

## Intertextuality and Scapegoating Motif in Yorùbá Myth of Ayélála and Judeo-Christian Narrative of Jesus

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### **Abstract**

Myths have always been significant parts of the oral traditions of preliterate societies. As the creative repository of indigenous communities, myths express the shared ecosystem of communal ideologies and cultural identities. As vital narratives, myths—whether in their symbolical, literal or allegorical multimodalities—are artistically constructed to serve cosmological and ontological purposes. Given their very universal appeal and representation, myths frequently exhibit cross-cultural correspondences, borrowing motifs, themes, and characters from remote, neighboring or dominant cultures. Intertextuality, the weaving together of diverse cultural elements within myths, suggests that texts are part of a larger network influencing and shaping one another, fostering dialogue and meaning production through interaction. It encompasses practices like ritual performances, quotation, allusion, parody, pastiche, and adaptation, encouraging readers to be active participants in uncovering hidden layers of meaning. Earlier studies on ritual practices for restoring social order and cosmic balance have established the criticality of the scapegoat motif. While engaging intertextuality and social drama as theoretical framework, this study examined layers of cross-cultural parallels of the scapegoat motif in the Yoruba myth of Ayélála and the Judeo-Christian narrative of Jesus. In both myths, the scapegoat emerges as a character or entity burdened with blame or punishment for the sins or troubles of others, often sacrificed to restore communal harmony or absolve guilt.

**Keywords:** Scapegoat motif, Ayélála, Jesus, Intertextuality, Myth.

### **Introduction**

Human societies have always reflected the core aspects of their oral traditions and cultural proclivities. Driven by the need to provide a framework of meaning, preliterate societies imaginatively constructed epistemologies which serve both their ideological needs and cultural identities. Myths, songs, legends, festivals, proverbs, folktales, and many other aspects of oral literatures form the larger bodies of folklores which are communal and self-preservative.

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Chief among these collective literary representations are myths which are universal in outlook and goal.

Myth abounds all over the world. It is a story about a group of people, which reflects customs and expresses their ideological beliefs as a people. It is also, a form of narrative which explains a people's understanding of the mysteries that they find in nature, including weather, cosmology, superhuman beings, and strange utterances. Myths—whether about the concept of the divine, creation, origin, legendary heroes, death, burial, reincarnation and reintegration—can be allegorical, symbolic or literal (Jegede, 2021). In some instances, these mythic constructions provide ethical models for communally accepted behavioral patterns. Akporobaro (2012) argues that myths symbolize human experience and embody the spiritual values of a culture, with each culture preserving its myths since these beliefs and worldview found within them are vital to the survival of that culture.

The vibrant tapestry of myths and their pivotal role in traditional storytelling across many communities underscores their profound importance. These dynamic narratives, passed down orally through generations, not only shape cultural identity but also transmit communal knowledge systems, ethos, and essence. Malinowski (1961) underscores the pragmatic and functional aspects of myth within specific cultural contexts, defining it as a narrative that serves practical purposes such as explaining natural phenomena or providing psychological comfort. Achebe (1975) further explores the role of myths in African literature and culture, emphasizing their orality and performative aspects as sources of communal knowledge and identity.

Myths possess the capacity to reflect cosmological and ontological beliefs about the universe, humanity's origins, and the interconnectedness of beings. Mbiti (1969) discusses myths as integral parts of African oral traditions, emphasizing their religious and cosmological dimensions in shaping spiritual beliefs and practices. Okpewho (1979) examines myths as foundational stories providing explanations for the origins of humanity and culture within the epic tradition of African oral literature. Eliade (1955) defines myth as a traditional narrative that recounts primordial events, emphasizing its sacred and religious aspects as a symbolic expression of transcendent truths.

Beyond their spiritual dimensions, myths often contain social and political commentary, addressing issues such as power dynamics and conflict resolution. Soyinka (1976) highlights the transformative power of myths in challenging established norms and inspiring social change within African society. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasizes the role of myths in preserving cultural memory and reclaiming indigenous identities, particularly within African literary and cultural expressions.

These narratives offer diverse and nuanced interpretations, reflecting a range of human experiences across cultural, religious, social, and aesthetic realities. Even in modern times, myths continue to hold significance in various aspects of human life, including literature, art, religion, popular culture, and psychology. From religious movements to popular media, myths serve as foundational texts and sources of inspiration, conveying sacred truths and inspiring

devotion. In contemporary media, myths are pervasive, reinterpreted or adapted to captivate audiences and explore timeless themes of heroism, love, and redemption. Modern authors, playwrights, and artists draw inspiration from mythological themes to explore contemporary issues and reflect on the human condition, further enriching the cultural tapestry of mythological narratives.

