



# The Misrepresentation of Yoruba Traditional Religion on Social Media and Nollywood Practitioners Comparative Analysis of Representation of Traditional Religions on Social Media in Yoruba and Russian Societies

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**Abstract:** As Yoruba traditional religion continues to experience resurgence across Africa and the Diaspora, digital and visual media have become primary sources of knowledge about it. However, this visibility comes at a cost. In this paper, we critically examined how social media platforms and Nollywood have contributed to the distortion of Yoruba traditional religion’s core doctrines, symbols, and practices. Content creators and filmmakers, often lack direct initiation or scholarly grounding, frequently present shallow, sensationalized, or fictionalized depictions of the tradition—reducing a deep cosmological system to aesthetics, fear, or fantasy. Such portrayals not only mislead global audiences but also endanger the integrity of sacred knowledge systems by encouraging performative spirituality and appropriation. The study explored specific case studies from TikTok, Instagram, and Nollywood productions that exemplify this trend. We also discussed the ethical responsibilities of practitioners, content creators, and scholars in safeguarding Yoruba traditional religion’s epistemological depth. Finally, we proposed strategies for reAfricanising media narratives around Indigenous Religions, centering voices of initiated custodians and scholar-practitioners to resist digital neo-colonialism in sacred discourse. Findings were content analysed.

**Keywords:** Africa, Yoruba Traditional Religion, Diaspora, Nollywood, Neo-colonialism.

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**Introduction**

Ifá, according to Jawolusi (2026) in Ogunda Owonrin says:

<i>Okún sù nàre nàre</i>	The sea was seriously dim
<i>Òsà sù lègbelègbè</i>	The lagoon was terribly shady
<i>Alásán nrasán</i>	Alasan was going to Asan
<i>Alásàn nrasàn</i>	Alasan was going to Asan
<i>Alásán nrasán omi abẹ ọta ọ kún</i>	Alasan goes to Asan water under the stone was not full
<i>Awọn àgbààgbà wògbèyìn Ọrọ</i>	Some elders look at the future of the matter
<i>Wón ri pé ọ sun àn mọ</i>	They realised it was not good again
<i>Wón firunmú</i>	They used their mustache to cover their

<i>digágá imú</i>	noses
<i>Wón f’irùgbòn díyà pínpin</i>	They covered their chests with bears
<i>Dífá fún Ìṣẹ̀ṣe</i>	Cast divination for Isese
<i>Ti ns’olóri Orò láyé</i>	The head of Oro cult on earth
<i>A bù fún Ìṣẹ̀ṣe</i>	Given to Isese
<i>Ti ns’olóri Orò níwàrun</i>	The leader of Oro in heaven
<i>Ìyá ẹni,</i>	One’s mother,
<i>Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni</i>	Is ones Isese
<i>Bàbá ẹni,</i>	One’s father
<i>Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni</i>	Is ones Isese
<i>Ikin ẹni,</i>	Ones Ikin
<i>Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ẹni ni</i>	Is ones Isese



<i>Ìṣẹ̀ṣe là bá bọ</i>	It is Ise that we should appease
<i>Ká tó b'òrìṣà</i>	Before we propitiate Orisa.

## Ìṣẹ̀ṣe, a Comprehensive Nature of Yorùbá Traditional Religion

Yorùbá Traditional Religion, widely recognized as Ìṣẹ̀ṣe, constitutes a fundamental component of the cultural, ethical, and cosmological frameworks of the Yorùbá people. It is the ancestral ways and established practices, beliefs and rituals passed down through generations. It is the totality of Yoruba heritage. This tradition includes a wide-range of Òrìṣà, divinatory system- Ifá and wide range of ritual practices that regulate communal existence. According to Olupona (2014), Ìṣẹ̀ṣe operates not just as a spiritual framework but also, as a worldview that influences the moral coordination and philosophical perspective of the Yorùbá people. He situates Ilé-Ifẹ̀ as both a mythical and tangible city that describes the uncountable (sacred) numbers of Yorùbá religious belief. Akintoye (2010) enriches the understanding of Ìṣẹ̀ṣe by narrating its pre-colonial significance in governance, identity formation, and resistance movements. His narrative serves as a corrective to the historiography of the colonial period by reinstating the dignity and intellectual validity of Yorùbá religious traditions. Adeboye (2020) explained how Ìṣẹ̀ṣe sustains and challenges male-controlled frameworks. She contends that in the predominance of males in priestly hierarchies, women occupy essential spiritual roles, especially through oracular and healing practices, a perspective that creates new dialogues between feminism and African religious practices. Ilesanmi (2013) also buttressed the above view in his work, *Obinrin*; a cultural assessment of Yoruba women where he explained the vital roles that women played and are still playing in both the physical and spiritual life of the Yoruba society.

