Chapter I

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The evolution of man from the past and his journey towards the unknown future is marked by a number of developments in every aspect of life. Man witnessed various terrors of the shifting forms of earth, of volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, storms, ice fields, and extinction of forests. The trail of development includes increasing the physical power and enriching the mind. Through various discoveries and inventions, man tried to make the various forces of nature to serve him. For the survival of the race he learned that mutual aid and co-operation is necessary. Likewise, in cooperative groups, Jordan says, “individuals preferentially cooperate...Long-term social bonds among kin as well as nonkin, some possibly recruiting the same psychological mechanisms among human friendships, enable dyadic cooperation in many primate societies” (88). The sum total of all these experiences created civilization.

Survival instincts and the need for mutual protection accelerated the budding of community life. It produced a ceaseless connection of semiotic links of culture, power, art, literature, science, and history. Modern society is also marked by a web of chaotic chains that compel an individual to attach oneself with the outer world. Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizome explained by Rozenberg unveils this interconnection.

I am speaking specifically of the micro political field of struggle that Deleuze and Guattari locate between the 'zone of indiscernibility,' which represents the ways in which the mind and
body of a subject may be 'dominated' or determined by systems of cultural signification that remain invisible to that subject, where the subject is unconstrained by those systems. (272)

Thus the gradual evolution of man led to the molding of community life and the origin of different cultures. Certain thinkers, according to House, believe that “historical developments influence the evolution of such distinctive phenomena such as the degree of cooperation, morale and commitment to different groups” (3).

The term culture refers to the shared elements such as beliefs, values, language, norms, customs and tradition that people imbibe in order to live in a particular society. As Matsumoto says it is “shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next” (16). The process of socialization helps in transferring culture. According to Kroeber, culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.’ (Adler 14)

Everything humans perceive, know, think, value and feel is through participating in a cultural system. Human potential can only be realized within
the structure of human culture and through growing up in close contact with other humans. Culture of an individual is dependent on the social group to which he belongs. This is evident from Ferraro’s words as he says “for an idea, a thing, or a behavior to be considered cultural, it must be shared by some type of social group or society” (16). Culture can be distinguished into different aspects. The main culture of the society which is shared and accepted by the majority of the people is called the dominant culture. Subculture refers to the culture of the small groups within the society. The authentic culture which is rooted in the experiences and beliefs of everyday life of the ordinary people such as folk songs, story telling and folk dance includes the folk culture. The elements of culture which consist of a lasting artistic or literary value, aimed for the upper and the middle class of the society is what high culture deals with. The other important form of culture is the popular culture, which refers to the everyday, simple, appealing to masses and easy to understand.

Contemporary world witnessed the development of cultural studies into a diverse and interdisciplinary intellectual field, which Stuart Hall put as “today cultural studies program exists everywhere”. (337)

The multi disciplinary nature of cultural studies blurs the boundary between various disciplines. As Hall argues there is something that differentiates cultural studies from other subject areas. It includes the things related to power and cultural politics. Cultural studies deals with the study of representations of the marginalized social groups and the changes that happen in culture. The study of culture has no limits and it is a discursive phenomenon. A group of ideas, images and practices that deals with the ways of knowledge and features of a
particular society is included in the study of culture. Cultural studies is related to all those customs, institutions and systems through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct.

As Hall details, “By culture, here I mean the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific society. I also mean the contradictory forms of common sense which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life” (439). The question of shared social meanings that are decoded out of the culture of a particular society is discussed while reading the culture. Through the study of culture one makes sense of the world he is dealing with. It can be compared to the generation of meanings out of the projected signs.

I. AFRICAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The core patterns of African society is shaped by an underlying harmony of structures that includes unified historical experiences, shared cultural impacts from external sources and a great extent of interaction between one culture and another. Kofi Awoonor’s statement: “a close look at the distribution of peoples in Africa today will reveal a great degree of unity in concept and practice among what hitherto been regarded as vastly different peoples and cultures” (4) states the presence of some common cultural threads that lay underneath objective witnessing. The institution of chieftaincy that impart divine powers on the tribal chiefs, the cult of ancestors, various rites from birth to death, dependence on nature, strength of kinship groups based on blood, notions of supreme creator, the metaphysical conception of the world, and oral literature shape the very
essence of the collective African culture. The origin of this culture rests buried in an obscure past.

As history developed, Colonialism has grievously disrupted the political and economic construction of Africa more than its traditional and cultural milieu. Ngugi wa Thiong’o, through his words: “It was African labour and Africa’s material wealth that built America and major cities of Europe” (Homecoming 17), stress the truth that centuries of trade and conquest has extracted much of Africa’s resources for the expansion of the rest of the world. Thiong’o also urges people not to overlook the present reality that a collection of African art, literature, and music found all over the world. He reminds them of Jazz music “with its now wide influence on modern music is derived from the African rhythms and musical art forms” (Homecoming 17). Songs, oral tales, music and art form the part and parcel of the needs and aspirations of the ordinary man as well as the fundamental fraction of the community’s tussle with their environment. This spiritual relationship between community and individual is poles apart from modern Europe, where he is detached from the physical, social, and religious needs of the community. James Joyce’ character Stephen Dedalus says:

I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my father- land or my church; and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can. (247)
Stephen Dedalus is the representative of a modern European who deems himself as an outsider existing in an individual culture conforming only to the laws of his imagination. Contrary to this, the African art is oriented to the community by fusing it together. The integrative function of culture as expressed by W.E Abrahams, holds particularly true to the traditional African society:

Culture is an instrument for making (mutual) sufferance and cooperation natural. Its success depends on the extent to which it is allowed to be self-authenticating…. By uniting people in common beliefs, actions and values, culture fills with order that portion of life which lies beyond the pale of state intervention. (Lemming 92)

In the area of culture, the struggle to move the centre was reflected in the tri-continental literature of Asia, Africa and South America. In the case of Africa it was more dramatic, since there the post-war world saw the new literatures in English and French merging itself into the tradition. According to Thiongo’ “this literature was celebrating the right to name the world and *A Grain of Wheat* was part of that tradition of the struggle for the right to name the world for ourselves” (Moving 21). This new tradition was confronting with the more influential capitals of Europe. They often saw the literatures of Asia, Africa and South America in color-tinted glasses. The good and the bad African often witnessed in the racist European tradition and the absence of consciousness of the colonized world as portrayed in the mainstream European literary imagination were all challenged by the energy of the new literatures. There emerged characters like Okonkwo who would rather prefer to die fighting than live on bent knees in a world which they could no longer define for themselves on their terms. These
characters, with their every gesture in their interaction with nature and with their
social environment, were a vivid image of the fact that Africa has its own
potential to show to the world.

The foundation of the traditional African world is based on the concept of
man and universe, where they “placed man at the center of the universe”
(Awoonor 49). The earliest myths of most African groups dealt with man, his
creation and the establishment of certain supernatural powers. The binding force
that defines the relationship between man and the creator is art. And art for them
turns out to become an appropriate instrument in articulating man’s material
world and the nether one beyond the grave. Art, by putting on the outfit of
spirituality, becomes an augmentation of the ritualism of the African mind.
Awoonor delineates African art as “an instrument expressing man’s will and
wishes to the creator, an assertion of his temporality, more important an
articulate statement of spirituality through a cyclic order within his cosmos”
(53). The mingling of African art and spirituality is apparent from the singing of
elegiac verse during funeral ceremonies in the Nigerian town of Abeokuta. They
believe the dead soul to hear the following poem sung by others:

the leopard has eyes of fire
the tale of the leopard never sleeps;
but mightiest of all are its claws-
its hidden secrets. (Mahadeva 23)

The figurative language of the song preaches a familiar African lesson that the
ancestors though buried and gone remain the most potent allies of the living. The
chanting of the song, according to Adrian A. Roscoe, supplies the mourners “a
fleeting glimpse of the next world, which, in reality, is the chanter’s poetic way of announcing that the deceased died a happy death, an old man who is leaving behind a great harvest of children” (13)

T.S. Eliot’s notion of a poet’s relation to his tradition as “the most individual parts of his work may be in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously” (26), and the words of the Senegalese writer, Birago Diop: “the tree can grow only by sinking its roots into nourishing soil” (Wauthier 66) appears to be the central truth of African tradition in defining their art and literature. Oral traditions figure an essential part of culture of any group of people. It is the channel through which communities sought to preserve their identity, by handing down orally the most important rudiments of their culture from one generation to another. The abundant array of oral traditions echoes the African way of life. It also embellishes specific forms, often identifying themselves with certain localities, settings, or ceremonies. It is said that the continent Africa can be viewed as a site of enormous, long, and ongoing creativity in relation to orality as a vector for the production of social life, religious beliefs, and the constant constituting and reconstituting of society, ideology and aesthetic. (Gunner, 1)

If it is language which has a decisive responsibility in the production and reproduction of culture in a society, then in the case of an African society it is often language joined with the performativity of the body and the enactment of it in both private and public space that defines its culture. It is difficult to conceptualize oral literary forms as a mere conventional, primordial, and pre-
colonial phenomena. They flourish in contemporary Africa too, where performances of oral tales get featured on radio, television, and films. Numerous forms and tropes of oral literatures are incorporated into the African written literary expressions like fiction, drama and poetry also, by providing literary abode to various mythical fantasy characters. Kihika in Thiongo’s *Grain of Wheat*, Dan and sello in Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power*, Nedjma in Kateb Yacihe’s *Nedjma* are real life characters who move into a relationship with mythical characters, thereby becoming a part of history and culture.

i) **LITERATURE IN AFRICA**

The beginning of modern literature in Africa can be traced to the work of missionary institutions throughout the continent. Most African languages received orthography, “as a result of missionary work based on the realization of the need to translate the Bible and other holy works of Christian dogma and teaching into African languages” (Awoonor 130). There occurred an explosion of African writing in European languages during the mid-twentieth century, when black intellectuals from French colonies living in Paris instigated a literary movement called negritude. It materialized out of a “sudden grasp of racial identity and of cultural values” (Gerard 51) and an awareness of the wide discrepancies which existed between the promise of the French system of assimilation and reality. In order to rediscover the African values that had been erased by French cultural superiority, the initiators of negritude looked to Africa and its cultural diversity. Authors like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire, and Leon Damas were the first to prove that only through European linguistic
means will the Africans be able to work effectively towards a pan-African end, which will enable them to reach much larger audience. Senghor says

we are cultural half-caste, because, although we feel as Africans, we express ourselves as Frenchmen, because French is a language with a universal vocation, because our message is addressed to the Frenchmen of France as well as to other men, because French is a language of graciousness and civility. (23)

After negritude had done its work, the surrealist poem and philosophical essay gave way in West Africa to another literary form- the satirical novel. The dominant tone of the 1950s includes Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, Bernard Dadie, and Camara Laye, whose fiction is packed with anti-colonial humour. These writers tried to create a dignified image of the African past. They circumspectly tried not to glorify the pre-colonial era as a Golden age, since for them the best way to beseech the cause of the past was by projecting an accurate image, not a romanticized one. Achebe’s words: “the credibility of the world (the writer) in attempting to recreate will be called to question and he will defeat his own purpose if he is suspected of glossing over inconvenient facts” (The Role 158) confirms that a writer cannot create a make-believe idyllic and multicolored world. The right way is to admit that like any other people past the author’s world also had its positive as well as negative aspects.

Thus an African writer is endowed with the task of re-educating his society to an acceptance of itself and also to argue their case against colonialism exposing the damage foreigners had done in Africa. The testimonial literatures of 1950s and 60s, such as those written by Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka,
Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa tried to epitomize African reality as well as culture by responding to the derogatory representations of, and myths about, Africans. The modern African novel is a genre developed as a distinct body of imaginative discourse. It was predominantly occupied with modes of resisting the role of western hegemony in determining the consciousness of African states.

The end of the colonial period is marked by the emergence of novel in West Africa. There the creation of fiction is virtually as old as communication through spoken words. The region of West Africa is rich in traditional lore from many ethnic groups. It has produced folktales that are among the most famous in the world. It includes a huge part of the corpus of what is now referred to as orature. It is stated that the fiction of West Africa “includes the epic tradition kept alive by the griots, traditional bards who recounted the history of their clans as well as of heroic figures in their region” (Peters 8). The West African novels are also a reply to the twisted narratives of Europeans about Africa. They extorted control of the territories they had carved out for themselves without any proper knowledge of the natural and ethnic boundaries.

Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, while trying to depict the horror which Belgians are imposing in Congo, still helped to reinforce images of Africa as the Dark Continent by swathing an evil that was almost blatant. Achebe criticizes *Heart of Darkness* as it “projects the image of Africa as ‘the other world’, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality” (*Hopes* 2). Yearning for a shelter in culture, voicing for a political upheaval, love and disillusionment were the main themes of the different waves
of West African writings between 1950 and 1988. This period also saw some new-fangled writers who enjoyed a populist approach represented another tier between market literature and the sophisticated literature that pays homage to exacting aesthetics, form, and style. The traumatic political and cultural changes since independence forced Anglophone West African writers to move from the gripping trepidation with the residual effects of colonialism in Black Africa to a preoccupation with more universal themes rooted in more specific contemporary realities. In West Africa, Nigeria is the country where most of the literary activities flowered as West African writing is dictated by developments more in Nigeria than in the other countries.

ii) DRAMA IN AFRICA

Thomas Aquinas’ statement that humans are “made almost on a par with the angels” in their capability to acquire and apply knowledge which is reassuring and they share some basic characteristics of other animals, namely: “love for power and uninhibited sexual aggression” (Oke 4) shows that human beings generate the crisis in society and also create the means for their elimination and thus drama can be called as a human art. Culture can be identified as “the set of learned behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population” (Ember 17). According to Ralph Linton, the culture of a society is the people’s way of life: “the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation” (Haralambos viii). It is said that culture is a lifelong process’ without which “an individual would bear little resemblance to any human being defined as normal by the standards of his or her society” (ix). In the
African society religion and arts are major tools of socialization that are often employed to counteract the stressful factors of life. Through prayers, admonitions, folktales, etc this situation is tackled in a family.

But, to deal with the issues that touch the whole community, much more engaging methods are used, such as songs and dances that put the people in the right mood, so they can listen to the prayers and admonitions of priests and leaders. They used music, dance and drama in order to guarantee that the messages are understood and internalized by the members of the community. During festivals, in pre-modern societies, deities and ancestors of a community are made present through masking and other forms of impersonation.

Aristotle states in his *Poetics*, that imitation is natural to man from childhood, “because he is the most imitative creature... and learns at first by imitation” (Selden 47). Beyer and Lee Points out that a child imitates those whom he admires and then adds his own levels of “person” drawn from his observation and imagination (15). The kind of imitation that infuse human active life is most potent in the dramatic form, as it is performed for the public. During impersonation, one becomes another person as Jean-Louis Barrault explains; it is through the greatest love of life, and particularly of man, that the actor, called on by his profession, will come to bear a resemblance to the man he wants to interpret. The theatrical job is avocation of giving of self (26). Along with the basic meaning interpretation skill of an actor, one must have at one’s own disposal a collection of sign systems which can help that person in improving his facial expressions, body language, and use of the voice in modulating the text. This quality of an actor can be read parallel to what Martin Esslin stated as play
instinct. For him play instinct is “one of the basic human drives, essential for the survival of the individual as well as the species”, and that it can be regarded as more than a mere pastime, “since it is profoundly linked to the basic make-up of our species” (20).

