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NARRATING CULTURAL SYNCRETISM: CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN TRADITIONS IN MARK NWAGWU'S *FOREVER CHIMES*

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt is made to examine the issue of cultural syncretism in contemporary Nigerian fiction. The discourse relies on the template provided by Mark Nwagwu's debut novel, *Forever Chimes*. The methodology inheres on the exploration of the treatment of the theme of cultural contact and the enabling narrative techniques in the novel. In the main, the paper discovers the dissonant interactions of Christianity and African traditions in the cosmos of the story. It is also revealed that Nwagwu's text prioritizes cultural syncretism over cultural hybridity. African traditions are shown to lack the wherewithal to withstand the onslaught of Western cultures. It is concluded that although Nwagwu's novel exhibits a few lapses in its content and form, it still has more merits than strengths. Therefore, it is a successful work of art because of its laudable vision and fresh and unique narrative techniques.

Keywords: *Cultural syncretism, Nigerian fiction, Mark Nwagwu, Forever Chimes, Cultural hybridity.*

Mark Nwagwu burst on to the Nigerian literary scene in 2007 with his debut novel, *Forever Chimes*, a work that appeals to different audiences/readers and transcends ethnic, cultural and geographical boundaries. To a great extent, the much-quoted Ngugi's (1981) assertion that literature does not evolve from a vacuum is still potent because autochthonous myths, legends, folktales, customs and the like continue to be thematic and stylistic sources for African writers. It is pertinent to say that Nwagwu's novel is one of the current efforts to reconstruct a slice of African cultures. This is a timely and commendable effort because of the need to put the record straight, that is, the necessity to reconstruct African history and culture in this age of crippling scientific and technological discoveries. In this cultural-historical reconstruction, Nwagwu still dwells on many contemporary continental and global issues which include the problems of endangered cultures, conflicts in the continent, women empowerment, the role of the youths in cultural nationalism, etc.

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Indeed, the novel is replete with lots of topical issues. It may not be an idle claim, therefore, to declare that the text has a lot to offer in the building of a total African (wo)man. It has the potential to assist the reader in her/his all-round development – socially, politically, spiritually, economically, intellectually, physically and emotionally.

However, although Nwagwu's text deals with a common motif in African literature (cultural nationalism), its enduring brilliance lies in its artistic bravura, that is, the architectonics/techniques of the novel, which include biblical intertexts, direct addresses, sociolectal variations, code-mixing, flashbacks, oral poetics, proverbs, eulogies, dream technique, conundrum and axioms. Nwagwu is, therefore, able to negotiate a popular old thematic preoccupation in African literature with these fresh and insightful techniques. Abiola Irele (1990) comments on the tendencies of most Nigerian writers to only address post-independence concerns. To him, the outstanding attribute of the Nigerian writer is "his immediate engagement with history" (69). Sam Asein (1978) had earlier made a similar observation that a writer should "play a purposeful role in the human drama of his time" (74). However, a few recent critics are not very comfortable with the perennial rear-ward glancing and perpetual lachrymal tone of most Nigerian writers (See: Ayo Kehinde, 2005 and Charles Nnolim, 2006). It is not an overstatement to claim, therefore, that, Nwagwu's *Forever Chimes* is one of the texts that have taken care of these critics' caveat. It offers a continuation of and a challenge to the popular motif of cultural nationalism in African literature, and it is able to negotiate between the burden of modernity and tradition. Socio-political issues are only in the margins. History is not allowed to be the 'hero' of Nwagwu's novel (cf. Nkosi, 1982); rather, it is tangential. For instance, the trouble in Nigeria in 1905 is adroitly sandwiched with the background information about Chioma and her ancestors: "her great-grandparents were born in times of great tribulation...all of Nigeria was in turmoil, *wahala* everywhere" (7).

Solomon Iyasere (1975) avers that "the modern African writer is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind" (107). Through

the exploits of the Akadikes, *Forever Chimes* reflects on the challenges involved in the synthesis of indigenous and foreign traditions in Africa. The novelist (Nwagwu) thus assumes the role of a griot, a historian and a story-teller. He perceptively dwells on the problems confronting the interplay of Christendom and African cultures. The narration moves back and forth between various cultural voices that are connected to various socio-cultural contexts and are shaped by issues of race, gender and generation.

In fact, *Forever Chimes* is a story brilliantly told in a language that speaks to the experiences of many Nigerians both at home and in the Diaspora. The novelist strikes a balance between Africans remaining faithful to their heritage as Africans and being fully at home in their new environments. However, as revealed in this novel, finding this balance can be a daunting task. It is apparent that, initially, Chioma, the archetypal Nigerian youth in the Diaspora and the protagonist of the novel, continues to reside physically in America, but mentally and culturally in Nigeria. At the outset, she does not allow the opportunities and 'good life' that the United States offer to dissuade her from imbibing her native culture; instead, she always yearns for the familiarity and comfort of her own culture. This is an evidence of a people's reverence of and responsibility to their ancestors and their insurance of lineage continuity.

Forever Chimes is also an entertaining, didactic and spiritually uplifting novel. It is a most compelling family saga with appreciable literary worth. Written by an erudite academic and versatile researcher, *Forever Chimes* has a strong moralistic, intellectual, didactic, pedagogical, and spiritual undertone. It portrays a Nigeria that goes beyond the notorious stereotypes of backwardness, corruption and misgovernance. Nigerians are depicted as important personalities who have some legacies to be emulated. Nwagwu does not only reflect the travails of the African continent in this postmodern age, he also dwells on concrete ways of tackling her key problems in the context of discriminatory and competitive relations between developing and developed nations. It also comments on many fundamental issues, including the major cultural, historical and

literary connections between black peoples in Africa and those in the Diaspora.

Nwagwu's novel is, indeed, one of the most memorable, deeply yearning and sophisticated family sagas in the twenty-first century. It starts with scenes involving the large extended family of Akadike. The scope of the novel is impressive; it intricately and enigmatically plots the story of three generations of one family (the Akadiques), pivoting on Chioma, a prodigy of a child. Although the story-line starts a bit slowly as the reader is (re)introduced to many sociological, anthropological and historical details, it turns into a fascinating read eventually, covering the lives of three generations of the family. Through this family saga, most events in pre-colonial, colonial and neocolonial Africa are seen in relation to a single family among whose members are representatives of African socio-cultural exploits and problems. The story is told through the point of view of Chioma who suddenly becomes disillusioned with the indigenous culture. We follow her through her birth, her naming, her exploits, her family background and socio-cultural/economic outlooks and her unexpected cultural backsliding. In fact, the story starts with some comments on the background and virtues of the precocious girl: "Chioma was not just born. She was created. And she continuously recreates herself in new light transforming her world" (2). She is thus portrayed as an empiricist and a creative individual. Her great grandfather, Akadike, is also described with superlative qualifiers: "a wealthy man of immense power and prestige...a legend in the town of Okeosisi, where his influence was profound and uncontested" (7).

The whole story bothers on how a new African immigrant (represented by Chioma) tries to come to grips with the ambiguities of an intricate fate made up of dispossession, disruption and dislocation. The text is, really, a product of meticulous historical and cultural research. Nwagwu also uses his native Igbo land, with its rich landscape, humanscape and cultural make-up to explore human nature and how to negotiate the labyrinth of multiculturalism in an alien land. This epistemological tool provides him with a worldview which is able to accommodate the complexities and ironies of postcolonial

accretion. Chioma's abrupt rejection of African culture and her cross-carpetting to Western culture may be Nwagwu's intent to reveal the complexity of African culture and the impossibility of cultural transplantation, especially, the complexity that drives Africans in the Diaspora to become capable of culture suicide, that is, all of their very own deviate from their code. Nwagwu dwells on this problem of cultural complexity by using multiple viewpoints to reveal variety of African Diaspora and their many individual dimensions. This reveals how African culture moves toward, and/or even seeks to destroy itself, a self destruction illustrated graphically by the characters, most especially, Pa Akadike and Chioma.

The stage is therefore set for the novel's main preoccupation – the presentation of the clash between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern. On one level, the novel introduces African children to another world and to the lives of children who live in the United States of America, in a different continent, a different country and culture. On another level, the novel's universal theme addresses much broader issues of culture and Diaspora. These issues transcend geographical and cultural peculiarities. The question of cultural tolerance and impossibility of culture transplantation is a universal one, even though it may be addressed and resolved differently in different situations.

Nwagwu devotes his narration to the strained relationships between modernity and tradition. These conflicts, and the attempts to solve them, add to the story's mesh of sub-plots. Certainly, it can be asserted that other writers, like Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi, Okot p'Bitek and Okara had earlier told clever stories of modernity versus tradition, but Nwagwu could be said to have told it better than some of the old writers. The narrative pairs the perspectives of the 'old' with those of the 'youths', juxtaposing the views of tradition with those of the modern. Stunning in its most unexpected delivery by a first-timer novelist, Nwagwu's novel is written with a measured and bizarre elegance. The novelist captures the interplay of tradition and modernity with great gossamer-wash of descriptions that expands into an ever-widening field of vision, keeping highly descriptive and

meticulous records of every moment of cultural interactions that passes by his characters. The text is imbued with cultural and pedagogical values. Nwagwu, a culturalist, projects some intrinsic aspects of Igbo culture, norms and practices. What we have in the novel is a painstaking analysis of magic in Igbo cosmology – its features, its *modus operandi*, its tenure of potency and its elimination. Some African cultural norms, values and traditional beliefs – in ancestors, life after death, hospitality to neighbours, respect for elders and use of proverbs and aphorisms – are preponderantly foregrounded in the text.

Naval-gazing approach is used by Nwagwu to capture the problem of cultural syncretism. This is done through the exploits and ordeals of the precocious Chioma. The story is multi-thematic, giving attention to domestic, communal, regional, national, continental and global issues. Time past, time present and the future cohere. The text also prioritizes multiple locales: rural and urban, home and abroad, the sea, the road, the air, and the celestial and subterranean realms of existence. Flashbacks are employed for historical reconstruction, and they are carefully inserted into the narrative to throw light on the characters' present situations. In fact, flashbacks are carefully positioned, and the transitions in time so carefully made that they build up indispensable pictures of the characters' lives. Majority of the stories are indeed segments of flashbacks. Intertextual miscegenation is also privileged in Nwagwu's tale, as many voices of precursor writers are heard loud and clear – Achebe, Ayn Rand, oral autobiographies, the Bible, etc. The text is also a bildungsroman, centering on the education of Chioma and Maduka.

However, it should also be stated that *Forever Chimes* resists convention and easy generalization. It has, in sufficient, but varying degrees, elements of postmodernism, metafiction and postcolonial texts. In the main, it exposes the artificial barriers that exist between and within cultures (African and Western cultures). Nwagwu, a puzzling writer, has devoted his creative talent to the mysteries of languages and consciousness. He uses pages analyzing the functional beauty of African cultures, artifacts, axioms, etc, and he spends so

much time on them that they are transformed into ritualistic havens of meanings. His defamiliarizes the African landscape by being so in-depth about his inventions and by providing such relentlessly exploded views. He equally has a concern with enlarging small thoughts about the materials which surround us – forests, places, rivers, mountains, grooves, and so on. It is also safe to categorize Nwagwu as a ‘religious’ writer who gives the reader the obscure radiance of words as spiritual world, and world as words. To a large extent, also, *Forever Chimes* dwells on the spiritual struggle in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and secular society. It is interwoven with references to, and explications of, pertinent ideas from the Holy Bible, philosophical and psychological ponderings and the foundational theories of Freudian psycho-analysis. The author steers these multiple threads of his novel with admirable – if at times overly academic – dexterity. The novel thereby provides an insight into the writer’s society and cultures.

The narrative alternates between the first-person singular and the third-person singular. The ‘I’ appears to be the inner voice that incessantly invades the third-person. The first paragraph establishes the protagonist’s engaging virtues in her specific family circumstances, as well as her wider socio-cultural, intellectual and spiritual context. She is immediately established as intelligent, perceptive, sensitive and moderate. The last part, however, enacts a turn or shift in argument. It explores a sense of culture shock. There is an unexpected transit from postcolonial temper to Eurocentricism and lack of respect for indigenous customs: “no children; no marriage; no Bia. All that is now in the past, just as my Uzo is in the past” (374). There is no doubt of the supernatural mystique with which the text is invested – a secret gift from the ancestors of Akadike who carefully select the recipient of the magic wand. Initially, Chioma successfully amalgamates aspects of Western culture and her traditional culture. For instance, she adopts Christianity while still retaining her belief in Uzo, the family’s mystique. However, the last part of the novel reveals her increasing disillusionment with African culture. Her loyalties are divided, and she has difficulties in seeking help or

speaking out against mental dissonance which arises out of bi-cultural confusion. The dynamism of Chioma is an attestation to the claim of Irene Visser (2004) that the family is both an agent of restriction and freedom. In her words:

The family ... is a vital institution. It is the primary social unit in any community, the individual's opening into the wider social network. As the first locus of development, the family provides nourishment to the individual, and sets the conditions of growth. Confronted with the individual's desire for independence and growth, the family may be metaphorically seen as a closed door or an open door, as a prison or a gateway to freedom (5).

The family is the custodian of tradition and memory. It transmits and mediates the memories, mores and myths of the preceding generations and communities. In fact, rituals, customs, spirituality, morality and religion all have their place within the family structure. What is implied in the foregoing quotation, therefore, is that initially the family of Akadike serves as a closed door for Chioma's deeds, ideologies, actions and her adherence to culture, but it later becomes an open door when she gets acquainted with two cultures. She therefore rebels against her indigenous culture in favour of Christianity and Western culture. Moreover, Nwagwu uses Chioma's revolutionary temper to comment on the problem of identity formation and growing up in a multicultural/transcultural world like the United States of America. Richard Priebe (2006) brilliantly comments on the fragility of cultural identity in the postmodern world. To him, the agricultural grandparents had "a cradle to the grave charter that allowed for stable transference of cultural identity from one generation to another – mobility, literacy and education have fractured that charter" (45). Indeed, Chioma has been affected by Western education, literacy and migration to the United States of America. Also, Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the subversive power of the carnivalesque and the dialogic is at play in Chioma's insurgence. She has, by her action, put to trial the notion of a fixed and stable self.

Nwagwu has thus positioned Chioma in a boundary situation where the traditional categories of identity and cultural affiliation are questioned, resisted and transgressed.

Also, to expose the trouble with biculturalism, one of the early discourses in the novel centers on the problem of child-rearing in a foreign land. Should Africans in the Diaspora insist on the strict child development guidelines that characterized their own childhood in Nigeria, or should they relax and follow the more liberal policies in America? Onyebuchi and Okeadinife argue this issue without any concurrence. This is the novelist's way of saying that attempts to reconcile contradictory beliefs always prove tedious.

Forever Chimes is written to fulfil an obligation, incurred by the author's status – being an African and a Catholic. He is firmly embedded in the two cultures, with an awareness of his place in each. Through the exploits and ordeals of Chioma, Nwagwu dwells on the problems confronting cultural miscegenation. He seems to be suggesting that a culture cannot be safely transplanted from its source into an alien setting. Chioma initially adheres to African autochthonous culture, but she is later infected with the virus of the exigencies of studying in a foreign country, as well as the complicated spirited social structure of Igbo (nay African) cosmos. By leaving the African culture for Euro-western culture, Chioma has finally cut herself (and extensively her family) from her (their) roots. Her final decision to jettison African culture for Western culture is plausible in a society completely overtaken by philistinism and crass materialism. Chioma's cultural-cum-ideological U-turn is a literary ploy meant to adapt the text to the realities of the author's world of experience, the post-independence contradictions and experience. It is a revelation of a strong tension between a modernity that is often an illusion of development and a tradition that sometimes reflects a poor image of a mythical past. Perhaps, Nwagwu is trying to propose that the Euro-American world is always responsible for most African exiles' thwarted ambitions and the constant neglect of African traditions by her people. The argument, stretched further, can mean that African culture cannot survive the outlooks of an alien

environment; neither can it cope with the demands of the present/modern age, and there is no hope for its future relevance.

Another striking technique employed by Nwagwu to dwell on the theme of tradition versus modernity is the employment of a fast-paced and enthralling plot structure, in spite of its heavy reliance on the technique of intensity/vividness. In fact, Nwagwu's firm grasp of the technique of vividness foregrounds his greatest gift as a writer – the ability to provide a firm historical foundation to an otherwise fictional work. He has the capacity for evoking scenes and presenting them vividly to the reader's imagination. Given his professional background, a University Professor, his knack for historical, archaeological and scientific research should come as no surprise. His academic tendency is revealed in the vividness of the narration and in the meticulously researched facts. Architectural, zoological, botanical and geographical landscape of his milieu is presented in extensive detail, and the social etiquette is richly described. The narration is aggressive, intense and revolutionary. The novel actually sets a new tone for an old theme.

The hallmarks of the text are apparent in its visionary qualities, timelessness and sublimity redolent of Achebe's styles. The story can stir the reader, if not to a profound affection, then at least, to a genuine reflection about the past, the present and deductively, the future of the African culture. The historical purview of *Forever Chimes* is panoramic, taking in a vast vision of cultural discourses and prominent historical events. Its synoptic, macro-cosmic view impresses the reader. It should be asserted that Nwagwu's novel, in many ways, accomplishes what most historical novels strive for - it paints a portrait of some specific periods and places in all their cultures and socio-political realities. It also has most of the trappings of literary gamesmanship.

Another intrinsic aspect of the novel worth elucidating is its characterization. Nwagwu's characterization is commendable. The portrayal of Chioma, Jeff, Pa Akadike, etc is particularly well done. He penetrates their psyches to identify the bases and motivations for their actions and conduct. There are rich developments and photo-like

descriptions of most of the characters that are picked up and brought into fleshy, vivid life. And the seeming multiplicity of the characters reflects the globalized nature of the modern world. The characters' metaphorical language influences Nwagwu's descriptions – the prose-a-prism through which the characters' cultures shine forth. The novelist allows them to speak and see for themselves through his robust narration and credible characterization. Each detail about each character is carefully conceived and meticulously rendered. Chioma's prodigy and Jeff's too radical cultural primitivistic temper may be overstated, but they are nonetheless still plausible. Here is realism at its best. Chioma's precocity, her initial cultural fanaticism and the eventual profound weight of diasporic dwelling on her own unexpected abandonment of her indigenous traditions are brought into relief through sharp characterization. The characters are also imbued with the breadth and depth of three-dimensional characters, making them round. The result of all this is a work that merits respect and admiration.

Nwagwu should also be commended for his ability to recreate scenes which many readers can easily recognize as familiar. This is another reason for the text's appeal. A cosmopolitan text, *Forever Chimes*, depicts a powerful and vivid evocation of Nigerian and American lives. However, what we have is not an accurate, unimaginative and faithful depiction of lives, but a picture of social, cultural and political realities in Nigeria and the United States of America with distortions, falsification and confusion of details which are glaring. Nwagwu's handling of such crucial incidents is significant.

Besides, Nwagwu is a visionary writer. This is because one notices the great visions of Gryphius, Doris Lessing, Holderlin, Novalis, etc in the story – that is, visions of peace, freedom, and humanity. Also, the reader observes, in the story, the features of lofty intellectuality and morality of Pascal, the Catholic, and the radical Christianness of Kierkegaard the protestant, the mystical depth of Dostoyevsky the Russian, and the enigmatic darkness of Kafka the Jew. But in the end, the metamorphosis of the protagonist of the novel

(Chioma) foreshadows an eclipse of an African god, the downfall of the modern pseudo-gods and the subsequent ascendancy of a 'higher' god. Chioma's mental dissonance towards the end of the story signifies that authorities and beliefs have started to crumble in Africa. Her initial rigid adherence to African culture and norms now succumbs to Catholicism, a development of intellectual life. Studies in literature and religion are particularly vulnerable to accusations of subjectivity and bias, because by their very nature, they deal with subjectivities and peoples' perceptions of their own identities. This is why the reaction of Chioma to African culture at the end of the story seemingly looks illogical. That is, Chioma and her family's inexorable slide into Catholicism is shocking. Equally the turn of events shocks the reader.

African literature has often been accused of spinning and spinning around the same themes. However, Nwagwu's *Forever Chimes* is an exception. It deals with a wider range of human experiences, centering on most important and most controversial concerns of contemporary Nigerian culture. The past is subjected to multiple interpretations in the text. Nwagwu uses the 'shocking' end of the story to reject stable, permanent centre of belief. This allows him to "play with fixed ideas, raising a hall of mirrors that reflect and deflect her/his selves in an endless play of signification" (cf. Ana Arce, 2000:79). Thus, Chioma resists stable categorizations. She is a fiercely independent personality who favours fluidity and introspection as deconstruction favours a continuous revision of beliefs. Through the radical temper of Chioma, Nwagwu rejects Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity and accepts syncretism. This involves negotiating one's ways in a labyrinth of cultural collision.

Through the character/characterization of Chioma, the novel unsettles and questions discourses; it involves deviations from the socio-cultural norms and unconscious process of picking, rejecting and creating new symbols. The novel is concerned with a detailed objective portrayal of the protagonist under various forms of social, psychological and spiritual stress. Indeed, Chioma's intrinsic conflict, between good and evil, reveals that *Forever Chimes* is seriously

concerned with the moral, religious and social problems of the postmodern world - the sources of evil in human lives (redolent with Graham Greene's and Evelyn Waugh's thematic and ideological underpinnings).

The plot of *Forever Chimes* is not linear; rather, it is inorganic/episodic. It takes the form of a chronicle in order to picture all the episodes of cultural interactions through the generations of the Akadikes. Culture is, therefore, explored on the pedestal of power-play in a struggle for survival and relevance. In the novel, the world is taken as a 'chess – board', while life becomes a game and 'man', the object of the game. As the Western culture/religion contrives and secretly designs to outwit its opponent (African culture) in this game of survival, havoc is consequently wreaked on the African culture.

The complex colonial and post-independence experiences of African countries have thrown into sharp relief the saliency and vicissitudes of memory, particularly in societies that have been marked by racialized religions, cultural contacts and conflicts. *Forever Chimes* interprets Nigerian culture in a new context which is post-national, post -realist and even post-historical. As a postmodernist novel, it challenges the assumptions of metropolitan literature and unfolds the possibilities of magical realism. Realistic spaces and times, as well as imaginary spaces and times are privileged. In fact, Nwagwu's novel belongs to the new literary tradition, which though related to the European tradition, is distinguished from it by its African frame of reference. The empirical are merged with the uncanny. Through this, Nwagwu is able to expose the conflictual parameters between the real and the imaginary. This consequently signifies the opposition between 'romantic' (metaphysical) and 'futurological' potentials of the text.

One of the ways in which a culture declares its presence is through the texts it produces. The celebration of the beauty, richness and validity of African traditions and cultures are seen in the scenes set in traditional Africa and some set in the United States of America. Accepting the claim that the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture (Roland Barthes, 1990) implies an

intertextual understanding of the text, placing it within a vast cultural network. Textual space contains the potential to produce a ‘differential space’ or a “space of radical openness”. By conceiving textual practice in this way, Nwagwu has shown the text as a new site for social transformation. The natural environment of Okeosisi, a fictional Igbo rural community, is appropriated, turned into a unique discursive space in which values and meanings are created, celebrated, contested and transformed. This setting houses the past and both determines and destroys the future. It also accounts for Chioma’s multicultural life-styles in a melting pot of cultures (the United States of America). The village and the city settings ring splendidly true. And the character of Jeff as he tackles the problem of malaria and the people’s reactions is engaging and credible. The theft of the car that conveys Maduka and Jeff to Okeosisi, at Calabar, is also a realistic event in Nigeria. Nwagwu is also skillful in depicting evocative settings - the hustle and bustle of activities in Nigerian cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Calabar, Port-Harcourt and the like.

One of the most compelling aspects of Nwagwu’s art is the use of multiplicity of voices to reveal to the reader the complexity of African cultures, especially the intricacy that drives its own citizens to become capable of savagery in the name of cultural syncretism. *Forever Chimes* particularly privileges children’s voices, once violated, neglected and forgotten. It denounces chauvinism. Nwagwu is at his best in deploying multiple viewpoints to expose the intricacy and variety of African cultures and their many individual dimensions, as well as how those cultures move toward and even seek to destroy themselves, a self-destruction illustrated graphically by Chioma’s sudden rejection of her indigenous culture. The text is also filled with the tone of hopelessness and, much worse for Africans, the meaninglessness and feeble nature of African culture: “the little gods that gave us Uzo have completed their task and have now returned home to be united with the one big god, Almighty God. And he alone shall I serve with all my body and soul” (375). We should remember that the idea of a high God was the invention of the Christian

missionaries. Nwagwu seems to be orchestrating this view through the foregoing statement.

Forever Chimes stands as a reminder of how media images of Africa can never substitute for African stories. Previous writings have habituated us to an Africa purely of impersonal disasters. Nwagwu however takes us beneath the skin of Afro-pessimism. From the early pages of the text, a lively cast of characters, beautiful sceneries, elegant places, worthwhile cultures and rich traditions tumble forth. The ethnographic richness of the text is revealed in the descriptions of the ordinary life, religious rituals and social stresses of an Igbo Village. Thus, the story of Africa's past is made a truly global tale, offering the opportunity to connect past and present in a powerful way. Indeed, Nwagwu is able to hold the reader spellbound, while he takes him/her round the landscapes of Nigeria, real and imagined. Although the early chapters may appear too detailed and seemingly pedantic, a distinct protagonist (Chioma) finally emerges later to give the story its needed structure. Chioma's exploits and dilemma open up the space for the author to explore some of the problems of multiculturalism and exilic consciousness, the stereotypes concerning Nigeria and Nigerians in the United States or in the Diaspora generally. Indeed, *Forever Chimes* is a text for all to read as the stories (or at least part of the stories) of Nigerians everywhere is told in the text. The story flows with imagery and metaphors that resonate with many familiar experiences and memories. It promotes heteroglossia as different discourses and counter-discourses are developed. This is revealed in the idea of global interaction and communication orchestrated in the novel (cf: Abigail Ward, 2007).

Although Nwagwu employs the technique of stories-within-stories in the text, each of the stories apparently stands on its own, and its impact is significantly enhanced when examined in the conversational context of the whole. For instance, a series of vignettes of Chioma's, Jeff's and Pa Akadike's lives and experiences are vividly and interrelatedly explored. Through this style, the text shows the unexpected connections between peoples, cultures, centuries,

countries and histories. Edward Said (1994) comments lucidly on the necessity of cultural connections thus:

No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival, in fact, is about the connection between things (408).