### **Myths and Intertextuality**

Myths frequently exhibit cross-cultural influences, borrowing motifs, themes, and, in some instances, foregrounding characters from dominant cultures. This intermingling of elements across cultures enhances the richness and depth of myths, making them a shared repository of human experience. For example, Burkert (1979) emphasizes the performative and communal aspects of myth, which reinforce social cohesion and preserve cultural traditions. The communal telling and retelling of myths serve as a binding force within societies, maintaining continuity and a shared sense of identity. Additionally, the universal patterns identified by Campbell (1949) in his concept of the hero's journey or monomyth outline archetypal motifs and stages found in myths from diverse cultures, suggesting a common psychological framework underlying these stories.

From a structuralist perspective, Lévi-Strauss (1966) highlighted the role of myth in mediating binary oppositions within society, such as life and death, or good and evil. Myths, therefore, function as a means of resolving fundamental conflicts and contradictions inherent in human existence. Beyond these descriptions, the relevance of myth extends both intrinsically and extrinsically within the dialectics of societal creativity. Myths are perpetually reinterpreted and reenacted, finding new meanings and self-preservative nuances in each iteration. This dynamic process allows myths to remain vital and adaptable, continually resonating with contemporary audiences while preserving their foundational cultural significance.

Intertextuality, the weaving together of diverse cultural elements within myths, merges indigenous traditions with external influences to form hybrid narratives. More than ever, these narratives inherently reference and draw upon other myths, stories, cultural traditions, and historical events, enriching myths by establishing connections between diverse narratives and fostering a dynamic dialogue within cultural and literary traditions. They are retold and adapted across literature, art, and popular culture, resulting in a proliferation of intertextual references and reinterpretations.

Intertextuality as a literary theory, popularized by poststructuralist thinkers such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, examines how texts are interconnected through references, allusions, and borrowings. Barthes (1970) introduced the concept of intertextuality, laying the groundwork for discussions of mythic intertextuality in literary theory. Kristeva (1969) explored intertextuality in literature, emphasizing texts' engagement in dialogue with one another. Intertextuality suggests that texts are part of a larger network influencing and shaping one another, fostering dialogue and meaning production through interaction. It encompasses practices like quotation, allusion,

parody, pastiche, and adaptation, encouraging readers to be active participants in uncovering hidden layers of meaning. Myths frequently contain allusions to other myths or mythic figures within the same cultural tradition, enriching the mythic universe with interconnected stories and characters.

Through intertextuality, myths resonate with universal themes and symbols, reflecting shared human experiences. Joseph Campbell's concept of the monomyth has informed discussions of mythic narratives and their intertextual relationships. Myths serve as vehicles for cultural commentary, critiquing social, political, and existential concerns.

### **Judeo-Christian and Yorùbá Myths: Of Sacrifices and Communal Cleansing**

The comprehension of divine concepts in both Judeo-Christian and African myths, which constitute the focal point of this inquiry, reveals deeply entrenched belief systems that attribute supremacy to a supreme being. Both Judeo-Christian and Yorùbá myths incorporate the notion of sacrifice for ritual purification, albeit with varying specifics in their practices. In ancient Judaism, sacrificial rites held a pivotal position within religious customs as delineated in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Detailed guidelines for diverse sacrifices, such as sin offerings, burnt offerings, and purification offerings, are provided in the Book of Leviticus. These rituals aimed to atone for transgressions and attain ritual cleanliness. Purification offerings were frequently utilized for cleansing purposes. Typically involving the sacrifice of animals like bulls, goats, or doves, these offerings utilized blood either sprinkled on altars or applied to individuals or objects for purification. Notably, the "red heifer" sacrifice, detailed in Numbers 19, involved mixing its ashes with water to purify those in contact with impurity or death.