Drama is a work of art meant to be performed, and it is in this way that its full meaning is accomplished. According to Marjorie Boulton, “there is an enormous difference between a play and any other form of literature. A play is not really a piece of literature for reading. A true play is three-dimensional: it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes” (3). In drama the audience can see and hear the events as they unfold. The success of a play consequently depends, in large measure, on its ability to construct plots from the common mode of the time so that an audience is able to recognize it, however altered. Henshaw points out that “dramatists have always known that the drama is one way in which they can “catch the conscience” of people. But this cannot be achieved if their audience does not understand the situations in their plays” (5).

A good play for Chris Dunton should conform to ‘the broader context of social formation” (2). By this he means how “plays relate to currents of thought, of ideological patterning, in contemporary … society; how do they function as social production if and when they are performed; what do they do?” (2). From these disparate submissions emerges the conclusion that drama has great influence on life. The experience of taking part in a drama can greatly modify or deepen an actor’s personal life; equally, the audience’s appreciation of a situation, indeed of life itself, can be enhanced through drama.
Traditional African theater has continued to exist in spite of the invasion of modern culture as well as theater from outside Africa. Several African communities and cities still embrace their own traditional treasure of generation-to-generation means of entertainment, even though the British, French, and Portuguese theater have influenced most aspects of Africa. The main force for the survival of traditional theater, drama, culture, and history lies in the special oral nature of the African people. Traditional theater has also been a tool for social changes on the continent. Its relationship with the African world view and religious beliefs make it similar in some aspects to Greek or Hellenistic theater. In the modern time when classroom education has inflicted foreign culture and ideas on different forms of entertainment in Africa, teachers encourage their students to experiment with both traditional and modern forms of theater. Thus, African students read works of writers like William Shakespeare, act out scripted drama, and at the same time, or interchangeably, keep the tradition by engaging in traditional theater during festivals and other special occasions. The blending often occurs, especially when performers target educated class of audience. In traditional theatre, drama is seen as repertoire or oral warehouse of verbal and body entertainers. Their role in reshaping their communities and in keeping the tradition alive makes them relevant in African art.

Different from western theatre, African theatre is a total theatre. It appears to be a spectacular event with singing, dancing and acrobatic display complementing the spoken script and the plot. Lasisi differentiates this as

While theatre in the western world favours a gulf between the performer and the audience, places more emphasis on
the spoken word… with essentially passive audience, theatre in Africa is the theatre of the people and by the people. There is no significant demarcation between the performer and the audience also participates actively in the performance process (30)

As far as Africa is concerned the dramatic rituals is functional in traditional society, because rites are efforts "to change the undesirable, or to maintain the desirable" (Richards 113). When something goes erroneous or is misplaced, the whole effect will be lost and it has to be done all over again. During rituals dramatic aspects should not be ignored, but one can only then speak of drama when a division is effected between drama and rituals. It is difficult to mark a clear limit between dramatic ritual and drama, "where movement meets countermovement . . . where the leader of the dance separates himself from the choir and places himself in front of the others" (Van der Leeuw 86).

During the dramatic ritual, people play their role in the action, even though some may participate more actively than others. Gradually, in Africa, forms are developed which assign the dramatic parts to one or several actors, while the rest of the people become audience. Thus a miniature group here represents as well as expresses the concerns and emotions of the whole community.

The mimetic dances, puppet shows and masquerades have lead to the origin of drama in Africa. The commonest form of African traditional drama is the comic sketch, depending mostly upon gestures rather than speech with
alternating songs and dance. Another source of African drama “can be traced back to the art of story-telling” (7). In story-telling, the stories live through gestures and narration. The narrator strives to portray various characters, through dialogue and action. Dramatic dialogue is employed to convey the progression of events of the story. The ancient literature, including the story telling aspect, which forms an essential part, has been transmitted orally from generation to generation. In narrating the old stories the main point is the sung or spoken performance with music, singing, dancing, mimicry, masks and costumes. Here the narrator improvises on common themes, while the performance proceeds inside a fixed frame of traditional ritual actions.

Austin Ovigueraye Asagba claims that, “the drama in Africa developed from man’s need to control and dominate the natural and unforeseen forces that co-inhabit the world around him” (21). On the other, according to Rajkumar, certain thinkers relate the origin of drama to some supernatural elements. He says:

a human being, by some inexplicable circumstances, is abducted by a diety, it is argued. When he returns, he brings along with him the secret dance steps and songs; in due course of time these dance steps and songs might have developed into ritual drama. Befitting this interpretation, a close study reveals how myth and religion, in African drama, stand out as ever refreshing and energetic sources, through all these years. (16)
While comparing the traditional theatre with that of the modern theatre, some theorists are of the opinion, that traditional African theatre can be rightly considered as a separate entity. Traditional drama has no distinct script and often blended with rituals of the community. As Lewis says, the characteristics of traditional African drama “is its communal aspect, a collective working out in symbolic language of the fears, hopes and wishes of an organic community, a placation of the gods and a placebo for the dead who are called upon to intercede for the living” (176). The modern drama has a script, a stage with a system of relations between the author, producer, director and actor. The obligation of the author to an ideology related to the social context forms the source for modern scripted play. The dramatist Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin, while writing *Oda-Oak Oracle*, draws upon the traditional Ethiopian myth to exploit the audience’s relation with it. Lewis states that “despite its affinity with the traditional forms of African drama Gabre-Medhin’s play is recognizably modern, written with a modern audience in mind” (178).

On the other, for certain thinkers, a clear separation between oral literature and drama cannot be made. Similar to modern written drama, performance is such an integral aspect of this literature also. In fact, oral literature is always at the same time drama in a way, because sentiments, mimicry, gestures, intonation, rhythm and pause, variation of moods and reacting upon the moods of the public, belongs to the oral character of the African non-written literature and also to drama. An analysis of the literature and culture emphasize the fact that it is never possible to bring about a clear division between eras, periods and movements, because they influence and overlap each
other. And thus in the case of drama, certain critics opines that one cannot treat traditional drama-forms as one thing and the modern drama as another, since there are various common elements that bind both together. The use of traditional stories as well as myths and their narrative technique in contemporary drama is evident from Tom Omara’s *The Exodus*, where he made use of the stories of beginning based on myths and incorporated in his drama. The event happened a century ago in what is nowadays called Acholiland, east of the Nile, in the north of Uganda. Basically, it was an etiological story in which it is described why two related clans do not live on the same side of the river. The play as Omara wrote it some years ago is introduced by a narrator who sits among a group of children, before the stage or among the audience. The children ask questions and are answered by the narrator, until they arrive at the point where the play is taken over by the "real actors". Omara adds explicitly that this first scene of the play can also be substituted by a narrator summarizing this part, as it has been done traditionally. In the version with the children, an old song forms the obligatory transition to the performance of the ancient events;

3rd Boy. The story of the beginning. Yes, I know it.

Narrator. Tell your brothers and sisters, then. Tell your generation. Your mothers should have told you this. My mother told me; and my mother's mother told her. That is how the story has lived on. Tell them, my son.

3rd Boy. Long, long ago, before anyone was born, God, the Moulder, the Nameless One, lowered to earth the Fust Man. Lwo was his name.
Then the world was bare, like an egg's surface. There was nothing like buildings, cars, clothes, or even people except for this single man, Lwo. So that from Lwo spring all the people now alive, you and me. Isn't that right?

Narrator. Go ahead, boy, you know the story.

3rd Boy. Lwo had a grand-daughter who bore forth triplets. These brothers lived a life cursed by their own quarrels and jealousies among themselves. And one day there was such a big quarrel among them that they split up, and forever after lived on opposite sides of the great river(…) But we could put this story on the stage and act it,sir.

Narrator. So that these people would come back reclothed like spirits of our ancestors, do you mean? ( . . . ) Then let us sing the song that tradition says must precede such a revelation. They sing the Acholi song Canna. Our attention moves to the stage. (Omara 48)

The story ends with a ceremony in which the brothers swear on their crossed spears that they will never meet again. Omara's Exodus indeed stands very close to the traditional way of story-telling. Masiye, a Zambian playwright adapted his play The lands of Kazembe from the surviving historical journals and documents. This historical play dramatizes “the first major Portuguese attempt, undertaken in 1798, to cross Africa from Beira to Angola through the country of the fabulously rich and powerful empire of Mwaata Kazembe” (Etherton V). Another East African example is Ebrahim Hussein's Kinjeketile which has been
motivated by historical events. Hussein says himself in its introduction that

*Kinjeketile*

is not an historical evocation of the real man. Kinjeketile here is a creature of the imagination, and although the 'two men' closely resemble one another in their actions, they are not identical. I have had to mould my character, to suit artistic needs, borrowing freely from the imagination when historical facts did not suit my purpose. History should not be used as the measuring stick for this play therefore; rather, its failures or successes should be gauged against rules determining a work of art. (Hussein v)

Ruth Finnegan has emphasized that “Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion – there is no other way in which it can be realized as a literary product” (2). Thus the parallel is less to written literature than to music and dance, which also depend on repeated performances for their continued existence. The question whether in precolonial Africa real drama existed is one of those typical questions of debate in western ethnocentric thinking. Several Europeans have denied the existence of African drama, before the arrival of the colonizer. Coomevin even dedicates his book on African drama to the father or the “bononcle” of African drama, Charles Beart, director of the Ecole Superieuere of Bingerville in the thirties in colonial French West Africa. (52)

There are instances where the modern theatre makes use of the world of oral tradition, where the ordinary people meet the world of the spirits, as in
Penman Muhando's *Tambueni Haki Zetu* (1973). This play deals with the political theme of oppression. Here the local tribal story gets much wider dimensions, because the dramatized events which here confront the world of the spirits and the actual world “could also take place among African groups, in the larger domain of world history, and in particular the history of colonialism and all forms of oppression” (Mbughuni 91). There are also many modern plays based on traditional animal stories. Efua Sutherland has dramatized some of them, especially the ones called *Anansesem*, which means literally Ananse stories, but the name is also used for the body of stories told and for the story-telling performance itself. Efua Sutherland developed this traditional genre in the drama-studio in Accra. The spider Ananse is a kind of Everyman showing the people who they are and how qualities such as greediness, ambition, silliness or slyness affect the community. One may laugh tremendously about Ananse and his tricks, but no one ignores the morality of the story. Ananse is, artistically, a medium for society to criticize itself, as it can be seen in the expression: “Exterminate Ananse and society will be ruined” (Sutherland V).

The warning of Eldred Jones, when he said “the writer who will make the maximum impact would be the one who adapts these traditional elements to contemporary uses” (8) states that using traditional devices does not automatically guarantee an artistic result. It emphasizes the foolishness in blindly following tradition without meeting its quality. It seems that the large themes which preoccupy many modern playwrights such as Ngugi wa Thiongo’ and Rebecca Njau are tradition and change and the problems of the big city,
since both of them are often intertwined. Their themes originate from and are related to the confrontation with the western world and urbanization.

Theatre in Africa is obviously an arena of greater vigor than other literary forms and it appears to be the locus of dialogic variation. Bringing personages on to the stage and also locating them in stridently identifiable scenarios that emits the struggle for self-actualization and the lived vagaries of experience which breed disillusionment, fear, joy, and terror, produces this vigor and vitality. And this applies the same for those scenarios that are drawn from present-day life and from mythic times.

The personages we see on stage are also often surrounded by the paraphernalia and accoutrements of everyday life: clocks, an alari or kente cloth, radios, mortars and pestles, shoe racks, handkerchiefs, even the detached back of a passenger lorry (with inscription of proverb and all), as well as all the stage props that demarcate the quotidian round…. Yet it is precisely when the theatre is accepted as a minimal paraphrase that two serious difficulties open up regarding its relocation within culture. (quayson 46)

Along with this, theatre in Africa also reflects the varying rhythms of other spheres of African culture in terms of music, dance, and spectacle. The theatre, then, might be said to provide a minimal paraphrase of life on the continent, whether in its heroic and epic past or in terms of its contemporary realities.
As a result of the paradigm of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial sociopolitical realities, African theatre witnessed not only the loss of the vitality of indigenous culture but also the emerging contemporary theatre and its role in the re-production of the lost indigenous ethos.

For it is also clear that the _alarinjo_ traditions, even though historically began as funerary rituals lining up to support the royal institutions and authority, sever themselves from these institutions. When they become secularized, they got converted into a channel for reflecting the changed aesthetic, political, and social relations. And this shift can be mapped out for most indigenous forms on the continent. With the intrusion of colonialism, indigenous cultures delicately widened their conceptual realm so as to take account of the new cultural threat across a wide range of expressive forms. For the Yorubas, one way in which the new cultural threat was negotiated was by arguing the Christian God as synonymous with the high God Olodumare. This allowed the _babaláwo_, the priests of the Ifa divination cult, to proceed with their interpretations of personal problems brought to them for resolution by both Christians and non-Christians alike within the ambit of _orisha_ worship.

Redefining drama includes an amendment of the Aristotelian rules in performing a drama. It comprises a resistance to Aristotle’s theories form the beginning related to the traditional performing arts and the contemporary African culture. The still persisting academic argument over whether the ritual or the festival observed in performance, which provides a new definition to drama or the need for an alternative method of categorization is relevant. Oyin Ogunba says:
This ceremony can serve as a paradigm for kings’ festivals not only in Yoruba land but much wider afield in Africa, especially in West Africa, for it contains several of the typical elements of the African ‘royal drama’. First there is a string of loosely connected events lasting for a few days, all in an atmosphere of general merriment. Then, there is a central event of a historical and military nature which is usually mimed. The king may conclude the ceremony by dancing in full pomp and pageantry for the whole community. (15)

The quotation indicates how a festival or ritual performance has achieved its present organizational status. Social changes that happen today have already turned the festival or ritual meaningless in the background of present day realities. Etherton’s finding that the “present day Kalankuwa performance in Bomo village might seem to be trivial, inconsequential and even a corruption of tradition for it is changing from a harvest festival into a more satirical festival”(34)

In Africa, there have been a very large number of theatre companies. But those of Hubert Ogunde, E. K Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo and Moses Olaiya Adejumo are the main ones. These travelling theatre companies made use of the western drama modes and the Alarinjo theatre elements. The Yoruba masquerades like Egungun, Gelede and the music traditions of the various kingdoms had their own influence on Hubert Ogunde’s company. It was through Ogunde Company that dialogue drama flourished in Africa. His first plays were
folk operas with titles like *The Garden of Eden* and *Throne of God*. On the other
his *Strike and Hunger* was an allegory that reflected the desperate situation of
labor in Colonial Nigeria which led to the general strike of 1945. During the
1950s cultural nationalism got substituted by a more specific process of political
organization in the regions of Nigeria in expectation of independence.