Actually, Chioma's survival in the United States is made possible by her ability to trace the affirmative connections between traditions, habitations, language and cultural terrains. The Akadike mystique, the walking stick (Uzo), Ifa and ancestral masks are portrayed as cross-cultural items. For instance, Jeff, a stranger, values African culture more than the natives. He admires the masks that Pa Akadike offers him as gifts like jewels:

Jeff's plane arrived Washington, D.C, on time. He had three masks as hand luggage, none of them covered, or in a bag, all were naked and bare, no make-up, no cover-up. When he approached the passport officer on the entry post, he wore one of the masks, in jest (323).

Therefore, the text dwells on a ubiquitous paradox of African 'new immigrants'; that is, the problem of displaced identity - difficulty of fully belonging to the society where they have settled and a sense of an unavoidable, almost atavistic, attachment to their birthplace. This tension between diasporic existence and local essence has always been a formidable ferment for the creative imagination of recent Nigerian writers. Nwagwu is, without doubt, one of the most distinguished representatives of this outburst of talents.

It should, however, be stated that the text has few artistic shortcomings which are pardonable for a first-timer novelist like Nwagwu. For instance, the otherwise informing and cultural novel suddenly becomes an agent of religious (Christianity) proselytizing. In the United States, things suddenly start to fall apart for Chioma. The family magical wand, that is, the family walking stick she

inherits from her grandfather, becomes a fetish object, and African gods and goddesses become 'small gods' without any power. Surprisingly, the alien God becomes the mighty God, the big God. The Igbo culture, hitherto a quintessential, preservable, worthy culture, is later projected in a negative light. The narrative is also at times marred by a bewildering amalgam of muddled actions, folktales, stories, characters, locales, quaint coincidences and very many recurring references and cross-references. An inattentive reader can easily get lost in this labyrinth of complexities. At times, Nwagwu shows ambivalent attitude towards the womenfolk. This sexist stance is revealed in many scenes of the novel. The following should suffice as few illustrations:

Let only real men attend; women should stay at home and watch the children and cook their husbands' good delicious *ofe ukazi* tomorrow (17).

Ah, no, my dear; this is not women's business. It is for men and men only (19).

However, despite this little criticism leveled against Nwagwu's *Forever Chimes*, its thematic relevance, stylistic felicities and visionary quality promise much for the future. All things considered, the text is a useful addition to the corpus of Nigerian prose fiction. It is to be hoped that Nwagwu continues to tell our stories, and to tell them, distinctively.

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THE IMPACT OF JEWISH SCRIPTURE AND PROSELYTISM ON EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY EXPANSION

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Abstract

The paper attempts an examination of the significance of Jewish scripture and proselytism to early Christian missionary enterprise the Gentile nations. The paper is approached from a socio-historical perspective. Among other things, the research brings to the fore that the availability of Jewish scripture (which talks more about the promised Messiah) to the world in the Hellenistic language and the missionary spirit already at home in the first century Judaism which allowed the conversion of Gentiles to Jewish national religion, considerably combined to give the pioneering Christian missionaries the much success they recorded in the early Christian global mission. That if not for these two Hellenistic elements in Judaism, Christianity would probably not have achieved the much success recorded in its first attempt at global mission.

Introduction

Judaism, up to the time of Christ, was not the narrow racial national religion it is sometime made out to be.¹ The translation of the Jewish scripture into Greek, the language of the Greco-Roman world, coupled with Jewish proselytising mission, transformed Judaism from a racial national religion to a universal one. This new religious identity earned by Judaism in the Greco-Roman world, in turn considerably prepared grounds for the “Christian Great Commission” of “making disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

To drive the above point home, this paper examines the ways significant Jewish scripture and proselytism helped in the dissemination of the Christian gospel to the Gentile world in the early phase of Christianity. The work is a socio-historical research carried in the light of biblical literature and scholarly writings.

Jewish Scripture and Early Christian Mission

The Hebrew Scripture, divided into Law, Prophets and Writings, was very precious to the Jews (especially after the exile), among

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whom became pioneers of early Christian mission. No true Jew was at home anywhere without the Jewish Scripture. The widespread of the Jewry both East and West made the Law the centre around which Jewish life and religion had perforce to revolve outside Palestine.²

The main stress in normative Judaism is laid on the *Torah* (Law) much of which is devoted to the Law and the history of the origin of the nation of Israel as the covenant people of Yahweh. After the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem with its sacred objects, the Law of Moses took the place of the Ark of the Covenant. This Law was of a treasure importance to the Jews. They guarded it jealously, respected it a lot, and some were even prepared to die in defence of it.³ There were Jews in the Maccabean age who suffered cruel tortures and death during the mad attempt of Antiochus Epiphanies to Hellenize Judea. They were prepared to suffer shame, contempt and death than to abandon the Law of Yahweh⁴.

The results of the unwavering devotion to the Law of God were of the utmost importance to Christianity. As related by Foakes Jackson, in the first place the martyr spirit obtained recognition, in the second, the Messianic hopes were again aroused.⁵ These martyrs taught the world the lesson, that opinions for which men are prepared to die possess an unquenchable vitality. The obscure and unknown victims who suffered nameless tortures rather than abandon the Law of their God were the precursors of the Christian martyrs whose blood became the seed of the Church. When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews saw the approaching persecution of Christians, he recalled the memory of these Jewish martyrs (cf. Heb.11:35). He stressed that these were prepared to die for the truth with the conviction of a future life and the prospects of a glorious deliverance.

Moreover, the Jewish Scripture contains many prophecies and special references to the coming Messiah. So with the aid of the Scripture which was dear to the pious Jews, the Messianic idea was prevalent in the minds of the Jews.

In addition, the translation of the Jewish Scripture to Greek (the lingua-franca of the Graeco-Roman world) made it possible for the people in the then known world to have direct access to the study

of the Jewish scriptures which speak so much about the coming of the Messiah (GK. *Christos*).⁶ Hence, the Septuagint helped to a considerable extent in the spreading of Messianic ideas and expectations among the Gentile nations.

Owing to its importance, the Jewish Scripture was at the heart of every true Jew. It was expected of parents to teach their children the Law of Yahweh at early age (cf. Deut 6:7). Jesus was well versed in the Scripture. He quoted from it and expounded on it during His teachings (Mt.4:4, Lk. 24:27; John 7:42 cf. with Mt.5:21-48).

He acknowledged it as the word of God (Lk.16:31). He recommended the searching of it to those who did not believe in his messiahship, pointing out that it testified of him and his mission (John 5:39). He spoke of it as profitable for doctrine, instruction and sanctification (cf. Jn.17:17). In John 20:31 it is said to make wise unto salvation. Christ clarified his mission as not that of abolishment of the Scripture but the fulfilment of it (Mt.5:17; Jn19:24). That everything in the Law must be fulfilled before the heaven and earth pass away (Mt.5:18). The dangers of rejecting it or breaking it are spelt out in John 12:48 and Matt.5:19.

In the earliest days of the Church, the Apostles often appealed to it (Acts 2:3; 17:2; 18:24; 28:23). The early Christian writers depended largely on it as on the life, mission and sayings of Jesus. For instance, the four Gospel records were rooted in it, pointing to Jesus as the fulfilment of it; Paul the Apostle, the doyen of Christian theology, drew largely from it in his Epistles etc. In fact, the importance of the Jewish Scripture to the Christian Church cannot be overestimated. As remarked by S.O. Abogunrin, the Bible of the first Christians was the Old Testament known in Palestine as the Septuagint-the Greek version of the Old Testament that contains the apocryphal writings that were held in high honour among the Hellenistic Jews.⁷ Even when Christianity became emancipated from Judaism the Old Testament was not discarded. It was recognized as containing the Christian economy in prediction, symbol and types. It was the delight and duty of the early preachers to show how these found their fulfillment in the Lord's life. The Apostolic doctrine

consisted largely of the Messianic interpretation of Old Testament passages. Thus, the words of Jesus and the teachings of the Apostles formed a parallel with the Old Testament.

Jewish Proselytism and Christian Global Mission

Jewish proselytism in a number of ways prepared grounds for Christian global evangelistic mission. Etymologically, the word proselyte is the technical concept, coined by the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *ger* which at first meant a resident alien, who might profess no religious affiliation whatever (cf. Gen. 15:13; Ex. 23:9). The word came later to describe “those who had come over” (Gk. Proselytes) religiously from the Hellenistic environment (cf. Mt. 23:15; Acts 2:11 etc)⁸. According to the teaching of later Judaism, a proselyte, as expatiated by S.O. Abogunrin, was a Gentile who was converted to be circumcised and baptized. In addition to these he was to offer sacrifice and observe the Sabbath.⁹ And as stressed by M.S. Miller and J.S. Miller, not until a candidate was circumcised and cleansed (or baptized) and has offered sacrifices did he become a proselyte to Judaism and eligible to partake of the Passover.¹⁰ The prescribed baptism by immersion was symbolic for purification and consecration of the heathen while circumcision was a necessary requirement for males, only baptism and sacrifice were required of females (though sacrifice became abolished for both sexes after the final destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70). Both baptism and circumcision had the underlying purpose of cleansing the proselyte from the impurity of idolatry and the restoration of the purity of a new born man. It was a baptism of repentance like that of John the Baptist, but that of John was different in that it was administered to the Jews and it was in anticipation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit by the Messiah. The proselyte baptism like those of John the Baptist and the Christians is once and for all unique and unrepeatable.¹¹ At any rate, the proselytism together with its baptism in a number of ways foreshadowed Christianity.

The Dispersion of the Jews considerably enhanced proselytism. The dispersed Jews carried along with them a missionary

spirit to the lands of their sojourning. Contrary to their ancient and modern custom, the Jews became energetic missionaries¹².

The translation of the Jewish Scripture into Greek-the official language of the then known world also facilitated the making of more converts into Judaism as many Gentiles became acquainted with the Septuagint. The constant mention of the persons who worshipped the God of Israel in Acts of the Apostles shows how numerous they must have been in the great cities of the Empire at that time. In fact, the Gentiles themselves seemed to have also recognized something of the divine mission of Israel.¹³

However, Judaism with its proselytism still fell short of assuming the status of a universal religion. While there is no doubt that Jewish theology and ethics held a strong attraction for the serious pagan, weary of polytheism and its attendant moral corruption, two factors still combined to limit the number of proselytes. As related by G.B. Caird, firstly, the Roman government refused to extend to proselytes the privileges and immunities granted to those who were Jews by birth; secondly, most Gentiles hesitated to undergo the rite of circumcision, which would bind them to obey not only the moral but also the ceremonial Law. Accordingly, in most Synagogues of Diaspora there could be found Gentiles who were satisfied to participate in the worship and instruction without becoming more deeply involved.

Moreover, the proselytes were still discriminated against by those that were of Jewish nationality inspite of their conversion to Jewish religion¹⁴. This was because for one to accept the faith of Israel was one thing, but it was a different thing for him to become a Jew¹⁵. And so, among other things (owing to racial discrimination) Gentile converts into Judaism were restrained from going into the Temple proper. They were confined to a place called "the court of Gentiles".¹⁶ And any attempt to go beyond this point, even to "the court of women", was to be met with a heavy penalty. In fact there was an inscription in Greek and Latin prescribing death for anyone making such an attempt.

Even among the so called proselytes there was apostasy. Many of the converts were not strong enough to persevere in their newly found faith probably owing to its legalism and bids to satisfy personal ambitions.

Similarly, there was syncretism between Judaism and various pagan cults. There is ample evidence of this in the passage in Acts 19:13 – 19 where mention is made of Jews who practised magic. In addition, the Magic Papyri are full of references to the Septuagint. This could be attributed to the literary influence of the Septuagint in that the translation of the Old Testament into Greek opened up the possibility of a synthesis between Jewish and Greek thought, (though this synthesis was not attempted by the translations, who left the fundamental nature of Judaism unchanged).¹⁷ This attempt to integrate Jewish theology with Greek philosophy was made by Alexandrian philosophers. For example, in some places the God of the Jews, under the title "Sabaoth", was identified with the pagan deity Sabazins. Similarly, in the Aegean provinces there was a worship of Zeus Hypsistos which almost certainly owed something to the use of Hypsistos as a divine name in the Septuagint.¹⁸ Other reasons for the syncretism included the apostasy of Jews, the lapse of proselytes, and most importantly the visits paid to the Synagogue by partially converted Gentiles.¹⁹

With the shortcomings of Judaism with its proselytism to make itself a faith that could be universally accepted without any limitation sprang the hope and search for a new religion which could be able to make up for the ideals deficient in Judaism. In other words, proselytism in Judaism was only a harbinger of the Christian dispensation with its characteristic dynamic missionary spirit.

The advent of Christianity with its unique message of salvation from sin and the adoption of every true behaviour in Christ into God's family as joint-heirs to the commonwealth of the eschatological Israel irrespective of race, sex or status (cf. Rom. 9:23-26; 10:12-13; Gal. 3:28) resulted in a massive drift from Judaism into Christianity among the proselytes. As corroborated by M.S. Miller and J.S. Miller, many non-Israelites, who had become religious

proselytes of Judaism became proselytes of the Christian way, for example, among the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost were proselytes from distant lands (Acts 2:9-12); many from Pisidian Antioch, who followed Paul and Barnabas were proselytes (Acts 13:43) and so on.²⁰ That these readily accepted the Gospel, left the Synagogue and followed Christ who made no ceremonial distinction between Jew and Gentile bond and free. That this way Synagogues of Gentile proselytes to Judaism became living cells which grew into new Christian Churches (cf. Acts 13:16, 43, 16:14f).

It is not an overstatement that Paul and other pioneering Christian missionaries of the early centuries of Christian expansion traded on the Jewish missionary spirit of making converts to Judaism of Gentiles from far and remote lands, and the availability of the Jewish scripture in the Hellenistic language. Paul in his three missionary journeys easily found a ready made audience among the proselytes in the different Jewish synagogues in gentile lands. During the first missionary journey in A.D. 45, centred on Asia minor, Paul and his associates preached the Gospel of Christ with much success in the Jewish Synagogues, among others, Salamis, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, where Paul with his sound knowledge of Jewish history and Law, preached in the Synagogue on the Sabbath recapitulating the salvation history of Israel and the establishment of the Davidic dynasty and its adjoining eternal covenant to establish the Messiahship of Jesus, the Saviour.

Equally, in the second missionary journey of between A.D. 50-53 which centered on Asia Minor and Europe preached with great success in the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. At Philippi in Macedonia, Lydia, the seller of purple was won into the Faith as the first convert in Europe (Acts 16:14-15), and the miraculous conversion of the city's chief warden equally took place (Acts 16:30ff). At Thessalonica, a large number of Greek converts were won including many prominent women (17:4). Persecution arising from Jewish hostilities however made the missionaries fled to Berea where the Christian message was received with much eagerness with "prominent number of Greek women and many Greek men" also won

into the Faith. Jewish opposition at Berea also drove them to Athens, the home of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. Among others, the notable converts at Athens, the capital city of Greek philosophy, were “Dionysius the Areopagite and a women named Damaris” (17:34).

Significantly, at Corinth, Crispus, the chief ruler of the Synagogues, his entire household, and “many of the Corinthians” were converted to Christianity and administered water baptism (Acts 18:8). And Paul spent one and half years in this city teaching the converts the word of God. At Ephesus, Paul equally used the grounds provided by Jewish scripture and proselytism to engage in a kind of theological discourse with the Jews in the Synagogue.

The third missionary journey which started in about A.D. 54 and lasted till about A.D. 58 was devoted to Ephesus where Apostle Paul spent two years in keeping with his earlier promise (cf. 19:10 with 18:21). Opposition in this city however forced Paul to leave. He went through Macedonia to Greece confirming the churches and eventually set for Jerusalem after a farewell speech and a charge to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus (cf Acts 20:17, 28).

Though the book of Acts which provides us with the records of the first century Christian mission ends abruptly with the imprisonment of Paul in Rome awaiting trial by Caesar on the basis of his Gentile evangelistic activities (Acts 28:16), extra-biblical records inform that Paul's trial by Caesar was fair. He was discharged and acquitted after which, as speculated by some scholars, he embarked on the fourth missionary journey to Spain.²¹

Apart from the missionary activities of Paul among the Gentile nations, traditions inform that other Apostles of Christ eventually followed suit in strict compliance with the Lord's injunction of preaching the Gospel to every creature without racial discrimination. In fact, each of the Apostles was credited with a field of labour in the then known world. To mention a few, Matthew is credited with preaching the Gospel in Ethiopia; Andrew - Scythia; Bartholomew - India and Arabia; Simon the Zealot - Persia; Thomas - Parthia and India; Philip - Asia; Matthias - Ethiopia or among the "Anthropophagi"; Peter - Rome (figuratively called Babylon in his

Epistles), and so on.²² Although undue weight cannot be given to all these traditions, it is not right for a historian to ignore them altogether since they show that the Gospel of salvation was taken virtually to the utter-most parts of the earth through which the racially despised Gentiles became obedient to the Gospel.

Moreover, it is equally a fact well established in ecclesiastical history that Christianity was established very early enough in the regions of Gallica, Belgica, Germania and Rhaetia, all of which roughly coincide with the present day France, Belgium, the Rhine Valley, Southern Germany, and parts of Switzerland. There were also said to be Christians in Britain before the first decade of the third century.²³

Summary and Conclusion

In a nutshell, the Jewish Scripture was taken over by the Church in her early days as the foundation Scripture for Christianity. It did not only form the groundwork of Christian preaching and teaching, it was as well used for all the purposes outlined in II Timothy 3:15-17. The Jewish Scripture therefore, without mincing words, became the bed-rock upon which the Christian Scripture was founded. In fact, the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, the headquarters of the church, could never have made the world accept the Faith of the Apostles, and the church would have consequently remained an isolated community with no attractions to the outside world, if not for the Hellenistic element which gave Christianity its true character as a missionary religion, and more importantly, the significant roles played by the Greek version of the Jewish scripture and earlier Israel's divine mission among the Gentiles.²⁴ The mission to the Gentiles, inaugurated in the Gentile city of Syrian Antioch in about A.D. 45, barely five years after the conversion of the first fruits of the Gentile church, was made more possible owing to the foundation that Jewish Scripture and proselytism had made in preparing the world to accept the Jewish faith. In other words, the early Christian global mission owes much of its success to the availability of the Jewish scripture in its Hellenistic form which talks more about the promised Messiah, and the earlier missionary spirit among the despised Gentiles which Judaism with its proselytization process had prepared.

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2. H.L. Ellison "Judaism" J. D. Douglas. *et al.* (eds) *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1974, p. 554.
3. The Law used in the Synagogue was a scroll covered in a velvet or silk robe lavishly decorated and crowned with gold or silver. Before reading, it was carried all round the Synagogue, and as it passed everybody bowed or touched it, and turned round so that nobody had his back to the Law.
4. The aged Eleazar, an highly respected teacher of the Law was beaten to death for his refusal to eat pork as demanded by Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. 6:18-31). Similarly, a Jewish mother together with her seven sons were in a single day cut into pieces and roasted in the brazen pans for their insistence not to abandon the Law of Yahweh (2 Macc. 7). However, the courageous death of these Jews than compromise with heathenism seen by their fellow Jews as "exploits for the name of the Lord" remained a great lesson to subsequent generations (cf. Dan. 11:31-33).
5. F.J. Foakes Jackson, *The History of the Christian Church*, Cambridge: Hall and Son, 1914, p. 7.
6. This Greek version of the Jewish Bible is called the *Septuagint* (from the Greek word for seventy) based on the belief that seventy Jewish scholars undertook the translation at Alexandria in Egypt.
7. S.O. Abogunrin, *Critical Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*. Ibadan: Tafak Publications, 1989, pp. 17&18.
8. See Clyde C. Smith "Proselyte" in J.D. Doughlass *et al* (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 807.
9. Abogunrin, *Critical Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, pp. 6 & 7.

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10. M.S. Miller & J.S. Miller. *Blacks Bible Dictionary*, London: A & C Black Ltd., 1952, pp. 486-587.
 11. See Abogunrin, *Critical Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, p. 7.
 12. Cf Jesus' reference to the missionary activity of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 23:15.
 13. Foakes Jackson, *The History of the Christian Church*, p. 13.
 14. A distinction was always made between *Ioudaios* (a Jew by nation) and *Proselutos* (a convert into Jewish religion).
 15. Foakes Jackson, *The History of the Christian Church*, p. 14.
 16. The "Court of the Gentiles" was outside the Temple proper, but within the Temple compound. In the Temple proper were different divisions: "the court of women" meant only for Jewish women and children; "the Court of Israel" where men sat and watched what the priests were doing at the "Altar area"; beyond the Altar area was the Holy Place" which led to the innermost Holy of Holies. In respect for the Jewish religion, the Roman administrators granted the Sanhedrin the power to inflict death penalty on any Gentile who crossed the barrier into the Temple proper.
 17. G.B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age*, London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1955, p. 27.
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 20. M.S. Miller & J.S. Miller. *Blacks Bible Dictionary*, p. 587.
 21. This is also suggested by Paul's own statements in Romans 15: 24, 28.
 22. For detail see F.C. Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford: O.U.P., 1958.
 23. See K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Vol.1), London: Harper and Bros., 1937.
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MUSLIM FEMINISM – EXPERIMENTS IN LIBERATORY HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract

In the early 20th century, mainstream Muslim reformers tentatively embraced a paradigm shift, from the classical orthodox position in which the human mind simply discovers the rulings (*al-ahkam*) of divine law and extends them to new cases on the basis of consensus (*ijma'*) and analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), to a position where reason, now empowered to discern right from wrong and to ferret out the *ratio legis* behind the divine injunctions is granted the privilege and responsibility to make legal rulings according to the spirit of the *shariah*. The inadequacy of classical methods brought them to notice a paradigmatic crisis epistemological and methodological levels of the traditionist Muslim thought. The absolutist view of knowledge and consequently the ahistorical and a-empirical methodology along these two lines is spurned by them. The shift allowed ultimately a more realistic attitude of knowledge based on the constant discovery and trial. Most of these reformists, which may be classified as Critical Modernists, believe that Islamic law must be made to accommodate the sweeping changes imposed on Muslim societies in the modern period. Although most of them are conservatives in many ways, the implications of the points of theory they choose to emphasize indicate a shift in epistemology and hermeneutics. For them, the connection between the revealed text and modern society does not turn upon a literalist hermeneutic, but rather upon an interpretation of the spirit and broad intention behind the specific language of the text. This paper argues that the Muslim Feminists are a part of this stream of Critical Modernists and attempts to show that their approach, which favors the spirit of the texts over their literal reading, has become a hermeneutic of choice practiced by a wide spectrum of Muslim thinkers, the Muslim Feminists being one of those.

Muslim feminism is part of a new reformist or modernist religious thinking that is consolidating a conception of Islam and modernity as compatible, not opposed. Reformist thinkers do not reject an idea simply because it is Western, nor do they see Islam as providing a blueprint, as having an in-built programme of action for the social, economic, and political problems of the Muslim world. Following and building on the work of earlier modernist reformers

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such as Mohammad Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal and Fazlur Rahman, they contend that the human understanding of Islam is flexible, that Islam's tenets can be interpreted to encourage both pluralism and democracy, and that Islam allows change in the face of time, space and experience.¹ Instead of searching for an Islamic genealogy for modern concepts like gender equality, human rights and democracy, these new thinkers place the emphasis on how religion is understood and how religious knowledge is produced. Not only do they pose a serious challenge to legalistic and absolutist conceptions of Islam, they are attempting to carve a space within which Muslim women can realize gender equality in law.

Classifying Feminism in the Islamic Environ

Feminism began as a universalist belief during the 19th century. The term feminism is credited to Hubertine Auclert who presented the concept in 1880 in her journal, *La Citoyenne*, criticizing male domination and beginning to make claims for women's rights. The term may have originated in France and the West, but feminism is not a Western idea. Feminism has as its ultimate goal the triumphal emancipation of the woman as a unique, distinct individual with a mind uncluttered by patriarchal beliefs and an abusive submission to tradition. In its most humane sense, the concept of feminism is a conscious process of self-renewal in thought, feeling and action that aims at deconstructing and transforming the prevailing order of reality.

It was in the early 20th century when the feminist movement emerged in the Muslim Middle East to struggle for women rights in the society. The creation of the movement started after that the middle- and upper class women had got aware about the oppression the women in the society were getting through. The aim of the middle- and upper class women was to make changes in the patriarchal state system. The Muslims feminism was not a new movement. In the beginning of the nineteenth century Islamic thinkers such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Jamal-ad-Din Asadabadi, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Reza, Qasim Amin, and later "the Sister's movement" in the Arabic countries tried to give a

modern, liberal, reformist and feminist reinterpretation of Islam. Their ideas never became dominating in any Islamic country, but during the 1980s and 1990s, a similar tendency to reinterpret Islam in a feminist context reappeared in several Islamic countries.

By the late 1980s, a new way of thinking in the Muslim world about gender began to emerge, a discourse that is 'feminist' in its aspiration and demands, yet 'Islamic' in its language and sources of legitimacy. Several secular feminist scholars, for instance, Fatima Mernissi and Aziza Al-Hibri, who earlier criticized Islam, changed their position and tried to offer a feminist interpretation of Islam, making it quite difficult to place Muslim feminist into a 'neat' category. Some versions of this new discourse initially came to be labelled 'Islamic Feminism'² – a notion that remains contested by both the majority of Islamists and some secular feminists, who see it as antithetical to their respective positions and ideologies, and as a contradiction in terms.³ Islamic feminism is both highly contested and firmly embraced.⁴

Jan Hjärpe, a Swedish scholar of theology separates Islamic feminism from Muslim feminism. He identifies four feminist trends in Islamic cultures: *Atheist feminism*, *Secular feminism*, *Islamic feminism* and *Muslim feminism*.

Atheist Feminism

Atheist feminism proposes that religion per se is anti-women. They believe that women's movement could develop only by challenging the influence of religion in society.

Secular Feminism

Secular feminists situate their calls for reform outside the religious paradigm. They are not interested so much in reforming Islam, but in promoting a secularized version of societal governance which allows for equality of men and women.

Secular feminism broadly refers to feminist movements in the Muslim world which have drawn their inspiration from Western models which view religion as part of the 'problem'. Historically, secular feminists in the Muslim world were largely drawn from the upper-middle class and include figures such as Huda Sha'wari who

founded the Intellectual Association of Egyptian Women in 1914, and, who, after a visit to Rome, famously removed her face-veil after stepping off the boat in Cairo.

