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**THOMAS MOULERO**  
**HISTORIAN OF**  
**GELEDE**

**HOMAGE TO THOMAS MOULERO:  
PRIVATE HISTORIAN OF *GÈLÈDÉ***

compiled and annotated by  
**Henry John Drewal**

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# HOMAGE

*Tí a bá da omi tútù síwájú, àá rí ilè tútù tè* (Yoruba proverb)

When one pours cool water in front, one's way will be cool

*Ìbà Ètù Alákétu,*

Homage to Thomas Moulero,

Child of our Mothers and *Gèlèdé*,

Royal son of the *Màgbò* line,

Son of Kétu,

Son of the soil of Benin,

Son of Africa,

and son of Olódùmarè, the saints, and *òrìŌà*.

## Introduction

I composed this praise poem (*oriki*) for Thomas Moulero who was born into the *Màgbò* royal line at Kétu. He became the first African Catholic priest to be ordained in the French colony of Dahomey after a mission was established at Kétu in 1897 (Parrinder 1967:77). Father Moulero went on to become an important leader and scholar of his people, publishing many histories and ethnographies in the issues of *Etudes Dahomeens*. One of his first publications, and the first written history of Ketu, was entitled “Histoire de Ketou” which appeared in 1926 in *La Reconnaissance Africaine*. It was based on the “traditional version of the history as given to him by the elders of the town” (Parrinder 1967:3).

Sometime before 1970, Thomas Moulero collected important historical information on one of Kétu's finest cultural and artistic contributions -- the masking tradition of *Gèlèdé* -- and prepared a manuscript on the topic. I first met Father Moulero in May 1971 in Porto-Novo while I and Margaret Thompson Drewal were researching *Gèlèdé*. We had heard about him and went to see him in Porto-Novo where he was staying at the time. When we told him about our research, his eyes brightened with enthusiasm and he showed us a 65-page hand-written manuscript entitled “Le Guelede” which he had recently completed. He generously lent us his copy which we promised to return the following morning. With no access to a copying machine, I worked feverishly, copying most of the manuscript by hand and doing a sketch of one of several photographs that accompanied the text. When we returned

the manuscript the following day, we discussed various points in his essay for about an hour. My translated transcript of our taped conversation in French and Yoruba comes at the end of this essay. Moulero had hoped to publish “Le Guelede.” When we next saw him in the summer of 1973, he had already retired. He informed us that the manuscript was with the editors of *Etudes Dahomeens*, but that they lacked the funds for publication. The journal itself ceased to publish regularly about 1970 and I have been unable to confirm the present whereabouts of the manuscript. Father Moulero died in 1974. When we published *Gèlèdè: Art and Female Power among the Yoruba* (1983), we cited excerpts from Moulero’s work and dedicated Chapter Seven -- “A Historical and Thematic Overview” -- to his memory (1983:226-8, and notes, 277-8). In honor of the scholarly contributions of one of the first and finest Beninois scholars, Thomas Moulero, I here offer an annotated version of his manuscript “Le Guelede” for the edification of future generations of cultural and art historians of Africa.

Such recognition of the contributions of African scholars/historians is important for several reasons. Firstly, our studies of African artistic traditions continue to lack an historical dimension. Often, we seem content to provide descriptions in the “ethnographic present” that deny past developments or future directions, thus “freezing” vibrant, emergent traditions in time and space. Secondly, many of these accounts are recorded by persons from outside (like myself), who, no matter how seriously and sensitively we try to record and understand, will always have an outsider’s perspective. While this can be important, accounts from within the culture are equally crucial to fuller, richer appreciations of such traditions. Unfortunately, in the fields of African history and art history, such accounts are all too rare. Thirdly, where such data exist, they have been transmitted orally in sometimes esoteric/archaic language whose meanings are often beyond translation by most non-native speakers/researchers. Thus oral histories collected by indigenous scholars can be extremely valuable sources that, like all sources, need to be critically examined and evaluated. As Hayden White reminds us, the “only meaning that history [whether oral or not] can have, is the kind that a narrative imagination gives to it. The secret of the process by which consciousness invests history [and objects] with meaning resides in the content of the form -- the way our narrative capacities transform the present into a fulfillment of a past from which we wish to have descended” (White 1987:8) [my editorial comments/additions in brackets].

Finally, it is very important that we listen carefully to, recognize and honor the voices of our African scholar-colleagues. Through them, the wisdom of the elders, in whose minds and imaginations stories of the past have been and continue to be told and retold in the present, will instruct and guide us in the future.

On May 15, 1971, the day after I had copied Father Moulero's hand-written manuscript, Margaret and I returned his copy and interviewed him. Our conversation, in French and Yoruba, lasted about an hour. We tape recorded our discussions and a few days later, I transcribed and translated them, taking note of certain key French or Yoruba words/phrases as you will see below.

**Henry and Margaret Drewal:** What are the "*jeteur du sort*?"

**Thomas Moulero:** They are called witches (male and female). In Yoruba they are called aje. Yes, they are called *notre meres* (iya wa).

**H/MD:** Ulli Beier and others have written that Gelede is done mainly for the iya wa. What do you think about that?

**TM:** It is rather a dance society *leur aplaise* [to placate or calm them]. It is to avoid their doing harm to people (*pour eviter qu'elles nuissent...*) It isn't specifically (*proprement*) for them, but it is so they don't do any harm, it is to honor them, to honor them so they don't do harm. There are stories about this. For example, they can prevent the mask from being removed after the festival.

