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Perceived Relevance of Human Rights and Peace Education in Post-Military Nigeria

Biodun Ogunyemi and Kolawole Raheem

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Note portant l’auteur¹
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INTRODUCTION

1 With an estimated population of about 130 million and over 250 ethnic nationalities, Nigeria ranks the most populous country in black Africa. It is also one of the most resource-endowed countries in the continent, having an enormous stock of natural resources that include petroleum, bitumen, gold, coal, and bauxite. Its soil and climate are suitable for an all-year round farming and there is ample distribution of rivers for commercial fishing. Many observers (Achebe, 1983; Ayida, 1990; Fasanmi, 2002) have therefore argued that, given the vast pool of human and natural resources at its disposal, Nigeria should have emerged one of the richest countries not only in Africa but in entire the world.

2 This however has not been so. Nigeria is one of the 13 poorest nations in the world. About 70 per cent of Nigerians earn less than one dollar a day and the country’s per capita income is put at a little above US $300 (UNICEF, 2001). Its economy is in shambles, characterized by low investment, hyperinflation, mass unemployment and heavy debt commitments to countries of Europe and America (Yaqub, 2003). Social infrastructures remain largely under-developed as evident in poor road networks, inadequate public health facilities, and underfunding of education (Oyejide, 1998; Aboyade 2004). Nigeria is
politically unstable. The military has dominated the country’s affairs for about thirty out
of its forty-four years of independence from Britain; providing the context for the
pervasive social crisis and violence manifesting in ethno-religious conflicts, politically
motivated assassinations, violent youth agitations, and others (Babalola, 2000). Phrases
like “a giant with the feet of clay”, “the sleeping giant”, and “a land of scarcity in the
midst of plenty” have thus been used at different times (Fasanmi, 2002) to portray the
fact of Nigeria’s potentials which remain untapped for enhancing the people’s quality of
life and for sustainable development of the country.

Following the successful hand over of power by the military to an elected civilian
leadership on May 29, 1999, hopes were raised on entrenching a lasting democratic
culture which would galvanize the citizenry into positive actions for the country’s
development in an atmosphere of peace and respect for human rights. This was against
the backdrop of widespread reports of human rights abuse by successive military
administrations climaxing in the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election,
widely believed to be the freest and fairest in the country’s history, and the official
execution of nine leading environmental rights activists in 1995. Many indeed have
argued that the overwhelming dominance of Nigeria’s political and economic space since
1960 by military dictators and their collaborators has been largely responsible for the
country’s continued underdevelopment (Olorode, 2001; Akinyanju, 2001; Fasanmi, 2002).

And a major fallout of this trend was the emergence of several human rights
organizations within the civil society (estimated at over 5,000 organisations in different
areas of development) which “challenged the government by criticizing government
policies as well as their oppressive tendencies” (Dipo-Salami, 2003:14).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly in the last decade, have no doubt
made significant contributions in exposing the pretensions of military actors in Nigeria’s
search for a politically stable, economically viable and socially vibrant nation.
Nevertheless, NGOs are not without their own limitations. For instance, they lack the
financial muscle to cope with the level of public information, education and
communication required to sustain the entrenchment of human rights norms and ethos
in Nigerians. This is especially so because their foreign donors might no longer see the
need to further support them in a post-military dispensation. Again, there is the problem
of focus. Since most NGOs are externally funded, the focal points of their activities are,
more often than not, donor-driven. In addition, there is usually the crisis of legitimacy
when activists claim to represent the “voice of the people” as against elected officials who
readily advertise their credentials as “democratically elected” leaders of the same people
(Eade, 2002; Dipo-Salami, 2003; Aboyade, 2004).

It is in view of the perceived limitations of human rights organizations, and against the
background of the pervasive legacy of violent culture of military dictatorship, that there
has been a growing demand for the introduction of human rights and peace education
into Nigerian school programmes (Makinde, 1999; Ogundare, 1999; Iyunade, 2001; Olusola,
2003; The Guardian, March 9, 2004). With particular reference to universities and other
higher educationale institutions, Falana (2001:6) has argued:

It is our considered opinion that the basic provisions on human rights and civic
responsibilities should be part of the curriculum of our tertiary institutions. This
we see as a first step towards a return to the past when such courses as Civics and
Social Studies had provisions on rights and responsibilities designed in them.
This call might be quite relevant, at least from the viewpoint of ‘experts’. The question, however, remains whether Nigerians across the social strata fully appreciate the issues involved. What does human rights and peace education (HRPE) mean to the average Nigerian? Are current provisions of the school system capable of achieving the goals of HRPE or is there a need for fundamental activities of curriculum review? To what extent do Nigerians across gender, occupational, educational, ethnic, religious, age, and marital groups see relevance in introducing HRPE as part of school curricula in Nigeria? These questions, in particular, constitute the problematic of this preliminary investigation.

HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A Conceptual Overview

The idea of development has shifted from the traditional focus on the economic growth index of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to that of holistic concept of human capital development. Central to this emergent paradigm are the need to invest in human capacities, particularly education, skill acquisition and health; adaptation, transformation and creation of institutions which assist in channelling people's energy towards the achievement of the goals of development on sustainable basis; and formulating good policies that are critical for success in the human development process (Oyejide, 1998). The essence of human development in that context, Akande (2000) explains, is to enlarge people's choices in the political, economic and social spheres of life in order to be creative, productive and enjoy personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights. In other words, it is the people that make things happen at the level of social, political, cultural, economic, scientific and technological advancement (Adedeji, 1991). The greater the opportunities people have to develop and exercise their innate abilities in an uninhibited manner, the faster they progress on the path of a development process that would be trans-generational or sustainable.

The question of opportunities in the human development process borders on human rights. These are universal moral entitlements or basic needs without which human beings cease to be complete creatures. All human beings should be accorded those rights by law irrespective of their race, colour, creed, gender or social status. Such rights range from legal through moral, civil and political, economic, social and cultural, to collective or group aspects and are often enshrined in national constitutions (Makinde, 1999). However, in societies where the military governments hold sway (as Nigeria experienced for the better part of its post-independence history), the human rights components of the constitutions are suspended thereby undermining the citizens' fundamental freedoms and negatively impacting the human development process which foregrounds the building of human capital.

While it may be argued that it is the political economy of the ruling class, and not the military perse, that shapes a government's approach towards human development or respect of human rights (Olorode 2001), it cannot be denied that the professional orientation of the military leadership has no room for dialogue, debates, dissent and other basic tenets of a democratic culture and concrete expression of fundamental rights (Fasanmi, 2002). What then emerges is the gradual disarticulation and castration of the civil society in a manner that forces its opinion leaders “to keep quiet because their lives
and the lives of their family members were (are) in danger” (Dipo-Salami, 2003). And with the silencing of the critical segment of the society, the problem becomes not just that of being “saddled with leaders without vision most of the time, but that the majority of the citizenry have no idea as to what they really want out of governance Biodun Ogunyemi and Kolawole Raheem except the basic necessities like food, drinkable water, shelter and good roads” (Aboyade, 2004: 65). A disillusioned people produced by a military-driven Society of this nature cannot be expected to become the prime movers of innovation and ideas for a country desperately in need of development as in the case of Nigeria.

In consequence, a people coming out a military government are, willynilly, like a people coming out of a war. The military are, by nature, a violent professional group. “They have no organization for mobilizing the people the secret weapon of modern power” (Ayida, 1990:10). Although there might have been no direct war, the fact of attack on, or denial of, the people’s fundamental human rights in one form or the other is incontrovertible and this, in itself, constitutes an indirect war against the people. To re-focus the developmental challenges of a post-military society like Nigeria may thus require a process which put the people’s awareness of their choices on the front burners and a programme of human rights and peace education thus becomes imperative.

When people are conscious of their rights to speak against bad government policies, for instance, they are likely to gain deeper insight into their creative potentials as agents of innovation and development. The knowledge, skills and values people require to achieve this life-time human development goal are provided within the ambit of human rights education. Concurrently, the actualization of these rights equally demands certain obligations in terms of creating an enabling environment for other people and groups to enjoy their own rights as well. And this is at the heart of peace education which has been associated with other interrelated concepts such as disarmament education, education for non-violence, human rights education, development education or education for social justice, education for international understanding, intercultural education, non-racist education, and education for sustainable development (Swee-Hin, 1997; Lasonen, 2003). Peace Education, according to UNESCO (2002), aims at empowering people with skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to build, maintain and restore relationships at all levels of human interaction; develop positive approaches towards dealing with conflicts from the personal to the international; create safe environments, both physically and emotionally, that nurture each individual; create a safe world based on justice and human rights; and build a sustainable environment and protect it from exploitation and war.

“Human rights education” and “peace education” are thus mentioned separately only for convenence. In reality, the former is subsumed in the latter. The justification for human rights and peace education lies in not just the national crisis which military dictatorships engender in developing countries like Nigeria, it is also imperative for regional and global understanding. The United Nations (UN) prepared the ground for contemporary rights advocacy with its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the current human rights and peace education movement is given additional impetus in several UN decia Perceived relevance of human rights and peace education...rations and resolutions including its Decade of Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for Children of the World (2001-2010), and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Specifically, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) calls for public understanding of the principles behind sustainability, and that the social process needs to be mainstreamed into all sectors
including business, agriculture, tourism, natural resource management, local government and mass media, adding value to programme development and implementation. Indeed, ESD is life-long learning for all, regardless of peoples’ occupations and circumstances. It is therefore relevant to all nations, be they industrialized, less industrialised or agrarian. In addition, ESD calls for specialised training programmes to ensure that all sectors of society have skills necessary to relate to their world in a sustainable manner (IUCH, 2003).

The United Nations (UN), within the context of the human development index (HDI) and in the pursuit of sustainable development, has set its nine Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) against the year 2015 and ESD is to be a key factor in realising the goals. These goals are based on the need to (1) halve the proportion of people living below poverty line; (2) halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS; (3) halve the proportion of underweight under five year olds; (4) halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water; (5) achieve universal primary education; (6) reduce maternal mortality ratios by three quarters; (7) reduce under-5 mortality by two-thirds; (8) reverse loss of environmental resources by 2015; and (9) achieve equal access for the boys and girls to primary and secondary schooling by 2015.

Yaqub (2003:45) observes that “a tenth goal for Nigeria is the need to consolidate democracy as its process is likely to serve as a catalyst to the minimization or eventual elimination of poverty in the social formation”. For an underdeveloped country like Nigeria, whose latest experiment in democratic governance is just about six years, it is apposite to analyse people’s perceptions in relation to the variables of human rights, peace promotion and sustainable development if the country is to make meaningful progress in its strive for a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens through the instrumentality of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). The question, to paraphrase Patrick (1999:54), is: Do Nigerians have the intellectual and social capital needed to sustain and improve upon their constitutional liberal democracy through their roles as citizens? “And, if not, how do we use our schools and other venues of education to more adequately prepare the people to assume their responsibilities of citizenship?” (Patrick 1999:54).

**Purpose of the study and research questions**

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, this pilot investigation was carried out with the purpose of providing some baseline data for intervening in the current advocacy for human rights and peace education in the curricula of Nigerian educational institutions. To guide the investigation, the following research questions were raised:

1. How do Nigerians perceive the interrelated issues of development, peace and human rights?
2. How do Nigerians perceive the role of education in promoting human rights and peace issues in relation to sustainable development?
3. Are there significant differences in Nigerians’ perceptions of human rights, peace education and sustainable development with reference to like gender, marital status, educational qualification, geopolitical zone of origin, religion and occupation?
Methods

The survey involved a total of 1,300 respondents who were residents of Lagos, Nigeria's former capital city, as at the time of the investigation. However, 1,122 (86.3%) of the survey questionnaires were valid and used for this report. Lagos could be regarded as miniature Nigeria because nearly all the country's ethnic nationalities (estimated at about 300) are fairly represented in the city. Lagos State is estimated to have a population of over 12 million which is about 10 per cent of the total population of Nigeria (Shekoni, 2002). Respondents in this study were drawn from across the six geopolitical zones adopted by the Military Government in 1996 as represented in the city of Lagos. The zones represented in the sample are southwest (544), southeast (182), south-south (207), north-central (54), north-east (84) and north-west (51). The accidental-incidental sampling technique was used for randomly selecting the respondents who were drawn from four major locations in the Lagos metropolis (Ikeja, Mushin, Ebute Metta and Victorian Island). This technique involved street sampling as the trained field assistants came across willing respondents because of the largely mobile nature of the city residents. Akinkanye (1994) explains that this technique is helpful in situations where the study involves an unstable population. A total of 12 field assistants worked on the data collection process over a period of eight weeks.

About 54 per cent of the respondents were male while the rest were female. Also 62 per cent were single while about 38 were married. Majority of the respondents were Christians (70.6%), followed by Moslems (28.8), and an insignificant number of local traditional worshippers (0.4%). About 65 per cent of the respondents were youth between the age of 18 and 29 years; the next 32 percent were those in the 30-49 year bracket while the rest were rest were 50 years and above. The educational background of respondents was quite diverse.

Perceived relevance of human rights and peace education... About 28 per cent had no formal education at all, six per cent had primary education while a total of 12 per cent had either secondary or technical/initial teacher education (Teachers’ Grade II certificate). The major cohort of the respondents however was those with the mid-level teacher education (i.e. Nigerian Certificate in Education)/Ordinary National Diploma (OND). In addition, about 12 percent had bachelor’s degree or Higher National Diploma (HND) and another two percent had either masters or doctorate degrees.

The survey adopted a 29-item survey questionnaire which was divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire focuses on demographic background of the respondents while the second adopts the Likert scale model focusing on issues of development, peace and human rights. The last part is largely open-ended and it is meant to tease out some general comments from respondents.

Analysis of data involved the use of the SPSS to tease out some descriptive and inferential information for addressing the research questions.

Major findings and discussion

Table 1 presents the summary of respondents’ perceptions of human rights and peace education issues in relation to school curriculum. In Table 2, the result of the t-test of differences in the perceptions of the respondents according to sex is presented while
Table 3 summarises the result of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test of differences according to age, marital status, geopolitical zone, highest qualification, religion and occupation.

Table 1: Perceptions of Human Rights and Peace Education issues (N = 1122)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements on Questionnaire</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria is currently facing huge problems of national unity, instability and conflicts</td>
<td>751(66.9)</td>
<td>305(27.2)</td>
<td>11(1.0)</td>
<td>29(2.6)</td>
<td>19(1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the problems facing Nigeria as a country are caused by bad leadership</td>
<td>676(60.2)</td>
<td>332(29.6)</td>
<td>28(2.5)</td>
<td>62(5.5)</td>
<td>17(1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria’s major problems are better resolved under civilian government than the military</td>
<td>236(21.0)</td>
<td>352(31.4)</td>
<td>210(18.7)</td>
<td>240(21.4)</td>
<td>70(6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military governments are in the best position to promote peace and development in Nigeria</td>
<td>150(13.4)</td>
<td>302(26.9)</td>
<td>195(17.4)</td>
<td>264(23.5)</td>
<td>198(17.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights in Nigeria are better respected by civilian than the military</td>
<td>315(28.1)</td>
<td>426(38.9)</td>
<td>112(10.0)</td>
<td>190(16.9)</td>
<td>59(5.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 continues
Table 2: T-test of differences in perception according to sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>58.0760</td>
<td>6.234</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>57.4700</td>
<td>77.0465</td>
<td>2.044</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS = NOT SIGNIFICANT AT .05 ALPHA LEVEL

Table 3: ANOVA test of differences in perception according to age, marital status, state of origin, state of origin, highest educational qualification, religion and occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Groups Between</td>
<td>218.734</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5.208</td>
<td>1.943</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Groups Within</td>
<td>2891.762</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>2.680</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Groups Total</td>
<td>s3110.496</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status Between</td>
<td>18.748</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>1.891</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status Within</td>
<td>254.690</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status Total</td>
<td>273.438</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Qualification Between</td>
<td>199.621</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.753</td>
<td>1.187</td>
<td>.195*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Qualification Within</td>
<td>4320.129</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>4.004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Qualification Total</td>
<td>4519.750</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical zone Between</td>
<td>196.051</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.668</td>
<td>1.683</td>
<td>.095*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical zone Within</td>
<td>2992.480</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>2.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical zone Total</td>
<td>3188.531</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Between</td>
<td>14.705</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>1.607</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Within</td>
<td>23.075</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Total</td>
<td>249.780</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Between</td>
<td>75.279</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.792</td>
<td>1.128</td>
<td>.267*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Within</td>
<td>1714.100</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>1.589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Total</td>
<td>1789.380</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S = SIGNIFICANT AT .05 ALPHA LEVEL

An overview of Table 1 in relation to the first research question suggests that majority of the respondents strongly believe that the numerous social, political, economic and developmental problems facing Nigeria are caused by bad leadership. However, it is interesting to note that only a little above 50 per cent of the respondents (21.0 % strongly agree; 31.4 % agree) thought Nigeria’s multidimensional problems are better solved under a civilian administration than the military. On the other hand, about 40 per cent (13.4 % strong agree; 26.9 % agree) of them would support the view that “Military governments are in the best position to promote peace and development” in Nigeria. Indeed, majority of the respondents believed that “Nigerians need tough leaders like military to make them do the right thing”, and that “Military leaders take over power only when it is absolutely necessary”.

These findings immediately point to at least three plausible conclusions.
The first one is that the long regime of military intervention in Nigeria’s body politic might have influenced a sizeable number of the people to see military rule as “part of the norm” rather than “an aberration” in the political process.

Secondly, the use of military force to quell the not infrequent incidence of communal, ethnic, religious and political crises in Nigeria may have also led many Nigerians into believing that elected officials are not sufficiently equipped to govern the country. And thirdly, many Nigerians may not fully appreciate the implications of military governments for their rights to choose those who govern them and that opportunities for self-development and the development of the country are better guaranteed in a civilian dispensation in view of the competing manifestoes of the political parties. At least, this is the case in other societies where the military establishment limits itself to its professional calling of defending the country against internal and external aggressors, unlike in Nigeria where the military sometimes take over the reins of government purely for self-interest (Olorode, 2001; Fasanmi, 2002).

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (53.4% strongly agree; 31.1% agree) subscribed to the view that “Equal opportunity for all Nigerians is the best guarantee for peace and sustainable development”. However, more than 50 per cent were sceptical about the possibility of achieving this, even though over 60 per cent agreed that “Free and compulsory education at primary and junior secondary school levels will provide for equal opportunity in Nigeria”.

This seems to be an acknowledgement of the present civilian administration’s nine-year compulsory education under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme launched in September, 1999.

On the second research question which probes into how Nigerians perceive the role of education in promoting human rights and peace issues in relation to sustainable development, the sampled Nigerians seemed to be favourably disposed to introducing different aspects of peace education into the school curricula.

An overwhelming 92.6 per cent (52.5 strongly agree; 40.1 agree) of the respondents believed that “Nigerian youths need to be taught about tolerance to address issues like religious and ethnic conflicts”, while another 84.6 per cent thought that “Human rights education is what Nigerians need to maintain peace and help achieve self-confidence”. In addition, about 82 per cent of the respondents saw global citizenship education as “relevant to the development of the Nigerian youth”; with 78.8 per cent calling for education for non-violence “to help achieve Nigerians achieve a stable polity”; and 73.4 per cent stating that “Multicultural education should be made compulsory for Nigerian youths to accept the reality of cultural diversity” nationally, regionally and globally. The obvious conclusion here is that the respondents in the study seemed to invest much hope in the ability of the Nigerian school system to address the numerous issues that constitute the flashpoints in the process of building a stable, dynamic and progressive country. However, about 70 per cent of them felt that the existing school programmes are capable of achieving that purpose, 17.2 felt otherwise while 11.9 were undecided. These findings tend to give empirical support for earlier calls (e.g. Ogundare, 1999; Makinde, 1999; Ogunyemi, 2003) for curricula review, rather than introducing an entirely new programme, in the course of introducing peace education and its other variants into formal and non-formal educational programmes in Nigeria.
A cursory look at the Tables 2 and 3 reveals that there are no statistically significant differences according to gender, educational qualification and occupation.

However, respondents are likely to differ in their views in relation to age, marital status, geopolitical zone and religion. The specific dimensions of these differences are to be explored in a follow-up investigation to this study.

Implications of findings for Nigeria’s sustainable development

There is an expressed preference for democracy as against military dictatorship in much of Africa today. According to The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) adopted by African leaders in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2001, Across the continent, democracy is spreading, backed by the African Union (AU), which has shown a new resolve to deal with conflicts and censure deviation from the norm. These efforts are reinforced by voices in civil society, including associations of women, youth and the independent media (NEPAD, 2001:10).

Nigeria, being one of the architects of NEPAD, is thus challenged to pay serious attention to the prevalent conceptions of governance vis-à-vis the core elements of sustainable democracy such as opportunities for self-expression and enforcement of fundamental rights, enthronement of democratic institutions and policy environment supportive of justice and peace. Evidence from this study suggests that, if the ongoing efforts at institutionalizing a lasting democracy in Nigeria are to yield the expected dividends, Nigerians need a comprehensive programme of formal and non-formal education in human rights and peace promotion. Such programme should complement the activities of civil society organizations whose capacity for changing the entrenched orientation towards “militocracy” (Fasanmi, 2002) is highly circumscribed. One obvious implication of this is the need for serious activities of curricular review preceded by baseline studies, unlike official dictations from government ministries and agencies as currently going on in Nigeria (e.g. see The Guardian, March 9, 2004).

Another major implication of findings from this study is the need for elected leaders to conduct the country’s affairs in manners that practically demonstrate the superior status of civil rule over the military. One practical way of doing this is to squarely tackle the problem of corruption for which Nigeria’s corporate image has been severely dented. To quote Yaqub (2003:44),

Corruption and dictatorship belong in the socio-economic and political quagmire into which the country has sunk for more than two-thirds of the period of self-rule...

The twin evils of corruption and dictatorship have exacted a variety of costs - psychic, economic, political, social, cultural, etc - on the people and the nation-state; the costs are expensive and huge, although the exact quantum may never be known.

The current civilian administration introduced The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000 as its strategy for arresting the seemingly hydra-headed problem. However, many critical observers are wont to argue that the personal lifestyles and disposition of civilian officials do not go far enough to demonstrate their sincerity in tackling the problem headlong (Yaqub, 2003), although some evidence of the potency of the crusade is beginning to emerge.

To strengthen people’s faith in the crusade, elected officials in Nigeria must constantly keep NEPAD’s injunction on “developing clear standards of accountability, transparency
and participatory governance at the national and sub-national levels” (NEPAD, 2001:11) in focus.

For the an enduring culture of peace and the survival of democracy in Nigeria, the parlous state of the economy, the widespread incidence of poverty, the poor state of social infrastructures (health, education, roads, etc.) and the mismanagement of environmental resources all call for critical attention. Indeed, there is a tendency for the citizens to prefer a military ruler who caters for their welfare needs for food, shelter and employment than a civilian who makes pretensions without concrete actions on the ground; perhaps not minding the snowballing effect on their political and civil rights in the long run as implied in this study. The existential needs of the people must be addressed in a holistic and fundamental, not ad hoc, manner to make lasting impact capable of developing the stock of human capital that would guarantee the sustainable development of the Nigerian nation. NEPAD (2001) anticipates that states in Africa will continue to rely on the global community in building their capacity to set and enforce the legal framework as well as maintaining law and order. However, much is expected of a resource-endowed country like Nigeria in demonstrating continental leadership for sustainable development and its capacity to respond in the expected manner may be seriously curtailed unless its creditor nations across the world do something drastic by either writing off a substantial part of the country’s foreign debts or renegotiating many of these debt obligations which are hampering local development efforts. The intervention of the global community is required in this direction if Nigeria is expected to achieve much in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and be an active player during the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

CONCLUSION

This study has provided some preliminary evidence in support of the call for curricular review with the purpose of introducing thematic issues about human rights, peace promotion and sustainable development in Nigerian educational institutions. When completed, the curricular review should serve as part of the country’s strategy for entrenching democratic values particularly within the contexts of MDG and ESD. Findings from this study however cannot be taken as conclusive. Further analyses of determinants of Nigerians’ perceptions of the relevance human rights and peace education are required. Also, more studies at various sites in the 36 states and the six geopolitical zones are required to gain a deeper insight into the profile of Nigerians’ attitude towards the military in governance, promotion of peace and human rights, and sustainable development of the country because the present study was limited to the former capital city of Lagos mainly for reason of inadequate fund.