Duro Ladipo plays have a specific structure of meaning through the
imaginative dramatization of Yoruba myths. In Ladipo’s famous play *Oba Ko
So*, Etherton states

different elements all contribute quite specifically to the
play’s overall meaning, such as symbolism, both in the
dialogue and spectacle on stage, and the plays formal
rhythm through which characterization is established and
the story unfolds. (49)

History has a great importance among the playwrights of Africa. The
example where the history of Mau Mau is for the audience and dramatists of
Kenya the embodiment of the struggle for independence proves the importance
of history. For some dramatists, history can provide material for their drama
regarding the periods where certain qualities appeared to inform the conduct of
human affairs. Certain historical plays like *Chaka* by Senghor, *Les derniers
Jours de Lat Dior* by Amadou, *The Mightier Sword* by Martin Owusu, *Kurunmi*
by Ola Rotimi focus upon a leader, a king or a warrior as a hero. Etherton says
“the drama creates the heroic stature of the leader. Each play is structured so that
the central figure rises above adversity and all efforts to undermine his authority
and position through the inherent nobility of his character” (144). In Thiong’o
and Mugo’s *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, colonialism and capitalism is portrayed as the cause for the continuing poverty and despair of the working class and of the peasants of the third world. Kimathi, the leading general of the Mau Mau war becomes the main character of the play. However in recognizing and depicting Kimathi as the hero of the Kenyan masses, the author’s real focus is on the continuing class struggle, which got increased due to the post-independence neocolonialism. They say

> It was crucial that all this be put together as one vision, stretching from the pre-colonial wars of resistance against European intrusion and European slavery, through anti-colonial struggle for independence and democracy to the post-independence struggle against neo-colonialism. (52)

While creating the character Kimathi as the people’s hero, the authors have made people themselves heroic. The act of writing the play includes their understanding of history and their awareness of the contemporary realities.

Kaabwe Kasoma, the Zambian playwright has commented that “the mixing of English with other language has less to do with the social categorization of characters than with the comprehension of the play by a linguistically mixed audience” (24). As the options here are not about appealing an english speaking and a non-English speaking audience, but between a rural linguistically homogeneous audience and an urban linguistically heterogeneous groups. This automatically creates problems to the directors and producers of the theatre company. Thus it is extremely difficult to find a language which matches the linguistic variety of the African milieu. As a result of which the playwrights
started to address themselves to the problem of increasing wider audience for contemporary drama. The first attempt has been with the Kaedza Batanani popular theatre movement in Botswana related to the linguistically homogeneous rural audiences. The established popular theatre traditions such as the various Yoruba travelling theatres of west Africa have an urban orientation. But they tend to perform Yoruba and try to attract audience exclusively from the particular regional group.

The vital linguistic medium for popular urban performance became the pidgin and creole. Young Nigerian playwrights began writing and performing plays and satires in pidgin. Those like Ngugi wa Thiong’o wrote plays in the language of their people in order to accomplish a political commitment rather than a literary objective. This is evident from Rugyendo’s words when he wrote The Contest. He says “rendition (of the heroic recitations) into English certainly curtails much of the poetic quality, especially the even relationship between the dance and the gestures with the tonal structure of the recited world”. (54)

In his collection of essays, Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature, Ngugi reflects the different ways that the language of African literature display the superiority of the colonizers. He urges the African writers of drama to write in the indigenous languages of Africa rather than in the European languages. Using the language of the colonizer, he points out, “means that many of one's own people are not able to read one's original work” Ngugi again observes that “the greatest weakness of African literature in European language is its audience -- the petty bourgeoisie readership automatically assumed by the very choice of language (22). According to him
literature written in a European language cannot claim the status of African literature and therefore he separates the works by Wole Soyinka, Achebe, and Gabriel Okara as Afro-European literature.

Ngugi’s thesis is that “language occupies a significant position in the entire hierarchy of the organization of wealth, power, and values in a society” (6). He claims that language is the most significant tool that helped the colonial power to conquer and imprison the soul of the colonized people. He says “the bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation”(7). Thus for many critics, Africa is in need of curing from the longstanding wounds inflicted by colonialism on the indigenous languages and cultures, and it can be done only through cultural autonomy and self-determination. So writing in African languages is a decisive step toward cultural identity and independence from continuing neo-colonial exploitation. But writing in African languages alone will not bring about the renaissance. If that literature does not transfer the message of revolutionary unity and hope and embody the content of the people's anti-imperialist struggles for socio-political and economic liberation, then it is of no use.

Literature should act as a communicative necessity, including a concern for practical purpose for target audience and realistic characters. While analyzing Greek tragedy in Poetics, Aristotle made comments on the language usage in drama. He noted that language, which is in the form of speech in plays, is made up of the following parts: letter, syllable, connecting word, noun, verb, inflection or case, sentence or phrase. Every word is either current, or strange, or metaphorical, or ornamental, or newly coined, or lengthened, or contracted, or
altered. A dramatist distinguishes himself by his word usage. A good style is clear and lofty and transcends the use of obscure idiom. The clearest style uses only current or appropriate words and substitutes a strange word, metaphor, or any similar mode of expression, with contemporary idiom in order to make its meaning apparent. According to Aristotle, six elements determine the quality of a play – namely plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle. For Aristotle, therefore, the hallmark of good dramatic language is the use of suitable present-day words in characters' speeches so that the language will help in increasing the realism of a play and makes its story, characters and logic plausible and hence affective to its audience. J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada has remarked that there is an incongruity observable in a play if an African elder or peasant speaks very refined English (19). Some characters in African plays in English are given English speeches, although the appropriate characterisation is to have them speak in their native tongue. To avoid such incongruity foreign language plays ought to present only western educated subjects, just as plays featuring uneducated subjects is best rendered in the appropriate local language as Ngugi did in the Kamiriithu experiment. But whether a play is rendered in a foreign or local language, its diction should suit its characterization and target audience; current expressions should be used in place of outmoded ones, unless it is a historical play. Since language choice implies audience choice, a play's target audience should normally influence the playwright's word usage. Consequently, the aptness of a playwright's diction ought to be assessed on the basis of the play's intended audience.
There are at least three broad categories of plays in modern West African drama. The first is the propagandist play inorder to demonstrate a political and cultural point of view as seen in the writings of Ene Henshaw of Nigeria and Sarif Easmon of Sierra Leone. The play called *This is our Chance* written by Henshaw during the 1950s was an appeal directed towards the ibos and the ibibos of Nigeria to cease their age long quarrels and prepare for the benefit of the future. Thus the “plays standing as a work of art is gravely compromised since it merely seeks to support a commonplace political philosophy of good neighbourliness” (Heywood 82). The second category includes the plays that deals with the traditional African idea and explores it beyond the traditional boundary, such as in the works of Efua Sutherland of Ghana, J.P Clark of Nigeria and some of Wole Soyinka’s plays. The third section includes the satirical plays which are represented by majority of Wole Soyinka’s plays as well as the plays of J.C de Graft and Christina Aidoo.

**II. NIGERIAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE**

Nigeria is an amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups and the resemblance of this multi-ethnic and multi-religious backdrop to that of the Indian situations is detailed by Mahadeva as:

Today English occupies a principle position in the federal administration and there are 100 indigenous languages. While each region has its own predominant language for communication, those living in areas bordering another region frequently tend to be bilingual, or even trilingual. The origin of it goes back to the colonial days. (9)
The main aspect of Nigeria is that it is made up of over 400 linguistic groups, three principal religions, a number of socio-political organizations and their opinions, different weather and climatic conditions in the northern part and the west. There are manifold number of customs, traditions, festivals and cultures in Nigeria. The Hausa-Fulani, Nupe, Kanuri, Igala and tribes follow Muslim religious traditions. All the festivals conducted in the northern areas such as Katsina and Kaduna states are related to religious celebrations.

Rituals and festivals, for Nigerians, are a quest to unravel the mysteries of life through the fabrication of mythos and these ritual actions, according to Echeruo is “simply as unorganized and perhaps spontaneous reaction of primitive peoples to the mystery of life” (75). The recurrent enactment of the New Yam festival related to harvest, the Ojiyi fertility festival associated with the symbolic consummation of a union between male-female, earth-sky, benefactor-god, the Mbom Ama festival celebrating the departure of the ancestral God Ebu with his mate from the town, and the Odo festival of Aku rejoicing the return of the spirit of the dead to have a communion with the living try to interpret and affirm a serious view of life. Margaret Laurance aver this tether between religion and art by detailing the dramatic performance of Ijaws, a tribe, since they

Perhaps more than any other people in Nigeria have developed over the centuries a form of dramatic art which is religious in purpose but which has become weighted heavily on the side of skilful performance and artistic values. (79)
The traditional expression of the Nigerian people as seen in their proverbs, songs, tales, legends, myths and riddles indicates the folklore. In the Nigerian context, the folklore forms one of the vital ingredients of their community life. It can be witnessed as not only a means of recreation but also a means of education. Its high educative value lies in the fact that they provide knowledge on the tribe’s history, moral values, warfare ideas and wise sayings. Emmanuel Obiechina says that the folklore “embodies the values and attitudes (of a people) in its proverbs and fossilised saying, its belief in myths and religion, and its consciousness of its historical life, collective outlook and ethics, in its legends, folktales and other forms of oral literature”(27). Folklores and myths irrespective of its background teach each individual how to lead a community life and also the great tradition of the country. The range of the folklore is not concentrated to the villages only, but those who reside in cities also are aware of this, since they usually visit their villages during festivals and vacations. These art forms still help to mould the sensibility of the contemporary Nigerians, including the illiterate masses and the educated elite.

The term mythology is related to the study of myths or a body of myths. The main characters of the Nigerian myths are gods, deities or the sacred stories of the supernatural heroes. Myths are often endorsed by rulers and priests and closely linked to religion in the society in which it is told. It can be considered as an account of a remote past and they are experienced by one generation to the other. As it is orally transmitted tradition it becomes part of the history of the people. While analyzing the history of the various tribes in Nigeria, Martins says that
In the history of the origin of the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa in Nigeria (West Africa); myths and mythology formed a major and it’s widely accepted by various historians who trace the traditions and origin of the people. They are sacred narratives telling of scared things/beings and of semi divine heroes and of all things, usually through the agency of these scared beings. (160)

Igbo New Yams Festival which represents the people’s cultural beliefs on nature, ancestors, creators within the background of an agricultural life. The ordered system of the Igbos can be considered as the result of the myths and customs related to the yam deity called Ahianjoku. The Igbo festival of *Iri Ji Ohuru* has its origin from the cultures of the Igbo land. various narratives regarding the festival are transmitted through the myths and customs shared by the society. These people consider the anger of gods in wonder. For them there exist certain evil forests that which are the abode of dangerous spirits, cruel deities and irritating ghosts of wicked dead people. Since these forests are evil and uncanny, they are not used for yam cultivation and people never wander in these areas. Thus a religious attitude towards reality projects a unity in the life of the community. Every actions of the people are directed towards protecting the interest of the society.

According to the Ibibio, an ethnic group in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, the most prominent characteristics of human existence is the belief in the Supreme self called Abasi-Ibom. Abasi in this context means,
A divine being who always and will always be forever, while *Ibom* refers to... infinite nature of this being. It is further held that *Abasi Ibom* created two offsprings namely: *Abasi Enyong* (male) with dominion over the sky (*Enyong*) and whose offspring include the sun, thunder and lightning, the second offspring of *Abasi Ibom is Abasi-Isong* (female), with control over the earth (*Isong*) and whose offspring include *Nedem* in charge of the waters and *Ekpo* in charge of the bushes. (13)

This tribe believes that the supreme god Abasi- Ibom made all the creatures and things, even the Indemo. According to them it is the Indemo to whom the supreme god gives the charge regarding the different aspects of human life. Along with that there is the deity like Ndem Isong related to the land fertility, Ndem Udua or the market deity to secure the interest of traders and the Ndem Ikot, who is believed to be residing in the farmland to take care of the growth of the crops.

Another myth among these people, which is an example of the influence of myths on the normal life of the people, is the conflict between the earth and the sky. After having created himself, the supreme god made the Enyong which is the sky, the Isong or the earth and the Inyang or the water, together. They were struck together to satisfy their sexual drives. But the conflict that broke out between them made the sky to go away. The separation widened when the people of earth rubbed their dirty oily hands on the face of the sky. It is again described in the words of Jaja as
To effect the separation, *Abasi-Ibom* sent a giant with an axe to force away the sky from the earth. The Ibibio still hold that despite this separation, the conflict between the earth and the sky persists and this is manifested in the alternation of days and nights. Night reflects when the earth has overpowered the sky, while ‘day’ reflects the reverse.(13)

In the traditional Nigerian culture, gods are believed to approach people through their cultic acts of worship. These actions are to be done with belief, care, adoration and worship. The people of south eastern Nigeria offer their sacrifices indirectly to the God through the subordinate spirits. And this makes them different from the Christians who make sacrifices directly to the god. Nze pronounce this as

There is no single instance when the Igbos performs sacrifices to or worship a single Being of the Christian Concept. Because the Igbo people perform sacrifices as acts of appeasement and or worship and because there exists no occasion when a Supreme Being of the Christian description is appeased or worshipped, it can be said that this being does not exist at all or exists but is not recognized because he is passive. Our fathers worshipped gods and not a God. (35)

They follow polytheism also. The worship to the supreme god is done through various spirits. Thus a number of spirits, gods and ancestors stand in between the
supreme god and man. Kayode Explains “that the goal of worship in the African Traditional Religion is not oriented to personal salvation or sanctity, but directed to gain favour or to thank God for a favour obtained or to ward off a disaster, and to be looked upon favorably by the spirits and the ancestors” (235). The worship can be done both privately and publicly. Private worship can be routine or in intervals. In a place called Ihiala in Nigeria, routine private worship includes the head of the family offering the ancestors at the Ndebunz shrine with kola-nuts. They draw white lines with chalks and utter prayers to protect the family by holding the stick. (Ilogu49) They also offer chicken, eggs, kola-nuts, alligator pepper, goats and palm wine to the priest of the deity for the success of their worship.

The two types of public worship are the family worship and the village worship. Village worship is done during the various important dates related to agriculture and during the outbreak of epidemic disease. The dibias are asked to disclose the secret behind the epidemic. After understanding the reason the whole village will start doing the sacrifices needed to overcome the tragedy.

The role of ancestors in a Nigerian cultural life is same to that of the lesser spirit. For them they are one of the mediators between god and man. Anyone who is dead can never become an ancestor. A person who leads a morally good life and a role model to others during his life on earth will be transformed to ancestors list. According to C. Nyamiti, a good life according to the Nigerian traditional moral standards, is also a precondition to attain such status. No one is revered as ancestor unless the one led a morally good life on
earth; for an ancestor is also a model of behaviour for the living. The ancestor is, moreover, believed to be the source of tradition and its stability. (168)

Those who lead a bad life are not included in the list of sacred ancestors.

Nigerian wedding customs often vary with the tribe to which one belongs. They have different rituals, proposals and dowry systems. If a hausa man wanted to marry a girl, he has to endure some physical challenges to prove his love and commitment. That person is left to accept floggings of about hundred in number. Kingsley explains “he has to take everything, even if they are on the ninety-ninth stroke and the man protests, they will not allow him to marry the girl. But if he takes everything, the wedding can proceed” (20)

Marriages between different tribes are not common in Nigeria. During ancient days if a man and a woman wish to marry, they would have to elope and do so in secret. But in the modern society, people’s attitude to marriage is gradually changing and as a result of which inter-tribal marriages are accepted.