Secular feminists espouse a neutral view about religion. They argue that the relationship between Islam and feminism depends first and foremost on whether liberal or patriarchal view of Islam is dominant in the society. They also hold that under a theocratic government or a religious movement woman's emancipation is impossible. But they do not think that feminist movements necessarily have to attack religious beliefs.

While the secular feminists have had some success in parts of the Muslim world, however, because religion plays an important role for the vast majority of Muslim peoples, secular feminists' inability to work within the religious paradigm restricts its progress.

Islamic Feminism

Islamic Feminism is the feminist articulation of Islamism, another modern movement which rejects Westernisation and yet calls for the revival of Islamic law and practice. Specifically, the Islamists adopt a worldview in which their usually literalist interpretation of Islam is considered divinely mandated. Their approach is considered to be the only, true and infallible interpretation of Islam and to which all aspects of personal faith and societal structure should be subordinated. Islamist feminists often hold the view that Islam promotes a patriarchal structure of family and society, but which isn't inherently oppressive to women. The Muslim man is the head of the household, but he should not be a tyrant in his own home. A woman's rightful nature, according to Islamists, requires that her role is primarily that of home-maker and care-giver to children. Paid work is a secondary option which should not conflict with her primary role.

Islamism is found in the revival movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at-i Islami, works of Ayatullah Mutahhari, and Islamist feminists include Zaynab al-Ghazali.

Islamic feminism is mostly state feminism, or a part of fundamentalist and religious movement, and according to this trend, women's identification with religious movements help Muslim

women's emancipation. Nesta Ramazani, an Iranian scholar, for instance, points out that women's gathering in religious mourning, their presence in Friday prayers, and their participation in revolution and war eventually will lead to their emancipation.

Muslim Feminism

Muslim feminists adopt a worldview in which Islam can be contextualized and reinterpreted in order to promote concepts of equity and equality between men and women; and for whom freedom of choice plays an important part in expression of faith. Muslim feminists cherish an essentially liberal view of Islam and try to adapt it to modern times.

Muslims feminists argue that for a long time, our imagination about Islam was dominated by a patriarchal vision of Islam, but that this is not necessarily an authentic Islam. They argue that primarily focus should be on the teachings of the Koran because much of the Hadith and the Shari'ah is a patriarchal reading of Islam. A fine distinction is thus drawn between the Qur'an which is considered by Muslims to be divinely inspired and suitable for all times, cultures and contexts, and the Shari'ah that are taken as the human fallible interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah that can be revisited and revised as society needs.

Muslim feminists argue that Islam was born into a misogynistic and patriarchal society of the pre-Islamic *jahiliyyah*. Because the Qur'an is situated firmly within a historical context, it naturally recognised and addressed this patriarchal society. Thus there is in the Qur'an a hierarchical double layer which as interpreters we must take into consideration when applying the text to our lives and our societies. They argue that the Koran introduces many powerful female figures who played important roles in Islam and in the Prophet's life, something that many of his successors did not favour. Muslim feminists point out that a liberal and feminist review of the Koran could contribute to the development of women's emancipation in the Islamic country.

These Reformists, who emerged in the closing years of the century as part of an internal response to political Islam, display a refreshing pragmatic vigour and a willingness to engage with non-religious perspectives. Though many of these scholars still avoid the term 'feminist' and instead call themselves Muslim women scholars or activists, they have also sheltered feminist voices and feminist scholarship, which are shifting the old and tired debate on 'women's rights in Islam' onto new ground.⁵

Liberatory Hermeneutics of Muslim Feminism

Fazlur Rahman saw the key to an Islamic reformation in a new awareness of hermeneutics.⁶ Keenly aware of the gender imbalance in traditionist interpretations of the Qur'an and Islamic law, the Muslim Feminists have created a new hermeneutic that is inclusive of the female experiences and voice; one that would yield greater gender parity to Islamic thought and practice. Rather than approaching the Qur'an in a literalist and verse-by-verse manner, they advocate reading it holistically and identifying "general principles" that may then be applied to diverse situations.⁷ General principles or themes are regarded as means to weigh multiple interpretations and not to erect singular interpretations.⁸

While Muslim feminists insist that no single Qur'anic interpretation may be prefaced with "God says," it is axial to Islam that God does speak through revelation. The modern relativism that deems all human efforts to grasp Divine messages to be as subjective and therefore as valid or invalid as all others, cripples Islam's inherent capacity to inspire. Barlas asserts that "the interpretive process is open to question, not the revelation itself".⁹ What seems most significant to her mind, is the need for every individual to discover his or her meanings by exercising individual reason and intellect. By drawing inspiration directly from the Qur'an for critical engagement, she highlights that there are some 750 allusions in the Qur'an, as opposed to 260 on legislative matters, that instruct believers to "reflect and make the best use of reason" in trying to decipher its multifarious depths.

In opposition to Muslims who advocate *taqlid*, the Muslim feminists, akin to their canonical and post-canonical predecessors, argue that *ijtihad* is essential if humans are to extract from God's message guidance suited to each day and age. For instance, Barlas regards analytical reasoning as essential to Qur'anic interpretation, and like Ibn Rushd criticizes al-Ghazali, who, according to her reading, "held that real knowledge comes only through unmediated religious experiences and intuition and not through rational or philosophical inquiry".¹⁰

The Muslim feminists argue that the Muslims who abjure rational reinterpretations of the Qur'an overlook the central role that reason played in constructing classical interpretations in the first place. "Many Muslims," writes Barlas, "hold that modern readings of the Qur'an...are tainted by biases, while...they embrace the religious knowledge produced by a small number of male scholars in the classical period as the only objective and authentic knowledge of Islam".¹¹ In sum, they urge rational, up-to-date methodologies of Qur'anic interpretation, and by implication, rational approaches to living life 'Islamically'. They, however, depart from the classical modernists' trust in "the sovereignty of reason"- not by dismissing reason, but rather by demoting it from sovereignty. Reason is, in their eyes, not capable of "knowing" everything. Even if it were conceivable that a person could intellectually grasp the text in its entirety, the intellect would be several steps removed from encompassing all wisdom, for the text (*mushaf*) is not the Qur'anic discourse, and the Qur'anic discourse is not "the Archetype of the Book".¹²

One of the most important strategies for a feminist reading is to read what is in the text without relying on the perspectives of earlier interpreters. This means that the feminist interpreter needs to examine the text in its original language in order to arrive at meanings untainted by translations and interpretations. They tend to argue that absolutization of particular readings of scriptures has compromised the vitality of the Muslims. They stress that the Qur'an, if understood correctly, should inspire diverse visions and practices. Its message is

polysemic – possessed of multiple meanings, and, thus open to variant readings.¹³ Even the companions of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) differed in their understandings of some verses, and as far as history recounts, the fledgling Muslim community made no effort to impose conformity on them.¹⁴ A tendency exists for those in power to endorse religious teachings that perpetuate their status. In her critical assessment of patriarchal readings, Barlas asserts that the state's ongoing involvement in sustaining the hegemony of conservative interpretive communities and of religious meaning has injected coercive power into the very heart of knowledge construction in many Muslim societies.¹⁵ Historically, moves toward communal solidarity and consolidated power structures have favored "restrictive modes" of Qur'anic understanding to the point that such modes have become so entrenched that today it is difficult to read the Qur'an in liberatory modes.¹⁶ The difficult task of reinstituting liberatory readings is taken on by the Muslim Feminists. Barlas advocates critiquing the methods by which Muslims produce religious meaning and rereading the Qur'an for liberation endeavouring to determine whether the Qur'an teaches or condones inequality or oppression, or, conversely, permits and encourages liberation for women.¹⁷

Barlas highlights a number of conceptual dilemmas, the most endemic being a philosophical clash between the Qur'an as revelation - Divine Discourse, and as text - a discourse fixed in writing and interpreted by humans in a time/space continuum. A conundrum perpetually facing interpreters is how to safely infer meaning from the Qur'an without reading into the text too much. Although this seems to be an interpretive issue irrespective of whether the interpreters are male or female, Barlas ascribes a large portion of the blame to patriarchal readings that absorbed many norms that are labeled as "Islamic" to Qur'anic teachings. The failure to "connect God to God's speech", she avers, has resulted in blurring the principle of God's Unity or *tauhid* and has inevitably engendered a disjuncture between Islam in theory and Islam in practice. Her most scathing critique of male interpretations is their inadequate linkage of the Qur'an's contents within the context of their revelations. According to Barlas,

the assimilation of the commentaries and the commentaries upon commentaries of the Qur'an (*tafsir*) became secondary religious texts that enabled the "textualization of misogyny in Islam".

Amina Wadud, ardent to explore the reasons why the Qur'an uses gendered words differently – referring sometimes to males only, sometimes to females only and at other times referring to both females and males, endeavours to read Qur'an "as it is" in her *Qur'an and Woman*.¹⁸ A further facet of reading the Qur'an "as it is" is to read individual verses or parts of verses as parts of a holistic text rather than reading it in an 'atomistic' manner taking verses in isolation without due regard for the overall morality of the Qur'an. While internal consistency is not a new concept in Qur'anic interpretation,¹⁹ this concept had not been adequately employed in feminist readings. Moreover, often fragments of verses are used to imply a general principle when, in fact, the fragments are parts of verses that relate to specific questions. One of Amina Wadud's objective is to establish some form of definitive criteria for evaluating the extent to which the position of women in Muslim cultures accurately mirrors the actual Qur'anic intentions for women. In *Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Wadud convincingly argues against a monolithic, misogynist interpretation and attempts to distil the language and meaning of Qur'anic statements within a framework that underscores the inherent universalism of Islam.

According to Wadud, male restrictive readings have failed to distinguish the specific within the Qur'an which causes them to overstress some verses while de-emphasizing their full contexts. She reproaches the traditionist male ulema for ignoring the doctrine of the Qur'an's universalism which they themselves profess, while adhering to a "unicultural perspective" of the Holy Prophet's community - a view that, according to her, "severely limits the application and contradicts the stated universal purpose of the Book itself".²⁰ She also questions the canonization of readings generated over a thousand years ago in the name of sacred history which limits the built-in flexibility within Islam that encourages adaptation. For Amina

Wadud, the relevance of the Qur'an can only be maintained through a continued process of re-interpretation and re-evaluation by each new generation of Muslims.

An oft quoted example of such use of verse fragments is the *darajah* question. The word *darajah* refers to a degree or a level and is used in different contexts in the Qur'an. For example, one striving in the way of God with one's wealth and person obtains a *darajah* (4:95) above others. Similar is the case of one migrating for the sake of God (9:20). The word becomes contentious in the context of 2:228 – 'men have a degree over them (women)'. This fragment is often used to argue that men are superior to women and have been granted more, intellectually, physically, morally, etc., by God than women. However, the meaning of the fragment becomes clearer when it is placed within the context of the whole verse:

Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. Nor is it lawful for them to hide what God has created in their wombs, if they have faith in God and the Last Day. And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation. And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (or advantage) over them. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

The Muslim Feminists point out that the verse is not making a general statement about the relative position of men to women but is referring to a particular instance in the context of divorce.

Another familiar example is the variegated nuances of the expression "*qawwamun*" (4: 34). Al-Hibri refers to old Arabic dictionary definitions and concludes that the definitions are varied, some open to hierarchical authoritarian interpretations, some not. *Qawwamun* can also mean "providers of guidance." However, hierarchical authoritarian interpretations appear to have prevailed as meanings were colored by jurists' own authoritarian perspectives.²¹ Farida Bennani argues that *qawwamun* refers to a duty, and not

leadership or control. She argues that the word *qawwamun* is derived from the root *qwm* which means “to stand up,” “to take care of,” or “to guard.”²² Therefore, a husband is a servant to his family, and not the leader of his family. Amina Wadud-Muhsin argues that *qiwamah* is the responsibility of a man during the time his wife bears a child. She argues that a woman deserves *qiwamah* in a mutually dependent relationship where she chooses to take on child-bearing as her primary responsibility.²³ She deserves physical protection and material sustenance; otherwise, it would be a serious oppression against the women. The verse, according to her line of reasoning, refers to the responsibilities where marital partners decide to undertake different roles within the marriage.

Constant recourse to the moral-ethical framework of the Qur'an has been an important strategy for feminist interpretations of Islamic scripture. Developing an understanding of the moral-ethical imperatives of the Qur'an is argued by the Muslim Feminists to be an important guide in the interpretation of any Islamic scripture or the understanding of any Muslim problem. That these imperatives encourage towards gender equality is clear. According to Leila Ahmed, the Qur'an displays a tension between ‘pragmatic’ and ‘ethical’ perspectives as far as the position of women is concerned. She contends that the pragmatic perspective was context-bound and the ethical perspective is the one that should persist and determine gender relations.²⁴ Asma Barlas in her book, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, also points to what she terms a lack of “a creative synthesis of Qur'anic principles” as a result of the failure to recognise the Qur'an's textual and thematic holism.

The Muslim feminists also suggest that to understand the Qur'an, one must place its pronouncements within their historical context. They call on Muslims to distinguish clearly between normative Islam and historical Islam. They argue that believers of all kinds envisage the question of meaning not from the angle of unchanging transcendence—that is, of an ontology sheltered from all historicity—but in the light of historical forces that transmute the most sacred

values, those regarded as most divine by virtue of their symbolic capital and as inseparable from necessarily mythical accounts of the founding, and from which each ethnocultural group extracts and recognizes what it calls identity or personality. Mahnaz Afkhami, a vocal advocate of revision of the andocentric interpretations of the Qur'an asserts that "the original Word of God is infinite in depth and scope and hence ... applicable to evolving situations."²⁵ The Qur'an, according to the Muslim feminists, is not only polysemic but is also organic and responsive. It qualifies as an "interactive medium," if one accepts Barlas' suggestion that a comment by the Prophet's wife Umm Salama shifted Qur'anic discourse towards greater gender-inclusivity.²⁶

Also advocated is a second facet of "historicization," which involves adapting Qur'anic guidance for the current era. In the rare passages that refer directly to legislative issues, for instance, the Qur'an displays a situational character. Qur'anic legislative intent should, therefore, be extracted on the basis of *ratio legis* (the principle of the law). If a time comes when legislation does not faithfully and correctly realize the *ratio*, the law needs to be changed or re-interpreted. The dual processes of historical contextualization have been termed by Barlas as "reading behind the text" and "reading in front of the text".²⁷ In the first process, one moves from the concrete case treatments of the Qur'an-taking the necessary and relevant social conditions of that time into account-to the general principles upon which the entire teaching converges. In the second, there is a movement back to specific legislation, taking into account the necessary and relevant social conditions now obtaining. Employing Fazlur Rahman's historicist approach is at once part of the theory of the nature of the Qur'an as text and a strategy within a feminist method. The case of women's witness in credit transactions²⁸ is a good example of how his approach is useful in arriving at meaning for the Qur'an in new contexts and how this can be useful for a feminist hermeneutic.

Within modernist movements, tensions frequently develop between, on the one hand, the aspiration to accommodate pluralistic,

multifaceted visions, and practices and accepting the existence of different values, commitments, and rationalities,” and, on the other hand, the pull toward the conflation of... different values and rationalities in a totalistic way, with a strong disposition to their absolutisation.²⁹ Such tensions are evident in the Muslim Feminists’ accounts of historical and contemporary developments in Qur’anic interpretation. The methodology that the Muslim feminists appear to propose for Qur’anic interpretation are remarkable for maintaining pluralism and eschewing absolutism, while also honoring the original Qur’anic discourse as an absolute that prevents pluralism from becoming unprincipled relativism.

Limitations of the Muslim Feminist Hermeneutical Attempts

The limitations of Muslim Feminism in its present phase are poignantly underlined by an interesting article by Anne Sofie Roald. She notes that Christian feminist theologians such as Rosemary Reuther, Phyllis Bird and Elisabeth Shussler Fiorenza “are part of an established scientific tradition within Christian theology.” This is a historical-critical method which allows them to “perceive the Bible as written by human beings and in particular by men.” This is “an assumption which is not possible in an Islamic exegesis.” The Muslim feminist theologians seek to evaluate Islamic sources, criticize the interpretation of Islamic sources, and stress the equality of men and women in the Quran. Their method concentrates mainly on textual analysis and thus works methodologically in search of evidence to establish laws and regulations suitable for modern society. Roald concludes that “The interpretation of the Islamic sources by women is a new project and the next decades will show us whether this project has any future.”

As an ideology, policy, and social movement, feminism generally has been connected to secularism. It is not surprising that many secular feminists found Islam to be a major opponent for the feminist movement. For example, Shahrzad Mojab and Haiddeh Moghissi, two Iranian secular feminists, argue that Islam is a challenge to feminism. Mojab argues that from an initial total rejection of Islam, feminism has moved towards a more sophisticated

readjustment. According to Mojab, Muslim feminism is not a serious challenge against patriarchy and it is still far from independence, secularism, and democracy. She sees the Muslim feminist movement as more of a compromise with patriarchy than a realistic movement for the emancipation of women.

It can be claimed that liberal and milder interpretations of Islam, which try to distance themselves from traditional Islam's misogynist rules and accept gender equally, can improve the status of women in Islamic countries to a certain degree. But Question is to what degree a liberal review of Islam can improve women's rights. The experience of political Islam shows the difficulties of compromise between Islam and feminism.

A lack of consensus is evident even among Muslim feminist authors in their views regarding how the values and ideals put forward in the Qur'an can be translated into society while also retaining their foundation in sacred discourse. Arkoun writes,

Contemporary exegesis offers another example of the semantic disorder and dangerous confusion about the Qur'an and what can be deduced from it in the current context of ideologies of liberation. This kind of exegesis leads one to forget the primary function of revelation: to reveal meanings without reducing the mystery...with an infinite capacity to signify things, including the truth of being.³⁰

One may wonder whether Barlas's exegesis is not of the kind to which Arkoun takes exception. Her analysis of the story of Ibrahim and the Divine command to sacrifice his son casts light on Qur'anic portrayals of patriarchal authority.³¹ But doesn't such one-pointed analysis obscure broader themes of the story, such as trust, humility, and sacrifice, that have more far-reaching potentials to ameliorate oppression in all its forms rather than just its patriarchal forms? There is always an apprehension that the urge to re-examine Qur'anic teachings in liberatory modes may put the Qur'an at the service of liberation, rather than freeing humans to receive from the Qur'an its own liberating message.

A critical question that Muslim Feminists fail to readily answer is: whose truth is believable and upon which criteria is it based? For dissent to be meaningful, it must contend with some discursive framework it seeks to counter. There will always be various interpretations of the religious texts. While admitting that contemporary readings of the Qur'an, especially those by women, run the risk of immediate dismissal, they still insist that applying new insights to read the Qur'an is both unavoidable and justifiable. In spite of the stated advantages of female readings of the Qur'an, it is also conceivable that a reformist or woman-centric interpretation of religious scriptures and laws risks being marginalized as yet another deviant version of Islam. Though Riffat Hassan avers that "ijtihad is open to all who have knowledge of religious matters" it remains, at best, a normative statement, not a social reality.³² Given the currently used interpretive framework, feminist interpretations are not accepted as authoritative by the majority of the Islamic scholars and might fail to garner support from the Muslim community.

The main problem with interpretation as the only or even the central tool of women emancipation is that, as many scholars have noted, "Islam has been used in so many contradictory ways that one cannot accept, as both orthodox and orientalists have, a monolithic definition of this religion."³³ The Muslim Feminist interpretations of Islam can add to the already bewilderingly diverse spectrum of interpretations, each claiming to be the true interpretation. Consequently, Islam itself can become more fragmented until the point where it will be difficult to know which brand of Islam to subscribe to.

Conclusion

There is "a serious need for constructive and bold humanism that would restate Islamic social ideals in order to back up this new legislation."³⁴ Any reading of the Qur'an is nothing more than an attempt to approximate the essence of the Qur'an. While the Qur'an distinguishes between itself and its exegesis, subjectivity, in and of itself, does not rule out the possibility of saying something essentially true.³⁵ The interpretative strategies that the Muslim feminists appear

to propose, attempt to reform Islamic approaches to the Qur'an in ways consistent with the modern value of pluralism. At the same time, they avoid casting the Qur'an as one more random phenomenon in a relativistic universe. They suggest an appreciation of pluralism that does not descend into an absolutist insistence on relativism.

The feminist voices and the reformist Islam, of which they are a part and the idea of developing a Muslim feminist hermeneutic, though still in a formative phase, are in a unique position to bring about a much needed paradigm shift in Islamic law and should be studied with seriousness. Their hope of redressing the gender inequalities in orthodox interpretations of the Shari'ah depends on the balance of power between neo-traditionists and modernists and their ability to engage with the advocates of each discourse. The Muslim feminist hermeneutics may need more thinking and writing before clearly usable and acceptable strategies can be developed.

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PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF POLITICAL SPEECHES IN ENGLISH BY SOME PROMINENT NIGERIAN LEADERS

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Abstract

This study examines the pragmatic features of political speeches in English by some prominent Nigerian leaders. The study utilizes the speech act theory and the concept of implicature as analytical tools. The findings show that Nigerian political rhetoric is characterized by elements of excitement, blunt and 'hard' truths, forceful and command tone, linguistic diplomacy and outright insincerity. It then recommends an appraisal by target audience of not only the actions of those in power, but also their words. This would enable the electorate to see whether the actions of those at the corridors of power really match their words or not.

Keywords: pragmatics, political speeches, countrymen, freedom

Introduction

Language, as a powerful instrument of mass mobilization and socio-political engineering, has played a vital role in the emergence and sustenance of the Nigerian nation-state. Right from the colonial era to date, eminent personalities in the nation's political landscape have made notable speeches that have had a long lasting effect not only on individuals, but also on the destiny of the entire nation. Speeches made by notable politicians like Azikiwe, Balewa, Awolowo as well as those made by military rulers such as Gowon, Obasanjo and Babangida merit a pragmatic study in view of the roles played by such speeches in the nation's chequered political history.

Scholars have looked at political speeches in Nigeria from different perspectives. Oha's (1994) work is a stylistic study of war speeches of Yakubu Gowon and Emeka Okukwu focusing on the two key players in the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). Adegbija (1995) examines discourse tactics in military coup speeches in Nigeria. The study highlights the linguistic strategies employed by Nigerian

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military coup leaders while trying to take over the reins of power and seeking for public acceptance.

Ayodabo (2003) investigates from pragmatic and stylistic perspectives the forms and functions of hedges in a presidential media chat programme hosted by the Nigerian Television Authority. The study focuses on the first edition of the said programme in which President Obasanjo was the Guest on October, 5th 1999. Another study carried out by Yisa Kehinde Yusuf (2003) entitled “Dysphemisms in the language of Nigeria’s President Olusegun Obasanjo” examines disparaging expressions in selected speeches of President Obasanjo since his assumption of office in 1999.

In this study, we attempt a pragmatic appraisal of political speeches in Nigeria with a view to identifying salient features of Nigerian political rhetoric and how such features enhance meaning achievement in English. We examine the pragmatic features of excerpts of such speeches representing different dispensations (colonial, post-colonial, civilian and military) of the nation’s political history.

Pragmatics, which developed as a discipline “as reaction against the purely formalist approach to Language” (Adegbija 1999:6), has been variously defined by scholars. In the words of Barton (1990:6) pragmatics is “the meaning that consists of interpretation within context”. Referring to the general views of scholars, when the discipline began to receive attention in the early 1980s’ Thomas (1995:1-2) claims that the most common definitions of pragmatics were “meaning in use” or meaning in context”, adding that people do not always or even usually say what they mean. Speakers frequently mean much more than their words actually say”. On his own part, Stalnaker (1978:383) sees pragmatics as “the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed”, while Crystal (1987:120) opines that “Pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others”. Yule (1985) gives a rather insightful perspective of the subject by defining pragmatics as the study of intended speaker meaning, claiming further that it is the study of invisible meaning or

how we recognize what is meant even when meaning is not explicitly verbalized. This appears to be in consonance with the claim of Fromkin and Rodman (1978:186-187) that pragmatics is “the study of how context influences the way we interpret sentences. “A synthesis of all the above definitions could be found in the following perspective expressed by Adegbija (1999:189):

Pragmatics may be seen as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations of necessity, this would take cognizance of the message being communicated or the speech act being performed; the participants involved; their intention, knowledge of the world and the impact of these on their interactions; what they have taken for granted as part of the context (or the presupposition); the deductions they make on the basis of the context; what is implied by what is said or left unsaid; the impact of the non-verbal aspects of interaction on meaning, etc.

Pragmatic Theory and Principles

The principal goals of pragmatics as culled out from Adegbija (1999:198) are:

- (a) to explain how meaning is decoded from utterances in context and in particular situations;
- (b) to explain how utterances convey meaning in context;
- (c) to explain how context contributes to the encoding and decoding of meaning;
- (d) to explain how speakers and hearers of utterances perceive them as conveying the meaning they are considered as conveying in particular utterances;
- (e) to explain how speakers can say one thing and mean something else; and
- (f) to explain how deductions are made in context with respect to what meaning has been engaged in a particular utterance.

Several scholars have come up with one suggestion or the other towards the fulfillment of the above goals. Notable works in this

regard are those of J.L. Austin (1962) H.P. Grice (1975), J. Searle (1979), K. Bach and R. Harnish (1979).

Austin's Theory of Speech Acts

Austin (1962), a pioneering work on speech acts, distinguishes between “constatives” and “performatives”. According to Austin, constatives are statements that are traditionally known to have truth or falsity, e.g. ‘I love my wife’ could either be true or false. A performative, on the other hand, cannot be said to have the property of truth or falsity, rather, its utterance, such as asking a question, answering a question, greeting, accusing or promising implies the performance of an action. Thus, the difference between Austin’s constatives and performative is the same as the one between saying and doing. Austin also says that performatives could be “felicitous” or “infelicitous” (appropriate or inappropriate within the context). For a performative to be felicitous, according to Austin, there must be an acceptable conventional procedure which should include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances and this must be followed correctly and completely. Also, the particular persons and circumstances must be appropriate for the procedure being invoked. For instance, on the occasion of independence anniversary celebration, the appropriate person to give a national broadcast is the head of state or head of government whose speech must not only be appropriate for the said anniversary celebration but delivered at the appropriate time on the anniversary day in line with the stabled conventional procedure.

In trying to understand the speech act theory, three concepts are significant. These are locution, illocution and perlocution. Locution is the act of making an utterance of a certain grammatical order while illocutionary act is the force of that utterance; perlocutionary effect is the effect of that utterance on the hearer(s).