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ENDNOTES

*. Percentages (%) in parentheses

1. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria
2. University of Jyvaskyla, Jyvaskyla, Finland
This survey investigated Nigerians’ perception of recent calls for Human Rights and Peace Education (HRPE) to entrench democratic culture in the country. Respondents were 1122 Lagos residents who came from the country’s six geopolitical zones. Majority of them saw the interrelated problems of underdevelopment, incessant conflicts and human rights abuse as products of bad leadership, but were sceptical of the capability of elected officials to manage the crisis-ridden polity. They supported emergent calls for introducing human rights, peace education and sustainable development themes into school programmes to complement the activities of non-governmental organizations (NOGs) in the country.
Mechanisms for Conflict Management in Plural and Divided Societies: the Nigerian Experience

Emmanuel O. Ojo

AUTHOR’S NOTE
Note portant l’auteur

INTRODUCTION

One of the perennial problems which also seem intractable that Nigeria, like several other new states and segmented societies, has to contend with is that of successfully managing her numerous ethnic groups. Scholars put these ethnic groups at different figures. According to Kirk-Green, Nigeria have well over 400 ethnic groups.¹ For Suberu, “Nigeria is of course, one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, with over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, some of which are bigger than many independent states of contemporary Africa”.² At the beginning of the sixties, there were thousands of tribes or ethnic groups in the world, about 1,000 were represented in the geo-political space called Nigeria today. In his insightful work, Otite, has specifically identified 374 ethnic groups in the country.³

It is not astonishing therefore, that these ethnic groups are always in rabid conflict and competition for scarce resources. This is not unexpected especially between ‘ethnically defined constituencies’.⁴ The reason is that al-most by definition, ethnic groups are in keen competition for the strategie resource of their respective societies. This is true in Nigeria as in other plural and divided societies which consider themselves biologically, culturally, linguistic or socially distinct from each other and most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms.⁵ Barth however, defines an ethnic
group as a purely unit of people who perceive themselves as sharing common features, which are different from that of others and are accepted as being so different by others.  

Be that as it is, the problem of cohabitation among ethnic groups can be broken down into ethno-centrism and ethnicity. Ethnocentrism, in the words of Abu Bah, is the attitudinal dimension of ethnic relations. It is usually inward looking and promotes a sense of pride and positive image of the group's beliefs, customs, and identity in relation to others. Ethnicity emerges during the process of interaction among ethnic groups inhabiting the same state. The interaction is frequently characterized by competition for resources, power and the assertion of cultural identity. Conflict arises out of the attempt to include one's members and at the same time exclude people from other groups. The urge to include and exclude fosters a collective consciousness among group members, making them not only a "group in itself" but also a "group for itself". Ethnicity has been viewed as either the result of innate tendencies to be loyal and support one's group or the result of elite manipulation. While the former emphasizes the strength of primordial identities, the latter stresses social construction. Whether ethnicity is intrinsic or socially constructed, the fact still remains that ethnicity exists. We discriminate on the basis of ethnic identities and at the same time, we use ethnic identities to mobilize people. Irrespective of its origins, ethnicity is real and in many cases its politicization has led to tremendous human suffering, which is the thrust of this paper. 

It needs to be emphasized that in virtually all plural societies, there are at least three main types of conflicts which are intra-personal within a given component part of the larger system, inter-personal between; at least two component parts and supra-personal between and among groups in the polity. Since conflict is inherent in human societies, its mode of resolution equally deserves scholarly analysis. This is not unconnected with the fact that peace management and maintenance is as cumbersome as conflict resolution particularly in plural societies. 

It is against this background that the paper discusses mechanisms for conflict management in Nigeria. The paper is organized into three main sections. With the above introductory overview, the first major section is an explication of the contending paradigms to conflict management in divided societies. The second part is a brief survey of ethnic and religious conflicts with the attendant lose in Nigeria's recent past. The third part is an appraisal of accommodative strategies put in place to effectively manage the polity. The paper however infers that a general overhaul of the institutional management strategies need to be carried out in Nigeria if the polity will not eventually disintegrate.

CONTENDING PARADIGMS TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT 

One of the leading theorists of conflict management in plural societies is Cynthia Enloe. In her profound and insightful work, she lists seven ethnic conflict management formulas. These formulas are: (1) Divide and Rule, which involves the deliberate efforts on the part of central political authorities not to isolate the several communities from one another, but to encourage them to perceive themselves as fundamentally different in values and goals when they do interact with one another. This was a popular colonial strategy in multiethnic colonies. (2) Displacement which involves the strategy employed by a ruling elite which happens to control superior resources and control the state apparatus against
the most vulnerable of ethnic groups. The best example of such formula is genocide. (3) Internal colonialism involves the domination of the groups in the polity by only one of them. South Africa stands out as the harshest example of such a formula combined there with divide and rule. (4) Submachine an offshoot of a larger political machine organization which, in turn, controls it, and use it to mobilize resources on occasions when they are needed usually at election times. (5) Consociational democracy, which is based on the assumption that the various ethnic groups are communal enough that they have internal consensus and internal mechanisms for generating leaders with sufficient intra-communal support that they can speak for the groups at large in state affairs. In its strict sense, this is an elite accommodation of diversities. (6) Vanguard assimilation, which aims at eliminating those inter-comage. Usually, one ethnic group is presented as the standard bearer the vanguard for all others to emulate and finally; (7) there is federalism traditionally federalism has been offered as an institutional solution to the disruptive tendencies of intra-societal ethnic pluralism.

As Enloe points out, the seven formulas of inter-ethnic accommodation are not mutually exclusive. With specific reference to federal states, any one or more of the other formulas can be effectively applied. For example, federalism can be upheld or made more effective by adopting the formula of consociational democracy, vanguard assimilation or internal colonialism. Thus, many federations have sought to balance the diverse interests in their politics through various measures of ethnic balancing in government. Another plural accommodation and management strategy that is applicable to plural societies is that of Rupesinghe, he summarises the broad spectrum principles in his assertion that democracy, devolution and power sharing are important for accommodation and management of segmented societies. Within this spectrum are the instrumental ities of human rights, including minority and groups’ rights, local political autonomy, affirmative action or quota system and other elements of consociationalism, secularism and so on. They also include the five types of devolutionary arrangements identified by Gurr such as confederalism, federalism, regional autonomy, regional administrative decentralization and community autonomy.

Given the pervasive, convulsive and destructive nature of ethnic conflicts, it is hardly surprising that much of the literature on ethnicity has been devoted to the investigation, classification or evaluation of actual or potential strategies or policies for containing divisive ethnic conflicts and promoting national, inter-ethnic unity. For instance, John McGarry and Brendan O’Leavy have classified policies or methods of ethnic conflict by eliminating ethnic differences, while the remaining four seek to regulate ethnic conflict by managing such differences. The four methods for eliminating ethnic differences are: (i) genocide, (ii) forced mass-population transfer, (iii) partition and/or secession (self-determination), (iv) integration and/or assimilation. The four methods for managing ethnic differences are: (i) hegemonie control, (ii) arbitration (third-party intervention), (iii) cantonization and/or federalization, (iv) consociationalism or power-sharing.

In the same vein, Donald Horowitz examines approaches to conflict reduction by a number of countries and draws out a number of successful strategies that could be adopted by countries having similar ethnic configuration. The prescriptions are:

Mechanisms for conflict management in plural and divided societies

(a) the creation of lower level political units (i.e. proliferation of points of power) with a view to directing struggles away from, and taking the heart off, the centre;
(b) putting in place arrangements which activate intra-ethnic conflict and reduce
energies available for inter-ethnic conflict. The arrangements include the creation of lower-level political units and reservation of offices for members of particular groups;

(c) adoption of policies that create incentives for inter-group cooperation e.g. electoral inducement for coalition purposes;

(d) adopting policies that encourage alignments based on interest other than ethnicity; and

(e) preferential programmes to reduce disparities between groups.  

Horowitz presents the last three as a follow-up to, or as resulting from, the first two, and all five prescriptions as having the potential of producing both politics of bargaining and representation of minority groups in national institutions. The prescriptions happened to have been drawn from Nigeria, which is our case study for this paper. In his words, Horowitz stated “if one is looking for African democracy in a divided society, the place to look is... Nigeria that is where many of the African lessons are...”

For Larry Diamond, there are four principal mechanisms for managing ethnicity politically within a democratic framework: federalism, proportionality in the distribution of resources and power, minority rights to cultural integrity and non-discrimination, and sharing or rotation of power, particularly through coalition arrangements at the centre. In a similar classification, Crawford Young outlines ‘four major policy spheres’ for the management of ethnic diversity. These are:

(i) constitutional formulas, particularly federal decentralized alternatives to the centralized unitary state;

(ii) cultural policies, especially in the fields of education and language;

(iii) remedies for marginalized population categories (indigenous peoples, immigrants, peripheral minorities); and

(iv) resources distribution issues (including “affirmative action questions”).

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Finally, the table below encompasses the works of five scholars vis-à-vis different strategies of ethnic conflict management as presented by Ayoade.\textsuperscript{25}  

Glaringly, all the aforementioned typologies do overlap closely. Although, ‘no two lists are identical... the resemblances are striking’.\textsuperscript{26} Our concern however, is with the suggestion that they have magical solutions that can be uniformly applied to all minority situations is something of an over-statement in the light of the complexities referred to in the introductory section of this paper. This is true especially of a situation of multiple ethnicities such as Nigeria, which calls for multiple solutions.\textsuperscript{27}  

Indeed, Stavenghagen has observed that most states fare poorly in such cases where ethnic conglomerates are divided on the basis of uncommon problems, multiple solutions sometimes work at cross purposes.\textsuperscript{28} The management of multiple minority problems is therefore a difficult task indeed. We now proceed to a brief survey of ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria between 1999 and 2003 before we appraise Nigeria’s conflict management strategies.

**SURVEY OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CRISSES**

Nigeria has demonstrated a very high propensity for ethnic and religious violence even before independence. In 1953, thirty-six people were killed in the North in communal clashes prompted by the visit of NCNC and AG leaders. This was seen as retaliation against southerners, the Yoruba in particular, who rebuked northern leaders in Lagos for refusing to support the self-rule motion tabled by Anthony Enahoro. In 1967, Nigeria degenerated into a civil war after the Igbo-dominated Eastern region tried to secede from the Nigerian federation. However, other Nigerians were not ready to let the oil rich east go away. The secessionists were fiercely attacked and by the end of the war in 1970, more than a million Igbo had either been killed or displaced.  

In more recent times, however, there has been a dramatic surge in xenophobia expressions, the hardening of ethno-regional positions and the proliferation of ethnic militias that have unleashed varying degrees of violence and terror on the polity.\textsuperscript{29} In spite of concerted efforts being made to curtail tribal wars in Nigeria, the problem has
been on the increase, especially since the return of democracy in May 1999. Earlier, Ikengah-Metuh, identified three broad types of religious violence in Nigeria viz: (i) intra-religious disturbances which occur between different denominations or sects; (ii) inter-religious conflicts prevalent between adherents of different religious beliefs, but capable of assuming socio-ethnic dimension; and (iii) inter-religious conflicts which, though, have socio-economic origin, end up in the form of religious conflicts. He noted further in respect of Nigeria that “most inter-religious disturbances usually develop into inter-ethnic conflicts even where they began as purely religious disagreements. The reverse is also often the case; namely, some socio-ethnic conflicts are deflected and fought out under inter-religious banner”. This is hardly surprising because as will be demonstrated later with empirical data, there is a very strong correlation or overlap between ethnic and religious boundaries in Nigeria’s plural setting. The tendency for the boundary between the two forms of identity to collapse during moments of conflicts and violence has been captured in the phrase, “ethno-religious” violence.

A survey of ethno-religious conflicts between 1999 till date shows that they are worrisome development which threaten harmonious co-existence and jeopardize the unity of the Nigerian nation-state and its fledging democratic experiment far more than any other challenges of democratic sustenance. But the state seems to lack proper perspective on the handling of the reality of religion in Nigeria. Nigeria is a complex society with a multiplicity of religious and cultural allegiances and sensibilities. The least the government could do is to come to terms with the reality of Nigeria’s multi-religious status, recognize religious rights and ensure that religious rights of all Nigerians are equally protected.

From data gathered, ethnic conflicts have persisted in all geo-political zones of the country. Commencing from the south-west zone of the country in Ondo State, the Ilaje and Ijaw Arogbo have been fighting tribal war since September 1998 until August 5, 1999 when ceasefire was achieved. Ondo State government had to set up a 24-man committee to work out the process of resolving the crisis permanently. Within one week of conflicts, which involved the use of sophisticated weapons, they eventually succeeded in destroying 45 communities with more than 1,000 people killed while 18,000 people were displaced! According to Olusola Oke, spokesman of Ilaje, he said the Ijaws razed down more than 13,000 residential buildings when the conflict started in 1998, September 19. Oke said no fewer than 180,000 people from 68 communities were chased out of their domains.

In Eastern part of the country, protracted fratricidal conflict among the three contiguous communities of Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba Anam of Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State, had left the area sordidly devastated, as several hundreds of lives, houses and economic valuables including motor vehicles were lost. Following the fragile peace currently holding in the area, pockets of sporadic attacks are still witnessed in spite of heavy presence of mobile policemen drafted to ensure peace there. The protracted ethnic conflict started as far back as the 19th century. Before April 1999 incident, two major conflicts have taken place ever since. One of the conflicts occurred in 1993 leading to the setting up of a commission of enquiry headed by Moses O. Nweje, a retired judge. The recommendations of the commission were yet to be implemented before war broke out years later in April 1999. Ohaneze Ndigbo the pan-Igbo association -, which has been assisting to broker peace in the area said over 1,000 people, have so far been killed. In a communique issued in April when a peace committee set up by the group met with
leaders of the three warring communities, they said that “a conflict that has claimed over 1,000 lives and reduced over 500,000 citizens of Nigeria to refugee status in their fatherland is grave enough to attract a rapid intervention by a sensitive and responsive government”. The present government in the State (Anambra) has been involved in a number of measures aimed at bringing lasting peace in the state. Apart from holding series of meetings with representatives of the people, Chinwoke Mbadinuju, the State Governor, visited the scenes of war and promised scholarship to students from the area in exchange for peace. He told a reporter:

“I am saying that for the three communities without houses, without residence, without whatever civilized means, they are all destroyed... I pronounced compulsory free education for these three communities and scholarship as a way of inducement for these people to come back”.

One can then imagine the extent of damage as a result of civil strives in that community.

In Warri, Delta State, in the Mid-western part of the country, the war that the 1997 creation of Warri south-west local government sparked off, is yet to subside. When the regime of late Gen. Sani Abacha created the local government, serious fighting erupted between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri after the local government headquarters said to have been initially located at Ogbe-Ijoh, a riverine Ijaw community which was later moved to the Itsekiri town of Ogidi. Ever since the war started, it has remained a ding-dong affair, current estimate of people so far killed since 1997 stands at over 3,000 lives, which included soldiers, policemen and oil company personnel in addition to residents in the area. More than 30 billion naira both in oil revenue and valuable property were said to have been lost too. The crisis in the area at one time became so expanded that the Urhobo were forced to join the war. That was July 1999 when Itsekiri youths stormed the palace of Oresuen of Okere-Urhobo, newly installed traditional ruler of the Urhobo of Okere, Warri, and burnt it to ashes. Five people were killed in the attack, among them an old man of 76. The State government had to impose curfew on three occasions in the area before peace could return. Now, there is full but fresh indications point to the possibility of another round of fighting in the area.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the ethnic war in Taraba State of the Northern region of the country is perhaps the most complex and sophisticated in Nigeria. It is centred on efforts at the control of Takum by three ethnic groups, the Jukun, Chamba and Kutep which dates back to the colonial days. In wars which the groups have fought, the Jukun and Chamba communities usually fought against the Kutep group. The first leg of the crisis is centred on conflict of interest between the Jukun/Chamba and the Kutep over who ascends the Jukun monarchy. Historical sources revealed that prior to 1914, Jukun and Zumperi had existed as separate districts with the Jukun and Chamba inhabiting Jukun while Zumperi (now Ussa was inhabited by the Kutep). By the amalgamation of 1914, the two groups were merged. The clamour now is for a separate chiefdom for each of the two communities. This deep rooted animosity resulted into war in 1997 with over 200 people killed, several hundreds maimed and property worth 300 million naira destroyed. On June 18,1999 fresh hostilities erupted in the area resulting into what is now known as Chachanji war with casualties on both sides, with more than 10 villages burnt down in the fracas. The old wound reopened and took a dramatic turn in October, 2001 when ethnic militia group suspected to be Tivs in Vaaser which falls into Benue State captured 22 Nigerian soldiers on peace mission in the area and slaughtered them. This gruesome murder of soldiers provoked the federal government. Few hours after burying the soldiers killed in Zaki-Biam, Benue State, and the military invaded Tiv land and killed
at least 70 people in the revenge mission at the first instance. At the end of the final onslaught hundreds of Tiv people were killed and the house of former Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Victor Malu was burnt down. However, rather than resob'ing the crisis, the military invasion has compounded the problems.  

The Yoruba western part of the country has equally not been spared from the orgy of ethnic violence. In August 1999, ‘Area Boys’ hijacked the annual ‘Oro’ festival in Sagamu, Ogun State, which triggered off avoidable clashes between Yoruba and Hausa. At the end of the clash which started on the night of July 17, Moses Ogunlaja, the Lisa of Sagamu and Chairman, press briefing committee on the clash had reported the killing of 100 Sagamu indigènes and burning of over 120 vehicles belonging to them by the Hausas at Sabo, a part of Sagamu with Hausa concentration. He said over 130 indigenes were on danger list in various hospitals in the town. The Hausas lost no fewer than 50 lives in the clash. Ogunlaja said over 2,000 Sagamu indigenes have also left the town. In August 1999, serious ethnic clash erupted in Kano, between Hausa and the Yoruba. It was a rebound of the earlier clash between the two ethnic groups in Sagamu, July 15. The Sagamu clash witnessed the exodus of Hausa to their various homes in the northern part of the country. It was gathered that two trailer loads of corpses and survivais of the clash arrived Kano July 25 and were put on display at Kanti Kwari, a densely populated commercial area of Kano municipality. The survivors who included pregnant women and children were said to have told tales of horror and suffering in the hands of the Yoruba in Sagamu. This was said to have infuriated the young men in the city. That night young Hausa men went on a rampage, attacking Yoruba residents of the city. At the end of the fracas over 50 houses and shops and about 30 vehicles belonging to the Yoruba were razed before the Police could quell the anger. 

The irony about ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is definitely that of the Yoruba speaking Ife and Modakeke communities. The conflict had been on for several years back. However, after a long truce, the Ife and Modakeke communities of Osun State began another round of blood letting in March 2000. The old war rages on for days that had to necessitate imposing a dusk-to-dawn curfew for well over a week because of the massive destruction of lives and properties. The bone of contention is rooted in their history. To the Ifes, the Modakekes are squatters on their land. This kind of colonial, domineering and hegemonic traits is deeply resented by the Modakakes, who believe that a separate local government should be created for them to get them detached from the historical appendage of the Ifes. But their population size is far below satisfying the condition for the creation of a local government area, which is another dimension to the dilemma of the two warring communities. The most unfortunate thing however, is that politicians have been playing politics with the issue. It will be recalled that the defunct National Party of Nigeria (NPN) used the Modakekes to rig the gubernatorial election in old Oyo State in the second republic. In the current democratic dispensation too, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is equally cashing-in on the crisis to spite the Alliance for Democracy (AD) that is presently Osun State. If communities that share the same culture, language and religion could not stay together, the extent of the disintegrative potentials of the polity can be understood. The Ife/Modakeke war had been on since 1997. The aforementioned are just a few cases out of the numerous instances of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. 

If ethnic conflicts are worrisome, religious conflicts have been dastard too. After the transition from the long years of military rule to civil rule in May, 1999, by 27th October that year, Zamfara State government elevated the Sharia to the status of the English
common law that has formed the bedrock of Nigerian judicature. With the adoption and application of Sharia law coupled with the promise of its extension to other northern states, the whole country was polarized into two opposing camps of Moslems in support and Christians in opposition camp. In March 2000, Kaduna State government another northern state introduced Sharia law. This sparked off an orgy of violence unprecedented in the history of that state. It was so bad that “the senseless destruction of lives and property would not ordinarily abate” despite a till-further-notice restriction was placed on Kano metropolis. At the end of the day, well over 200 lives and properties worth about N1 billion naira had been destroyed. When the Nigeria Police became helpless, soldiers were called in to quell the crisis with unquantifiable casualties. The Kaduna religious conflict instigated a reprisal move by the Igbos in the Eastern parts of the country who equally attacked Hausas for inflicting injury on their kits and kins in the Northern parts of the country.

Other than the troubling ethno-religious conflicts, to many Nigerians, a more worrying development has been the emergence of ethnic militias whose goal is to protect the identifies and interests of the groups they represent within the federation. These include the Oodua People’s Congress (OPC), the Igbo People’s Congress (IPC), the Arewa People’s Congress (APC), the Egbesu Society of the Niger Delta, and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). Others include the Ijaw National Congress and the Urhobo National Union among others.

Similarly other than the civil society becoming catalyst for democratic sustenance they have been bastardized in view of unusual democratic liberty they now enjoy thus, transforming them from civil society to ‘civil riot’. The above graphie illustration of the state of anomic’ is indeed far from being a cheering one for the nascent democracy.

NIGERIA’S ACCOMMODATIVE STRATEGIES: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Nigeria is often regarded as a pioneer and exemplar in Africa in the use of accommodative mechanisms and practices to promote inter-ethnic inclusiveness, or discourage sectional imbalance and bias, in decision-making processes. The “federal character” principle, the allocation and rotation of political party positions among geo-ethnic zones (zoning) and the establishment of inter-party coalition governments, represent some of the Ways by which Nigeria’s political elites have sought to institutionalize conflict management in the Nigerian context. We now take some of the strategies for appraisal one after the other.

After the civil war, policy makers came up with the idea of an enhanced interaction among the nascent elites. The assumption of the policy was that if the emergent elites are forced to interact with the environment outside their natural milieu, they are likely to have better understanding of Nigerian state and the ethnic mix. That was the rationale behind the setting up of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme via Decree No. 24 of May 22, 1973. The purpose of the scheme according to the Decree is primarily to imbue Nigerian youths with the spirit of selfless service to the community and to emphasise the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians irrespective of cultural or social background. The history of Nigeria since independence and before has clearly indicated the need for unity amongst all segments of the country, and demonstrates the fact that no
cultural or geographical entity exist in isolation. The objectives of the scheme which conscripts all young graduates for a year mandatory national service are indeed laudable and gallant. But the implementation of the policy has succeeded in truncating its achievements. Two salient problems of the scheme are first, favouritism in posting, in which corps members do serve within their localities thereby defeating the essence of the programme. Secondly, the scheme has become a bastion of corruption. The greatest hindrance to the success of the policy is the problematic nature of citizenship in Nigeria. Corps members cannot easily secure jobs outside their place of birth for being “non-indigenes”, for few lucky ones; at best they can only secure contract appointment.

Another accommodative strategy adopted in Nigeria is the one relating to political participation and rulership in Nigeria, otherwise known as the “federal character” principle. It is defined as “fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country’s position of power, status and influence”. This accommodative strategy was known as Quota System before 1979 when it was entrenched in the Constitution. Section 277 of the Constitution highlighted the rationales for Federal Character principle thus: “(a) to promote national unity; (b) to foster national loyalty; (c) to give every citizen a sense of belonging to the nation as expressed in the constitution, sections 135(3), 14(3), and (4). In 1987, the Political Bureau commended the principle and recommended that it should be continued in the politics and governance of the country. It is against that background that the principle was entrenched in the 1999 Constitution too. It however, cautioned that its practice should however be carried out without prejudice to the criteria of merit, excellence and achievement. In operation and actual practice, a number of pitfalls have been identified too with this policy. It potentially invades the integrity and standards of public bureaucracy and such other government bodies that normally require safeguards from the ravages of party politics. Another problem is that the policy has been used to achieve unintended purposes of ethnic cleansing sort-of, when people from some sections of the country are sacked, purged or removed all in the name of federal character. The result in this regard has not been promotion of national loyalty, but inertia and alienation as those who hail from states and communities which have suffered from federal character discrimination become resentful and also alienated from the overall body politic, while those who gain through federal government manoeuvres in the name of federal character scheme are grateful and presumably loyal to the federal character scheme.

In a recent appraisal of the policy, Ayoade observes that the policy suffers from a faulty philosophical premise. First, it is a policy that should have been designed for the benefit of the under-privileged. But it was designed for the benefit of the ruling class, thus, resulting in the further disempowerment of the powerless. The consequence is that it removed the checks and balances in the informal arrangement that existed before. Since the emphasis was on nonascriptive considerations, it resulted in a geometric diffusion of mediocrity, public service ineptitude, and manifest decline in public morale. Of course, it has also made the further distortion of the federal arrangement possible. That is the paradox of federal character principle in Nigeria. Despite its congenital and operational flaws, however, the “federal character” principle “has become a cornerstone of ethnic justice and fair government in Nigeria”.  

