay: The Spirit of Lagos

It is another historical play that centres on the life and activities of Herbert Macaulay, a nationalist, in the colonial era in Lagos. Some historical events that are specifically adapted in the play are: the place of women in Lagos politics; Muslims in Lagos politics: the water rate player; the Àpápá land case of Chief Olùwá and Èşúgbàyí Eleko's exile; court cases that went to the Privy Council. Macaulay, in all the above cases, made his stand known to Clifford, the then Governor of Lagos, by resisting the overbearing nature of the governor and the denigration of Yorùbá law and customs by Clifford and the men in his group; he organised a grass-roots movement against him. The collectivism and solidarity method employed by Macaulay gave him triumph over Clifford. Even at the Privy Council, the custom and law of the people of Lagos were given recognition. Olùwá's case succeeded, and instead of £500 that Clifford paid for the land he acquired from the Olùwá's family, the Privy Council orders that £22,500 should be paid. Also, the deposition of Eleko from the throne was overturned because it was not based on the custom of the land, Eleko returns triumphantly from exile to the detriment of Clifford and his men.

Literature, Culture and History

There is a close relationship between literature and the historical and cultural contexts of its production. Literary writers are not historians, but there are times that history is adapted to bring



about the social change a writer desires to see. The new historicists see literature and history as inseparable: “literature is a vehicle for the representation of history, and it does contain insight into the formation of historical moments” (Branningan, 1999:418). In Louis Montrose’s view, as cited in Branningan (1999), “the relationship between literature and history is bi-dimensional. The relationship between literature could either lean on “the historicity” of “texts or the textuality of history” (Montrose, 1989:28). It means that history could be seen as a text or historical record and be produced and seen as a text; or that, through literature, one could be exploring the history of a given culture and social issues of a particular era or epoch.

However, literary texts are not history. According to Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá, a writer is not supposed to be subjective while adapting history for the production of his texts. Most times, writers are objective. This is why he says “drama is not history! It only makes history memorable” (Isola 2010:4-8). Womack emphasises the fact that culture influences the literary work that we consume (Womack, 1999). Therefore, there should also be a link between the literature and the culture which produce it.

Oral literature, culture and history belong to the people, hence the grass-roots level is central to the dissemination of culture. The oral poetic genres in most African societies belong to the people. With the advent of the written culture, both the oral and written genres are combined to serve as a means of socialising and influencing the younger generation. Literature

plays a servicing and monitoring role to all other aspects of culture in traditional African society (Ìṣòlá, 2010:5). At the grass-roots level, during annual festivals, satirical songs are sung to ridicule erring members of the society in order to sanitise the community (Adéjùmò, 2008). In order to integrate the younger generation into the culture of their people, folktale, a form of oral narrative, is narrated to them. Folktales introduce children to reflect on fears and aspirations of the people (Ìṣòlá, 2010:4). In a nutshell, literature originates from the grass-roots and thrives on participation by the people at the grass-roots.

Literature and Propaganda of Culture

The link between the propagation of culture and literary tradition in the Yorùbá society dates back to the early 19th century, an era when the nationalist movement by indigenous people and their rulers to resist the imposition of colonial rule as well as the consciousness on the part of individuals and groups of African to see that African nations achieve socio-political, economic and cultural freedom started. In the era of colonised Lagos, Yorùbá culture experienced a high degree of denigration which led to moral laxity. As a response to the correction of moral laxity and cultural denigration, the educated elite who had access to publishing in newspapers used them to fight the war against cultural denigration. According to Ògúnṣínà (1992), such a call was published in *Elétí Ofẹ Newspaper*:

The problem of the decayed morality in Lagos
which has baffled the minds of a good many



would-be reforming ecclesiastics is still to be solved... it was then the glory of our girls to carry their honour bright and shining to their husband's house... women have now become the playthings not only of the Marina Lords, but even of their cook, stewards and boys... We must all, leading men and women, parents and guardians, men of all ranks and positions, try each his best to arrest the growth of this destructive social evil for the sake of the future of our race. (*Eléti Ofe* "Scrutator" March 14: 1923:5)

Herbert Macaulay, one of the nationalists, also used his daily newspaper, *Lagos Daily News*, to fight his battle against the government in his time (Tamuno, 1975:23). The development of the literary tradition which led to the production of poems, drama and novel, first in the newspaper, and later as a text, enhanced the fight against cultural denigration. For instance, a response to the 'Scrutator' call in *Eléti Ofe* in 1923 led to the production of I.B. Thomas's *Ìtàn Èmi Sẹ̀gilọ́lá Ẹ̀léyinjú Ẹ̀gẹ̀ Ẹ̀légbẹ̀rún Ọ̀kọ̀ Láyé*.