**H/MD:** Is this true?

**TM:** That's what people say. And sometimes when the singer begins to sing, they (the iya wa) can prevent him from continuing. It is done to avoid all these things. It is not that [we do it only for them] but we place ourselves under their protection. It is that especially -- to be protected by them. Yes there are those who have said and written about it and they often say that there are dancers who know how to dance, but who don't know anything about the deeper meaning, who don't have a real understanding. There are those who don't really look for the deeper meaning. There aren't many who know the real meaning. It doesn't interest them. The old know some of these things, but the young are not interested.



**H/MD:** You said they make prayers to the *iya wa* for their protection. But isn't the power of the orisa the same as that of the *iya wa*?

**TM:** It's not the same. The *orisa* are gods, but these prayers are addressed to living persons.

**H/MD:** Are the powers of the *iya wa* stronger than the powers of the *orisa*?

**TM:** No, I wouldn't say that, because really the majority of the *orisa*, the gods, in general, are there to prevent these mothers from causing harm. If one were able to suppress witchcraft or things like that -- *les fetishes*, these superstitions -- to prevent them, because *pour les noirs (les Africains)* they believe that when there is a sickness or a death, then they attribute it to a certain person. They believe that that person is powerful (*puissante*), not more powerful than the gods, but they can do harm in various ways, especially by diabolical means. There are male and female witches, [but there is] a distinction between them. The male is called *oso* or *ayekurin*. The *aje* are in communication with the devil (*le diable*), whereas the *oso* are simply magicians (*magiciens*).

**H/MD:** Their power is not the same?

**TM:** No, the *oso* don't learn the way to do things that the women can do. It is very difficult [to understand] witchcraft. I have done research and it is very difficult to see clearly the deeper significance [of witchcraft]. During the Middle Ages, everything that happened was associated with witchcraft, during that time, in Europe, Italy, America, it was found throughout. And is it possible to say that it doesn't exist? No, the people believed it and continue to believe it.

**H/MD:** Do the Yoruba believe that sickness, etc. is also caused by the *orisa*?

**TM:** They believe that that is primarily the work of witches, but sometimes if they are sick they may consult an *orisa* because it must be said that at the foundation of this are the spirits of the departed (*les manes*). These spirits are people who were later deified. Thus, when someone is ill and he goes to consult with Ifa [a divination system among the Yoruba], Ifa will say "it is your father who is annoyed because you did this or that."

**H/MD:** Is it Ifa that is consulted?

**TM:** Yes, it is *Ifa* everywhere, that is consulted. There are other orisa that can be consulted but it is mainly Ifa. There are several methods by which one consults. Ifa is the oracle given by Orunmila. One can consult, with palm kernels, cowrie shells, and kola nut, with *opele Ifa* [*Ifa* divining chain], *opon Ifa* [divining tray] . . . .

**H/MD:** In your essay we saw the photo of the mask for Orisanla/Obatala. Why is it important at Ofia?

**TM:** It isn't only at Ofia, In all the Gelede houses (*loges*) this god is venerated, but not all have the mask for that, but others do have it. There's one at Iju and at other places. But it is especially that orisa -- Obatala is Obatala/Odudua, it's the same in Nigeria.

**H/MD:** But in Egbado they don't have any masks for Odudua/Obatala?

**TM:** Yes that's true. In the Ketu region there are, but in other places it's different. In Sakete it is different. For the Holli [Oho] it's not the same.

**H/MD:** Have you seen any other Obatala masks?

**TM:** Yes I've seen others but smaller.

**H/MD:** Are they of the same form? Can you describe them?

**TM:** I have seen others, but I can't describe them. I wasn't particularly concerned with them. I only saw them. I visited a house at Odogbo and I saw one, but it wasn't the same [as at Ofia]. And also, one has trouble seeing clearly because it is night when it comes out. It was only for me that they brought it out so it could be photographed.

**H/MD:** You wrote that Obatala/Odudua is a goddess. But others have said it is a god.

**TM:** I have already said in talking about these *orisa* that basically there are only

three *orisa*. If you go deeply into it, there are only three gods called *orisa*. The first *orisa* is God, Olorun. The second is Orunmila, *orisa* of Ifa, and the third *orisa* is Odudua. There are only these three. If you go to the Dassa [Yoruba people of Dassa Zoume] for example, they say *orisa*. And the others don't know other *orisa* besides these three, and Obatala. These are the three *orisa*. The others are called by another name. Sometimes they are given the name *imole*. They are a sort of god or genie, a spirit. These spirits are deified ancestors like Sango who was a king of Oyo, or Ifa, who was a great doctor. Yemoja, the queen of Shaki, there's a history about that, Osun, Orisa-Oko, and all the others.

**H/MD:** They have powers?

**TM:** People attribute powers to them.

**H/MD:** What is the difference between these deified ancestors and the three great *orisa*?

**TM:** It is in Ifa that one can know this, from the *babalawos* [Ifa diviners], because not everyone knows these things. It is Olodumare/Olorun who created order and man, and it was Odudua who gave him (*l'homme*) his senses (*les sens*) like eyes etc. Then Orunmila is the witness of destiny (*le temoin de la destinee*). It was he who was there in front of god when he created all things in order to know what the destiny was going to be. And these are the three true *orisa*. There are others of course, but it is these three which have the name of *orisa*.

**H/MD:** The third is Odudua?

**TM:** *Odu to dawa, Odu ti o da wa, o da iwa* -- that means the god that created human beings. *Odu* is a god, you know. There are sixteen *odu* in Ifa. But *Odu* is the god that created man.

**H/MD:** Is the *odu* of Ifa associated with Odudua?

**TM:** It isn't really the same thing but basically, *Odua* is a deity.

**H/MD:** Can you give the history of Odudua?



**TM:** There are only the stories which one finds in the books. There are two Odudua. There is the first who came to earth at Ife, the first hunter, called Odudua. And the second, who was deified, the ancestor of the Yoruba.