Be that as it is, the character of political parties can go a long way too in managing ethnic conflicts. In a plural society like Nigeria, political parties may have well strong ideological class which may impose inter-ethnic relationships since without such ideological class,
the tendency is for the parties to see themselves as forces competing in a multi-ethnic civil-society. There is also the tendency for the parties to interpret competition in terms of ethnic entities, in which case, political parties may have institutional ethnic solidarities. A brief overview of party formation in both the pre-independence and post-independence Nigeria suffices to buttress this point.

The first political party was formed in 1923 when the Nigeria Legislative Council was established and franchise extended to Lagos and Calabar under Clifford Constitution. The party was named Nigeria National Democratie Party (NNDP). In 1938, the colonial administration had frustrated the first generation of professionals and intelligentsia sufficiently for them to cope with their predicament. Thus, in that year they formed the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). Though, both parties had aspirations which covered the whole country, but their operations territorial-wise did not go beyond Lagos and Ibadan. In 1944, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), was formed. It was the first party that aspired covering the whole country. It was a mass party with membership opened to everybody. But the party did not advocate consistent ideological position except occasional 'Fabian' rhetoric. In 1948, Action Group (AG) was formed to counter NCNC. This party was an offshoot of Egbe Omo Oduduwa (lit. Association of the Children of Oduduwa, the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba speaking peoples). Explaining the rationale for the formation of this party, its leader Chief Obafemi Awolowo said that he was concerned with stability in a multi-ethnic polity like Nigeria, and that such stability can come if ethnic conglomerates were formed. Therefore, AG epitomized Yoruba cultural fashion. The third and perhaps the most influential party of the first republic was the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), which could be said to have been formed in 1951 and somewhat like the AQ was an offshoot of a cultural association, the Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa (JMA), (lit. the association of peoples of the North). Unlike the first two parties, membership of NPC was restricted to people of Northern Nigeria descent, especially the intelligensia. In this respect, the party carried its ethno-regional character far beyond that of the other parties. In practical reality, the NPC was the modern party of the Hausa/ Fulani that dates back to the Uthman Dan Fodio Jihad. Aside from these three dominant parties, there were a number of small ones. But the dominant parties were far from being agents of national integration. Saburi Biobaku recalled that cut-throat competition for political power by the big three thus: The dominant parties in the North and South-East formed the government with that in the South-West in the opposition. Each party represented the predominant ethnic group in its Region and each, incidentally, controlled the government in its Region.

Thus, political parties in the first republic generally could not be regarded as agents of national integration, providing the bridge of unity for a people of diverse backgrounds. In some of the countries of the West, party identification has (more or less) played down the significance of cleavages such as ethnicity, religion and language. Being Conservative or Labour in the United Kingdom, Democrat or Republican in the United States can sometimes be more important than the natural ideologies which an individual in those two western nations may have inherited through the accident of birth. But in Nigeria it has hitherto been extremely difficult for political parties to hold such sway. It is against this background that the 1979 Constitution, Section 202(b), provided that “the membership of the association (i.e. political party), is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, sex, religion or ethnic grouping”. Similar provision was entrenched in 1989 Constitution in its Section 220(b).
Nevertheless, despite all constitutional dictates, all the five political parties in the Second Republic could be linked with the past. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was to all intents and purposes a re-incarnation of the Action Group (AG). It was the same founder, the same centre of power, almost identical ideology and organizational structure. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was almost a replica of the NPC except that the membership was not of Northern descent only. But it was dominated by the Northern aristocracy and the Southern bourgeoisie. The Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) was NCNC reincarnation with Ibo heartland as its base but extended beyond Ibo enclave by capturing Plateau state. The Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) was the aftermath of the quarrel of the Kanuris who were in the first Republic resented hegemony by the Hausa/Fulani ruling class, hence, second republic afforded them the opportunity to demonstrate their desire for autonomy. The fifth political party, Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), was Northern Element Peoples Party (NEPU) sort-of. It is pretentious to note that each party was headed by their respective leaders in the first republic except where a given leader had been killed in the coup d’etat that terminated the First Republic. Party formation in the aborted third republic was nothing to write home about too, for the military decreed them into existence and administered like government parastatals. Same blunder was repeated during Gen. Sani Abacha transition programme down to Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar that handed over to President Obasanjo in 1999.

A brief comment on Nigeria’s federal arrangement shows that it has been convoluting and its performance dismal. From 1954 when the country went all hog to embrace federalism, the hope of national integration has become a mirage for quite a number of reasons which perhaps bothers on the mismanagement of the system. Unlike the United States of America and Switzerland, both federal countries, Nigeria’s federal system is highly centralized in all its ramifications. James Coleman noted long time ago that “excessive centralization and station of most developing countries... not only means greater vulnerability as a result of non-fulfillment of populist expectations, it also means heightened inefficiency”.

Nonetheless as earlier mentioned, the problematic nature of Nigeria’s citizenship, at least, sociologically is one other travall of Nigeria’s federalism, which has in no small measure whittle-down the efficacy of Nigeria’s federal structure. Unlike India where there is no duality of citizenship in which case there is only one Indian citizenship, Indian federalism is like that of Canada too, where the concept of state of origin does not really matters.

As if to compound the travalls of federalism in Nigeria, the system is structurally imbalance. If Mill’s law of federal instability is anything to go by, that “a federation is morbid if one part of the federation is bigger than the sum of the other parts”, then one can easily explain the stress on the system. Though, there is no federal arrangement in the world in which the constituent states or regions are even or nearly equal in size, population, political power, administrative skills, economic development or relative geographical location, but where such disparity is as great as to make one constituent state/region permanently dominating collective decisions, it results into unitary centralism rather than federalism which is the case in Nigeria. This feeling that the federation is tilted to the advantage of one of its component units tends to transform a federation into an imperial structure. It is this kind of arrangement in Nigeria that brew the problem of hegemonic traits by the major ethnic groups in the federation. It is also for these reasons among others that ethnic minorities who tend not to be reckoned with are restless too. The unpalatable consequential effects of the mismanaged federal
system are political instability, ethnic disharmony, and threats of secession. With this lack of federal culture of associative democracy to generate a sense of coexistence and well-being, Nigerians need to find a solution in fiscal federalism, political restructuring, derivative revenue sharing, or whether except the present warped union where there is too much power and resources concentrated at the centre.

The accommodative strategies discussed in this paper are far from being exhaustive of all known ones in Nigeria. For space constraint, others that have been used are: National Language Policy, the movement of federal capital territory from Lagos to Abuja, States and Local governments’ creation at fairly regular intervals, revenue allocation formula, and creation of federal character commission and OMPADEC among others.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Like virtually all other multi-ethnic societies, in all regions and climes, Nigeria has exhibited very high propensity of conflict for quite a long time. Thus, managers of the system have been trying too to prevent the polity from crumbling. But considering all the conflict management strategies put in place by various civilian and military regimes, both prior and after independence, there is the under-lining conceptualization which informs them all. This conceptualization derives from the employment of Western bourgeois theory of social stability and elite stability. Two outstanding contributors to this perspective are worthy of mentioning. They are Martin D.G and Morrison Stevenson. They argued that stability in any political system depends on the elite which they identified as the middle class. In this wise, the stability of any plural society is a function of the state of development of the middle class. If the stratum called the middle class is well developed and fairly thick in terms of population and in terms of strength the more cohesive, the more stable the polity is. Also, if there is cordiality of ideas, or put differently, if there is ideological consciousness among the middle class, this is likely to engender stability that will affect the political system positively. They argued further that instability within any polity is elite instability or communal instability. Elite instability for them occurs when the competition among the elite is too keen on resources that are too few. Communal instability however, is grassroots one and it is usually caused by elite instability, carried to the grassroots level.

What successive regimes have been doing is to try to integrate the elite or the middle class to the neglect of the grassroots and this has not achieved much as clearly shown while appraising the NYSC scheme and the federal character principle. Whereas, the masses of the people needs to be targeted for conflict resolution if lasting peace will be attained. This is because they are the ready tools in the hands of the political class to foment communal instability. The greatest recommendation of this paper therefore is that the grassroots must be mobilized by appropriate strategies to orientate the masses of the people on the need for communal stability in the interest of development, peace and tranquility. This can be done by educating the masses of the people on the need to live in peace and tranquility with their neighbours without which development becomes a mirage.
NOTES


10. Abu Bakarr Bah, op. cit., p. 7.


22. Ibid.


32. Ibid.

33. Samuel G Egwu, op. cit., p. 4


37. Ibid.

38. Ibid


42. Ibid.


44. See, ‘Kaduna Massacre: Sharia Will Split Nigeria’, *The News*, 6 March, 2000. According to the News Magazine, a BBC reporter was reported to have said that “I have never seen a slaughtering Of human beings like this”. Prof. Soyinka a Noble Laureat too was reported to have told the magazine that “... this is a serious state of anomie and the prelude to war...”.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.


ENDNOTES

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ABSTRACTS

Nigeria like several other new and segmented societies is undoubtedly facing a number of challenges that have to do with how to successfully manage her numerous ethnic groups. Therefore, the thrust of this paper is an appraisal of the institutional and public policy mechanisms put in place to integrate the convoluting federal system. The paper is divided into a number of sections. With an introductory overview, the paper proceeds to dwell on the contending paradigms to conflict management in the extant literature on plural and deeply divided societies. The second major part surveys a number of ethno-religious conflicts between 1999 when the nascent democracy was inaugurated till 2003 to attest to the fact that the polity is beleaguered. Having done that, part three is a critique of the integrative/accommodative strategies of the managers of the Nigerian system for it not to go the way of the former Soviet Union (USSR) which disintegrated in the early 90s. The paper infers with the observation that all the accommodative strategies have been directed mainly at the elite, ignoring the masses of the people simply because the strategies are Western bourgeoisie theory of social stability and elite stability. Whereas, the masses of the people too; needs to be targeted for conflict resolution. This is because they are the ready tools in the hands of the political class to foment communal instability. The strongest recommendation of this paper therefore is that the masses of the people should be re-orientated and mobilized on the needs for communal stability in the interest of development, peace and tranquility.

INDEX

**Keywords:** conflict, plural-society, communal-instability, ethnic-groups, crisis
The struggle against Corruption in Nigeria: the Role of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (ICPC) under the Fourth Republic

David Uchenna Enweremadu

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Note portant sur l’auteur

INTRODUCTION

1 Over the last couple of years, Nigeria, Africa’s largest nation, gained unprecedented global attention on account of its unenviable record in corruption, notwithstanding the fact that its current leader, President Olusegun Obansanjo, ironically a one time President of Transparency International’s board of directors, had at the inception of his administration in 1999, initiated a state of the art anti-corruption law paving way for the establishment of an independent anticorruption commission with awesome powers to fight corruption. The effects of corruption on the image and development of Nigeria need not be overemphasized. Notwithstanding its huge potentials (population and resources), the country lie prostrate today owning largely to decades of plunder by successive governments. Nigeria’s inability to achieve enduring political stability is also not unconnected to the damaging effects of corruption, which continues to undermine the legitimacy of political leaders and public institutions, and thus the capacity of the state to implement development programmes.

2 Following a successful return to democratic rule on May 29, 1999, there was immense domestic and international pressure on the new administration to fight corruption. These
pressures explain partly, why a host of new policy and institutional measures are been put in place to fight corruption. One of the most significant anti-corruption measures already taken is the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), on September 29, 2000. ICPC, the major tool with which the present administration in Nigeria hopes to combat corruption has however suffered severe set back in its operations, due largely to the néo-patrimonial orientation of the Nigerian political class, inadequate structures and a weak judicial system.

The concept of corruption and its manisfestations in Nigeria

3 Despite the fact that corruption has attracted global attention in recent times, a generally accepted definition of the concept remains elusive. For the purpose of this article, however, we will, following Khan, define corruption as any act which deviates from the rules of conduct, including normative values, governing the actions of some one in a position of authority or trust, whether in the private or public domain, because of private regarding motives, (that is non public or general) such as wealth, power, status etc.

4 Implicit in the above definition is the assumption that all corrupt acts are motivated by the desire to misuse the instrumentality of office or one’s position in pursuit of private regarding interests, which may or may not be material, in violation of existing rules or norms.

5 The various manifestations of corruption in Nigeria are well documented in the numerous reports of commissions of enquiry established by successive administrations. The Forster-Sulton Tribunal (1956) and the Justice Coker Commission (1962), highlighted how politicians of the First Republic used their privileged positions to divert public resources away from state corporations and companies to their various political parties. These politicians were also known to have engaged in embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, bribery, nepotism, extortion, electoral frauds and other forms of corrupt behaviours. Notwithstanding the fact that corruption during that era was largely restricted to the political class, it greatly contributed to the collapse of the Republic following Nigeria’s first military coup on January 15, 1967.

6 During the 70’s, the import licensing system was widely exploited by government officials and their friends in the business sectors for self enrichment. Contracts for public works were frequently inflated, while civil servants rampantly engaged many forms of bribery and extortion. In 1976, 10 out of 12 of the then state military governors were dismissed from office and the military, haven been found guilty of grossly abusing their offices by a judicial probe panel. The probe by the Mohammed regime (1975/76) also extended to other key state institutions, including the judiciary, police, civil service and parastatals, and even universities, culminating in the purge of over 10,000 officials, many of them on corruption related offences.

7 With the return of electoral politics in 1979, under the Second Republic (1979-83), large scale and high level fraud, diversion, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds either to finance political parties or for self enrichment, and more brazen inflation of state contracts, nepotism, ostentatious display of ill-gotten wealth, stuffing of pay-roll with ghost workers, and electoral malpractices and violence returned to the front burner, after a brief lull.
Succeeding regimes (1985-99), marked by very corrupt and repressive military rule and growing personalisation of power, saw corruption spreading to virtually all spheres of society, including the civil society and the private sector, becoming a national culture. The scale of corruption during that era in Nigeria is reflected in the Pius Okigbo Report, which noted that about $12 billion in oil windfall which accrued to the nation during the 1990 gulf war could not be accounted for, by the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida.

In 1998, a Panel constituted to facilitate the recovery of funds looted under the Abacha regime (1993-98) also revealed how top military and civilian leaders, including Abacha himself, siphoned billions of dollars in public funds to offshore accounts, while using their positions and public resources to acquire choice properties around the country. In 1999, following return to democratic rule, the Christopher Kolade Panel in a very celebrated report also indicted the last military regime of General Abdusalami Abubarkah (1998-99), for awarding, massively inflated, contracts, licences, awards, etc., usually to firms in which top echelon of the regime had substantial interests, causing a sharp drop in the countries external reserves.

Some of the most rampant manifestations of corruption in Nigeria today (under the Fourth Republic), include the inflation of contracts in return for huge kick-backs, which has also grown in its proportion, fraud and falsifications of accounts and official records in the public service, forgery or falsifications of vital documents (including educational qualifications, to gain important offices), especially by aspiring politicians and public servants, the ghost worker syndrome, examination malpractices in educational institutions, bribery, extortion and perversion of justices, especially among the police and judiciary, and of cause, the various crimes against the state in the private sector, sometimes by multinational firms operating in the country, in such areas as tax evasion, over-invoicing of goods, foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling. Others are frauds in the banking and finance sector, and of course the illegal acquisition of public assets, such as landed property and a frightening degree of electoral fraud.

Thus, corruption remains widespread today, affecting virtually all public institutions, despite the incumbent regime’s well publicised move to fight it. For instance, a recent audit report on federal government finances, which covered key institutions such as ministries and parastatals, public corporations, the judiciary, the federal legislature and the presidency among others, authored by the Auditor-General of the Federation, revealed that as much as 23 billion naira, may have been lost to corruption in 2002 alone. The amount represents financial frauds perpetrated by state officials, ranging from outright embezzlement, payment for jobs not done, over invoicing, double debiting, inflating of contract, to release of funds without the consent of the approving authority.

From Patrimonialism to Néo-patrimonialism

The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of competing theoretical models on corruption, which have illuminated many aspects of the phenomenon. The developmentalist/modernization theory (Huntington, 1968), the functionalist theory (Leff, 1964), the public choice perspective (Mbaku, 2000), the Principal-agent theory (Klitgaat, 1988) are some of the theoretical models that exist in the literature. But because corruption in Africa is now systemic, we can no longer be contended to use these theoretical models, as they are no longer adaptable. More importantly, African corruption
raises not only economic but also social and political rationality. In Africa, unlike elsewhere, we have in some cases more of corruption of the social exchange type, in form of nepotism, tribalism and clientelism etc, more than the economic exchange type, due to the place of such primary group relations in Africa. However, this type of corruption can also lead to corruption of the economic type, due to social pressures on public officials to fulfill social obligations.

For this reason, some scholars (J.F Médard, R.H. Jackson and C.G Rosberg, R. Joseph, Peter Lewis, and J.F. Bayart), have offered the “neopatrimonial” framework, not only because of its analytical advantages, but also for its historical and cultural relevance to Africa. Clapham argues that “it corresponds to the normal forms of social organization in pre-colonial (African) societies” While Médard relates it to the historical context within which the post-colonial state emerge from a colonial heritage. Subsequently, these scholars have analyzed the same phenomena under related theoretical labels, including “personal rule”, “Predatory rule”, “prebendalism”, and the “politics of the belly”. After reviewing and comparing these different terms, Médard affirmed that these theoretical differences are trivial or mostly semantic.

Néo-patrimonialism derives from the concept of “patrimonialism”, which Weber used to designate a style of authority in small traditional polities, where a ‘big man’ rules by dint of personal prestige and power, while followers are treated as extensions of his household. Authority is personalised and shaped by the ruler’s preferences, rather than any codified system of law. The ruler ensures political stability and personal political survival by selectively distributing favours and material benefits to followers or clients. Médard have identified three features of patrimonialism; no distinction or confusion between personal and public property; personalisation of power at the summit and also at all the levels of authority and a direct exchange of political and economic resources (i.e. power and wealth) or ‘stranddling’. Weber distinguishes patrimonialism from a legal-rational bureaucratic system of authority, governed by formal rules.

Although contemporary African societies do possess varying degree of bureaucratic institutions and formal rules, they still “retain in modified form many of the characteristics of patrimonial rule, forming a “hybrid political system in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with rational-legal institutions”. Modern neopatrimonialism is thus, differentiable from the traditional model, to the extent that it is a mixed one and not the ideal, because there is a formal and subjective differentiation between public and private sectors.

African corruption is largely informed by this neopatrimonial logic, with its common features including also ‘straddling’, where businessmen are also politicians, the confusions between public and private spheres, even though there is a subjective distinction and patronage/clientelism, arising from the necessity for political elites to redistribute part of the resources stolen to maintain their political clientele. This is vital to the stability of political leaders and their survival, being the only way to legitimize their power in a society where the state is still viewed as an alien imposition.

The Nigerian corruption is similar to those found in other Africa states, given the similarities in their history, culture, levels of social development. It is characterized by “straddling” a system where economic and political powers overlap (i.e. almost all politicians are businessmen in Nigeria), a confusion between the private and public realms, and patronage or clientelist redistribution of the ‘national cake’, what Joseph
calls “prebendalism”. Indeed, politics in Nigeria centres on redistribution of state patronage in an atmosphere of fierce ethnic and regional competition. Politicians who occupy public office are expected to use their position to amass resources for themselves and members of their primary groups, or else they lose their relevance. This explain why communities in Nigeria often lobby to ensure that their ‘sons’ are appointed into lucrative offices and protest loudly when they perceive their communities are ‘neglected’ in the scheme of things. It is also not unusual to see communities putting up a spirited defence of their ‘son’, when an attempt is made to remove him on corruption charges or insist that he or she be replaced by another individual from their ‘community’.

Under this arrangement, the official purpose of state offices or resources often becomes a secondary concern, notwithstanding regular pronouncements of state officials to the contrary. Instead, awarding of state contracts or appointment into public offices are simply conceived as an opportunity to spread national resources, “à la federal character” reward individuals and communities for their support or better still as an invitation to come and ‘chop’. This logic is firmly rooted in the perception and behaviour of both the elite and the followership. The notion of public office as an opportunity to “chop” is also generalised and is now a stable pattern of behaviour which govern the actions of individuals at all levels in the Nigerian society, irrespective of the type of regime in power. The average policeman, the civil servant or the politician, all see their various positions as an opportunity to “chop” and if possible, to give other members of their reference group (family, clan, ethnic group, party etc.) to “chop” also.

This paper argues that the failure of the ICPC to stem the tide of corruption in Nigeria since its inception is largely explained by this prevailing neopatrimonial logic, more than any other factor. It contends that, except the putting in place of such institutions are accompanied by a radical change in social values and practices beginning from the top, corruption may likely remain a major problem in Nigeria in particular, and in Africa in general. The remaining part of this article is divided into three parts. The first part traces the immediate processes leading to the emergence of the ICPC, the second looks at the ICPC’s elusive quest for good governance and transparency, while the final part présents a conclusion which summarises the major observations and outlines some recommendations.

**SETTING AN ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA FOR A NEW REPUBLIC: THE EMERGENCE OF ICPC IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC**

The inauguration of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, was marked by a heightened awareness of the devastating consequences of decades of wanton corruption on the Nigerian society and an unprecedented national resolve to tackle the menace, perceived as the most potent factor frustrating the country’s development. This national mood was well captured in an acceptance speech by the then president elect, Olusegun Obasanjo, following his victory in the February 1999, presidential election:

> I regard the result of this election as a mandate from the people of Nigeria and a command from God Almighty that I should spare no effort in rebuilding this nation. I understand the clear message of the Nigerian people. In giving me their mandate, they have asked me to restore our dignity they want me to alleviate poverty and reduce corruption.”

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Obasanjo made corruption a key campaign slogan, promising that if elected he will not recognize any ‘sacred cow’ in his war against corruption. Before his election, Obasanjo, a known crusader against corruption and abuse of power, and one time President of Transparency International Board of Governors, had left no one in doubt about his disdain for corruption. In many fora, he had emphasized the devastating consequences of corruption on Nigeria’s socio-economic development and wellbeing, affirming that no meaningful development can take root in a society so pervasively ravaged by corruption. His imprisonment between 1995 and 1998, by a previous military regime, was not unconnected with his principled and courageous stand against corruption by the regime. Upon his election, Obasanjo promised he would end the brutality and systemic corruption that characterized the country’s past, especially the preceding 16 years of military rule.

To give teeth to his anti-corruption crusade, he presented to the National Assembly, the ‘Prohibition and Punishment of Bribery and Other Related offences Bill’, exactly six weeks after he took office. While presenting the bill, the very first bill under the Fourth Republic, the President noted that: “we believe this law is morally right and politically correct and necessary to change the attitude of Nigerians”. The Bill was also in part, a fulfilment of provisions of the ‘1999 constitution’, which had required under Section 15(5), “that the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power”. The decision to initiate such a new law was similarly informed by the realisation that given the high levels of corruption and its current modern and sophisticated nature, existing legislations could not effectively check the menace. The law aimed to prohibit, prevent and prescribe punishments for corruption, through the instrumentality of a national anti-corruption agency modelled after those of Hong Kong, Singapore etc.

The process of passage of the bill in the national Assembly was, however, marked by a lengthy legislative squabble, and even after the Bill was finally passed into law on June 13, 2002, paving way for the inauguration of ICPC, several State Governments went to the Supreme Court to challenge the legality and powers of the body. These challenges which constituted the initial obstacles threatened the survival of ICPC, raising questions about the commitment of the political class to the war against corruption in Nigeria. This was however overcome by a June 7, 2002, Supreme Court ruling, affirming the status and powers of ICPC. 

Structures and powers of the ICPC

The ICPC was inaugurated on September 29, 2001, with Hon. Justice Mustarpha Akanbi, a well respected jurist as its chairman. It has its administrative headquarters in Abuja, the federal capital and is expected to establish branch offices in all the 36 states of the federation. Under Section 3(12) of the Act, ICPC is conferred with the powers to appoint, dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over its staff.

However, as a new organisation which was greeted with public pressure for its immediate take-off, ICPC faced some administrative problems upon its birth. These raged from the vital question of how and from where to pool its foundation staff to the issue of office and residential accommodation of its key staff and finance. To enable it commence operations immediately, it had to make do with skeletal staff deployed from other public institutions. The unavoidable dependence on the services of staff of these institutions, some of which had been grossly tainted with corruption of the past, especially the Nigerian Police, became a source of concern for the Public. However, the commission has in the last
three years moved to effect the recruitment of its own workforce, based on its need and
the level of resources available to it.45

Before the enactment of the Act, there were other laws which dealt with corrupt
practices in the country. These included:

- The Criminal Code (applicable in the Southern states).
- The Penal Code (applicable in the Northern states).
- The Recovery of Public Property (Special Military Tribunal Act Cap. 389, laws of the
  Federation of Nigeria 1990 (as amended in 1999).
- The Failed Banks (recovery of Debts and Financial Malpractices in Banks),

Decree 1994 (as amended in 1999).