The music of Nigeria includes many kinds folk and popular music in relation to the various tribes in the nation. And each group has their own musical instruments, techniques and songs. The main feature of Nigerian music is that they are performed as a part of the rituals such as wedding or funeral. It is also done in relation to the agriculture and they are also played during different seasons. Aluede explains “an examination of the functions of traditional African music in African societies reveals that music is woven around every event of the Africans life from birth through to death” (31).
The inventor of traditional music is not always anonymous. For the Nigerian tribal people songs and dances are part of their community living and are communally possessed. Thus taking pride in the authorship of dances and songs are not their part of the game. The continued existence of these is through oral transmission, and this enables changes to the original. This helps in the variations, mutiliations and modifications in the traditional music. While going back to the original transmission and evolutionary processes of traditional music, Agu states that: “The folk music of people…evolves as a corporate communal experience. It has been handed down from generation to generation and continues expanding and enriching its resources as it evolves” (80)

In Nigeria, songs are different for different occasions. Some of them include wrestling, moonlight, title taking, royal, cradle, masquerade, fishing songs etc. Africa is marked with the brightest day and the darkest night. Moonlight songs are used at night recreations especially when the moon is full. Africa has the brightest day and the darkest night. Therefore, under full moon, one could easily read, to show the level of visibility that enables the phenomenon called egwu onwa or Uro onwa. It usually takes place in village squares in different villages. Songs are used for socializing purposes, stories are
told. Sometimes there is a wrestling bout between villages or kindred. One of the songs that easily come to mind as moonlight song is  

*uri oma* which is sung in the context of a story.

Wrestling music comes in as a morale booster for the wrestlers as their supporters cheer them from the sides while they battle it out in the circle ring that is drawn by hand on sand. An Example of wrestling song is *Ndi anyi ka aka* and *oburu n’isi*. One of the most popular song of Nigeria includes those sung during the title taking. Getting a title is very expensive and one has to spend different amounts for different titles. Most of the people save their money inorder to achieve titles. For instance, the title called Ezeani of the tribe Neni celebrate this title taking with a seven day process of eating, drinking and music making. *Onye chi mere eze* is an example for this category of music and it is played during royal events. At the time of coronation, the music played is called the royal music. It uses the royal drum meant for kingly events. It includes instrumental music and dance rather than songs. Call and response type songs are also included at times. During the time of traditional worship or sacrifice, the ritual or cultic music is used. The *mbem* or *ima mbem* style of singing is associated with this and the lyrics and tunes are spontaneously created by the performer. It is usually related to the powers and accomplishments of a specific deity. Those who are spending their private time, which is always performed by the women or aged ones, are called satirical songs. The entrance of a child into the music culture of the tribe, mainly the Igbos is through the cradle song. Cradle songs form part of the first music that initiates a child into the very musical culture of the Igbo. This is because the nanny or whoever carries the baby as a
duty sings most of these songs to the baby, composes some and learns some from other people. It is most amazing how babies recognize these songs and respond almost each time with consistent gestures or smiles even in the midst of a cry. An example is Onye gburu nwa na ebe akwa or Nwa nnunu ukwu nwa nnunu nta. Hunting music is used by the hunters during their trade of hunting or while they are out in the field after hunting. This is rarely done because community hunting is not a common activity over among the Nigerians. Among some of the Igbo communities, hunting guilds known as the Egbeni Oba is common.

The work called The Albatross of fishing songs in Igbo land – A case study of songs of Igbokenyi Fishermen, by Oguno in the year 2006 is a survey of the songs of the fishermen of the riverside areas. Fishing music is heard more by fishermen or the fishing people of the riverside areas. The tribal people sing different songs during the burial or the funeral from the wide range of songs related to death and dying. The situation in which a person dies, influence the choice of songs. Masquerade music is meant for the masquerade dance. There are different types of masquerades such as the mytho- mystical and the masked dancers who depend on entertainment and performance without anything concerning the supernatural or magical elements. These different masks sing different songs.

One of the common types of traditional songs includes the work songs. It is sung by the workers in fields and the women during their household duties like cooking, pounding yams etc. work songs are a common type of traditional Nigerian music. They help to keep the rhythm of workers in fields, river canoes
and other fields. Women use complex rhythms in housekeeping tasks, such as pounding yams to highly ornamented music. In the northern regions, farmers work together on each other's farms and the host is expected to supply musicians for his neighbors. In most of the cases there will be a lead singer as well as a chorus and they both interchange verses with the accompaniment of the instruments. Music followed in various regions of Nigeria also differs according to their custom. Complex rhythms and single player is used in the southern part, while north prefers the mixing of different sounds. And again in the extreme north single line music is used along with drums. In certain areas among the Hausa tribe long poems of epic nature are recited by gypsy musicians. Singing games exists among the children of Nigeria and they use an archaic language. The important instruments used by them zithars made out of cornstalks and drums from tin cans. There are also certain people who sing songs which are sexually open and bad. In the development of Nigerian music brass instruments and woodwinds played an important role, while the spread of electric guitars promoted the juju music. Some says that, it is the indigenous music of a people, which is an integral part of their life. It plays a functional part in all important stages of a person’s life, especially birth puberty, initiation, title-taking, marriage and death. Examples of such music include Atiliogwu, egwu-ekpili and the mgbeleke/ngedegwu/ngelenge music of the Igbo. It is the music that evokes from the community, experiences of a people and touches all aspects of their tradition, socio-cultural and political systems. (Onyiuke 84)
Similar to most of the African countries, Nigeria too faced violence and dilemma during its conversion from its traditional folk culture to the modern. The earliest form of Nigerian popular music was the palm-wine music and the highlife. It even spread to the neighbouring countries during the 1920s. After the Second World War, new musical instruments, techniques and electric instruments began to dominate Nigerian music. It includes the Rock N’ roll, soul and funk and the main artists like IK Dairo. The main patrons of Nigerian of these kinds of music are Fela Kuti, Ebenezer Obey and King Suny Ade. In the 1980s, Obey and Ade, performers of a band called International Brothers became popular. Another style of music is the Afrobeat, which is mostly associated with Nigeria. It is a blending of the American funk music, highlife, jazz and other styles of West Africa. Another unique variety of music is the waka music founded by Salawa Abeni. The Reggae music popularized by a musician called Terakota and the hip hop music brought to Nigeria during the late 1980s also were significant when one analyses the history of Nigerian music. Campbell says

As musicians learn their craft, they employ techniques that appear widespread across traditions and cultures… Learning is a multisensory experience and the aural, visual, and kinesthetic capacities are called into play in acquiring techniques and repertoire…Imitation is a critical device in learning music in formal and informal settings…notation is simply not helpful in some traditions, where the direct teacher-to-student passage of music-making is the key.(6-7)
i) **NIGERIAN LITERATURE**

Nigerian literature embarks on the oral traditions including folklore, proverbs, myths and stories pioneered by the unsung heroes of their literary past such as royal bards, warriors, story tellers, and priests. Nigerian literature consist not only songs, tales and short poems, but also has extensive universe of unrelenting narratives of epic proportion. Tijmi El-Miskin disagrees with C.M. Bowra’s conception that Africans are unable to mount beyond a single occasion to the concept of a detached art and they never possessed a narrative of epic proportion, by spotting out ‘Kayawar’, a heroic and narrative poetry of northern Nigeria. Tijmi says, “Kayawar generally takes several hours and often more than a day to perform… derives its historical material from some seventeenth century Islamic jihads” (291). Another form of poetry which is found among the Yorubas of the south western part of Nigeria performed with the accompaniment of drums and clanging of bamboo sticks is Okiri. Wole Soyinka identifies an Okiri artist as “the recorder of the mores and experience of his society and the voice of vision in his own time” (Mahadeva 10). It is inferred that the performance of Okiri in tribute to the divinity, gladdens him and the aura of spirits, persuading them to provide in abundance their blessings upon their progeny on earth. The long and vivacious tradition of Nigerian culture is embossed with different hues of poetry that exist in various parts of the country such as the Hausa poetry of Northern Nigeria and Ojebé poetry of the Igbo land. The individual poet’s autonomy to improvise what is passed on to him, by including contemporary events, as Mahadeva said, “the incorporation of social criticism by the individual artist within the given frame makes the African oral
poetry all the more dynamic and living” (10) turns out to be one of the major character traits of Nigerian oral poetry.

Apart from poetry, Nigeria has sculpted oral narratives and stories from the tradition of the daily life of common man. In villages, after the evening meal, members of the family gather on the porch along with their younger ones engaging themselves in story telling sessions. The session embroidered with riddles, like “what dines with an oba (permanent chief of a community) and leaves him to clean the dishes? A fly” (Owomoyela 34), not only charm the younger members to have a knowledge about the everyday activities of the world, but also make them sentient of gods and their powers, animals, nature and seasons creating a pantheistic attitude towards life. As “these have survived the coming of Christianity, the radio, TV, and literary journals and continue to exist even today” (Mahadeva11), one can visualize the simultaneous existence of the old and the new, the folk and the commercial culture analogous to the Indian traditional narratives like Harikatha, Yakshagana and puppet show.

A Semitic wave disseminated Arabic culture and their skill of writing to various parts of Africa including Nigeria, producing two chief streams of Muslim- Arabic influence in literature, during the Seventeenth Century. Muslim reformers proceeded as Christian missionaries were to do in the nineteenth century in order to surmount pagan people of Nigeria and also to convert them to Islam. They waged war with illiteracy and employed the Arabic script to transcribe vernacular languages. At the commencement of the seventeenth century, Abdullahi Sikka from Kano wrote Al- ‘Atiya li’l- mu’ti, which Hiskett says, “is the earliest example of locally composed nasm or versification based on
material drawn in the first place from one or more existing prose sources” (15), in its subject matter, which is strappingly redolent of Sufi mysticism, illustrating the progress accomplished by Islam erudition in Hausaland. The early decades of the nineteenth century in Hausa literature, “which witnessed the spreading of *ajami* writing, were also a flourishing period for Arabic scholarship and literature, due primarily to the triumph of the Fulani jihad in the Hausa states of present-day northern Nigeria” (Gerard 35).

Even though British conquest of Hausaland at the turn of nineteenth century was destined to produce profound amendments in Hausa writing, there was a resistance from the side of the Islamic societies against threats to their cultural autonomy. Religious themes and outlook dominated Hausa society monopolizing a kind of didactic tradition for several decades. These times also witnessed the writing down of verse chronicles, as if Hausa poets, sensing the threat from modernity, were eager to stabilize the image of their people’s identity as personified in oral tradition. Thus the verse chronicles like the song of Bagauda, a narrative of Kano, “were not simply regarded as historical documents perpetuating the memory of the past, but are heavily marked by characteristic Islamic moral didactism” (Gerard 61). The prose writings of Abubakar Bauchi, Muhammadu Gwarzo, and Muhammadu Bello laid the groundwork for modern prose fiction in Hausa, with its inimitable concoction of muslim piety, earthy folk humor, and oral tradition. Abubakar Imam initiated Hausa plays and these works represented the conservative Hausa society which does not seem to have been entrenched by the brunt of European conviction and morals. Hausa plays, as Neil Skinner said, “in contrast with poetry which views
a wider field- have on the whole been concerned with domestic situations and, in particular, marriage and divorce in a polygamous household and the tensions that arise there” (181). Nevertheless for all the transformations since the end of World War II, that has transpired in Hausa writing, such as the escalation of prose fiction and drama, thematic innovations in the traditional poetic forms, the use of printing and the modern media, the evolution of literature has remained stranded in a rigid linguistic isolation as Gerard says, “Hausa literature has stubbornly resisted the encroachment of the colonizer’s language which has been so successfully adopted by the other two main ethnic groups of Nigeria, the Ibo and the Yoruba” (70-71)

As the Nigerian slave trade declined during the early mid nineteenth century under pressure from liberal abolitionists in Britain and America, many European and American traders shifted their commercial specialism away from humans to a type of trade known as legitimate commerce

using the same storage facilities, trade routes, contacts, and networks, they would barter imported commodities such as guns, ammunition, cloth, alcohol, cowries, metal currency, and beads, not for humans but for African raw materials, including ivory, gold, timber, rubber. (Newell 43)

In addition to British merchants, the explorations of Nigeria attracted other interest groups, especially the Church Missionary Society. The CMS laid the foundation for the emergence of a generation of Christians and literate elite, who would change the political and cultural landscape of Nigeria. Colonial people
tried to twist the relationship between languages and culture and used language as a tool of oppression. Thiong’o says:

they met with English as the language of the conquering nation, and ours as the language of the vanquished. An oppressor language inevitably carries racist and negative images of the conquered nation, particularly in its literature, and English is no exception.

(Moving 53)

Literacy is decisive in the surfacing of novel writing in Nigeria, where the paramount cultural tradition had been on the spoken word, because the novel is destined to be read. Literacy, according to Abiola Irele, “provides the sole basis for any kind of sustained development of civilized world” (75). A novel demands both from the novelist and from the reader a gift of empathy, the ability to slip imaginatively into circumstances and conditions of life beyond their immediate milieu and literacy mediates between the novelist and the reader by launching a rapport between them.

The Igbo world is an arena for the interplay of forces, a vigorous pitch of flux and its art too is never tranquil, but peripatetic, full of zip, and aggressive. Achebe upholds this argument by stating that Igbo art is “striving to come to terms with a multitude of forces and demands which gives Igbo life its tense and restless dynamism and its art an outward, social, and kinetic quality” (The Igbo 43). Contrary to certain other cultures, in which a person may worship one of the gods or goddesses and pay scant attention to others, selectiveness is improbable in Igbo religion. The cautionary proverb among Igbos stating that even when a person has completely contented the deity Udo, he may yet be killed by
Ugwugwu, echoes the need for every member of the community to conciliate all the Gods equally. The amount of threat promulgated by this proverb is only faintly captured until one realizes that Ugwugwu is not a stranger to Udo, but his consort. The functional intention of art in Nigeria is to channel the spiritual force into an aesthetically corporeal form that incarcerates the presumed attributes of that energy.