Searle's Theory of Speech Acts

Searle’s theory is based on the hypothesis that “speaking a language is engaging in a rule governed form of behaviour”. This implies that speaking a language is performing acts based on a set of rules. Austin also believes that speech acts are intentional behaviours.

Like Austin, Searle distinguishes between what he call “complete” speech acts and “perlocutionary” acts, which are the effect of illocutionary acts on the hearer. He expatiates on his notion of rules by drawing a distinction between what he calls regulative rules and constitutive rules. Regulative rules according to Searle, “regulate antecedently or independently existing forms of behaviour”. They form the basis for the appraisal of behaviour and they could be paraphrased as imperatives. Rules of etiquette come under this category. Constitutive rules, on the other hand, do not merely regulate behaviours, they create new forms of behaviour. For instance, as Adegbija “(1982:6-15) aptly puts it, the rules of football or chess do not merely regulate the games, but “create the very possibility of playing such-games”.

The classification of performative verbs into five groups is also credited to Searle (1979). The five classes are assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Assertives commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition and examples of performative verbs under the class of assertive include believe, conclude, deny, report, state, affirm, claim and report. Commissives consist of performative verbs such as pledge, promise, and guarantee, swear and offer. Such performative verbs get the speaker committed in varying degrees to some future action.

The class of performative verbs tagged expressives has to do with the expression of some psychological state. Such verbs include apologize, deplore, thank, congratulate and welcome, while declaratives effect an alteration in the status of an object or situation. Performative verbs under this category are declare, name, sacked, resign etc. Directives consist of such performative verbs as order, challenge, request, urge and command, and with their use, the speaker tries to get the hearer to do something.

Bach and Harnish’s Contribution to Pragmatics

Bach and Harnish’s contribution to pragmatics is based on “intention and inference”. The theory holds that illocutionary acts are performed with the intention that the hearer identify the act being performed and that linguistic communication is basically an

inferential process (Bach and Harnish 1979:4). Bach and Harnish claim that the inference made by the hearer is based not just on what the speaker says but also on mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs); that is, salient information known to both speaker and hearer from the communicative context. They opine that “the contextual beliefs that figure in speakers’ intentions and hearers’ inferences must be mutual if communication is to take place” (Bach and Harnish, 1979:5). In inferring what S is saying, Bach and Harnish claim, H also has to rely on the “Presumption of Literalness” (PL). They claim in other words that:

“If S could (under the circumstances) be speaking literally, then S is speaking literally. Conversely, if it is evident to H that S could not be speaking literally, H supposes S to be speaking non-literally and therefore seeks to identify what the non-literal illocutionary act is (p.12).”

Grice’s Contribution to Pragmatics

Grice 1975 proposes a cooperative principle (CP) which combines a number of maxims specifying the conventions which interlocutors should normally be expected to obey. Such maxims are as follows:

Quantity

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than required.

Quality

Make your contribution one that is true:

- (i) Do not say what you believe to be false
- (ii) Do not say that for which you lack evidence

Relation

Say only that which is relevant to the communication at hand.

Manner

Be perspicuous, i.e.

- (i) avoid obscurity of expression
- (ii) avoid ambiguity
- (iii) be brief
- (iv) be orderly

According to Grice, it is out of the flouting of the cooperative principle that conversational implicatures emerge. Conversational implicatures refer to what is conveyed beside what is said.

Adegbija's Contribution to Pragmatics

Adegbija's pragmatic theory is based on factors collectively referred to as "pragmasociolinguistic context". This, according to him, "need not necessarily have anything to do with the recognition of any fixed or specific intention of the speaker". He submits further that "the force of some illocutionary acts is determined by the intention of the speaker, while others may still have to do with the pragmatics of the situation (Adegbija 1999:203). According to him, the pragmatics of a situation of social interaction may include any or all of the following:

- (a) the cognitive or affective states of the participants in the interaction at hand;
- (b) special relationship obtaining among participants;
- (c) mutual beliefs, understanding or lack of these;
- (d) the nature of the discourse and how this relates to the interaction of both the hearer and the speaker and to the context of interaction. (Adegbija 1982, 1999).

Commenting on this perspective of pragmatics, Emuchay (2002:195) says. The pragmaticsociolinguistic theory requires the understanding of the "historical, personal, environmental, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of context relating to the context in which a particular discourse took place..." From this comprehensive view of meaning the theory seeks to explain the meaning of utterances at the master speech act level...

A combination of relevant aspects of the various theories explicated above provides a dependable framework for a pragmatic analysis of political speeches in Nigeria. An eclectic pragmatic

approach is chosen to enable us to utilize relevant aspects of the contributions above for our analysis.

Data Base of Study

The study focuses on political speeches of six eminent Nigerian leaders whose contributions to the nation's political history could not be forgotten. Three of the speeches were made by civilians while the remaining three were made by military men. The civilians are Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe (Nigeria's first indigenous Governor-General); Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Nigeria's first Prime Minister) and Chief Obafemi Awolowo (The first Premier of Western Nigeria). The military men whose speeches constitute part of our data are General Yakubu Gowon, General Olusegun Obasanjo and General Ibrahim Babangida who at different periods in the nation's history served as Heads of State. Furthermore, three of the eminent political leaders (Azikwe, Awolowo, Obasanjo) are from the southern part of the country, while the remaining three (Balewa, Gowon and Babangida) are from the north. The analytical procedure used for the study is the descriptive method.

Data Presentation

As stated above, the study focuses on selected speeches of six prominent Nigerian leaders. Such speeches were selected out of several ones studied, through a random sampling technique. We therefore naturally classify the data into six units as follows:

Text-1: *Nnamdi Azikwe (First African Governor-General and First President of Nigeria)*

Context: *Inaugural address as Governor-General (1960)*

Source: *Daily Times (1960)*

It is with humility mingled with joy that I thank this grand course of patriots and friends of Nigeria for congregating here, today, on the occasion of my inauguration as the first African governor-general and Commander-in-Chief of the Federation of Nigeria... come and join Abubakar with me, Sardauna, Awolowo, Akintola, Osadebay, Okpara, Aminu Kano, Ibrahim Imam. Let us bind the Nation's wounds and let us heal the breaches of the past so that in forging our

Nation, there shall emerge on this continent a hate-free, fear-free and greed-free people....

Text-2: *Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (First Prime Minister)*

Context: *Independence Day speech (1960)*

Source: *Mr. Prime Minister (1964)*

Today is Independence Day. The first of October 1960 is a date to which for two years every Nigerian has been eagerly looking forward. At last our great day has arrived and Nigeria is now indeed an independent Nation. Words cannot adequately express my joy and pride at being the Nigerian citizen privileged to accept from Her Royal Highness the symbols of Nigeria's independence. It is a unique privilege which I shall remember for ever, and it gives me strength and courage as I dedicate my life to the service of our country.

Text-3: *Obafemi Awolowo (First Premier of Western Nigeria)*

Context: *A statement at a press conference*

Source: *Action group 14-point Programme (1959)*

The people of this country have been told and reminded again and again that Regional self-government and Nigeria's independence would mean hard work, sweat and blood. Undoubtedly, National liberty which is the father of sovereign political power is an invaluable, priceless property which can only be maintained and preserved from violation in perpetuity, by very hard-work, profuse sweat and untold sacrifice of time, money and even life on the part of the citizens of a free Nation Freedom from foreign rule brings in its train a unique opportunity for the leaders of the new Nation to set their people free from the shackles or imperialism of ignorance, disease, poverty and fear.

Text-4: *Yakubu Gowon (Nigeria's Second Military Ruler)*

Context: *On assumption of duty after a coup*

Source: *Daily Times (1966)*

Fellow countrymen, I sincerely hope we shall be able to resolve most of the problems that have disunited us in the past and really come to respect and trust one another in accordance with all known codes of good conduct and etiquette.

All foreigners are assured of their personal safety and should have no fear of being molested... Any foreign interference in any form will be regarded as an act of aggression. All members of the armed forces are requested to keep within their barracks except on essential duties and when ordered from supreme Headquarters. Troops must not terrorize the public.... Any act of looting or sabotage will be dealt with severely. I am convinced that with your cooperation and understanding, we shall be able to pull the country out of its present predicament.

Text-5: *Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria's Fourth Military Ruler)*

Context: *On assumption of duty after the failed military coup in which his predecessor, Gen. Murtala Muhammed was killed.*

Source: *Nigerian Tribune (1976)*

Fellow country men, we are once again passing through a critical period in the history of our country. For me personally this has been one of the saddest moments of my life. The supreme military council has already announced the assassination of His Excellency, General Murtala Muhammed. We all mourn the passing away of one of the greatest sons of Nigeria I wish to assure the Nation that the supreme military council has taken a sound decision that all those found guilty will be summarily dealt with in a military way. I therefore appeal to all sections of Nigerians not to take the laws into their hands but to rest assured that the federal military government will see to it that justice is done. As you have heard in the statement by the supreme military council, I have been called upon against my personal wish and desire to serve as the new Head of State. But I have accepted the honour in the interest of the nation and in memory of the late Head of State.

Text-6: *Ibrahim Babangida (Nigerian's Sixth Military Ruler)*

Context: *On the occasion of the annulment of the June 12th 1993 presidential election apparently won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola.*

Source: *Daily Times (1993)*

Fellow Nigerians, I address you today with a very deep sense of world history and particularly of the history of our great country. In the aftermath of the recently annulled presidential election, I feel, as I

believe you yourself feel a profound sense of disappointment at the outcome of our last efforts at laying the foundation of a viable democratic system of government in Nigeria. I therefore wish, on behalf of myself and members of the National Defence and Security Council and indeed of the entire administration, to feel with my fellow countrymen and women for the cancellation of the election. It was a rather disappointing experience in the course of carrying through the last element of the transition to civil rule programme.

Data Analysis

In Text-1 above, Azikiwe's speech could be said to consist mainly of the illocutionary act of appreciation and that of request/plea. In the expression, "... I thank this grand course of patriots and friends of Nigeria..." Azikiwe claims that his audience (those who were around to witness his inauguration as the First African Governor-General of Nigeria) was patriotic and friendly.

The expressions "patriots" and "friends" should not be taken literally. Azikiwe, as an experienced politician must have known that not everyone in the audience was patriotic and friendly. His political opponents and those who probably did not want him to attain the position of Governor-General must have been among the audience. He, however, had to employ the said words in keeping with the politeness principles formulated by Lakoff (1973) expressed in the following maxims.

- Don't impose
- Give options
- Make your receiver feel good

The second part of the excerpt from Azikiwe's speech consists mainly of the illocutionary act of request or plea, as exhibited by items i-iii of the following data.

- (i) Come and join Abubakar with me, Sardauna, Awolowo, Akintola, Osadebay...
- (ii) Let us bind the Nation's wounds
- (iii) Let us heal the breaches of the past
- (iv) ... There shall emerge on this continent a hate-free, fear-free and greed-free people.

Items i-iii of the above data constitutes a passionate appeal to the audience to cooperate with the political class in the quest for nation-building. The illocutionary force of the word “Join” in item (i) above therefore is “to cooperate and unite with”, while the illocutionary force of “bind” in item (ii) of the data is to forgive, forget and overlook the offences and grievances of the past. The “Nation’s wounds” imply the social ills ravaging the nation, while the breaches of the past mean the pains and trauma inflicted on the nation’s body politic. The speaker was of the opinion that it was only when the binding of the wounds and the healing of the breaches were done that a new nation made up of “a hate-free, fear-free, and greed-free people” (item iv of the data) would emerge. In other words, Azikiwe was envisaging an egalitarian society provided Nigerians cooperated with the political class. Thus, we have an illocutionary act of promise (item iv) premised upon the fulfillment of the illocutionary act of request (items i-iii of the data).

In Text-2, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, Tafawa Balewa expressed his joy and pride over the privilege given to him to receive the symbols of the country’s independence from the colonial powers. He also expressed his readiness to dedicate his life to the service of the Nation. The expression “At last, our great day has arrived...” Presents the picture of a long awaited personality for whose reception a lot of preparation has been made. The expression, “day” in this context implies freedom or independence.

The privilege of Nigeria’s freedom, Balewa claims, is a source of courage and strength for him to dedicate his life to the service of the country. This pledge was fulfilled as he died in office as Prime Minister through a military coup d’état five years later.

In Text-3, Awolowo (first Premier of Western region) opined that Nigeria’s liberty would require the “sacrifice of time, money and even life”. In his opinion, hard work, sweat and blood were required if Nigerians were to be set free from the shackles of ignorance, disease, poverty and fear. Blood is a symbol of life. This hard truth is premised upon the fact that genuine freedom is hardly ever won on the platter of gold without one painful sacrifice or the other.

Awolowo's hard but frank words were in consonance with the maxim of quality expressed in Grice's cooperative principle i.e. "make your contribution, one that is true".

The illocutionary force of the word "sweat", as used by Awolowo, is struggle (i.e. for freedom), while that of blood is loss of life (as a result of bloodshed arising from nationalist struggles that Nigerians should be prepared for).

In Text-4, Gowon's speech is:

- (i) a declaration of hope that a solution would come to the Nation's problems;
- (ii) an assurance of safety for all foreigners
- (iii) an order for members of the armed forces to remain in their barracks except when otherwise instructed.
- (iv) A threat of severe punishment for looters and saboteurs

In this speech, Gowon reflected on the travails of the nation that has experienced a coup and a counter coup during which important personalities had lost their lives. As the new Head of State, he expressed his confidence in the ability of the nation to come out of its predicament. He also assured foreigners of their personal safety. This comes within the ambit of Searle's Comissives. After words of assurance to the foreigners, he ordered the armed forces to keep within their barracks" and not to "terrorize the public".

In Text-5, Obasanjo declared that the nation was passing through a critical period in her history, as General Murtala Mohammed had been assassinated – an event which led to one of the saddest moments of his life. He assured the nation that the coup plotters who assassinated General Muhammed would be dealt with in a military way. His role as the new Head of State, placed on his shoulders by the Supreme Military Council, was against his personal wish and desire (he claimed). He, however, had to accept that role (honour) in the interest of the nation and in the memory of the late head of state. He appealed to Nigerians not to take laws into their hands.

In Text-6, Babangida expressed a feeling of disappointment at the annulment of the June 12 1993 election. He tried to identify with the mood of Nigerians who felt greatly disappointed by the action of

the government presided over by him. The sincerity of that expression of feeling with "... Fellow country men and women ... for the cancellation of the election" remains doubtful. Since that utterance could not be said to be true (as he had all the power as a military ruler to deannul the election). We can conclude that this expression of a sense of disappointment over the cancellation of the election did not comply with Grice's maxim of quality, *Say that which you believe to be true*. He was simply trying to make his addressees (Nigerians) feel good, in accordance with Lakoff's politeness maxim – "*Make your interlocutor feel good*" Babangida did not really mean what he said. Thomas (1995) says people do not always say what they mean.

Conclusion

This study has attempted a pragmatic study of political speeches in Nigeria. As seen in the analysis of our data, the political class, as represented by the six individuals studied, has at one time or the other employed language in diverse ways, not only to steer the ship of the nation, but also to consolidate its position for whatever gains political power has to offer. As seen in our data, Nigerian political rhetoric is characterized by elements of excitement, as demonstrated by Azikiwe and Balewa (Texts 1 and 2 respectively); blunt and "hard truths" as represented by Awolowo's speech (Text 3); forceful and command tone, as represented by Gowon (Text 4); linguistic diplomacy as represented by Obasanjo and Babangida (Texts 5 and 6) respectively and outright insincerity as demonstrated by Babangida (Text 6), especially on his so-called "disappointment" and implied apology to the nation over the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential elections.

From the foregoing, one sees the need to critically appraise not only the actions of those in power but also their words. This will enable the governed to compare and contrast the performances of those in power and their speeches and see whether their actions really match their words. Once this is done, the right opinion and attitude could be formed towards a particular office holder.

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AFRICAN DEMOCRACY AND THE DILEMMA OF CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

**Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun*

“... we have trivialized democracy to the extent that it is no longer threatening to those in power... Democracy spreads because it has been rendered meaningless and innocuous without losing its symbolic value. While it spreads out world is more repressive...”

(Ake, 1996)

Introduction

Since the momentous events of the early 1990's which sounded the death knell of several authoritarian regimes in Africa including the termination of apartheid rule in South Africa, the number of democracies on the continent has dramatically increased. Prior to this period of democratic revolution, Africa could boast of only three democracies: Mauritius, Botswana and Gambia, albeit only Mauritius witnessed an alternation of regime in power (Diamond, 1999).

In spite of threats to the democratization enterprise in some countries and actual democratic reversal in others (such as occurred in Nigeria in 1993) the number of democracies increased through the late 1990s and today virtually all the countries in Africa are democracies if one accepts the minimalist conception of democracy as a system of political rule established with the consent of the people given through election; and if one ignores the quality of such election and the contents/substance of the entire electoral process.

The future of democracy on the Africa continent appears to be in jeopardy despite the fact that election which represents the heart of representative democracy now holds regularly on the continent. Although there is a sense in which one can argue that African democracy has been able to answer Claude Ake's (1992) poser: “Is Democracy Feasible in Africa?” in the affirmative at least through

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“successfully” organizing consecutive elections, yet there are no reasons to suggest that these elections advance the cause of democracy by deepening the democratic process and ensuring the accountability of the governors by the governed. Even if it is conceded that Africa has made substantial progress in its democracy quest through organizing regular elections, it is also true that the domestic political (and to some extent external) context of these elections considerably vitiates the quality of the elections and this has implications for democratic consolidation.

The quality of elections in Africa today is not only declining but getting worse. The chances of alternation of power are increasingly becoming slim as political incumbency is brazenly exploited to manipulate electoral process in favour of the ruling party particularly in countries where the ruling party enjoys parliamentary majority. Thus, election in Africa has become a “mere ritualization of the grip on power by an incumbent regime” (Young and Kante, 1992,). For Africa’s power elite, particularly the political incumbents, election is like a war which must be won by all means- fair or foul. In their desperate bid to remain in power or to install their favoured successors, they spare no effort. They deploy state administrative resources including electoral management bodies (the rhetoric of being independent institutions notwithstanding) and the security services in a manner that gives them or their party a headstart advantage over the opposition. Strategies such as disqualification of electorally strong opposition candidates based on phoney charges, denial of opposition access to state media resources as well as intimidation and harassment of the opposition are some of the weapons that have been adopted in the last and a half decades to electorally injure the opposition candidates.

What pervades Africa’s electoral space today is electoral dictatorship where the consent of the people commands, if any, little premium. The guided transition projects of African regimes are only mounted to legitimize their unpopular and authoritarian rule domestically and to “satisfy prevailing international norms of presentability” (Joseph, 1999). The crisis of electoral democracy in

Africa is aptly captured by Geatano Mosca's classic critique of electoral politics on the continent that "the representative is not elected by the voters but, as a rule, has himself elected by them" (Mosca, 1964).

Another troubling dimension of the crisis of electoral democracy in Africa is the tendency of opposition elements who won elections on the strength of popular pressures for the expansion of the democratic space to return after capturing power to the authoritarian path of the old order. This tendency is typified by the desperate move by Zambian President Friedrich Chiluba against former President Kenneth Kaunda, whom he had defeated in the 1992 elections, to prevent him (Kaunda) from competing in the 1996 presidential elections. Chiluba also clamped on journalists, arrested civil society activists and opposition elements (Joseph, 1999). The authoritarian character of the Chiluba government got to a head on March 8, 1993 when he declared a state of emergency and assumed extra-ordinary powers citing a plot to unseat him. Thus, President Chiluba who was once 'the symbol of democratic revolution' became a means of disempowerment" (Ave, 2001).

This paper investigates the conundrum of credible elections in African democracy focusing on presidential elections in five African democracies: Cameroun, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo and Zimbabwe. This investigation is justifiable against the backdrop of the fact that the administration of the last presidential polls organized in these countries was heavily criticized by the civil society and in some cases by election observer groups while the official results of the elections were disputed by the main opposition parties. Why has credible election remained an albatross to African democracy in spite of African regimes' stated commitment to democracy and good governance? What are the challenges of organizing credible and acceptable elections in Africa? This article shall attempt to provide answers to these questions.

Africa and the Third Wave of Democratization

The early 1990s witnessed a profound expansion of democratization in Africa. This democratic expansion which was a

fallout of the democratic tide sweeping across the globe led to the collapse of several authoritarian regimes on the continent as attempts were made to institutionalize accountable and responsive democratic governance.

The third wave of democratization in Africa, bolstered as it were by domestic pressures from civil society, extracted decisive concessions from Africa's dictatorships which eventually led to the expansion of the political space through transition from one party to multi party democracy and a regime of respect for and preservation of civil and political liberties of the African people which was a radical departure from the pre-third wave authoritarian context.

However, it is tragic that the expectations raised by the political liberalization of the 1990s have since been dashed. Though one may concede the fact that the modest democratic gains of the 1990s are yet to be completely eroded, the governance records of African regimes in the post-third wave period have betrayed the initial hopes elicited by the democratic wave (Animashaun, 2006).

On the one hand, election which represents a mechanism of conferring legitimacy on democratic regimes is being used to disempower African voters and legitimize illegitimate regimes. On the other hand, political leadership succession has either been privatized (as evident in Senegalese President Abdullahi Wade's plan to foist his son as his successor; and the veiled desire of Cameroun's Paul Biya to contest 2011 elections through an orchestrated constitutional amendment) or criminalized (as evident in the travails of Jacob Zuma who recently beat South African President Thabo Mbeki to the leadership of African National Congress making the former the standard bearer of ANC in 2009 presidential elections. Thus, while formal liberal democracy has grown in terms of regular election and universal suffrage, substantive and popular democracy continues to elude the African people.

Africa Regimes and Commitment to Democracy and Good Governance: NEPAD and APRM

If abiding faith in democracy and good governance were to be measured by intention, African regimes will be awarded pass mark..

African rulers have not disappointed in designing elaborate mechanisms to address governance crisis on the continent. In other words, the crisis of electoral democracy in Africa can not be explained in terms of absence of legal and institutional framework for regulating electoral politics. As will be demonstrated later in this story, the real problem is the understandable inability of Africa's rulers to muster the required political will to allow electoral competition run according to the rules of the game.

New Partnership for Africa's Development (**NEPAD**) and African Peer Review Mechanism (**APRM**) are the latest regional initiatives by African leaders to address the crisis of governance rocking the continent. For African leaders, these two instruments demonstrate their determination to individually and collectively rid Africa of illegitimate and unresponsive government.

NEPAD is a product of the merger of the Omega plan and the Millennium Partnership for African Recovery Programme (MARP). It was initially tagged the New African Initiative while the new name, NEPAD, was adopted at the inaugural meeting of the 15-member Implementation Committee of Heads of State and Government headed by Nigerian former President, Olusegun Obasanjo on October 23, 2001. NEPAD has as its major objective the consolidation of democracy and promotion of sound economic management on the continent. The NEPAD document pledges African leaders' determination to respect the global standards of democracy, the core components of which include political pluralism, multipartyism, free and fair elections, independent press and the rule of law (NEPAD document, paragraph 79) The Democracy and Political Governance Initiative, a sub-component of NEPAD, seeks to strengthen the political and administrative frameworks of member states of NEPAD in conformity with the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and promotion of the rule of law.

The Democracy and Political Governance Initiative consists of the following elements: a series of commitment by participating countries to create or consolidate basic governance process and

practices, an undertaking by participating countries to take the lead in supporting initiatives that foster good governance; and an undertaking by participating countries to commit themselves to meeting basic standards of good governance and democratic behaviour (NEPAD document, paragraph 81).

African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), originated from NEPAD, is a voluntary instrument acceded to by the African Union member states. APRM has a mandate of ensuring the conformity of participating states to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards contained in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance (See APRM Base Document, Paragraph 1 & 2). The goal of the APRM mechanism is to ensure that participating states in the mechanism increase the pace of their efforts to adopt and implement the priorities and, programmes of NEPAD with the aim of “achieving the mutually agreed objectives and compliance with best practice in respect of each of the areas of governance and development” (See NEPAD, Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators for APRM, 2003: paragraph 1-3). 27 African countries are now participating in APRM (<http://www.nepad.org/aprm>).

This represents an improvement over 23 countries that acceded to the mechanism in 2006.

In other democratic climes where democratic culture is routinized and entrenched, NEPAD and APRM are sufficient enough to ensure accountable, responsible and responsive governance which in turn confers legitimacy on the state and its institutions. But in Africa, it is a huge challenge to make African leaders respect and have abiding faith in the basic principles of NEPAD and APRM even as many of them have acceded to the two instruments. Nigeria represents a classic example of the gap between stated commitment to and actual implementation of NEPAD and APRM core principles. Despite the fact that the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo enlisted Nigeria in the APRM in 2005, the administration in April 2007 organized what has been widely acclaimed as the worst elections in the political history of Nigeria on account of the

magnitude of irregularities and manipulation that attended the elections. Many observers of Nigeria's fourth republic politics are eagerly awaiting the report of the APR panel that recently visited the country on governance assessment mission. It is widely believed that the report of the panel on its Nigerian assignment will have impact on the credibility of the APRM.

Futility of Election in African Choiceless Democracy

It is universally acknowledged that election is central to bourgeois democracy be it presidential or Westminster model. Without election, representative democracy loses its essence as a system of rule. It is however also true that competitive election, though crucial, is not a sufficient condition for guaranteeing democracy. This section of the paper will focus on the analysis of the most recent presidential election in Kenya, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroun and Zimbabwe. It will attempt to bring to the fore why the extant political and institutional contexts of elections in these countries cannot engender credible elections and therefore can hardly produce alternation of power / regime. As a matter of fact, election has lost its capacity to compel accountability in African governance because political incumbents hardly feel any threat of defeat at the polls since they heavily control the machinery of election administration.

Kenya

The current political impasse in Kenya arguably represents the most severe governance crisis since party pluralism emerged in the east African country in the early 1990s. Kenya was thrown into political crisis following the announcement of official results of the December 27, 2007 presidential polls. At the heart of the crisis which later assumed ethnic character was the alleged irregularities in the collation of votes in respect of the incumbent President Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the main opposition candidate Raila Odinga of Orange Democratic Party (ODM). The allegation that the election was manipulated was to be strengthened by the dissenting voices of five of the twenty-member Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) to the results announced by the Commission. Indeed, the chairman of ECK came to say he doubted

Kibaki's victory at the polls (Adamolekun, 2008). The official results announced by ECK credited the 76 year old Kibaki with 4.5 million votes and Raila, son of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Kenya's first post independence Vice President, with 4.3 million votes. Violence that greeted the announcement of the result left 1,000 people dead and over 600,000 socially dislocated.