In Christianity, sacrifice holds symbolic and theological significance, particularly in the context of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. Christians believe Christ's sacrificial death served to redeem humanity's sins, offering spiritual purification and redemption to believers (Matthews, 2010). Baptism, a Christian sacrament, symbolizes cleansing and initiation into the faith. Through immersion in water, individuals are symbolically cleansed of sin, transitioning into new life in Christ (Ferguson, 2009). Confession or repentance is another significant Christian practice, wherein believers acknowledge their sins to God and receive forgiveness through Christ's grace. This act of confession and absolution facilitates spiritual cleansing and rejuvenation (Jones, 2015). While ancient Judaism outlines sacrificial rituals more explicitly, the concept of spiritual purification through sacrifice and ritual finds resonance in Christian theology, especially concerning Christ's sacrificial death, baptism, and confession sacraments (Wright, 2003).

Within Yorùbá culture, rituals featuring sacrifices for cleansing and purification hold significant roles in traditional religious customs. These ceremonies often aim to eliminate spiritual impurities, appease ancestral spirits, restore communal balance, or commemorate vital life transitions (Olajubu, 2003). Across numerous Yorùbá traditional societies, offerings and sacrifices are presented to honor ancestors and seek their blessings and safeguarding. These offerings range from food, beverages, livestock to valuable possessions. Ancestor veneration constitutes a

fundamental element of the Yorùbá traditional belief system, with rituals conducted to sustain a positive rapport with the spirits of departed kin (Bascom, 1991). Sacrifices are frequently made during ancestral gatherings to rid the community of adverse influences and secure the ongoing benevolence of ancestors (Peel, 2002).

Initiation rites are prevalent in numerous Yorùbá societies as rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. These rites often entail purification rituals and sacrifices to ready initiates for their forthcoming roles and duties within the community (Ajayi, 1998). During initiation ceremonies, sacrifices may be offered to cleanse initiates of their juvenile status and initiate them into the adult realm. These sacrifices symbolize the abandonment of prior identities and the acquisition of fresh knowledge and societal responsibilities (Olupona, 2011). These ceremonies serve as vital mechanisms for upholding spiritual equilibrium, nurturing communal unity, and affirming cultural heritage within African communities. The scapegoat motif as found in the Ayélála myth of the Ìlàjẹ and Ìkálẹ (subgroups of the Yorùbá) draws mythic intertextuality with the crucifixion, and death of Jesus Christ as reflected in the Judeo-Christian myth.

Both oral and written traditions highlight the Yorùbá people's identity, primarily rooted in religion and culture. This is evident through their cultural practices and religious beliefs. According to Alao (2017), the Yorùbá region spans approximately 181,300 square kilometers in southwestern Nigeria, but significant aspects of Yorùbá culture extend beyond this geographical boundary to places like Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, and the United States, with a global population estimated at over forty million.

While there are unique variations among Yorùbá sub-ethnic groups, their unifying belief centers around a Supreme Deity approached through various mediums. Idowu (1996) suggests that religion defines the Yorùbá way of life, though *oriki*, a form of praise chant celebrating individuals and ancestral lineages, also holds significant importance in Yorùbá oral tradition. Mbiti (1970) adds that understanding African religious ethos requires considering concepts of the spiritual world alongside beliefs about God, echoing the densely populated spiritual realm recognized by the Yorùbá people. Omotoye (2011) further categorizes Yorùbá spiritual beings into three groups: primordial divinities like *Qbátálá* and *Èṣù*, deified ancestors such as *Ṣàngó*, and personifications of natural forces like rivers and mountains.

Lawal (2011) delineates the roles of various Yorùbá deities, emphasizing their importance in maintaining cosmic order. Jemiriye and Akinola (2007) point out differences among Yorùbá spiritual entities based on geographical features, with communities near rivers, rocks, or forested areas worshiping deities associated with those environments. For instance, the worship of Ayélála by the Ìkálẹ people reflects their worldview, emphasizing cosmic balance and harmony with the Supreme Being through the vicarious death and deification of Ayélála (Oyetimi, 2022).

In the milieu of the Yorùbá, where the present study is partly situated, ritual constitutes an integral aspect of communal life. Beyond conveying societal norms, history, myths, and stereotypes, ritual endeavors to maintain cosmic equilibrium by facilitating interaction between

the living world, ancestors, and the unborn (Soyinka, 1976). According to Aderibigbe (2017), who delves into the significance of rituals in the Yorùbá cosmos, rituals serve as a primary form of spirituality through which individuals or societies navigate relationships with fellow community members, the ancestral realm, the energies of nature, and divinities.