The first Igbo to publish fiction in Igbo was Peter Nwana, whose novel *Omenuko*, based on actual events, is one of the most widely read novels in Igbo literature, which Emenyonu says Omenuke, “has been reprinted several times in various Igbo orthographies and is still a classic in Igbo literature” (85). The sayings of this novel have become an ingredient of the Igbo speech repertoire which every young adult of the community is expected to acquire. Most of the novels that came after Omenuke tried to draw a picture of the Igbo society and its culture by sketching descriptions on rural communities as well as busy markets where commercial activities happen side by side with grave matters, such as resolving disagreements, people leading a traditional life draped with rituals and customs, family life within walled compounds where the head of the family manages his immediate and extended families from his obi or hut, the relationship between family and community life where loyalty to family often gives way to the clan, villages connected by a taut pattern of intersecting paths that converge at major markets, ostracism as the product of an individual alienating from the group or premeditatedly acting against the canon of communal life as Emenyonu says, “the theme of the novels, offense and expiation, emerges from their communal attitudes to life” (86)
The areas inhabited by the Igbo in Nigeria got clamped together under the prodigious tentacles of colonial regime, towards the end of the nineteenth century. Many people got converted to Christianity, which is one of the organs of the imperialist regime and it is marketed as something which owns the keys to the white man’s knowledge, though there are still people who remained dedicated to the old Igbo religion. They demur to give up the rituals that honor the dead by not ceasing to pay tribute to in their ancestors and making obligatory sacrifices to placate angered deities in order to restore harmony in nature. This collision of two cultures and its impasse form the main theme of most of the Igbo novels that appeared during and after colonialism. Chinua Achebe says, “One of the greatest crimes a man could commit was to unmask an egwugwu in public, or say or do anything which might reduce its immortal prestige in the eyes of the uninitiated. And this was what Enoch did” (Things 176). This infringement of Christianity and it welcoming apostles of old religion as well as those outcastes, who were taboo in the Igbo culture, spell disaster in the tradition. Okonkwo’s son in Things Fall Apart and Oduche in Arrow of God seek asylum in the Christian camp, when they commit an abomination against the traditional religion. One of the general characteristics of most of the Igbo novels is a resolution at the end affording a circular configuration for it, as it shows a point of exodus and homecoming. Ekwensi’s Jagua nana and Agunwa’s More than once are some examples articulating the traditional Igbo allegiance that no matter how successful a man may be in a foreign land, he cannot fail to realize in the long run that indeed there is no place like home. Austin Shelton remarks:
writers sees social change in part as change from cultural wholeness to fragmentation and disorientation of the individual, who can regain “wholeness” of self and proper orientation to behavior as well as obtain the deserved rewards only through his maintenance of traditions or a return to the traditionally sanctioned behavior. (357)

The bearing of the missionaries can be sensed in certain strata of life such as language, culture, attitudes and values of the present Igbos, and therefore, a modern writer who reflects Igbo life, as Emenyonu said, “cannot help but reflect something of the Europeanized Igbo approach to life” (97)

Most of the Nigerian novelists are conscious of the prevalence of Europeans in their country and the disturbing outcome of western culture on Nigerian tradition, as Oladel Taiwo remarked about these writers as “concerned with the clash of cultures and the effect it has had on social life and the religious beliefs of the people” (54). Chinua Achebe, Onuora Nzekwu, Gabriel Okara, and Timothy Aluko are those writers from whose works we decipher the gratification of rural life on masses and the time-honored concord predominant in the clan before the dawn of Europeans. These writers also take a crack at depicting the unity and serenity of the kinsfolk being disturbed by imported ideas. The image of a bicycle tied to a sacred silk-cotton tree and the murder of its owner, a white man who is one of the first intruders of the Igbo region, as the oracle augurs that his type will spread destruction, in Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, foreshadows his amazement at the meeting of a culture mostly reigned by the sacred with a culture which is devoted to the mechanical aspect of life. In Akulo’s One Man,
One Matchet there is a scene where a whole village is torn between those who want to comply with the colonial government’s decision to cut those cocoa trees that show symptoms of disease and those who hanker after defending their tree of wealth. One of the puzzled opponents utters for all the others when he asks a string of skeptical, rhetoric questions;

the cocoa trees are ill, do you all hear that? Do you all hear that trees are ill? Does disease not make man himself so ill? Does death not kill man himself? And does disease not catch the White Man himself?… If therefore we cannot prevent a man from dying why should we worry so much because a tree is dying? If one dies, can we not plant a seed from which another will grow? (5)

The initiation of western education, the formation of westernized urban settlements, the setting up of a cash economy and modern industries opened fresh prospects to the individual, and drew together people from different ethnic groups into the shelter of urban aggregations. To fit himself into the economic scheme the individual has to acquire literacy, and through literacy some specialized skill or profession. The result was that he took out himself from a community where status and social hierarchy had decided the individual’s place in society and where the individual counted in terms of the group to which he belonged, but entered a situation in which Obiechina says that, “he thus predisposed himself to play a range of roles which did not exist in traditional setting-roles depending on his level of education and professional training” (327). As the individuals broadened contacts and multifarious attachment to others in different walks of life made him capable of envisaging himself
imaginatively in any of the roles attached to the other professions and vocations, lead to development of novel writing.

The contemporary Nigerian authors have moved away from discourses about national identity and authentic ‘Africanness’ in their work, choosing instead to develop hybrid literary styles and to highlight themes of migration, existential anguish, and cultural intermingling, since most of the authors have migrated from their countries of birth and settled in Europe or America, from where they shuttle between global locations. This is evident from Newell’s claim that “their work is characterized by features such as narrative indeterminacy, non-linearity, non realism, linguistic experimentation with the ex-colonial language, and the fragmentation of subjectivity and cultural intermingling” (211) and Ben Okri’s comment “I got tired of the traditional artifices and realism of the novel” (Deandrea 2002: 47)

Apart from male authors such as Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Cyprian Ekwensi, who depicted war and its carnage, there are also some female authors such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who extracted a slice from history and mixed it with fiction through various narrative tools. Nwapa’s stories revisit time after time to the experiences of women during the civil war years, referred to by Nwapa as a period when young Igbo women were cut off from their family ties and society, disconnected from the moral lessons that were passed down through generations of foremothers. Newell quotes the comments of the narrator in Nwapa’s One is Enough as “the war forced women to survive by their wits alone: Igbo women participated in the ‘attack trade’, crossing front-lines to haggle with the enemy, bringing goods
home to float in the scarcity economy; or they followed Biafran officers, offering them sexual ‘gifts’ in return for money and food” (184). Nwapa’s *Never Again* is another work which concentrates on the Nigerian society during war days and also the worth of Biafran women in supporting their fighting men and society.

Another Nigerian woman author Buchi Emecheta through her *Destination Biafra* makes an effort to probe into the historical and political reality of the Biafran war, in which Debbie fit into a new breed of educated Nigerian urban women who represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role and is ready to pronounce “I didn’t mind you being my male concubine, but Africa will never again stoop to being your wife, to meet you on an equal basis, like companions, yes, but never again to be your slave” (*Destination* 258-59)

The focal chore that engaged Nigeria since its independence from British colonial rule in 1960 was the venture to create a general sense of nationalism even though the European rulers had enforced a single government on the heterogeneous consortium of communities for political and administrative expediency. The interference of the colonial powers and their policy of drumming up inter-ethnic abrasion through open or disguised support for separatist tendencies is like fanning the flames of already existing ethnic troubles. Chandrani Biswas states: “the innumerable differences among various indigenous communities continued to trouble the tasks of uniting the newly independent nation” (12). The pre-colonial nightmares, abhorrence, and
antagonisms hang about dormant in the memory of the Nigerians and continued in the colonial as well as the post-colonial period. Chief Awolowo’s comment “Nigeria is not a nation. It is a geographical expression” (Hallet 344) states that the country is agglomeration of tribal units. The three main ethnic communities— the Hausa, the Igbo, and the Yoruba— that dominate Nigeria are different from each other by language, life style, culture, ecology, and history. The situation generated by World War II with its unemployed veterans, workers’ strike against low wages, and boycotts by small plantation owners to raise the prices of their products accelerated the process of Nigerian nationalism and the emergence of political parties like, the National Council of Nigerian citizens… inspired by the Ibo intellectual Nnamdi Azikiwe…. The Northern People’s Congress (NPC) led by Hausa intellectual Abubakar Tafawa Balewan was formed by the traditionally conservative Hausa and Fulani communities. Finally, the Action Group of the Yoruba chief and intellectual Obafemi Awolowo. (Biswas 19)

The economic condition of the country in the post-independent period was overseen by a number of factors external to the Nigerian economy which Robin Luckham observes as, “the colonial government handed over to the inheriting elite, the political class, the right to control the machinery of government in return for the protection of its economic interests” (207). Though perplexity, corruption and endemic battles for office marked Nigerian life since pre-independent days, the federation had encountered all the odds, always hitting upon some temporary stanchion to avoid total crumple. The factor that kindled
the extreme battle was the infusion of the ethnic regional hostilities into the army by introducing quota system. But the quota system fostered suspicions within the army between different tribes as it favored the Northerners even though Ibo were still too prominent among army officers. Achebe observes that the 

modern Nigerian history has been marked by sporadic eruptions of anti-Igbo feeling of more or less serious import, but it was not until 1996-7 when it swept through Northern Nigeria like a flood of deadly hate that the Igbo first questioned the concept of Nigeria which they had embraced with much greater fervor than the Yoruba or the Hausa/Fulani. (The Trouble 45)

All the ethnic tensions reached its peak driving Nigeria to a civil war when a military government was formed under an Ibo Major General Aguiyi Ironsi through a coup and striking the political and military leaders in Lagos, Ibadan, and Kaduna. A highly charged symbolic environment takes its grip throughout Nigeria after the coup, when both sides of the conflict fracas came to deem that the others were plotting against them, conniving to put a ceiling on their promotions in order to destroy them, for Luckham, “both developed myths around their own ‘invulnerable’ heroes. And both reinterpreted the struggle for power in the light of generalized beliefs defining it in terms of sin and retribution” (194).

The precipitous rise in food prices, following a bad harvest and the precarious condition as the region gradually emerged from its state of shock after the first coup. After Colonel Yakubu Gowon became the supreme commander of the Nigeria, there broke out a massacre of the Ibo people in the north. As there was no state
security to protect the Igbos, the northerners gave vent to their jealousy of Igbo wealth through mass looting accompanied by killings. In 1967 an assembly of Easterners unanimously passed a resolution declaring the sovereign republic of Biafra with an avowal by Ojukwu stating that “the territory and region known as Eastern Nigeria, together with her continental shelves and territorial waters, shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title The Republic of Biafra” (Jorre 121)

The federal forces of Nigeria started to shove the boundaries of Biafra inward, from south, west, and north leading to the loss of Biafran oil centers in Bonny, Port Harcourt, and calabar, as the war progressed. The Biafran war, which ended up in 1970, marked a turning point in the history of Nigeria because of the massive war-time havocs, heavy toll of human lives it claimed, and its long term impact on the lives of the Nigerian people. Biswas quotes, the Nigerian civil war also became degraded by corruption, nepotism and arbitrary oppression, characteristics shared equally by both sides. For the average Nigerian or Biafran, the war was a menace. Once the initial enthusiasm of the war was over, the Nigerian and Biafran everyman wanted an end to the incessant bloodshed and endless killings. (32)

The war percolated deep enough to affect all the politically active strata of society as well as millions of ordinary people who came in direct contact with the war. War features as a formative as well as a traumatic aspect in Nigerian literature, often endowed with far greater significance to Nigerian history and private life than colonialism. The reality of the war situations and the post-war
conditions was reflected in a rich crop of war novels which depicts various facets of human struggle for survival. Nigerian civil war was followed by a significant body of literature, since “war inevitably gives rise to war literature” (Biswas 10), which mirrored the social realities of war. War literature depicts this struggle during the war as well as the imbalance in the gender power relationship wrought by the war. The iconic representations of women in various anthropological, historical, and cultural male-centered studies project them as non-actors in history. The nature of womanhood is constantly defined in terms of male desire and male imagination as Kate Millet points out that “under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she is described…. The image of woman as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs” (46-47)

III. YORUBA SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The ethnic group who resides in the south western part of Nigeria is called the Yorubas. Gbagbe says that their estimated worldwide population is supposed to be “of over forty million” (8). The common language that binds these diasporic people from all over the world is Yoruba. Traditionally, farming is the main occupation of the Yoruba people along with a wide range of other occupations like weaving, dyeing, smithing, pottery and trade. Various versions of myths exist regarding the creation of the Yoruba world. Drewal says that “there are countless versions of the myth of the creation of the world and of human civilization at Ile-Ife” (45). The common factor that links all the general versions of the origin of the mankind is Olodumare.
Yoruba believes Olodumare as the creator of the universe. It is him who sent one of his attendant deities called Orisa from heaven to earth in order to establish mankind and civilization. Some consider Orisa as Obatala, while some others as Oduduwa. Johnson gives an alternative version regarding the Yoruba origin myth. It says that they migrated from Mecca to Yoruba land after the establishment of the Islamic religion. The main reason for the migration was the religious conflict related with Lamurudu, an old king of Mecca. Johnson identifies Oduduwa, one of his sons, as the prince during the conflict. Record says that this happened “to have been a considerable time after Mahomet.” (3)

As per the Yoruba myth, God resides in the sky. In ancient times the sky was rather low. In those days it was easy for men to reach the sky and convey his complaint, which got answered immediately. But as time passed by, due to the disobedience of man, God withdrew and marked a separation between the earth and the sky. Instead of him he sent other spirits and divinities to inquire man’s affairs. During the nineteenth century the arrival of the Christian missionaries made a huge impact on the Yoruba people. They imposed a number of restrictions on the religious practices of these people. Certain practices and groups, night gatherings for the worship of ogun, polygamy were banned by the intruders. As a result of the influence of the colonial forces, Christianity became the major religion. Some Yoruba converted to Islam also.

Myths are the main tool through which young ones are taught about their morals. These mythical stories are shared by sitting under the moonlit compound. According to Hountondji, Yoruba myths “are not only theoretical explanations of the origin of things, they also serve as a guideline for the daily
behavior of men as well as they command religious principles” (14). Since Yoruba has a preliterate culture, in traditional Yoruba all the images, themes and ideas have to be communicated through the words of the mouth and symbols. Proverbs are also used to convey moral images from one generation to the other. The importance of proverbs and folklore is elaborated by Coker who says

The import of the above is that, as a people without physical written paraphernalia, the Yoruba starts to nurture their minds early. The implication is that as a child grows s/he learns etiquette and moral ethos, along the way. As the journey of the individual progresses, fear is one thing that shapes the life of the child. (4)

The social, cultural, political and the economic structures of the Yoruban ethnic group, according to Akinjogbin, had been founded in Ile- Ife during the earlier nineteenth century. Polygamy was practiced between the 11th and 14th centuries (108). Thus the foundation of the Yoruba structures can be dated back to the beginning of the 11th century. Those early Yoruba men who were engaged in wars left widows and children in need of husbands. This was the reason why men who are married started living with these widows. This polygamous institution is still continuing. Regarding the structure of the Yoruba society, there exist some major theories. The Imperial theory is the notion that the whole of Yorubaland is ruled by one emperor. It is stated in the records of Johnson. Another one is the Roman empire theory popularized by P. A. Talbot in the year 1926. This theory compared the Yorubaland to the holy empire of Rome style of government. In this type of government, the emperor was in charge of the
governmental and the military affairs, while Pope is the spiritual head. The Ebi theory which discusses that a Yoruba family includes those who are living, the dead who are buried in the house, the ancestors and the unborn children. This theory embodies the coming together of people on behalf of blood relationship. Here privileges are first given to elders over the younger people.

The good news like new birth, festivals, marriage is shared with the other members of the family. All of them are expected to attend the function and participate in the rituals. These visitors bring money and items like kola-nuts, guinea pepper, yams and honey. During bad times such as death, these people come not only to console the family members but also to help in the funeral ceremonies and rites.