In the build up to the election, President Kibaki unilaterally appointed 19 new electoral commissioners in clear violation of the 1997 accord which empowered the opposition to nominate 50% of the electoral commissioners (Odinga, 2008). There were also several allegations of plans to rig the elections leveled by the ODM but Nairobi authorities dismissed them as cries of impending defeat of the opposition.

It is instructive to note that Kibaki and Odinga were leading figures in the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that wrested power from former President Daniel arap Moi's Kenya African National Union (KANU) in the 2002 presidential election after four decades of KANU'S authoritarian rule. Moi, ineligible to run for presidency due to the two-term limit introduced by the 1992 constitutional amendments, had foisted Uhuru Kenyatta on KANU as its presidential candidate in the 2002 polls. Kenyatta was heavily defeated at the polls by Mwai Kibaki who ran on the ticket of NARC, the opposition alliance comprising the Democratic Party, FORD-Kenya, the National Party of Kenya, the Social Democratic Party and later the Rainbow Alliance made up of a splinter group from KANU led by Raila Odinga (Anyang-Nyong'o 2004). Misunderstanding however broke out between Kibaki and Odinga as a result of the refusal of the former to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2002 by NARC on power sharing and constitutional reform. Part of the agreement in the MOU was that the office of the prime minister would be created and that Odinga would occupy the office (Badejo, 2006). After two months of violence, peace is gradually returning to Kenya following the intervention of a team of eminent Africans under the headship of Kofi Annan former world's number one bureaucrat after earlier failed

attempts by some mediators including President John Kuffur of Ghana in his capacity as Chair of African Union. Major highlights of the peace agreement brokered by Annan are the creation of the post of prime minister and creation of the post of 2 deputy prime ministers. While the office of the prime minister is to be occupied by an elected legislator who is parliamentary leader of the largest party in the National Assembly or of a coalition of parties (in the event of no party having parliamentary majority), the two positions of deputy prime ministers are to be filled each by PNU and ODM.

Togo

The “victory” of the current Togolese President, Faure Eyadema in the April 2005 presidential elections did not come to many observers as a surprise given a certain constitutional absurdity that preceded the election which could to a large extent explain the non credibility of the entire process and the outcome of the presidential contest. Shortly after the death of the then incumbent President Gnassingbe Eyadema, Chief of Togolese Army, Zakary Nandja proclaimed Faure Eyadema, son of Gnassingbe, as the successor to his father. That the Togolese Armed forces (FAT) threw its weight behind the Faure project is not surprising given the structure of the ethnic profile of FAT.

Faure’s father, Gnassuigbe, during his authoritarian rule transformed FAT from a national to an ethnic military establishment which largely ensured his long stay in power (Nwokedi, 2003). Through a deliberate recruitment policy, which tilted heavily in favour of Eyadamea’s Kabye ethnic extraction, out of the 12,000 men in the FAT by 1991, 7,000 of them were of Kabye ethnic group while out of the 300 officers in the FAT in the same period, 200 were of Kabye ethnic stock (Ajavon, 1992). This ethnic profile of the Togolese military explains why influential personnel of the armed forces owed personal loyalty to Gnassuigbe and this was practically extended to his son upon the former’s death.

It took pressures from within and outside Africa before Faure “slipped aside” on February 25, 2005. He was replaced by Bonfoh Abbass, the first deputy parliament speaker until presidential elections

were held in April of the same year. In the official results of the election released by the Togolese election authorities, Faure Eyadema of Rally for the Togolese People polled 60.15% of the total votes cast while his closest rival Emmanuel Bob-Ak9tani of Union of Forces for Change scored 38.25% in an election in which the main opposition leader, Gilchrist Olympio was barred from contesting owing to a constitutional provision that a presidential candidate must have lived in the country for at least 12 months.

Nigeria

For the scholars on Nigeria's democratization project, 2007 general elections represented an opportunity for both the authors of the transition programme and the election oversight body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the institutional manager of the transition process to restore public confidence in the electoral process. Not few voters were disappointed by the unsatisfactory manner by which 2003 elections were conducted. This opportunity was however squandered by the Obasanjo presidency and INEC. While the Obasanjo government deployed state administrative resources including anti-graft agencies and even the court in some cases to truncate the ambition of many opposition candidates, INEC exploited rather brazenly its regulatory powers to exclude certain candidates from the ballot. All in a bid to boost the electoral fortunes of the ruling Peoples Democratic party (PDP). When General Obasanjo during a PDP rally in Akure, capital of South Western State of Ondo said the 2007 election would be a "do or die affair" for the PDP, he was apparently sending a message to all election- related agencies particularly INEC and security agencies to deliver victory to PDP at any cost in the elections which have gone down in the troubled electoral history of Nigeria as the worst ever elections conducted in the country. This was achieved as PDP "swept" the polls winning 28 states in the governorship elections, majority seats in the National Assembly and in over 20 state Houses of Assembly and winning the presidential contest with its candidate, Umar Musa Yar'adua credited with 24 million votes. His closest challenger, General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Nigerian Peoples

Party polled 6 million votes while former Vice President Atiku Abubakar of the Action Congress, who eventually contested the election after successfully crushing all the hurdles put against his presidential ambition by the Obasanjo presidency and the INEC, scored 2 million votes.

Local and foreign election monitors who documented their various reports that the elections did not meet minimum international standards have been vindicated by the spate of election reversals coming out from tribunals across the country. Contrary to the position of Nigeria's election oversight body that the 2007 elections were "successful, free and fair" (INEC, 2007), there was a consensus among the election observer groups that the elections were massively flawed. So far, governorship elections in 6 states and several State and National Assembly elections including that of the President of the upper chamber of Nigeria's bicameral federal legislature, the Senate, have been voided by the tribunals. What could have been an embarrassing situation for the country was averted by an apparent "political judgment" given by the presidential election tribunal which upheld the election of Musa Yar'adua. Had the judgment gone in favour of the petitioners, General Buhari and Alhaji Abubakar and affirmed by Nigeria's Supreme Court which is the final arbiter in presidential election, Nigeria would have been thrown in to serious governance crisis. With the voiding of the election of Senate President and ineligibility of the Speaker of Federal House of Representatives to assume office as the Acting President on the ground of age requirement, the consequence would have been a "national embarrassment" to Africa's largest democracy.

With the reports of election observers documenting the irregularities, manipulation and absurdities that attended the 2007 polls coupled with the spate of election reversals by the tribunals citing irregularities and connivance of INEC to subvert electoral justice, one is at a loss how to justify INEC's claims that the 2007 polls "was successful... and its outcome reflects the intent of the Nigerian electorate" (INEC, 2007).

Cameroun

The current President of Cameroun Paul Biya has dominated the politics of the Francophone country for almost three decades. He assumed Camerounian presidency in 1982 succeeding Alhaji Ahmadu Ahidjo who ruled the country from 1958-1982. Ahidjo's 24 year authoritarian rule was sustained through a combination of repression and highly centralized political system which concentrated political and economic power in the president (Delancey, 1987). Political liberalization of the early 1990s and its accompanying regime of party pluralism did not significantly change the character of state inherited by Biya from Ahidjo. Rather, the former deepened the centralist character of the Camerounian state under his presidency and this, in addition to corporatism, patronage and repression, became the instruments of sustaining power for the ruling party and President Paul Biya. In the October 2004 Presidential election, the candidate of Cameroun Peoples Democratic Movement, the incumbent president, Paul Biya scored 2,665,359 or 70.92% of the total 3,758,221 votes pushing John Fru Ndi of Social Democratic Front to a distant second with a meagre 654,066 or 17.4% of the total votes cast. The election was widely condemned locally and outside Cameroun as not meeting the most elementary less of transparency and therefore its outcome could not by any standard be regard as the true preference of Cameroun voting public. Indeed, the official result annouced by Camerounian election authorities represented a contradiction and an evidence to the declining legitimacy and unpopularity of the Biya presidency.

Zimbabwe

Like his Camerounian counterpart, President Robert Mugabe has remained the dominant figure in the political economy of Zimbabwe since independence 28 years ago. Mugabe became Zimbabwe's first black Prime Minister in 1980 following the victory of his party, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) over its major rival Zimbabwe African Peoples Union in an election organised by the white dominated government of Prime Minister, Ian Smith (Ayittey, 1992). Since this electoral feat of 1980, Mugabe who later transformed himself into an executive president and his party have

won virtually all elections conducted in former Rhodesia. This fact is not however a product of Mugabe's popularity but a function of the total domination of the Zimbabwean polity by Mugabe. In the last presidential election held on March 11 2002, Mugabe according to official results polled 54% of the total votes while his main opponent, Morgan Tsvangirai polled 40% in an election characterized by allegation of irregularities, denial of media access to opposition and intimidation of voters which disenfranchised many eligible voters. The non transparent manner in which the election was conducted coupled with the poor human rights record of President Mugabe earned him sanctions from some Western countries and international development organizations. Mugabe, now 84 makes his sixth attempt at presidency in this month presidential election with Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change and Simba Makoni, Mugabe's former minister of finance as his main challengers. Makoni was expelled from ZANU following his declared intention to contest the presidential election. With Mugabe's insistence on conducting presidential polls against the opposition's demands that election reform should precede election, it is easy to predict the winner of the presidential contest ante election.

The foregoing demonstrates the political environment of electoral democracy in Africa. In this kind of environment, elections can not guarantee popular democracy. At best what this environment produces is "choiceless democracy" in which African voters continue to vote without making any choice. Without a pro-active reform of the electoral system in Africa, elections will continue to legitimize illegitimate governments.

Challenges of Credible Multiparty Elections in Africa

From our analysis so far, certain challenges to transparent election administration in Africa became apparent. This section will briefly examine some of these challenges.

One of the potent challenges to credible election in Africa is political incumbency. This has become a political capital in the hands of sitting rulers to promote their political ambitions or that of their favoured power contestants. The use of political incumbency to

disempower opposition parties in Africa manifests in the ways political incumbents appoint partisans into so-called independent election management bodies, denial of access to state media by the opposition, use of state resources to fund their campaigns in violation of campaign finance laws, manufacturing of new electoral rules and eligibility requirements to exclude opposition elements as well as deployment of state instruments of coercion to intimidate the opposition and its supporters (Osaghae, 1999).

Partisanship of the election oversight bodies is another challenge to credible elections in Africa. The process of appointing the membership of these bodies is heavily influenced/dominated by the ruling regimes which undermines their independence. Many African electoral bodies discharge their duties as though they are departments of government ministries. Their funding is also serviced by the executive branch of government. With the infrastructure of elections firmly in the grip of the incumbent governments, the possibility of the election bodies carrying out their functions without bias is very remote.

Vulnerability of the sanctity of vote is yet another challenge of election administration on the continent. Contrary to a widely held belief, the voters on their own can hardly protect their votes. The onus of protecting the vote rests on the electoral body as the regulator of electoral process. However, with the partisanship of election management bodies, the connivance of security agencies and limited influence of election observer groups, the sanctity of the vote cannot be guaranteed and result of election can hardly be regarded as the true wishes of voters.

Finally, credible elections and even democratization on the continent will continue to be challenged by economic, military and commercial interests of the Western countries. Amuwo (1992) has perceptively observed that “where the interests of the West are best served by authoritarian regimes, democracy cannot be on the agenda. Regimes in this group qualify, ipso facto, for more and more aid and loans”. While it is true that the internal pressures mounted by non-state constituencies such as social movement and other mass based

organizations including labour and professional groups shook the foundation of authoritarian regimes in Africa, these were significantly strengthened by pressures from international community particularly from the West, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent end of the Cold War. Since that period, the West and the Brettonwoods twins-the Bank and the Fund became “stakeholders” in the democratization project in Africa. But there is a contradiction between the interests of the West and the democracy enterprise on the continent. The motivation of the West for supporting democratization is no more than advancement of capitalism through globalization and economic liberalism. An African regime with dubious democratic credentials and poor human rights records but which is committed to the entrenchment of capitalism is assured of the support of the West. This scenario has engendered a structure of accountability in which African rulers are now accountable to the West rather than to the domestic constituencies. If one adds this to the fact that it is the international community (the West) that determines the success or otherwise of the democratization process, and will better appreciate how African voters have been disempowered and Africa democracy reduced to choice less democracy. In spite of the cries of irregularity and fraud that greeted 2007 general elections in Nigeria, some Western countries were among the first to congratulate Musa Yar’adua and paid him solidarity visits.

Achieving Credible Elections and Alternation of Regime in Africa

If authoritarianism in Africa was so discredited in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the third wave of democratization was inevitable, the electoral dictatorship currently pervading the continent legitimizes an urgent reform of the election context in Africa with a view to ensuring that only popular candidates are produced by free, fair and transparently managed elections. Our analysis in this study has demonstrated that the patterns and structure of challenges/obstacles to credible elections in Africa are the same across the continent. This then suggests that a one-for-all therapy can be applied to cure election disease in the region although with some country-specific

prescriptions to cater for individual country peculiarities. Below are some proposals capable of ensuring credible elections in Africa.

The point of departure for any meaningful attempt at sanitizing electoral democracy in African should be a reform of election administration. There are two dominant models of organizing election in Africa: elections are organized by ministries, departments of government (this model was popular in Francophone African countries) and elections are organized by supposedly independent election bodies. This is the practice in Anglophone countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana. These two models have proved disastrous to the sanctity of votes in African democracy. Under the two regimes, election officials betray public trust by manipulating election process in favour of the ruling party. The case of Nigeria's election oversight body INEC, during the much pilloried 2007 elections deserves a mention here. INEC practically became an interested party in the electoral process through its measured actions and inactions. It became so obsessed with its determination to deliver victory to the ruling PDP that it unlawfully excluded some opposition candidates perceived to be electoral threats to PDP from the election. The reforms that are needed in this area are the ones that will give meaningful structural, financial and administrative autonomy to the election authorities in a manner that protects them from the executive irresponsibility of the ruling governments.

Joseph (1990) has rightly observed that "the renewal of African governance will require the re-invigoration of the non-state sectors of society". The civil society in Africa should intensify its pro-democracy efforts in two major areas namely the empowerment of the citizenry to compel accountability from the political leadership and the checkmating of the excesses of African rulers. Democratic rule does not flourish only with constitutional safeguards but with "...the organized measure of social and political movements which need democratic freedoms for their very existence and which therefore struggle to defend them" (Mandani, 1995). Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), troubled by electoral insanity in the sub-region, recently came up with an initiative to set up a sub-

regional coalition to ensure transparent management of elections with a view to achieving credible elections in the member states of the sub-regional organization. Civil society activists including media practitioners should form the nucleus of the proposed network. There is a need to reform Africa's military establishment. The reform efforts should particularly target the pattern of recruitment into Africa's armed forces and the restoration of pure professionalism to the forces. A review of the structure of enlistment in the armed forces is imperative to give the military a national outlook while regeneration and entrenchment of culture of professionalism in the military will dissuade its personnel from political governance.

African judiciary also has a role to play in promoting the health of electoral democracy on the continent. They should discharge their official responsibilities without fear or favour and in a manner that inspires the hope of the African people in the judiciary as the defender of justice.

Finally, there is a need for the opposition parties in African democracy to bury their ideological and/or ethnic differences in order to form strong coalition to wrest power from authoritarian African incumbencies. Experience has shown that one of the major reasons why opposition parties do not have realistic chance of winning elections against the incumbents is the fact that the opposition parties are both weak and deeply divided. Any disagreement within the opposition coalition results in to disadvantaged/marginalized faction forming opposition party which not only proliferates opposition parties but also divides opposition votes during election to the electoral advantage of the incumbent regimes in spite of their declining legitimacy. For instance, in the presidential elections of 1997 in Kenya, KANU's Daniel arap Moi won with 40.1% of the total votes while opposition candidates Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga recorded 31.1% and 10.9% of the presidential votes respectively. If the opposition parties had fielded one candidate for the election, they would probably have ousted Moi from power. Kenya's opposition however learnt a bitter lesson from that

experience and it took a sort of grand opposition coalition by the opposition parties to defeat KANU in the presidential polls of 2002.

Conclusion

The current health of democratic rule in Africa is not only poor but deteriorating. The dominant rein of electoral dictatorship unleashed on the electorate across the continent makes the prospect of enthroning popular democracy on the continent very bleak. This paper has attempted to investigate the crisis of electoral democracy in Africa with particular emphasis on why credible and acceptable election has continued to elude African democracy. The paper argues that in spite of their stated commitment to democracy and good governance, Africa's rulers have failed to demonstrate their commitment in action by allowing election to run according to the rules of the game. With the infrastructure of election administration at their feet, they deploy this to disempower African electorate and thus turn election into a weapon against democracy. This therefore calls for urgent measures to reverse this ugly trend and put Africa on the path of popular and enduring democracy.

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PALACE CULTURE IN YORUBALAND: THE EXAMPLE OF OGBOMOSO PALACE 1850-1960

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Abstract

This paper examines the traditional Yoruba palace in Ogbomosho from the period when Ogbomosho was a small town in the metropolitan province of old Oyo Empire before the establishment of colonial rule in South Western Nigeria. Although earlier studies had been carried out on palace culture, yet little or nothing had been documented about the cultural values entrenched in Ogbomosho palace. It is against this background that this study seeks to historically analyse and document the palace culture in Ogbomosho. The methodology employed in this study was derived from oral testimonies received from the Oba, Elders, Priests and Chiefs in the town as well as relevant information from books and journals relating to the study. Our findings reveal that the Yoruba people in Ogbomosho still look up to the Oba as the model of tradition and culture. The palace is seen as a place of succor in the times of conflicts between people in the town so as to maintain peace, orderliness and harmony within the community.

Background of the Study

The fountain of culture in any Yoruba town is the palace. The Oba is the custodian of this culture. Yoruba palaces are of high standard in architectural designs, the architectural structure of the Yoruba palaces lends credence to the fact that the Obas domain is the most important building of the town which are in different architectural forms, shapes and depicting the dexterity of the people's art and culture¹.

Yoruba palaces are sacred sanctuaries typifying the divine nature of the Oba. These are temple, shrine and alters dedicated to the ancestors. Sacrifices are therefore, performed constantly in the palace for the well being and prosperity of the town². This makes the *Soun* to be regarded as the representatives of his ancestors in the town. The Ogbomosho palace which is the focus of this paper is the traditional and royal residence of the *Soun* and the entire people of Ogbomosoland.

Ogbomosho is located in the northern part of Oyo state in Nigeria. The town is bounded in the south by Ilorin, Oyo in the west, and Ejigbo in the East. According to Oyerinde, the town started with four

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district communities³. The first settler in ogbomoso was *Aale*, from Nupe descent, who was a hunter of elephants. His hunting camp became known as *Oke-Elerin* (Elephant hill). Up till today, all the people at *Oke Elerin* quarters claim to be the descendant of the main. The chief of the quarters has become the exclusive right of his descendants. The second settler is *Ohunsile*, who is an Otta prince but came to settle in Ogbomoso. He left Otta because of chieftaincy dispute to settle at Oyo during the time of Alaafin *Ogbolu* of old Oyo Empire. He embarked on a war campaign for the Alaafin and won. Hence the Alaafin ordered for a settlement of him at *Oke-Ijeru* now a quarter in Ogbomoso. The third settler was *Orisatolu*, of Borgu town in present day Kogi state. His first settlement was at *Paku* and as an *Ifa* priest, he named his camp *Fatedo* (Ifa encamps here) oral tradition had it that he later relocated to another camp where he cultivated *Isapa* (*Hibiscus sabdarifa*). This new camp bears *Isapa* till today and its head chief bears the title the *Onisapa* meaning the owner of *Isapa*. The present *Isapa* quarters in Ogbomoso was resettled by his descendants who settled on the land of the first settler *Aale*. The old *Isapa* is now a village outside Ogbomoso. The fourth settler was Soun Ogunlola who was a great hunter and warrior. Oral tradition had it that his defeat of *Elemoso*, a powerful warrior of Oyo made the Alaafin to honour him with title of Soun of Ogbomoso and since then he became the ruler and controller of Ogbomosoland⁴.

The period, 1850-1960 is very important because this was the time Ogbomoso had its traditional political structure on the ground from where the palace emerged as an institution in Ogbomoso history and the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. According to Falola and Oguntomisin⁵, Ogbomoso town was established as a settlement by *Alaafin Abipa* to guard against the incursion of Nupe warriors to old Oyo Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century and this was the period when Ogbomoso palace was found. To begin with, it is necessary to explore the content and concerns of the current historiography on palace culture in Yorubaland. Notable among such historical works relating to palace culture in Yorubaland includes the works of G.J.A Ojo⁶, T. Falola⁷, B. Adediran⁸, O.B Olaoba⁹, B.

Ajayi¹⁰ and J.A Adeniran¹¹ to mention a few. Of all these scholars, none has ever discussed the activities of Ogbomoso palace, a vacuum which necessitated the contribution to knowledge of Ogbomoso palace culture.

Origin of Ogbomoso Palace

The exact date of the establishment of the Ogbomoso palace in Yoruba land is unknown to scholars. The probable date of its establishment is traceable to the nineteenth century. The spur of building Ogbomoso palace was informed by the social environment in Yoruba land during the first half of the 19th century. This was the period every Yoruba town was ensuring some legitimacy for kingship. In describing the socio-political environment of the Yoruba people in the nineteenth century, Ajayi and Akintoye maintain that:

By 1800, for particularly, all Yoruba, the monarchy was the sanctified order of society and even until the end of the 19th century; there were many Yoruba who still regarded communities without kings as bastards.¹²

The above statement shows that the building of the Ogbomoso palace evolved in the second half of the of the nineteenth century. The main reason for the establishment of the palace was to maintain law and order and provide adequate security and protection for the inhabitants of the town. However, it is on record that Ogbomoso was one of the new settlements in Yoruba land that suppresses the excesses of the Fulani jihadist on the attack of Yorubaland.¹³

The palace of Ogbomoso was a residential building of a powerful military warlord called Soun who turned the building to Ogbomoso palace to cater for the socio-political exigencies of the 19th century Yoruba welfare. The architectural designs of the Ogbomoso palace and the palace organization were modified along the pattern of new Oyo.¹⁴ This point suggests that old Oyo tradition and indeed that of the new Oyo empire had great influence over the palace culture of Ogbomoso. Although several other palaces exist in Ogbomoso but the main focus of this study is the Soun's palace in the city

Structure of the Ogbomoso Palace

The Ogbomoso palace is located in the heart of the city. The palace is the largest unit of the building in the area of the town. The palace is bounded to the north with building estates of the town chiefs, *Oja-jagun* market in the west, *Oja-Igbo* market in the east and the sacred *Ajagbon* tree in the south before the twentieth century, the palace building structures occupied about eleven acres of land mass with several large compounds and numerous apartment. The Ogbomoso palace is the most important building in the town and the building is quite distinctive in outlook and structural pattern. The palace accommodates wide range of personalities, which include visitors' warriors royal wives, princes and princess. Ojo however described the palace as a place of residence of the Oba's family and entertainment during traditional festivals in the town.¹⁵ Thus, Ogbomoso palace is significantly a public property.

At this point, it is important to mention that Ogbomoso town has numerous Oba's and palaces with distinctive architectural patterns and designs. Notable among the *Olugbon* and *Aresa* palace in the town. The structure of this two palace is largely different from popular Soun's palace in the city. The Ogbomoso palace has fourteen courtyards and earmarked for different categories of purposes. The largest courtyard is nearest to the main entrance known as *Ojude-Oba*. It serves as the assembly grounds for people during festivals and ceremonies.¹⁶ During the festival of *Ogunojalu* festival, the people in the town troop out en-masse at *Ojude-Oba* to rejoice with the *Soun* of the town that they have not been wiped out by warfare.¹⁷ A large section of the palace is marked out as the apartment of the royal wives known as *Iyewu Ayaba*.¹⁸ Also, a section of the palace is earmarked for the palace chiefs as waiting rooms while in the palace. There are other sections in the palace which accommodated fire arms and ammunitions while the rooms where used by the servants (*eru*) of the palace, the prince and princess of the palace as well as the *Ile-Igbejo* where civil and criminal offences are handled. There is also a particular section of the palace known as *Iledi* where religious and spiritual meetings are held. Temples and shrines are also in the palace where the *Soun* consult the oracle to receive advice and solution to a

problem. The name of the shrine is known as *Ojubo Orisapopo*, while the shrine of *Ogun* is referred to as *Ojubo Ogun*.¹⁹

Palace Functionaries

The palace was built through communal efforts and initiatives for the Oba and other members of the community. Ojo considers the palace as a house which the people built but in which the Oba live.²⁰ In the same vein, Lucas considers the Oba as incarnation of the soul of the people and representation of the people kinship.²¹ The responsibility of maintenance of the palace is the exclusive duty of the palace chiefs. They are the *Areomole*, *Ogaala*, and the *Alapo*. They are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining the spiritual and physical structure of the palace. The civil chiefs were pre-occupied with the legislative, executive and judicial matters of the town. They are known as *Ilu*. The *Areomole* is the head of all the princes and princesses in the palace. The security of the royal paraphernalia is reposed to him when the *Oba* joins his ancestors.²² The *Ogaala* is the chief priest of the palace, he assisted the *Soun* to perform rituals to the *Orisa* deities to maintain peace and order in the town. The *Alapo* was the personal aide to the *Soun*. He is in charge of the *Soun's* arms and ammunition and was responsible for the maintenance of cleanliness of the palace through the servants.²³

The role of women in Ogbomoso was very significant to mention. The duty of the *Ayaba* (king's wife) were essentially to educate the princes and princesses in the palace. The *Ayaba* are of two classifications, each with defined hierarchical roles. The *Agba Ayaba* form the *Soun's* senior wife, most of them were bequeathed to him. This is however in line with the Yoruba social theory known as *Ijogun* (inheritance). On the other hand, the junior wives are referred to as *Ayaba*. They usually take instructions from the *Ayaba Agba* in the knowledge of palace traditions.²⁴

Other palace officials who made useful contribution to the smooth running of palace activities include palace messengers and musicians. The palace messengers in pre-colonial Ogbomoso society consist mainly of the *Eru* (slave). Most of them were captives of Yoruba civil wars captured into slavery and integrated to the service

of Ogbomoso palace. The palace messengers conveyed important information from the Soun to the town's people. They also attend to personal chores in the palace as directed by the Ayaba and *Oloye-Afin* (chiefs of the palace). The palace messengers acted as the state police. They were often sent to arrest offenders. Some of them usually worked on royal farms while a percentage of them formed the royal body guards to the Soun.²⁵

Functions of the Palace

The Ogbomoso palace is the symbol of power and authority in the town. The Soun is the spiritual and political head of the town. He is regarded as the representative of the gods and ancestors of the community. The palace is a very important place for socio-cultural activity of the people.²⁶ The Egungun and Orisapopo festivals are periods of joy and happiness in the life of the town. It is a great feast of celebration. The event usually entails dancing and singing which is considered by the people to be a period of re-enactment of the past and shedding more light on their survival as a people.²⁷

As mentioned earlier, the palace is the supreme court of the people. Hence, an apartment was embarked for that purpose in Ogbomoso, the palace court is referred to as *Igbejo*. The Soun is the chief judge of the court while his chiefs were his advisers. During judicial proceeding in the palace, the Soun seats on the Apeere (the sacred royal stool) he treats all cases with strict impartiality. In the presentation of criminal cases oaths were sworn in the name of the Soun to ascertain truth. Also, in ascertaining the truth, litigants were made to cross over the sacred chains present in the palace. The people believe that the interlocking chain has the power of making the deceptive litigant say the truth and any form of false representation is detected because the offender may be inflicted with the punishment of lying under false claims. Also, the palace is well known for settling marital disputes among husbands and wives in the town. Oral tradition had it that no matter what the degree of the woman's misbehavior, if such a woman is chased to the palace and she touches the *Ilaja*, the husband ought to settle and reconcile with her immediately, in order to avert the wrath of the gods on him.²⁸

The palace is a sacred institution in the community used for religious purposes, for instance, certain places are earmarked in the palace to make covenant and confession by the people of the town. Field investigation reveals that the palace is the abode of gods and ancestors of the community. The people of Ogbomoso have described the palace as a place for safety and protection against aggressive and oppressive people in the society. J.K Olupona describes the palace as a sanctuary for the persecuted.²⁹ It is however a taboo in Yoruba society to assault anyone who ran to the palace for safety.