Fakayode () highlights the interdependent relationship between language and spirituality. He explained that Yorùbá language depends on Ìṣẹ̀ṣe for survival. His assertion is that the sacred dictionary of Ifá verses and its prayers-Ìwùre serve as custodians of indigenous wisdom that cannot be preserved outside their religious framework. Elebuibon (2004) explores the cosmological, ethical, and therapeutic aspects of Ìṣẹ̀ṣe.

Deopa and Rinaldo (2023) posit that Ìṣẹ̀ṣe instills environmental ethics by venerating natural elements such as rivers, mountains, and trees as sacred entities. This has assisted a lot in the area of conservation of the natural environment in the past. In the wisdom of these ancestors, they created Igbòrò, Igbó Igbàlẹ̀ and Igbo Awo for variety of reasons ranging from safeguarding some useful plants from going into extinction, as isolation centres during epidemic breakout to prevent the spread of such a disease and for holding important meetings.

This cosmological reverence raises conservation efforts in manners that contemporary secular policies frequently overlook. Collectively, these scholars provide a range of perspectives that touch on Ìṣẹ̀ṣe ranging from gender roles to environmental ethics and from political response to cultural revitalization, They illustrate that Ìṣẹ̀ṣe is not merely a remnant of history but a lively and changing system that actively influences identity, resilience, and community dynamics in this contemporary time.

## The Emergence of Social Media and its Influence on Ìṣẹ̀ṣe-Tradition

The emergence of social media has contributed a lot to the promotion of Ise in no small measure positively and negatively. Aremu (2024), a cultural blogger and researcher, chronicles the growing interest in Ìṣẹ̀ṣe among Generation Z in Nigeria. He attributed this phenomenon to the influence of the internet, cultural tourism, and a profound desire to decolonize perceptions of African spirituality. According to him, the youths are not returning to Ìṣẹ̀ṣe; they are reimagining it. As said above, the Yorùbá concept of Ìṣẹ̀ṣe, often translated as “the beginning or the source”, encompasses the totality of Yorùbá traditional religious, spiritual, ethical, and cultural life. It is a living system rooted in the veneration of the Òrìṣà, the wisdom of Ifá divination, reverence for ancestors, observance of moral taboos (èèwò), and the ritual organisation of the society. Ìṣẹ̀ṣe is more than belief; it is an epistemological and ontological framework, a worldview that connects, humanity with the divine and nature, shaping every aspect of life from birth to death and beyond. As Olupona (2014) explains, it integrates metaphysics, medicine, law, governance, and ecology into a single, coherent cultural universe. For generations, this sacred system was preserved through oral transmission in verses, chants, rituals, and public ceremonies, but was severely undermined by colonial aggression, missionary bias, and modern neglect as explained by Falola (2018). However, Ìṣẹ̀ṣe was never entirely hidden. While certain aspects were ritually restricted, especially those associated with Egúngún, Òrò and Àjé-witches, many parts of the tradition were intentionally public. Festivals, processions, oríkì recitations, and drumming ceremonies served as living classrooms for communal education. These were traditional media platforms before the invention of digital ones. Public rituals allowed even non-initiates to observe how offerings were made, which Òrìṣà were honoured, and what moral principles were being performed. According to Lawal (2001), Yorùbá festivals functioned as both sacred drama and social pedagogy, teaching entire communities through aesthetics and embodiment. This long-standing culture of ritual visibility is echoed in an important Ifá verse from Adebayo (2026) who sited Òtúrá Ọ̀sá in a telephone interview which helps to frame the current shift brought by social