**H/MD:** And this one was a woman? **TM:** Ah, now there is some confusion. Some say that he is a man, others that she is a woman. For others it is creative nature (*la nature creatrice*). It is the second one who gave light to Oranyan and all that, and it is this second one that people do Guelede for.

**H/MD:** You wrote that Adebija comes from which royal family?

**TM:** Mefu is the family. There are complications and I had to search and search. You know that each king has several names and because of this there is confusion.

**M/HD:** But after Akibiohin was it Adebija?

**TM:** Yes, that's it because the master of ceremonies recites these traditions by heart, and I went there the first time to see if it was true and he wasn't able to recite the complete thing. After the recitation when I went to his house he told me that the spirits of the departed (*les manes*) were angry and that was why he couldn't succeed [in the recitation]. Only, when one is trying to gain information, it is the king on the throne who attributes other kings to himself that didn't really belong to him. [Moulero consults Parrinder's book]. It was Alapini [one of five royal families] that was on the throne at that time [when Moulero was collecting his information], and he was the second. His father was Adegbede.

**H/MD:** The father of who?

**TM:** Adewori [the forty-eighth king at Ketu, on the throne when this interview took place]. His grandfather was Adegbede and he was the first and it is by a favor that he was given the throne. Thus, he considered the kings of that line as his own line, and that is not true. All this is in my "Histoire de Ketou" which has not yet been published. I discuss everything there. I am from the Magbo [royal] family, the line of Oba Ede [the founder of Ketu according to Parrinder 1967:99].

**H/MD:** The history said Akibiohu [Akebioru] and then Adebija. Nothing was said about Ajibolu.

**TM:** Ajibolu wasn't of the dynasty of Adebija. That's why his name was not mentioned. It's another dynasty. He is from Mesa.

**H/MD:** But in your article you say that Adebija followed Akibiohu?

**TM:** I have other lists.

**H/MD:** Is Ajibolu on your list?

**TM:** Yes.

**H/MD:** Does he come between Akibiohu and Adebija?

**TM:** Yes, after Akibiohu comes Ajibolu and after him comes Adebija.

**H/MD:** Was it Adebija who began Gelede?

**TM:** Yes, Yes, Yes.

**H/MD:** Did Ajibolu have anything to do with Gelede?

**TM:** No, No, No. He wasn't of the dynasty which started Gelede.

**H/MD:** When Adebija fled, he took with him the Adjossin. What was it?

**TM:** Adjossin is something with which one begins the ceremonies . . . . It resembles a little, a drum, but it isn't really a drum.

**H/MD:** Do they beat it?

**TM:** No, No, No, they don't beat it. You know, I saw one once, but I can't describe it.

**H/MD:** Do you remember how it was made?

**TM:** It was made with the skin of an antelope. The one I saw was in disrepair and they were carrying it out to be repaired. In any case it is an instrument used to

begin the ceremonies.

**H/MD:** Is it a musical instrument?

**TM:** No, it is not played.

**H/MD:** Do they sacrifice with it?

**TM:** No. The Edun in the note on Ofia was another Edun, not the same as Adebiya.

**H/MD:** In one of the songs you wrote “*Edun, oriyan.*” What is *oriyan*?

**TM:** It is a surname. I don’t know the meaning.

**H/MD:** Does it mean originator?

**TM:** No. It is like an *oriki* [oral poetry].

**H/MD:** Do you know the name of the Olobi, the king of Ilobi, at the time Adebiya (Edun) went there?

**TM:** No, the history doesn’t say anything about that. Maybe when you return to Nigeria you might be able to find out -- they have conserved many things there.

**H/MD:** Do you have a map of the Ase (houses) for Gelede?

**TM:** No.

**H/MD:** What does Tetede mean? It is “the one that comes before.” It is the name given to a twin. There are two names and the first to come out is Tetede. This is the name given to the first born of twins here. It is the first who is sent by the elder to see if the world is good.

**H/MD:** What is the Ayo game carried out before the Efe mask? We had seen one of these Ayo board games brought out during an Efe night ceremony.

**TM:** It is a sort of *juju* (*gris-gris*).



**H/MD:** But what does it signify?

**TM:** It is a kind of medicine to prevent the witches from doing harm. It is that, the *gris-gris (juju)*.

**H/MD:** Can the witches use this game?

**TM:** No it is the men who use it, it is juju used to prevent the witches from doing harm.

**H/MD:** Is this Ayo game the same as “Tete”?

**TM:** No. They are not the same.

**H/MD:** Any relation between “Tete” and Tetede?

**TM:** No, No, No.

**H/MD:** I am studying the educational aspects of Efe/Gelede, such as what people learn from the songs and the dances.

**TM:** You see, it is like theater (*le theatre*) and I have spoken about the songs and dances.

**H/MD:** When you were small and you went to Gelede, did you learn anything?

**TM:** You know, long ago, I never went to see Guelede because it didn't say anything to me (*ca ne me dise rien*). [Moulero told us he saw his first Gelede at Ofia in 1906] It is only to study it that I now write about it, but it didn't say anything to me. But really, there are things to be learned. With the songs there are many words and many ideas (*il ya des idees*) about all sorts of things like life (*la vie*) and one learns a lot from the songs. It is like the theater and one learns from the theater. And that they call Efe buffoonery (*la bouffonnerie*). It has the aspect of comedy and before it was like that, but done much more seriously.

**H/MD:** Are the Holli (Ohuri), Nago (name for Yoruba-speaking people in Benin

Republic)?

**TM:** Yes, they are Yoruba. Some say they are not Nago, but they speak a dialect of Nago. And by their own traditions they are Nago. But the thing which confirms this is their *Idi*. It is a kind of god -- two statues that were brought from Ife. This is mentioned in Johnson's history [See Johnson (1921:4) for a discussion of *Idi*.]