Schechner (2013), Alexander (2004), Grillo (2012), Koster (2003), and Spilka (2005) offer diverse, yet utilitarian definitions of ritual. Schechner suggests that rituals embody communal memories and assist in managing challenging transitions, ambiguous relationships, hierarchies, and desires. Rituals are seen as vehicles for shaping the sacred, conveying doctrine, accessing the supernatural, and integrating individuals into communities (Schechner, 2013). Thus, the communication of communal doctrines and the shaping of individuals reflect the perpetuation of communal norms, social hierarchies, and gender distinctions.

Grillo (2012) posits that African ritual performances are instinctive strategies pursued for practical purposes: establishing identity, eliciting revelation, accessing divinity to foster empowerment, and effecting transformation. She argues that since African ritual performances lack canonical texts, beliefs about the cosmos, the nature of divinity, social structures, and power dynamics are transmitted through embodied experience and upheld as traditional practices and societal norms. As observed in the current study, the rituals of Ayélála worship are transmitted orally, yet both verbal and non-verbal aspects hold potent significance despite their absence from written records.

Grillo also emphasizes the prominent role of sacrifice, or “ebo” in Yorùbá, within African rituals. Aderibigbe (2017) asserts that among the Yorùbá, the highest form of sacrifice is human sacrifice, believed to represent and convey the community’s petitions to higher powers. Such sacrifices are performed to atone for the community’s sins and alleviate calamities to varying extents. The current study, inspired by Grillo’s perspective, centers its narrative on the propitiatory deaths of Ayélála (a female slave) and Jesus, illustrating “the reciprocal bond between spiritual and mortal realms” and aiming to restore cosmic balance within the originating societies.

### **Ayélála and Jesus: Contextualising the Dialectics of Scapegoatism**

In mythology, a scapegoat is a character or entity unfairly assigned blame or punishment for the transgressions, sins, or tribulations of others. Typically, this individual or entity is isolated and offered as a sacrifice, whether symbolically or literally, to absolve the community of perceived guilt or restore harmony within the group. Frazer (1890) establishes the groundwork for understanding scapegoating across diverse cultural and religious contexts. Frazer investigates its role in rituals and myths as a means of reestablishing social equilibrium. Girard (1965) offers an in-depth analysis of scapegoating in human societies and its interconnections with mythological narratives and rituals. Thompson (1989) explores the concept of scapegoating within literary and cultural spheres, shedding light on its significance within mythological stories. The scapegoat which fits into the framework of victimhood serves as a receptacle for the

collective burden or guilt, allowing the community to maintain cohesion or alleviate its anxieties. This motif recurs across various mythological traditions, often intertwined with themes of sacrifice, redemption, and the preservation of social order.

The concept of victimization proposes that in times of societal turmoil and conflict, order is often reinstated through scapegoating (MacLeod, 2019). This entails the community, fractured by widespread disorder, morphing into a mob that targets a vulnerable individual for blame and persecution, portraying them as the primary source of unrest. Subsequently, this individual is subjected to isolation and vilification. As the community fragments, it reorganizes by replicating the violent accusations and persecutory actions aimed at the chosen scapegoat. Through this process, the community collectively exerts control over the vilified figure, viewing them as essential to restoring social order. The scapegoat absorbs the community's pent-up violence, serving as a cathartic outlet.

The selection of victims is often arbitrary, though they are typically perceived as distinctive in some way. For instance, figures like the mythic Jesus, who perform miracles and claim divine lineage, or individuals with disabilities, presumed flaws, exceptional qualities, or belonging to marginalised groups (such as women as found in the Ayélála myth where the female protagonist is unjustly sacrificed), become targets. This arbitrary selection and the obscured innocence of the victim are intrinsic to the scapegoating process. As the enraged mob attributes the societal crisis to the scapegoat, their collective actions of violence seem justified. Blaming the victim obscures their mistreatment and conceals the truth of their unjust persecution. This victimization process is sufficient to psychosocially reestablish stabilizing social divisions that had previously faltered.

Despite conflicting narratives surrounding the rise and deification of Ayélála, both oral and written sources unanimously identify her gender as female. Awólalù, in his article "Ayélála: A Guardian of Social Morality" (1968), elaborates on Ayélála's power as a deity by proposing that the cult of Ayélála originated from the sacrificial compensation of an Ijaw slave woman's life. This woman was killed as a substitute for the atonement of a runaway Ìlàjẹ adulterous man's sin. Awólalù suggests that this act of scapegoating led to significant discord between the Ijaws and the Ìlàjẹs. During her sacrifice, the slave woman, experiencing immense pain and anguish, could only utter the words "Ayélála," signifying "the world is incomprehensible" or "the world is a mystery." Henceforth, she became known by this name.