- The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, Cap.56 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990

However, as varied as these laws were, they were believed to be out dated to the extent
that there are now modem methods of perpetrating corruption, which were not within
the contemplation of the law makers at the time the older statutes were enacted. Dealing
with these modem methods, it was thought, required a modem legislation. Further more,
they were said to be scattered, rather than grouped together conveniently and were not
comprehensive46. The 2000 Act, therefore aims to bring about some orderliness in the
laws, by putting them in a more comprehensive document and to fill the lacuna created
by the inadequacy of existing laws47. It however recognised the existing laws48.

The powers and responsibilities of the commission are outlined in the Act. The Act begins
with an interpretation section which defines the word ‘corruption’. According to the Act,
corruption ‘includes bribery, fraud and other related offences’. It defines ‘gratification’,
under section 8, to mean:

money, donation, gift, loan, fee, reward, valuable security, property or interest in
property being property of any description whether movable or immovable, or any
other similar advantage, given or promised to any person with intent to influence
such a person in the performance or non performance of his duties50.

The interpretation is important because it guides the court in its interpretation of certain
words and phrases used in the Act and it assists the commission in determining what
conduct constitutes corrupt practice. ICPC is empowered to:

- Receive and investigate complaints from members of the public on allegations of
corrupt malpractices and in appropriate cases prosecute the offenders51 This is
however not the case in places like Hong Kong, where the commission has the
power to investigate and prosecute any one suspected of corruption, without
receiving complaints52.
- examine the practices, systems and procedures of public bodies and where such
systems aid corruption direct and supervise the review.
- advise government officials and agencies on the ways corruption may be
eliminated or minimised by them and changes in practices, systems or procedures
compatible with the effective discharge of the duties of public bodies to reduce the
likelihood or incidence of corruption;
- educate the public against bribery, corruption and related offences.
- enlist and foster public support in combating corruption53

ICPC has created various departments/committees to deal with different aspects of its
duties. The first deals with investigation and prosecution; the second the study of the
systems, practice and procedures at public institutions, with a view to identifying areas
which will lead to corruption and how to minimise it; and the third, public enlightenment
and education. Each committee has a member of the commission as its chairman. ICPC’s chairman heads the investigation and prosecution committee.

The Act created a wide range of offences which includes acceptance of gratification by officials, corrupt offers to public officers, corrupt demand by persons, offences relating to corrupt and fraudulent acquisition of property. Others are offences committed through postal systems, deliberate frustration of investigation by the Commission, making false statement or return, gratification by and through agents, bribery of public officers, offence of using office or position for gratification, bribery in relation to auction, bribery for giving assistance etc, in regard to contracts, failure to report bribery transactions, dealing with, using, holding, receiving or concealing gratification, making of statements which is false or intended to mislead and attempted conspiracy. Penalties for these offences range between 10 years and 1 year imprisonment with the option of a fine. ICPC enjoys wide powers to enforce these provisions, including the powers to investigate, search, seize (any property which is the subject of investigation) and arrest, if it deems that to be necessary or can facilitate its work and its officials investigating cases enjoy some immunity, and are conferred with special powers.

In order to eliminate all forms of corruption, especially the modern methods of perpetrating it and render ICPC and its fight against corruption more effective, the Act makes provisions for certain unique clauses:

- It limits the time within which offences of corruption can be tried to 90 working days with a proviso to extend it when good grounds exist;
- Special judges of the High Court are to be designated to try only corruption cases to accelerate the speed of trials, bearing in mind the snail-speed of the Nigerian judiciary;
- The protection of witnesses and their evidence;
- Presumptions in certain cases, notably given or receiving of gratification, which can be presumed to have been done for corrupt motive once it proved that it has been given or received in the first place. This is not exactly the same situation in the cases of Hong Kong and Singapore, where the onus is placed on the person suspected or accused of any form of corruption to prove otherwise;
- It states that evidence shall not be admissible to show that gratification is customary in any profession, trade, vocation or calling or on a social occasion;
- It outlaws bribery in relation to bidding at an auction sales and;
- Bribery for giving assistance or using influence in procurement of contracts;
- It criminalises soliciting or accepting advantage as an inducement or reward for giving assistance in the promotion, consideration or other money stipulated in any contract;
- inflating the price of goods or services above the prevailing market price or professional standards;
- awarding of contract without budget provision, approval and cash backing and;
- transferring the spending of money for a particular project or service on another project;
- failure to report bribery transaction and
- giving of false information to the commission.

Thus, in the context of a legal framework for combating corruption, there seems to be sufficiently worded legislations in the Act for tackling most aspects of corruption pervading public and business life in Nigeria.
INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS: AN ELUSIVE QUEST FOR TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA

within the first year of its establishment, ICPC arraigned twelve personalities on corruption charges despite its initial administrative problems. These twelve included some well placed people, like a High Court Judge, a prominent lawyer (SAN), a multi-millionaire and chief executive of an insurance firm, permanent secretaries and directors, as well as state commissioners. By March 28, 2002, the number rose to 39 accused persons standing trials in 17 criminal matters pending in various designated courts. The trials emanated from the over 800 petitions before the commission then. Unfortunately, virtually all of these cases have been politicised or stalled in the courts, because of the frequent adjournments and the interlocutory orders and injunctions normally granted accused persons by the courts. More disappointing, some were in fact thrown out on technical grounds. Thus, even though ICPC prosecutes cases, it will appear that the ‘Nigerian factor’ and the decay in the judiciary, and not necessarily financial or manpower limitations, have ensured that there is no headway.

ICPC’s first prosecution took place in 2001, when in a highly publicised trial four individuals were docked for allegedly offering of 3.5 million naira in gratification to a member of the Justice Obiora Nwazota Commission of Inquiry, established by the Federal Government on the Nigerian Airways Limited (NAL). The accused persons included, one Milton Ohwovoriole, holder of the highest professional honour, SAN, chief Adebiyi Olafisoye, multi-millionaire broker and owner of Fidelity Bond (Ltd.) and a manager in his company, Adeyemi Omowunmi. The trio were said to have conspired to offer the sum through Omowunmi, to one Mika Anache, a member of the Justice Nwazota panel. The goal, according to the receiver (Anache), who admitted Omowunmi brought the money which he claimed was from his boss, Olafisoye, for him and other members of the Justice Nwazota panel of inquiry, was to wrest a favourable report from the panel, which for over nine months unravelled the decades of wroth in the NAL.

Anache, a member of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Presidential Committee that reviewed the 1999 constitution, said he kept the money in his bank account for two months, ‘because the commission was on recess’, but failed to disclose this until when the commission resumed, only to admit receiving the money when another member of the commission raised the issue that he learnt a commission member had taken 3.5 million naira in gratification. This constitutes an offence under the Act. All the accused persons, where charged under the Act, though they denied any knowledge of the gratification.

Given the social backgrounds of the accused persons, in this first antigraft case, it was thought that the trial was a timely warning to the public, that the Act and commission will not be hostage to the unwritten, but abiding solidarity between the bar and the bench and that party loyalty might not shield anyone from facing prosecution under the present dispensation. Unfortunately however, this promising trial, like others which followed, has remained stalled in the court process till date. More ironical, the principal suspect in the trial, Omowunmi who allegedly ferried the money in question to Alhaji
Anache, disappeared from police custody, in what the police describe as ‘mysterious circumstances’

In another development, ICPC had commenced investigations on an alleged shady acquisition of a commercial property situated at Victoria Island, a high braw area in Nigeria’s sprawling commercial capital, Lagos, involving some officials of Ondo State. The property was allegedly acquired for 500 million naira in a very questionable deal. Some top officials of the state, including the governor, were suspected to have corruptly benefited from the transaction, in contravention of the 2000 Act. Based on a petition alleging corruption, ICPC issued an order to the state’s Commissioner for Finance, requiring him “to appear before the commission and produce all documents relating to the purchase of plot 90 (the property in question).”

This order was however flouted with impunity, prompting ICPC to dispatch some of its officers with a warrant of arrest, in what turned out to be an elusive search. Rather than obey ICPC summons, the Finance Commissioner and indeed the State Government, took ICPC and its chairman to court, alleging defamation. They accused ICPC’s chairman of haven “gone on air (media) to declare the commissioners wanted by the ICPC as ‘fleeing criminals’” and only issued a summons requiring them to appear before it, “when it became conscious that it had ran foul of the law setting it up”. Before the order came, the Finance Commissioner went to court and obtained leave to enforce his fundamental human rights which had been ‘largely infringed upon’ as a result of a Radio and Television programme.

They alleged that “the procedure adopted by the ICPC is not a mistake but part of a deliberate and calculated attempt to embarrass the leadership and Government of Ondo state.” They traced there problem with the Commission to a former commissioner in the state cabinet, who was ‘dismissed’ from the cabinet for fraud. The said ex-commissioner, who was privy to the transaction which took place while he was still in the cabinet, later made available to the PDP (a rival political party which he later joined) leadership in the state certain documents which he claimed represented the State Executive Council conclusion on the purchase of plot 90. They alleged ‘political conspiracy’, instigated by their political rivals in the PDP with the active connivance of ICPC, to discredit the Alliance for Democracy (AD) government in the state, in order to gain political advantage, ahead of the 2003 general elections.

Subsequently, attempt by ICPC to prosecute two of the state’s commissioners on an 11 count charges in the court over the property, was frustrated, in the usual Nigerian fashion, by multiple court injunctions and adjournments and the media war which followed. Initially, the trials were halted as a result of the legal action against the commission at the Supreme Court, to which Ondo State was also a principle party. But even after the Supreme Court delivered its verdict in favour of ICPC, this case, like others, have remained stalled in the an endless court process.

In September, 2002, ICPC however recorded its only successful prosecution till date, when a Local Council chairman in Kogi State, was sentenced to three years imprisonment, by a high court for ‘awarding a contract for the construction of mobile telephone project, to a local firm to the tune of 4.5 million naira without budgetary provision, approval and cash backing, contrary to and punishable under Section 22(4) Act 2000. Unfortunately, this conviction although a major break-through, failed to elicit any applause from the public, much of whom were already getting frustrated by ICPC’s seemingly helplessness in the face of growing corruption in the country. Understandably, the public wanted to see the
‘big fishes’ put behind bars. Unable to repeat this feat, particularly with respect to the VIP’s, public criticism soared, leaving ICPC with no choice, but to go after the real thieves’ or remain discredited.

In highly publicised move, ICPC soon announced that it has received petitions against some highly placed officials, who were to be investigated for various offences. These included the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives and some state governors spread across the then three political parties. This development aroused tremendous interest among the public, who had almost lost confidence in the ICPC. Any successful prosecution of officials of such calibre in Nigeria, would have undoubtedly sent the appropriate signals and help convince the cynical public that the commission was still on track. But unfortunately, the exercise turned out to be another phase in the commission’s protracted and controversial battles, which almost led to its abrogation by the Legislators.

By 2001, the federal legislature, comprising the Senate and House of Representatives has emerged one of the most notorious public institutions in Nigeria, with respect to allegations of corruption since the commencement of this republic, in May 1999. Indeed, the scenario in the Senate, since the removal of its first president on November 19, 1999, has painted a clear picture of a chamber polarized by greed. No sooner would a president and his team be removed on allegations of corruption sometimes substantiated by documents than the next leadership would be mired in allegations of financial recklessness. Allegations of corruption in the floor of National Assembly took a more comical dimension in the House of Representatives when in a remarkable piece of parliamentary theatre some law makers walked to the front of the lower legislative chamber and handed over a large ‘Ghana Must Go’ bag full of cash, which they said was given to them in order to influence their vote in parliament. This incident took place during a period when the legislature was considering a motion to impeach President Obasanjo, fuelling suspicion that the money may have emanated from the Presidency or sources close to it.

Given this prevailing atmosphere of graft in the federal legislature, ICPC’s decision to commence investigations into the affairs of the leadership of both legislative houses, was welcomed with relieve. The Speaker, Alhaji Ghali Umar Na’abba was accused of corruption by a member of the House who petitioned ICPC, alleging various acts of financial improprieties against the Speaker and some of his personal staff. Before the ICPC could conclude preliminary investigations on the petition, the Speaker headed to court and obtained an order restraining the Commission from investigating him, once the ICPC indicated that from the evidence so far collected by the ICPC in the course of its preliminary investigations into the petition, there exist sufficient reasons to interrogate the Speaker to clarify some issues outstanding to him.

Senate President, Ayim Pius Ayim, was also accused of corruption by a controversial Senator, Arthur Nzeribe, who alleged that Anyim used his position to corruptly acquire some landed properties both within and outside the country and transferred Senate savings to one of the commercial banks in the country in violation of existing rules, among other offences.

On the basis of these petitions, the ICPC immediately swung into action, ordering thorough investigation into the allegations. Accordingly, “the petitioner was invited to the commission’s headquarters and drilled for several hours to authenticate his claims”. During his
interrogation, he promised to show ICPC officials the houses he mentioned in his petition. When ICPC officials, armed with sophisticated video cameras, arrived at the site of one of the houses in question, in company of some aides of the petitioner, they were held hostage for several hours and prevented from carrying out their duties by security men attached to the Senate President. The incident almost degenerated into a violent conflict, but for the timely intervention of the Inspector-General of Police.

48 Subsequently, Anyim went to court to restrain the ICPC, after which he petitioned President Obasanjo, complaining about the *modus operandi* of ICPC’s investigation of his said property. Anyim contended in his petition that it was illegal for ICPC officials to enter the premises of his property without his knowledge or any form of search warrant, sighting Section 36 (1 and 2) of the ICPC Act. He also drew the attention of the President to sections of the Act which forbid public disclosures of reports. He was also not happy that ICPC officials were in company of three aides of the petitioner, who was considered a sworn enemy of Anyim, but a close associate of President Obasanjo, wondering why ICPC has not prosecuted Nzeribe, who himself had on several occasions openly confessed giving and accepting bribes.

49 Anyim, not satisfied by Obasanjo’s response to his petition, reported the matter to his colleagues in the Senate, who subsequently passed a motion on November 19, 2002, to investigate the activities of ICPC since its inception, with a view to reviewing the law establishing it. Surprisingly, Anyim, unlike his predecessors, got the backing of most of his colleagues in the Senate and even the House of Representatives, in what later turned out to be a war of attrition between the three arms of government. On the day the motion was debated, Senators took turn to condemn ICPC’s dismal performance and its transformation into a ‘puppet’ of the executive. Their actions were informed by the urgency with which the ICPC handled cases involving their leaders, a time when they were considering a motion to impeach the President, even though ICPC had ‘thousands’ of cases of corruption in its files, especially those involving ministere and others close to the Presidency, but has not been able to do much work on them.

50 Before the dusts raised by ICPC’s attempted investigation of legislators and the power tussle which followed it could settle, ICPC came out with what turned out to be another bag of controversies. Following a request from the leadership of the PDP, it announced, three months to the highly awaited April 2003 elections, that investigations on alleged corrupt practices involving at least 15 state governors (all of whom where seeking re-elections), mainly from the ruling PDP, had almost been concluded and that those who are found wanting will face the music. It later announced that it had forwarded requests to the Chief Justice of the Federation, CJF, to constitute independent council to probe those who have cases to answer, in line with Section 52 of the 2000 Act.

51 This came at the height of campaigns for the 2003 elections, expectedly raising great political stakes and even suspicion in different political cycles, given the potential political implications which a damning ICPC report could have on any political aspirant. The question became, why did the ICPC suddenly decide to wake up from its slumber in the midst of electoral campaigns? Despite assurances that the exercise was not intended to undermine any aspirant, there remained throughout the period a wide spread suspicion that the leadership of the party in close collaboration with the Presidency may be planning to truncate the aspirations of some of the governors, especially those who where believed to be opposed to the President’s second terni bid, using ICPC as a weapon.
On January 20, 2003, Governor D.S.P. Alamieyeseigha, of Bayelsa State, one of those indicted by the ICPC report, went to court to stop the CJF, from appointing an independent council to complement the investigation by ICPC of charges of corruption levelled against him, which he vehemently denied. Alamieyeseigha, who had earlier secured a copy of ICPC report on him, from an ‘undisclosed’ source, declared that ICPC probe on him was politically motivated and that the contents of the investigation by ICPC, must have been manipulated by politicians bent on denying the governor (himself) a second term.

Alamieyeseigha was accused by a petitioner, who according to the local media “is backed by a wealthy politician who has political ambition in the state”, of illegally approving contracts and payments of 1.7 billion naira to eight fictitious companies in connection with the Niger Delta University project. The State Tenders Board also allegedly issued contracts worth 667,258 million naira to other fake companies. The petitioner alleged that the governor corruptly enriched himself by using government funds to acquire eight properties, including a five star hotel in the country, while also using two local banks as conduit pipes to move billions of state funds to private accounts. ICPC even alleged that efforts to ascertain the governor’s ill-gotten landed properties were frustrated by the state Commissioner of Lands and Housing, who refused to cooperate with its officials during their investigations.

The companies which Alamieyeseigha allegedly used as a conduit for siphoning money by awarding contracts to them vehemently denied any wrong doing. They contended that, not only were they legally in existence, contrary to ICPC’s claim, but that they did not even have any business connection, whatsoever, with the state. They chided ICPC for spreading ‘falsehood’ against them, in an apparent attempt to ‘intimidate’ them. These companies subsequently headed to the court and got injunctions restraining ICPC from prosecuting them based on the allegations made against them.

Curiously, ICPC is yet to respond properly to these charges by the Bayelsa government and the said companies or come out without any convincing explanation to clear the air on these seeming inconsistencies in its report relating to the governor, fuelling suspicion and rumours that operatives of the commission handling the cases might have compromised their positions for monetary gains or other political considerations. Though these rumours have not been proved (or even disproved), considering the type of allegations made against Alamieyeseigha, as contained in the ICPC report, at a time when he was struggling to keep the gubernatorial nomination he had earlier won in a keenly contested governorship primaries and the manner the report was leaked to the press and the governor himself, there can be no greater confirmation of either the un wholesomeness or lapses in the ICPC investigations. ICPC’s silence, despite the seriousness of the allegations, has not helped matters. Worst still, the cases have remained unresolved and stalled, like the others, in the Courts.

On February 6, 2003, the Senate commenced processes for the amendment of the 2000 Act. Some of the proposed changes, obviously intended to weaken the ICPC, included the provision that a serving Justice of the Court of Appeal who is now to be appointed by the CJF, rather than the President, subject to the confirmation of the Senate, should head ICPC in the new arrangement. By this amendment, the president was effectively stripped of his powers to appoint officers of ICPC. With the amendment also, the present Chairman of the Commission, who has been having a running battle with some political
office holders including the legislators, over allegations of corruption, will have to give way to a serving judge to head the Commission. The amendment also affected the powers of ICPC, the procedure of its investigations and scope of punishment it could met out to those found guilty under the law. Most importantly, it restored the right of the citizens to know that they are under investigation. To demonstrate their seriousness to effect the changes, the bill was made to pass the first and second readings on the same day, a clear departure from parliamentary tradition.

The threats and counter threats which followed the proposed amendment brought the three arms of government into a sharp conflict, threatening to ridicule not only the ICPC, but also the judiciary, in what appeared to be a judicial anarchy with potentially disastrous consequences for the country’s fledging democracy. The President who had earlier wrote the leadership of the National Assembly asking it avoid taking any further action on the new bill, in line with a High Court order which directed all parties to halt proceedings on the passage of the law, haven been ignored by the lawmakers, withheld his assent to the bill. But undaunted by the mounting opposition against it, the National Assembly, in a special session, on May 7, 2003, overrode the presidential veto and went on to pass the amended ICPC Act 2003, into law. This crisis was however resolved by the same court, which declared the 2003 Act null and void, on May 21, 2003, while directing that the 2000 version of the law should continue to operate until it is amended by due process of law.

TOWARDS A MORE SUCCESSFUL WAR AGAINST CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

This article has reviewed Nigeria’s recent attempts at fighting corruption, focusing specifically on one of the principal anti-corruption institutions, the ICPC, which as we have seen has failed to curb corruption especially among the political class. Rather than secure the conviction of these corrupt officials, the reason for why it was established, ICPC have become politicised and neck-deep in damaging controversies, losing its credibility in the process. So that it is now seen by some as a mere instrument for witch-hunting political enemies. Its dismal performance has been partly due to its own many internal contradictions and administrative problems, but more fundamentally, to systemic factors outside its control, i.e. the prevailing néo-patrimonial orientation of the political class who politicised the exercise and used the deficiencies in the legal system to frustrate attempts to combat corruption in Nigeria. This has destroyed public confidence in the ongoing efforts to fight corruption, and eroded the legitimacy of the principal agency for the war against graft.

These developments are not completely unexpected, given that, at birth, ICPC and indeed its enabling status, did not receive a very warm reception from all sections of the political class. State Governments and the federal legislature had right from the beginning been very suspicious of its powers, which explain why it took the lawmaking body one full year to pass the Bill in to law, after injecting the clause that the President and his Vice along with the governors and their deputy should not be immune from similar probe. Several state governments also registered their opposition to the anti-corruption law which they said was a violation of the constitution. These challenges foretold the kind of opposition which ICPC was to confront.
On the basis of the foregoing analysis, we propose the following suggestions, which, could help reposition the commission and make the current attempt to curb corruption more effective:

(a) A restructuring of ICPC’s leadership, with a view to bringing on board men and women of high moral standing known for their personal commitments to the crusade against corruption will be required to restore its credibility. In order to win public confidence, support and participation, which are necessary conditions for any successful struggle against corruption, the appointment of the top echelon of the commission would need to be opened up to some form of public participation. It will be helpful in this regard if the government, involve at least a significant section of the civil society, including opposition parties.

(b) The Act should be revisited, with a view to effecting the changes that will empower ICPC to:

1. Monitor potential sources of corruption and investigate individuals on grounds of reasonable suspicion, as against the present practice, where the commission can not probe anyone, irrespective of the amount of evidence available to it, except upon the receipt of a petition.
2. Probe cases of corruption irrespective of the date of the offence. One way of doing this, is to empower the commission to prosecute such individuals where strong grounds exist in its opinion, but on the basis of previously existing laws.
3. Receive sufficient independent funding, to lessen its dependence on the whims and caprices of the executive and legislature. It could draw its funding from a Consolidated Revenue Fund, as applicable to the judiciary.

(c) A radical and comprehensive reform of Nigeria’s institutions for the administration of criminal justice. Experience has shown that the police and the Judiciary are key institutions which require urgent reforms, in the battle against corruption and other crimes.

(d) ICPC officials need to acquaint themselves very well with the provisions of the Act, to avoid running foul of the law. An impartial and non-political body, charged with the responsibility of supervising its operations, to ensure that its operations are done within the limit of its enabling statute will be useful.

(e) There is need to review and strengthen other anti-corruption institutions, as the responsibility of rooting out corruption can not be reasonably left to one institution, in a society where corruption so ubiquitous. The Office of the Auditor General and the Code of Conduct Bureau are relevant institutions and finally

(f) There is need to sensitise and mobilize the civil society to assume its role of watchdog. The political class can be forced by a well mobilized civil society, to demonstrate absolute commitment to transparency and accountability and the required political will to lead the struggle, by shunning corruption and leading by example.

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NOTES

1. The author is a doctoral student at the Center for Black African Studies, Institute of Political Studies, University of Bordeaux IV, Bordeaux, France. The work is a summary of a Masters (DEA) thesis completed in 2003 at Bordeaux and recently presented at a seminar organized by the French Institute for Research in Africa, at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, December 6, 2004.

2. In 1999, Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt country in the world, by the Transparency International. (Available at http://www.gwdg.de/~uwvw/.) In 2000, it emerged the most corrupt country. (See http://www.gwdg.de/~uwvw/.) By 2001, it fell to the second position (http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2001/cpi2001.html). In 2002 and 2003 ranking, it maintained the same position. (Available at http://www.transparency.org)

3. It is estimated that some Nigerians have at least $170 billion lodged in numerous accounts overseas. See This Day, Lagos, October 14, 2003. p. 1.

4. In a recent paper, titled “Factors Affecting National Security”, the Director State Security Services, Plateau State, Douglas Dogo, warned that “the survival of democracy in the country was under threat except the political class displays tolerance, maturity and sense of national service. He listed the threats to democracy as including political thuggery, tribalism, electoral fraud and unabashed corruption and economic sabotage, factors which usually culminate in public disenchantment with political systems that often brought military intervention. According to Him. “some individuals or groups in authority are the root causes of these undesirable developments” See This Day, Lagos, October 14, 2003. p.1.