A careful reading of the novel *Ìtàn Èmi Sẹ̀gilọ́lá Ẹ̀léyinjú Ẹ̀gẹ̀ Ẹ̀légbẹ̀rún Ọ̀kọ̀ Láyé* will make the reader have understanding of the state of Yorùbá culture in the then colonial Lagos. The story is indeed a textualised history of the colonial activities in Lagos (Barber, 2012). In contemporary time, Akínwùmí Ìşòlá, a renowned poet, playwright and novelist, uses his literary works to propagate Yorùbá culture, and to bring the

history of the people to memory. The issues of cultural conflict, emancipation of the masses, myth, history, socio-political problems, as well as social change dominate his literary texts. He does this in order to bring back the lost cultural identities of African from the literary perspective.

Grass-roots Movement and Reclamation of Lost Cultural Identities

An understanding of the selected text reveals that the main thing central to the propaganda in the text is Ìṣòlá's desire to reclaim the element of Yorùbá cultural identities. Culture has been defined "as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, encompassing, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (Ìṣòlá , 2010:1). Culture also encompasses the tangible and intangible as it also incorporates the subtotal of the material and non-material tools, art work and work of art of a people and knowledge accumulated by the people (Babáwálé, 2008).

Governance, one of the intangible aspects of culture, is part of the focus of Ìṣòlá in the selected texts. Governance is the base for the traditional Yorùbá society, while other aspects, such as economy, myths, religion, fine art, orature, law, defence, technology, agriculture and trade, are the superstructure. The main hub of the wheel of the above is language (Ilésanmí, 2004:32). In *Madam Tinubu and Herbert*



Macaulay, Ìṣòlá clearly reveals that the aspects of culture attacked by the colonial power during their incursion in 1851, when the missionary came to Lagos, and, in 1861 when Lagos was annexed to Britain, are their governance, language and law. Ìṣòlá also observes that the three basic fatal interventions that undermine the progress of African culture are slave trade, colonialism and foreign religions. In his opinion, “colonialism undermined African culture by introducing strange systems to replace existing ones in order to control political power to dominate the land and exploit its economy” (Ìṣòlá , 2010:6).

Political Structure

In Herbert Macaulay, the new political structure that the colonial power institutes to replace the monarchical system of government is portrayed. Àtándá describes the form of political structure in Yorùbá setting thus:

The Oba (King) was invested with a lot of authority and surrounded with an aura of dignity. He had supreme authority in the state and his word was taken to be law by the generality of the people. Hence, his attributes as Oba Aláṣẹ, Èkejì Òrìṣà (King, ruler gods). He was greeted as Kábíyèsí a contraction of the sentence Kí á bi yín kò sí (No one dare question your authority). In other words, he was not accountable to human being (Àtándá, 1996:3).

With the above background, one would understand why Ọmọ̀ẹ̀kó, a character in *Herbert Macaulay*, flares up to challenge the relegation of the authority of Eleko in the play. The abominable act of the Governor is weighed within the ambit of the traditional culture. Ọmọ̀ẹ̀kó's anger and resistance is aptly put in the play:

Rights of the people! Under our own King!
That is it! The king rules by right! Yes!. By
the rights conferred by cultural tradition. Ha!
Laws? Administration? Proclamations!
Promulgations! Don't forget that Peace,
Order, Control and most especially,
Development, are all about people! You
ignored the Ọba, you abandoned the people
and you are talking of development (4)

Ọmọ̀ẹ̀kó belongs to the lower class in the play, but his feelings about the relegation of Eleko's authority and power are the feelings of the market women, middle-class people and even some of the elite in the play. Ọmọ̀ẹ̀kó, the market women, and the middle class people see the Governor's action as an oppression. To them, the new rule made by the Governor is a means of subjecting the power and authority of the Ọba; hence, a foreigner, the Governor, will now lord it over an indigene. The struggle in this play confirms the communist claim that the "history of all... society is the history of class struggle..." (Rose 1997:462).



