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Editorial

A nebula is a truly wondrous thing to behold. The name is derived from the Latin word for ‘cloud.’ Nebulae (plural) are not only massive clouds of dust, hydrogen and helium gas, and plasma; they are also called “star nurseries” of the universe because stars are often formed inside the nebula (Matt Williams, 2015). Thus, a typical nebula is a place where stars are born. But, such descriptions barely scratch the surface. In fact, nebulae have provided scholars with endless scientific discoveries.

True to its philosophical nomenclature, the journey through most of the articles in *African Nebula* has always been a voyage of academic discoveries. This present edition is no exception because, essentially, it reflects the very essence of the true nature of a nebula. It draws on and projects the scholarly production of an array of young stars from four countries. The illuminating essays examines various issues ranging from communication and advertisement strategies, gender, population and climate change, to feminism, national security, global media, etc.

Specifically, **Adeyemi Adegaju**, in the first article, examines some verbal and visual signifiers in some GSM advertisements in Nigeria. The paper applies what the author calls a connotative semiotics framework to underpin and explain the semiotic import of verbal and visual signs in GSM advertisements. The article reveals that the codification of meaning in the discourse is hinged on cultural rules and social forces in the context of the situation in which the signs in the GSM advertisements are produced and received. In the second article, **Chineze Onyejekwe considers the** linkages between population dynamics and climate change as well as the gender-differentiated impacts of this phenomenon. The paper submits that empowering poor women is essential to tackling the negative impacts of climate change.

Kehinde A. Ayoola and Folasade Hunsu, focus on Muslim women’s writing from northern Nigeria. They argue that though this writing has attracted feminist critical attention but the exploration of this tradition through a blend of feminism and critical discourse analysis has not been explored. It is from this neglected analytical lens that the duo examines Asabe Kabir Usman’s *Destinies of Life* and Saliha Abubakar Abdullahi Zaria’s *Edge of Fate* to show how these women negotiate the interstices of feminist ideology, religion, culture and Western education. The paper also discusses the binaries of Islamic religion and culture vis-à-vis the yearnings of the contemporary northern Nigerian Muslim woman to extricate herself from the patriarchal web of inequity and injustice. The analysis projects the dilemma and creative impulse of the contemporary northern Nigerian Muslim woman as she attempts to overcome the forces that inhibit her self-expression without overtly upsetting the applecart of Islamic and patriarchal ideologies.

From a historical perspective, **Walter Gam Nkwi**, examines the activities of the gendarmerie in Cameroon since the re-birth of multi-party politics in the 1990s. He opines that these activities have been sending shock waves across several parts of Cameroon and that old memories of brutality and popular reaction are being rekindled. By relying on primary sources from the Cameroon National Archives and several secondary sources, the paper contends that the Gendarmes were strongly abhorred by most West Cameroonians, because of their oppressive and suppressive activities. The paper submits that in spite of the fact that Gendarmerie corps are primarily tasked with the maintenance of law and order and the protection of the citizen, yet it has turned out to be more of an oppressive force.

Lanre Davies, in the fifth article, focuses on the political economy of the Egba nation between 1830 and 1960. He argues that the economic prosperity of Egbaland did not only result in political power for the Egba, but also acted as a pull factor for many people who later made Egbaland their abode. The author contends that the modernisation of Egbaland pre-dated colonial rule and the evolution of a federal system of government which the Egba designed in Abeokuta after 1830 was unique and the first of its kind in Nigeria. He, therefore, concludes that the Egba are pace setters not only in Nigeria but throughout the West African sub-region. .

An interesting philosophical discourse on global media and the argument about the purported end of the nation state captures the fancy of **Wincharles Coker** and **Eric Opoku Mensah** in the sixth article in this volume. The paper argues that contemplations of the phenomenon can be effectively enhanced if a middle-ground approach is adopted. The authors are of the view that such a posture requires that a critical examination of the dialectic between global media and the nation-state within the orbit of critical theories such as Marxist political economy is absolutely necessary for understanding the wider implications of discourse on global media and the end of the nation state for sub-Saharan African states.

Henry Kam Kah, in the last article, critically examines two organisations (CERAC and JACHABY) whose Chief Promoter is Chantal Biya, Cameroon's First Lady. It argues that the organisations were meant to provide compassionate aid to the deprived and needy, promote education of the woman and girl child and ameliorate poverty. He, however, laments the fact that the two organisations have become tools for the veneration and 'worship' of Chantal Biya and "femocracy" in Cameroon's democratic and multiparty experience. Through a content analysis of internet and secondary sources as well as participant observations, the study concludes that both JACHABY and CERAC have deviated for their noble mission and now serve as lobby groups for the First Lady and the President of Cameroon and that this development poses a veritable challenge to good democratic governance.

By and large, it is a widely acknowledged fact that that nearly all nebulae are associated with stars and their illumination comes from star light. Indeed, between the entire star systems that fill our galaxy and our universe, nebulous clouds and masses are sure to be found, just waiting to give birth to the next generation of stars! (Matt Williams, 2015). Thus, the galaxy of stars (contributors) that have contributed to this volume have succeeded in giving further illumination to a wide range of issues that are critical to the survival of humanity in the 21st century. There is therefore no doubt that the issues raised herein will continue to provoke robust academic debates among both the present and next generation of *African Nebula* stars. I warmly congratulate and thank all the contributors, reviewers and editors that have made this present package of African Nebula possible.

Happy reading!

Olukoya Ogen.

Verbal and Visual Signifiers in Some GSM Advertisements in Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examines the appropriation of sign systems in the discourse of marketing the services of mobile telecommunications networks in Nigeria. It attempts to interpret the sign systems deployed in the marketing strategies in relation to the contextual background within which they operate, revealing multiplicities of meaning that are tied to the service providers' ideological perceptions, which to a large extent, appeal to the audience's sentiments and in some cases abuse their sensibilities. The paper applies the connotative semiotics framework to underpin and explain the semiotic import of verbal and visual signs in the advertisements. The article reveals that the codification of meaning in the discourse is hinged on cultural rules and social forces in the context of situation in which the signs in the GSM advertisements are produced and received.

1. Introduction

The Global System of Mobile Telecommunications (GSM) revolution in Nigeria's communications industry is arguably a coveted leveller which has enabled common citizens to share the experience of the elite, which had for long been privileged to have access to telephone. What the situation was prior to this watershed is captured thus:

Before now, many Nigerians had no hope or dream to own a phone as the service provider [...] NITEL [Nigerian Telecommunications Limited Plc] made things very difficult. One had to pass through lots of hurdles before getting a line. In fact, from the handwriting on the wall, it became very lucid to Nigerians that telephone was not meant for the poor.¹

Consequently, if ordinary Nigerian citizens were asked to reflect upon the singular reform in the Olusegun Obasanjo administration which touched their lives the most, they would not hesitate to cite the liberalization of Nigeria's telecommunications market as 'a true dividend of democracy'.

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By February 2001, four firms – Econet Wireless (Nigeria), MTN, Communications Investment Limited (CIL) and NITEL had emerged as GSM licensed operators in the country. CIL was, however, refused a license by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) on the grounds that it failed to meet the deadline for the payment of the license fee. In 2002, another service provider Globacom (an indigenous company) received its operational license and joined the race. Apart from these major networks, private telephone operators such as Starcomms, Oduatel, Mobitel, Multilinks, among others, emerged later and were granted licenses.

Since 6 August, 2001 when the first call was made on Econet Wireless mobile phone network in Nigeria, Nigeria's telecommunications industry has grown in leaps and bounds as affirmed in this comment:

The transformation of Nigeria's telecommunications landscape since the licensing of three GSM networks in 2001 and a fourth one in 2002 has been nothing short of astounding. The country continues to be one of the fastest growing markets in Africa with triple-digit growth rates almost every single year since 2001. It passed Egypt and Morocco in 2004 to become the continent's second largest mobile market after South Africa. And yet it has only reached about one quarter of its estimated ultimate market potential.²

Interestingly, this sector of Nigeria's national life has generated stimulating discussions at seminars and workshops, in editorials and features in newspapers and magazines, in parliamentary sessions, as well as in informal exchanges among the general public. There are many advantages attributable to the remarkable turnaround in Nigeria's telecom industry. The advent of GSM has contributed to the increase in gross domestic product (GDP) of the country, as the revolution has enhanced the efficiency of business transactions, saving people's time and energy that they would otherwise have expended on the road. Another major benefit of mobile telephony to the economy is the provision of employment opportunities to many Nigerians.

While acknowledging the relevance of these issues, this study explores the discourse of marketing GSM networks, since the frontiers of the advertising industry in Nigeria have been advanced so much so that every imaginable outlet has been utilized for promoting the companies offering GSM services in Nigeria. Particularly striking is the GSM service providers' rhetorical style adopted to penetrate the Nigerian market. It is intriguing that the advertisers deploy seemingly

ordinary objects, events, concepts, entities, situations and scenery in the audience's immediate environment to convey a deeper level of meaning in their advertisements. Writing generally on the style of such advertisements, McKeown (1998: 1) says: "The people behind the making of 'ads' are the transmitters and therefore, are aware of the codes in operation within the culture they are working or living. So advertising uses 'a system of distinct signs.'"