Socially, the palace is used as the beginning and terminal point of Ogbomoso festivals. The Egungun and the Orisapopo festivals were the most popular ceremony in the palace celebrated by the people and the Soun in the town. During the festivals, uplifting music was provided by the royal drummers together with charters and singers such as *Akewi* (poet), *Akejala* (Ijala chanters) and *Asunrara* (Rara chanters). The music is followed by a unique dancing style and pattern in the palace. All the people gathered in the palace to celebrate the town's festival with the *Soun*.³⁰

According to oral tradition, the *Orisapopo* is the official deity of the Ogbomoso religion in Yoruba society.³¹ The celebration of this royal divinity attracted the home coming of indigenes of the town living abroad. The divinity had its shrine in the palace where necessary rituals were held annually. The people in the town believed that the deity is fertility god. During the festival, barren women were asked to pray at the shrine of the deity. The major sacrificial object to the Orisapopo deity was a female goat. However, it should be noted that the sacrificial use of female goats portends fertility. The divinity was, however, not celebrated with drinking of palm wine because the god abhorred it. The essence of the worship was to glorify the monarchy.

Social Change in Ogbomoso Palace

The acceptance of Islam and Christianity in the palace of Ogbomoso was a very significant development in the history of ogbomoso. B.A Agiri mentioned that Islam came to Ogbomoso through Ikoyi-ile in the early nineteenth century.³² The *Soun* of the town perhaps accepted and allowed the Islamic religion to thrive in

the town because of his belief that Muslim marabouts would assist the town in providing charms to defeat other Yoruba communities attacking Ogbomosoland during the civil war in the nineteenth century. As many people began to embrace Islamic religion in Ogbomoso, there was a decline in traditional cult and deities in the palace. However, Christianity on the other hand was introduced to Ogbomoso palace by T.J Bowen of the southern Baptist mission in 1855.³³ Bowen's new religion was embraced by the palace because of the news that he could defend the community against external aggression. The kind that was demonstrated in Abeokuta during the Dahomey invasion. The relevance of these two foreign religions was to assist the community politically against external aggression. To an extent, the acceptance of Islam by the Soun could be a factor responsible for sparing Ogbomoso from destruction during the Afonja revolt of 1824.³⁴ However, it is important to mention that the two foreign religions were unable to defend the sovereignty of Ogbomoso at the beginning of the British rule in 1893.³⁵

The advent of colonialism and the establishment of British rule in Ogbomosoland is also a remarkable development in the palace organization. Under the colonial rule, the Soun was used in the colonial administration of the town. The colonial masters recognized the role of the Soun as the symbol of authority and control of the community. The colonial government influenced the palace administration by the introduction of taxes to run government expenses in the colony.³⁶ In 1925, the *Soun* of Ogbomoso land was appointed the head of Ogbomoso district council. This appointment confirmed Soun as the head of all the subordinate towns in Ogbomoso environs. O. Ikime, described the native authorities' treasuries for the colonial masters as one of the cornerstone of indirect rule system in Yoruba communities.³⁷ From the second half of the 19th century and with the decline of old Oyo empire, Ogbomoso had become one of the frontier towns between Ilorin and subordinate Yoruba towns. This strategic position encouraged the levy of tolls to commodity traders of neighboring Yoruba towns en-route north via Ilorin. B.A Agiri

contends that the accrued tolls provided a good source of revenue for the colonial government.³⁸

The relevance of the collection of the poll tax was that the appointment of *Soun* as a poll collector and his subordinate chiefs dislocated palace activities during this period as their duties in the palace were neglected for colonial offices. The responsibility of collecting poll tax for colonial government replaced the old tradition of attending to civil matters in the palace.³⁹ The physical transformation of the structure of the palace was also a significant phenomenon in Ogbomoso history. In 1931, the Ogbomoso palace took a new outlook. The architectural design of the palace took a new form. The walls of the old building were plastered with cement, the thatches roofs were replaced with corrugated iron sheets. Thus, the palace became distinctive modern edifice in the model which the British officials initiated.⁴⁰

Conclusion

It has been shown in this study that the palace in Ogbomoso community is an index of culture in which the Soun of Ogbomoso is the symbol of authority. The Soun is responsible for the maintenance of law and order to enhance peace and social harmony throughout the period covered in the study. He was described as a link between the living generation and the ancestors.

The palace in Ogbomoso was described as the residence of the rulers of the town and the whole community. It is the largest single public building of the town where everybody comes to celebrate with the ruler during festive occasions and a place to settle disputes among people through dialogue. The palace had several departments and functionaries responsible for the day to day running of the activities of the palace throughout the period of the study. The advent of Islam, Christianity, and colonialism had brought important and significant changes in the palace in the sense that it affects the traditional ritual practices of the palace in Ogbomoso history.

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POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY

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This paper was first presented at the 1st Annual Lecture organized by the National Association of History and International Studies (NAHISS) at Olusegun Obasanjo Multipurpose Hall, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, on the 1st of November, 2006.

Introduction

One of the consequences of corruption and unethical practices in Nigeria is the rate of political assassination. Therefore, this paper is to examine political assassination and its implications for Nigeria's democracy. Political assassination is not peculiar to Nigeria; it is a global problem; for instance, on November 21, 1963, President John Kennedy was assassinated at exactly 12:30p.m. He was shot twice by Harvey Oswald in Texas while on a state visit. In Liberia, President William R. Tolbert was assassinated on April 12, 1980 in Monrovia by some groups of soldiers led by Sergeant Samuel Doe. Recently, Rafik Hariri former Prime Minister of Lebanon was assassinated, prompting the country to fall into chaos and division. He was Prime Minister of the country from 1992 to 1998 and again from 2000 until his resignation in October 2004.

But the trends and dimensions it has taken in Nigeria today is worrisome and it portends danger, anarchy, lawlessness and total breakdown of law and order. Some groups of people believe that it is a veritable weapon to be used against opponents. Most of the cases of assassination in Nigeria revolve around the ambitions of politicians to emerge victorious in an election. That is why political assassination is more prevalent.

The term 'assassin' was brought by the crusaders from Syria to Europe, where it acquired its present meaning of one who murders a

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politically important person either for hire or for fanatical motives.¹ Therefore, assassination is the act of killing a politically relevant person by surprise. Most of the assassins kill for a sum of money or material benefit. This could be described as a method of killing, due to the mode of operations and weapon being used. A common feature of cases of political assassination is that nothing is taken from the victims to indicate a motive of robbery. Most of the victims are either political godfathers, aspirant to positions of authority, political big wigs whose continuous relevance in the political arena is considered as a clog in the assassin's or their sponsors' political wheel of progress. Due to the spate of assassinations, the polity is so heated up that fears are rife about our young democracy.²

Political Assassinations in Nigeria before 1999

Since the elective principle introduced by the Clifford Constitution of 1922 up to the collapse of the First Republic, political assassination was not common, although there might have been some political killings.

In the First Republic, the political crisis in Nigeria gave room to some political assassinations, which resulted from widespread electoral fraud that in turn resulted in riots. It will be remembered that in 1963, the Action Group (A.G) was maneuvered out of control of the Western Region by the Federal Government led by Alhaji Tafawa Balewa of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and a new government, led by the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP), took over. Shortly afterwards the A.G leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was charged and imprisoned for treason. The 1965 National Election produced a major realignment and a disputed result that snowballed into political crisis that claimed many lives unexpectedly.³

As a result of the crisis in Western Nigeria and other factors, the military took over the government from NPC-NNDP coalition and assassinated the Prime Minister Alhaji Ahmadu Bello and Premiers of the Northern and Western Regions, Alhaji Ahmadu and Chief S.L. Akintola respectively. Also assassinated was Chief Okotie Eboh. Yakubu Gowon took over government through a military coup d'état

that took place six months after. Both the head of state, General Aguiyi Ironsi and Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi, the Military Governor of Western state were killed among others. Hundreds of Igbo people were also massacred in the North, most especially, in Kano in 1966.⁴

In the Second Republic that lasted between October 1, 1979 and December 31, 1983, the country witnessed increased violence, riots and assassinations, which were mostly as a result of election rigging that characterized the period, most especially during the August 1983 elections. In the South West ,elections were rigged by the Federal government controlled (NPN) .In Ondo and Oyo States it led to political assassinations which finally gave way to the military coup of December, 1983, which produced Major General Mohammad Buhari as the new Head of State.⁵

The assassination of Dele Giwa through a letter bomb on October 19, 1986, was a new chapter in the history of assassination in Nigeria. This has remained a reference point in the country till date, so much so for the novel idea and style of execution employed by the killers. At the time of his murder, his magazine (*News Watch*) was said to be working on a report which many believed could have put a spanner in the works of certain 'powerful men' in the country, hence the desperate move to silence the precursor of such report.⁶

Political assassinations were common during the reign of General Sani Abacha, 1993-1998.⁷ According to Madunagu, Abacha's junta first professionalised political assassination, and then developed it into a systematic method of fighting the 'enemies' of the state in general and the supporters of Chief Moshood Abiola in particular.⁸

The following are some of the illustrious sons and daughters of Nigeria that were murdered during the reign of General Abacha: Alhja Kudirat Abiola; one of the wives of the presumed winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, Basorun M.K.O. Abiola, Pa Alfred Rewane, one of the financiers of NADECO; Air Comodore Anthony Ikazobor, Bagudu Kaltho; Navy Comodore Babatunde Elegbede, Dr. Makanjuola. It is believed that the government of Sani

Abacha might have masterminded the assassinations of these people for having critical views about his government's activities.⁹

Political Assassinations after 1999

The prevalent political assassinations in Nigeria could be the climax of the political crises which for long cast a pall of gloom on the future of Nigerian democracy.¹⁰

The Fourth Republic has witnessed more political assassinations of key politicians in the country. This paper highlights some of them. On December 21, 2001 the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige was Killed by yet-to-be identified gunmen.¹¹ All the accused including Iyiola Omisore, a senator and one time Deputy Governor of Osun state, as well as Kunle Alo, one time Commissioner for Industry and Co-operatives in Osun State were discharged and acquitted by Justice Akin Sanda of Ibadan High Court on June 25, 2004 because of a myriad of contradictions and inconsistencies in the case of the prosecution and on the totality of the evidence, which was insufficient and could not be sustained.¹²

The way and manner in which the murder of Chief Bola Ige was handled was condemned by the family, and the public at large.¹³ It was viewed by the people that the government and the police were trying to protect the assassins, because when Chief Ige was in government most of the people in the government were not comfortable with him and his style of politics. It will be remembered that he was of the Alliance for Democracy (A.D) extraction, while he worked with the PDP- led government.¹⁴

Another political assassination that was recorded during this political dispensation is that of Marshall Harry, a close political ally of the then Rivers State Governor, Dr Peter Odili. Harry was the State Chairman of PDP in 1999 when Odili won the ticket of the party at the primary election which was never conducted due to the role played by Harry. Sergeant Awuse was a hot contender for the ticket of the party.¹⁵ Eventually; Odili picked the ticket of the party. In Rivers States, Marshall Harry was known as a political "Kingmaker".

Immediately after the election he was made the Vice-Chairman of PDP, South-South due to his immense contribution towards Odili's victory. Immediately after the election, he began to disagree with Odili and the Federal Government to the extent that he campaigned against President Olusegun Obasanjo's re-election and formed the Campaign for Realization of South-South Presidency (CRESSOP).¹⁶ The PDP suspended Harry in 2001 for anti-party activities. He later joined the ANPP. He was made the Vice-Chairman of the party (ANPP) in South-South and a key member of Buhari's presidential campaign organisation.¹⁷

On March 5, 2003, he was killed by four armed men in plain clothes in his Abuja home in the presence of his daughter and other family members. His death raised some questions that are still begging for answers. One, why was the man killed few days prior to the Buhari's presidential campaign in Port Harcourt? Two, why was the request for the use of Port Harcourt stadium for the campaign turned down? Although the motive for his killing remains unconfirmed, it might not be unconnected with politics.¹⁸

Also on March 3, 2004, Andrew Agoni, a former Managing Director of Nigeria Airways and member of the PDP's Board of Trustees, and Joseph Ngana, a police sergeant, were assassinated when the convoy in which they were traveling with George Akume, the then Governor of Benue was attacked by assassins.¹⁹ It was believed that this could be the handiwork of political opponents.

Another dastardly act was committed in Lagos on July 27, 2006, at the residence of Engineer Funso Williams, a gubernatorial hopeful in Lagos state under the banner of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He was assassinated in his bedroom. Few days before the killing, the Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) in charge of Zone 11 summoned the meeting of all the gubernatorial aspirants under the banner of the PDP to a meeting where he expressed displeasure at the way the aspirants were going about their campaigns. Before the killing, there had been some altercations between Senator Ogunlewe's group and Engr. Funso Williams' group. Although the police is not ruling out the possibility of armed

robbery; investigations into the murder again brings to mind a litany of unresolved murders across the country.²⁰

While the search for Funso Williams' killers was on, another assassination took place in Ijan-Ekiti in Ekiti State. This was the murder of Dr Ayodeji Daramola on August 14, 306. Daramola, a PDP gubernatorial aspirant in the state, was not allowed to register during the revalidation exercise that took place in the party early that year. It was claimed that the then governor of the state, Mr. Ayodele Fayose deliberately disallowed him. But he later registered in the party Headquarters in Abuja. Within and outside the state, it was believed that the then State Government masterminded the killing of this gubernatorial aspirant. The public outcry on this matter have contributed to the impeachment of Mr Ayodele Fayose.²¹ Fayose is even wanted by the police on suspicion that he may have been directly, or indirectly, involved in the murder of Dr Ayo Daramola, also the suspects are facing a two count charge of conspiracy to murder and murder before the Ado-Ekiti High Court before Justice Daramola. Among them are Mr. Adegoke Olatunji, Personal Assistant to the former Governor Mr. Ayo Fayose and Chief Dayo Okondo, a member of PDP Board of Trustees and a one time Senatorial aspirant.

The political Assassination of Hon. Olagbaju was also viewed with disdain and condemnation. He was killed in the political crisis that engulfed Osun State during the tenure of Governor Bisi Akande and his Deputy Iyiola Omisore. The death of Olagbaju sparked off some political unrest. Up till today, the killers are yet to be identified.

In Anambra State, political assassination and mayhem have been a recurring decimal since 1999. But one political killing that stands out and that was condemned by the public was the killing of Abigail and Barnabas Igwe. Barnabas, Chairman of Anambra branch of Nigeria Bar Association and his wife were ambushed in September 2002.²² The killing is believed to be politically motivated. Before the killing, Igwe had been a powerful public critic of the then Anambra's Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju, openly calling for his resignation, due to his maladministration, and his failure to pay government

workers for several months. Today, the investigation and prosecution calls for concern.

On Friday November 10, 2006 at Ovwor Community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta state, 15 heavily armed men stormed the country home of John Oguma, a Chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and governorship aspirant in the state. A mobile policeman on duty at his house was killed, Ogunnma's wife was shot and injured by the gunmen who also rained a hail of bullets on the house in frustration at not meeting the politician.²³

Also on September 14, 2007, Hon Olusegun Oladimeji (a.k.a Segelu), a member of House of Representatives was gruesomely murdered in Ibadan. He was until his death representing the Akinyele/Lagelu Federal Constituency of Oyo State, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party and an associate of controversial Ibadan politician Chief Lamidi Adedibu. OLadimeji was at 9. 15p.m shot by two men who accosted him at the party office at Ejioku in Lagelu Local Government Area, while attending to party loyalists. In their reactions, Oyo Governor, Alo Akala, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu and Oladimeji's family claimed that the killing was politically motivated.²⁴

The following people were also suspected to have been murdered by political assassins. Yemi Oni, A.D. Ekiti State; March, 2003. Mr. Ikenna Ibor, ANPP Anambra State, April 2003. Chief Aminasoari Dikibo, PDP, Delta State, April 15, 2003, Chief Philip Olorunipa, INEC, Kogi State, April 2004. Mr. Patrick Origbe, PDP, Delta State, June 3, 2005, Chief Jesse Aniku, ACD, Plateau State, July 2006, and Sa'adatu Rimi, wife of Abubakar Rimi, a PDP presidential aspirant and former Governor of old Kano State.²⁵

All the aforementioned are just some of the known people killed by suspected assassins. The list is endless. Two things are common about the killings; one, most of them were murdered in their homes, two, money or other valuables were not stolen from them.

Implications of the Killings for Nigerian Democracy

Since death is an instrument that both the weak and the strong fear most, the rate of political assassinations in Nigeria has created

fear in the minds of politicians most especially the seasoned ones among them. Although political assassination was not alien in both the First and Second Republics, the magnitude today is very alarming. Most of those that are supposed to play key role are either not playing active roles, or completely out of the game. This is not a good omen for the entrenchment of democracy in our body polity.

This has given room for crooks, criminals, the jobless and thugs to control the government machinery. Anambra State's case easily comes to mind, where a school drop out, Chris Mba, at a time was dictating the political pace by performing the role of a godfather. Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu's case in Oyo State is not too different, because sycophants and misfits are the ones controlling the politics in that 'civilized' state. This has almost rubbished their century-old claim of fame and sophistication.

Two, Nigeria polity does not encourage technocrats and professionals to participate actively in our democracy because of the fear that they might be the target of political assassins. This is because they will be seen as threats to continuous relevance in the polity, since there is a sharp difference between good and bad. This practice is sharply different from what operates in advanced democracies, where people who have made it in the private sector are the ones dominating politics. There, politics is seen as service to humanity, whereas in Nigeria the easiest way of making money is through politics.

Three, due to the inability of the police to fish out any of the political assassins, the competence of the police has been brought to question. It is an urgent imperative that police and the government resolve all pending murder cases to rekindle people's confidence in the nation's political administration and in the police.

Another implication of the political assassination for Nigerian politics is that it may lead to a one party state, since most of the killers were never found or were linked to people in government. This may finally compel people to join the ruling party or weaken the opposition party.

The assassination can also lead to unemployment, since the youth that are supposed to be productive may go into crime because

of quick money involved. This may snowball into criminals taking over Nigerian politics. This is frightening!

Also, political assassination has turned all Nigerian politicians to virtual suspects. It has become almost reflexive for politicians in Nigeria to point fingers at one another whenever a prominent figure is killed. In Engineer Funso Willians' murder case, nearly all the then known gubernatorial aspirants and politicians in Lagos were either interrogated or detained by the police. In Ekiti, the then Governor Ayo Fayose, was accused of masterminding of Dr Ayo Daramola. Investigation into the case is shall on.

Nonetheless, the fear is palpable everywhere in the country about the spate of political assassinations, regardless of the claim of the police, discounting some of the cases as ordinary murder or killings. There is no doubt that political assassinations are a far too common occurrence, and action by the government and police to stem the problem has been insufficient or ineffective.

Concluding Remarks

Political assassinations are closely associated with intolerant and unaccommodating dictatorship. For this to abate, measures must be put in place by the government to dissuade the youth from engaging in this high profile crime. This could be achieved by creating jobs for the qualified ones. So that the crime rate will be reduced.

Also most of the elective and political appointments must be on part-time basis especially all the ones that concern the legislative arm of government. The number of advisers, senior special assistants to the President, Vice-President, Governors, Deputy Governors, Local Government Chairmen must be drastically reduced, and the salaries of all the political appointees must be drastically reduced and should be in line with Civil Service Structure, with difference only in the allowances. This will make the positions to be less attractive. The penchant for all to be politicians is not a good omen for our democracy.

More so, the police must be proactive to their constitutional duties, the force must be well equipped, officers must be well trained, so that they can address all the knotty security issues and compare

favorably with their counterparts around the globe. With well equipped and effective police officer's in Nigeria, all the protagonists of political assassinations in Nigeria will suffer ignominious defeat.

Furthermore, the political culture, which I believe will take time to evolve, must be allowed to germinate in this country. Politics must be seen as a call to service, not a do-or-die affair that will breed thuggery, assassination and violence, intra and inter-party relation must be encouraged this will reduce tension in the polity and allay the fear that is prevalent in the country.

Finally, for democracy to be sustained there must be security of lives and property. And to achieve this employment must be provided for qualified youths, so that crime rate will be reduced in Nigeria, since the youth are the most vulnerable to crime. They must be engaged in something productive since the idle mind is the devil's workshop. Also, should Nigeria allow anybody without proven character or of a reputable ancestry to be in position of leadership!

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THE GENESIS OF FREE EDUCATION IN WESTERN NIGERIA, 1951-1966

**S. Ademola Ajayi*

Introduction

The 1950s witnessed an exemplary innovation in the history of Education in Nigeria. This was an era of Free Primary Education, pioneered by the then Western regional government. The scheme was preceded by the Western form of literacy education, championed by the Christian Missions and the British colonial government.¹ By the mid-twentieth century, therefore, western education had, to some extent, been firmly rooted in Western Nigeria. However, because of the limited objectives of the pioneers of western education in Western Nigeria, educational development in the region, as the case was in the entire country, in the period before 1950 was grossly inadequate for meeting the needs of a modern state.² In simple terms, neither the Christian Missions nor the colonial government in Western Nigeria (and indeed in Nigeria as a whole) in their entire ramification had adequate answer to popular demands for mass education. This was the social milieu in which was developed the Free Education scheme in Western Nigeria in the 1950s, specifically from 1955 to 1966. It is against this background that one could really appreciate the revolutionary nature of the programme in this area of study.

The Era of Transition

For Nigeria, the decade of the 1950s was marked by the crucial transition from colonial to independent status.³ In 1951, the country adopted a Federal Constitution, named after its author, Sir John Macpherson. Through its provisions, the regional Houses of Assembly ceased to be potent advisory bodies for which they had been noted since their formation in 1946. Henceforth, the new constitution provided for democratic elections to the regional Houses of Assembly. But, more importantly, the legislature of each region was empowered to make laws for peace, order and good government

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of the region, with respect to certain enumerated subjects, of which education was one.⁴ With this new development, therefore, responsibility for education devolved on the governments of the regions. Consequently, ministries of education were created in each of the Northern, Eastern and Western regional governments of Nigeria, and were responsible for education in their respective regions while the Federal Ministry of Education was in charge of education in the Federal Territory of Lagos.

The Action Group party, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, won the first election to the Western House of Assembly in 1952. In his first budget speech, Chief Awolowo, made it clear to the members of the House that his government would give top priority to education, among other things, as far as that budget would allow.⁵ This he spelled out as a basic principle by which his party was guided:

As far as possible, expenditure on services which tend to the welfare and health and education of the people should be increased at the expense of any expenditure that does not answer to the same test.⁶

In July of the same year, the Minister of Education for the Western Region, Chief S. O. Awokoya, presented a comprehensive set of proposals calling for a free, Universal Primary Education (U.P.E) for the Western Region by January 1955.⁷ In the view of Chief Awokoya, these proposals deserved utmost priority. For, according to him:

Educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution. Our past history makes it a matter of paramount necessity to catch up with the rest of the world. Our present position makes it obligatory to re-orientate our policy and formulate certain major principles which must determine the nature of our institutional proposals.⁸

This was the prelude to the birth of what Professor Babs Fafunwa has aptly described as “the boldest and perhaps the most unprecedented educational scheme in Africa South of the Sahara”⁹ as

an ample demonstration of the Western Regional government's whole-hearted commitment to the vital interest of her subjects.

Some Motivating Factors: External Influence

In embarking on a scheme of this nature, the Western regional government was motivated by many factors – external and internal.

Generally, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, there seemed to be a world-wide acceptance of every individual's right to education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th December 1948 made a number of assertions about the inalienable rights of every human being. The Declaration guarantees for the individual, a whole range of basic freedom – among which included “the freedom of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”.¹⁰ Far more important, at least as far as this paper is concerned, is Article 26, Sub-Section 11 of the Declaration which made the following assertion as to the rights to which each individual is entitled.

Everyone has the right to education. *Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.* Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (emphasis mine).¹¹

The United Nations is a world body, membership of which is composed of all sovereign states – the world over. From its declaration above, it would be glaringly seen that there is no ambiguity whatsoever as to the inalienable rights of man to free and fair educational opportunity. One cannot accurately gauge the extent to which the U.N. Declaration motivated the government of the defunct Western Region. Yet one cannot rule out the probability of this Declaration having an influential effect on the policy makers of Western Nigeria towards the introduction of the free education scheme. This argument would hold when one takes into cognisance the time element between December 1948 when the Declaration was

passed and July 1952 when proposals for the free education programme was laid before the regional House of Assembly.