Using the character of Herbert Macaulay, Ìṣòlá propagates his own way of rebelling against the denigration of the existing cultural and traditional institutions. In the play, Macaulay deploys agitation propaganda and integration propaganda techniques to reclaim the right of the Oba. Some of the tactics he employs are collectivism and solidarity of the people at the grass-roots level. Macaulay organises public meetings in order to create awareness as well as manipulate and instigate the people against the colonial power which has overturned the existing political structure. The point we could infer in this action is that Ìṣòlá wants to launch the communal way of life of Africans, because in Africa, according to Ehusani,

The traditional African does not retreat from people to some lone, one desert in order to revitalize himself or herself. Life is drawn from persons, energy is found in the midst of persons, beauty inheres in persons, wisdom is acquired through relationship with persons. (Ehusani, 1991:220)

Péléwùrà, another character in the play, is also used to vividly describe the communal living in the African society as to reclaim the African social structure. When the Governor stops Eleko's stipend, the people feel insulted. To show that the Oba has the full support of his people and that the people have regards for him, Macaulay organised a meeting. In the meeting the elite and the masses contribute money for the king's upkeep.



The long speech made by Péléwùrà reveals the people's opinion about the existing political structure:

Kábíyèsí (kneeling) we are here as representatives of the market women, to express our surprise at Clifford's order and to demonstrate our solidarity with you. When we heard that Clifford had stopped your stipend, we laughed, and laughed. What does a white man know about Lagos Ọbas and how they maintain themselves?.. In the meantime, we have delivered into your kitchen bags of gàrí, èlùbó, beans, rice, smoked fish and pepper. Never shall our own Ọba starve in the throne
(25)

In addition, other characters like Balógun, Şeríkí, Olùwá, Àdàmú, Kòtún and Braimoh donate money for the upkeep of Eleko (22-25). With the stock of the characters that participate in the fight for reclaiming the authority of Eleko, it is clearly seen that all social classes existing in the community are represented in the movement.

Similarly, in *Madam Tinubu*, Tinubu opposes the relegation of the authority of the Ọba. Vikiansony Sr is beaten by Masqueraders. Vikiansony reports the suspects to Dòsùmú, but he does not act as quick as he wants. Vikiansony reports the case to Campbell, the Consul, who orders the arrest of the suspects. In the traditional setting, this is a breach of the existing political structure and order.



Tinubu an activist, who is an adherent of culture, prevents Vikiansony from arresting the suspects because, in her view and based on Yorùbá culture, any case that has been reported to the Oba should not be tabled at any other place. She angrily puts her position thus:

Tinubu: And when this happened, did you
report the incident to Kábíyèsí

Vikiansony: Yes, we did

Adéjùmò: And I would like to tell you that the
Consul himself has ordered the arrest
of the offenders...

Tinubu: You cannot move an inch, what is this
world turning into? The tail is
wagging the dog. The rat is
threatening the snake. The tenant is
ruling the house. The herd is
controlling the herdsman! The foolish
want to condemn the wise? It cannot
happen, not here in Lagos. What right
has your Consul to poke his very
long nose into matters over which he
has no control. When a case is before
Kábíyèsí, why must the Consul order
any arrests? (28)

In *Madam Tinubu*, the importance of collectivism and solidarity is clearly seen in the way the playwright approaches characterisation. There are three categories of character. The first group is the group of Madam Tinubu, and in this category

are Badà, Mr. Adéoyè, Mr. Turner, Tèlà, Bèpo and hundreds of Madam Tinubu's slaves. In the second category are the aliens; that is, the Consul in Lagos, Ben Campbell, Sandman and the Yorùbá indigenes who have lost their identities, such as Vikiansony Sr, Vikiansony Jr. Frazer, Maiden Toker and Adéjùmò. In the third category are Dòsùmú, the Ọba and his chiefs. The first group, which is led by Madam Tinubu, are involved in agitation and dialectical propaganda. Madam Tinubu, the protagonist who leads the group, always deploys the overt propagandist method to fight for cultural revitalisation. She also understands the power of persuasion when it comes to grass-roots movement.

The second group encompasses the Colonial Administrators who have introduced a new structure into the society. The Consul and his group are employing the covert propaganda to manipulate Ọba Dòsùmú. Their action confirms the claim that "the modern bourgeois society... has but established new classes, new condition of oppression, and new form of struggle in place of old ones" (Rose 1997:462). The third group are Ọba Dòsùmú and some of his chiefs, who have fallen into the manipulation of the second group, and they have sheepishly imbibed the new ideology and new condition of oppression introduced by the second group.

Madam Tinubu and her group, using the agitation and overt propaganda, fight to liberate the second group from the power of oppression by employing a grass-root mobilisation of



the masses so as to set the entire society free. Thus, in the play, she appeals to Mr and Mrs Adéyeyè to make sure they win the heart of more people to the traditional way of life.