8. The 70’s was characterised by a proliferation of rights to state resources through a fast growth in new government agencies and the construction of numerous white elephant projects across the country following the oil boom which expanded the country’s revenue. For détails on this see Ayagi.l. 1990. ‘The frapped Economy’, Ibadan: Heinemann Books. p. 10.


10. Ibid.


13. The Obasanjo government has accused General Sani Abacha who died in 1998 of personally stealing at least $4 billion. The Abacha family recently agreed to return $1 billion to the national coffers, in exchange for a government pledge to allow the family to keep $100 million and to drop charges of theft and money laundering against Mohammed Abacha, eldest son of the late head of state, who was then under detention. This Day, Lagos, July 21, 2003, p.1.


15. In the private sector, like the banking and finance sectors of the economy, serious corruption and unwholesome practices, such illicit transfer of funds and money laundering can still be observed. The foreign currency exchange departments of some banks still behave as if the anti-corruption crusade is meant for civil servants alone. In a recent report by the Central Bank of Nigeria, it was revealed that “there were about 981 reported cases of fraud and forgery in the country’s banking sector in 2002 alone, which amounted to a total of 65 billion naira”. A break down of the statistics showed that “428 of the cases resulted in losses of 1.40 billion naira and $152,000 to the banks while the others were nipped in the bud”. See The Guardian, Lagos. July 30, 2003. p.1.

16. The April 2003 elections were widely characterized by serious electoral malpractices, including high profile assassinations, allegedly perpetrated by the ruling People’s democratic Party (PDP)


19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


27. Ibid.


29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.


32. The “Federal Character Code” or “Quota system” in the Nigerian constitution, makes it mandatory for the appointment of state officials and the distribution of other state benefits to reflect the ethnic complexities of the nation, as way of “ensuring national loyalty and integration”. See Chapter II, Section 14(3) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, available at http://www.nigeria-law/constitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm

33. A minister in Obasanjo’s cabinet (1999-2003) was known to have openly reminded another minister, who was from one of the opposition parties, that he was ‘merely invited to come and “chop”’, in an apparent reference the regime’s benevolence, given the fact that the minister’s community did not vote the governing party during the elections. In a similar outburst, some
group of petitioners had petitioned the Senate over the nomination of one of their son as minister, complaining that his nomination was a violation of Tiv (his ethnic group) “spirit of eat and give your brother to eat” given the fact that he had been appointed Senate President and Minister on two occasions, in the past. The petitioners wondered if he was the only person from his community that is fit for appointment. Clearly, as far as these people were concerned, appointments into government offices are nothing but avenue to come and “chop”. (See *This Day*, Lagos. July 7, 2003, p. 1.)

37. See the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria... op cit.
38. The National Assembly raised at least two major objections to the anti-graft law as proposed by Obasanjo. Some provisions of the bill according to them constituted grave violations of the fundamental rights of Nigerians as guaranteed by the Constitution. This was specifically in respect to the powers of the commission to invade the privacy of suspects, in the course of its investigation. They were also not comfortable with a bill which granted the President, his vice, state governors and their deputies, immunity from investigations and prosecutions on grounds of corruption, at least while they were in office.
41. Specifically, Section 3(4) of the Act provides that: “The Chairman shall be a person who has held or is qualified to hold office as a judge of a superior court of record in Nigeria”, while Section 4(6) provides for the position of a Secretary appointed by the President, whose duty is to keep the records of the Commission, take care of the general administration and control of staff. The commission has as members 12 men and women of no less integrity, all nominated by the president, two coming from each of the six geo-political zones in the country. See ICPC Act op cit.
42. *Ibid*
44. *Ibid*
45. In one of such exercises, the commission engaged Messrs KPMG Consultants, one of the world’s most renowned management firms, to recruit its own personnel, in 2001. *Ibid*.
47. *Ibid*
49. Section 61(2) states as follows: “Without prejudice to any other laws prohibiting bribery, corruption, fraud or any other related offences by public officers or other persons, a public officer or any other person may be prosecuted by the appropriate authority for an offence of bribery, corruption, fraud or any other related offences committed by such public officer or other person contrary to any laws in force before or after the coming into effect of this Act and nothing in this Act shall be construed to derogate from or undermine the right or authority of any person or authority to prosecute offenders under any other law”. See the ICPC Act 2000..., op. cit.
50. *Ibid*
51. This implied that the commission can not initiate any investigation on mere suspicion of corruption. Even if it has sufficient evidence indicating that an offence of corruption had been committed, it can only do some when a complaint is received from any member of the public. This has impacted negatively on its image.
53. See Section 6 (a-f), ICPC Act, op. cit.
56. Section 5(1) states as follows: “Subject to the provisions of this Act, an officer of the commission when investigating or prosecuting a case of corruption shall have all the powers and immunities of a police officer under the Police Act any other laws conferring power on the police, or empowering and protecting law enforcement agents”. *Ibid.*
57. See ICPC Act, op. cit.
60. For more details on this, see ICPC’s official website, available at http://www.icpcnigeria.com
63. In his own statement to investigators, Alhaji Anache claimed that: “The money was apparently given to me for onward transmission to the members (of the panel) so that the commission can assist the management of Fidelity Bond who are appearing before the commission as witnesses in respect of insurances of Nigerian Airways”. *Ibid.*
64. The trial itself was a fall out of the NAL probe. Some NAL former managing directors had hauled allegations of complicity at Fidelity Bond over the insurance scam in the Nigerian Airways, Nigeria’s defunct national airline that was crippled by decades of corruption and mismanagement. A former NAL managing Director, Captain Peter Gana, alleged at many of the NAL panel’s session in Abuja, that Fidelity Bond colluded with Alexander Howding of London to defraud NAL through fraudulent risk placements. Captain Gana told the panel too that the Airways Annual premium was inflated by $17 million. He said he slashed the premium from $27 million to $5.8million when he came in as managing director of NAL. *Ibid.*
66. This constitutes an offence under section 10 (a) (ii) and 231 (1) and punishable under section 213(3) of the anti-corruption Act, respectively. See the ICPC Act, op. cit.
67. The others where charged under sections 10 (a) (ii) and 231 (1) and punishable under section 213 (3) of the anti-corruption Act..
79. ICPC promised to investigate the source of the money, but is yet to come out with any report on it.
84. See Act.
Section 27(4) of the ICPC Act states that: “A report shall not be disclosed by any person other than the office of the commission or the Attorney-General until the accused person has been arrested or charged to court under this law or any other written law arising from such report”. See the ICPC Act, op. cit.

Senator Nzeribe is known to have earlier admitted that he not only received bribes, which he said was to save the country from political crisis that could follow the impeachment of the president, but also gave huge amounts in bribes to other Senators, including Anyim and his deputy in the Senate, in order to halt the impeachment process against the President of the Republic.

Senator Ike Nwachukwu, who moved the motion, noted that: “Contrary to the great expectations and hopes held by Nigerians that the ICPC would clean up the Aegian stable, it has, to the dismay of keen observers, turned into a veritable weapon of political manipulation and assassination of characters leading to serious credibility gaps in the operations of the Commission. These have cast doubt on its objectivity, transparency, fairness, relevance and continue existence”. Deputy Senate president, Ibrahim Mantu, in his own observation likened the ICPC to a ‘terrorist institution’, noting that it had not brought anybody to book for corruption, two years after it was set up. Senator Dalhatu Tafida, who seconded the motion, was even more uncomplimentary in his remarks: “The ICPC has suddenly transformed itself from being an agency for investigating and presenting appropriate punishment for corrupt officials to an extension of the executive arm of government. The commission is now not only a political tool for the victimisation and oppression of government critics, but also an instrument of political blackmail”.

Of particular interest to the lawmakers were the cases of 17 ministers who where dropped earlier from the cabinet of President Obasanjo, in the first major cabinet shake-up, allegedly for corruption and non performance. The press had earlier quoted the President as saying that they might be facing the anti-graft panel for corrupt practices. See News Watch, Lagos. December 9, 2002, p. 33.

The ICPC had in an application dated January 8, 2003 and directed to the CJF pursuant to Section 52(1)of the ICPC Act 2000 asked the CJN to appoint an independent council to investigate the allegations ofgross corruption and abuse of office against Governor Alamieyeseigha. See This Day, Lagos. January 21, 2001, p. 1.

The operations of ICPC have continued to attracted negative media publicity, some of them alleging that officials of the anti-graft panel have not only been ‘trading official documents relating to cases before the commission’, but that ‘field reports by the commission’s investigators are also usually heavily influenced with money by those being investigated or by petitioners. See News Watch. Lagos. March 3, 2003, p. 28.

101. The Senators through their president, had threatened that they could order the arrest of the Abuja High court judge who was reported to have earlier threatened to issue a bench warrant for the arrest of the principal officers of the National assembly for contempt charges, if they went ahead to pass the amended anti-graft act into law, if the judge carried out his threat. The leaders of both legislative chambers argued forcefully that the constitution does not provide for any court to interfere with the legislature in its performance of its law making duties.


ENDNOTES

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ABSTRACTS

On September 29th, 2000, President Olusegun Obasanjo inaugurated an anti-graft body christened *The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)* to spearhead its declared war against corruption. However, this renewed attempt to stern the tide of corruption in Nigeria is turned out to be another phase in the country’s perennial war against corruption. After three years, the commission became enmeshed in controversies even as its efforts become overshadowed by endless trail of scandals and allegations of corruption that hit some key political leaders and institutions, most of who are presumed to have failed to live above board. Yet, not a single top official has been convicted, notwithstanding its awesome powers. ICPC’s failure to secure the conviction of corrupt officials derives from limited political will, inadequate structures (personnel, finance, etc.), internal contradictions, the country’s inefficient judiciary and laws and more importantly the rent seeking behaviour of the political class.

INDEX

*Keywords:* corruption, clientelism, patronage, patrimonialism and néo-patrimonialism
Approaching the Study of Yoruba Diaspora in Northern Nigeria in the 20th Century

Rasheed Olaniyi

AUTHOR'S NOTE
Note portant sur l'auteur

Conceptualising Yoruba diaspora:

_Ajo ko da bi/ile._
Diaspora is not like home

Yoruba diaspora in northern Nigeria is better understood within the historical context of the respective host communities and indeed the entire history of northern Nigeria as a whole. It is equally important to examine the interaction of resources and opportunities in order to understand the dynamics of Yoruba commerce in northern Nigeria. Isa Hashim has offered three explanations why the Yoruba were accepted in the north. First, according to Islamic tradition, the Yoruba were regarded as brothers and sisters of the Hausa people because the majority of Yoruba migrants were Muslims. This suggests why some Yoruba have been assimilated into Hausa culture or enjoy accommodation. Second, economically, they were hardworking in terms of their technical skills, productivity and quality of work delivery. Third, the Yoruba shared myth of origin with the Kanuri. Oral tradition in Borno has it that the “Yoruba and Kanuri were cousins. According to one mythology, the Yoruba were said to be outspoken while the Kanuri were calm people who detested discussing their private affairs in public, particularly those issues concerning their sexuality. The Kanuri thus referred to the Yoruba as “Khairuba,” meaning that there is no _alheri_ in your habit (that is, you don’t keep secret, go away!). It was from “Khairuba” that Yoruba was derived. There are those who claimed that the similarity in Yoruba and
Kanuri culture could further be observed in their passion for singing, particularly among their women.

2 Very often, diaspora communities construct identities that distinguished them from the host community. The identity could be expressed in terms of settlement patterns, social, religious, political and economic institutions. The word diaspora is Greek, meaning scattering. According to R. Cohen, the term diaspora as first used in the Greek classical world (800-600 BC) implies “to sowidely, to expand.” The concept of diaspora is used to describe a community, which has a history of migration, possess distinctive cultural practices that distinguished it from the host community and maintain cultural ties with the homeland. Some diaspora members engage only in activities that involve their ethnic group (for example herbalists); while entrepreneurs and traders may specialise on economic interests involving their homeland (for example, Yoruba women Alajapa-itinerant foodstuffs traders).

3 The term Yoruba diaspora is used here to refer to all those of Yoruba descent who settle outside the shores of the Yoruba homeland but maintain socio-cultural linkages with the homeland or who continue to maintain Yoruba identity. Conceptualising the Yoruba diaspora could be situated in the Cohen’s framework for classifying diaspora, which involves migration from a homeland in search of work and pursuit of profitable commerce; and ethnic consciousness preserved over a long time and based on a series of cultural distinctiveness.

4 Eades articulates four main types of migration among the Yoruba, which influence the formation of diaspora communities. These were analysed according to occupational categories. First, there were the unskilled labor migrants of the colonial period, looking for work on the cocoa farms or in larger towns. Second, there were migrant farmers looking for suitable land, especially for planting cocoa. Third, there were long distance migrants, many of them traders. Trading diaspora was particularly a common commercial orientation in the savanna towns of Yorubaland. Fourth, there was the migration of the younger educated people to the urban centres, especially since the rapid expansion of education in the 1950s. According to Eades, kinship plays an important part in channeling migration, as people move to join their relatives in other towns to find jobs. Eades argues that a steady flow of goods and information exists between home and diaspora.

5 The Yoruba diaspora includes people who have experienced migration and others who were born and brought up in a new community of settlement. In this way, Yoruba diaspora implies that their culture survived, transformed and remained relevant even when members of the diaspora have not lived in the original homeland. Yoruba diaspora in northern Nigeria developed its own political organisation influenced by historical specificity and social forces operating in the host communities.

6 There were many Yoruba families in northern Nigeria who experienced cyclical migration and lived in many communities of the region. For example, in 1967, the expulsion of Yoruba from Ghana led to their migration to northern Nigeria towns of Kano, Kaduna, Jos, Zaria, and Minna. This pattern of migration greatly convoluted the spatiality of diasporas and produces a geography of diaspora, which was built on multiple localities.

7 The concept of diaspora becomes imperative in the analysis of the legal status of Nigerians living in communities other than their own when considering the question on
citizenship. The identity crisis of citizenship and indigeneity rights within Nigeria call for a review and redefinition of the term diaspora. According to Ifidon, “the level at which citizenship is truly realised is not the mega-state, but the home state or primary group level, where the Nigerian is a subject. Beyond this, a Nigerian is an alien in another state.”

The perception of a Nigerian citizen is compounded by the retrogressive provision of the 1999 constitution, which places emphasis on places of origin and indigeneity rather than residency. In certain situations it was easier for a person to be accepted as an abstract Nigerian citizen than to be recognised as belonging to the area of residency no matter how the person, group or family had settled in the area.

A problematic factor for ethnic relations in Nigeria is the manner in which indigeneity has been entrenched in the constitution. Both the 1960 independence and the 1963 republican constitutions were progressive on the question of citizenship rights, but the 1979 constitution on which the 1999 was based, was retrogressive on citizenship. Whereas the former constitution granted citizenship rights to Nigerians in any part of the country, subject to a residency requirement of three years in the defunct northern region, the 1999 constitution is completely silent on the issue. The aftermath of this has led to the rise in ethnic conflicts between indigenes and settlers across the country. In several cases, the frictions between “us” and “them” have been expressed violently and in terms of molestations.

This study expands our knowledge of Yoruba migration in the north. Most of the Yoruba diaspora studies have been carried out through ethnographical and anthropological research covering areas outside of the Nigerian region. An early account of Yoruba society and the Yoruba language appeared in French in 1845, notably the ethnographical study of Osifekunde, an Ijebu Yoruba liberated slave in France. The life-story of Osifekunde studied by M.A.P. d'Avezac de Castera-May of the Société d'Ethnologie, Paris, in 1939 constitutes a pioneer scholarly work on the Yoruba diaspora.

**Colonial antecedents**

The historical relationship between peoples of northern Nigeria and the Yoruba runs deep. For more than five hundred years before the British rule, Yoruba merchants traversed communities in northern Nigeria and established their abodes. For example, Yoruba traders established Anguwar Ayagi and Lalemi quarters in Kano and Bida respectively. They were assimilated and their descendants today formed the core of peoples in the region. Nigeria is full of examples of individuals and groups who formed settled communities of occupational specialists in societies other than their own. Traditionally, exchange of immigrants among communities has been part of the Nigerian historical heritage. Societies with centralised political structures accommodated culturally diverse groups with different modes of livelihood within a single political system. Immigrants provided complimentary services alien to the host community, which often added value to the economy.

In the twentieth century, the formation of Yoruba diaspora in northern Nigeria had a linkage with the British conquest and colonial rule. Migration was largely driven by colonial labour policies; commercial opportunities available for Africans, and deprivations during economic crises. For example, D.R. Aronson observes that it was the wage labour of the colonial economy, together with the indigenous institutions of Yoruba
society, which provided the framework for individual migration. Thus, economic pursuits produced a set of Yoruba craftsmen, laborers, and traders in cities.

The British utilised the services of the Yoruba in the conquest of northern Nigeria. Some Yoruba served as spies, commercial agents, and members of the West African Frontier Force. In 1900, when Lord Lugard took over the colonial administration from the Royal Niger Company, its constabulary was absorbed into the West African Frontier Force, which was formed in 1898. For a long period, the force remained largely dominated by the Hausa and Yoruba. The civil government police force raised for the north included the Yoruba in its service. In 1908, the force was made up of 240 Hausa, 216 Yoruba, 102 Beriberi, 53 Fulani, 25 Nupe and 54 others.

In Kano, by 1914, the government police were composed entirely of Yoruba ethnic group. Some of the Yoruba who served gallantly in the British army were rewarded with administrative positions in northern Nigeria. In the non-Muslim areas of northern Nigeria, the British imposed non-indigenous chiefs on the people for the purposes of suppressing rebellion and collection of taxes. For example, in the Abinsi Division of Tivland, Audu Dan Afonja, a Yoruba Muslim from Ilorin, was imposed as the Chief of Makurdi between 1914 and 1947. He had formally served as a British agent and spy in the area. In Dekina, Ahmadu, a Yoruba was imposed as the Onu of Dekina between 1914 and 1918 as a result of his role as a member of WAFF in the conquest of Igalaland. His rule was tyrannical and full of extortion. In 1916, he arbitrarily raised taxes from 1 s to 10s per adult male. His rule ended in turmoil and he was eventually sentenced to four years imprisonment.

The railway construction led to the employment of the Yoruba in several projects, and their migration and settlement patterns across communities, both rural and urban, in northern Nigeria. In 1912, the completion of the Baro-Kano railway marked a turning point in Yoruba migration to northern Nigeria. From the northern Yoruba towns, there were migrations from Kabba, Ijumu, Isanlu, Offa and Ilorin to Kaduna between 1916 and 1917.

After the First World War, more Yoruba, especially from Ogbomoso, Ilorin and Kabba, migrated to Kaduna in an attempt to participate in the booming commerce about which they had received information from their family and social networks. From Funtua, Nguru, Makurdi, Malamadori to Jos, Yoruba diaspora communities were established along the rail lines taking advantage of modern communication for foodstuffs, livestock, groundnuts and kolanuts trades. By the 1920s, the scarcity of Hausa clerical staff made the British employ southerners in the administration of northern Nigeria.

Beyond the colonial institutions, for most Yoruba in northern Nigeria, migration occurred within the kinship and social networks. Yoruba developed diaspora communities through migration of kinship linkages from the same town and family compounds. Successful “pioneer” migrants encouraged others to follow and supportive social mechanisms emerged to connect places of origin and diaspora.

Throughout the colonial era, migration was a crucial identity among the Yoruba. Yoruba migrants in cities were better viewed than their folks that stayed at home. Commercial opportunities in the colonial era influenced migration of Yoruba to northern Nigeria. For example, the Jos township market created the pull and Ogbomoso people flocked in. Those who had already settled in places such as Minna and Bida could not resist the prospects of making money in the tin mining city. By the end of the 1930s, the Jos market
was dominated by Ogbomoso merchant families such as Aladire, Aiyetoro, Odefara, Mafoni, Banki, Onilu, Araromi, Magajiya, Tapa, Idowu-Oke, Idowu-Isale, and Sabo, which developed to reflect the identity of the new traders and their cultural background.

Nevertheless, colonial rule created distortions in ethnic relations whose consequences still prevail. During the colonial era, the tasks facing Yoruba in diaspora changed dramatically from those that faced their predecessors in the pre-colonial era. In the pre-colonial era, migration often led to integration with the host community while in the colonial period, migration was overwhelmingly marked by segregation.

The establishment of Sabongari between 1911 and 1913 was a central thrust of the British divide and rule system constructed to make colonial rule flourish on ethnic division and enforcement of segregation. In the colonial era, Yoruba immigrants in northern Nigeria were British “protected persons” and the hosts were subjects. In the post-independence period, the citizenship status was reversed in favour of the host communities who were regarded as indigenes and migrants as non-indigenes or settlers.

The attempt by the British to segregate the Yoruba from the indigenes failed in Kano and Zaria due to historical relationships that had existed between them before the British conquest. In Kano, despite restrictions, the Yoruba Muslims continued to live within the Native Reservation Area (Kano old city) while some Hausa lived in Sabongari.

For the Yoruba and Hausa, the colonial segregation was ineffective due to historical relations that had existed between the two groups for no less than five hundred years before British rule. The idea of segregation was in some ways resisted by the two ethnic groups. For example, the establishments of the Townships of Sabongari created some problems for the British in Zaria. As early as 1915, the British found it difficult to keep out “emirate natives” who were neither employees of the government nor European Trading Firms in the Township area of Sabongari. Hence the British resorted to the system of issuing “permits” to all residents of Sabongari. It issued 1,355 permits: 885 to “nogovernment” and 470 to “government” residents.

In Kano, despite the British insistence, Yoruba Muslims were allowed by the emir to either live in the native area or in Sabongari. By 1937, the population statistics of Kano Township showed that there were 1,903 Hausa residents in Sabongari as against 1,547 Yoruba. By 1938, there were 2,040 Hausa (26 per cent) of the population in Sabongari, Kano. In 1939, the population of the Hausa in Sabongari Kaduna was 1,568 while Yoruba population was 1,093.

The status of Yoruba clerks, employed and protected by the British in northern Nigeria, depended upon the perpetuation of colonial rule. The host communities felt politically and economically threatened in the public sector where most of the Yoruba were now employed on contract basis. Under British rule, inter-communal relations in northern Nigeria as elsewhere in the country were enforced within the political and economic framework of colonialism. The British policy of exclusion created a dichotomy between the migrants who were British ‘protected Dersons’ and the natives, mainly the host community.

Identity in diaspora

Odo kii gbaahe orison
A river never loses sight of its source
Identity-based institutions articulated Yoruba diaspora and home ties. During the 1930s depression, the Yoruba in the north organised themselves to fight the exploitation of British rule and as a form of cultural nationalism. The Yoruba in northern Nigeria articulated their communal goals through different levels of associational civil life of an ethnic, religious, township and occupational nature. L. Trager argues that the hometown associations served as a source of social and cultural identity among the Yoruba in diaspora. She demonstrates the propensity of Yoruba groups to migrate and settle in other communities while maintaining ties with their homeland. Evidence from her study of the Ijesa-Yoruba shows that at the individual level, migration was combined with the maintenance of ties to family, kin networks and community in terms of remittances, ceremonies and visits.

These networks served as mechanism of managing threats of insecurity. Members drew on emotional resources including friendship and family visits, to strengthen ethnic bond. For example, in 1942, the Yoruba Central Welfare Association, Kano (Egbe Omo Oduduwa), was founded. It was the creative ingenuity of diaspora members to establish communal and ethnic associations rooted in their own culture. Chief D.O. Sanyaolu offered the association a plot of land where Oduduwa Hall, Kano, was built, but after his death in 1960, the ownership of the land and the building was disputed between his family and the Yoruba community.

It should be noted that the Egbe Omo Oduduwa in Kano preceded the one founded by Chief Obafemi Awolowo in London, Lagos and Ile-Ife between 1945 and 1948. By 1948 however, Awolowo’s Egbe Omo Oduduwa became popularly accepted among the Yoruba in northern Nigeria. For example, the Sokoto branch was formed on 4th January, 1948 and the Bukuru branch was inaugurated on 20th January, 1948.

Prominent Yoruba merchants in northern Nigeria played active roles in the activities of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. In July 1951, Chief D.O. Sanyaolu was part of the delegation of Egbe Omo Oduduwa led by Chief Awolowo to discuss the various problems of Yoruba in the north with the Northern Chief Commissioner in Kaduna. Chief D. O. Sanyaolu was one of the eight (8) Vice Presidents of Egbe Omo Oduduwa between 1954 and 1956.