Drawing upon this viewpoint, this paper examines the (re)construction of meaning through signs in the advertisements of mobile telecommunications networks in Nigeria. We will first need to provide some background information about the sample data in Section 2. In Section 3, we will discuss the role of connotation in semiotic analysis, while underscoring the place of the reader in the social production of meaning. Section 4 of the paper examines the factor of colour in branding GSM companies, while Section 5 discusses the semiotic force of verbal signs and cultural units in the advertisements. This is the order in which the rest of the article is organized, leading us to Section 6 which gives the concluding remarks.

2. Sources of Data

We have purposively sampled data from newspapers, magazines, radio and television jingles, and billboards. Structures such as houses, fences, kiosks and erect broad-sized umbrellas, carrying the trademark of GSM service providers are also veritable sources of the data of this study. Mass transit/luxury buses whose bodies are clad in GSM adverts, souvenirs and bannerettes also provide rich sources for the data. The sample data, though restricted, would be adequate for analysis in that there are parallels in the advertisements even where there are slight shifts in configurations across modes – written and spoken, on the one hand, and verbal and non-verbal, on the other. It is noteworthy that such overlaps are functions of the ideological motivations for the adverts which are a constant in the discourse.

3. Theoretical Considerations

How reality is organized and constructed, as well as how ideology and meanings are produced in the advertising discourse, is so intricate that the reader, in an attempt to process advertising meanings, cannot but appeal to the subtlety and power of connotation. With close reference to interpretation of meaning in printed advertisements, Leiss *et al* (1990: 201-202) argue:

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The semiological approach [...] suggests that the meaning of an ad does not float on the surface just waiting to be internalized by the viewer, but is built up out of the ways that different signs are organized and related to each other, both within the ad and through external references to wider belief systems. More specifically, for advertising to create meaning, the reader or viewer has to do some 'work'. Because the meaning is not lying there on the page, one has to make an effort to grasp it.

In the light of this argument, this paper applies the connotative semiotics framework to underpin and explain the semiotic import of verbal and visual signs in the advertisements of GSM networks in Nigeria.

'Connotation' is used to "refer to the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, ethnicity and so on" (Chandler, 1994a: 1). Although it is presumed that there is a code-sharing between the producer and the reader of a text that could maximize efficient and effective communication, connotation opens up the possibilities of meaning such that the reader could come up with diverse interpretations which depart from what the sender of the message originally intends. Borrowing from Schmidt's (1984) philosophical argument, Mick and Politi (1989: 7) submits that "the interpretation of advertising is a subject-dependent, internal monologue through which consumers generate, change and maintain their individual reality." It must be noted, however, that connotations are not purely 'personal' meanings, for they are determined by the code to which the interpreter has access. In this sense, Chandler (1994b: 5) cites Voloshinov (1973: 23) who referred to the 'multi-accentuality' of the sign, that is, the potential for diverse interpretations of the sign according to particular social and historical contexts.

This chance to uncover the playfulness of language brings to the fore the notion of 'oppositional reading' which gives room for multiplicities of meaning that audiences can choose to attach to a text while "searching for what is 'hidden' beneath the 'obvious'" (Chandler, 1994b: 2). This derives from the fact that the audience may have a very different cultural or social experience from the producer(s) and thus may connect signifiers to completely different signifiers. This approach to text reading is opposed to the notion of 'preferred reading' where the producer of a text designs it with certain meanings in mind and hopes that the audience will decode them in a way which ties in to hegemonic beliefs. Writing in favour of 'oppositional reading' as a stimulating approach to interpreting

advertisements, Myers (1983: 214-216) cited in Mick and Politi (1989: 5) contends:

There is a danger in the analysis of advertising assuming that it is in the interests of advertisers to create one “preferred” reading of advertisement’s message. Intentionality suggests conscious manipulation and organization of texts and images, and implies that the visual, technical and linguistic strategies work together to secure one preferred reading of an advertisement to the exclusion of others [...] The openness of connotative codes may mean that we have to replace the notion of “preferred reading” with another which admits a range of possible alternatives open to the audience.

Although the meanings generated at this level may be ‘small’, using McCracken’s (1987: 121) term, Mick and Politi (1989: 9) posit that such ‘small’ meanings are in no sense immaterial, for they ‘provide a looking glass on the role of personal history, self-esteem, fantasies, aspirations, doubts, fears, and other individual factors which contribute to ad-imagery interpretation’. This viewpoint underlies the nature of the analysis and discussion carried out in this study. Close attention is paid to the codification of meaning in the discourse in relation to cultural rules and social forces in the context of situation in which the signs in the GSM advertisements are produced and received.

Thus, our analytical approach in this study falls within the purview of social semiotics where attention has been given to the role of the reader in the meaning-making process. Social semiotics is based on the assumption that signs and messages must always be situated within the context of social relations and processes, as the same text may generate different meanings for different readers. Thibault (1991: 1) summarizes this view saying:

In social semiotics, the basic logic is that of contextualization. No semiotic form, material entity or event, text, or action has meaning in and of itself. The meanings these have are made in and through the social meaning-making practices which construct semiotic relations among forms, material processes and entities, and social actions.

4. Colour and its Functions in Nigeria’s Telecommunications World

The visual content and design of advertisements generally find expression in the choice of colours advertisers make while trying to appeal to the audience. Beyond

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such aesthetic motivations, colours could assume another level of significance relative to the world being depicted. We must, however, admit that analyzing the semiotics of colour across cultural boundaries is no easy exploration. This is borne out of the fact that different cultures classify and even perceive colours differently, even though colours are constant everywhere in the world. Thus, the potential meaning of colour is tied to the cultural world of the transmitters and the receivers. For instance, while black colours often depict death in Western societies, its opposite, white symbolizes death in Eastern cultures. In Japan, for example, white flowers are a reminder of mourning and death. Lindberg (2002 – 2005: 2) quotes Eco as saying:

When one utters a colour term one is not directly pointing to a state of the world [...], but, on the contrary, one is connecting or correlating that term with a cultural unit or concept. The utterance of the term is determined, obviously, by a given sensation, but the transformation of the sensory stimuli into a precept is in some way determined by the semiotic relationship between the linguistic expression and the meaning or content culturally related to it.

For our present purposes, the complexity in the signification of colours is evident in the deployment of certain colours by advertisers of GSM networks to carve an identity for their respective companies. In this regard, Caivano and Lopez (2007: 4) argue that:

One of the factors that render the identity of an institution visible is colour. As a factor of identification of a company and, in turn, as a factor of differentiation from its competitors, colour is widely acknowledged in institutional design [...] it is one of the vectors of corporate identity. By mentioning cases such as IBM (the 'Big Blue'), we must agree that, inside the global semiotic system, colour is one of the key elements in the conformation of corporate identity. Its visual impact, pregnancy, memorability, as well as its possibilities of reproduction in different applications and media, are key factors in design.

It is in the light of this argument that we will discuss the use of colour for identity purposes and its attendant local connotations in the present discourse.

Yellow has come to be identified with MTN advertisements and as such has become a dominant signifier in the MTN world. At the connotative level of

meaning, the use of the colour could be tied to any of the following representations, as put forward by paint company Glidden: “Yellow is truly joyous and virtuous in its purest form. Yellow exudes warmth, inspiration and vitality, and is the happiest of all colours. Yellow signifies communication, enlightenment, sunlight and spirituality.”³ While all of these interpretations seem to fit into the



Figure 1: MTN *Y'ello* signifier colour



Figure 2: 'MTN Man' propagating the *Y'ello* message

telecoms world, there are, however, yet other shades of meaning which coincide with the above interpretations or further extend them within the context of use.

In order to create the impact of novelty such that attention is drawn to the colour trademark in a most arresting manner, the advertisers of MTN services have resorted to the use of neologism in the nonce-word *Y'ello* as shown in Figure 1. This signifier serves some rhetorical functions in MTN adverts. In answering phone calls, the ritualistic opening formula is *hello* but in MTN adverts, *Y'ello* has been substituted for *hello*. Apart from the humorous stroke it has added to answering phone calls, the propagation of the 'MTN tongue' creates the impression that the universal language of communicating is being supplanted by MTN, thereby giving the impression that MTN is that network that cuts across ethnic, regional and racial boundaries and is, therefore, dominating the scene and setting the pace in terms of coverage and efficiency. In fact, *Y'ello* is so central to the MTN world that it is referred to as 'the language of possibilities' in one of the commercials.

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In another sense, the greeting formula *Y'ello* is a symbolic sign that creates an atmosphere of celebration and merriment during festive seasons. For instance, during Christmas, the compliment people give one another is 'Merry Christmas/Happy Christmas' but in an MTN commercial, the parody reads: "*Y'ello* Christmas" as a season's greetings to all Nigerians and MTN subscribers in particular. This departure from the convention is rhetorically significant. It is a message of love in which MTN shares the joy of the season with its (intending) subscribers. It also suggests that the Christmas season is one during which making contacts with relations, friends and well-wishers, is made stress-free when connected with MTN. As such, one could conveniently exchange love messages, greetings and give compliments without having to travel long distances. This signifier becomes particularly instructive when one notes that Nigerians who work and live in the cities usually return to their towns and villages to celebrate the joy of the season with their loved ones. One most disturbing concomitant to such extensive journeys during Christmas is the increase in the number of road accidents. Wishing the people "*Y'ello* Christmas" is an invitation to rely on MTN services in the bid to reach families and relatives while avoiding the risk involved in embarking on ritualistic Christmas travels. It seems, therefore, that one could understand why *Y'ello* is actually referred to as 'the language of possibilities' for it is possible for people to share the joy of a festive period with their loved ones without necessarily being with them physically.