Music plays an important role in Yoruba life. As soon as an infant is named, it is given a praise name called okiri. This may be in the form of a personal panegyric which everybody will remember about the child throughout its life. The child grows hearing the lullabies of mother. The awareness about the society is instilled inside the child through story songs, which they call as orin alo and game songs called orin isere. Music is important for the Yorubas from birth to death. Every event in their life is celebrated through music. There are different categories of music. Some of them are music for life events, music for rituals and worship, court music and satirical music. Out of the different Yoruba musical instruments, the greatest musical influence lies in the drum. There are two categories of drumming, such as sacred and social. Even though these two groups are mutually exclusive, the sacred drums include uni-embranophonic membrane. The main examples for this include igbin, ipese, and ogidan and all
these are related to a particular spirit. (Euba 93). If the specific drum assigned to a deity is not used, they will have to submit themselves to the anger of the deity.

Regarding the making of Yoruba gods in their culture, Karin Barber states that the “relationships between humans and orisa are in some sense a projection of relations between people in society.” (393) The role of music in Yoruba cosmology is detailed by Fela Sowande as,

traditional music is functional at root, because it enabled its creators and practitioners to bridge the gulf between the visible and the invisible worlds, thus aligning Man with God and Nature, in one and the same hierarchy, in which Nature is part of society, and society itself which consists of (1) the Ancestors and heroes, (2) the present generation and (3) the next generation, all three regarded as forming one unit. (255)

The universe of Yoruba consists of the physical world called the aye and the heavenly abode of the supreme god and the other spirits called the orum. Heavenly realm also consists of orisa, through whom the ultimate god does his works related to human affairs. For Yoruba people, there exists a belief that their dead are always with them playing various roles in their daily life. eventhough they are departed, they are never deceased (Drewal 71). And their custom includes the offering of the first morsels of food and drops of wine, just before the food is eaten, to the departed souls.

An important god, among the lists of Yoruba gods is ogun. Soyinka says, “ogun’s history is the story of the completion of Yoruba cosmogony, he
encapsulates that cosmogony’s coming into being in his own rites of passage” (Myth 26). He is the Yoruba god of iron, patron deity of blacksmiths and also the god of hunting as well as of war. One of the major festivals of Yoruba is the Oshun festival which is conducted in the town of Oshogbo. This can be considered as the most spectacular of Yoruba festivals. People celebrate this festival for the Yoruba female goddess of beauty. They also consider that this goddess have the power to heal illness, give children, impart wealth and protect her people. The festival, in traditional days were considered as the symbol of unity, which glues their loyalty to the king. Omajola details the performance of this festival as

The annual oshun festival comes after series of rituals, many of which are restricted to a limited set of people. The first of these is known as iwopopo (street cleansing procession) performed to spiritually and physically cleanse the town. The procession consists of oshun chief priestess (iya oshun), chiefs, and members of the royal family. This marks the official commencement of the series of events that will culminate in the festival. (38)

Eventhough this festival is related to the goddess Oshun, it is “designed to acknowledge the importance of other prominent Yoruba deities” (Omajola 38). Thus people are able to witness a unity in the celebration of the festival and this speaks about the Yoruba community life. Omajola explains this by providing an example “on the fourth day, for example, the appearance of masquerades serves
to venerate Sango, the god of thunder as well as the spirits of other ancestors” (38)

There exist certain mythical allusions and taboos related to animals in the Yoruba culture. Yoruba call the groups of animals as owo. The different categories of animals that exist, is according to them, define their perception of the universe. “world of binary complementaries in which they see everything existing in the cosmology in dual form but not opposing each other” (Olusola 156). Yoruba philosophy details the relationship between human beings and animals. The interactions between animals and human beings form an important part of the mythical narratives, legends, poetries and even literature. The taboo of murdering a mating animal is explained by Yoruba “by drawing parallels with the sexual relationship between humans, which should also never be disturbed” (Olusola 157). Thus they believe that animals like human beings are able to feel almost all the feelings and emotions.

There lies a complex relationship between the Yoruba hunters and the animals. They believe that certain animals are spirits who transform themselves into human beings at night. For them not every animal they encounter is to be killed, because some are too powerful and can attack them during night time. Another version of this dual relationship is their thought that animals were created to serve man. They call meat as the carrier and believe that people who do not use it are having emptiness. “When their hunters go hunting in the bush they do everything possible to get game to have meat on their table. Whenever they are performing Ijala, Yoruba hunters make fun of those who do not kill any animal when they go hunting” (Olusala166).
I) YORUBA ART AND DRAMA

The improvement of the art of Yoruba language and its literature accelerated with the establishment of the University College, Ibadan in the year 1948 which later known as the University of Ibadan. The activities of the university helped in refining the literariness of Yoruba language and literature.

As far as Yoruba folktales are concerned, they have the same importance as the contemporary written Yoruba literature. The triumphant presentation of Yoruba folktales depends on the way in which the presenter employs his own body, voice, time and space. This can be read parallel to Sesan’s argument in his 2012 submission, which is quoted by him, states that

Apart from the utilization and manipulation of the body and voice of the performer, there is also a need for the significant manipulation of the performance space. In the traditional Yoruba society, the performance space of Yoruba folktales is triangular, corresponding and interactional between the audience and the performer. (151)

The argument of Sesan, stresses the significance of Yoruba oral performance as an aesthetic of phonetic tradition. He puts the performer, the audience and the performing space at the center during the presentation of Yoruba folklore. The phonocentric tradition of Yoruba oral tradition can also be called as literature. Similar to written literature, for an individual or for the community oral literature also flourishes on inventiveness, originality, resourcefulness and literary imagination.
The phonocentric tradition transformed into logocentric one in the Yorubaland. Missionary activities and the introduction of Yoruba written language accelerated the growth of logocentricism in language, literature and performance. The written texts for those missionaries who encroached into the Yorubaland were the tools for evangelization. Mwankwo’s words that “writing is only a symbolic way of representing speech and as such is secondary to it” (315) can be read as something which is against the view that literature began with the arrival of the colonial people and the missionaries.

Modern drama was introduced in Nigeria a few years after the British conquest of its main city called Lagos in 1851. It was chiefly connected to the work of the Christian missionaries. Even though the development of the genre was initially rather slow, it gathered high momentum during the mid-sixties. Nigeria’s unique features like multi-national population, different languages and dialects, ethnic groups contributed to the rapid growth of drama form of literature. This is evident from Michael Etherton’s words “theatre in the Third World, particularly in Nigeria, like the Third world economics, in which this theatre is based, is in some respects over-developed rather than under-developed” (368). By conducting a survey on the different dramatic forms of Nigeria, Finnegan opines that these varities do not adhere to the fundamental criteria to which drama is defined. She states

The idea of enactments, of representation through actors who imitate persons and events… linguistic concepts; plot; the represented interaction of several characters, specialized
scenery etc often music; and of particular importance in most African performances- dance. (501)

In the Nigerian art scenario, one may notice the fact that the traditional forms of drama are not fully wiped out, but kept alive along with the new forms of drama. The comparatively new forms like folk operas and Nigerian drama in English flourished side by side with the developed ritual drama and traditional drama. Ritual drama is a sort of drama that deals with the ritual ceremonies of worship. It forms the initial form of Nigerian dramatic heritage. Prof. T.A Lambo discusses the origin of this form as “if a man finds the hair or nail belonging to, or even a piece of material which has been worn by an enemy… he has only to ‘use’ them in order to bring about his enemy’s death or to injure him” (4). This belief illustrates a haunting feeling of anxiety which sees life itself as a potential resistance. The inquisitive nature of man made them believe in the power of certain rituals and magical acts to solve the mysteries that haunted them throughout day and night. As hunting of the beasts was the earliest of all techniques of acquiring food, the immediate target was the cries and grunts of the beasts for magical and mimetic actions. Rajkumar’s gives an example of the ancestor worship ceremony of the Yoruba Egun. He says;

According to the practice, the reality of the dead, whose memory is being honoured, is invoked not only through chanting and drumming but more importantly through a series of eerie vocal sounds imitating the weird nasal voice assumed to belong to the world of the dead. (20)
The immediate offspring of the ritual drama is the traditional Nigerian drama. The major concern for this drama is dance. The extensive moral demands made way for the rituals to move out of the enclosed shrines and sacred groves to the general market place. Rotimi says,

One approach was to instill fear into the minds of the community, first as a way of curing evil intentions. Hence, for instance, the nightly displays of cult worship which must be preceded by stern warnings to all non-initiates to remain indoors and never attempt to peep out at the spirits as they passed. As further reinforcement to this occult approach, idealized representations of these spirits came into being in the form of masked actors and impersonators.

(39-40)

In the Nigerian context, dance is more important and mime in the case of traditional drama exists as a “framework upon which to hang the dance sequence” (Horton 294). By using props, the delta tribes of the rivers state of Nigeria play mime as part of their act. The women’s dance troupe called Erema Segi Ogbo of the Ijo tribes is an apt exemplary for this act. They act during a water ceremony. Another dance item is the Wuruye or invitation to drink usually performed by the Itshekiris of the mid-west state. Acrobatics is another significant part of their cultural heritage. Dancing is a medium for acrobatics as Rotimi says, “within the structure of traditional Nigerian drama, acrobatics are a prominent feature” (41). Dance is the medium through which the mimetic impulses are transferred. And in Nigeria the mimetic movements consists of a
fusion of music, drama and mime accompanied by drum accents. Some major examples for this include the Igheleghe dance of Ishan, in the mid-west state and it is dominated by acrobatics consisting of brisk somersaults and tableaux of body contortions. Apart from this, there are other performances like the Egungun Alarinjo display of the Yoruba, the Ikaki and the Angalaiyai of the Delta tribes in the rivers state. The background sound of Nigerian music in connection with the traditional dramatic presentation rely itself on a number of instruments that can be classified under four groups, such as beaten objects, wind instruments, vocal and other effects.

The dialogue, in traditional, ritual or in folk opera, is conveyed not only through human speech, but also by drum. The Yoruba ‘Iya- lu’ or the talking drum and the drum dialogue in the rivers state are used in dramatic display. When this is compared to Greek drama “known as the ‘Ekule’ or ‘salute’, its importance in the traditional drama format of the Rivers state culture is similar to the entrance song of the chorus or ‘parados’ in Greek drama” (Rotimi 42)

Masquerades in Nigeria symbolize the union between man and God. Mask limits the extent to which the faces of gods can be exposed to the public. Masks intend to create a connection between man and those ancestors who got eternal life through death, as Jome Kenyatta says, they create “communion with Ancestral spirits” (6). Animal masks are used in ritual drama and it began when man tried to understand the way animals are for the need for himself to survive. Alarinjo mask- theatre developed from these ancestral and animal masks. The actors use mask in order to create an aura of mystery regarding the supernatural and the divine.
In Nigerian cultural representations, the role of costume is also vital. The love for form and colour is inborn in the Nigerian tradition and it is a characteristic feature of their drama. Procession, is a common spectacle in rituals and other ceremonies. The Amagba ceremony, performed during the month of November has the dual purpose of purifying the community of malevolent forces and giving them expectations for a new year.

The Nigerian folk opera is a medium of communication and a vent to emotions. Folk operas

Like other cultural activities in Nigeria, organized drama is in its infancy. It may be argued that drama is part of the life of people, that social functions, religious ceremonies and traditional festivals lend themselves easily to dramatic performances. But in the past these were not well organized; in the absence of written plays and national theatres, and not much could be achieved. (Taiwo 68)

Ulli Beier coined the term ‘folk opera’ for Yoruba theatre. Yoruba theatre began out of the group of masquerades that flourished during the sixteenth century. The two societies of masqueraders such as the Gelede and Egungun are similar to the Yoruba theatre. The Galede society run by women had the main objective of appeasing the witches. While the Egungun society deal with the worship and appeasement of the dead. Yoruba theatre consists of music, song, dance, extended story line and a moral nature. Wide acting gestures and the use of vernacular language ranging from an isolated local dialect to a commonly known Pidgin English are the characteristics of Yoruba theatre. This theatre used
all kind of topics such as historical themes, social satires, biblical stories and political events. Yoruba rituals have strong dramatic features. The duel scene of the Edi festival of Ille-life, the Ajagemo-Oluwin episode which ends during the annual Obatala festival, and other spectacular festivals performed in honour of the Yoruba deities like Ogun, Osun and Sango highlights the stress they give to dramatic enactments.

Most of the Yoruban rituals have preserved their sacredness and the egungun rite has yielded a secular branch recognized as the traditional theatre of Yoruba. The origin of the ritual play is a funerary ritual to continue the memory of the dead Oyo kings. They consider them as not deceased but converted and existing in a different form of masquerade. Adedeji says it was during the rule of Alaafin Ogbolu “who acceded to the throne at Oyo Igboho about 1590” (221), that the egungun rite developed. It was at first considered as a court entertainment. This court ritual developed and moved itself away as an itinerant theatre during the middle of the eighteenth century. But both the theatre and the ritual continue to exist drawing elements on mutual basis. Adedeji says “the cult members and the mask dramaturges are still bound together by ancestor worship and meet during the funeral ceremony of any member of the egungun society. (233)

Yoruba society has to face a number of cultural deprivations during the time of colonial rule. This adversely affected the theatre. The incongruence of the pagan rituals of Yoruba with Christianity lead to these emasculations. During the first four decades of the nineteenth century, western education and Christianity had become firm in Lagos. This acceleration is due to the European
missionaries and the new Yoruba elite. Both these groups together introduced new types of western entertainment. Thus along with the traditional music, European style music also flourished. According to Omojola;

The cordial relationship which existed for most of the nineteenth century among the various cultural groups in Lagos was, however not to continue forever. Towards the end of the century, the black community in Lagos began to question the dominance of the Europeans. European musical activities suffered in this process and traditional Nigerian music began to find its way into the church and on to the concert platform. (16)

There is no doubt that traditional Yoruba travelling theatre occupies a significant position in the socio-cultural, political and religious milieu of the Yoruba people. The source of Yoruba modern theatre lies in the churches. It started growing during the 1920s. The origin of independent African churches and its increase in value became powerful in the materialization of Yoruba modern theatre. Emergence of new churches like the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Apostolic Church started using Bible stories as plays to instruct their congregations, especially those who were not literate. All these including the contributions of the audience went towards the development of the ‘church school’ and dramatic portrayals (Beier 3). Amateur actors, who were mostly colleagues and pupils recruited and taught by school teachers were available in great numbers. Stories like the tale of Joseph and his brothers, Adam and Eve, Nebuchadnezzar and Samson were performed. An example of this type of
performance is evident in Beier’s account of his first encounter with Kola Ogunmola’s troupe. He says, “I saw Joseph and his Brethren in Ikerre Ekiti in 1953! I came across him by chance and I followed him for a whole week to Ado Ekiti and Ijero and other towns to watch him” (77). The musical instruments that are mainly employed were tambourines, bongos, iron gongs and congas. In between the performances there will be humorous lines which excited audience.

(3). Hubert Ogunde was the progenitor of modern Yoruba professional theatre. He “was a born entertainer” (4) who started his career in a church school and went on to become one of the greatest and most prolific dramatists to be produced by Yoruba theatre. According to Jeyifo

It is tempting to see in Esa Ogbin’s career a prefiguration of Hubert Ogunde’s influence and career: the basic outlines of the emergence and evolution of the old Travelling Theatre, the Alarinjo tradition, parallel, rather closely, those of its modern counterpart, the contemporary Yoruba Travelling Theatre. (35).