Tinubu: You now see how bad the situation is? It has come to a point where all lovers of Lagos must put their feet down and resist this intrusion.

Adeyeye: I agree with you, Madam, I am surprised that ADÉJUMÒ and VIKIANSONY can team up with aliens to determine our culture.

Tinubu: I'm not surprised. Neither the stone-hammer nor the stone anvil is a friend to the dry palm-nut. I do not hate the aliens as much as the so-called sons of the soil who turn against their own culture. To me it shows a threatening degree of mental sickness, for they can never be at home in the foreign culture they imitate, and they are complete stranger in their own heritage (35)

Projection of Gender Relation

Gender relation within the African cultural perspective is part of the heritage projected in *Madam Tinubu and Herbert Macaulay*. Gender has been perceived by feminist studies scholars as the social roles assigned to the sexes by the value and norms of the community (Akintúndé 2005:346). In Bascom's view, gender refers to "subjective feelings of maleness and femaleness

irrespective of one's sex" (Akíntúndé 2005:346). Gender roles for men and women vary from one culture to another, and from one social group to another, because it is the society that assigns social roles to each gender,

In most African societies, it is commonly believed that women are not visible, and they are rarely heard because of the patrifocal nature of the African societies (Adéjùmò, 2010:92). Gender discourse has been the focus of literary critics, and the female representations have enjoyed the attention of critics. In most discourses, especially the ones based on the Western model, the general position of critics is that women are being subjugated by their male counterparts. Hence, the fight for women liberation takes its root from the Western world. However, the history of feminist study in Africa takes a different dimension. The varieties of feminist models that exist, including STIWANISM, womanism, motherism and African feminism, believe that African women are not subjugated in the sense of Western feminism. The above position is encapsulated in Ògúndípè's view:

African women were in fact honoured, hallowed, indispensable to their communities and countries, and more historically liberated than Western women who were seeking to save us. (2007:8)



She states further that “African feminism represented an effort to liberate, not only women, but families, men, children and the nations.

Ògúndípè’s view is in line with Stewart, Abigail, Isis and Winter Nicholas’ (1998) that when women are involved in social movement “more attention is often paid to activities focused on improving family, neighborhood, and community well-being, as well as on connections between the private sphere and politics”.

The representation of Tinubu, the protagonist of *Madam Tinubu*, clearly supports the above assertion. Tinubu’s fight against Campbell and the indigenes that are opposed to Yorùbá tradition is a fight for the identity of the Yorùbá people and that of the Lagos people in particular. She opposes oppression of the masses on every shade (44). In the economic space, Tinubu transacts business directly with Dally and Birdlake, who are European merchants. This alludes to the fact that she is economically empowered. Her prowess in merchandise at the international space could be inferred in the relationship between her and her European business associates. Dally and Birdlake also show that African women are hallowed and honoured. They come to seek her opinion on the goods she likes to sell and buy.

Dally: Madam, our ship has just anchored. We hasten to find out what goods you have ready for us, and to ask you to come over to our ship in the evening to have a look



at the goods we brought this time before
other customers start (8)

The choice of words by Dally shows the close relationship that exists between Tinubu and the European merchants. In addition to an exchange of goods, the European merchants give advance payment to Tinubu. The above relationship shows that Tinubu, though a woman, is a good match for his business counterpart like Sandman, a male European merchant based in Badagry.

The influence of Tinubu in the socio-political climate of Lagos also corroborates the fact that African women are dignified, and they have a voice. In *Madam Tinubu*, when Campbell, the Consul, wants to render Dòsùmú, the Ọba, useless, Turner, an adherent of Yorùbá culture, reports the role played by Tinubu to uphold the tradition even in the face of strong opposition and persecution. He says:

The whites, the Brazillians and the other émigrés would like to use the Ọba as a plaything. Madam Tinubu's strong influence with the Ọba makes this difficult, so, they want her out of the way... (68)

Even in the midst of strong opposition, persecution and intimidation, Tinubu is portrayed as being as bold as a lion. She says:

There is no cause for alarm on our side, it is for them to take care. If Dòsùmú does not take care, there will soon be a change of Ọba. And, then, we shall have a more kingly man on the



throne. The tall man owns the throne, kingship does not belong to the dwarf. (72)

From the above excerpt, we can deduce the paradox of gender role. In most African societies, men are believed to be strong, brave and always daring. But in this play, it is Dòsùmú who is timid in the face of slight intimidation by Tinubu, and he readily aligns with the alien to fight her aunt.