Still deploying the *Y'ello* signifier, the company uses a product character popularly known as 'the MTN man'. He is commissioned in the commercials to transmit the *Y'ello* message from cities to towns and villages, as he paints billboards and demarcates highways with the colour yellow to signify the connection of such locations to the MTN network. One intriguing aspect of the advert is the "*Y'ello* magic" signifier as reflected in two major codes.

In the first one, the MTN man is painting a billboard with the colour yellow and as passengers in a vehicle passing by alight to extend greetings to him, the original colours of their vehicle and the clothes they wear automatically changes to yellow. There is also the case where the MTN man and his co-painters are trying to cross a river in the course of their mission and the yellow paint inside the container they are carrying accidentally spills into the river and the whole river turns yellow at once.

This scene instantly reminds us of the Biblical account recorded in Exodus 7: 19 where Moses performed the miracle of turning Egypt's water into blood when he was commissioned by God to lead the Israelites out of captivity. Rather than

producing a negative effect, as in the Biblical account, the spilling of the yellow paint into the river in the present discourse has positive connotations. The scene is suggestive of the spontaneity and the vastness of MTN network. All together, the two major codes of the MTN “*Y’ello magic*” seem to bring to the fore the infectious attribute of the MTN network which objects, people and natural phenomena cannot resist but must respond to with a ‘chameleonic’ instinct.

On the other hand, Globacom’s lemon-green colours assume semiotic significance in very interesting dimensions, too. By hitting Nigeria’s telecom market in 2003, when some other networks had already been in operation, Globacom needed to carve a niche for itself and the identification of the lemon-green colours with the company is symbolic: “Green is the colour of life, and represents freshness, security and tranquillity. Green creates an atmosphere that is calm and restful, and characterizes the intense power of nature.”⁴ In one of Globacom’s memorable commercials, a satellite with a resplendent lemon-green colour appear from the horizon and traverse a geographical space. Beholders of the lemon-green satellite – the young and the old, male and female, professionals and artisans – are sent into wild excitement as they chorus the verbal semiotic surrogate “It’s coming! It’s coming! It’s coming!” This verbal message helps to anchor the pictorial image by contextualizing it.



Figure 3: Globacom’s lemon-green colour

The sighting of the satellite and the attendant excitement, call to memory the sighting of a new moon in a real-life situation and what it signifies to people. In the Islamic world, for instance, the sighting of a new moon is a natural phenomenon

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pivotal to the Islamic calendar and religious activities. Across cultures, the appearance of a new moon in the sky signals a change of season to which diverse cultural and religious beliefs are attached. In a typical African village setting, the sighting of the new moon announces a joyful season, especially to children, and when it is full-blown, it rules the night, dispels darkness, and allays the fear and uncertainty characteristic of nightfall. It is the season when they can defy night outings and sit in the full glare of the moon to enjoy moonlight tales from an elderly story-teller. The excitement of the children-audience here is akin to those sighting the lemon-green satellite which signifies the birth of Globacom.

In particular, the manner in which the beholders of the satellite appear stupefied needs to be critically examined. People from diverse professional backgrounds such as engineers working on sites, medical practitioners attending to patients, and footballers playing a competitive match, all suspend their primary assignments at critical stages – for instance when a footballer is about to score an all-important goal – just to catch a glimpse of the satellite. In another case, it could be a wedding reception where the couple and their well-wishers are basking in the euphoria of the moment. Even at the point of taking a snapshot on such a memorable occasion, the bride, to the chagrin of on-lookers, would take a leap from the gathering in the direction of the satellite and others in admiration follow suit, momentarily abandoning the purpose for which they are gathered. Generally, their kinesis posture of maintaining a fixed gaze on the roving lemon-green satellite is significant. It implies the arresting power of Globacom network which appears to have shifted people's attention away from already existing networks.

As a mark of Globacom's identity, the lemon-green colour becomes a symbol for the efficiency and dependability of the company, as expressed in the popular slogan 'Glo with pride'. 'Glo' in this slogan could be an abbreviated form of the name of the company, thereby suggesting that subscribers should take a pride in using Globacom network. Aside from this, the word seems to be an orthographic deviation from the verb 'glow'. Just as the lemon-green colours glows wherever they appear, the impression created is such that the services offered by Globacom in the places covered by its network stands subscribers out from the users of other networks. This is also suggested in the popular advertising slogan 'Wherever you go, we glo', suggesting that the network outshines others in getting people connected.

Generally, the centrality of colour to the adverts by these GSM service providers is underscored by Elliott (2005: 1):

One great thing about colour, argues Martin Lindstrom in his newly published marketing book *Brand Sense 2005* is that it contributes to the ‘smashability’ of a brand. Successful brands can be ‘smashed’ like a glass of bottle of Coca-Cola and consumers would still recognize the brand from its pieces. Logically, then, marketers should place a ‘signature’ colour at the centre of all branding efforts.

In a similar vein, Caivano and Lopez (2007: 4) have this to say:

Colour has a high influence on institutional communication because it is perceived more quickly than other institutional symbols such as iconographies or verbal texts. It has been proved that colour requires less time of ‘reading’ than a logo. When shape and colour are adequately associated, colour (the more primary element) facilitates the memorability of the shape. Chromatic logos are more easily remembered than achromatic ones. In this way colour works as a factor for remembering the brand. For instance, Kodak yellow, Nestle red, Intel Blue, Coca- Cola red, etc.

And this appears to be exactly what the network service providers have done with their preference for certain colours that have come to be identified with such companies and are central to their branding efforts.

5. Deictic Verbal Signs and Cultural Units in Nigeria’s Telecommunications World

In view of the fact that the issue of network coverage is carefully considered before people subscribe to the services of a telecom company, every service provider boasts of wide network coverage. This is evident in their commercials where spatial deictic markers are deployed to influence consumer behaviour: we live where you live (Glo)

The advertisers’ predilection for the use of the deictic markers ‘where’, ‘wherever’, and ‘everywhere’ is predicated on the fact that they want to give the impression that they are capable of connecting urban centres to the rural areas, as subscribers living and walking in urban centres would wish to keep in touch with loved ones back home or in the hinterland. To further emphasize the mobile service providers’ bid to connect the urban to the rural, spatial deictic markers are reinforced with non-verbal indexical surrogates. Such indices revolve around diverse cultural units such as occupations for which rural communities are noted. The occupations touch

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on cattle rearing, fishing/fish smoking, *garri* (cassava flour) processing, hand weaving, tying and dyeing of textile materials, farming with crude implements such as hoes and cutlasses, pounding with mortar and pestle, harvesting of palm fruit, among others. Apart from cultural units in the form of occupational engagements, there are pictorial images in the form of landscapes, showing thatched roofs, deserts, forests, creeks, and so on.

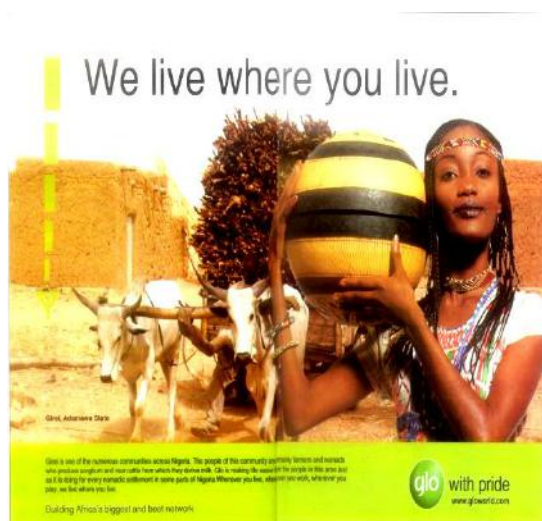


Figure 4: A typical Hausa-Fulani village setting in Northern Nigeria

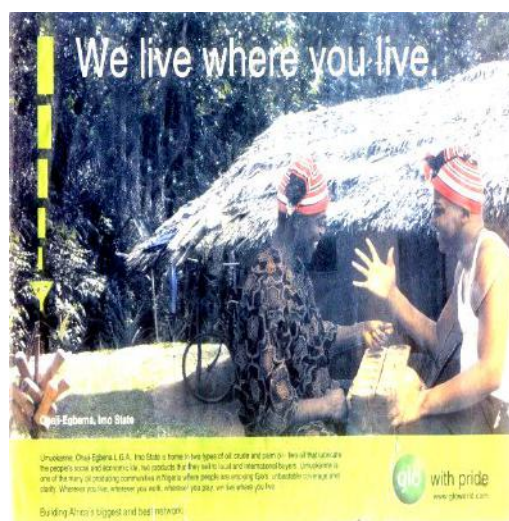


Figure 5: A typical Igbo village setting in Eastern Nigeria

In Figure 4 above, we see the pictorial image of a hut that is normally found in a village in northern Nigeria. Also, there are yoked oxen transporting harvested grain stalks. There is also the pictorial image of a typical Hausa-Fulani girl decked in traditional attire. In Figure 5, two Igbo men wearing their traditional caps are seen relaxing in the village as evident in the thatched roof of the hut and the thick forest in the background. All of these signifiers help to arouse the emotions of the audience by appealing to their sense of pride in cultural images and traditional settings whose memories they would cherish and long to keep in touch with partly by using the network that connects them to such places. It is instructive to note that the artisans involved in the occupations earlier cited are normally found in local communities. In the present discourse, they serve as iconic signs of the supposed ordinary people in rural areas who are connected to mobile networks and can therefore, still keep in contact with their children and relatives living in towns and cities. Another implied message in this respect is the attention drawn to the affordability of mobile services by rural dwellers unlike time past when telephone was a status symbol for the elite.