**H/MD:** Is this the orisa that the Holli worship?

**TM:** Yes, which proves that they are Yoruba.

**H/MD:** Was it two statues?

**TM:** I don't know. It is their god. I have never seen it. They speak a dialect of Yoruba. From the traditions of their origin, they say they came by way of Meko to Ketu in order to arrive at Holli.

**H/MD:** Who was the friend of Edun?

**TM:** Souberou. Other historians give the name Agbobuloko [Not clear on the tape]. There are confusions about this. Some say it was Agbobuloko and others say other names. I wasn't sure so I put Souberou.

**H/MD:** In a note you put Souberou, the future king.

**TM:** Yes, it was because of the service which he rendered Edun. Edun made him king. He (Edun) didn't want to be king and he put him (Souberou) in his place [According to Parrinder (1967:44) the name "Adebiya" indicates a reluctance to return and rule]. Before dying, he said it is you that must replace me.

**H/MD:** Can witches do good as well as evil?

**TM:** For me, you see, it is a gift (*un don*) that they receive from nature. And they use this gift, as they would say, to protect their children (*proteger leurs enfants*). Thus one would say that there are good witches as well as bad. And if such a thing exists, one doesn't know, then they can be good or bad.

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## Note on this transcription and translation:

Moulero's hand-written manuscript was done in French and Yoruba *ca.* 1969-70. Given the shortness of time available to copy the manuscript, I transcribed portions of his original French/Yoruba text and translated other sections into English. These are rendered as un-italicized text. Italicized and bracketed [] English texts are annotations -- commentaries and clarifications -- which I felt might assist the reader in understanding portions of Moulero's text.

### Le Guelede by Thomas Moulero

p.1 - [The author compares the form of Gèlèdè to the Roman theatre.] *Le guelede est une danse, un jeu scenique a l'instar du theatre romain ou se rencontrent quelques formes de cet art, en particulier, Comedie, Farce, Bouffonnerie, etc.* [He discounts an origin outside Africa and says . . .] *mais non, le Guelede du Dahomey naquet dans la contree du Nigeria appele Egbado-Ketou.*

p.2 - *Nous pouvons dire tout court, que le guelede est une institution Ketoise.*

p.4 - [He compares *guelede* with *No Theatre* in Japan.]

p.5 - *Ces noms sous lesquels les masques sont designes sont empruntes au sujet ou motif, a l'accoutrement, aux moeurs des hommes et des animaux on a leur facies, ainsi le masque dont le motif est une scene de chasse prendra le nom de chasseur (Olode).... L'enorme masque qui prelude la danse du soir est la personnification de la nature creatrice qu'on appelle "Oso som ou" (Orisa nla) a nom "Obatala" La grande deese du Yoruba. Le Guelede est considere chez les paiens comme un veritable divinite "Oricha" [For Yoruba people, an *òrìsà* is a deified ancestor, often associated with some natural phenomenon. For example, *Òàngó* was the fourth king of the Oyo-Yoruba Empire and, partly because of his hot temper, became deified as the Thundergod.] aussi est-il compris dans le pantheon des peuples qui ont l'habitude [p.6] de le danser telque les Egbado, les Ketois, les Ohoiri (Holli), les Saketeens, les Pobeens, et meme les Chabeens qui l'ont adopte.*

p.7 - [He quotes from Cambell Flavien, author of] *Sakete d'Autrefois et Aujourd'hui*

*et conferencier des centres culturels: “Èfè...est le fetiche censeur des moeurs, qui denounce l’impudicite des grands personnages . . . Èfè est le personnage anonyme qui raille les mauvais actes ou qui adresse les louanges a ceux qui les meritent sans etre pourtant victime des pards venimeux des critiques.”*

The Pobe people say that Gèlèdé came from an ancestor who was a fine carver. *“Pour le Guelede, il ne faut pas perdre de vue que Cetou etait un scupteur; il faisait de jolis masques et la nuit de cette fete (fete de la consommation de la nouvelle igname), [p.8] il organise une danse avec des danseurs masques qui chantent les louanges d’Ondo (Ondo est un autre nom pour . . . le roi d’Ife Oranyan, divinise). C’est bien cette coutume une que nous avons gardee et que nous revivons en assistant au Guelede. Thus Pobe doesn’t say that Guelede is an òrìsà, but a dance organized to honor Ondo their chief òrìsà.*

p.9 - The first [musical] instrument to be used for Guelede in Pobe was “Gángan” and then replaced by “Akpesse.” Perhaps borrowed from Save or Ochori (Holli). *La danse de Guelede est une occasion dangereuse pour les danseurs et pour les assistants, parce que s’executant la nuit, les ennemis tachent d’avoir leurs adversaires qu’ils empoisonnent a la faveur des tenebres. Les danseurs risquent eux aussi d’etre empoisonnes et surtout craignent les jeteurs du sort.*

p.11 - *L’histoire de l’institution de Guelede etant intimement liee a l’histoire de l’avenement d’un roi de Ketou. Nous donnons d’abord cette histoire Adebiya de la lignee princiere de Mefou etait un jumeau dont son frere -- jumeau portait le nom d’Akan -- et lui-meme s’appelait du nom jumelaire d’Edun, c’est a dire le 2e venu au monde apres le premier. [The second born of twins is regarded by Yoruba as the senior. For a summary of the following oral account, see Drewal and Drewal 1983:226-8.] When Alaketu Akibiohou died, fate chose Edun but Akan wanted to rule. Fight broke out and Edun’s life was in danger. Edun had a friend named Souberou living at Omou. He told Edun to flee to Issale. Akan soon found out where Edun had gone to and he had to go there because Edun had taken l’instrument avec lequel devait commencer [p.12] les ceremonies du sacre appele “Adjossin,” made of the skin of a type of chevre du bois.*

p.13 - Souberou found out about Akan’s plot, returned to tell Edun and helped him flee to Ilobi. Edun fit alors ramasser a la hate beaucoup de coquilles de colimacons, qu’il fit enfler dans deux longues cordeaux. Il planta ensuite deux poteaux a

chaque cote du chemin de sa cachette, puis attacha chaque bout de chaque corde perlee aux piliers ainsi plantes.