Nevertheless, some Yoruba businessmen opposed the formation of Egbe Omo Oduduwa. Mr. S.A. Fajemisin, a Yoruba trader based in Kano and Kiyawa, mobilised a group in Ilesha against the formation of Egbe Omo Oduduwa. He “contended that only the oba in Yorubaland were the descendants of Oduduwa and that the generality of the Yoruba were not. The group alleged that even though the Ooni was not one of the sons of Oduduwa, the incumbent Ooni was being sponsored by the Egbe to deal with and overshadow Ilesa. It wanted the name of the Egbe to be changed.” Fajemisin, however, became an ardent supporter of Action Group (A.G) and attended the inaugural conference at Owo in 1951. He also urged the Ijesha people to support the Action Group as Yoruba.

The formation of ethnic and communal associations constituted a crucial part of fraternal loyalty /allegiance to the Yoruba homeland. The Yoruba community was the representative assembly of the Yoruba associations. It was organised within the framework of Yoruba traditional political framework, having the oba (king), basorun (prime minister), iya egbe (matron), otun (adviser to the king), balogun (Chief Security) and baales (district heads).

In 2001, the Yoruba Welfare Association in Naibawa Kano donated a new throne to the oba Yoruba in Kano State, Oba Abdullahi Salihu Olowo in an attempt to rehabilitate the palace.
and enhance the status of the oba. This in essence was to give political meaning to Yoruba ethnic identity. Among the Yoruba diaspora in northern Nigeria, the institution of oba symbolised authority, solidarity, loyalty and the final arbiter in disputes. The administrative set up of the organisation has the oba as the head and an executive council that serves as a customary court. Yoruba community served as the centralised pseudo-political institutions that regulate internal social order, communication and diplomatic affairs both within the community, the homeland and the host community.

32 Despite the fact that the Yoruba has the highest number of legal practitioners in Nigeria, its tradition gives a high preference to settling cases out of modern secular courts. Hence, the Yoruba community organised an autonomous judicial institution for settling disputes internally. The internal judicial arrangement ensured social cohesion, exclusiveness and integrity of the community. Thus, the judicial council adjudicated disputes over financial matters, business transactions, and social issues involving domestic disputes, and breach of marital contracts.

33 Of all the Yoruba associations in Kano only Lisabi Club of the Egba Yoruba had “Town Hall” built in 1947 under the leadership of Chief D.O. Sanyaolu. Other associations operated in temporary meeting halls in the houses of influential leaders. Members were often a small fraction of the total number of the Yoruba residents and, indeed, representatives of the entire community.

34 Ethnic associations generated and disseminated information central to the identity of the community. To a greater degree, the elements of mutual solidarity provided informal mechanisms of social safety nets and security in times of adversity. For example, many of the ethnic associations provided assistance to deceased members by burying them in their hometowns and granted educational support to their children.

35 Communal identity enhanced hometown ties and ensured resistance to cultural assimilation into the host community. Most of the associations were formed as a branch of larger unions with headquarters in the hometown (for examples, the Ogbomoso Parapo and Okin Club of Nigeria). Branches sent subscriptions and representatives to annual and quarterly meetings. The Yoruba in northern Nigeria continued to maintain close affinity with their homeland over several generations. Yoruba social networks involved maintaining, reinforcing, and extending relationships with the homeland. At both the individual and group levels, these activities included sending remittances, marriage, sponsoring of festivals and events, and child fostering.

36 Social capital, grounded on ethnic networks, provided a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation in the diaspora. It increased economic opportunities for entrepreneurs, giving them better prospect to put to use whatever skills they brought from their homeland. Yoruba used the tradition of rotating credit associations (Esusu and Ajo) brought from their region of origin, as a means of acquiring or boosting business capital. Yoruba women predominantly practiced Esusu and Ajo. In Zuru town, some Yoruba women entrepreneurs emerged richer than their husbands who brought them to the town.

37 The system of cooperatives and hire purchase schemes enabled Yoruba men to dominate taxi transport across northern Nigerian cities. Yoruba immigrant groups had additional advantage over the host communities in small-scale business by virtue of their tradition of extended kinship and apprenticeship schemes. They facilitated the establishment, operation and expansion of businesses. Some of the migrants who worked for co-ethnics
businesses emerged as entrepreneurship through hard work and savings. Access to cheap labour of apprentices and journeymen, rather than a large amount of capital, was essential to the operation of artisanship workshops such as auto-mechanics, auto-rewires, lathe-work artisans, and battery chargers.

38 These comparative advantages made it easy for Yoruba artisans to start workshops with relatively simple technologies and small capital. Production technology was organised around the social relationship of kinship, friendship and ethnicity. However, the intermediate economic roles (concentration in credit schemes and money lending) subjected Yoruba migrants to host hostility and commercial mistrust but further enhanced their ethnic solidarity. This was particularly significant in the case of Osomaalo of Ijesha-Yoruba textile traders until the 1970s when they diverted to corn mill and auto-spare parts businesses.

39 In most of the northern communities where kulle (seclusion of women) system was practiced, Yoruba women played an intermediary role between the hosts and the immigrants. Yoruba women were equally active players in commercial networks and activities that linked regional, urban and rural economies. This accounted for their retailing trade in household utensils, jewelry, textiles and agricultural products and setting up of food canteens that employed Hausa men. In most communities of northern Nigeria the Yoruba became a powerful economic force, particularly in urban technical services, photography, printing, and auto-repairs. 37

40 Another factor that reinforced identity was the cultural flows of organised music and theatre. Many Yoruba musicians (Fuji, Juju, Apala) and theatre practitioners were invited to stage their plays either commercially or in annual, township, club and ethnic celebrations. Equally, the evenings on which popular Yoruba musicians and entertainers such as Hubert Ogunde, Dauda Epo Akara, Ayinla Omowura, Haruna Isola, Sikiru Ayinde and King Sunny Ade were invited to play in northern Nigeria illustrates cultural continuity and linkages between home and diaspora.

41 In 1946, Hubert Ogunde took his play Human Parasite to northern Province, Jos, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, and Minna where he acquired many patrons. However, the display of his work “Strike and Hunger” was opposed by the British administrators in northern Nigeria who saw it as Southern Nigeria’s attempt to incite northerners against the British. In Jos, he was arrested and fined. The Yoruba community in Jos supported Ogunde’s fight against the British by contributing £100 to fight the case as a national one. 38

42 In May 1951, he was charged with sedition and banned from staging his play Bread and Butter in the Colonial Hotel, Sabongari Kano. 39 He was fined £6 and Makurdi. Bread and Butter was apparently produced in solidarity with the Enugu strike of 1949. Such plays that were not provocative, such as Mr. Devil’s Money, and Highway Eagle, were staged in Zaria, Minna, Gusau, Bukuru, Kaduna, Jos, Oturkpo, Bida, and Jebba in 1955. 40

43 Some Yoruba in northern Nigeria lived in very poor conditions to enable them accumulate capital. To them, the city was a ‘farm.’ They lived together and sometimes squatted until they were able to marry and live independent of the person under whose influence they migrated. The interplay between the spheres of the workplace and the neighborhood was crucial to the social organisation of the Yoruba. As Yoruba were concentrated into larger communities, their interests became more harmonised and social consciousness was unified. Thus urban neighborhoods were metaphors for urban villages with primordial identity of kinship, religion, language, culture and costume.
Yoruba culture expressed the philosophy of “back to the land” vision in which traditional attire played a dramatic role.

Since 1995, Yoruba Cultural Day celebrations have been organised as a strategy for the unity, cultural renaissance and ethnic identity in the north. Many Yoruba cultural activities are displayed including dancing, a beauty competition, Ayo games and Yoruba traditional medicine trade fair. For the second Yoruba Day Celebration in November 1997, individuals, Yoruba ethnic associations, religious institutions and corporate organisations in Kano donated more than 400,000.00 naira worth of food and drink.

**Religion in the context of Yoruba diaspora**

The commercial and religious interactions between Yorubaland and Kanem Borno led to the settling down of the two ethnic groups in each other’s communities. The Yoruba in Borno were products of two religious waves. First, Borno scholars who settled in Yorubaland influenced the migration of Yoruba students to Borno for Islamic education. Second, Yoruba pilgrims to Mecca often passed through Borno. Some of these pilgrims discovered business opportunities, which made them to settle in Borno. In northern Nigeria, Islamic brotherhood constituted a fundamental relationship between the Yoruba and their host communities. Thus, while Islam inspired the migration of Yoruba Muslims, the drive for evangelism motivated most Yoruba Christians to northern Nigeria.

The Yoruba increasingly turned towards the homeland in search of spiritual stimulation. The practice of traditional religions was widespread among the Yoruba in northern Nigeria. There were branches of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity and the presence of Babalawo-Yoruba herbalists northern Nigeria. Herbal medicine traders, both itinerant and those in diaspora, often sold their products in major markets.

It is equally noteworthy to understand the dynamics that gave rise to the formation of Yoruba religious institutions within an ethnic framework. Some of these religious centres maintained linkages with the headquarters based in the Yoruba homeland. For example, the establishment of Yoruba mosques such as Ansar-ud-deen, Samori-a-deen, Nawairudeen, Nurudeen, and Yoruba churches such as Baptist church, Cheripm and Sheraphim, and Aladura churches. In Maiduguri, Yoruba Muslims built the first mosque with modern infrastructure while the first church, the Holy Trinity, was built by some Yoruba along with some Ghanaians and Sierra Leonians. In 1939, seven Yoruba colonial workers from Lagos founded Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria, Maiduguri branch. It was officially launched in 1942, and they completed their mosque in 1948, a modern infrastructure popularly called “Madina Mosque.”

It should be noted how Yoruba religious centres invested in human development through education in the host communities. Some Yoruba mosques in the north operated their own nursery, primary and secondary schools. The evangelical work of the Baptist Mission in northern Nigeria spread from Plateau, Bomo Provinces in the northeast, Zaria Province in the northwest to Benue Province in the South. Ogbomoso merchants opened the areas to evangelism. From 1855, Ogbomoso had been exposed to the work of the Baptist mission and this continued until the early twentieth century when traders from the town migrated. In 1915, Ogbomoso traders established Baptist church in Jos; Zungeru and Kaduna in 1916; Dorowa Babuje in 1926; Minna and Keffi in 1924; Kafanchan, Zaria, Kano and Gindi Awati in 1926; Gana Ropp in 1927; Bida in 1929; Funtua in 1930, Katcha in 1931 and Bukuru in 1932.
Evangelism was carried out among the indigenous peoples of central and northern Nigeria, thereby solidifying the early work of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Indeed, Yoruba had more religious contacts with the indigenous northerners than most southern Nigerian groups. The first indigenous Baptists were converted as a result of their efforts. For example, apart from visiting Yoruba traders and civil servants in Kaduna, the Reverend I. A. Adejumobi started working among those Tiv whom the government brought to settle near Unguwan Rimi in 1937. In Kano region, between 1975 and 1994, preaching stations were like the Christian missionaries, Ogbomoso Baptist adherents established schools partially to enhance their work and to train their own children and those of the converts who were excluded from the government controlled schools. Rev T. A. Taiwo opened the first Baptist Day School in Jos in 1926. In Kaduna, Baptist school was established in 1926; Minna, Zungeru in 1927; Kano in 1929 and Keffi in 1941. In the 1940s, schools were also established in Jos, Rahama, Bokuru, Mongu, Dorowa and Gindi Akwati through the efforts of Rev. E. O. Agboola. Some of the schools were placed on the list of government-assisted schools in 1946 or received grants in aid from the government. By the 1980s, most of the mission schools were taken over by governments.

A sizeable number of Yoruba Muslim migrants established their settlements within the neighborhood of the host communities. Some Muslim members of the two ethnic groups are also adherents of Islamic brotherhoods (Sufi), particularly Tijaniyat and Quadiritat. Yoruba Muslims in northern Nigeria developed an extensive social network with the Hausa host community through inter-marriages.

Post-colonial experience

Yoruba diaspora in post-colonial northern Nigeria was composed of the early migrants, their descendants, and the new migrants. Hence, the Yoruba diaspora in the post-independence period could be understood in terms of an historical continuity of the dichotomy between the immigrants and the hosts. In terms of access to resources and opportunities, the distinction between indigenes and non-indigenes was decisive. Though the post-independence period has brought about the dismantling of ethnic and residential segregation imposed by the British, migrant communities were confronted with the issue of citizenship in places where they had settled for several years. The residential segregation between immigrants and hosts decreased as many among them enjoyed better income and education. Across northern Nigeria, Sabongari was transformed from migrant enclaves to merchant cities. Culturally, the significance of Sabongari became even more profound because of the unrestricted nature of inter-ethnic social interaction.

In recent decades, religious and ethnic affiliations became major criteria for appointment to political offices, employment in the civil service and enrolment in schools. There was disparity in terms of school fees paid by indigenes and immigrants. This has led to unequal access to power and resources and to violent contestations and conflicts.

Yoruba were among the earliest settlers in Funtua, and certainly played significant roles in the development of the town. A 1918 report of the cotton market at Funtua clearly indicated that out of the ten buying agents at the cotton market, three were Yoruba, while another three were of West African origin. Alhaji Sule Mohammed, the leader of the Yoruba in Funtua - Sarkin Yorubawa Funtua observes that:
...We want to be recognised as Katsina State indigenes. If we return to Ogbomoso, we would be ignored. Some of us don’t even know our towns, but we do know that we have Yoruba roots. We wish that the Katsina State government would accept us fully.  

He acknowledged the fact that some Yoruba who identified themselves with the host communities often benefited from scholarships and employment opportunities from the state government. A high rate of mutual co-existence was displayed in August 1999 to prevent a reprisal attack of the Hausa-Yoruba conflict in Sagamu. The District Head of Funtua, Alhaji Mainasara Idris, turned back Hausa refugees from Sagamu but equally appealed for calm among the Yoruba settlers. Alhaji Mainasara observed that the Yoruba in Funtua had become integrated with the indigenous community and that it was absurd for Hausa to rupture their time-honoured relationship with the Yoruba because of a distant ethnic strife between Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu and Lagos. According to him,  

Considering how united we have become with the Yorubas in Funtua, it will be completely irrational that we should want to isolate and kill them. This is the work of rouges, not ethnicity.  

According to the Sarkin Yorubawa Funtua, neither he nor his subjects in Funtua contemplated relocating to their homeland in Yorubaland:  

That will be useless. I have children here who are married to Hausa people of Katsina. I have no intention of going anywhere, and I believe it is the same with many of our people (Yoruba) here”.  

While ethnic conflicts against the Yoruba were prevented in a rural setting like Funtua such an effort proved abortive in metropolitan Kano and Kaduna. Indeed, from the middle of 1980s the incessant ethno-religious conflicts in northern Nigeria towns has led to the unprecedented relocation of Yoruba families from the conflict zones to their hometowns or other northern cities. Many Yoruba  

After three or four generations of a family that had lived all their lives in Kaduna, Kano or Jos, they might be seen as indigenes but practical situations sometimes indicated that even after undergoing cultural, religious and other dimensions of assimilation, such persons could still be regarded as non-indigenes. In October, 2000 much fears were aroused among Yoruba in Kaduna and other northern cities after the OPC/ Hausa violent conflicts in Ajegunle, Apapa and other parts of Lagos. The Yoruba community leader in Kaduna, Alhaji Oguntoyibo, who was conscious of possible reprisal attacks, repeatedly disassociated the approximately four million Yoruba people in the northern states from OPC’s activities while the Yoruba Welfare Forum led by Alhjai Rafiu Salawu also did the same while appealing for reason to be allowed to prevail. Justifying the fears of the Yoruba ethnic group about the possibilities of retaliatory attacks, a coalition of thirteen northern youth under the aegis of G-13 disseminated statements which emphasized that all Yoruba immigrants must leave Kaduna within twenty-four hours or pay risk their lives. In a statement entitled: 'Who is Afraid' the coalition stated that:  

Following the recent organized killing of Fulani cattle-herdsmen in Lagos and the subsequent events in Kwara State, we hereby give all Yorubas resident in Kaduna, twenty-four hours to either pack out or pay for it. We have followed, with keen interest, the calculated plan to destroy our people with the support of powerful people in the society who have been aiding the OPC members with weapons of mass destruction. We call on President Obasanjo and the Inspector General of Police to resign...
To some extent, the preponderance of the Islamic faith among Yoruba in Kaduna has provided some good measure of reassurance and sense of brotherhood feeling among their Muslim hosts. For example, the quick intervention of the council of Ulamas and several leading Muslim clerics including Sheikh Yusuf Sambo Rigachikun of Sultan Bello Mosque actually helped substantially towards laying the G-13 threat to rest. Since the resurgence of Ethno-religious conflicts in Jos in 2002, Yoruba immigrants have been living with fear of insecurity and attack on their lives and properties. Many were displaced and forced to relocate to their hometowns.

Since the resurgence of ethnic conflicts in 1999 largely masterminded by the Odu’a People’s Congress against the Hausa immigrants in Yorubaland, the relations between Hausa and Yoruba has been transformed from hospitality to mutual suspicion and hostility. The uncertainty and state of insecurity has led to the formation of pan-Yoruba and multi-ethnic organizations involving Yoruba in Northern Nigeria around the issues of security and peaceful co-existence.

In 1995, the Yoruba Community Northern States Council was formed. Alhaji A. G Oguntoyinbo and Alhaji Y. A. Makanjuola who became President General and Secretary respectively coordinated the establishment of the association. The association further encouraged the formation of Pan-Yoruba groups in Northern States.

The Kaduna state chapter established the Northern States Council, similarly known as Northern Forum. In the Executive Council were: Dr. J. P. Aiyelangbe, Kano (Vice President), Alhaji Y. T. Dada of Bauchi; Chief S. A. Adesina of Zamfara State. Others are: Chief Akin Fatonyinbo (Gombe), Oba Solomon Olugbodi of Plateau and others. The council, which comprises of the 18 Northern States excluding Kwara began its maiden quarterly meeting in October 1996 in Kano. Jos-Plateau, Bauchi, Adamawa, Sokoto, Nassarawa and Zamfara followed this.

The formation of Yoruba Community Northern States was influenced by the socio-political crisis that followed the annulment of the June 12th, 1993 Presidential elections. Indeed, the state of insecurity and tension and ethnic conflicts made the Yoruba leaders in diaspora formed a Pan Yoruba Association for the protection of Yoruba migrants through allegiance with host communities and the security agencies. The Central Agenda of the association is to foster unity, stability and strengthen the cordial relationship among the Yoruba on one hand and between Yoruba and other Nigerians on the other hand.

The association has the following objectives:

a. to foster unity among Yoruba;
b. to be our brothers’ keeper;
c. to cooperate and assist ourselves in all fields;
d. to identify ourselves where and whenever the need arises; and
e. to seek continuous cordial relationship between our people, the indigenes, the government and other citizens in northern Nigeria

For mobilisation of membership and solidarity, the association dedicated the month of November for the celebration of Yoruba Day.

In the aftermath of the Kano anti-Yoruba ethnic violence of July 1999, the National Integration Forum for Peace (NIFOR) was launched on 23rd August, 1999. The core targets of (NIFOR) were the Nigerians in all parts of the federation not living in their states. The Forum is an association of Nigerians who are living, thriving and happy to be living
among ethnic groups other than their own regions other than theirs. NIFOR was formed
as a consequence of the ethnic riots that took place in Shagamu and Kano in July 1999. Dr.
J. P. are living, thriving and happy to be living among ethnic groups other than their own
regions other than theirs. NIFOR was formed as a consequence of the ethnic riots that
took place in Shagamu and Kano in July 1999. Dr. J. P. Aiyelangbe, a medical doctor who
has lived in Kano for 24 years, the Bashorun of Yoruba in Kano and Deputy President
General of Yoruba Community Council Northern States was appointed as the Protem
Chairperson. While Alhaji Ahmed Zungeru, the Sarkin Hausa in Ibadanland who was born
at Ibadan and hold the title of Asiwaju Adeen of Ibadanland served as a co-chairperson.

In a passionate letter to Alh. Chief Bala Abdulsalami the Sarikin Hausawa of Osogboland
dated 4th November, 1999, Aiyelangbe passionately expressed that:

You will... remember that members of (NIFOR) like you have a very high stake in
the unity of Nigeria, simply because we have intermarried, in fact every fourth
marriage in Shagamu is mixed. Intermarriage is routine in Shagamu. People don’t
even notice it. We have houses and fixed assets that cannot be transferred. We have
the clout we have in the place we live, so that if you Sarki go back to Kano, you are
an ordinary man, no more Sarki. If I go back to Ondo State, I am no more accepted
doctor, no more the Bashorun as this recognition is in Kano-by-Kano people. We
need Nigeria. We can do something to keep Nigeria

At inception, NIFOR membership was drawn from the Hausa Fulani communities in the
Southwest and the Yoruba Community in the 17 Northern States, but membership have
been widened to incorporate all Nigerians living in states other than their own.

Conclusion

The existence of the Yoruba in northern Nigeria has implications for national
development. Yoruba lived with other ethnic groups and exhibited the capacity for ethnic
tolerance and religious pluralism in northern Nigeria. The migrants pursued and secured
economic livelihoods that contributed to the development of the host and home
communities. The entrepreneurial drives of the Yoruba merchants enabled them to
recruit labour from their kinship network for the expansion of their commercial base but
such strategy often prevents capital accumulation on a large scale. Kinship network of
extended family was a major strategy in the provision of employment, training and
capital that ensured the preponderance of Yoruba commerce in northern Nigeria. Some
integrated with the host communities. Integration involved both the Yoruba immigrants
and the host communities achieving a degree of convergence. The integration of second-
generation Yoruba migrants was largely conditioned by how their parents identities.
These has been exhibited in costume and the spoken patterns of the Yoruba in diaspora
who felt at ease communicating in Hausa, Nupe and Kanuri or mixed the languages
together with Yoruba. The central question is not whether the second generation
assimilated into Hausa society, but into what segment of that society it assimilated. Many
of the descendants of early migrants have integrated into the Hausa society and became
members of the political, intellectual, military and commercial elites. Others used their
integration into Hausa to benefit from scholarships; employment and promotion
opportunities but despised their Yoruba ancestry. Those who maintained their Yoruba
identity in diapora often ended up as 'marginal citizens' without the right to lay claim to
the community where they were born and grew up or their home origin where they were
less known. Among the last group, however, were those who contested elections and won
as representatives of the communities where they lived, particularly, at the local government levels.

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NOTES

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ABSTRACTS

In 1956, the defunct western region government launched the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme. The main aim was to produce an authentic and coherent history of the Yoruba, covering all aspects of the people from the earliest times. Despite the fact that a tremendous achievement was recorded in this enterprise, an enormous lacuna exists in the study of Yoruba diaspora in northern Nigeria. While accounts of Hausa impact on Yoruba history, particularly for the pre-colonial and colonial periods, have been offered, only passing references have been made to acknowledge the Yoruba factor in the history of the Hausa society during the same period. Within this context, the paper explores the chronology of Yoruba migration and formation of diaspora communities in northern Nigeria during the twentieth century. It raises the questions: what were the migration patterns? What forms of identities did the diaspora communities produced? What were their linkages with the Yoruba homeland? What were their contributions towards the development of towns in Yorubaland? Of what implication was the Yoruba diaspora to the socio-economic development of northern Nigeria and Nigeria as a whole? The paper focuses on the interplay of cultural, political and economic forces in the formation of Yoruba diaspora communities in northern Nigeria.

INDEX

Keywords: citizenship, colonial labour policy, diaspora community, identity, migration
Short Takes on New Nigerian Poetry from the Niger Delta

Ismail Bala Garba

Introduction

The present essay offers an omnibus review of four poetry collections, written by poets from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Since the advent of Modern Nigerian Poetry in English expression, such disparate poets as J. P. Clark-Bekederemo, Gabriel Okara, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tanure Ojaide, Onookome Okome, and a host of others, have ably represented this unique part of the country in Nigerian poetry. Like the rest of poets in other parts of the country, poets from this region have imbued and enriched Nigerian poetry with their respective communities’ oral traditions and lore. Apart from that, perhaps the single most important contribution of poets from Niger Delta is both their political and literary attempts to put Niger Delta on the literary map, and show the world what was and is happening there in terms of disastrous oil exploration by ruthless multinational companies, which, invariably, results in the region’s environmental degradation, economic stagnation, and wanton suffering of the populace. So sustained and remarkable is this poetic protest by the Niger Delta poets that now within the annals of Nigerian poetry, (at least in its expansive English expression), there is the recognition of the unique feature of this indubitably Niger-Delta poetry of protest, and of raising
awareness about the larger question of environmentalism and the place of Federalism, which seems to be the bane of the region within the Nigerian polity.

Indeed, it is imperative (if not critically expedient) to consider these four new books of poetry in the light of the “overarching horizon” of other Niger-Delta poets, both established and new. This is not to suggest that all poets from the region seek to write with the same critical idiom, with the same displaced voice or with the same terrible tenor, necessitated by the terrible mess that the Niger Delta finds itself in. Rather, it is to establish the existence of a kind of “stylistic, even linguistic, meta-thematic tradition” that finds acceptance in a corpus of work emanating from the same region. The aim of an omnibus review of this kind is not to identify the same poetic inclination and sensibility within these disparate poets but to appraise, albeit briefly, each of the poets in the light of his or her own poetic terms.