Nevertheless, we have to point out that the preponderance of the spatial deictic forms ‘everywhere’, ‘where’, and ‘wherever’ in the discourse betrays the exaggerative bias of advertising discourse. In fact, there are numerous towns and villages not connected to any mobile telecom network and yet, the service providers claim to be everywhere. This claim leaves a gap in the communication process, as the advertisers say what would normally interest the audience in such a slippery arena of meaning. Such words, which are characteristically injected into the advertising discourse, are referred to as weasel words. According to Taflinger (1996a: 4) weasel words are: “... those words that are tossed into a sentence that change the actual meaning of the sentence while leaving an impression that is different. It is the easiest way of having to take responsibility for anything you say, or seem to say.”

Other cultural traits apart from the ones we examined earlier serve as useful sign vehicles in the discourse. Worthy of mention is the celebration of birth in a typical African society which has been made a dominant signifier in the telecoms world. Normally, when a new baby is born to a family, the joy is shared with other members of the family both far and near. However far or near such family members may live, delivering such good tidings through mobile networks enhances promptness and efficiency.

In an MTN commercial set in the northern part of Nigeria, a grandfather set to attend the naming ceremony of a granddaughter cannot make it to the venue because horse riders in front of an Emir’s palace had blocked the road, rendering the route impassable. Left with no other option, after the baby’s father called to say all was set but for his absence, he had to communicate the name of the baby, Aishat, by phone, a situation which settles the anxiety of either postponing the ceremony or denying the grandfather of his customary responsibility. Commenting on the relevance of the message of the advert, Obinna Ezeobi says in a newspaper column that the advertisers seek to communicate: “...the fact that the network makes life easy, by connecting its subscribers with their loved ones, even when unforeseen circumstances hold them back and disrupt their plans...”⁵

Also worthy of attention is the popular MTN commercial ‘Mama Na Boy’ in which a man blessed with a new born baby calls his mother in the village that his wife has been delivered of a baby boy. Expectedly, the mother receives the message with overwhelming joy amidst rigorous dancing. While the liberal audience may not question the choice of announcing the birth of a baby boy in the commercial rather than that of a baby girl, the curious audience may query the

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rationale for this choice and wonder why the commercial did not read ‘Mama Na Girl’. The ‘Mama Na Boy’ advert posed great concerns for two Nigerian lawyers, Adejoke Babington-Ashaye of the Centre for Public Policy and Research, and Felicitas Aibokun of Legal Resource Consortium. They argued that:

Viewed against the context of a strongly patriarchal society, in which male child reference is a fact, often leading to discrimination against the girl child and therefore against women, the campaign is inappropriate... Son preference is traditionally rooted in Nigeria and is based on social constructs of the role and value of males and females. Boys are valued at birth while... mothers are blamed for producing girls.⁶

From the foregoing, one could deduce that while the advertisers tend to project birth as a cultural unit worthy of celebration, they probably fail to take cognizance of the emotive associations it may invoke on some receivers of the message. It suggests, therefore, that how a message is interpreted depends on who the receiver of that message is. It is in this light that Eco (1976: 152) explains:

In exchanging messages and texts, judgements and mentions, people contribute to the changing of codes. This social labour can be either openly or surreptitiously performed; thus a theory of code-changing must take into account the public reformulation of sign-functions and the surreptitious code-switching performed by various rhetorical and ideological discourses.

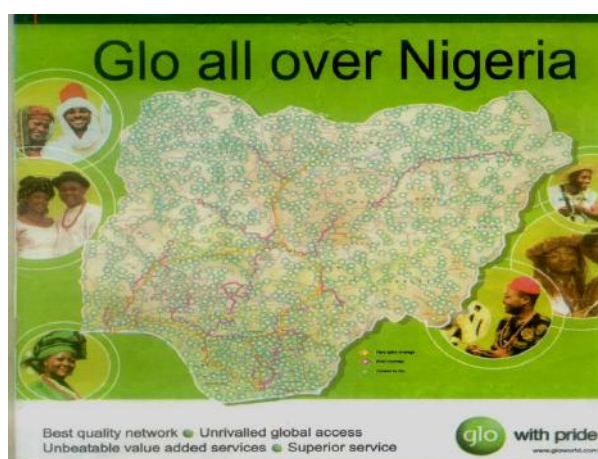


Figure 6: Traditional attires across the major ethnic groups in Nigeria

Generally, the discourse of marketing mobile telecoms services features cultural phenomena that range from traditional attires, musical instruments, and traditional dance to masquerade performance during village festivals. Others include traditional transportation system involving the use of boats in coastal areas, bicycles used mostly in villages in eastern Nigeria, and horses and donkeys used in the northern part.

One interesting aspect of the commercials in which the cultural units are used as sign vehicles is that advertisers explore the cultural units across the major ethnic groups as shown in Figure 6 where traditional attires from different cultural backgrounds are showcased with the map of Nigeria placed at the centre. The strategy of exploring cultural units makes the commercials suit the heterogeneous Nigerian society, thereby giving the impression that their networks are capable of mitigating ethnic conflicts that have been the bane of Nigeria's unity. At another level of interpretation, the diffusion of cultural values in the discourse is a rhetorical attempt at provoking the cultural sensibilities of the audience in a bid to promote those aspects of the people's culture that have been suppressed by western cultural influence.

Finally, the place of the temporal deictic marker 'now' in the discourse of advertising mobile networks deserves critical study. Consider the following excerpts:

Econet NOW in ASHAKA

Abakaliki... now on the network of the people (Glo)

Katsina now live on the network of the people. Come glo with me

Here, the emphasis is laid on the present time which marks a clean break from the past when the inhabitants of the geographical locations in question had no access to telephone services at all or when they experienced disappointments and delays occasioned by poor telecoms service delivery. In fact, the implied juxtaposition of the time past (then) and time present (now) in this case brings to bear the then-now dichotomy in popular discourses. Such a dichotomy could positively emphasize movement from obscurity, bondage or ignorance in the past, to limelight, freedom or knowledge in the present. The popular parlance 'Once I was blind but now I see' in Christian doctrine best captures the message that the unpleasant past should be swept into oblivion to celebrate great developments and achievements in the present.

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At another level of interpretation, the temporal deixis ‘now’ underlines the rolling out of certain services by the telecom companies to satisfy the curiosity of their subscribers. The expression ‘Now you can pay per second’ in Glo adverts takes us to the kernel of a vexed issue in Nigeria’s telecoms industry. At the inception of mobile telephony in Nigeria in 2001, major operators such as MTN and Econet Wireless offered the per minute billing system such that a caller would have to pay for a whole minute regardless of the few seconds spent calling. Of course, subscribers did not take kindly to this perceived dubious business tendency as they felt the tariff should have been based on the number of seconds spent.

Consequently, when Globacom broke the jinx in 2003 by introducing per second billing, subscribers heaved in relief. We can, therefore, read the import of ‘now’ in the extract ‘Now you can pay per second’. To further reinforce the verbal signifier ‘now’, there is interplay between verbal and visual signs. How it is instrumentalized here is interesting. In an advert, Charley Boy (Charles Oputa), a popular Nigerian musician, buys a bunch of banana from a hawker, peels just one, eats it halfway, returns the remaining half to the seller and collects his change. The eaten portion of the banana is a symbolic sign for the number of seconds a subscriber could spend on phone, while the returned uneaten portion symbolizes the remaining unused seconds which the service provider does not need to charge the subscriber for, hence the banana seller’s resolve to give Charley Boy some change. Similarly, the money paid for the banana is a symbol for the subscriber’s credit value which has to be deducted commensurate with the number of seconds used.



Figure 7: Daddy Showkey sending the copycat dwarf musician packing from the stage

It is interesting that Globacom's trail-blazing effort of introducing 'pay per second' forced other competing service providers to start operating the system. Since it is a business world in which competition reigns supreme, Globacom sought to persuade subscribers that the originator of an idea or strategy is its repository and must be so acknowledged. In another Globacom advert, a dwarf musician comes to the stage and performs exactly the way a popular Nigerian musician, Daddy Showkey, performs. In terms of his dancing steps, hairstyle and costume, the audience would mistake him for Daddy Showkey but for his prominent kinesic deficiency in height. In no time, however, Daddy Showkey appears on stage, sends the copycat dwarf musician packing, and entertains the audience as the real figure known to the people generally. Then the advert is capped with the verbal surrogate 'glo the original pay by the second' or 'Don't settle for the second best'. Since the copycat dwarf musician, despite sharing some of Daddy Showkey's attributes, suffers a kinesic deficiency in height, he cannot be said to duplicate the original figure. By extension, Daddy Showkey is an iconic sign for the supposed Globacom's unparalleled pay by the second billing method, while the copycat dwarf musician is an iconic sign for the perceived low quality (counterfeit) pay per second billing method offered by other networks.

6. Concluding Remarks

The semiotic interpretations of the modes and contents of the commercials that we have carried out in this study are interesting in two major respects. In the first place, the images, colours and verbal pointers seen by the researcher-reader and the meanings derived from them strongly demonstrate the polysemic nature of signs. Signs, we must emphasize, are open to interpretations which are dependent on the cultural and experiential knowledge of the interpreter within a specific context of use. The representations we have made in the analysis would, therefore, not in any way foreclose further signification.