In focusing on his the Eegun Alare tradition, that is, the Alarinjo, Jeyifo states that when Ogunde was “a young boy he ran away with one of these companies, touring with the company for several months until his irate father, who had been away when his son absconded, personally effected his return home” (39). Ogunde used biblical themes to produce plays before 1946, as evident in Jeyifo’s statement:

In the tradition of a long line of other song-writers and composers of the “Native Air Opera” and other forms of entertainment such as
“Service of Songs” and “Cantatas” before him, Hubert Ogunde had been giving public performances of his own compositions in these forms for some two years, largely under the sponsorship and patronage of his denominational sect, the Church of the Aladura and other similar sects which requested his services. (36).

The highly professional skill of Ogunde helped him in influencing his audience for maximum effect. Beier states that “No other Yoruba director understood his audience the way he did” (4). The quality of Ogunde’s plays got increased and it attracted more people with the introduction of the ‘opening glee’, which consists of dancing beautiful girls, shaking their hips and rolled their eyes to the tune of playing saxophones. The ecstasy reached a climax when Ogunde came on to the stage, in the midst of these beautiful women to introduce the play they were about to perform. Thus the emergence and the constant growth of the Yoruba modern Travelling Theatre tradition, within its short period of existence turned out to be a powerful force to be considered with. As Jeyifo explains:

Clearly, the historical emergence and growth of this theatrical tradition is to be seen in terms of both its roots in the traditional religious and secular performing arts of the Yoruba people and its more direct, immediate antecedents in the performances and entertainments engendered by the contact with the European Christian missions and secular forces. (36)

Peter Ukpokodu writes that between 1945 and 1950, “Ogunde wrote nineteen plays, of which thirteen are politically influenced” (126). His
contribution to the nationalistic discourse lies in this manner of writing and performing plays. This resulted in the granting of unconditional independence to Nigeria by the British imperialists. In addition, most of his plays exposed the evils of colonial administration of Nigeria. The colonial government even censored and levied tax on his plays for being politically assertive. Amkpa writes that Major Anthony Syer appreciated Ogunde’s theatre after seeing the rehearsal of *Mr Devil’s Money*, which was a satire on the colonial government. He says that

> Since my arrival in this country, I have seen many plays and operas… but I had the greatest surprise of my life when I attended the rehearsal… written, produced and composed by Hubert Ogunde, … the theme is based on an old African story depicting the “here and after” of a man who signs a pact with an evil spirit in order to be wealthy. (128)

Ogunde’s drama was so popular in the 50’s and 60’s that he became a model for most of travelling theatre troupes that later emerged. His theatre was active during and after Nigeria’s independence from 1960 till 1970’s when he ventured into the cinema. Fellow artists like Kola Ogunmola and Duro Ladipo also contributed massively to the development and spread of the modern Yoruba popular theatre. Ogunmola also tried Christian stories. In Jeyifo’s analyses of this description, he observed that the Yoruba Travelling Theatre was at a stage of its development when performers and audiences were mostly made up of “the lay congregations of the various Christian denominations” (40). The cultural renaissance that had happened during the 1960s when Nigeria became
independent also led to its flowering. The necessity of new social and cultural identity was identified and instilled. This led to an increase in the country’s support towards traditional and contemporary arts. One of the famous play of his, entitled *Love of Money* portrayed a man who was happily married with two children, but his vanity and greed led to his downfall. This play became a type of morality reference point for Ogunmola to the Yoruba society. According to Beier, he had been able to reveal “the weaknesses and foolishness of man without the help of allegorical characters” (7). Kola Ogunmola began his professional theatre practice in 1948 with *Reign of the Mighty*. His influence on the success of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre is also noteworthy. His plays are considered by critic like Ulli Beier as a refinement of the Alarinjo theatre by making it come “closer to literary drama” (133). He constructed his plays differently from Ogunde and Duro Ladipo by trying to make the audience laugh without openly criticising any human action. Though Ogunmola acknowledged the influence of Ogunde on his theatre, however, he restricted himself from clear political plays and concentrated on social satire. His plays draw influences from both the Bible and Yoruba folk tales. The reason for the performance of some of his plays is his relationship with Ulli Beier and the Ibadan School of Drama.

Duro Ladipo is another Nigerian dramatist whose modern folk operas blending ritual poetry and traditional rhythms with the accompaniment of indigenous instruments based on Yoruba history. When Duro Ladipo began his career in 1962, Ogunmola was already fully established and was at the height of his fame. The source of his material is the Yoruba mythological world, Biblical stories and everyday subjects. Ladipo became an exponent of the Sango myths
and most of his plays were the different dimensions of the god’s story. Before the travelling theatre’s transition to television and the cinema His *Oba Koso* (1963) remained one of the most popular of the plays of the period. The play was so successful with the mass audiences, academic communities and the government that it was taken on tour in the United States, London, Germany and some other European countries.

Moses Olaiya who is also known by his stage name Baba Sala, is a comedian different from the other practitioners of the Nigerian popular theatre. In fact, he was the most famous comedian and one of the most highly regarded dramatists in Nigeria from the 1960s to the early 1990s. He is regarded as the father of Nigeria’s comedy, moving from the stage, which he joined in 1960, to the television and later to cinema and video film. Olaiya gave rise to the birth and proliferation of comic drama groups in Nigeria.

The quest for indigenous identity gave birth to the independent African Church Movement. It advocated for the Africanization of the liturgy and theatrical entertainment at the same time. As a result of this the Yoruba folk opera developed.

Nigeria’s success in getting independence on October 1, 1960 saw an emergence of political awareness in every aspect of life. There was a marked change in ideology and socio-cultural outlook. The University College of Ibadan had been trying to cultivate a literary tradition in the 1950s. But most of the theatrical activities were western in its content and concept and fall short in portraying the national identity which the Nigerians felt. Wole Soyinka’s essays
“Towards a True Theatre” draws the cultural apathy engendered by such productions. He say,

every event in theatre, every genuine effort at creative communication, entertainment, escapism is for me, entirely valid. It is very easy to sniff for instance at the efforts of the Operatic Groups. What one must regret is the atmosphere of sterility and truly pathetic preciosity that it seems to breed.

(461)

Beyond the difference in cultural tastes, what is significant about the developments of the late 1950s is that the meeting of purely European theatrical traditions and Euro-Nigerian hybridized forms. This created a new type of literary audience. The introduction of the new group out of the Players of the Dawn by Wole Soyinka, the 1960 masks and the founding of the University of Ife in western Nigeria increased the space for new literary playwrights for conducting their theatrical experiments.

WRITTEN LITERATURE AND DRAMA IN YORUBA

Written Nigerian literature is restricted to a few indigenous languages, such as Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa, while, most of the other languages of Nigeria are spoken and they do not have a written script. One of the main characteristics of the few languages that have the written script, like the Hausa and the Yoruba is that they were first written in Arabic and Roman scripts. This was the situation with Hausa which was written in Ajami, a hybrid of Arabic and indigenous Hausa and Boko with a script that blended Hausa and Roman scripts. (Yahaya 15).
The lineage of Yoruba literature reflects the fact that it has attained its ripeness in the first decades of the twentieth century. Even though Yoruba did not become a written language until 1842 and the first novel in Yoruba *Itan Emi Segilola Eleyinjuege, Elegberun oko laiye* by Isaac B. Thomas, would not be published until nearly a century later, precisely in 1930. (Isola ), there are evidence which shows that the Arabic script was used in writing Yoruba as far back as the seventeenth century (Falola 24). Thomas’ socially implied and realistic novel, *Akede Omo*, first published in 1929, cannot be considered as the first attempt at novelistic writing in Yoruba. But this novel showed many features of a modern novel. This effort of Thomas paved the way for the budding of many such novelists and novels like Daniel Olurunfemi Fagunwa, the best known Yoruba novelist. His *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* published in 1938 is one of the most popular literary work in Yoruba. In 1968 Wole Soyinka translated *Ogboju Ode* as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.

The magical realistic tradition got germinated in Yoruba novelistic tradition with the publication of the picaresque novels written by Fagunwa and these novels revolve round the expeditions of a traveler. The attempt made by him provided inspiration to a generation of novelists in Yoruba literature. This included among others Ogundele who wrote *Ejigbede Lona Isalu Orun* in 1956 and *Ibu Olokun* in 1956, Omoyajowo who wrote *Itan Odeniya-Omo Odeleru* in 1957 and Fatanmi to write *Korimale Ninu Igbo Adimula* in the year 1976 (Isola 80). The more realistic tradition got accelerated by other works like Delano’s *Aiye D’aiye Oyinbo*, Afolabi Olabimtan’s *Kekere Ekun* and Adebayo
Faleti’s *Omo Olokun Esin*. a new genre of detective fiction was also pioneered by writers like Oladejo Okediji and Kola Akinlade.

The history of writing poetry in Yoruba dates back to the past comparatively longer than the other genres of Yoruba literature. Henry Townsend published a collection of poems in the form of religious hymns in the year 1848. *Kekere Iwe Orin Aribiloso* in 1886 wrote by Moses Lijadu, followed by his own *Awon Arofo Orin ti Sobo Arobiodu ati ti Oyesile Keribo* are milestones in the area of Yoruba poetry (Isola 80). Yoruba poetry has now reached a point where it has many practitioners such as Olanrewaju Adepoju and Olatubosun Oladapo working side by side with earlier generation of poets and writers of Yoruba literature.

Plays produced in this new literary tradition were written in English, but conveyed in content and form a strong sense of traditional expression. It included writing Yoruba in English. These plays, according to Dan Izenbaye, is an instrument for the recovery of identity, of tradition, even of an exclusive cultural essence… a practical means of transforming the colonial word without abandoning it… the proverb and other speech forms were implanted in the structure and lexis of Queen’s English. One of the highly prized benefits of the colonial educational system. (154-170)

The Extensive use of traditional song, dance, Yoruba oral poetry, instrumental music, divinations, drum texts and incantations are common features of Yoruba folk operas and the new literary plays. On the other, “in
general modern Yoruba plays are longer and have more complicated plots than those of the travelling theatre companies” (Isola, 400).

The prosperous store house of myths, fables, music, chants, folklores and legends make them able to transfer all these treasures from one generation to the other. They are used for theatrical presentations not only to preserve them, but also to spread the cultural diversity of the Yorubans. The new generations of Yoruba are gradually losing their contact with the past due to the flow of globalization. Adapting these elements in the modern plays help in making them aware of their past glory and rich tradition. This will in turn help them to connect to their roots. Lasisi elucidates the significance of this by quoting Beeman’s words. He says “performance is the means… perhaps the principal means… through which people come to understand their world, reinforce their view of it and transform it on both small scale and large scale” (31)

Nigerian Literary plays started budding from the late 1950s. English was the medium of expression from the beginning onwards. Apart from the plays developed by the travelling theatre companies, there are plays that are considered as modern Yoruba plays. They are introduced initially as written scripts and may or may not be staged.

Modern Yoruba plays have something in common with Yoruba written literature: they borrow a lot from oral literature, especially from oral poetry … In many contemporary modern Yoruba plays one comes across references to ritual drama either in the form of deities being worshiped or in the form of traditional ceremonies being
The inclusion of these features lends colour and movement to the action in some of the plays. There is also a generous use of social songs, drumming and dancing, largely borrowed from the practice of the travelling theatre groups. (Isola, 400).

The popular playwrights who write in Yoruba include Adebayoh Babalola, J.F. Odunjo, Adebayo Faleti, Olanipekun Esan, Duro Ladipo, Afolabi Olabimtan, Olu Daramola, Dosu Alamu, Babatunde Olatunji, Akinwumi Isola, Olarenwaju Adepojie, Lawuyi Oguniran, Wale Ogunyemi, Olusesan Ajewole, Olu Owolabi. The famous playwrights who write in English are Wole Soyinka, the first African Nobel laureate in literature, and Femi Osofisan who achieved international fame as outstanding dramatist.

Nigerian playwrights, poets and novelists have immensely depended on oral folklore for materials for their creativity parallel to Greek playwrights, Shakespeare and modern playwrights like Synge and Yeats, for whom folklore was the mine for literary materials. Critics like Joel A. Adedeji claims that Yoruba theatre is a legacy of Yoruba religious impulses, where religion is the basis of dramatic developments, by quoting that, “the human instinct for impersonation and ritualistic expression leads to the developmental drama” (66). Another Nigerian John Pepper Clark has written, “As the roots of European drama go to the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Dionysus, so are the origins of Nigerian drama likely to be found in the early religious and magical ceremonies of the peoples of this country” (118). The substantiation set forth by some scholars who believe in a ritualistic origin of drama from festivals believes that
these festivals while purporting to be religious incorporate theatrical performances also. Festivals, according to Owomoyela “are social institutions by means of which men satisfy their unseeking instincts. They generally take place when the commodities that will ensure their success are in abundance and also when the festivals will not prejudice the performance vital to the community.”(29)

The contemporary Yoruba theatre can be viewed as the culmination of a socio-political development which began around the middle of the nineteenth century in Lagos. The cosmopolitan European elite class encouraged foreign theatres which forced Africans to react against the rigorous suppression of African culture, encouraging them to take up various researches in Yoruba mythology, philosophy of religion, and the metaphysics of the system of divination, thereby leading “by the turn of the century, the African amateur dramatists mainly drawn from the ranks of the secessionist churches, were performing works mainly on local themes and in narrative language- Yoruba” (Owomoyela 31). Folk tales donate an array of plots, proverbs, eulogistic poems, ornamental dialogues to Yoruba theatre and the physical actions connected with certain festivals gave the dramatization ideas that are effective on stage. An accommodation has been effected between the native and the foreign elements of Yoruba experience, resulting in a hybrid civilization of both foreign and native elements. The recreation of Ogunmola’s *Palmwine Drinkard* by The Arts Theatre of the University of Ibadan opens up the dependence of Yoruba folk theatre to that of the past. The allusions in Wole Soyinka’s works “Death in the Dawn” mirror the use of Yoruban mythology in modern literature;
the right foot of joy, the left, dread
and the mother prayed, child
may you never walk
when the road waits, famished (22-25).

Soyinka is referring to Ogun, the primal spirit of Yoruba mythology, by saying that it is Ogun and not simply the road, that waits famished.

Along with Soyinka, a number of writers and literary activities both in writing and performance have taken place in the Nigerian society. Nigeria saw the emergence of many talented playwrights and theatre practitioners. One of the major playwrights is Femi Osofisan who has been considered as a talented writer. Other important authors include Ola Rotimi, Bode Sowande, Zulu Sofola, Tunde Fatunde, Wale Ogunyemi, Olu Obafemi, Bode Osanyin, Ben Tomoloju, Sam Ukala, and Tess Onwueme.