In any case, if the U.N. influence on the Western Region leaders was not obvious, that of a sister West African country – the Gold Coast (now Ghana), was perhaps very glaring. For, there are manifest indications that the leaders drew some inspiration from the Gold Coast example. In the Gold Coast, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had laid before the parliament in 1951, an accelerated Development Plan for Education, soon after the adoption of a new constitution in that year. It was the objective of the new plan “to help develop a balanced system working towards universal primary education as rapidly as consideration of finances and teacher training allowed but maintaining at the same time proportionate facilities for further education for those who fitted to receive it”.¹² It was this example of Gold Coast (it seemed) which acted as a morale booster or catalyst in motivating the Western Region Government. This could be deduced from the Education minister’s (Chief S. O. Awokoya’s) statement in his proposal:

Elsewhere on the West Coast of Africa, the young and vigorous Government of the Gold Coast has blazed the trail of progressive educational development..... If we do not follow the Gold Coast example, we shall have suffered in vain the pains and anguish of these troublous times; but if we do, we shall emerge from the throes of this transitional period into a glorious age in which this country will enjoy the fruits of political independence and the blessings of economic freedom.¹³

External influences of the Gold Coast and the United Nations were complemented by convictions of the new political leaders. Study and travel abroad seemed to have made such leaders as Obafemi Awolowo and S. O. Awokoya to be painfully aware of the great economic, cultural and psychological gap between the modern world and Africa. They tended to judge Nigeria’s progress not in relation to its own past but in relation to changes in more advanced countries

which were steadily increasing their economic and technological lead over the less developed areas of the world.¹⁴ Caught in a revolution of rising expectations, therefore, the leaders were no longer content with the progress of recent decades. Awokoya for instance complained bitterly: "We are not living here in Nigeria, we are only existing".¹⁵

Motivating Factors: Internal Dynamics

Whatever the degree of influence of either the United Nations, the Gold Coast example or the exposure of the leaders to the external world, one should exercise some measure of restraint in order not to over-stress the external influences, at the expense of the internal dynamics of change within the society. For all practical purposes, it is very obvious that programmes of this nature would depend very much on a combination of factors: the relative availability of resources (human and material – especially finance), effective utilisation of same; leadership and foresight, as well as a general goal – oriented governmental policy, among other things.

One factor, perhaps, which spurred or acted as a booster for Western Nigeria to pursue a vigorous policy of universal/free education seemed to lie in the relative availability of funds. The regional government, apart from political advantages, seemed also to have economic advantages. Prior to 1954, the West was the wealthiest region in Nigeria¹⁶ resulting in her subsidizing development of the East and North because the British fiscal commissioners maintained that central government revenue should be allocated to the regions on the basis of need (in effect population) rather than derivation (i.e. each region's proportion of the country's exports and imports).¹⁷ At the London Constitutional Conference of 1953, however, the Action Group leaders pressed vigorously for a re-allocation of Federal revenues on the basis of derivation. Consequently, a new revenue allocation formula that took these demands into account shifted significantly the economic position of Nigeria's political units. On balance the Federal Government lost £9 million, the East lost £200,000, the North gained £1.2 million and the West gained £3.8 million.¹⁸ In view of the enormous sums now accruing to the Western

regional government, she could subsequently afford a programme of the magnitude of a free education.

The West won another significant financial victory when the commodity marketing boards were regionalised in early 1954. These boards, established following the Second World War, ostensibly to stabilise the prices of Nigeria's major exports, in fact accumulated vast sterling reserves estimated at £92 million by the end of 1953.¹⁹ When Nigerians came to power, it dawned on them to use these funds for development purposes. As part of the trend towards Federation, it was decided that the assets of the marketing boards would be distributed to each federating unit according to its share of the commodities exported; the West thereupon received £34.4 million, the North £24.8 million and the East £15.1 million.²⁰ Thus in the words of Professor Abernethy, the Western regional government was "in a unique financial position to implement a crash program like universal primary education".²¹

Though the economic climate of the 1950s was fairly favourable to the pursuance of an ambitious policy of the magnitude of free education, it should be borne in mind that it is one thing to be naturally endowed with economic resources, it is another thing to utilize and manage those resources judiciously. In the case of Western Nigeria, the region had also the political advantage of having leaders of foresight who were prepared to tap the resources and utilize them for a free education programme. The men were guided by certain principles and aimed at certain goals in their proposal for a free education. These principles, aims and rationale were clearly spelt out at various times by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and by the Education Minister for the Western Region – Chief S. O. Awokoya. A major motivation for the Scheme, as has been suggested elsewhere was the gross inadequacy of both the missionary and colonial education to meet the yearnings not only of the Western region but the country as a whole.²² This made it a matter of utmost urgency for the leaders to want to pursue a vigorous policy of mass literacy exercise. According to Awokoya in his proposal, "our educational services require a great deal of expansion because they are not adequate for the needs of the

region”.²³ Irrespective of the society, education is not meant to be static. “Education”, says Nwagwu, “has the growing quality of a living organism”.²⁴ Thus it must be constantly changing and adapting itself to new demands and new circumstances as well as challenges. In the circumstances of the period of the 1950s, therefore, there was an urgent need for a massive expansion in education. This greatly touched the minds of the leaders of the Western Region. As Awokoya stressed,

The position today has not materially changed. Up till now, most of the school leavers still look forward to an appointment in the Civil Service or in the mercantile houses. The young man literate in English is still in high demand. His literacy still has to couple with ability to calculate. Although the curriculum of schools has been broadened and the young man with a School Certificate has had a more or less liberal education, he is still used as an “interpreter”, and no demand is placed on his liberal education.....²⁵

Closely related to the above was the need for development. The generally low level of literacy and the consequential mass illiteracy plagued the entire country. “Where are we today?” queried Awokoya. “The masses of our people can neither read nor write. Two-thirds of our children are not at school.”²⁶ The salient fact then remains that education was seen by the launchers of the Free Education Scheme as the best weapon in the battle against the societal ills such as malnutrition, disease, ignorance, unemployment, superstitious beliefs and practices, and the like. To checkmate all these, there was a strong feeling of urgency for mass education. This touchy aspect of the societal ills and the urgency to eliminate same was equally reflected in Awokoya’s proposal to the House. For, according to him:

By a proper presentation of new knowledge, superstitious beliefs can be eliminated. Children must learn, even in the primary schools, the truth about the things above us, around us and below us. Only then can the firmament cease to be a bowl studded with stars, and the shooting stars dead princes. The rain

doctor will cease to indicate the approach of the day of judgement. Rivers and streams, trees and forests will no longer be deified and the unexplored interior or the earth will no longer be the abode of the departed spirits.²⁷

On the grounds that Universal/Free Education is a very vital weapon for driving away ignorance and superstition, and in raising national consciousness and improving citizens' receptiveness to new ideas, therefore, the leaders did not treat it with levity. It was considered so basic to nation-building that the region could not leave education to the whims and caprices of the individual's choice. "To leave education to expand just as it pleases, without any proper guidance or direction, without intelligent stimulation", observed Awokoya, "would be clearly irresponsible and positively unsuitable for the needs of Africa today. Education has indeed become the most potent factor in determining our national survival in this Atomic age".²⁸

It would appear from all indications that there were popular pressures from the populace itself, for an educational expansion at this period. Even though it is difficult to gauge public opinion or assess its importance, the period up to the 1950s demonstrated clearly that the average citizen in this part of the country was enthusiastic about education. The very success of the educated elite in attaining political power during the decolonisation period undoubtedly reinforced the popular view that education was the key of power, wealth and prestige.²⁹ Professor Abernethy quotes an article published in one of the July 1950 issues of the *Lagos Daily Service*, and credited to one Mr. A. O. Akintoye as clearly indicative of the pressures to which the education Minister would soon be subject:

What we therefore say is this. We want to appoint an African Minister of Education, give him £294,980, the vote of the Department for the financial year 1950-51, and see whether he cannot open more Government elementary schools in five years. If he cannot, we vote him out and put another man in his place.³⁰

It is not surprising then that on assuming office, the new education minister was bombarded with requests from all quarters for more schools and scholarships. This might probably explain why Awokoya himself tagged his proposal to be “the embodiment of public desires with regard to the educational development of the country”.³¹

Even though the launchers of the Free Education Programme in Western Nigeria never considered their efforts in these terms, the evidences clearly reveal that they were motivated by considerations involving capacity for self government through massive public enlightenment – which in itself is an index of political development. It was perceived that an informed citizenry would make a democratic government more feasible. In his *Autobiography* for instance, Obafemi Awolowo remarked:

To educate the children and enlighten the illiterate adults is to lay a solid foundation not only for future social and economic progress but also for political stability. A truly educated citizenry is, in my view, one of the most powerful deterrents to dictatorship, oligarchy, and feudal aristocracy.³²

S.O. Awokoya had earlier spoken along the same line when, as early as 1952, he stated that,

... a literate public is a great political force that can be readily indoctrinated for good or for ill and... far reaching economic and political developments cannot take place unless the masses of the people are literate and educated.³³

To some extent, the idea of Universal/Free Education in Western Nigeria seemed to have stemmed in part, from the realisation that education is not only an investment in human capital, but also a prerequisite for economic development. In the observation of Professor B. O. Ukeje, free education “is actually indispensable for both progressive leadership and enlightened followership; it is indeed

necessary for effective life in a technological society”³⁴ and should therefore be open to all. The United States of America is undoubtedly one of the best developed nations of the world today. Lawrence Cremin argued in his book that the greatness of America and the distinctive purpose and animating spirit of Americans lay in the country’s commitment to popular education.³⁵ This seemed to have been echoed in the minds of the Western Nigerian political leaders when Awokoya stated inter alia:

...our survival as a race in this atomic age will depend on our ability to initiate and our capacity and competence to implement bold schemes of political, economic and educational advancement. No statement can be more true.³⁶

It was also the intention of the leaders to champion the course of an education policy that would in the end facilitate the rapid economic transformation not only of the region but of the country as an entity. The near absolute dependence of the country on foreign countries for the supply of virtually all necessities of life – partly a direct result of the colonial economic structure greatly agitated the minds of the leaders of Western Nigeria. This moved them in no small measure towards wanting to arrest the ugly situation by embarking on the massive vocational and technical – biased education along with the Universal Free Education, all with the aim of developing not only Western Nigeria but the entire country economically. In the words of Awokoya,

The economic principle that must underline our educational policy must aim at a comprehensive economic development of the country. Today 90 per cent of our population is engaged in agriculture and food production, the rest are responsible for the distribution of imported goods. Practically all the other needs of the country are imported from overseas. Comfortable human shelter cannot be built without the importation of cement, iron sheets, glass, nails, whitewash and nails.... Any properly conceived system of education must set out to

remove this absolute dependence on the economic fortunes of European countries....³⁷

The education planners had at the back of their minds the possibility of giving the youths the opportunities necessary for the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which would enable them to lead happy productive lives as individuals and discharge their social duties for the betterment of life in the society. The universal education proposed was one which would be geared towards the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human dignity, rights and fundamental freedom. This was well reflected in Awokoya's Proposal to the House. He stressed:

Of immediate practical importance is the training of men who can man the complex machinery of the modern state at all levels. Expert economists who must manage and control monetary and financial policies, who will promote industry and trade.... Again, we need men who can handle every description of international affairs.³⁸

One would adequately appreciate the steps taken by the Western Region government in the area of secondary education as part of her efforts to popularise education when one realises the problems encountered throughout the length and breadth of the country prior to the take off of the Free Education Scheme. As rightly emphasised by Professor Nduka, in respect of the educational dilemma of the region, "there was an incredible bottle-neck with regard to the passage from primary schools to the secondary schools".³⁹ For instance, "in 1950, under 5,000 or between four and five percent of the school leavers could find places in secondary schools in the following year."⁴⁰ This same fear was expressed on the floor of the Western House of Assembly on the 30th July, 1952 when the education minister lamented that "one-seventh of those at school (primary) are suitable for secondary education but they cannot all get".⁴¹ Rather, only about five percent were admitted.⁴² Obviously, this ugly situation presented

a great challenge to a young government that was meaningfully committed to the vital interests of the people it governed.

Conclusion

The principles and rationale stated above would clearly show that the proposal for a free and universal education was indeed a momentous and revolutionary one. This effort represented an awareness of the value of universal education in the building of an orderly modern society. A careful examination shows also that the principles embedded in this proposal were ones which if pursued to their logical conclusions were geared towards long term results rather than that of short term, not only for Western Nigeria, but the country as a whole. They represented the predicament which at the moment in question, the country was facing.

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OBA AKENZUA II AND THE MODERNIZATION OF BENIN, 1933-1963

**Dr. Victor Osaro Edo*

Introduction

Oko Godfrey Basimi Edoparhogbuyunmwun Eweka, the heir to Eweka II, was born in 1899.¹ He attended the Government School, Benin City, where he attained the highest standard available and left the impression of high moral culture and discipline befitting his royal birth in the minds of the teachers and others who associated with him. In 1918, he was sent to Lagos to further his studies at the King's College, and all through his stay in College, he was a gentle and brilliant Youngman. He left the college in 1921.

Between 1922 and 1923, he worked with the Benin Native administration as a transport clerk. He was confidential secretary to his father, *Oba* Eweka II, from 1924 to 1925. From 1926 to 1927, Godfrey began his political training when he was sent to Abeokuta to study the system of administration there.² By July 1931 he had completed his initiation in the palace, but his taking up of the title of the *Edaiken* of Uselu (crown prince) could not take place until 10 February 1933, two days after his father's death.³ The delay was because the incumbent *Oba* usually invested his heir with his title when he felt his own reign was coming to an end. By the time *Oba* Eweka II passed away, Prince Godfrey was well groomed to govern within a modern colonial context.

His Accession to the Throne

When the great pillar of chalk broke the effect of Western education on Godfrey, the first educated monarch in Benin was conspicuous.⁴ The extent to which the Benin monarchy has been able to modify its traditions was highlighted by the burial ceremonies of *Oba* Eweka II.

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In ancient times, the burial of a dead *Oba* was supposed to have been accompanied by many human sacrifices. However, the burial of Eweka II was different and events reflected the image of the monarch who would succeed to the throne. Instead of the usual human beings, livestock were used; two hundred goats, cows, rams, dogs and fowls each. On the question of supervision of the sacrifices, the chiefs requested that the Nigerian police be present throughout and witness all ceremonies. This invitation was made in order to show the general public that no human beings would be used for sacrifices. Furthermore, all ceremonies and sacrifices were to be performed during the day.⁵ These arrangements were innovations in the history of the monarchy, since in the olden days only senior chiefs were allowed to be present at the burial of any *Oba* of Benin.

As the Edaiken of Urelu, Prince Godfrey Eweka was crowned *Oba* Akenzua II on the 5 April, 1933. He was installed by His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Buchaman Smith, in front of the Native Court House, in the presence of a crowd of over ten thousand people. The new *Oba* then took an oath of allegiance to His Majesty, the British king, and he was given a staff of office as a First Class African king.⁶ The impact of western education, which Akenzua had acquired, showed vividly when he embarked upon restructuring some palace institutions in Benin.

Re-organization

The first reform carried out in the kingdom had to do with the Benin chiefs. The *Oba* designed new dresses that covered the chest (cassocks) for the Benin Chiefs; this was to support the existing regalia (Eyon, Uhunwogho, Iyenhwan etc).⁷ Hitherto, the Benin chiefs used to appear in the palace and even in public gatherings with their chest bare. Also, Akenzua II decided that he did not need a big harem; therefore, he disbanded his father's harem that was at Ughkekun, and remodelled it. In ancient times, the *Oba's* male children were not allowed to enter the harem once they had been circumcised or had reached the age of puberty. Akenzua II discontinued this tradition; the young princes were now allowed to

meet their mothers. But they could only talk to them from behind a cloth screen without seeing or touching them.⁸

Oba Akenzua II also designed a uniform for the *Emada* or *Omada*, (royal scimitar bearers), who used to be naked from the earliest times of Benin history to the reign of *Oba* Eweka II. He allowed these *Omada* to attend school and always released them whenever he felt they were ready to start fresh lives as young men. In the past, these *Omada* usually served the *Oba* for life. These *Omada* were also allowed to grow hair on their heads, armpits and private parts. This was not allowed in the past.⁹

During the same year of his coronation, *Oba* Akenzua II created over thirteen new titles, in conformity with certain Benin traditions, which allowed the *Oba* to honour Benin citizens who had distinguished themselves in the society, although *Oba* Eweka II had not been allowed to do this.¹⁰ The British believed that Eweka II would use this to gain unnecessary popularity among the people. The British allowed Akenzua II to create more chieftaincies because they believed that any popularity gained by *Oba* Akenzua II would not be misused, and that he would always be ready to cooperate with the British authorities.¹¹

On 14 January, 1934, Akenzua II presented his first son Oko (Prince) Solomon Igbinoghodua Aisiokuoba Akenzua – the incumbent *Oba* of Benin, to the council of Chiefs as the heir apparent to the Benin throne and *Edaiken* of Urelu.¹² This act by *Oba* Akenzua II was a clear break from tradition, in the sense that the *Edaiken* of Urelu title was never conferred on the heir apparent at such an early stage of an incumbent's reign. *Oba* Akenzua II himself was only conferred with the title after the death of his father, Eweka II. Akenzua II decided to set this precedence because he did not want any form of succession disputes, as was in the case of his father.¹³ Thus, Akenzua II, from the beginning of his reign, showed himself as adapting to western civilisation and modifying as much as possible, the old customs and traditions to fit in with the modern age. The fact that he was a Christian influenced the steps that were taken towards the realisation of his modernisation policies.

Although *Oba* Akenzua II was a monarch who strongly believed in the need for modernisation, he nevertheless realised that there were attributes of the monarchy, which could not be changed. For instance, the *UGIE-ORO* and the *UGIE-IGUN* festivals were important aspects of the monarchy, and an *Oba* had to perform them every year. These festivals were in honour of the departed *Obas*.¹⁴ The *Ugie-Oro* festival was performed during the second half of the year, and it was supposed to invoke the spirits of the departed *Obas* from the guidance of the people. The striking thing about these festivals was that every reigning *Oba* in the past had a separate shrine, and all these shrines had to be visited during each festival.

Each shrine was adorned by the *Oba's* staff of office, and the reigning *Oba* would have to wear the regalia of any *Oba* whose shrine was to be visited. The bone of contention here was that, a large number of art-works and beaded crowns were stolen from the palace during the "Benin punitive Expedition of 1897", and most of the shrines could not be visited without these beaded crowns. The British authorities could not account for most of these things, since most of them must have been stolen by private collectors of artworks. But the British officials were able to return the crown of *Oba* Ovonramwen (1888-1897) and some other artworks that were in their possession in 1935. *Oba* Akenzua II received it with great joy and burst into a song "*Obi gb'Eni, sage lemayo*" (poison has killed the elephant), to which he danced with the crown resting on his head.¹⁵ As would have been expected, the agitation to get these artworks back was a very subtle one, and *Oba* Akenzua brought out the diplomatic qualities in him.¹⁶

Oba Akenzua II did not stop at getting back some of the lost artworks from the British; he also decided to re-organise the old guild system, so that it would fit into a modern framework. In the olden days, the brass workers, leather workers (*Isekpoki*), Ivory workers, weavers, blacksmiths etc. were organised into different guilds. These guilds were rigidly controlled by the monarchy. Indeed, certain works, like the royal scimitar, could not be fashioned for just any individual except the monarchy. Some members of these guilds were not allowed to engage in free enterprise, they could only work for the

monarchy. Akenzua II removed all the restrictions and he encouraged all the guilds to improve the standard of their works.¹⁷

The brass workers and the carvers were commissioned by the *Oba* to help preserve the remaining artworks of ancient Benin, and they were also asked to help reproduce some of the lost or destroyed artworks. Notable among the works reproduced were the statue of *Oba* Ozolua, which stands at the Ozolua shrine in the palace of the *Oba* of Benin, and a relief sculpture of *Oba* Ovonramwen on a wall in the palace. These works were made by Chief Idah, a Benin artist.¹⁸

Furthermore, through the influence of Akenzua II, Pa J. U. Egharevha was commissioned to help collect artefacts in and around Benin for safe-keeping in a museum. Most of the antiquities that were collected came from the *Iwebo* (Regalia) apartments in the royal palace, but many other articles were also collected from around Benin Divisional. Pa Egharevba himself was made the first curator of the Benin Divisional Council Museum.¹⁹ To top all these innovations that were carried out by Akenzua II, he was a devout Christian and he attended St. Matthew's Church regularly. He encouraged missionary work and St. Peter's Church Iyarho was built on a land he allocated to the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.).²⁰

Economic Activities

The British, with the co-operation of *Oba* Akenzua II, were able to introduce some economic measures in the Benin Division. Timber concessions, the payment of royalties to chiefs and villages or communal rubber plantations made investments in family estates possible. By the middle of the 1930s, these investments were already yielding dividends in the production of a virile commercial elite in Benin.²¹ Akenzua II encouraged agriculture and the people were allowed to farm on lands that were not in use.

The *Oba* himself later went into the transportation business, although not on a very large scale. His vehicles were in most cases used for transporting goods from the rural areas to the urban centres. Akenzua II persuaded the British to re-organise the markets in Benin. Markets that used to be held by the roadsides were shifted to vacant plots. This saw the growth of markets at Agbado, Ekiosa, New Benin

etc. Akenzua II made part of the palace grounds available for the extension of the *Oba* market.²² Many more roads were constructed in and around Benin City, and those that were made during Eweka II's reign were re-surfaced. This saw the construction of Mission, Akpapava and Forestry roads.

Education

Education also received the attention of Akenzua II. In fact, it must be pointed out that it occupied a prominent position among the ventures that he undertook. With the *Oba*'s active involvement, primary schools were built all over Benin City. The C.M.S. Baptist and Catholic missions were involved in the establishment of these primary schools. These included, St. Peter's Primary School, Iyaro, St. Stephen's Primary School along Igun Street and the Benin Baptist Primary School along Mission road. Also, Akenzua's reign saw the establishment of Edo College at its old site in Iyaro.²³ The College had since been relocated to its permanent site on Murtala Muhammed way, Benin City.

From the foregoing, we have seen how the beginning of *Oba* Akenzua II portrayed himself as a monarch who saw the essence of modifying traditional institutions to suit changing times. Thus, it looked as if the British gamble in promoting the education of the monarch from early childhood, had started to pay good dividends. However, the *Oba* soon gradually headed for a showdown with the emerging intelligentsia and commercial *elite* in Benin. The years immediately after his accession witnessed conflict between him and the new generation of educated youngmen. Moreover, the *Oba*'s unpleasant task of promoting unpopular, though modern, government measures, and regulation, nourished the conflicts.²⁴

Akenzua II and the Creation of the Mid-West State

Oba Akenzua II was equally involved in politics, especially with respect to the creation of the Mid-West state. Indeed, as early as 1950, the *Oba* was already fully involved in partisan politics as he strongly supported the *Otu Edo* party, a party that was pro-monarchy.²⁵ Little wonder, the Tax payers' Association, which the *Otu Edo* party defeated in 1951, argued that the *Oba* was deviating from the role of a

traditional ruler by supporting one faction of his people against the other. However, the *Oba's* involvement in partisan politics was an indication of his ability to marry tradition with modernism. Thus, in spite of criticisms, the *Oba* continued his involvement in politics and lent his active support to the movement for the creation of a Mid-west state. In fact, it was suspected that he was instigating the movement. Indeed, in 1953, as a result of the crisis in the *Otu Edo* party, the *Oba* left the party to form and lead the Benin Delta peoples' party (B.D.P.P). This was significant because the creation of a Mid-west state would mean the breaking up of the western region and would once again bring together those areas, which used to be under the influence of the Benin kingdom.

However, in the 1954 federal parliamentary election, the Benin Delta peoples' party failed. In 1955, *Oba Akenzua II* joined the Action Group and in October that year accepted an appointment as minister without portfolio in the government of the western region. It has been pointed out that if *Oba Akenzua II* was not enticed away from the *Otu Edo* party, which was in alliance with the N.C.N.C., the Action Group would have lost that area to the opposition.²⁶ It is evident that the *Oba's* appointment re-shaped his political activities, because in 1956, he ceased entirely to be the patron of the *Otu Edo* party on the grounds that it was unreasonable for one to be opposing a government he was a part of.²⁷

Consequently, the *Oba* had to adapt to the changing political developments in Benin during the decolonisation era as he had done in the period before 1950 since that was the only option open to the institution, which he represented to continue to maintain its relevance. This was the era of politics and the educated *elite* had emerged as heir to the position to be soon vacated by the colonial officials. The monarchy was also set to find its feet in the new dispensation. Under the colonial dispensation, the monarchy had been made to play a major role even if the *Oba* was made to serve as an instrument of British rule, now that self-rule was being put in place, the institution of the monarchy also had to adjust and adapt to the new political dispensation or changes and make itself relevant.

However, the appointment of *Oba* Akenzua II as a minister was used to the best interest of the Bini people. Some previous studies have suggested that the *Oba* joined the Action Group because of the promise (by the Action Group) that the Mid-west region would be created.²⁸ This suggestion does not seem plausible, as the state creation exercise did not take place until much later. It was the position of the Action Group that state creation exercise should also be carried out in the remaining two regions – the northern and eastern parts of Nigeria where other minority groups were also clamouring or calling for separation from the majority ethnic groups.

Moreover, the failure of *Oba* Akenzua II to make a case for the creation of the Mid-west region before the Willinks Minorities' commission in 1957 attested to his level of commitment or non-commitment to the creation of the Mid-west region after joining the Action Group. However, the *Oba*'s desire for the creation of the Mid-west region led him to found and finance the Benin Delta peoples' party. The *Oba* could not make a case before the Willinks minorities' commission because of the often suggested fear of deposition if he continued to remain in opposition to the Action Group regional government.²⁹ This argument, which seems more plausible, is corroborated by the threat from the Governor of the western region, who had "advised" him in a private meeting to disentangle himself from politics when the *Oba* disagreed with him over the state creation movement.³⁰

It is worth mentioning that the *Oba*'s involvement in politics at that time was as a result of the fact that his finances did not seem to be in good shape. The *Otu Edo* – N.C.N.C. administration in the Benin division had withdrawn its patronages to the *Oba* who was now compelled to make do with his private business ventures that could not support his large family.³¹ Worse still, his personal financial involvement in the sponsoring of the Benin Delta peoples' party during the 1954 election had eaten deep into his finances. In such a situation, a ministerial salary, coupled with other patronages would have been an attraction for him to join the Action Group. But his explanation was "I did this to hasten the creation of the Mid-west

region which was long over due".³² By this act, the *Oba* showed a great quality of resilience. From this time onward, he did not relent in his efforts until the referendum to create the Mid-west region took place on 23 July 1963.³³ With the creation of the Mid-west region on 10 August, 1963, the *Oba* became the president of the House of Chiefs until 1966 when, through a coup de'tat, the military took over the reins of government in the country.³⁴

Conclusion

It is worth mentioning that during the formative years of political development in Nigeria, Oba Akenzua II contributed tremendously to the politics and policies that were to guide the nation through its infancy to its emergence into the comity of nations.³⁵ *Oba* Akenzua II, for instance, had good working relationship with Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe – two major nationalists that worked for the independence of Nigeria under the banner of their party, the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C.) from 1944 – 1966. When Nigeria became independent in 1960, *Oba* Akenzua II was one of the political giants to reckon with in government, and indeed up till the time when the military took over the administration of the country. As a result of the military take over of administration in Nigeria, political parties were dissolved and all political office holders were relieved of their offices. But it suffices to state that during the decolonisation or nationalist era between 1951 and 1966, the *Oba* adapted to the political developments of the period, which led to the change from colonial to partisan politics taking place in Nigeria.