<i>Ìbábá awo Egúngún dífá fún Egúngún</i>	<i>Secrecy the priest of Egúngún; Ifá was cast for Egúngún.</i>
<i>Ìkòkò awo Orò dífá fún Orò</i>	<i>The hidden priest of Òrò; Ifá was cast for Òrò.</i>
<i>Gbangba l'Èrìgì ní sawo tirẹ̀</i>	<i>Openly does Èrìgì perform his priesthood.</i>
<i>A dífá fún Ọ̀rúnmilá</i>	<i>They also cast Ifá for Ọ̀rúnmilá,</i>
<i>Babá yóò máa ẹ̀ awo ti ẹ̀ ní gbangba</i>	<i>Who conducts his spiritual work in the open.</i>
<i>Ẹ̀yin ò gbọ̀ o</i>	<i>You don't hear?</i>
<i>Ẹ̀yin ò mọ̀ pé</i>	<i>You don't know that?</i>
<i>Gbangba ni Èrìgì ní sawo tirẹ̀ gbangba.</i>	<i>Openly does Èrìgì carry out his rites.</i>

media. The verse goes thus:

Ọ̀rúnmilá goes on to declare that the more Ayé is exposed, the more dangerous she becomes. This is a profound metaphor. Ayé represents not only the Earth, but also the hidden forces that govern

nature, fertility, time, and fate. To expose her completely is to destabilise the balance she maintains. This verse warns that while Ifá spreads wisdom, it must do so with discretion. Not every truth is meant for all eyes. Knowledge shared without discipline can bring confusion, disrespect, and spiritual harm.

In our present digital era, this sacred boundary is being tested. The internet especially social media platforms, thrives on visibility, openness, and rapid dissemination. Algorithms reward what is seen, what is shared, and what is made spectacular. In this environment, the traditional values of ritual secrecy and sacred silence are increasingly treated as obstacles rather than as protective wisdom. The danger is that, in the race to document and “explain everything,” core parts of Ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ may become flattened, sensationalised, or misinterpreted. Take, for example, the case of the Òṣun-Òṣogbo Festival, a globally recognised UNESCO heritage event, what has helped preserve the power of the festival is the ritual discipline surrounding it, the hidden knowledge behind the Arugbá (the virgin girl who carries the sacred calabash), the unseen forces in the sacred Òṣun grove, and the deep meanings of the rites performed by initiated priests. As Ajibade (2015) pointed out, the enduring sacredness of Òṣun-Òṣogbo is rooted in its protection of cultural and spiritual secrets. If the contents of the igbá (ritual calabash) carried by Arugbá were to be exposed to public view, or if the spiritual power of the Òṣun River were to be trivialised for entertainment, the festival could lose the very force that makes it sacred and globally respected. Similarly, during *Ifá* or any Òrìṣà initiation, there are well-defined boundaries. Initiates undergo specific rites that must remain within the circle of awo (those who are initiated). These rites are not hidden out of fear, but out of reverence for spiritual transformation. According to Abimbola (1977), the initiation process serves as a rebirth a journey into the mysteries of the cosmos and must be protected by silence and respect. It is these layers of sacred secrecy that ensure the continuity and originality of Ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀.

Unfortunately, many in the digital age are impatient with mystery. There is a growing trend to record, live stream, and upload sacred moments, often with little understanding of their spiritual implications. Some even seek to decode what the Awo have intentionally kept hidden, believing that exposure equals truth. However, in Ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀, exposure without context can become distortion. Fakoya (2023) notes that when uninitiated individuals attempt to explain complex Ifá verses or rituals online, they often mislead others, either by oversimplifying or by blending traditions with unrelated ideologies.

Moreover, the internet’s hunger for content encourages people to cross spiritual lines. We see this in instances where sacred shrines are filmed without permission, ritual objects are displayed casually, and initiation processes are reduced to entertainment. These actions not only disrespect tradition but weaken its power. *Orò* is a secret cult in Yoruba society that is used for cleansing and to punish offender. It is forbidden for certain people in the society to see *Orò* in action, most especially, women and non-initiates. However, the secret of what makes *Orò* tick is now been exposed on TikTok by some ignorant youths who may possibly have a glimpse of how *Orò* is being done without knowing the implications (Ewulaye Iroyin Yoruba TV on TikTok, 2025). As Lucas (2022) warns, sacred traditions risk becoming “aesthetic experiences” rather than meaningful spiritual systems if their inner mechanisms are exposed carelessly. Importantly, Ìṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ is not anti-knowledge or anti-sharing. The *Ifá* verse about Òrúnmilà marrying Ayé teaches us that wisdom must expand but with care. The very phrase “*Ifá* is taking over the universe” implies a spreading of knowledge, but also reminds us that not everyone can understand its depths. Initiates exist not to hoard knowledge, but to protect and pass it on when the time is right, and in the right way. This is why the tradition has custodians Babaláwo, Ìyánifá, Ọmọ Awo who serve as guardians of what has been preserved for future generations.