Second, the advertisers' careful selection of those signs that will make the image of their networks fit into the perceived desires and expectations of the target audience is interesting. At the syntagmatic level, there are endless possibilities that characterize and define the telecom world, but advertisers make conscious choices at the paradigmatic level to favour the perceptual framework of their world. Creating an atmosphere of joy, celebrations, and a stress-free world of communication, advertisers give the impression that getting connected to their networks takes away worries, disappointments and frustrations occasioned by poor service delivery. However, subscribers could tell how many times they have been

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disappointed by poor network services when calling coupled with the frustrating response they usually get: ‘The number you are calling/dialling is not available/reachable at the moment, please try again later’.

In a similar vein, the commercials are tailored towards reflecting the peoples’ positive perceptions of life, reflecting only the bright side of life. As humans, we cannot gloss over the fact that there are some gloomy aspects of life for which the use of mobile telephony would be expedient. Making calls on emergency cases such as armed robbery, road accident, fire outbreak, sudden illness, among others, is apparently suppressed in the commercials, just to focus the preferred messages that the people are inclined to spreading and hearing. As a matter of fact, Nigerians make it a prayer point where they hope for continuous joy from their habitation and while their ears should be impervious to bad news.

On the whole, our exploration of the sign systems in the discourse of marketing mobile telecoms networks in Nigeria sheds light on the fact that patterns of meaning could be extended, reinvented or contested, as advertisements yield elaborate inferential interpretations when readers ‘work’ on them.

Notes

1. Quoted from a feature article ‘Four Years of (GSM): The Journey So Far’. *The Guardian*. Vol. 22, No 9,772 Wednesday August 24, 2005.
2. Cited from <http://www.lxcomm.com/lx-telecommunications-research-toc.asp?toc=2998>
3. ‘The Language of Advertising’ by Peter Sells and Sierra Gonzalez. Available at http://www.stanford.edu/class/linguist34/Unit_11/index.htm Retrieved 5th May 2007.
4. Ibid.
5. See “‘Crazy’ World Cup Advertisements” by Obinna Ezeobi in *The Punch* Wednesday June 28, 2006. p. 37.
6. *Tell Magazine* January 31, 2005 p.39

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Population, Women’s “Unmet Needs”, Climate Change and the Issue of Empowerment

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the fact that while population is the mother of cross-cutting issues related to climate change and how it impacts the environment and human well-being, other contributory factors exist. The linkages between population dynamics and climate change as well as the gender-differentiated impacts of this phenomenon – climate change - are analysed. The concept of women’s unmet needs in reproductive health and how empowering poor women is essential to tackling the negative impacts of climate change are also discussed.

Key words: population, climate change, reproductive health and empowerment

Introduction

Environmental debates are often framed by such extremes as the population explosion and depletion of resources’. In addition to other major societal upheavals, there have also been warnings concerning the state of earth’s available resources by the end of the 20th century. In his 1968 best-selling book titled *Population Bomb*, Stanford University Professor, Paul R. Ehrlich warned of the impending negative consequences of overpopulation, chiefly mass starvation, in the 1970s and 1980s, due to overpopulation and advocated immediate action to stem population growth. Yet, the world’s population keeps growing as corroborated by United Nation’s announcement on 31st October, 2011 that the world’s population hit 7 billion. Quite interestingly however, fertility is declining globally and it is only at the replacement level that only 18% of the very poor countries still have high fertility (table 1 below).

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Top Ten Countries Where Future Population Increase Will Occur 2010-2100

Country	Contribution as % of World Population Growth
1. Nigeria	19%
2. India	9%
3. Tanzania	6%
4. Ethiopia	6%
5. DRC	5%
6. Niger	5%
7. Uganda	4%
8. USA	4%
9. Kenya	3%
10. Zambia	3%
Total	64%

Table1. Source: Kaja Jurczynska, Blog, [populationaction.org](http://www.populationaction.org), 13 September 2013. Accessed at http://www.populationaction.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/blog_table-01.png

Despite this fact, United Nations (UN) estimates show that the world's population will grow by 3 billion or more by the end of this century and balloon from 7 billion in October 2011 to 9.3 billion in 2050 and hit 10.1 billion by 2100. Demographers have already pointed out that the new projections point to the unsolved problem of population explosion that helped define global politics in the 20th century. Indeed, the 20th century experienced advances in medical science and public sanitation and these resulted in the fall in death rates (increased life expectancy). These advances and the introduction of vaccines and other public health measures resulted in improvements in the standard of living and worldwide population explosion. Yet, the irony is that longevity is one of the positive consequences of scientific advances, coupled with moderate habits and possibly, regular exercise. At the same time, as global population increases by 7 billion, it poses a serious challenge since every billion more people puts instant pressures on the use of goods and services while demands for more resources will increase.

Overpopulation means over consumption in, for example, the scarcity of freshwater, the lack of food security, and the lack of space. Then, there is the problem associated with urbanisation as people, ideas and commodities are intensively mobilizing from peripheries to economic centres, where architectural wonders tower over skylines while slums continue to grow in their shadows. The estimate is, for example, that by 2050, more people will live in cities than the number of people living in the entire world today. Though the fact is that the earth lacks enough resources to sustain such enormous population growth, but at the same time, many factors determine population growth. These include contraceptive use. Yet, millions of women in developing countries are still unable to determine the size of their families because they lack access to contraception (Women's Environment & Development Organisation [WEDO], 22 March 2011).

These recent population projections by the UN are therefore a wake-up call for governments to fulfil the global demand for contraception. Currently, the combined problems of population, environment, development and sustainability are on the agenda of global agencies, governments, scientists, business, Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) and activists in a wide range of fields.

In 2005, the World Summit set out three mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development: economic development, sustainable development and environmental protection. Also, the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development generated fierce debate that included *inter alia*, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) advocates. Ensuring that women have access to the family planning they want is the first step towards creating healthier lives for the world's 7 billion people and protecting our planet for those yet to come. This paper therefore focuses on the relationship between women's "unmet needs" in reproductive health and climate change. It also discusses the disproportionate burden of climate change on women and highlights how empowering women can make them become a key partner in reducing the negative effects of this phenomenon – climate change – as well as reduce excessive population growth.

Fertility and the Concept of "Unmet Needs"

Access to contraception is critical to a woman's ability to prevent unintended pregnancy and make some of the most basic decisions about her health and life. Yet, there remains the issue of the lack of access to family planning methods for many poor women. These are the "unmet needs" of women in reproductive health estimated, at more than 200 million in number. According to Reproductive Justice [RESURJ] and the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights [YCSRR] (2014), "more than 215 million married women do not want to be pregnant but lack access to modern contraception, and many more millions who are unmarried lack this vital service." Consequently, most pregnancies are unplanned and risky (Population Action International [PAI], *BM Magazine*, Volume 339, 21, November 2009). Unlike most European Union countries, however, costs deter many women in the developing countries from using contraception. Furthermore, there is the problem of unsafe abortion, which is one of the leading causes of maternal mortality.

The statement by the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR 2014) estimates that "47,000 women die each year due to unsafe abortion which

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accounts for an estimated 13% of maternal deaths worldwide. Five million women are hospitalised each year for treatment of abortion-related complications, such as haemorrhage and sepsis. Almost all abortion-related deaths occur in developing countries, with the highest number in Africa followed by Asia and Latin America.” Moreover, “the largest group of young people in history is entering their reproductive years – globally. The decisions and policies made today, and the options available to these young people, will ultimately determine whether the world’s population will climb to anywhere from 8 billion to 11 billion by 2050” (PAI, Fact Sheet 2011).

The RESURJ and the YCSRR further point out that “8.5 million women, including adolescent girls, experience complications from unsafe abortion annually; 3 million women do not receive necessary abortion care; and almost 50,000 women die due to unsafe abortion.” There have also been other international agreements that recognise SRHR as human rights and promote their inclusion as part of national, regional and international policy frameworks. Yet, despite calls for the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education needed to leading safe, healthy and enjoyable lives, these services remain inaccessible to far too many.

The WGNRR (8 February 2014) further adds that even though progress has been made towards the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 through the implementation of International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD PoA), this achievement has not been universal. In addition, many countries are yet to meet the targets that are set out in the original ICPD PoA. Gaps in implementation remain and for women and young people, this often translates into their inability to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. This, therefore, diminishes their opportunities, impacts their health, and infringes on their right to a just and healthy life. Twenty years after the ICPD was held in 1994 in Cairo, Egypt where 179 governments signed the ICPD PoA, the world has witnessed no significant progress in its implementation.

For example, the MDGs - the blueprint agreed to by the global community and the world’s leading development institutions - have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest people – mostly women estimated at 70% of the world’s poor. Overall, the outcomes of the ICPD Regional Conferences in 2013, as well as the expert meetings of the ICPD: the Global Youth Forum, Human Rights Conference, and Women’s Health Conference, all highlight the progress

made and the challenges that remain to achieve the Cairo Goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights of all people. Currently, the world is seriously discussing what should happen to the eight MDG. In line with what happened in Rio, the 2011 Population Footprints conference held in London also focused on achieving equitable and sustainable development.