Joe Ushie

A Reign of Locusts by Joe Ushie is divided into four uneven parts containing fifty-two poems as a whole. Unlike his previous books, which stridently make their name and boldly confirmed Ushie’s growing reputation based on his eco poetry and nature-dominated concerns, the present collection seeks to explore and explain the recent happenings in Nigerian polity through ceaseless allusions and references to such happenings using the overriding metaphor of the locust. But this is not to suggest that the usual obsessive metaphor of a place of origin, of attachment to geography, of the symbolism of the earth, or of the imagery of the homeland is absent in A Reign of Locusts. Most of the time these metaphors and references to Nigerian political scene are powerfully substituted with that of vulture, hyena, hawk, tiger, lion, fox, or dragon in order to capture the precise, pervasive image (and indeed the reality) of injustice, extra judicial murder, corruption and all other vices associated with the long reign of military dictatorship in Nigeria, and to some extent with the present crop of “civilian dictators”. In the light of this, then, the first part of the collection, “Toward Canaan” is the most successful. And the first poem in that section, the political “beauty” titled “The African Bermuda” represents all these concerns in a miniature way. For it does seek to compare, even contrast, the real Bermuda Triangle with an imaginary, yet real Nigerian/African Bermuda. The similarity between the two Bermudas is that whatever crosses them banishes without a trace. Yet while the real Bermuda (in the Caribbean) is a geographic/natural phenomenon, that of Nigeria is man made because it came into existence through the evil conspiracies, (what Ushie calls “triangle”) of the soldier, the politician and the technocrat.

The next poem, “Night, still” uses the quasi-surreal imagery of night and time (with capital N) to sustain the exploration of Nigeria’s recent political happenings. Here, Ushie’s fresh neologisms come through with such words as “Hewman” (human), “Sofstitutes” (substitutes), and “Compagriots” (Compatriots). Despite the gloom occasioned by the unnatural night of “eight-long tyrants”, the poet sees hope only when his fellow poets, whom he regards as embodying the conscience of the society, squarely face their task of “growing a flower of phrases” with their “swords of words” in order to confront the screaming “metaphors of pain”.

7

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9
The next poem, the historical/allusive “Musa’s Legacy” traces the root causes of the phenomenon of “African dictatorship” precisely in the supposedly dictatorial reign of Mansa Musa, the king of the former Empire of Mali (in the present Republic of Mali in West Africa). While the title poem’s inclination is to foreground the plethora of troubles and turmoil, there is still no respite even when we turn to the proverbial prayer as the last resort, for, as the poet says:

Our spade filled with curses  
We laid to rest last dusk  
Those ogres of our night of horror.  
But the locust-choked sky  
Darkens the infant rays  
Of our rising sun.  
Now is a rain of locusts  
In a chewing race,  
An endless eclipse for the wingless  
Blister your knees  
At your Faith’s prayer ground  
Or they munch down our fences  
These locusts (18).

The same tenor and terse words mark another of the short poems, which takes its title from a cannibal called Clifford Orji (who was arrested for cannibalism in Lagos in 1999). The poem is not a celebration of what Orji did or indeed of cannibalism. It is, rather, an indictment of all those who are at the forefront of condemning vices like that of Orji while being guilty of even more heinous crimes. Another poem in this section, which is similar in tone and style with the previous one, is the aptly titled “The Uniform”. It captures the tragedy of Nigeria with brevity as it is with absolute certainty about who the real culprits are: they are the devils in whatever kind of uniform, whether bluish or darkish; and they seem to be united by one aim, despite the different colours of their uniform. For all have “The cowed pregnant palms/ Delivering into wolfish trays/ Cobwebbing the land’s path” (28).

The poems in Section Two, “Back to the Hill and Valles, are no more than a transmutations -linguistic and lyrical adaptation/adoption -of popular songs by singers from the Obudu region of Cross River State, such as the late Umali Alikpong, (popularly known as Angbeb-ishang, of Bebuagbong, Obudu), Atsu Akpegah of Okambi, Obudu, and other poems (at least going by their titles) are derived from oral literature of the region. Section Three, “Voices and Moods of the Silent Wild and Other Deep Matters... ” contains the inevitable rain song, “Rain Season”, the nature-dominated “Particle” which highlights the human domestication of nature. There is also the semi-concrete/ graphological poem, “Tongues”, and the beautifully wrought “Sleep” which lyrically foregrounds not only the inevitability of sleep, but its varied, disparate manifestations in our lives; a superb, but brief treatise on the Congo music of the same name; and the romantic “Season of Flower”. Section Three, “Returns” contains mostly tributes poems.

In the end, A Reign of Locusts establishes further the place of Joe Ushie in the new Nigerian poetry. With varied voices and style the book shows that even when there is a central theme with which a poet like Ushie is usually identified, that theme could be realised without an explicit recourse to it. Like in his previous collections, Joe Ushie has demonstrated that a concern for the degradation of the environment is closely linked with the assumption that poets, like all other creative artists, are physically, culturally and metaphorically rooted in specific geographies, and that they strive towards the well-
being of those physical and cultural geographies. In this remarkable collection, Ushie has shown that when it comes to what Charles Bodunde (2002:195) calls “the appropriation of the physical environment” - as both subject and object, Ushie is a master in portraying the decay in the people’s lives.

Barine Saana Ngaage

Barine Ngaage’s Rhythms of Crisis is his second published collection. And in it the poet carves a world, which is entirely his: it is a world, which has a close affinity with the larger Nigerian/African world that is invariably etched and marked by varied crisis of one form or another. There is, for instance, the crisis of conscience and of crisis of much more tangible things, such as politics, the economy, and morality. The poet sees it as his ultimate duty to confront these crippling crises; for, he sees himself as not just the embodiment of his society’s debased conscience, but also as the society’s “soft spot”: its sensitive part that both laments and celebrates its wealth and its woes. The poet’s voice is urgent and calls for both the renewal of hope amidst squalor, and the reign of justice in the midst of suffering.

Though Rhythms of Crisis is not divided into any discernible parts, the poems could be read as part of an overarching theme on the issues outlined above. Nevertheless, each of the fifty-eight poems could also be read independently of the other, and with each having its own subject matter, as it were.

In the first poem, “Letter to a Surgeon” there is a tacit reference to the annulled June 12th elections of 1993, which almost led to the collapse of the country as an independent state. As the title suggests, the poem is written as a lamentatory-missive to a mythical surgeon (a higher being: part an accomplice, and part a sympathiser) who would “cure” the ills of the country, the most obvious of which being the debacles occasioned by the annulled elections. For the callous annulment of the elections amounts to a calculated murder, a crisis of conscience, for which the poet asks ruefully:

Did you hear my conscience beat
On the bed of your theatre?
There I lay like a crossroad,
My eyes were lifted into the face of the nation,
Where I read crises.
My heart ached when June became pregnant
Surgeons were called into the theatre;
The child was ripped out of her womb
 [...] 
My nation lamented the inauspicious mystery.
It was then my ailment began
In the commotion of tongues,
In the fear of futuristic ill-omen (9, emphasis added).

The poem concludes with a note of hope, and highlights the nascent democracy now taking root in the country; it equally calls on established democratic nations to assist in the development and strengthening of our own democratic institutions and principles when the poets enthuses:

My regards to great democracies:
Tell Switzerland my people love its bed of roses
Where thorns are almost extinct;
Tell Norway my people search for light.
Tell Sweden democracy peeps through the mirror of greed here
And Denmark should know my nation is like a tender child (p. 11).

Another poem that merits mentioning here is the short, epigraphic “Earth Falls Over the Cleft of Time” which is a nature poem of sorts. It celebrates the earth and its resilience, (even in the face of increasing degradation). As for the poem, “Blindness”, it rather juxtaposes the state of blindness in three different situations: in bats, in canoës and in humans. Blindness is seen as liberating, something that empowers whosoever it afflicts to fly like the jet, or to dance with elegance and grace. What the poet calls the “inconvenience of blindness” shields the blind man “from the gun that shoots through the eyes”, even though “he walk[s] and hear[s] its echoes in the earth” (28). The next poem, “My Brothers Travelled Faster than Light”, is a tribute to departed people dear to the poet. It laments their death without mentioning it: it is a subtle dirge that asks some unsettling rhetorical questions regarding death when it says:

When a kite steals a chicken
We blame the mother for negligence
When a lion devours a sheep,
We blame the shepherd for carelessness
But when our brothers travel
Lord, whom do we blame? (30).

“I am the Canoe” is about the duality inherent in things particularly in the eponymous canoe, which, like the poet, has to negotiate its precarious position between two or more contending places at once:

I am the canoe
Torn between warm and cold currents,
I am the canoe
That does not worship any of the currents (36).

And the satiric “Radical Choice”, offers, as the title claims, a choice supposedly informed by tact and taste apt by the situation at hand:

Poised between two sacrificial items,
Greed and Service,
I chose greed
As an expert I laid it on an altar,
Killed greed on the eve of initiation
And killed the Greedy in the bosom of plenty (43).

In the last analysis, Rhythms of Crisis is a powerful testimony to the (textually displaced, but linguistically-and-orally realised) utilitarian value of poetry in forging a sense of self-worth not only in the poet but also in the readers. With a clutch of fresh metaphors, memorable lines, inventive cadences, and rich rhythms Barine Ngaage ensures his places in recent Nigerian poetry in English.

Ebi Yeibo

Ebi Yeibo’s first collection, Maiden Lines, is a book of thirty-four poems of varying lengths and style, ranging from short takes like “Friends”, “When a Loved One Dies”, “Religious Hypocrisy”, and “The Clown”, to long lyrics like “Reunion”, “Transition”, “Kernel in the Shell” and “The Golden Bird”. Like Ngaage’s Rhythms of Crisis, Yeibo’s Maiden Lines is also not delineated into any explicit divisions, whether thematic or organizational, but it can still be read as a whole, as poems possessing the same vision and objective. As a title,
Maiden Lines hints at both the incision usually patterned on Izon maidens and also subtly foregrounds the collection as to what it undoubtedly is: a debut collection. The poems—both metaphorically and aesthetically—have the same inerasability and permanence as the maiden’s lines which adorn the cover of the book.

There is indeed a strong stylistic and thematic affinity between Ebi Yeibo and the other poet of the Niger Delta, Tanure Ojaide, in that they both share an abiding interest in the environment and the people of the Niger Delta. As such, Maiden Lines is (as the blurb claims) a sustained sequence of “canoe songs” known and sung by the various riverine people of the Delta. Yeibo metonymically evokes the physical environment of the Delta not just as the objective in his lyrical portraiture of the Niger Delta, but also as his own poetic interventions on life generally. Therefore, the Niger Delta provides both the setting (the immediate backdrop), and the inspiration behind the collection.

The first poem is significant in line with the collection’s thematic concern. “Mermaid” partakes in the same mythical invocation such as that memorably achieved by Christopher Okigbo’s celebrated “Mother Idoto”. And it is no coincidence that the poem is dedicated to Okigbo. Here, the poet-persona sees himself, (and all other educated people from the region), as a prodigal returning home—physically and metaphorically—after a sojourn (or after imbibing an alien culture, such as Christianity, for instance), outside his immediate environment. It is, simultaneously, an invocation of the mermaid—like that of the Aridon of Tanure Ojaide, especially in the Fate of Vultures and Other Poems (1990); the Ajon of Olu Obafemi’s Songs of Hope (1999); the sacred Udala Tree of Chimalum Nwako’s The Womb in the Heart and Other Poems (2000); or the fabled Mammiwata/water mermaid of Onookome Okome’s The Mammiwata Poems (1999), or even the Kilago of Garba Mani Yangora’s Dizerykinks (1991), for example. It is also a kind of an offering of a quasi-religious cum spiritual-cultural ritual, or some form of mythical cleansing even, in the name of the water mermaid. This is also a form of placation, giving the mermaid some form of omnipotence. “Mortality” adopts powerfully, albeit briefly, the riddle nature of the Izon (the poet’s area in Niger Delta) proverbial lore:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{And do we beat our chests} \\
& \text{In the midnight?} \\
& \text{Beating drums of glory} \\
& \text{Shrouded in the dark?} \\
& \text{[...]} \\
& \text{Two kernels that live} \\
& \text{In the same shell} \\
& \text{Must taste breath the same day} \\
& \text{And as one melts in the teeth} \\
& \text{The other waits for its fatal turn (pp. 18-19, original emphasis).}
\end{align*}
\]

Ebi Yeibo is also a romantic poet, though not in the usual sense of the word. There are a host of poems that could be labelled romantic poems with “I Can’t Leave Her” as representative of such enigmatic poems. It is a “love” poem for the poet’s alma mater; hence his place of poetic inspiration and craft, the Delta State University, Abraka. Here, the setting provided by the university is akin to that afforded to the poet by the entire Niger Delta: it is a miniature Niger Delta as it represents all the features that combine to make the Delta the object of admiration and the subject of the poet’s verse:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{We talked and talked and talked} \\
& \text{Far into the charcoal-dark night} \\
& \text{Till cockroaches ceased to scurry} \\
& \text{And cruising car lights}
\end{align*}
\]

Find no more hugging spirits
Singing mating songs unheard,
Breast against breath, to desecrate.

[...]
And I, on my part,
Simply whispered in her right ear
In a faint, almost inaudible voice:
"Why is it that
I can’t ever leave you?"
And she, on her part,
Gazed straight into my eyes
As one instantly possessed,
And said in a cool, piercing voice
That gripped me mad:
“You will soon know
And will continue to know” (20-21, original emphasis).

26 “The Weeds” is about the eponymous weed and about the fate that awaits all weeds, which is captured and portrayed as nothing more than parasitic thorn; while “Carcass” is also about the title’s carcass, and also about human waste catalysed by “Black men in white apparel”, who are vultures, earnestly looking for putrefying carcasses. Both “River Forcados” and “River Ethiope” are concerned with rivers named in the titles; they are, as it were, love poems since they personify the rivers as if they were women with whom the poet is in amorous relationship:

Pregnancy of parallels!
She echoes the tune of life;
Timed splashes punctuate
The undercurrents
In the sweet rhythms
Of her solemn flow (“River Forcados”, 46).
Your mild feminine face
Breeds multiple adoration
Courting suitors from far and wide
That come [sic] to behold your natural majesty
And bask in this splashing kiss and smile
That lie [sic] forever glued to men’s heart
See her clear ornamental face
Exuding an enchanting aura
Beyond man-made territories,
Eyes winking in the exchange
Of ecstatic pleasantries
With the yellow shatts of the crescent sun
Made golden in her convulsive embrace (“River Ethiope”, 61).

27 In the end, Maiden Lines emerges as a collection that forges both private and public issues. It has lived up to the expectation of recent Nigerian poetry of artistically linking topicality with artistic accomplishment; of privileging the satiric mode, and of highlighting the multifarious disappointments of the realities of post-independence Nigerian state.

G ‘Ebinyo Ogbowei

28 ‘Ebinyo Ogbowei’s let the honey run and other poems [sic] is, like some of the books reviewed above, a debut collection first published in 2001 and now reproduced and repackaged in
an exciting second edition. The book represents a bold attempt in the daring fusion of fresh metaphors, deep level imagination, profound poetic sensibility, and some topical considerations. The fifty-one poems are divided into two thematic and organizational sections whose overall foci are a vindication of the poet’s ceaseless, committed wanderings between issues that are decidedly private, communal and national. The three disparate phases are intermingled in such a way that even a personal tragedy (like, say, the end of a relationship), is transformed into a communal concern, while a “national need” -like that of a viable democratic culture, for instance -is made visible in the profoundest of manner.

As such, the nationalism and the sense of loss associated with the ruthless rape and relentless ravaging of the poet’s native Niger Delta are among the most moving within the tradition of lament poetry of the Niger Delta. For this. The second section of *let the honey run* is the most successful; while the first section is notable for a number of love poems, inspired by real relationships, and also couched in images of the country as both the object of love and of revulsion. For, between the expression of outrage and the desire for change, there is, squeezed in-between, a strong sense of survival against all odds. Therefore, the image of honey running is that of a powerful vision, even a sweet dream awaiting fulfilment to the poet. as it is to the Niger Delta.

All the poems were written between 1986 and 1999, and each of them is dated, thereby conferring on the book a unique identity within the avalanche of books of poetry published recently in the country. (Apart from this poet, the only other contemporary Nigerian poet who dots and adorns his poems with dates, place of publication, and even time of composition is Chike Ofili whose *Our Unspoken Ties* [2001] bears close resemblance to *let the honey run* in this regard). Dating one’s poems may, at first, appear to be a way of asserting one’s idiosyncratic, stylistic inclination; but it also freezes the poems within a particular time frame and stupefies them within a specific politico-historical and social context.

Also, there is the complete absence of punctuation and initial capitalization of lines and of proper name, not even the title of the book! This deviant style -either of absent or sparing use of punctuation -is mostly associated with African-American poets who are perpetuating its use in order to steer clear of the dominant tradition of capitalization, hence formality, associated with white American poets; and is also used to vigorously deploy a brisk stylistic feature with a view to make visible a radicalisation of orally dependant poetic tradition. But here none of this is apparent or felt in Ogbowei’s poetry.

Even though *let the honey run*, unlike some of the books discussed above, does not overtly rely on the oral tradition of the poet’s Izon region in terms of transmutation of oral songs into poems, (like in Joe Ushie’s *A Reign of Locusts*, for instance), it, nonetheless, attains a level of orality albeit in a displaced way. This is achieved by the deft and skilful use of untranslated Izon words and expressions, which are later, collated and annotated in an informative glossary.

The book opens with the rhythmic “christmas”, which, even though dealing with the mundane and the usual, achieves a height of lyricism availed by the refrain:

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  mummy mummy
  you’ll buy us **new** shoes of fine leather
  a pair for me
  a pair for heather**  (12, original emphasis).**
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In “grandmother’s face”, however, there is a nostalgic lamentation about the withering and the subsequent passing away of the poet’s grandmother. There are other good love poems in the first section: poems such as “gloria glorifies the groin”, “so ‘ba daughter of the sea”, “for the love of mary” and “sarah”. The title poem, “let the honey run”, while being openly inclined towards the rest of the poems in the section as a love lyric, doubles up as a poem where the poet employs a host of military metaphors, (“howitzer”, “machine gun”, “trenches”, and “bunkers”), to showcase the militarisation and the corresponding militant attitudes of the people of the Niger Delta, as they have been brutalised by the repressive soldiers of the Nigerian military. In the second section of the collection, “lament”, there is the inevitable Ken Saro-Wiwa poem, one on the Bosnian civil war, another on the annulled June 12, 1993 elections in Nigeria, and on the late music maestro, Fela Kuti, as well as a clutch of tributes and dirges on the poet’s friends and relatives.

In the last analysis, then, let the honey run is a kind of book, hard to find, difficult to dismiss and one to praise for its spectacular poetic depth, creative subtlety, and aesthetic profundity. Such a book is only realised by poets at the height of their poetic pace and power; indeed, it a collection that could only be written by poets who are free from any kind of creative block, whose inspiration is not imprisoned within any imaginative confine, whose creative muse has not departed them.

Conclusion

What emerges from the foregoing is that Nigerian poetry, as shown by the four poets from the Niger Delta discussed above, has never been more exciting, more robust and engaging as it is now. What these poets have demonstrated is that apart from the usual fusion of topicality and artistic achievement, raising awareness about the disappointing realities of post-independence Nigeria, what Tanure Ojaide (1996:77) calls the “consequences of socio-economic hardships”; the ensuing search for political alternatives; raising hope in the face of ceaseless suffering; striving towards the evolvement of distinctively national literature; and the debate about appropriate language and form, Nigerian poets, (particularly those from the Niger Delta), are increasingly turning towards their various, rich oral traditions as a veritable source for both inspiration and meta-thematic sensibilises. And orality is seen by Ezenwa Ohaeto, himself a pre-eminent Nigerian poet, as, principally:

The desires of the poets to eliminate textual impediments, unclog poetic syntax and infuse the poems with the oral flavour of the rich and variegated Nigerian culture, hinged on this conscious reaction to make more people enjoy poetry, despite their occupations, in spite of their preconceived ideas of the poetic craft, and notwithstanding their levels of intellectual sophistication (1998: 11).

Orality is now as much the subject, (some would say the subjectivity), as the cliched “clash of cultures” once was. For these poets have vindicated that orality (whether in a conventional way, or in a displaced mode) is the vital link between the ethical and moral on the one hand, and the didactic nature of (some) Nigerian poetry with its utilitarian function on the other. And the subject of environmentalism—eco poetry—is slowly but significantly interspersing Nigerian poetry: poets from the Niger Delta are the masters, the proponents of this form of poetry where a rich, textually and linguistically diverse world, or homeland/ locality, is weaved into a larger cultural map, while being acutely
conscious of its beauty, and of the continued survival of its eco system and its culture in a milieu of both political, economic and social independence, and development.

Works Cited


ENDNOTES

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Complexly Intertwined’: Poetry and Politics

Ismail Bala Garba

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Note portant sur l’auteur


1 *The Public Poet* is the first book-length intellectual biography of the preeminent Kano-born, Hausa poet, Alhaji Mudi Sipikin. The individual chapters, while demonstrating Sipikin’s accomplishment as both a poet and a politician, also reveal his poetry’s engagement with a wide variety of concerns. Among such concerns are his politics, especially his pre-independence political activism as a member of the anti-monarchist party, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and other issues such as religion, the socio-historico-political status of northern Nigeria, and so on. And when read as a whole, however, the book foregrounds the centrality of religion and politics within Sipikin’s poetics, and their subtle synthesis in his poetry’s epistemic inclination and tropological sophistication.

2 In more ways than one, *The Public Poet* is also a companion book to the concurrently published volume of Sipikin’s selected poetry in an expansive Hausa-English translation, *Mudi Sipikin: Selected Poems of a NEPU Activist* (2003), which, for the first time since his first published volumes, *Tsofaffin Wakoki Da Sababbin Wakoki “Old and New Poems”* (1978), and *Wakokin Ilimi da Tarbiyya Don Yara na Alhaji Mudi Sipikin “Poems on Education and Training for Children by Alhaji Mudi Sipikin”* (1981), has made available Mudi Sipikin’s poetry not
just in a significant selection spanning many years, but also in making available many unpublished poems, including the highly acclaimed, "Wasiyya Sipikiyya", Sipikin’s Will. Alhaji Mudi Sipikin was born at Darma quarters of Kano city. His grandfather came to Kano from Auyo in the Hadeja Emirate of the present Jigawa State. His father, Malam Muhammadu Buwa, was his first teacher, and later Mudi attended Qur’anic school of Malam Umaru Badamagare. Sipikin did not attend any formal (Western) school, but was, all the same, educated informally through a correspondence course with a British school in the 1960s, and afterwards in a series of adult education/literacy classes in Kano.

He is a founding member of NEPU, founded in 1950. And for daring to uphold the interest of the talakawa (the masses; the poor) under the oppressive Native Authority, he was imprisoned many times; while his house was auctioned off by the colonial authorities several times. Sipikin’s early poems portray his radical political inclination, which keeps evolving in line with his maturity, and development as a politician and poet. For this, Sipikin’s poetry betrays his deep knowledge of Islam, his acute political consciousness, poetic accomplishment, as well as his famed poetic celebration and critique of Hausa culture and people. In addition, Sipikin’s poetry often thematizes both temporal and transtemporal issues, namely the philosophical exploration of human will in relation to a larger will of God. And this is often achieved, and consciously highlighted, by what could be called “Sipikin’s philosophy of composition”: a kind of an “exclusive” clutch of poetic techniques. A distant, even unconventional instance of Sipikin’s philosophy of poetic composition is his unique employment of doxology, (opening or closing prayer). Sometime in his poems, Mudi completely ignores the opening or closing doxology; in such instance, he chooses to plunge into the poem directly, without any doxological mediation as in the following example:

Fellow countrymen I have corne to tell you  
My views so that you may know the truth  
On the poem Zungur wrote where he talked about “Republic”  
(From "Arewa Jamhuriya Kawai", North is for Republic Only, 12).

Many critics of Hausa poetry have recognised doxology as one of the characteristic markers of Hausa poetry, whether written or oral. The use of doxology is, in a way, an attempt to follow the Islamic injunction of making one’s presence known to others, a way of recognising them. According to such disparate critics -like Hiskett (1975), Furniss (1993 and 1996:213), Liman (1994), Sa’id (1995), Junaidu (2001), Aliyu (2001), and Munkalla (2001), among others -the use of doxology is a form of self-renunciation, and-effacement in the presence of not only one’s peers, fellow humans, but also before the Divine. But, in the case of Mudi, to invoke God, (as he does in many of his poems, too numerous to cite here), is for the poet to imbue himself with life, in a quasi-narcissistic, semitranscendent way.