The researcher obtained a more detailed account of Ayélála's emergence through an interview with a prominent Ìlàjẹ traditional ruler in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State. Ese Odo, a Yorùbá community in Ese-Odo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria, is historically labelled as the origin of Ayélála myth and ritual worship. This narrative, widely accepted among the Ìlàjẹ people in Ondo State, traces Ayélála's emergence to the frequent conflicts between the Ijọ-Apoi people and the Ìlàjẹ people. According to the interview conducted on June 8, 2020, 63-year-old Oba Beniah Adeola Ìdogbè, the Alaboto of Aboto,

Mahin Kingdom, in Ese Odo, reported that Ayélála's vicarious death was as a result of communal conflicts. According to him,

The frequent fights between the Ijọ-Apoi people and the Ilaje people necessitated Ayélála's emergence and her eventual habitation in the world today. When the war started between these tribes, Idogbe, who was my forefather, led the Ilaje people. Agbeleki, who was Ijọ-Apoi, led the Ijọ-Apoi people in that war. The Ìlájẹ warriors killed many Ijọ-Apoi fighters. It was obvious that the casualties were more on the side of the Ijọ-Apoi. Despite the losses, they continued in their feud. I must mention that at various times, considering the fact that they lived close to each other, it was almost impossible not to record infringements on individual rights, and so there were clashes between them.

"I must also mention that there was a large river which was used by both tribes (Ìlájẹ and Ijọ-Apoi) at that time. My people, the Ìlájẹ, clearly won the war. My forefather, Idogbe, led his people to victory. In fact, it was so bad at that time that the Ilaje warriors had put the Ijọ-Apoi fighters in a difficult and embarrassing position, especially when there was no way of escape. The Ijọ-Apoi fighters were pinned down and also surrounded by my forefather and his warriors. Knowing this sad reality, the Ijọ-Apoi fighters decided to surrender; they had nowhere to go and continuing in the fight would spell total annihilation for the Ijọ-Apoi people.

"It was then that Idogbe, my great forefather, stood up and Agbeleki, who was the representative of the Ijọ-Apoi, did same. Remember Idogbe represented the Ìlájẹ people while Agbeleki did same for the Ijọ-Apoi people. The Ijọ-Apoi people recognising their handicap decided to sue for peace. They met at a point where three paths crossed. The Ijọ-Apoi people decided to go into a covenant with the Ìlájẹ people so that the fighting would come to an end.

"At the point of the covenant, Idogbe, my great forefather, brought a female slave forward while the Ijọ-Apoi people, represented by Agbeleki, brought a goat. It will interest you to know that the venue at which they decided to effect the terms of the covenant was at a big water body which is today called 'orita Ayélála.' That place is still there today. That exact location is where the Ayélála deity is worshipped today by our people. That is very symbolic.

"Then, they took the slave woman and buried her body while her head stood out. She was still alive. Idogbe took wine and began to pour on her head while he offered the following words: 'Henceforth, there will not be conflict between Ìlájẹ people and Ijọ-Apoi people.' This was meant to end the conflict between them. Agbeleki, representing Ijọ-Apoi people, also brought forward his goat and did same. The slave woman, who became the symbol of peace, the propitiation of atonement and the basis of covenant between the Ilaje people and Ijọ-Apoi people, was already gasping for breath. In pain, desperation, she shouted 'Ayélála'!

The expression is *Ilaje*. It means ‘this world is large and incomprehensible.’ She died a most gruesome death. Since then, she was deified and also transformed into a powerful agent in maintaining order and social justice. This was so between the *Ìlájẹ* people and *Ijọ-Apoi* people.

The vicarious death and the eventual deification of *Ayélála* as a myth capture the essence of the reluctant hero. As the female protagonist in the narrative, she is forced to atone for communal wrongs, restore cosmic balance and reestablish social order. *Ayélála*’s vicarious humiliation, agony and death as an archetype of the reluctant hero find an intertextual parallel in the Judeo-Christian myth of the sacrificial atonement paid by Jesus for the sins of humanity.