Along with what happened in Rio, the overarching goal put forward at that conference was the need to achieve equitable and sustainable development. The all-embracing conclusions were that too high levels of consumption are having a far greater impact on the environment than overall numbers of people, with a myriad of other contributory problems. This is in contrast with the assertion that reducing population growth will solve all the problems. Instead, the conference called for many different actions on major issues such as:

a. Climate Change

Today, climate change is one of the frustrating and recurring (or worsening) issues to deal with. Others include the global financial meltdown, violent political revolutions and natural disasters. This phenomenon (climate change) is associated with regional or global temperature changes and the increased prevalence of extreme weather conditions. Natural events and human activities also contribute to an increase in this phenomenon caused primarily by increases in “greenhouse” gases. Some of the consequences of this phenomenon include melting glaciers and permafrost, elevated water levels in oceans, fatal heat waves, forest fires, prolonged droughts, water shortages, desertification, soil erosion, and erratic rainfall. Furthermore, exposures to negative environmental-related changes not only cause genetic and hormonal damage in fish and other wildlife but in humans as well. Recent “severe drought in the Horn of Africa, which has caused the death of at least 30,000 children and is affecting some 12 million people, especially in Somalia, is considered a direct consequence of weather phenomena associated with climate change and global warming” (Julio Godoy, *IPS*, 26 August 2011). Added to this process is accelerated economic development, brought about by globalisation that produces negative environmental impacts in many parts of the world such as the global reach of pollution. This is highly related to high levels of consumption that are having a far greater impact on the environment than overall numbers of people, with a myriad of other contributory factors.

b. Lifestyle and Consumption Patterns

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The negative consequences of climate change have been associated with human activities. One only needs to look at development based on the generation of extreme amounts of pollution related to lifestyle and consumption patterns. These contribute to wide disparities in per capita greenhouse gas emissions. However, both developed (industrialised) and developing countries have environmental problems but these problems tend to stem from different issues (Mooney, Knox and Schacht 2009). In this regard, three elements come to mind - consumption, poverty and population growth. Developed countries have become so dependent on fossil fuels that they account for the largest part of mineral and fossil fuel consumption. This dependence has caused a supposedly dangerous level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that are contributing to (accelerating) the global warming problem from too many vehicles being driven and factories pumping hazardous gases into the atmosphere - pollution. The military can also be the biggest polluters of the environment. Less developed countries' environmental problems are also largely the result of poverty, the priority of economic survival over environmental concerns and lack of proper sanitation. Some developing countries, while growing economically do not have enough to afford the luxury of using cleaner energy resources (Mooney 422-423).

While most of the world's environmental problems arise from industrialisation and economic growth, developed countries are developing techniques that ease the impact of environmental problems. These techniques include green energy such as hydrogen, biofuel, solar and wind power. Companies are getting more responsible with their efforts to go green and even consumers are becoming more responsible by drinking tap water instead of bottled water, buying fuel-efficient cars and downsizing their homes. The reality is that the effect of climate change is global and severely felt by the poor, especially in the developing countries who are more vulnerable because of their high dependence on natural resources and limited capacity to cope with climate variability and extremes (UN 2010).

East Africa and Bangladesh are clear examples of how the hardest hit is the world's poor (Masum Momaya, *AWID*, 18 September 2009), mostly women, hence, climate change has gender-differentiated impacts as the negative fallout from this phenomenon has a devastatingly lopsided impact on women compared to men (UNFPA, 2009).

Specific Gender Impacts of Climate Change

The negative effects of climate change are not gender neutral. Specific gender impacts of climate change include women's livelihoods/food insecurity (the Editor, *IPS*, 12 December 2009); famine marriage (UNICEF, 2006); (Thalif Deen, *IPS*, 9 March 2010); water insecurity (Thalif Deen, *IPS*, 9 March 2010, 18 March 2011); UN News Centre, 18 November 2009); tourism industry (Masum Momaya, *AWID*, 18 September 2009); natural disasters (Masum Momaya, *AWID*, 18 September 2009); (Amy Lieberman, *Women's eNews*, 26 January 2010); (Thalif Deen, *IPS*, 9 March 2010); PAI (April 2011); and diseases outbreaks. The relatively low status of women in many societies and their lack of economic and cultural power may help to explain why gender-related climate change issues do not enjoy the global profile that they deserve.

The 2011 publication by Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Green European Foundation and the Greens (EFA, September 2011) shows that women are a vulnerable group in climate change policies that are often silent on gender. In climate discussions, women's roles in challenging the negative effects of climate change and their needs are also often neglected.

In a situation where the growth of population is a major factor behind climate change, the debate on this phenomenon continues to focus mostly on the role of human technologies and their economic foundations rather than on critical human numbers and behaviours as well as the ways to empower women who are most negatively impacted. This is because women can also be agents of change.

Women as Agents of Change: Resilience Moving Forward

Women are often responsible for agriculture, food and water supply, as well as first education of the next generation. They are also long-time leaders on poverty eradication and sustainability, even as gender equality remains a key issue in the climate change debate. Already, the world has seen many women spearheading the efforts to solve climate change and other environmental crises as well as jumpstart the clean energy economy. For example, small-scale farmers are now in the business of managing carbon (Stanley Kwenda, *IPS*, 7 July 2010). Through *Manos de Mujer* (Women's Hands), indigenous and rural women from southern Tolima, a province located in the heart of Colombia, are simultaneously recovering the ecosystem and regaining their own dignity in a community effort that is changing

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their environment and their lives (Helda Martínez, *IPS*, 2 January 2010). Another widespread measure in tackling climate change-related problems is planting trees in accordance with the number of inhabitants of a community or city. In this regard, one stalwart comes to mind - Wangari Maathai of Kenya, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner recognised for her environmental activism. In 1977, she founded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya to rejuvenate the environment by planting approximately tens of millions of trees.

In addition, history was made at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP15) held at the Bella Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark (7-18 December 2009) as women comprised about 30 percent of registered country delegates. This constituted the largest percentage of women attending a climate change meeting on record (Thalif Deen, *IPS*, 9 March 2010). The international community is also making efforts to allocate funds for climate-related initiatives. A good example is the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund considered as a big step forward since talks on climate change in Bali, Indonesia, in 2007, where countries committed to controlling emissions but offered no financial support mechanisms. As pointed out by Valentino Piana (economicswebinstitute.org, December 2009 - February 2010), the hope is that more funds will be allocated to gender-sensitive projects for public infrastructure such as water. She pointed out the gender CC projects in adaptation and low carbon development in Bangladesh and the Pacific as good examples of gender-sensitive projects. There is the need to link women's low-carbon initiatives with sustainable development policies. Until women are seen as active agents of change, these efforts mean nothing.

Though women are at the frontlines of climate change, they continue with the fight for their voices to be heard and their very diverse perspectives to shape effective national policies and actions recognised. In the fight against climate change, if gender-sensitive policies are not implemented it will have disastrous consequences on climate change-related gender balance. In this regard, the first step in helping them (women) deal with the challenges of climate change starts with women empowerment.

Empowering Women

Empowerment is the exact answer women need to help cope and stand up to the challenges posed by climate change. There is the need to include initiatives that support women and girls especially in rural areas, focusing on education, training on farming and livestock-raising techniques while prioritising and providing adequate information on family planning; local involvement in constructing water

wells, the provision of dependable solar energy cookers, and the ability of women to have strong voices on issues of climate change. By empowering women with a voice and knowledge, the world can help remedy the negative effects of climate change that continues to create environmental crisis.

Women organisations can also push their governments further and hold them accountable. They must be recognised and given a formal place at decision-making tables, that is, from global policy-making spheres, including at UN Women and in Rio+20 debates, to national and sub-national planning on forests and finance, where women remain incredibly marginalised. The launching of the Women and the Green Economy (WAGE) campaign at the 16th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Cancun, Mexico (December 2010) is a step in the right direction. WAGE is aimed at promoting leadership amongst women in order to create a sustainable green economy and alleviate climate change (Aline Cunico, *IPS*, 22 April 2011).

Furthermore, women's rights stand in the future of sustainable development framework. There is the need to address the systemic issues behind the causes of climate change, that is, by touching on themes with a local context with the aim of putting political pressure on governments at the local, national, regional and international levels. Achieving this requires that women constantly organize in order to empower themselves so as to reverse the negative impacts of climate change on women. With the direct effect that climate change has on women, the lack of women's voices in the environmental debate is a missed opportunity because women have accumulated a vast wealth of knowledge about food, water management, weather patterns and their effect on the community. Empowering poor women is essential to tackling the challenges posed by climate change. Progress for women is progress for all!

Conclusion

There is the need to find ways to reduce inequities and ensure the well-being of people alive today, for the following generations. New ways of thinking and unprecedented global co-operation should also emerge. The focus starts with empowering women as decision-makers for a healthy peaceful planet, economic and social justice, and human rights for all. If women are included and empowered, the world will do a better job in addressing climate change and its consequences. Women's special vulnerabilities caused by climate change should be acknowledged. They are also managers and primary caretakers of natural

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resources, and thus have a critical role to play in ensuring a safe, sustainable, secure future for planet Earth. As the world population zeroes in on the United Nation's numerical milestone, it is important to think about the impacts of increasing population growth on women's health, educational opportunities, and their ability to provide for their families.

Some environmentalists still believe that population growth remains the biggest problem facing the world therefore; reducing fertility is all that matters. However, fertility has actually dropped so far below replacement level in a growing number of countries that the dearth of children is, perceived to be a source of serious economic and social problem, creating an opening for anti-sexual rights and human rights (anti-SRHR) forces to encourage governments to restrict the right to contraception and abortion. In China, for example, rolling back the one-child policy has scaled through. All said and done, while Ehrlich's book generated the great sustainability debate in the 1960s, current studies show that much has changed over the past 20 years, therefore, his book can be considered alarmist in tone. Overall, climate change is a problem of human numbers, lifestyle and consumption; therefore, the problem is about population control and the wise distribution of natural resources. Women can, therefore, be agents of change in this regards.