Another instance of Mudi’s distinct philosophy and technique of composition is his special way of employing multiple voices and personas in his poetry, in a manner which shows up his deep tropological, or rhetorical sophistication, and philosophical inclination. This in itself is nothing remotely “philosophical”, or special, but its uniqueness arises from the way in which Sipikin’s poems are conceived and written with a conscious audience expectation: the way in which he inserts his poetry into a certain kind of reading formation; the way in which the poems are placed, invitingly, before the reader. Accordingly, there are about three different imbricated “readers” in Sipikin’s poetry. These are: the Ideal Reader, or the Authorial “I”, (when Sipikin seems to be
addressing God), the Inscribed Reader, represented by a form of narrative presence, (when he seems to be addressing no one in particular, or seems to speak to a sort of a universal subject), and, lastly, the Implied, or Ostensible Reader, or, simply, the lyrical “I” dispensing poetic/epistemic truth, (when he is, impliedly, addressing someone for either tropological or rhetorical effect).

6 The poetic and analytical thrust of Sipikin’s poetry themes is often didactic, sometimes prescriptive or admonitory (as in any other modem Hausa poetry). Hausa poetry is indubitably marked by its didactic, admonitory and prescriptive tones. Hausa poetry, Jihadist or modem, written or oral is inherently characterised by its moral discourse, Sipikin’s poetry is not, then, an/exception. A quintessential case of Sipikin’s poetry’s didacticism is in the following poem, “Gadar Zare”, Grand Deception:

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I want the people to understand that belief in
Superstitions and phantoms amount to ignorance:
Magic and bori are crazy
Believing in them is going astray and
Foolish and nonsense and a waste of time.
People should know there isn’t such thing as inna
Which deforms hands and legs... How?
It is a disease you had better know.
Go to the doctors; there is remedy
You should ask to find the truth.
Know also there’s nothing called Fatalwa
It is mere fantasy, you should know:
Do not succumb to the ideas of those misled
They will “kick” you like football
And lead you into the wrong path (102-3).
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7 Here, Sipikin is an unapologetic modernizer, very much open to the issue of “progress” and “modernization” as Liman (1994) would say. He is also indulging into a “poetic reprove” of some customs, beliefs, and behaviours, which he considers backward, and, therefore, unbecoming of people slowly imbibing modernization -as opposed to, say, Modernity, which the philosophical consciousness of the Modem. Likewise in the poem North is for Republic Only Sipikin’s concern is with the wanton exploitation of the talakawa, by both the colonial administration, and the aristocratic rulers as the sole reason for turning northern Nigeria into a republic:

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The exploitation of the talakawa is too much
Many of them (monarchs) drink beer
That is why I don’t agree
With that poem by Sa’adiya
But only where he says there is
No way to overthrow the monarchical system.
That is why I have come to speak,
Corne, people, and hear the truth (105).
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8 The book is divided into six chapters, with a concluding chapter. There is also a chronology of Mudi Sipikin’s life; while the “Notes on Texts and Translations” offers the ways in which the authors have attempted to negotiate the thorny issue of cultural translation, (or the transposition of one linguistic, textual and cultural tradition into another). This is necessary since Sipikin’s poetry and politics are both written, and
performed within a milieu, which is not just Hausa, linguistically and culturally, but informed and occasioned by it. And in order to compensate the loss arising out of translating Sipikin’s poetry from Hausa to English, the authors arrange both the original Hausa poems with the English translation in sequential order whenever his poems are quoted in order to illustrate, or further highlight a particular biographical point as in the following example from the poem, “Karara”, *The irritant:*

A ya jama’a ina tashin  
Ku don ku rage yawan barci.  
Mu wo himma mu tashi tsaye  
Mu gyara kasa ta san ‘yanci.  
Rashin ilimi ya sanya kasa  
Kasar nan duk take baci.  
Idan ba tattali a kasa  
Kasar nan dole ta baci.  
Idan an zub da hakkin dan  
Adam domin wulakanci.  
O you people wake up  
Rise from that deep slumber.  
Let us make an effort and  
Prepare the grounds for country’s freedom.  
Lack of education is the bane  
Of the decrepitude of this country.  
Lack of proper economy in a country  
For sure necessitates its recession.  
If human rights are disregarded  
It must be because of a general degradation (168).  

And the “Notes on Sources” identifies, as it were, the sources, both primary and secondary, from which the biography is assembled. They are, principally, oral interviews with Mudi Sipikin -the subject of the biography—and members of his family, friends, political associates, business partners and other informants. Various books, archival materials and the poet’s unpublished manuscripts show the extent to which the book also relied heavily on secondary sources.

Chapter one of *The Public Poet, “Roots”*, looks at Sipikin’s brief family history leading up to his birth in 1930. In some mesmerizing passages, the authors were able to show how Sipikin’s early education had had a deep impact on his early involvement in politics, and his immersion into poetry in later life. Chapter two, “Young Man”, traces the youthful days of Sipikin from 1948 onwards. Here, the concern is on Sipikin’s experience as an apprentice businessman. While chapter three, “Political Man”, is about Sipikin’s political career: his early political activism, the formation of NEPU and PRP (People’s Redemption Party), etc. The remaining chapters, i.e. chapter four, five, six and the concluding chapter, are, more or less, about Mudi Sipikin’s poetry.

III

The central tradition, the over-arching poetic ideology of Sipikin’s poetry is his revolutionary poetics; and his main theme -pervasive, always looming large -is a ceaseless attack on colonialism, and aristocratic political structure. His poetry is also revolutionary, (if the word is permitted here) in its appropriation of both Arabic poetry and Jihadist’s poetry tradition. And this could be seen in Sipikin’s poetry’s profundity of both notable rhyme and rhythms on one hand, the use of Arabic loan words, and the use
of English words on the other, by appropriating them as essentially Hausa words, or better still “Hausanizing” them, as in the poem, “Amsar Wakar Eamentare”, A Reply to Poem on Elementary Education. Indeed, Sinikin has mastered, in addition, the difficult-to-handle two stanzas poems, complete with acoustic rhythms. Sipikin is also adept at paying close attention to his various subject matters, and the narrative contexts at hand as in the poem, “Kukan Kurciya”, Wise Saving:

You can glimpse at the Falcon hovering
In the sky everyday, and visibly, too
You can see the Eagle, even with its massive body,
On seeing the Falcon becomes petrified with fear (145).

Here, images from the natural world are deployed in order to properly delineate the limitation of political power cruelly wielded by both the Native Authority, and the aristocratic rulers. The images, most importantly, too foreground the transience of such power, and portend to the possibility of obliterating such power by the poor who are being exploited. Sipikin’s other poetic craft is his superb organization of ideas, the way in which disparate things are effortlessly chained together to produce a composite vignette as in the poem, “Wakar ban Kwana da Mallam Aminu”, Farewell to Malam Aminu:

If you could recall the day Malam was to depart,
Some miscreants were asked to come and hubbub.
And four people were meant to come to him for a handshake,
Before he arrives, dead he would have been
He could die before getting to his destination
He said by God he would give them a handshake,
For he surrenders everything to the Almighty alone
So he eventually made it despite the odds, and arrived in London
alive and fit (146).

In the end, Sipikin’s poetry is built around three pillars: (a) his influence (or poetic inspiration) by such older poets as Sa’adu Zungur, Sani Kwantagora, etc, (b) his talent, or absolute belief in natural gift about poetic creativity, and (c) his political, and creative ideology, i.e. his concern with social, economic, and political condition of the masses in much of his poetic oeuvre.

IV

The Public Poet’s aim, as the authors say, is to present Mudi Sipikin, the poet, and the politician in a simple, accessible way; it seeks to emphasize the so-called biographical details of Sipikin’s life, showing along the way how Sipikin’s poetry necessarily arises out of his political engagement, which, in turn, catalyses his stature as a political poet, and a popular public intellectual.

It is here that the problem that the authors are desperately trying to avoid emerges in the most glaring way: in their attempt to collapse Sipikin’s poetry and his biography without assuming any trace of discursive hitch; though they (the authors) concede that the events of Mudi Sipikin’s life clearly, even naturally delineated, and marked his poetry in a significant way. They further hint at the difficulty of capturing their subject, Mudi Sipikin, within the decidedly linguistic, textual, and metaphorical trope of biography. Nevertheless, they bring to the fore the inherent a\(\text{\textit{pora}}\) in their subject by, for instance, separating their complex subject into two phases, of Mudi Sipikin: the shrewd politician, and Mudi Sipikin: the consummate poet. To do this is to presuppose that Mudi Sipikin’s
complex life could, neatly and successfully, be compartmentalized into two different phases, two different careers that are not related or complement each other.

For example, the book claims that it intends to highlight the social, political, as well as ideological imperatives of Sipikin’s poetic career, they, the authors, never bother, (and it is apparent that they do not care) to justify why this approach is adopted; since, by dint of this claim, they appear to be privileging one aspect of Mudi Sipikin’s life over the other, while clearly claiming the contrary. In many instances in the book we have a scenario where both the poet and the poem are unmistakably one, for instance on page 178 they claim that “the poem and the life (of Mudi) are difficult to separate”, even asserting further that Sipikin’s poetry functions as his “surrogate”, an other, and an extension of his self. In other words ascribing an unmediated quest for self-presence to the poet. Whether this is tenable via poetic textuality is open to debate. Yet the authors always aspire to uncritically collapse Sipikin into his poetry. And this could be seen more clearly in their discussion of self-presence and-presentation. They regard the poet’s innocuous autobiographical exploration in his poetry as, explicitly, an attempt to narrativise his ownself, and as a desire to occupy the narrative situation of his poetry, via his authorial presence. To buttress this they subject the poem, “Wasiyya Sipikiyya”, Sipikin’s Will into some kind of a psychoanalytical tool to justify, rather erroneously their thesis.

The authors also “mistake” the poet’s willingness to recite his poems before an audience as a teleological desire for an unmediated self-presence, as well as Sipikin’s use of first person pronoun to open and close his poems, or what is called poetic signature as partaking in the same quest. They (the authors) “misread” Sipikin’s public recitation of his poetry as a deep yearning to fuse together, in an ontological sense, the poem and the self, speech and metaphor, text and context. This is in no way a “transcendental need” that the poet needs to necessarily make obvious, either via the continuum of certain textuality availed by his poetry, or by public recitals of his poetry.

And for this they (the authors) offer, here and there, a close reading of Sipikin’s poetry with a view of purportedly presenting some aspects of his biography. By this the authors have again rather uncritically collapsed the author into his book. A good example of this aporetic biographical representation is chapter four, “Poetic Man”, which documents Sipikin’s poetry, seeing him, via close reading of his poems, as, among others: an ideological poet, an epistemic modernizer -both in his poetry and his cultural sensibility - and as an indubitably urban writer whose universalism intersperses his poetry, as much as his temperaments as a politician, and a businessman. Although the authors claim that they only offer selective close readings of Sipikin’s poetry within the larger frame of offering what they call “biographical representation”, yet they close prepare Sipikin’s poetry solely, at certain instances, it seems, for what they said they would avoid: i.e. “sustained literary criticism”, and seeing their subject as decidedly produced by his poetry. For example, on page 167 they claim, “there is no place to enter upon a close reading” of Sipikin’s poetry, but, all the same, they subject Sipikin’s technique of signature, (or the protocol of textually couching the poet’s name in his poems) as an opportunity for close reading as in the following representative passage:

Mudi, it should be stressed, freely uses all the available techniques of poetic composition. He is not content with using one or two only. One answer lies in a secret wish, namely: a deep wish to redouble his effort to live through the Name, his name, by also taking that very name into the very structure of his work, in ways as to increase his own involvement with Death (or a pendingone). That is, as a mortal, Mudi wants, or actually needs to use the structure of his poems (the first person
narrative voice, the proper name, etc.) to guarantee his own self-presence, to
deflect further from the End promised by his religion, Islam—the taste of Death. He
wants, by these poetic maneuvers, to overrun Death, by releasing, so to speak,
himself and his Self, through his Writing, his Poetry (125-6, original emphasis).

This lengthy quotation shows the book’s reliance on close reading, while making it so
obvious that despite these kinds of readings, the subject (Mudi Sipikin) would not, could
not, and need not to, as the authors say somewhere else “step out of metaphor” (211); but
this is further “contradicted” when the authors claim on page 215 that the so-called
epistemic truth in Sipikin’s poetry is nothing but that, since “the poet”, as it were, “affirm
[s] nothing” they claim, “otherwise he may have to prove that he never lies, that is, never
tells it as it really is”.

V

Despite the book’s brilliance as an intellectual biography, there are some annoying
citational and typographical errors. Some books and articles are cited, or referred to in
the book, but not listed in the bibliography. For example, on page 3, “Kirk-Greene 1966”,
are all not cited in the bibliography. While on page 9 the bibliographical entry “Ibrahim
2000” is given as “Ibrahim 2001”; and on page 18 “Feinstein 1987” is rendered as
“Feinstein 1998”. Yet again on page 69 “strong” is substituted with “strongly”, on page 72
“objectives” is rendered as “objects”, and on page 76 “Mudi” is spelt as “Mud”. And on
page 223 (of the Bibliography), one of the cited authors is referred to in her first name
(Bara’atu), rather than her surname (Maikadara); while Boehmer (Elleke) is spelt as
“Boemer”. It is also surprising that apart from Mudi Sipikin’s lone essay on “Ma’aunin
Wakar Hausa”, *The Prosody of Hausa Poetry*, none of his published books is cited; not even
the recent volume of Sipikin’s selected poetry in English translation, which is
concurrently published with the present book, (even though poems from such collections
might have been referred to, or quoted at length). Conversely, all the Hausa texts of
Sipikin’s poems in the book are quoted without the usual Hausa hooked letters, even with
the current availability, in fact explosion of UCLA’s Hausa font (which is based on the
Arial font), and others.

After three years of publication in 2003, *The Public Poet* is still not in circulation, and
despite the fact that numerous PhD theses are being written on Mudi’s poetry at Usmanu
Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and Bayero University,
Kano, etc. The book was written in the first place to, according to the blurb, “fill a potent
gap in the literature on the works of Alhaji Mudi Sipikin in particular and indigenous
non-English poets, dramatists and novelists in general”; yet the book is still locked away,
perhaps falling apart at Mambayya House, while researchers are anxiously waiting for it.

And there is also a huge gap between the content of the book—written with bravura,
intelligence and brilliance -and the book as a finished product -aesthetically uninviting,
blunt and hastily packaged. This is not to argue that there must always be a correlation
between the two. The book, sadly, is poorly produced, with the binding popping out
halfway through one’s reading, the pages constantly falling out, and the spine that is
peeling off.

Despite these shortcomings, and theoretical deficiencies (if the above mentioned
“aporias” could be referred ;to as such), *The Public Poet* is a good book that would surely
fill the wide gap on critical/biographical literature on Mudi Sipikin's poetry, and on other Hausa poets, and writers whose works also engage Sipikin’s intertextually in its varied themes and concerns. This is the first book of its kind. There is no intellectual biography of any other major Hausa poet. What exist are commentaries, textual exegeses, and biographical references, rather than sustained critical, intellectual examination of their works, or the relationship between the work and author.

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**ENDNOTES**

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Historiography and Historicality

Ismail Bala Garba

1 Note portant sur l’auteur*


3 Ranajit Guha’s *History at the Limit of World-History* fuses, as it were, both practice and theory by conceptualising “world history” (without the hyphen) in such a way as to see it critically as a problem of whether it is possible to achieve any level of speciality in an enormous field of that name. What was once regarded as world history, was now nothing more than a pattern, or even a phrase: narrative shape; a framing device. Therefore, world history is the mark of the very reductiveness of history as a whole to which Guha openly objects to.

4 In 2000, Ranajit Guha, the pre-eminent chief editor of the now famous *Subaltern Studies* series, delivered three lectures at the Columbia University, New York. *History at the Limit of World-History* is the revised version of these lectures. It has five uneven chapters with an appendix containing a succinct translation of Rabindranath Tagore’s *Shahitye Atithashikota*, (literally translated as “Historicality in Literature”).

5 The book offers some of Guha recent ideas about history; for many years now the author has been mediating on the possibilities of imagining new ways of writing Indian history free from the colonial ways of thinking and writing that have characterised it. The main thrust of the book is that what could be called the historicality of human existence is not, and could not, be the same as the humanity’s (or the humankind’s) history, which is conceived and written by the so-called professional historians within the critical idiom of historiography. For Guha, every human being and every human relationship is etched with unique qualifies that emanate in their uniqueness. And each is marked by a past that is not just spectacular but also various. This past, interspersed through as it is with different historical narratives and realities of indubitably human experience, is what Guha refers to as *historicality*. Such spectacularly disparate pasts largely escape histories, Indian history especially.
A substantial part of the book contains critical discussion of Hegel’s philosophy of history. Hegel, for Guha, is the key proponent: the instigator of what could be termed “state-centred history writing”. In Hegelian thought, the possibilities of human freedom lie in the creation and sustenance of a modern state, based on the pervasive European model. And this is because the highest principles on which a state is based are not made for any particular individual. For the state is an expression, even the embodiment of what is common to, or the same for all human beings living in a society at a particular time in history. Those societies, which have not been able to imagine and create a modern state, have not, then, discovered any universalistic principles about governance. And the pasts of such societies have yet to break out of the stupor of their mythic and poetic representations. Only societies that have been able to visualise and create the state by being cognizant of the “common” and the “general” amidst their myriad pluralism have also been able to produce histories written in the hard prose of analytical insight (22-23). For Hegel, contra Guha, all such societies are indubitably European.

Accordingly, world history is not, then, a shared focus: close readings avail us to a distinguishing hyphen in Guha’s title. The hyphen, he argues, does nothing more than to “emphasize [the] status” of world history in the book as “a concept rather than a description” (2). History at the Limit of World-History then is a reflection on the idea of world history, and its eventual evolving into a discipline, rather than as an instance of a practical example of it. The hyphenated word (World-History) portends a discursive, and epistemological relation to Hegel whose supposedly historical language (German) allows concatenated forms like “Weltgeschichte”. Guha’s relation to Hegel is, therefore, far from that of mere affiliation, but is simply antagonistic as he (Guha) goes to some roots of modern historiographical practice and theory in the late Hegel. And here, Guha brings to the fore one of those kinds of judgements, which we rightly (or wrongly) find so hard to accept, i.e. Hegel’s quip that “India [...] has ancient religious books and splendid works of poetry [...] ancient books of law [...] nevertheless, it still does not have history” (10-11, emphasis added).

This is also a way of saying that a Society without writing is a society without history. To Guha, Hegel is wrong, factually and philosophically, for he was simply ignorant of the existence of Ramram Bosu’s Raja Prapaditya Caritra (1801). Hegel is also at fault conceptually, for, to Guha, history is a loose term, an elastic concept that can be stretched over different narrative typologies found in pre-colonial India. Likewise Hegel is also wrong ethically since world history was (and is), to large extent, tool of European domination.

All of these aporias in Hegelian philosophy of history is explored with bravura and illustrated in a theoretically inflected discussion about how history—as both a concept and a discursive practice—is institutionalised within a specific use of language. As with all critique of Hegelian consciousness, there is a “grudging obsession” with that consciousness, since the critique can, in itself, be also a “grudging fascination”, a desire for aufhebung (or suppression) itself a quintessential Hegelian move.

Guha’s critique is focused on the limit, and indeed the very limit of a concept like world-history, which, in a way, falls to communicate an instance of “historicality”, and also falls to be alert to “all of the world’s past; since there is hardly any discussion of non-Hindu
historical practices in the book. Regarding the limit Guha finds and boldly endorses Literature, especially in Tagore’s wisdom where “the past [...] renews itself creatively in Literature, unlike in academic historiography” (101). Tagore’s wisdom, in an attractive if romanticizing vision, reminiscent of Nietzsche, is “born of the experience of living dangerously close to the limit of language as one must to be a truly creative writer. For it is the latter’s vocation to exhaust language and push it to the limit” (98). Guha’s interpretation of Tagore is that his Literature is an alternative to world history; in fact his Literature is history -but not as historians know it. And in this Guha may be a trifle generous to Tagore’s romantic individualism, and to its projection onto a communitarianism, which sounds feudal, or at best aristocratic.

In reading History at the Limit of World-History, one cannot but get the feeling that Guha is critical of what he has criticised: the aspiration of the people (like the Indian masses) to statehood and to state-centred identifies. He seems to propose that such desire does nothing more than perpetuate a colonial way of thinking and writing history.

ENDNOTES

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1 Note portant sur l’auteur


3 Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani’s Britain, Leftist Nationalists, and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1945-1965 is a pioneering study of the development, activities and failure of Marxism and other left-wing organizations in Nigeria during the decolonization period up to 1965. While the literature on nationalist movements in Africa is large and expanding, the aspects of the infiltration of Marxist ideas into anti-colonial movements have been neglected for several decades. As a watershed, this research is expected to draw the attention of scholars to the study of Marxism in colonial Africa and retain its prime position as both a reference material and a magnus colossus. Although the study focuses on the activities of leftist nationalists in Nigeria, Tijani is able to integrate development in the country into global debates and politics of the Cold War. In other words, he is able to demonstrate how international politics of capitalism versus communism affected local issues of nationalism and vice versa. The position of British colonies as appendages of and pawns in the political and economic chess-board of the Britain, United States and France is adequately elaborated. The style of presentation is lucid and simplified in a manner that makes the book readable for academic and non-academic audiences. Tijani should be commended for achieving this feat because only few academic historical studies combine professional interpretation of facts with narratives to produce academic studies which can appeal to the sentiment of people from diverse intellectual persuasions. His presentation of themes such as Marxism, Communism Nationalism and Capitalism, which are traditionally difficult to comprehend in a simplified, yet academic manner makes the study a must read. One does not need a head -ache reliever to read, understand and appreciate the scholarship of the book! The entire book is divided into nine chapters.
Each chapter begins with a short introduction which provides insight into the content of debates and ends with a short summary which bags the hole discourse and serve as a transition to the proceeding chapter.

Between the 1940s and 1950s, the rise and collapse of several leftist movements, a majority of which identified with the Communist Party of Great Britain, inform one of the creative intelligibility of Nigerian intelligentsias and the problems which anti-government organizations faced. Naturally, and as one would expect, the greatest opposition to the origin and activities of these leftist nationalist movements came from the colonial government who acted under the directives of the British government in London and the West bloc under the leadership of the United States. If the colonial government of Nigeria detested the activities of leftist nationalists movement and tried to curtail their “excesses”, the condemnation and disapproval which they received from other nationalists who were not convinced of their philosophy contributed in making them an easy prey for the British predatory tendencies. Although all nationalist groups detested colonialism and its attendant exploitation and barbarism, they were nevertheless divided on the profundity of approaches and the time required for the transfer of power. Leftist nationalist belong to the category of nationalists whose communist philosophy and militancy provoked serious sentiments amongst the government and their co-nationalist.

The division amongst the nationalists introduced new dynamics to the tension-soaked nature of relations amongst the different fervent of anti-colonial movements in Nigeria.

The continuous rise and fall of leftist communist movement in the 1940s and 1950s is therefore not explicable in terms of disillusioning of members or lack of direction and proper orientation. Their failure is largely attributed to the stiff opposition they received from the colonial government and Nigerian nationalists who detested their philosophy. This opposition took different dimensions. It ranges from the arrest and incarceration of some members of communist movements such as the Zikist movement to the banning of communist from government employment. The sacking of communist loyalists which Tijani brilliantly christened “Nigeria-McCarthyism” was not only practiced by the British but also by some nationalists as seen in the case of Ghana under Nkrumah. Lack of resources, which are needed to propagate ideas and activities, also played a significant role in clipping the wings of these movements. Against all odds, leftist nationalism was able to produce many leaders such as Uduka Eze, Samuel Doku, H. O Davies and Funmilayo Kuti who apart from organizing and coordinating trade unions established newspapers which served as the mouthpiece of the campaign for justice and equity and political self-determination

One expects the author to identify the role leftist movement played in the development of post independent socialist thought and ideas. The demise of colonialism did not signify and end to the philosophy of radical thinkers. In contemporary Nigeria, one still notices that some Nigeria intellectuals, a good percent-age of who belong to the academia continued to see the relevance of communism. The author was also less critical of the significance of ethnic nationalism on the discourse of leftist nationalism. The north-south dichotomy was a strong factor in the nationalist movement and its relationship with the leftist organization is downplayed.

Nevertheless, these shortcomings do not undermine the credibility of this study in any way. The study remains a reference source material for the study of Marxism and other
leftist movement in Africa and other developing nations of the world. The author should consider looking into theses when revising the book for the second edition

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