## Изображение традиционной религии в средствах массовой информации (телевидении и кино) в России.

### Portrayal of Traditional Religion within Media outlets (Television and Films) in Russia

#### Translation:

Тема славянского язычества ворвалась в советский кинематограф в 1960-х гг.

Мы обнаруживаем ее в двух широко известных в мире кинокартинах— «Тени забытых предков» (режиссер-постановщик Сергей Параджанов, 1964) и «Андрей Рублев» (Андрей Тарковский, 1966).

Фильм «Тени забытых предков» снят по мотивам одноименной повести, написанной Михаилом Коцюбинским в 1911 г. Фильм, вслед за повестью, вводит нас в мир архаичного быта и суеверий гуцулов — славянского этноса, живущего в Карпатах.

В фильме детально воссозданы этнографические реалии, которые находят свое соответствие в различных областях славянского мира и уверенно соотносятся учеными с язычеством древних славян. Сам факт появления такого фильма знаменует собой изменение общественного отношения к архаичной славянской культуре. Еще недавно этнографы, наблюдавшие ее реликты, говорили о «дикости» описываемых ими нравов.

Эта позиция была характерна для ученых XIX в., но весьма близкой к ним была и позиция критиковавшего их

The theme of Slavic paganism burst onto the scene in Soviet cinema in the 1960s, found in two internationally acclaimed films: "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (directed by Sergei Parajanov, 1964) and "Andrei Rublev" (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966).

"Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" is based on the story of the same name, written by Mykhailo Kotsyubinsky in 1911. Following the story, the film introduces us to the world of the archaic life and superstitions of the Hutsuls, a Slavic ethnic group living in the Carpathian Mountains.

The film meticulously recreates ethnographic realities that find their parallels in various areas of the Slavic world and are confidently associated by scholars with the paganism of the ancient Slavs.

The very launch of such a film marks a change in public attitudes toward archaic Slavic culture. Until recently, ethnographers observing its relics spoke of the "savagery" of the customs they described.

This position was characteristic of 19th-century scholars, but very close to it was the Soviet ethnographer S. A. Tokarev, who criticized them for their bourgeois narrow-mindedness. He wrote, practically on the eve of Parajanov's film's release: "From a practical point of view, knowledge of folk beliefs is

за буржуазную ограниченность советского этнографа С. А. Токарева, писавшего, практически накануне выхода фильма Параджанова: «С практической точки зрения знать народные верования интересно и важно потому, что такое знание дает нам возможность более сознательно и успешно вести борьбу за преодоление вредных пережитков в сознании человека» (Токарев, 2012:4).

Однако в кинокартине мы видим, напротив, стремление сохранить для потомков то, что ранее просвещенная общественность стремилась поскорее изжить из народного быта. Примечательно, что этот советский фильм вдруг оказывается созвучным интенциям амери-канского послевоенного киноавангарда, увлеченного магией, ритуалами, оккультизмом и этнографической экзотикой.

Но если фильм Параджанова отличается поэтичностью киноязыка, то в фильме Тарковского зритель сталкивается с прозой жизни. Эпизод встречи монаха-иконописца Андрея Рублева с язычницей Марфой в купальскую ночь стал поводом для размышлений режиссера о природе любви. Братская любовь и любовь к Богу, которую проповедует язычникам Рублев, сталкивается с любовью плотской. Облава на язычников, проведенная наутро княжескими дружинниками и монахами, показывает реальную цену каждого из этих типов любви.

Лишь язычник Федор готов оказывать сопротивление дружинникам ради того, чтобы помочь Марфе, христианам же остается лишь злорадно улыбаться либо тихо сидеть, потупив глаза. Так поступает и Рублев, не нашедший в себе решимости прийти на помощь женщине, ночью спасшей его от расправы рассерженных его появлением язычников. Таким образом, Тарковский первым в отечественном кинематографе показал восточнославянское язычество как жертву репрессивного государственно-церковного аппарата.