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Predator and Prey: Islamic Feminism and the Discourse of Female-authored Novels in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

Muslim women's writing from northern Nigeria has attracted feminist critical attention but the exploration of this tradition through a blend of feminism and critical discourse analysis has not been explored. This paper examines Asabe Kabir Usman's *Destinies of Life* and Saliha Abubakar Abdullahi Zaria's *Edge of Fate* to show how these women negotiate the interstices of feminist ideology, religion, culture and Western education. It also discusses the binaries of Islamic religion and culture vis-à-vis the yearnings of the contemporary northern Nigerian Muslim woman to extricate herself from the patriarchal web of inequity and injustice. This study employed Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical theoretical framework for the elicitation of perspectives on ideology and dominance and the binaries of inequity in heterosexual relationships in the selected literary works and the socio-cultural milieu that produced them. The analysis projects the dilemma and creative impulse of the contemporary northern Nigerian Muslim woman as she attempts to overcome the forces that inhibit her self-expression without overtly upsetting the applecart of Islam and patriarchal ideologies.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, female-author, inequality, Islamic feminism, Muslim womanhood, patriarchy.

Introduction

Nigerian women writers exemplified by Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Theodora Akachi Ezeigbo and lately Chimamanda Adichie have used literature to challenge the inherent contradictions in a society where men are treated differently from women; exploitative and oppressive tendencies against women are regarded as given; and heartbreak, unending tears and soul-penetrating torment are accepted as the lot of womanhood. A cursory look at the works authored by women from northern Nigeria such as Zaynab Alkali, Saliha Abubakar Abdullahi Zaria and Asabe Kabir Usman reveals that this new generation of writers, who can be described as the voice of women from northern Nigeria, are becoming more outspoken in a socio-cultural milieu where women are often consigned to household and nursery matters. This new generation of writers have brought to the front burner of public discourse issues that affect the physical and spiritual well-

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being of women in Muslim majority northern Nigeria; issues that border on gender discrimination, oppression and suppression of womanhood and much more.

The paper examines how Saliha Abubakar Abdullahi Zaria and Asabe Kabir Usman use their prose to demonstrate the northern Nigerian Muslim woman's negotiation of the interstice of feminist ideology, gender equality and the rights of northern Nigerian Muslim women in the context of an emerging global culture. It discusses the perspectives from which both creative writers present the binaries of Islamic religion and culture *vis-à-vis* the contemporary northern Nigerian Muslim woman's yearning for release from the inequity and injustice of patriarchy. Lastly, it elicits some social and psychological explanations why the contemporary northern Nigerian Muslim woman is unable to fight the cause of Islamic feminism openly in her male-centred *Umma* (Muslim-majority community).

Asabe Kabir Usman's *Destinies of Life* is about Aisha, a young Muslim woman whose parents divorced when she was very young. Consequently, she was brought up by her doting father and a wicked step mum. Aisha was set for wedding in her late teens when tragedy struck; Muktar, her fiancé, died in an auto accident two days to their wedding. She is so heartbroken that she thinks she will never contemplate marriage again. A few years later, she meets Umar and with her father's encouragement, she enters into a blissful marital relationship. Barely twenty years into the marriage, Aisha literally catches her husband in bed with Nafisah, his undergraduate niece who lives with them and whom Aisha had previously regarded as her daughter especially as she is about her first daughter's age.

Aisha's shock is compounded by Umar's decision to marry Nafisah as his second wife. With her change in status, Nafisah demands that Zainab, her cousin and Aisha's daughter, address her as 'Aunty'; she sees herself as Zainab's step mum in view of her marriage to Zainab's dad. This rude shock and the attendant wrangling lead to Aisha's relocation to her father's house in another city. Soon after, Umar is arraigned for corruption, he loses his job as a senior civil servant and his property is confiscated by the court. He loses his wealth; Nafisah leaves him; and he becomes terminally ill and hospitalised. Aisha returns to nurse him; he pleads for forgiveness from her and their children. He doesn't recover from the ailment and in turn dies a broken man in his hospital bed.

Saliha Abubakar Abdulahi Zaria's *Edge of Fate* is about a young educated Muslim woman, Salmah, whose mother died when she was very young. Like Aisha in *Destinies of Life*, she too was brought up by her father and her step mum. Salmah

is an unusually gifted young woman who often receives foreknowledge of happenings around her. She has an uncanny personality that makes men fall in love with her; and she almost always has her wishes fulfilled. As a teenager, her soul becomes entangled with that of Maina, the scion of a wealthy upper class family, but they are unable to marry because of the wide disparity in their family backgrounds. Salmah later falls in love with Gidado, a previously married army officer, but the marriage breaks down after three years because Salmah couldn't have children. About four years later, Maina and Salmah run into each other by chance; they realise that they are still deeply in love. The story ends "happily" as Salmah marries into Maina's polygamous home where she is warmly accepted by Maina's children and his first wife.

Contemporary Perspectives on Islamic Feminism

Feminism generally refers to the body of work concerned with the social, political, and economic equality of women by challenging the deep-seated nature of gender subordination in a society. Margot Badran (2005, 2009) distinguishes between secular and Islamic feminism; while the former generally describes an all-inclusive women activism in Muslim-majority countries, the latter describes Muslim women's activism based mainly on a rereading of the Qur'an by Muslim women. We don't quite see the need for the distinction between secular and Islamic feminism. To us, any struggle for the emancipation of Muslim women from the clutches of patriarchy in Muslim-majority communities can be accurately described as Islamic feminism. This movement has become inevitable in this age of enlightenment where more people of different races and climes are becoming increasingly aware of their fundamental human rights as global citizens (Moghadam, 2003; Mahmood, 2005). The preamble to *The Charter of the United Nations* reaffirms "faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small..." The movement is concerned with the variety of ways in which patriarchy, along with other axis of male domination, is being challenged in an Islamic framework. Hence it is often seen as a movement of people who retain their Islamic conviction, but promote egalitarian ethics of Islam by alluding to relevant verses in the Qur'an to support their stance (e.g. Badran, 2001; Barlas, 2002).

Although Islamic feminism continues to spread because of its agenda of relevance and enlightenment, it continues to generate much controversy in the form of opposing perspectives and arguments. According to Margot Badran (2008:26), detractors in the West "portrayed feminists as man-haters" while others in the East branded them as "perpetrators of cultural treason and, ironically in so doing

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‘colluded’ with westerners in declaring feminism western” (ibid). This view is echoed by Rochelle S. Witcher (2005:8) who observe that Islamic feminism is often in direct contention with the powerful religious elite because it often “flaunted basic religious doctrine and ... challenged the patriarchal structure of Islam itself.” Islamic feminism emerged as a result of the need to check sexist and patriarchal tendencies in the practice of Islam in Muslim-dominated countries. According to Valentine Moghadam (2002:1158), Islamic feminists combine their religious reinterpretations with recognition of universal standards, such as the UN’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Very much like many other Middle Eastern religions, the practice of Islam in most Islamic countries is overwhelmingly male-centred prompting Fatima Mernissi (1991) to observe that the religion has put a “sacred stamp onto female subservience”. According to her (ibid:23), the school and the workplace had until recently been considered the exclusive preserve of men and the privilege of maleness; hence access of women to education and paid employment in Muslim-majority countries is “one of the most fundamental upheavals of the twentieth century”. Reacting to criticism from proponents of patriarchy, she said, “If women’s rights are a problem for some modern Muslim men, it is neither because of the Qur’an nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interest of a male elite” (Fatima Mernissi, ibid:ix).

The Islamic feminist movement comprises mainly practising Muslim women, who are preoccupied with resisting the unequal treatment of women in Islamic societies. Many of them are not comfortable with being called feminists, and they actually resisted being branded as such initially, because such branding frames them as anti-Islam and blasphemers. At the risk of being misunderstood or ostracised from the Islamic community, they have continued to resist the injustice and the trajectory of patriarchy and male-centred practices that prevail in Islamic countries exemplified by Iran, Morocco and Egypt. Asma Barlas (2008:19), for instance, came to terms with her identity when she writes: “if my reading of the Qur’an is feminist simply by virtue of being based in and on the Qur’an, then, clearly I am an Islamic feminist and there’s no escaping that fact!” According to Rochelle S. Witcher (2005:7), women are now returning to the texts of their faith, exemplified by *The Qur’an* and *The Hadith*, and are working within the confines of Islamic ideology to reclaim their rights as Muslims.

Margot Badran (2006) observes that Islamic feminism has incurred enemies from Muslim men “who fear the loss of patriarchal privileges” and a minority of Muslim women “who fear the loss of patriarchal protection”. This is because its members

have taken on the task of eradicating many patriarchal ideals often glossed as Islamic and promoting globally acceptable ideals of gender equality through feminist reading of the Qur'an. She observed that Muslim converts in western societies were faced with a "painful contradiction between Qur'anic ideals of justice and equality and oppressive patriarchal practices that prevail in many Islamic communities. She argued that there is no reason biological duality should be allowed to diminish the ideal of fundamental equality of all human beings. She illustrated with Qur'an 4:34 which contains the expression "*qawwamuna 'ala*", and has been used by generations of men to justify and perpetuate male authority over women. She argued that this patriarchal reading has grossly exaggerated the significance of men over women. She also alluded to the popular belief amongst Muslims that a woman's path to heaven can only be attained first through obedience to her husband. However, Islamic feminists reading of the same verse places the statement, "*qawwamuna 'ala*" in the context of childbearing and nursing only and not as men having responsibility over women at all times. Patriarchal interpretation of this and many other verses in the Qur'an, Badran asserts, are self-serving and erroneous. She concludes that patriarchy, as ideology and practice, "fundamentally disrupts the Qur'anic ideal and practice of human equality". Elsewhere, she writes:

Islamic feminism is very much a work in progress. To engage in Islamic feminism is to stretch our minds and to expand the parameters of knowledge, and to develop and refine new analytical and conceptual vocabulary. It is to forge new bonds and extend the scope and forms of our collective and everyday activism. It is also to enter an embattled arena and perhaps this is a sign of Islamic feminism's urgency and relevance (Margot Badran, 2008:34-35).