Much like the *Ayélála* myth encapsulates the *Ìlájẹ* people’s symbolic ideals, the portrayal of Jesus as a scapegoat is deeply ingrained in Judeo-Christian mythology and symbolism. Within this framework, Jesus is often viewed as the ultimate scapegoat, assuming the burden of humanity’s sins and offering himself as a sacrificial offering for their atonement.

This concept draws inspiration from various narratives within the Biblical New Testament, particularly from the teachings of the Apostle Paul and the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion. In these narratives, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of God who willingly shoulders the sins of humanity, providing a path to redemption and reconciliation with God through his death and resurrection.

The imagery of Jesus as a scapegoat is laden with symbolism, akin to the *Yorùbá* people’s myth of *Ayélála*. In ancient Jewish tradition, a scapegoat was laden with the sins of the community before being sent into the wilderness, symbolically carrying away the people’s transgressions. Similarly, Jesus is depicted as offering a pathway to atonement and the establishment of a new covenant between estranged parties.

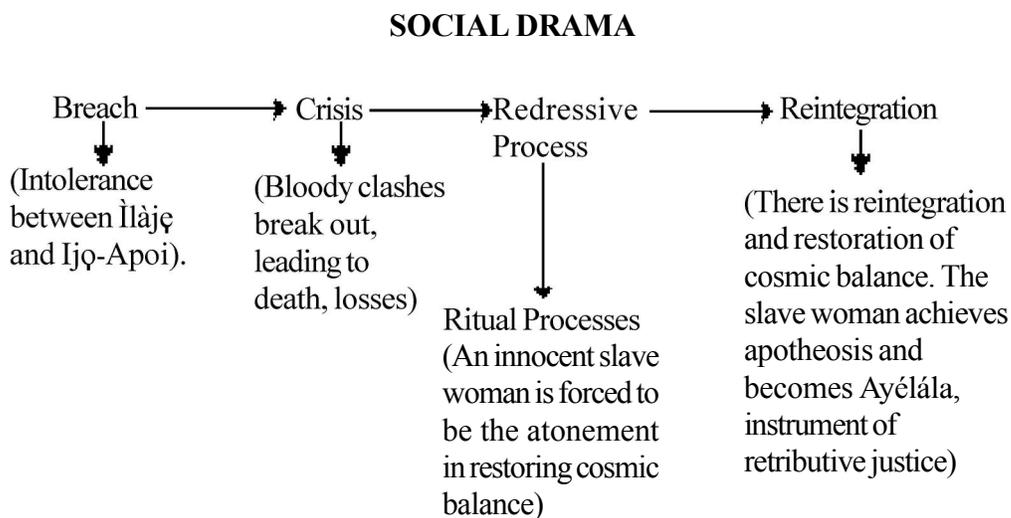
In the *Yorùbá* myth of *Ayélála*, the protagonist’s demise signifies peace and the restoration of harmony between previously warring communities. Similarly, the Judeo-Christian myth of Jesus represents atonement, symbolizing forgiveness between God and a wayward humanity that had previously spurned divine love and guidance. This myth underscores the sacrificial nature of Jesus’ death and the belief that through his ultimate sacrifice, humanity can achieve reconciliation with God. Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49, and John 19:16-37, all from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible present the myth of the suffering and eventual death of Jesus. They all collectively narrate Jesus’ journey to Golgotha, the crucifixion itself, and subsequent events. These accounts detail Jesus being mocked, soldiers casting lots for his garments, Simon of Cyrene aiding in carrying the cross, the inscription above Jesus’ head, darkness covering the land, interactions with various individuals, and Jesus’ final words before his death, including the soldiers piercing his side with a spear.

In Matthew 26:28, Jesus establishes the Lord’s Supper (Communion) and elucidates the significance of his imminent death, framing it as pivotal for the forgiveness of sins. He states, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

John, another disciple of Jesus, expounds upon this notion in John 3:16-17, asserting, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” Here, he underscores that Jesus’ death epitomizes God’s profound love for humanity and aims to bring salvation to believers.