Конфликт язычества и приходящего ему на смену христианства еще не раз отразился в советском кино. Довольно рельефно он представлен в фильме «Захар Беркут» (Леонид Осыка, 1971) по мотивам одноименной повести Ивана Франко, написанной в 1882 г. В фильме показана борьба карпатских русинов с монголами, готовыми обрушиться на Русь. Русины изображены язычниками, живущими общиной и не желающими признавать над собой власть боярина, поставленного князем.

Язычники вызывают симпатию своими моральными качествами и свободолобием, хотя в фильме любованию язычеством выражено в меньшей степени, нежели в книге. Зато в фильме разворачивается интересный диалог о вере между молодым язычником и девушкой-христианкой, чего нет в повести. Их разговор напоминает религиозный диспут, в котором позиция язычника выглядит сильнее.

Идеалами народоправства наполнен и другой фильм, снятый в том же году — «Могила Льва» (Валерий Рубинчик, 1971), основанный на мотивах белорусских народных легенд. Уже в самом начале фильма зритель понимает, что главный герой — кузнец Машека, а также его отец и соседи являются язычниками. Антагонист главного героя, князь Всеслав, строит христианский храм. Селение язычников он сжигает, дружинники валят установленное там идола, князь похищает невесту Машеки. Мы видим, как родоплеменные отношения уступают место феодальным порядкам, а вместе с тем уходит и прежняя демократичная религия. О том, что представляет собой новая вера, зритель может судить по эпизоду, где брат убитого князя воздает хвалы Господу за то, что дорога к престолу расчищена.

interesting and important because such knowledge gives us the opportunity to more consciously and successfully wage the struggle to overcome harmful vestiges in human consciousness" (Tokarev, 2012:4).

However, in the film, we see, on the contrary, a desire to preserve for posterity what the previously enlightened public sought to eradicate from popular life. It is noteworthy that this Soviet film suddenly appears to be consonant with the intentions of the American post-war avant-garde cinema, fascinated with magic, rituals, the occult, and ethnographic exotica.

But while Parajanov's film is distinguished by the poetic quality of its cinematic language, in Tarkovsky's film, the viewer encounters the prose of life. The episode of the meeting between the monk-icon painter Andrei Rublev and the pagan Marfa on Kupala Night became the occasion for the director's reflections on the nature of love. Brotherly love and the love of God that Rublev preaches to the pagans clash with carnal love. The raid on the pagans, carried out the next morning by the prince's warriors and monks, reveals the true cost of each of these types of love.

Only the pagan Fyodor is willing to resist the warriors in order to help Marfa, while the Christians can only smile maliciously or sit quietly, eyes downcast. Rublev also acts in this way, unable to find the courage to come to the aid of the woman who saved him the night before from the reprisals of pagans enraged by his appearance. Thus, Tarkovsky was the first in Russian cinema to depict East Slavic paganism as a victim of the repressive state-church apparatus.

The conflict between paganism and the Christianity that replaced it was reflected more than once in Soviet cinema. It is vividly portrayed in the film "Zakhar Berkut" (Leonid Osyka, 1971), based on the novella of the same name by Ivan Franko, written in 1882. The film depicts the struggle of the Carpathian Rusyns against the Mongols, who were about to invade Rus'. The Rusyns are depicted as pagans living in a communal setting and unwilling to acknowledge the authority of a boyar appointed by the prince.

The pagans evoke sympathy with their moral qualities and love of freedom, although the film's admiration for paganism is less pronounced than in the book. However, the film features an interesting dialogue about faith between a young pagan and a Christian girl, something not found in the novella. Their conversation resembles a religious debate, in which the pagan's position appears stronger.

Another film made that same year, "The Lion's Grave" (Valery Rubinchik, 1971), also imbued with ideals of democracy, is based on Belarusian folk legends. From the very beginning, the viewer understands that the main character, the blacksmith Masheka, as well as his father and neighbors, are pagans. The main character's antagonist, Prince Vseslav, builds a Christian church. He burns down the pagan village, the warriors tow down the idol installed there, and the prince abducts Masheka's bride. We see how tribal relations give way to feudalism, and with it, the former democratic religion disappears. The viewer can judge the nature of the new faith from the episode where the brother of the murdered prince praises God for clearing the way to the throne.