p.14 - *Au milieu au bout des deux lignes perlees, il planta un tronc de bois en haut du quel il fit sculpter une figure d'homme. En guise de vetement, il entourra ce bois de feuilles seches de bananier, puis prit un tessou de calebasse qu'il tailla en forme d'un masque, le peignit du caolin, puis en coiffa la statue.*

pp.15-16 - Then he gathered his followers and taught them this song:

*Afoude loude, ero Ilobi, Ilobi ni icholoude*

*Les habitants d'Ilobi, tappeurs de cuivre contre cuivre, ce sont les habitants d'Ilobi qui sont possesseurs de cuivre jaune.*

[Moulero's Yoruba orthography, shaped by both the Ketu dialect as well as French practice, has been retained with some modification. See Drewal and Drewal 1983:277, note 9. In "standard" Yoruba as written in Nigeria, this song would be transcribed as: Afude lude ero Ilobi, Ilobi ni ise olude.]

His friend returned from Ketu to say that Akan would come in four days. On the fourth day Akan and his followers came out at night. Edun heard them, raised the alarm and pulled on the cords with force. This frightened Akan and his followers and they tried to flee in the dark, knocked their heads on trees and fell breaking arms and legs, and after arriving at Ketu, told Akan not to chase Edun any longer. Knowing that Akan was discouraged, Souberou had Edun initiated into Ògbóni at Meko who then helped to return him to Ketu.

[The Ògbóni is the supreme judiciary of Yorubaland, a society of elder women and men who select a ruler from candidates proposed by royal families.] From Meko he went to Idofa, Idofa to Likimon, Likimon to Isselou, Isselou to Iwoye, Iwoye to Idigny, and from there to Ketou. [All villages under the domain of Ketu.]

p.17 - Afterwards Adebिया (Edun) called Issale [Meko] to thank them for help. They asked to do the ceremony for Ilari which they did.

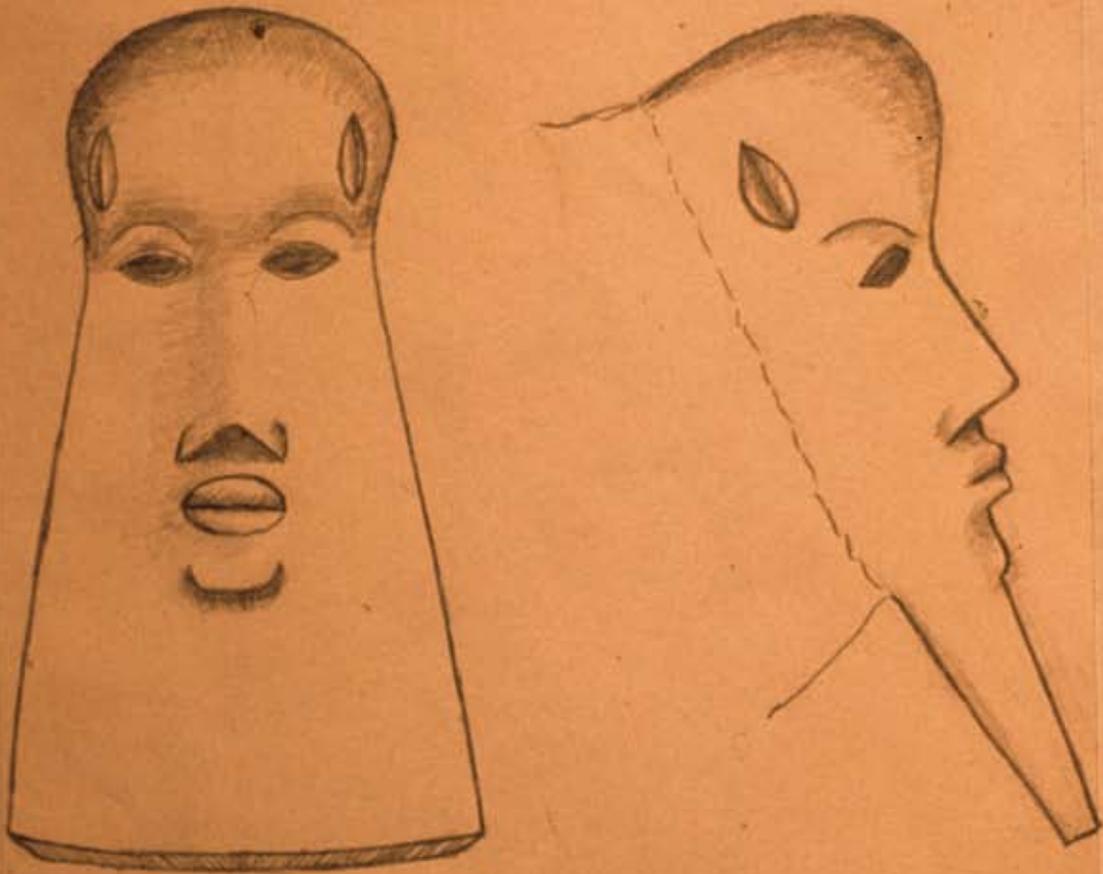


Figure 11

p.18 - The people of Issale came back later to ask Adebiya to please tell them the secret of how he fooled his brother at Ilobi. He taught them mais leur recommander de ne le faire que la nuit comme lui-meme l'avait fait le soir la 1ere fois. Il leur fit comprendre que c'était "oro-efe" c'est-a-dire une bouffonnerie, et que son surnome etait "olokou-ajaro-okoto" ce qui signifie - Homme de mer ayant combattu au bruit de coquilles de colimacons. Les Issale le faisaient la nuit pour danser selon la recommandation recue du roi Adebiya. C'est plus tard qu'on commença enfin a le faire en plein jour. Later the inhabitants of Ofia asked permission from Adebiya to do it from the Issale. Those from Idiye went and got Guelede from Ofia.