Finally, it can be asserted that *Oba* Akenzua II ensured continuity within the Benin society, despite the great winds of change blowing against traditionalism. Indeed, the most notable bridge of continuity between tradition and modernity in the *elite* outlook was provided by the emergence of *Oba* Akenzua II.³⁶ He became the monarch as a product of western education and subsequently got integrated into the traditional *elite* structure. He thus effected a balance between tradition and modernity within the *elite* category, but he also protected and defended tradition. Indeed, the reign of *Oba*

Akenzua II was full of events (even beyond 1963); no wonder, his era had been described as one of re-organisation and modernisation in the history of Benin.

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GLOBALIZATION AND ECONOMY OF SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of globalization in area of inflation, current account balance, exchange rate of currencies, growth and trend of exports and imports in South and South-West Asian countries. Economic performance of South and South-West Asian countries can be distinguished by an increase of GDP growth rate and a sharp increase in degree of openness. Nevertheless, the economy faces the problem of balance of payments deficit in some countries over the period of concern. The present study focuses its attention to the most important growth enhancing features of globalization that has played a vital role in the area of economy of these countries. The results inform us that the era of globalization brings a closer degree of financial and economic integration in an atmosphere where shocks have become more global in nature and where a crisis in one country easily affects others.

Keywords: Globalization, growth, exports, imports, current account balance South and South-West Asian countries

Introduction

The term “South and South-West region” is used to the study the economy of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Pakistan. The key question observed in this paper is to examine the impact of globalization on the economy of South-West and South-West Asian countries and to analyze under the impact of globalization: trade liberalization, GDP growth rate, and balance of payments deficit, inflation and exchange rate. European Community and Japan at the WTO (ECJ) are to establish new universal regulations of the trade, which will allow advanced countries to invest where they like, whenever they like, how much and in what products. The central conclusion of the paper is that, how globalization put impact on growth of GDP, inflation, exports, imports and deficit.

Globalization means everyone is a citizen of the global community and large corporations take advantage of developing

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countries to increase profits and exploit resources. A central segment of globalization is its nature and interconnectedness. In light of that we have also defined the global economic meeting of the United Nations and provided a description of non-organizations that inform global policy. The term globalization describes the growing political, social, geographical, cultural, economic and technological, industrial interconnectedness and interdependence of the world today. As communication technologies advance, cultures continue to overlap and influence each other. In addition, globalization has created an economic interdependence between many states. This process has enormous effects on the environment, culture, political system, economic development and prosperity and on human physical well-being in societies in the world (*The World Trade Review*, August 2007).

The lay out of the paper is as follows: After this introductory section, Section II shows frame work of literature review, Section III shows the impact of globalization on trade liberalization, GDP growth rate, balance of payments deficit, inflation, trend of exports and imports in South and South-West Asia countries. Section IV provides briefly recommendations. The final and last section gives the summary of results.

Literature Review

The main focus of this paper is to examine impact of globalization on economy of South and South West Asia countries. Stligiz (2000) and Sugden, (1997) conclude that the IMF to task for advocating capital account liberalization to developing countries before the Asian crisis. He also suggests that the case for such liberalization is not verified either by sound economic theory or by empirical studies. In view of the particular structural features of developing economies, he favours capital controls on short-term flows in many instances. North, (1981) Whittam, (2001), Wade, (1996) suggest that division from the governments of developing countries and the multinationals, the role of workers of developing countries increase at significant level in advance countries. Many employees and trade unionists in advanced countries regard worldwide

investment in developing countries as a major cause of their own labor market deficits, high unemployment, de-industrialization and wage distribution. Pfeffer, (1998), describes the relationship between employer and employee and suggests that unskilled labor is likely to be less productive which can make weak the purpose of the business. Therefore, employees got advantaged 'stakeholder'. This is not just because employees also invest in firm-specific assets, but also particularly because they are a very important determinant of a firm's ability to survive, and consequently, create and capture value in market.

Sugden and Wilson (2003), emphasize that the economies of the all countries have been undergoing deep changes as result of 'globalization and raised the progress in each sector and associated with new technologies and system of E-commerce. However, this is not clear. In part, the confusion is because globalization has become empty idea of harshness in both meaning and application. The lack of clarity is no doubt linked to globalization being associated with complex, difficult issues that cover the economic, social, political and geographical (Radice, 2000; Whittam, 2001; Scholte, 2000; Waters, 2001; Giddens, 2002) but even within narrower disciplinary limitations much is unclear and challenged. Friedman, (2000), Reich, (2001) and Stiglitz, (2002), state that in the economic activities, globalization is strongly associated with the increasingly global reach of markets and of production, in turn powerfully related to the activities of worldwide corporations.

Impact of Globalization and Economy of South and South-West Asian Countries

South and South-West countries are rapidly emerging as engines of global growth. In 2006, the 7.9 per cent increase in the size of the region's developing economies represented a third of worldwide growth. These gains were generally distributed among all sub-regions. The economies of South and South-West countries affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis reported 5 per cent growth and strengthened the macroeconomic variables, with controlled inflation and improved external balance. These encouraging trends are visible

in the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific in recommended period of study. Deep integration into the global economy offers exciting opportunities for South and South-West nations, but it also poses its own unique challenges. The Survey of the consideration recognizes some of these issues, and analyses the near and medium-term policy implications to solve these issues.

The study investigates the impact of globalization in the following sectors: economic participation; inflation; exports; and imports, balance of payments, exchange rate and real growth of GDP. In each area, examples of best practices illustrate the effectiveness of the recommendations. This study is a timely and important contribution towards a better understanding of the many development challenges faced by the countries of South and South-West. At first moment, we compare exchange rate of currencies of South and South-West countries for \$1 as at December 2006.

Table-1: Currencies of South and South-West Asian Countries

Countries	Fiscal Year	Currency	Exchange rate for \$ 1 as at December 2006
Afghanistan	21 March to 20 March	Afghani	50.10
Bangladesh	01 July to 30 June	Taka	69.07
Bhutan	01 July to 30 June	Ngulturm	44.25
India	01 April to 31 March	Indian Rupee	44.25
Iran	21 March to 20 March	Iranian Riyal	9233.0
Maldives	01 January to 31 December	Rufiyaa	12.80
Nepal	16 July to 15 July	Nepalese Rupee	71.10
Pakistan	01 July to 30 June	Pakistani Rupee	60.92
Sri Lanka	01 January to 31 December	Sri Lanka Rupee	107.71
Turkey	01 January to 31 December	Turkish Lira	1.41

Sources: United Nations, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* website, <http://esa.un.org/unsd/mbs/mbssearch.asp>; International Monetary Fund.

Exchange rate shows the value of Turkish Lira robust with rest of all currencies of South and South-West countries. Iranian Riyal has the lowest value against USA dollar in the basket of currencies of other countries.

Table-2: Rates of Economic Growth and Inflation of Selected Economies in the South and South-West Asian Region, 2005-2007.

Country	Year	Real GDP	Inflation
Afghanistan	2003	---	---
	2004	---	---
	2005	---	---
	2006	---	---

	2007	---	---
Bangladesh	2003	5.2	9.1
	2004	6.2	7.0
	2005	6.0	6.5
	2006	6.7	7.2
	2007	6.0	7.0
Bhutan	2003	6.8	4.6
	2004	5.8	5.3
	2005	6.1	---
	2006	---	---
India	2007	---	---
	2003	7.0	3.7
	2004	7.7	4.3
	2005	9.0	4.4
	2006	9.2	6.0
Iran	2007	9.0	5.0
	2003		
	2004		
	2005	6.4	12.1
	2006	6.1	11.0
Maldives	2007	6.0	9.1
	2003	5.4	6.4
	2004	6.1	3.2
	2005	---	---
	2006	---	---
Nepal	2007	---	---
	2003	3.4	5.7
	2004	3.6	3.6
	2005	2.7	4.5
	2006	1.9	8.0
Pakistan	2007	4.3	6.0
	2003	5.1	7.3
	2004	6.4	9.0
	2005	8.6	9.3
	2006	6.6	8.0
Sri Lanka	2007	7.0	7.0
	2003	2.4	7.5
	2004	3.3	11.5
	2005	6.0	11.6
	2006	7.0	13.0
	2007	6.5	7.0

Sources: ESCAP, based on national sources; International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics* (CD-ROM) (Washington, D.C., IMF, 2006); Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, www.cisstat.com 26 February 2007.

Above table reports the results that after a period of slightly slow growth in the 2005, the resurgent Bangladesh economy has shown an impressive growth rate for the second year. Real GDP grew by 6.7 percent during the current year against 6.0 percent last year. This growth in 2007 is underpinned by a calculation, which grew by 6.0

percent. The growth of GDP of other countries in South and South-West countries, the Indian economy has shown that real GDP grew by 9.0 and 9.2 percent respectively, while growth of GDP in 2007 is 9.0. Notwithstanding, the real GDP of economy of Pakistan is 6.6 and 6.6 percent respectively. Moreover, in Nepal slow growth took place in the 2005, while growth of GDP in 2007 is 1.9. In Maldives real GDP grew by 6.7 percent during the current year against 6.0 percent last year. This forecast growth is underpinned by a calculation, which will grow by 6.0 percent. The available evidence suggests that growth of real GDP of India remained the highest over the period of consideration.

Oil and gas exports remained strong in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as many economies of others countries of South and South-West region. Service of exports also remained well in 2006. The economies of India and Turkey, Iran were increased by growing exports. Domestic demand pushed GDP growth up in South and South-West Asia, particularly on the back of high investments in India and Turkey. But it has been relatively weak in much of the two East Asian sub regions, except for China.

High and volatile oil prices were one of the central sources of difficulty in macroeconomic management in the region in 2006. Inflationary pressures in oil-importing economies increased with the increase in oil prices through August 2006. With the further reductions in fuel subsidies during 2006, the economies of India, Pakistan and Maldives attained inflationary pressures. High and volatile oil prices were one of the central sources of difficulty in macroeconomic management in 2006. Governments across the region rapidly responded to inflationary pressures by tightening monetary policies, which they had begun doing so in mid-2005.

India's current account deficit in 2006 remains manageable at 1.6% of GDP. High oil prices contributed to an estimated 31.5% increase in imports. But exports also grew at close to 30%, reflecting good performance in the key exporting sectors of engineering goods, chemicals, automobiles, ore and minerals and basic metals and petroleum products.

Price stability has always been of primary importance in preparing and planning macro economic goals. With this view, fiscal policies and monetary policies are designed to ensure stable prices and to maintain a high growth. It also discourages saving and promotes consumption. As result, there has been considerable price stability in the South and South-West Asian region over the years 2003-2007. In economy of Pakistan, the inflation rate during the period averaged 8.4 with the lowest 7.3 percent in 2003-2006. This inflation is underpinned by a calculation, which will grow by 7.0 percent. The pressure on prices intensified in economy of Nepal in 2003-2006. The inflation has started to decline over the period of 2003-2005 and has started to increase in 2006. This inflation is underpinned by a calculation, which will grow by 8.0 percent. Similarly, we focus our eye on the inflation rate over the years 2003-2007 in Bangladesh. The inflation rate during the period averaged 7.3 with lowest 7.0 percent in 2007.

The inflation has started to decline over the period of 2003-2005 in India and has started to increase in 2006, which was 6.0 percent while the forecast inflation is 6.0 percent. In nutshell, the value of inflation of all countries remained in single digit except Iran and Srilanka.

Table-3: Summary of External Accounts for Selected South and South-West Asian Countries, 2005-2006

Country / Years	E/GDP				M/GDP				CA/GDP			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Afghanistan	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Bangladesh	18.0	20.4	14.3	17.0	15.7	20.9	21.8	23.8	0.3	0.3	-0.9	0.9
Bhutan	21.2	18.7	23.4	25.8	28.2	56.9	58.7	---	---	---	22.0	-15.1
India	14.1	15.3	13.0	15.1	22.3	23.4	19.5	22.8	2.3	-0.4	-1.1	-1.6
Iran	23.0	24.9	31.8	---	---	31.8	30.4	21.7	0.6	0.9	7.5	7.4
Maldives	18.2	16.0	21.5	24.8	27.8	31.5	99.2	102.2	2.6	2.9	-33.6	-36.2
Nepal	18.0	19.4	11.1	10.1	20.5	27.6	28.3	28.8	4.9	1.9	2.2	2.4
Pakistan	19.1	17.9	13.8	13.5	20.1	18.7	19.7	23.5	4.9	1.9	-1.4	-3.9
Sri Lanka	21.5	22.4	27.0	26.2	37.6	39.8	-0.4	-32.0	---	---	-2.8	-5.3
Turkey	---	20.3	20.9	---	32.3	34.7	-3.4	-5.2	---	---	6.4	-7.4

E/GDP = Exports/GDP, M/GDP = Imports/GDP and CA/GDP = Current Account Balance/GDP

The important growths in research and development, information technology and other activities increased the exports in India. India is now the 18th largest exporter of services in the world, with its share in world exports rising from 0.6% in 1990 to 1.8% in 2004. In

Pakistan, exports and imports continued to grow at double digit rates. The trade deficit extended to a record \$8.4 billion, with 45% of the increase due to a higher import bill for crude oil and petroleum products. Imports of raw material and machinery also increased sharply. Nevertheless, the current account continued to benefit from large remittances from emigrant workers, estimated at \$4.6 billion in 2006. Remittances from workers were also important in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal, which played vital role in the current account of these countries in 2006. Exports in Bangladesh, supported sharp depreciation of the domestic currency in the previous year, grew by 21.6%, imports by 12.2%. The country has successfully weathered the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement, with garment exports seeing robust growth. More than 70% of the country's total exports consist of textiles and clothing in 2003 and 2005.

Table-4: Growth Rates of South and South-West Countries

Country / Years	Exports				Imports			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Afghanistan	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Bangladesh	20.3	16.1	13.8	21.6	15.1	12.9	20.6	12.2
Bhutan	37.3	39.7	18.0	25.3	---	29.2	67.6	18.0
India	---	28.5	23.4	30.0	27.2	48.6	32.0	31.5
Iran	---	29.0	36.9	38.0	28.5	29.2	7.3	30.6
Maldives	31.0	19.1	-10.7	39.7	24.4	36.3	16.1	26.5
Nepal	6.4	8.9	14.8	-1.1	-3.7	10.6	15.6	11.2
Pakistan	7.7	10.3	16.9	14.3	13.7	27.6	32.1	38.8
Sri Lanka	7.1	12.2	10.2	9.1	9.9	19.9	10.8	18.9
Turkey	---	33.7	16.3	13.4	---	40.7	19.7	17.8

Sources: ESCAP, based on national sources; Asian Development Bank, *Key Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries 2006* (Manila, ADB, 2006); International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics* Washington, D.C., IMF, 2006

India maintained its growth momentum in 2006 with GDP growing at 9.2%, a higher percentage than the 9.0% achieved in 2005. While there was some deceleration in agriculture, both industry and services performed well over the year. Having concluded that the country's physical infrastructure is not sufficiently developed to sustain high growth, government is therefore promoting large-scale infrastructural development projects. Rural infrastructure remains a key issue.

India's impressive growth is driven by industry and services in actions, financial services and trade-related activities. This, together

with the rapid increase in spending on public administration, social services, rural extension services and defense has pushed up the share of services in GDP to 55.1% in 2006.

Pakistan's economy has grown at an average of more than 7.5% over the last three years, although it remained to 6.6% in 2006. The deceleration in 2006 reflected the unexpected increase in oil prices, the devastation caused by the October 2005 earthquake and adverse weather conditions. Agriculture grew at just 2.5% in 2006, down from 6.7% in 2005, with negative downstream impacts on the textile and sugar industries. Large-scale manufacturing grew by 9%, down from 15.6% the previous year. Services improved from 8% in 2005 to 8.8% in 2006 and investment hit a record high of 20% of GDP.

India's strong economic performance has generated growing private sector demand for transport, communication and technological revolution. Despite internal difficulties, Sri Lankan economy expanded by 7% in 2006, up from 6% in 2005. Agriculture performed better, with higher output of major crops and fisheries, confirming its recovery from the devastating Tsunami in December 2004. Export oriented industries and domestic market-oriented industries, along with the continued expansion in construction, bolstered industry. Trade and financial services supported the expansion in services. The Islamic Republic of Iran is the sub region's only net exporter of oil. High oil prices coupled with an expansionary fiscal policy and an accommodative monetary policy are continuing to fuel strong GDP growth of 6.1%, up from 5.4% in 2005. Turkey has enjoyed high growth over the past few years; in 2006 its rate of growth fell to 6%, down from 7.4% in 2005, a result of higher inflation and rising interest rates.

Bhutan's GDP grew by 10% in 2006, largely due to the launching of the hydroelectric project; a major project which the Government hopes will place the country's economy on a more sustainable path and create a more expanded economy with increased business activities and linkages to the rural economy.

Mining, quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, water and construction also grew robustly, as did services, reflecting strength in

tourism. The Tsunami that hit Maldives in December 2004 caused great damage and brought the country's decade-long expansion to an abrupt halt; GDP contracted by 4.5% in 2005 and tourism, which accounts for one third of GDP, contracted 33%. The strong pickup in tourist arrivals and recovery in the fisheries sector, resulted in GDP growing at an estimated 18.7% in 2006. The political stalemate and escalating conflict in Nepal, continued to impede growth, which remained unchanged at an estimated 1.9% in 2006 – the average growth rate of the past few years. The recent peace agreement has, however, brought new hope and growth is expected to improve.

Expectation for 2007 in South and South-West Asian Region

India is expected to grow around 9% in 2007, underpinned by a strong performance by the industrial and services sectors. The Government's target is to increase growth to 10% in coming years. Growth prospects for Pakistan are fairly promising and a small increase to 7% in 2007 is expected following a recovery in agriculture and improved performance of the manufacturing sector. To sustain future growth rate of 7-8%, more investment is needed to develop human resources and physical infrastructure. Given the recent increase in ethnic conflict and violence, Sri Lanka's growth is expected to slow to 6.5% in 2007. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, volatile oil prices and international tensions over its nuclear programme have created uncertainties for the economic outlook. In Turkey, high inflation and rising interest rates will continue into 2007, with its GDP forecast to grow by 5%. Among the least developed countries, GDP growth in Bangladesh could moderate to around 6% in 2007, reflecting political uncertainties related to the elections. In Bhutan, construction of new hydropower projects is expected to keep growth strong. With the peaceful resolution of the armed insurgency, Nepal is now looking for new momentum, with its GDP expected to grow by 4.3% in 2007. GDP growth in Maldives is expected to moderate to a more normal 7% in 2007.

Reform needs to be maintained to sustain high growth and rapid poverty reduction. With fiscal adjustment still a challenge, more progress is needed in tax collection and resource mobilization to

reduce large budget deficits. This will allow redirecting resources from servicing public debt to economic development and social programmes, while at the same time creating an enabling environment for private investment. An increase in consumer prices is a genuine concern in most countries. Striking an appropriate balance between promoting economic growth and price stability remains a challenge because inflationary pressures accompany rapid economic expansions. As the current account deficit is becoming serious in some countries, this will have implications for the balance of payments. If oil prices remain high, they will have to devise ways to contain their deficits.

Recommendations

- South and South-West Asian countries should be financed in infrastructure investment equally by developed countries.
- Globalization agencies should protect consumer's business and ensure financial transparency and a fair return on investment.
- Trace out other resources for energy.
- Tariff rates should be kept low, affordable for small countries South and South-West countries, consequently exports will be raised.
- Micro credit program can help in buying energy-efficient equipment and appliances, thus national income of nations can be raised.
- Developing countries have fewer human and technical resources. Globalization should enhance these resources.
- Mega projects may be essential to accelerated growth, but in these projects equal importance should be given to the benefit of the member countries of South and South-West region.
- Instead of laissez faire, globalization and integration of the world economy is more likely to be promoted by suitable national and international regulation for South -West and South-West Asian countries.

Criticism

The developing countries are not able to see that the rules of globalization contained the realities of South and South-West Asian

countries. Globalization is mainly solving the problems of the advanced industrial countries. Therefore institutions of globalization do not apply the rules uniformly with the countries of South and South-West Asian region.

Conclusion

This paper investigates that the economic performance of South and South-West Asian countries since integration with the global economy can be described by an increase in GDP growth rates, controlled inflation, increase trend of exports and imports. Developing economies in the South and South-West Asian region grew at 6.2% in 2006, up from 6.0% in 2005. Exports of electronics continued to be a key source of growth, while oil and gas exports remained strong in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the oil and gas exporters of North and Central Asia, and South-East Asia. Domestic demand drove gross domestic product (GDP) growth in South and South-West Asia, particularly on the back of high investments. Oil prices sky rocketed in the middle of 2006, while stock markets dropped across the South and South-West region, raising fears of a recession. Despite high and volatile oil prices in 2006, developing economies in the South and South West region kept inflation under control at 5.3%, similar to that of the previous year. The sharp appreciation of major currencies in the region against the United States dollar made it difficult to keep exchange rates competitive while addressing inflationary pressure. Asian currencies were strong, reflecting larger-than-expected current account surpluses and capital flows, at the end of 2006. Current account balances deteriorated across the region in 2006, mainly as a result of rising oil imports. Strong exports in many countries offset some of the effects of rising oil prices. Finally, it is concluded that globalization has positive impact on growth, trend of exports and imports and balance of payments.

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BOOK REVIEW

The ZigZag Way by Anita Desai. London: Chatto & Windus, 2004. pp. 182.

This novel deals with the theme of displacement of the individuals by employing magical realist techniques and a rich variety of imagery. The novel, unfolding Mexico, with its pallets of colours, folklore and history along with the lives of the Cornish immigrants and the natives in early 19th century, leads Eric's lurching journey to follow the trail of his and his ancestor's history. The title, *The Zigzag Way* which refers to the way Indian miners used to climb the tunnel, symbolizes Eric's efforts to enter the past, as if it was mine-dark and exhausting.

The story begins with Eric's arrival and ends at the festival of the Day of the Dead. Eric; an American graduate; a misfit; always uncertain and having lost his interest in his thesis, follows his girlfriend to Mexico. Here, per chance he attends Dona Vera's lecture and is reminded of his grandfather, a miner. Being always interested in details Eric sets out to explore more about his ancestors – to trace the roots of his identity. The mysterious character of Vera is introduced here. Living as "Queen of Sierra" and bent on portraying herself as a legendary character, she is a self appointed patron of Huichol Indians, possessing an extremely suspicious past. She serves the purpose of illuminating the culture and images of old Mexico and Huichol Indians in detail. Presented as a very colourful character she is always extravagantly dressed and strong enough to be imprinted on the minds of the readers. Compared to Eric, who is struggling to "retrace an old passage and follow to it", Vera has "evidently sloughed off the past."

Eric's journey finally brings him to ghost town, just before the Day of the Dead. The zigzag path takes us to the past again where the third female character of the novel Betty is introduced. It is to her graveside that the novel comes to an end, leaving Eric confronted both by past and present at the same time. The zigzag path of the three displaced character converge on the day of the dead.

Both individual and collective displacements have become an impertinent issue in the modern global inter-cultural world. The novel explicitly deals with the issue of displacement through characters like Vera, Eric, Davey, Betty and Paul. The literal and inner displacement of these characters has left them with no center to return to.

The narrative of the novel follows the technique of “magical realism”, particularly during the festival of the Day of the Dead. Though Desai very seldom steers away from reality but unlike her other works, the last chapter here is steeped in magic, mystery, myth and darkness. The established rules of science are exploited and the living and the dead move together to reject the concepts of time and space. Past and present seem to be crossing boundaries, time and again, comfortably. She succeeds in combining living and the dead, past and the present, reality and myth with equal grace and justice in the novel.

Desai’s skills in narration have even brought the dead to life. The atmosphere of the festival not only captures the minds of the readers with its vivid details but also investigates the effects of the character’s settling in unknown and strange lands. The feeling of lack of a homeland makes us experience the journeys into these unknown lands.

Desai has aptly used various images very skillfully. Moreover these images accentuate the mythical and the mysterious tone both of the characters and the narrative. The enigmatic character of Vera is portrayed through animal imagery to bring out her eccentricity. She is a person who is “gratified as a cat”, has a nose “of a bird of prey”, “dresses like a quetzal”, and lives among pet dogs, horses, pigs and turkeys. Shades of light and darkness along with rich variety of colours are used to create an atmosphere to make the description purely scenic and to paint the image of Mexico that of a “fairy tale”. The last chapter in the cemetery is set at night but at the same time brightened in the light of hundred of candles, giving a vivid and more succinct touch to the ending, speaks of craftsmanship of Desai.

Extracts, in the novel, serve as a significant device and are placed at the beginning of each chapter. Being explicit and self suggesting, they lay the ground even before one probes through the narrative. The novel begins with

the extract; “Time is a ladder one descends into the past” sets the tone of the novel till end.

However it appears that the characters are not worked out in much detail and the reader, at occasions, feels the need to know more about them in order to have a better grasp of the events happening. The way Desai has represented Mexico and Mexican life remains questionable. She had never been known as an authority over Mexican culture and history and the picture of the Mexico drawn by her can not be claimed as authentic. Moreover her abundant use of Spanish words and phrases in the novel, without any glossary of these words, leave the foreign readers at a loss at the end.

Overall the novel may not be very enlightening or satisfying regarding Eric’s quest for his past but still Anita Desai can boast of skillfully presenting sumptuous details about Mexico and Mexican life.

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