The theme of religious conflicts during the Christianization of Rus' is reflected in several other films. These include the two-part films "Yaroslav the Wise" (Grigory Kokhan, 1981), "The Legend of Princess Olga" (Yuri Ilyenko, 1983), "Primordial Rus'" (Gennady Vasilyev, 1985), and the one-part film "Vasily Buslaev" (Gennady Vasilyev, 1982), based on Novgorod bylinas. As in other Soviet films, there is no overt apology for paganism; "Yaroslav the Wise" even portrays an unsympathetic pagan fanatic. But overall, a consistent pattern emerges where Christianity acted as an aggressor against Slavic beliefs and cultural traditions. Pagan Slavs are portrayed either neutrally or sympathetically.

Тема религиозных конфликтов при христианизации Руси отражена еще в нескольких картинах. Таковы двухсерийные фильмы «Ярослав Мудрый» (Григорий Кохан, 1981), «Легенда о княгине Ольге» (Юрий Ильенко, 1983), «Русь изначальная» (Геннадий Васильев, 1985), а также односерийная кинолента «Василий Буслаев» (Геннадий Васильев, 1982), снятая по мотивам новгородских былин. Как и в других советских фильмах, там не найти открытой апологии язычества, в ленте «Ярослав Мудрый» выведен даже малосимпатичный образ язычника-фанатика. Но в целом прослеживается линия, согласно которой христианство выступило в качестве агрессора по отношению к славянским верованиям и культурным традициям. Славяне-язычники изображаются либо нейтрально, либо с симпатией.

Современные кинематографисты, осваивающие бюджетные деньги, демонстрируют зрителю укорененность, «традиционность» православия в России. Но мазать язычество черной краской — значит бросить тень на наших предков, что вряд ли найдет понимание у зрителя. Отсюда вытекает задача разрешить явное противоречие и найти в язычестве что-то положительное, но наряду с этим обосновать необходимость замены старой религии. Эту линию мы видим в фильмах «Лестница Владимира Красное Солнышко» (Булат Мансуров, 2004) и «Ярослав. Тысячу лет назад» (Дмитрий Коробкин, 2010).

Другой возможный вариант — связать язычество с чем-то иллюзорным и сказочным, изготовив средствами кинематографа некий сказочный лубок а-ля рюс. Таковы четырехсерийный фильм «Легенда о Кашее» (Валерий Ткачев, 2004) и детский фильм «Русичи» (Адель Аль-Хадад, 2008).

Казалось бы, эти компромиссные варианты, снимающие давнюю культурную травму, вызванную христианизацией Руси, проведенной отнюдь не демократическими методами, так или иначе устраивает и государство, и общество, и потому должны стать нормой для российского кинематографа. Но не так давно ситуация стала меняться, и в итоге мы обнаруживаем еще как минимум два варианта репрезентации славянского язычества.

Один из них выражается в резко негативном изображении этого явления. Впервые одними лишь черными красками оно было нарисовано в малоизвестном фильме «Владимир Святой» (Юрий Топошевский, 1993). Правда из-за крайне скудного бюджета, выражающегося в почти полном отсутствии декораций, фильм приходится не столько смотреть, сколько слушать и потому негативный образ язычества конструируется главным образом через обличающие его речи персонажей.

На новом технологическом уровне очернение язычества началось совсем недавно. Пробным шаром стал приключенческий минисериал «Дружина» (Михаил Колпахчиев, 2015), показанный на телеканале «Россия 2». В нем нам показывают некое славянское племя язычников-огнепоклонников, поклоняющихся богу смерти Морю (отметим эту необычную для кинематографа трактовку образа бога огня).

Негативный образ язычников создается разными средствами — как визуальными (безобразный черный идол, жрец в страшной маске с огромным ножом в руке, его помощница с безумным взглядом, кровь, окропляющая загадочные языческие знаки, выбитые на камне), так и акустическими (всякий раз, как язычники появляются в кадре, зритель слышит «потусторонние» голоса, шепчущие нечто зловещее).

Стоит отметить, что подобное звуковое оформление стало стандартным для фильмов и сериалов мистической

Contemporary filmmakers, using public funds, demonstrate to viewers the deep-rooted, "traditional" nature of Orthodoxy in Russia. But to tarnish paganism is to cast a shadow on our ancestors, which is unlikely to be understood by viewers. Hence the challenge: resolving the apparent contradiction and finding something positive in paganism, while also justifying the need to replace the old religion. We see this line in the films "Vladimir's Ladder: The Red Sun" (Bulat Mansurov, 2004) and "Yaroslav: A Thousand Years Ago" (Dmitry Korobkin, 2010).