p.19 - Ainsi les differente ache se creèrent. Ache signifie le lieu ou s'exécute le Guelede ou loge d'artiste ou habillement des acteurs ou bien encore le lieu ou sont conservés les masques parce que autrefois on conservait tous les masques a Ache.

pp.20-22 - Chant commemorant l'origine de Guelede.

- 1) Edun Ibadan l'o lo l'ajo. Igba o di l'ale  
Edun d'Ibadan etait alle en voyage. Le soir venu, on entendait
- 2) l'olokou nlu. Baba, l'ibisi won njo l'awoye?  
le tam-tam oceanique. Pere, ou danse-to-on a cette heure ci  
demanderent les gens?
- 3) Igboyi Guelede ti l'Edun bo (bis)  
C'est Guelede que l'Edun a importe
- 4) Edun l'o lo mu wa le.  
C'est Edun qui l'a importe.
- 5) L'a nfi se hihale (bis)  
et nous en sommes fiers alors
- 6) Ijo wo' Ranjin, o yo s'Igan-Gura  
La danse de Guelede arrive a Iranjin, puis de la a Igan-Gaura
- 7) Edun l'o lo mu wa le, ko se!  
C'est Edun qui l'a importe

- 8) L'a nfi nsi hale (bis)  
Nous en sommes tellement fiers.
- 9) Omo Ika won l'eran meji fi gba a.  
les habitants d'Ika sont allés demander avec deux cabris.
- 10) l'yo se gbere yo s'Ofia.  
Tout doucement la danse fit son apparition a Ofia.
- 11) L'omo Omu won gbo l'a wa gba.  
Les enfants du Omu l'ayant appris vinrent s'en initier.
- 12) Ijo se gbere yo s'Odogbo yi.  
De la, Guelede arriva a Odogbo.
- 13) Ara Iju won sare wa gba a.  
Vite, les habitants d'Iju vivrent en solliciter l'autorisation.
- 14) Omo Ibekpere gbo a wa gba a.  
Les Enfants de Ibekpere ayant été mis au courant sont venus s'en initier.
- 15) Ijo se gbere o wo 'lu Awayi.  
Tout doucement, le Guelede parvint a Awayi.
- 16) O se gbere O de eta Idie.  
De même, il fit son apparition a Idie.
- 17) Gboburo won sare a wa gba a.  
Les habitants de Gboburo accoururent la recevoir.
- 18) Issaba won sare a wa gba.  
Les Issaba de même vinrent s'en initier.
- 19) Baba, itan a kpa mi fi s'okan.  
Père, c'est l'histoire qui m'a été racontée que j'ai gardée en

ma memoire.

20) Igba ijo ti se jinna.

Ce n'est pas devant moi que le Guelede a commence, son existence remonte loin.

21) K'e ko le sa, e t'ako t'abo.

Hommes et femmes prenez-le au serieux.

22) Oni yi o wa ibi k'orohin f'oni ko wa.

Que ceux qui sont presents en informent les absents.

23) K'e ko'le sa, e t'ako t'abo,

Hommes et femmes prenez en soin,

24) Yekun okile Edun ko na. [Ko k'ile Edun K'ona]

c'est la butte dont Edun est l'auteur.

p.23 - From this song we get thirteen [Moulero actually lists fourteen] ache or artists' places where Guelede takes place:

1) Ilobi - birthplace of Guelede

2) Iranjin - in Nigeria

3) Igan-Gua - in Nigeria [Igan-Gura]

4) Ika - in Nigeria

5) Ofia - 6 km east of Ketu

6) Idigny [Idahin] - 24 km to the northeast of Ketu

7) Omu - 8 km to northeast of Ketu

8) Odogbo - 8 km. to northeast of Ketu

9) Iju - 6 or 7 km from Ketu

10) Bekpere [Bepere] - 10 km east of Ketu

11) Awayi - 6 km northeast of Ketu

12) Idie - 6 km north of Ketu

13) Gboburo - 12 km east of Ketu

14) Issaba - 8 km northeast of Ketu

pp.24-26 - Chant attestant l'origine Ilobienne de Guelede [See Drewal and Drewal 1983:227-8 for a transcription and English translation of this song.]

1) Iha Ilobi ni nti mbo

Meneur de danse, je viens du cote d'Ilobi

2) A seri ijo

Souhaitez la bien venu au danseur, dites lui que

3) E se awu li barika, ku ijo

Votre derniere rencontre avec lui date de longtemps

4) Sinsin ina ni mi,

Je suis une etincelle de feu,

5) Nko se fu 'nu aso

aussi on ne saurait me mettre dans un pagne

6) Aseri ijo de

Me voici, moi le danseur par excellence.

7) A mo se oro-efe

Je sais bien bouffonner

8) E maa sun mo mi

Approchez-vous tous de moi

9) Iha Ilobi l'awo nti mbo wa.

C'est de cote d'Ilobi que je viens. C'est bien du cote d'Ilobi que le danseur de Guelede vient vraiment.