Some of the significant plays of Femi Osofisan are *Morountodun, No More the Wasted Breed, Midnight Hotel, Aringindin and the Night Watchmen, Midnight Blackout, Once Upon 4 Robbers, Who’s Afraid of Solarin?, Altine’s Wrath, Twingle Twangle a Twynning Tale, Another Raft*. He is a folklore dramatist, who deals with the different problems faced by man in his society by using songs and parables. The language that he employs in his plays is easy, flexible and intelligible. Ajidahun says “Osofisan uses meta-phors consciously as a normal linguistic apparatus to make critical statements of facts that he considers crucial and to pro-voke and arouse the consciousness of our leaders to the worri-some living condition of the downtrodden in the society”(1)
Ola Rotimi is popular for the experiments he does in language. This can be read in relation to the multi-lingual situation of the Nigerian society. His theatre gives importance to most of the major ethnic groups in Nigerian society. Moreover he is also influenced by the classical and absurdist tradition. His play *The gods are not to Blame and Holding Talks* follow these great theatre traditions. Some of his plays like *His Man Talk, Woman Talk* and *Tororo* have a leftist leaning and try to detail the social situations through a comical representation. *Our Husband has gone Mad Again* is a political satire, explaining the dreadful situations even after achieving independence.

Zulu Sofola is a playwright who writes her works parallel to the classical idea of tragedies. She can be considered as a neo-Classical writer. The play *Wedlock of the gods* and *King Emene* is about human beings destruction due to his hubris. Nevertheless, Sofola’s later plays like *The Sweet Trap* and *Song of a Maiden* are a fundamental delineation from the way of writing she always used. These plays deal with the women and her place in the society. Instead of being an activist and a woman leader who calls out for the equality of the sexes, she maintained that women should possess certain rights in the society. But what contemporary feminism tries to achieve will position women at par with men. And for her this will damage the equilibrium. She supports for womanism, since feminism is against African women.

Nigerian dramatists always meet with the question of language. Most of the authors carried out different experiments on language. Certain Yoruba performing artists of the Western part of Nigeria like Afolabi Olabimtan, Kola Akinlade, Adekanmi Oyedele, tried to write in their mother tongue inorder to
reach the local audience, neglecting both international and national appreciation. Sonny Sampson-Akpan is one of the emerging indigenous playwrights who belong to the south- Eastern part of Nigeria.

At present Nigeria is witnessing a new wave of dramatic and theatrical activities. During the 1980s, an association called Nigerian Universities Theatre Arts Students Association (NUTASA) was established having its secretariat at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan. Its aim to is to encourage an annual festival known as Nigerian Universities Theatre Arts Festival (NUTAF).

The performance of dance, drama pieces, full-length plays, conducting exhibitions and the publication of annual magazine is the focus of this association. Scripts are accepted from a number of budding and capable playwrights from undergraduate schools by the festival. As a result of this within the last one decade there was an upsurge in creative writing in Nigeria. Writers like Tunde Ajayi, Pedro Agbonifo-Obaseki, Debo Sotuminu, and Bakare Ojo- Rasaki were all products of the festival. The activities of the National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), cannot be relegated to the background. Every year, her annual convention is held and her focus is in the promotion of indigenous artistry.

A fresh awareness is flourishing even among non- professionals along with the theatrical activities of professional or semi-professional theatre artists. A legal personality of global repute who turned to a theatre artist called Fred Agbeyegbe, has dedicated his time to writing and producing classic plays like Budiso, Woe Unto Death and The Last Omen. His classic, The King Must Dance
Naked, won the “Play of the Year Award” in Ghana. Rasheed Gbadamosi, an international businessman and a former Minister of the Federal Republic is another literary person who published a dozen plays. Efiong Johnson has more than half a dozen of published plays such as Frogs at Noon, The Fight Has Just Begun and Not Without Bones. Toni Duruaku is more interested on the impact of capitalism and the question of leadership in plays like Cash Prize and Silhouttes respectively. Bakare’s This Land Must Sacrifice, Once Upon a Tower, The gods are to Blame among others are all on leadership tussle both at the political level and at the ivory towers, a place expected to be more enlightened. Johnson’s Generous Donors and Iguanre’s The Grave Encounter focus on the dreaded AIDS scourge.

The third generation playwrights of Nigeria look forward to the role of the reader-audience to have an awareness to differentiate between the oppressive and dictatorial government. Such type of government is portrayed in their plays. Thus the reader-audience can identify these villainous characters to the political leaders in their own society. It is expected by the playwrights that these plays might help the reader-audience to come to terms with their everyday reality and also in the realization of their daily struggle for survival. A well-defined link between the earlier two generations of Nigerian dramatists and the present generation exists. And the link includes these political and cultural elements that define their society. Ahmed Yerima says

In some of my plays, sometimes I find out that I have to make a social comment. I look at contemporary Nigeria and I find that, for instance, the tragedy that exists is no longer
that of Aristotle or even Soyinka. Theirs is the tragedy of
destiny…. Break in social orders and ideological factors
create tragedy these days. (6)

IV. WOLE SOYINKA

Akunwande Oluwole Soyinka was born on 13 July 1934 in Ijebu Isara.
He was brought up in western Nigeria and went to Ibadan for secondary
education. He did his higher education from the University college of Ibadan and
the British University of Leeds. The first play of Soyinka being The Swamp
Dwellers and he presented it during the London drama festival and this made
him one of the leading Young writers of Nigeria. During the 1960s he was in the
midst of an extreme dramatic activity. According to Rajkumar,

Soon after his arrival, he acted in Bertolt Brecht’s
‘Caucasion Chalk Circle’, worked on his first major play A
Dance of the Forests and wrote The Trials of Brother Jero,
which was produced in spring 1960 at the Arts Theatre,
Ibadan. Between 1960 and 1963 he not only wrote plays
and acted, but formed acting company. (36)

During the 1960s the situation in Nigeria transformed itself in favor of
theatre presentation. Folk operas became popular as it blended the Yoruba texts
and traditional themes with that of modern theatre techniques. Wole Soyinka’s
The Road which appeared during this period can be considered as an apt
example that made the beginning of the interplay between University based
intellectual drama and the popular theatre. During this period Soyinka was busy
occupying himself with writing plays, poetry, masks and acting. The civil war
and other political developments in Nigeria forced him to write reviews that attack social and political wrongs and established a new company of Orisun players.

In the Year 1965, his first novel *The Interpreters* appeared along with *Kongi Harvest* and his public reading of *Idanre*, a collection of poems. Soyinka took part in the political struggle in order to avoid civil war in Nigeria. As a result of which he was arrested and had to spend two years in solitary confinement. Soyinka understood the disappearance of justice under dictatorship and the growth of corruption in the modern society after his two years imprisonment. His autobiography, *The Man Died*, records his experience in prison. The title of the book is itself a metaphor for the passage of justice. His plays *Madmen and specialists*, *A Dance of the Forests* and *Kongi’s Harvest* portrays images of corruption and the passing away of justice. During this period he composed some poems and in 1969, he sent them to a friend. This friend published them as Poems from Prison and afterwards appeared in the collection *A Shuttle in the Crypt*. After Soyinka’s release from detention in 1969, he journeyed widely in Europe, Africa and America.

After that he wrote the prose work *The Man Died* and *Brother Jero’s Metamorphosis*. His second novel *Season of Anomy* appeared in the year 1973. The biography of Soyinka shows that he is a multi- faceted writer, critic, lecturer, actor, translator and publisher, who is talented enough to deal with satires, comic plays, melodrama, absurd drama and tragedies at the same time. The world recognized his literary contributions by conferring on him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986.


Wole Soyinka's works communicate with the readers an eagerness to experiment a western technique of coalescing the metaphor of two worlds, which Charles Larson puts as

the western reader is already familiar with the kind of experimentation found in interpreters, and the prudence that modern life is alien to ancient Nigeria, which quaintly intrudes at times on dynamic modernity. On the other, there are writers like
Cyprian Ekwensi for whom present events seem more important than the obscure glories of the past. (Taiwo 61)

The theatrical performances of ritual, ceremonial, festival and dance dramas foreshadow the blending of the religious and theatrical. Soyinka acknowledges that special representation is fundamental to African ritual theatre. Colonization by missionaries convinced the Africans that Christian God can only save them, created double colonization in the name of religion and political. They captured the materialistic elements as well as the spiritual need. This can be found in Soyinka’s play called *The Road*. In this play the main character has no name. The only reference is that he is a professor. The person believes in Christianity and participates in Sunday sermons. His character is painted as a diabolic one. He serves Christianity and strives for personal materialistic benefits. He says:

>You may be the devils own army but my arm is powdered with the unbroken word!... They died, all three of them crucified on rigid branches… My kindness would be plagued by beggars if I gave them a chance…. The butterfly thinks the flapping of his wings fathered the whirlwind that followed. The burrowing beetle feels he powdered the arm of the eruption. (157-207)

Professor operates in an accident store near the church. And he utters, “the shop must be reopened at once. I don’t permit shuttered windows in my household…. They are the ones who up their windows. I have nothing to hide” (199)
Wole Soyinka’s works are echoes on society, culture, tradition and the politics of Africa, especially Nigeria. A variety of realistic scenes that reflects the situations in Nigeria is seen in the environment created by his dramas. The characters portrayed in his works hold a mirror up to the human nature and life. Various traditions and customs reminding the culture of Yoruba are discussed in his plays. Soyinka makes use of his Yoruba tradition inorder to express human emotions and sentiments. Emotions and sufferings are same for human beings all over the world. Human suffering is the same everywhere though causes may differ. The core element in man never changes and it stays there for generations. Soyinka is able to dive deep into the depths of human heart through his art and has also tried to rouse human consciousness.

The individualistic manner in which Wole Soyinka writes makes him vulnerable to personalize dramatic art to his favor. The profound imagination of Soyinka helps him to apply metaphorical language to the plays and introduce exclusive images and symbols. All these images reflect the individual as well as the social life of him. For David Cook Soyinka’s use of metaphorical language consists of

tier of meaning which is not just a matter of the structures of separate sentences and speeches; it has more to do with the eddying movement of the human mind circling round its private pre-occupation, while it is carried forward publicly by the continuous stream of situation. (114)

Along with the Nigerian sociopolitical background, he also writes about the human beings who are dropped into the world during a particular time and
place. The personal experiences are mixed into his art with an aim to improve its originality. Yoruba culture forms the backbone of his writings. But his mind is open to take up ideas and techniques in dramatic writings and presentation even from the other parts of the world. He attempts to create a unique world out of the by now accessible elements. As David Cook puts it “No artist is an island, however, hard critics may try to build coral reefs around him, or think they have scored a point by ‘discovering’ what ‘influences’ connect him to the mainland of humanity” (117).

Africans are familiar with the society that Soyinka exhibits in his plays. The spiritual and cultural wave that flows through them has many common threads. Apart from the religious perspective of having similar deities and ideals, there are some similar concepts of social living such as respect for the elders, good behavior ethical values, position of children, wealth and good health. Thus his works deals with all these and they are the fulfillment of what he himself and the readers are. The readers, according to Jauss, as quoted by Mosobalaje have a horizon of expectation which informs their critical criteria with which they approach Soyinka’s works. These readers are therefore not guests into the creative universe of Soyinka, they are part and parcel of the milieu that produced the work. Soyinka’s readers are familiar with the use of mask, with the egungun motif, with the tripartite world of Yoruba religious cosmology. (167)

One of the major themes of Soyinka’s plays includes the theme of regeneration. The necessity of the individuals to undergo self- recreation and the
need for the whole community to take up a cleaning of their minds is discussed through this theme. It also urges people to wake up from their stagnancy. This has contributed to the universality of his works. In the Yoruba ontology, regeneration has a cultural meaning. Their belief in the child who is born to die and to be repeatedly reborn called abiku is related to the regeneration myth. Mary. T. David quotes Samuel Johnson’s words that “after a period of time deceased parents are born again into the family of their surviving children. It is from this belief that some children are named babatunde i.e. father comes again”(1)

The value system of the Yoruba people is rooted and defined by their tribal cultural customs. Soyinka has used his dramatic techniques to yarn these cultural elements as themes into his plays. This made him the representative dramatist of the Nigerians. He is a flexible playwright who has been participating in the history and destiny of Nigeria, with the liveliness of its past and the vigor of its present. Soyinka’s aim in writing largely on Yoruba tribal traditions seems to be an attempt to deal with the misinterpretation and prejudices of the people. He speaks against the false customs and traditions. His works endeavors to encourage the marginalized sections. According to Rajkumar “soyinka’s use of the customs and traditions of the Yoruba is obviously twofold: to familiarize the non- African with the native culture and to dramatize the customs and traditions as they effect the African life” (42). He is ready to question even the atrocious beliefs. Even though, Soyinka had education and intellectual training in the west, he has a bottomless relationship with the tribal
culture with its hue of festivals and family traditions. Most of the cultural threads of the African as well as the Yoruban society are projected through his plays.

As far as Soyinka is concerned, the audience has a great role to playing a live theatre performance. The space where the performance is taking place consists of the members of the audience also. They belong to the action in a metaphysical way. The members of the audience are part of the space of the performance and therefore metaphysically. He considers the performance as a ritual. Audience is the integral part of the space in which the ritualistic performance takes place. According to Soyinka they are similar to the chorus in greek drama who instills confidence into the actors and make them ready to face “the symbolic struggle with the chthonic presences” (Myth 38). Thus the use of stage space is affective for Soyinka, since it affects the audience both in an emotional and physical way. The basic anxiety that captures the audience regarding the dilemma whether the protagonist will be able to overcome the confrontation makes the action metaphysical. In Yoruba theatre, songs play an important role. Wole Soyinka used songs in his theatre that helped in symbolically conveying more than what is really said through words.

In Africa the complexities of religion, philosophy, art and their relationship to nature is reciprocal. Every individual is connected to his past generations, family, those who are dead and also to the various natural phenomena. Since the birth of man, he has been in search of ways to overpower nature. For Cartey “reciprocity is established between the world of man and the world of nature. In Soyinka the realm of nature and that of man are hardly distinguishable; there is no fixed point of demarcation as both realms constantly
interciet and interpret” (328). Yoruba society has close interconnections with nature and their survival is restricted by nature. Their actions, festivals, rituals depend on the different cycles of nature. Those mysterious phenomena, which they are not able to explain, are worshipped. Those things associated with gods and goddesses by the traditional Yoruba religion include prominent objects of natural environment, ancestors considered as connected with the natural environment and other phenomena. Soyinka has successfully employed the elements of nature and man relationship in his plays. Similar to his attitude to religion, he shows an ambivalent attitude towards nature. In almost all his plays nature provides a functional background and a spiritual element that provides beauty to it.

The Nigerian backdrop with African themes in Soyinka’s plays shows that he is well aware of the rich cultural heritage of his continent. He is also packed with an urge to make revolutionary changes in his society. This feature makes him different from some of the other writers. White makes a comparison between Soyinka and the other writers like Clark as

Both Clark and Soyinka are ambitious writers, but one has the feeling that Clark’s are literary ambitious, whereas Soyinka is more concerned with using art to assess the world around him to influence it…. Soyinka grapples directly with the social conditions and political events of modern Africa, and even though his plays contain acute psychological explorations. (125)
A detailed analysis of some of the plays of Wole Soyinka will be done in the next chapters to trace out the cultural elements. This thesis discusses how the native culture of the Yoruba tribe is portrayed in the plays of Wole Soyinka.

**Works cited:**