Another possible option is to associate paganism with something illusory and fabulous, using cinematic means to create a kind of fairytale popular print, à la Russe. Such examples include the four-part film "The Legend of Kashchei" (Valery Tkachev, 2004) and the children's film "Rusichi" (Adel Al-Hadad, 2008).

It would seem that these compromises, addressing the long-standing cultural trauma caused by the Christianization of Rus', carried out by far from democratic methods, would suit both the state and society in one way or another, and therefore should become the norm for Russian cinema. But recently, the situation has begun to change, and as a result, we are discovering at least two more ways of representing Slavic paganism.

One of them is expressed in a sharply negative portrayal of this phenomenon. It was first depicted in stark black in the little-known film "Vladimir the Saint" (Yuri Tomoshevsky, 1993). However, due to the extremely meager budget, reflected in the almost complete lack of sets, the film is more likely to be heard than watched, and therefore the negative image of paganism is constructed primarily through the characters' denunciations of it.

The denigration of paganism at this new technological level began quite recently. The adventure miniseries "Druzhina" (Mikhail Kolpakchiev, 2015), shown on the Russia 2 television channel, served as a trial balloon. It depicts a Slavic tribe of pagan fire-worshippers who worship the god of death, Mor (note this unusual cinematic interpretation of the god of fire).

The negative image of pagans is created through various means—both visual (an ugly black idol, a priest in a terrifying mask holding a huge knife, his assistant with a crazed look, blood splashing on mysterious pagan symbols carved into stone) and acoustic (every time pagans appear in the frame, the viewer hears "otherworldly" voices whispering something ominous).

It's worth noting that this type of sound design has become standard for mystical films and TV series, and the effectiveness of audio effects on viewer perception has led to the emergence of a separate branch of the film industry—sound design. The combination of the described techniques, applied at the current level of technological development, has created a rather repulsive image of paganism.

It's portrayed just as unattractively in the film "Viking" (Andrei Kravchuk, 2016), produced with the support of the Cinema Fund and Channel One and one of the most expensive projects in the history of Russian cinema. The film tells the story of Prince Vladimir's conversion to Christianity, and we won't find any admiration for paganism here. The ancient Russian sorcerers—dirty, skinny, emaciated, shaved, dressed in rags—beat drums before equally crudely (in the truest sense of the word) crafted idols, inducing a trance in the crowd, and demanding that Prince Vladimir offer human sacrifices. Although this paganism visually appears different from that in "The Squad," the overall message is the same: the ancient Slavic sorcerers are half-mad savages and religious fanatics who can only be reformed by the grave.

But it's not only amateur directors who dare to express sympathy for paganism. In the historical fantasy film "Scythian" (Rustam Mosafir, 2017), we won't find any aestheticization of paganism—suffice it to say that the

направленности, а эффективность влияния аудиоэффектов на восприятие зрителя привела к выделению особой отрасли в составе киноиндустрии — саунд-дизайна. Сочетание описанных приемов, использованных на современном уровне развития технологий, позволило создать весьма отталкивающий образ язычества.

Столь же непривлекательно оно показано в фильме «Викинг» (Андрей Кравчук, 2016), созданном при поддержке Фонда кино и Первого канала и ставшем одним из наиболее дорогих проектов в истории российского кинематографа. Фильм повествует о принятии князем Владимиром христианства, и мы не найдем здесь никакого любования язычеством. Древнерусские волхвы — грязные, тощие, изможденные, наголо обритые, одетые в лохмотья, перед столь же грубо (в полном смысле топорно) изготовленными идолами бьют в бубны, вводя народ в транс, и требуют от князя Владимира приносить человеческие жертвы. Хотя визуально это язычество выглядит иначе, чем в «Дружине», в целом посыл тот же: древние славянские волхвы — это полубезумные дикари и религиозные фанатики, которых исправит разве что могила.

Но выражать симпатии к язычеству отваживаются не только режиссеры-любители. В фильме «Скиф» (Рустам Мосафир, 2017), снятом в жанре исторического фэнтези, мы не найдем эстетизации язычества — достаточно сказать, что служитель Перуна здесь выглядит еще более отталкивающе, нежели в «Викинге».