10) Ngbo ariwo iwo Okpere

J'entendais ta voix, toi Opere et je passe te

11) A [?] ni nya ki yin ni,

souhaiter le bonjour

- 12) Ika le duro, atokun  
Je ne puis attendre longtemps, meneur de danse,
- 13) Omo Oje, Egun Oba  
etant le fils d'Oje, donc le revenant du roi.
- 14) Nka eha mo nd'osan ola  
Je ne pourrai pas chanter jusqu'a demain midi
- 15) E maa ho yeye  
Acclamez le revenant.
- 16) Sobulu bu Egue  
meneur de danse.
- 17) Ngo so 'tan kan fun yin.  
Je vais vous raconter une histoire admirable
- 18) K'e ye e wo  
me voici arrive, moi
- 19) Okpere de, atokun, omo Oje  
Okpere [has come, the escort/performer, child of Oje]
- 20) Ki nro wewe  
mes sonnailles ne retentissent-elles pas bien?
- 21) Oliku yeye njo  
Admirable farceur, l'homme a sonnailles retentissantes, j'execute  
majesteusement la danse.

p.27 - Notes on principal Guelede places around Ketu.

Ofia - Edun quitta Ofia, apres avoir obtenu la permission du roi Adebिया et alla recevoir des Ilobi le Guelede. Il etait obligé, chaque fois qu'il voulait faire danser

a Ofia d'aller emprunter tout les necessaires de cette danse et payer en consequence certains frais assez lourdes, puis reporter les tam-tam et autres apres usage et cela, chaque fois qu'il voulait donner cette danse. After the conquest of Abomey by France [1894], Oga Oluguna went to Ika to procure the necessary things.

p.28 - Issaba - Abiala, thru the aid of a friend from Ofia, went to ask permission at Ilobi saying:

1) Ki ise eta Ofia nikan l'o daran Guelede.

Ce n'est pas l'angora d'Ofia seule que a le monopole de Guelede, d'autres localite peuvent aussi l'executer.

p.29 - Idigny - Adjalla, originally from Ilobi, went to Abiala to accompany him there to ask authority to start Gelede at Idigny. He was accompanied by Oluyabi, from Ika. They were granted permission and after the death of Adjalla, he was buried where the drums are played during the dance. [This was confirmed by elders at Idigny/Idiyin/Idahin in 1971.]

p.30 - Iju - Imported by a woman called Iya Abia [Abiya] who was married to an Ofia man. They honor her when doing Guelede by saying:

1) Iya Abia, mo juba e, Ile oguere, mo juba e.

Mere Abia, je te rends hommage, terre, je te rends hommage.

[A b&w photograph of a mask in honor of Iya Abiya had a flat dish on top and hair tied in two knots on sides.]

p.31 - Songs which precede the Guelede dance:

1) Akpa l'oligbo [Apa l'onigbo], akoko

l'arbre akpa est sylvicole, grand spectacle.

2) Iroko l'olodan, akoko

l'arbre Iroko habite la savane, grand spectacle.

3) Adaba lo hu' ye, akoko

le pigeon porte des plumes, grand spectacle.

4) Akoko nse koko

eh oui, ce soir, grand spectacle, grand spectacle.

5) L'ale yi o, A e akoko

ce soir, grand spectacle.

p.33 -

1) Onile, e ko mo kp'awa de ndan?

Habitants de ce lieux, ne savez-vous pas que nous sommes arrive?

2) Awa de onile

Ah oui nous sommes la.

3) Edun oriyan.

Edun oriyan. (originateur)

4) e ko mo p'awa de ndan?

Ne savez-vous pas que nous sommes venus?

5) Awa de onile

Nous sommes deja la

6) Igba de o l'ariwo nta.

C'est notre arrive qui a suscite les acclamations de toute a l'heure.

pp.36-43 - Two versions of a song to Agbagba [Esu/Elegba, the divine mediator, god of the crossroads] which precedes the entrance of Tetede. The length varies, but the praises of Esu are chanted to clear the way for the Guelede.

[not transcribed]

pp.44 - The second prelude - Arabi - balayeur - comes out. It is covered in palm fronds from head to foot and wears anklets [Arabi is a reference to Ogun, god of iron and clearer of the way]. When it comes out they sing:

- 1) Arabi, ajibale  
Arabi, balayeur matinal et quotidien
- 2) Aso alaso dun igbale  
le pagne d'autrui est bon pour balayer
- 3) Arabi, ajigbale  
Arabi, balayeur matinal et quotidien
- 4) Aso alaso dun igbale  
le pagne d'autrui est bon pour balayer

p.45 - When he leaves they sing:

- 1) Awo Arabi, nso nle  
Arabi, go to the house
- 2) O digba o nso nle  
goodbye, go to the house

p.46 - After Arabi, an uncostumed person comes out carrying a pot with fire in it while people sing:

- 1) Ko p'a ina njako,  
l'incendie de la brousse se declare sans prevenir,
- 2) Oloko l'adugbo  
aussi, cultivateurs dont les champs sont pres de la brousse,  
vous etes pries de prendre des precautions

p.47 - 4th scene: Ossosom - The actor carries an enormous mask [see Fig. 1] (to which people sacrifice chickens and other things in the building) that they call Obatala or Orisanla, and it is covered with a large white cloth like the Arabi. People put out all the fires and he dances in front of them like Arabi and they sing:

- 1) Orisa nla, a e! o de o  
Grand dieu, il est venu

2) Ori e kpeketekpekete!  
avec son enorme tete!