The depiction of Tinubu, Àlímótù Péléwúrà and Jùmòké Ọbasá further emphasise the role of women in the socio-political development of the communities, as equally emphasised in Herbert Macaulay. In the play, Àlímótù Péléwúrà and Jùmòké Ọbasá mobilise women to fight the government of Clifford when he introduces payment of head tax for women (54-55). The effort of Péléwúrà and Ọbasá is in tandem with the activities of Olúfúnmiláyò Ransome Kútì in Abẹ̀òkúta. Together with the other women, she raises objections to taxation of women in 1914 (Mba Nina, 1887:155-171).

The speech rendered by Ọbasá while addressing the women who are demonstrating also shows the paradox of gender relation and role-sharing in most Africa societies. She says:

Powerful women of Lagos, I thank you for this massive turn out. Now I know we are ready to stand up for our rights. Why are we here today? It is to show our men the way in the fight against this ridiculous colonial Governor who is more interested in how much



of our money he sends to his father in London than in the development of Lagos. We are here to protest some of his unpopular decisions the Governor and the collaborating establishment have taken oppose taxation for women! (55)

The emphasised lines show that women in African societies are intelligible enough to fight for their rights in the traditional setting and even now. Above all, *Ìṣòlá* foregrounds in the elderly women, Tinubu and some market women in *Madam Tinubu* that women are spiritually powerful and that they are the pillar that holds the socio-political power that men wield in the traditional society; hence, the role of women cannot be underestimated. In *Òpéfèyítímí*'s opinion, "women by virtue of their physiological constitution and biological functions possess certain powers over men" (*Òpéfèyítímí*, 2009:164). Women are also believed to have mystical power and the mystical power is used to their advantage and that of other women. (*Òpéfèyítímí*, 2009:162).

This belief is reflected in the way the old woman in *Madam Tinubu* organises all other women to fight the cause of Tinubu against the alien in the play. The old woman represents the body of other women that belong to the cult, and her speech clearly shows that they do not want Tinubu banished out of Lagos because the aliens have an ulterior motive. She lays bare their grievance against *Dòsùmú* decision:



Your highness, all of us, here old and young, are your children. Now, if your child offends you, you can punish him, but you don't banish him from your house. The elders are of the opinion that our good daughter should not be sacrificed to please certain greedy foreigners. I must also add that all the market women are now up in arm (*at this point all the market women stand up remove their wrappers and only have only black tunics on. They form a shielding circle round Madam Tinubu...*) (105)

The cultic exchange of words follows between Dòsùmú and the old woman, and Dòsùmú's final speech "bí a ẹ́e n ẹ́omọ ọ̀gbèrì, kọ́ lá ẹ́e máa ẹ́omọ awo" (105) (You cannot deal with an initiate the same way you will deal with a non-initiate) confirms the fact that grass-roots movement as a result of unity, collectivity and solidarity of women contributes immensely to the fight against oppression.

In addition, the level of participation of women in grass-roots movement in the plays corroborates Stewart's, Isis and Winter's grouping of women in social movements. We have women who participated fully as activists; for example, Tinubu, Àlímótù Péléwúra and Jùmòkẹ́ Ọ́basa. We also have women who are ordinary participants, like Bépo, Mrs Adéyeyè, the old woman and the market women, while Tito and Lola fall into the category of women who are non-participants in social movements. In addition, it is also clearly revealed that grass-

roots movement in the plays cut across religion and social strata in the society.

Conclusion

The plays we have examined in this paper have revealed the close link which exists between culture, literature and history. We have also been able to show that literature could be an instrument to re-tell the history of a particular period. The paper also establishes the propagandistic features of Yorùbá drama. The traditional methods of grass-roots mobilisation such as cultism, collectivism and solidarity are also revealed. The paper has established that the intangible cultural heritage such as respect for elders, tradition, communal living, hospitality, generosity and co-operation and unity among others are propagated by Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá in his plays. It is also clearly revealed in the paper that the representation of grass-roots movement in the plays is not andocentric; both genders are involved, the visible role played by women in the development of society is established.

The playwright's ideological stance on the significance of African culture to both human and economic development of the society is also exposed. In addition, it is clearly revealed that a rebirth of the African culture is necessary because the minds of many Africans have been bought over, and, thereby, they have lost their identities.



In conclusion, this paper recommends that literary writers still need to bring a revival of the lost cultural heritage in order to explore the glorious prospects in both the tangible and intangible aspects of culture for the development of our society.

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