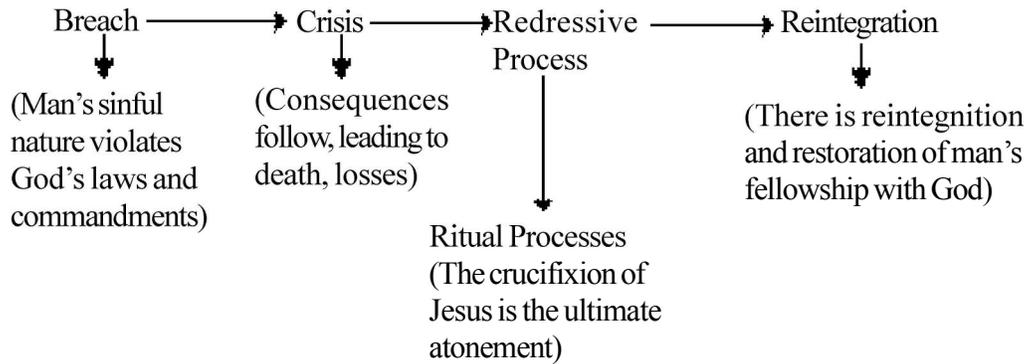
Paul, a prominent figure in the New Testament, reinforces the significance of Jesus’ sacrificial death in securing forgiveness for sins, aligning with the dictates of the Mosaic Law. In Hebrews 9:22, he reiterates the necessity of atonement through blood for the restoration of harmony and the acquisition of forgiveness. He writes, “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” This underscores the indispensable role of Jesus’ sacrificial death in fulfilling the requirements for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Schechner (2013), drawing from the insights of Victor Turner (1974), delineates four phases in the development of signs and symbols within social drama: breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration or schism. A breach occurs when an event disrupts the stability of a social unit, leading to a crisis marked by public displays of tension. Redressive action involves efforts to resolve the crisis and heal the breach, ultimately resulting in reintegration or the emergence of schism within the social fabric. The vicarious deaths of Jesus and the Ayélála ritual align with Turner’s concept of social drama, illustrating how these mythical narratives navigate through these phases as ruptures of the normative. The following diagram about the death of Ayélála captures the stages of Turner’s concept of social drama:



The diagram below captures the scapegoat motif of the Judeo-Christian narrative of Jesus using Turner’s concept of social drama and the stages involved:

### SOCIAL DRAMA



Both myths on the vicarious deaths of Ayélála and Jesus situate the intertextuality of the scapegoat motif and its far-reaching applications. The second edition of *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* (2005) underscores the significance of signs and symbols as integral components of social and cultural existence. These symbols encompass cultural enactments and representations of sacred rituals and practices, serving functional roles in achieving social, communal, or collective objectives. Within this framework, ritual portrayals play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing societal norms and values.

These mythical deaths of Jesus and Ayeilaila as situated within the framework of Turner's social drama encompass the phases of breach, crisis, redressive processes, and reintegration or recognition of irreparable schism. While seeking to redress breaches in societal norms and cosmic balance, these rituals ultimately place the consequence of their actions on the vicarious deaths of two voiceless, innocent individuals. Despite their sacrificial roles, the societal narratives surrounding Jesus and Ayélála highlight the complexities of managing ritual processes in accordance with socio-cultural expectations while grappling with the ethical implications of scapegoating.

### Conclusion

In mythology, the scapegoat emerges as a character or entity burdened with blame or punishment for the sins or troubles of others, often sacrificed to restore communal harmony or absolve guilt. This study has provided explorations of scapegoating across diverse cultures, elucidating its role in rituals and narratives. This motif, woven with themes of sacrifice and redemption, recurs in various mythological traditions, reflecting humanity's quest for cohesion and absolution.

The concept of victimization posits that in times of societal upheaval, order is reinstated through scapegoating, with a vulnerable individual becoming the target of collective blame and persecution. As the community fragments, it rallies around the scapegoat, projecting onto them its pent-up violence and turmoil (Girard, 1986). This process offers a cathartic release, exerting control over the perceived source of unrest and restoring social equilibrium.

Victims are often arbitrarily chosen, possessing distinct characteristics or affiliations that render them targets for scapegoating. Figures like Jesus in the Judeo-Christian tradition or individuals with exceptional qualities or marginalized identities become focal points for collective blame and persecution. This arbitrary selection obscures the innocence of the victim, justifying their mistreatment and reinforcing societal divisions.

The myths of Ayélála and Jesus exemplify the scapegoat motif's enduring relevance and complexity. Ayélála, a mythic figure in Yorùbá tradition, and Jesus, a central figure in Christianity, both undergo vicarious suffering and death to restore cosmic balance and social order. Their narratives, interwoven with themes of sacrifice and redemption, illuminate the human impulse to seek absolution and reconciliation, even at great cost.

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