3) Ossossom ki jegue,  
Ossossom ne devrait pas tarder,

4) Ara lila l'o de  
c'est la fierete qui te pousse a le faire

p.49 - 5th scene - dancier on stilts

p.51 - 6th scene - two dancers - male and female or both of same sex  
called Tentegu

pp.52-3 - 7th scene - Tetede - always a feminine mask which calls Efe with the  
following song:

1) Tetede, oju mi t'ale  
Tetede, je vois clair par terre

2) owo aiga ka nu,  
Un seul sauris ne saurait se perdre,

3) bo 'nu, maa he e.  
s'il se perd, je le ramasserai (je le retrouverai).

He then sings two songs which call Agba-Efe:

1) Amulohun o bi mo ba pe o  
Amulohun je t'appelle, si je t'appelle pour

2) l'ekini o je,  
la premiere fois et que tu ne repond pas,

3) e di gbodi pete.  
tu deviendras une termitiere.

4) Bi mo ba pe o l'ekeji o je,  
Si la deuxieme fois je t'appelle, tu gardes le silence,

5) o di kukubole.  
tu seras comme une bosse de terrain ou une butte.

6) Bi mo ba pe o l'eketa o je,  
Si le troisieme fois que je t'appelle et tu ne repond pas,

7) E di eran oko igbe.  
tu deviendra alors un animal sauvage.

Agba-Efe answers:

1) Nigba t'o pe mi l'ekini  
Heure quand tu m'avais appele premiere fois

2) Akpa l'o ran mi l'ise  
j'ai ete faire une commission que Akpa [a strong tree where  
spirits dwell] m'a donne

3) Nigba l'o pe mi l'ekeji, Iroko l'o be mi l'owe  
quand tu m'avais appele deuxieme fois, je rendais service  
a Iroko [regarded as leader of trees and the place where the mothers and other  
spiritual forces gather at night]

4) Nigba l'o pe mi l'eketa, mo je  
mais quand tu m'avais appele troisieme fois, je t'ai repondu  
  
fun rerere apela l'ai p'agba.  
dans une voix claire et retentissante.

5) Bi o ba pe mi tan, maa lo.  
Apres avoir m'appele, retournez a la maison.

Once one has called the mask, they go away immediately. Agba-Efe - comes out one entrance and quickly goes in another, then back again. [The entrance referred to is a double archway made of fresh palmfronds called enuase. For an illustration of one at Akio, see Harper (1970:opposite p.88)] Then he makes a tour of the circle when the drums start. Then he makes incantations to protect himself against evil spirits and begins to [p.58] sing the songs which must last until dawn. He must have a supply of up to fifty songs or more. He has to pay respect to important people present. Many songs of satire, fun, and jokes because Efe means bouffonerie.

p.60 - Danse du jour

Masks come in pairs, threes, or more, which are identical. Children will also dance.

p.61 - After Agba-Efe has gone inside, the first mask to come out is Elegbara. He has gourds carved on top to indicate the various charms or medicines, ju-ju.

pp.63-65 - Remarques Importantes

In former times it wasn't permitted to perform the Guelede dance with masks in the town of Ketu. They always used to do it outside the town. Mais depuis 1911 par la force des choses, on a commence a y danser avec le masque sur la tete.

Cela arriva quand, par un malheureux coup de fusil, l'interprete Mensah fut tue et la ville fut assiegee par un detachement de soldats -- Monsieur Achille Tereau, une fois le calme revenu tant soit peu, ordonna d'executer la danse de Guelede en pleine ville de Ketu. Cette premiere danse eut lieu au petit marche, Oja-kere, et le premier acteur fut Musa dont le premier chant d'excuse et de demande de permission aux Iyami tutelaires [Iyami ("my mothers") -- honorific term for spiritually powerful women] du pays en ces termes:

1) A li ns'efe l'oja-kere, Iya mi,  
l'on m'a intime l'ordre de danser le Guelede au petit  
marche, O meres,

a li ns'efe l'oja-kere o.  
l'on m'a intime l'ordre de danser le Guelede au petit marche.

- 2) Oluwa ko me ko won mi,  
Plaise Dieu, ne pas m'imputer la faute,
- 3) E ee e, Oluwa ko me ko won mi.  
Plaise le Seigneur, ne pas m'imputer la faute.
- 4) Ise oyinbo l'a je, nko je ko o, Iya mi.  
C'est l'ordre du blanc qu'on m'a transmis, meres,  
et je ne saurai le refuser.
- 5) a ti ns'efe l'oja-kere o.  
l'on m'a oblige a executer le Guelede au petit marche.

[Moulero's manuscript was accompanied by several small b&w photos. Margaret Thompson Drewal made the following notes on the motifs of Gelede masks illustrated:

- 1) - Snake  
-French soldier or officer  
-2 snakes, bird in center, all biting turtle  
-Shallow dish or bowl  
-3 figures - appears to be one French officer standing behind two figures carrying cylindrical or cone-shaped objects on heads
- 2) Palmfronds draped over head
- 3) Large flat slab carved face, Orisanla or Obatala  
Cloth attached (white) [see Figure 1 and discussion in Drewal 1977; Drewal and Drewal 1983:65-82]
- 4) Stilt dancer - face wrapped in cloth
- 5) Tetede - rather deep large bowl, plaited hair
- 6) elaborate headresses
- 7) Elegbara masks, different styles but contained small calabashes]

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*Homage to Thomas Moulero* is an important record of the research methods of Henry and Margaret Drewal. The monograph is from the beginning of their careers, when Henry began to focus on art history, and Margaret increasingly investigated female performance studies.



In 1983, they jointly published *Gelede: Art and Female Power Among the Yoruba*, which benefits from their conversations with Thomas Moulero. In this monograph, the Drewals explore the role of interviewing and analysis in African art scholarship, in three languages.

----Moyo Okediji