Но в конце фильма — кровавого, брутального, рассчитанного на такую же аудиторию, как и «Дружина», — мы видим неожиданный поворот сюжета: христиане во главе с русским князем оказываются коварными и жестокими, в то время как противопоставленные им скифы-язычники вдруг предстают перед нами честными и благородными людьми, а главный герой, славянин Лютобор, ошеломленный вероломством своего князя, обретает новую идентичность и осознает себя скифом по духу<sup>1</sup>. В фильме можно отметить те же мотивы, что и в советских лентах «Захар Беркут» и «Могила Льва», — герой противится воле князя-христианина, не считающегося ни с традициями, ни с моральными нормами.

## Comparative Analysis of the Yoruba and Russian Traditions

The portrayal of Yoruba actors and actresses are always in the negative to show the superiority of the foreign tradition, particularly in the areas of religion. The Yoruba tradition is seen as backward while those of the foreigners are progressive. This is responsible for the reason why Africa as a whole is not progressing in all areas of life just to buttress what Salami (2021) has rightly said that Africans have been colonized psychologically, economically, mentally and religious wise. Till date, Nigeria as a body still make use of the economic and governance systems of the colonial masters that are failing on a daily basis. Many of ethical and moral stories that are existing in Yoruba story books today are all from Ifa chapters and verses but no one can discover it today except one is familiar with Ifa. All had been changed and given another names and titles. Social media that supposed to be a succor for reshaping things are contributing in no small measure in damaging the tradition. Yoruba tradition agbo-herbs are not good while Chinese green tea is okay for many. It is only in recent time that we see a handful of people that are now consuming the herbs

servant of Perun here looks even more repulsive than in "Viking."

But at the end of the film—bloody, brutal, aimed at the same audience as "The Squad"—we see an unexpected plot twist: the Christians, led by the Russian prince, turn out to be treacherous and cruel, while the pagan Scythians, opposed to them, suddenly appear before us as honest and noble people. And the protagonist, the Slav Lyutobor, stunned by his prince's treachery, acquires a new identity and recognizes himself as a Scythian in spirit.<sup>1</sup> The film shares the same themes as the Soviet films "Zakhar Berkut" and "The Lion's Grave"—the hero resists the will of a Christian prince who disregards both traditions and moral norms.

they have once neglected. The religious aspect of the tradition is the worst. Every aspect of the Yoruba religion is associated with the devil popularly called Esu by Christians and Muslim folds. They believed the Yoruba who are not Christian or Muslim worship idols. Yet some Christians can kneel before the statue of Mary to pray every three hours of the day. They can afford to pay millions of naira to visit Jerusalem to go and see and pray before the tomb of Jesus and buy mustard seeds for healing purposes while neglecting ewedu seeds that can perform similar functions here. Some can also pay millions of naira to go and throw Satan stone in Mecca.

Whereas, in Russia, the promotion of their culture and tradition is paramount to their social medias, most especially radio and film industries. For example, in the film, "shadows of forgotten ancestors", the film meticulously recreates ethnographic realities that find their parallels in various areas of the Slavic world and are confidently associated by scholars with the paganism of the ancient Slavs. Also, in Tarkovsky's film, Zakhar Berkut, the Squad to mention but few portrayed the tradition of the Russians in positive manners that are actually promoting the tradition till today. Although not that there are no fewer ones like The Lion's Grave, Rusichi, The Legend of Kashchei, Yaroslav the Wise and Druzhina

that see Russian tradition as bad but they are not as bad compare to the Yoruba ways of total condemnations.

## Conclusion

Adeyinka (2023), writing from the diaspora, cautions that *Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* is experiencing significant challenges due to the infiltration of Western religious ideologies and modernity. In his essay, “*Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* under Siege: Navigating Challenges and Preserving Yorùbá Spiritual Heritage,” meticulously documents grassroots initiatives among young Yorùbá individuals and African descendants abroad who are endeavoring to reclaim their ancestral religious traditions. The French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria) convened a multi-religious symposium in Ibadan (IFRA, 2024), which examined the coexistence of *Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* alongside Christianity and Islam within urban environments. The conference proceeding revealed that notwithstanding, social pressures, numerous adherents maintain dual religious identities, thus indicating a dynamic and fluid spiritual landscape.

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