According to Margot Badran (2009:3), secular feminism and Islamic feminism approach gender equality differently. While secular feminism concentrate more on the implementation of gender equality in the public sphere and appear silent on the private sphere or family domain, Islamic feminists advance "compelling arguments that the patriarchal model of the family does not conform to the Qur'anic principles of human equality and gender justice" (ibid:4). Secular feminist movements that arose in various Muslim-majority countries were organised more on national frontiers than religious; hence the ideologies they espoused were not anchored solely on the Qur'an unlike their Islamic counterparts. Consistent and organised feminist activities in different geographical and national boundaries led to the emergence of all-inclusive and pluralistic descriptions of secular feminist movements exemplified by Egyptian feminism, Syrian feminism and Iranian

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feminism. Badran (ibid:5) observes that Islamic feminism is basically in the singular, because it “seeks to maintain a focus on what is an intellectual endeavour or *ijtihadic* project of articulating a coherent model of an egalitarian Islam, and one that can serve as a template for religious and socio-cultural transformation.” Secular feminists and Islamic feminists are not rivals, neither do they oppose each other; indeed they complement each other by working together to achieve shared goals in the Muslim-majority countries they are found.

It is important that Islamic feminism be taken seriously as a liberatory force and certainly not as a cult of dissident Muslim women; hence focus should be placed more on perspectives espoused and the methodology employed rather than the gender or the religious affiliation of its proponents. We subscribe to an all-inclusive definition accommodating all scholars with Islamic feminist conviction, irrespective of gender or religious leaning, whose writings and activities demonstrate commitment to the emancipation of Muslim females from the patriarchal web of sub-humanisation, inequality and injustice. This is why we have reconceptualised Islamic feminism as a movement comprising Muslim and non-Muslim men and women working towards the eradication of all traditional and social practices that perpetuate the impression that the Muslim woman is unequal to males in both the private and public spheres.

Islamic Feminist Activism in Nigeria

Islamic feminism, Margot Badran (2009:285) observe, is a “global discourse that is continually fed by the local, while the global discourse likewise animates the local.” The term feminism or feminist, be it secular, Muslim or Islamic are not in general circulation in Nigeria. However, Islamic feminism in Nigeria is used to encapsulate the activities of Muslim women who espouse ideals that are comparable to those promoted by Islamic feminists in other climes. Islamic feminism in Nigeria dates as far back as 1985 when Muslim women from various associations decided to unite under the umbrella of the Federation of Muslim Women’s Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) to champion the cause of gender equality in the country. The organisation has been actively involved in the promotion of laudable ideals which include nationwide campaign for the education of girls, provision of health care service for women and children and organising women empowering programmes across the country. Many more Nigerian Muslim women were impelled to identify with feminist ideals in the wake of the adoption of *Shari’a* laws by twelve Muslim-majority states in northern Nigeria shortly after the country’s return to democracy in 1999.

Muslim male-dominated legislatures in most of the Muslim-majority states in northern Nigeria saw the nation's return to democracy as an opportunity to institute patriarchal ideals by the incorporation of *Shari'a* laws into their states' statutory laws. *Shari'a* law, for instance, stipulates death by stoning for a woman found guilty of adultery and amputation of the arm for a person found guilty of stealing. Shortly after the adoption of these ancient laws, two common women, Amina Lawal of Katsina State and Safiyatu Husseini of Sokoto State, were arraigned before *Shari'a* courts in their respective states. They were summarily tried, found guilty of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning! Human rights activists and feminists both within and outside Nigeria immediately rose to the occasion by mounting vigorous media campaigns against this shocking travesty. The women were able to appeal their conviction through legal representation offered by women rights activists and the judgment was subsequently overturned by higher *Shari'a* courts. Margot Badran, (2009:287) described the acquittal of the women as a "triumph of the principles of Islamic equality and justice over patriarchal inequities".

Badran, (2009:282) also observed that these two widely publicised incidents "catalysed a longer-term unfolding of Islamic feminism" in Nigeria. According to her:

Islamic feminists have taken pains to make the distinction between *Shari'a* as the path discerned from the Qur'an that Muslims are exhorted to follow in life (*Shari'a* as divine inspiration and guiding principles), and so called "*Shari'a* law(s)" (laws deriving from understandings of *fiqh* that are man-made and therefore open to questioning and change). The *Shari'a*, as "the path" indicated in the scripture as the word of God, is sacred; but it needs to be ascertained through human efforts. By stressing the distinction between man-made law(s) and the divine path, Islamic feminists strive to remove an obstacle in the way of those who feared that they might be challenging divine laws if they questioned *fiqh* laws derived from it (Badran 2009:285).

Asma Barlas (2002:1) is less conciliatory in her approach to Islamic feminism. Unlike Margot Badran, her writings and those of Fatima Mernissi for instance, contain radical departures from patriarchal readings of the Qur'an. Some of her arguments such as "the Qur'an does not establish men as superior to women and the Qur'an does not represent God as father or male (ibid)" are more like a

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misreading of the Qur'an than anything else and such provocative utterances risk trivialising the cause of Islamic feminism as mere hysterics and blasphemous ranting in the eyes of Muslim males. She asks:

Is the Qur'an a patriarchal or misogynistic text? Does the Qur'an teach that rule by the father/husband is divinely ordained and an earthly continuation of God's Rule, as religious and traditional patriarchies claims? Does the Qur'an advocate gender differentiation, dualisms, or inequality on the basis of sexual (biological) differences between women and men? ... Do the teachings of the Qur'an allow us to theorize the equality, sameness, similarity, or equivalence, as the context demands, of women and men? (Asma Barlas 2002:1)

The above and many other questions like them express the irritation of Islamic feminists. This paper is an attempt to proffer an alternative avenue to finding answers to them by using a secular theoretical framework that has proved useful for the analysis of dissident discourse.

A Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Female-authored Novels

There are some methodological hurdles that need to be scaled by Islamic feminist analysts, or any scholar for that matter, seeking to interpret female-authored novels in Muslim-majority northern Nigeria. Contemporary Islamic feminists, exemplified by Asma Barlas (2002) and Fatima Mernissi (1991), subscribe to the approach of engaging in extensive Qur'anic exegeses to support their position on gender equality and justice in relation to Muslim women. According to Asma Barlas, "we need to base our readings of the Qur'an in our understanding of God." Margot Badran, who has the background of a historian, frequently combines contemporary historical analysis with her reading of Islamic texts to champion the cause of Muslim women in her research (e.g. Badran 2005, 2008 and 2009). While we appreciate the fact that these approaches are not without some merit, we consider a methodology that anchors its findings on what the Qur'an and other Islamic texts say or do not say as essentially confrontational and inherently divisive. This methodology puts Islamic feminists on the defensive and gives room for proponents of patriarchy to tag their service to humanity as anti-Islamic and blasphemous.

It is a well-known fact that anyone, irrespective of the side they belong in the divide between good and evil, can always find a scripture that supports their argument in hallowed texts exemplified by the Bible or the Qur'an. The ancient

source and sacredness often associated with scriptural texts, in this case *The Qur'an* and *The Hadith*; demand that they be interpreted with reverence, caution and a profound sense of responsibility by designated experts represented by Islamic theologians, Islamic legal experts and Muslim clerics. Too little can be gained from secular “rereading” or intellectual interpretation espoused by prominent Islamic feminists, because the Qur'an is perceived by devout Muslims as having been “revealed” from heaven. Hence, such a religious text is generally expected by adherents to be accurately interpreted only by divine inspiration and “divine revelation” by Islamic theologians or clerics. Consequently, secular readings or pronouncements by lay Muslims and non-Muslims can easily be dismissed as superficial, literary or intellectual and therefore, unacceptable at best and blasphemous at worst. We have refrained as much as possible from making direct or oblique reference to Islamic texts exemplified by *The Qur'an* and *The Hadith* to insulate our analysis from the charge of partisanship or anti-Islamic subjectivity. We have therefore, opted for an approach that better serves the liberatory purpose of Islamic feminism in northern Nigeria or elsewhere.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is basically interested in analysing opaque, as well as, transparent relationships of dominance, discriminations, power and control in society. Aside from investigating social inequality as it is expressed, constituted and legitimised in discourse, it also aims to ‘demystify’ discourse by deciphering ideological perspectives in them. Very much like CDA, feminism in general concerns itself with highlighting oppressive practices against females prevalent in many societies with a view to liberating them from such unwholesome tendencies. Such practices can be exemplified by discrimination against women in both public and private spheres, and several other manifestation of unequal treatment of female children and women.

According to Weiss & Wodak (2003:14), it easily aligns itself with “the perspectives of those who suffer and critically analyse the language use of those in power; those who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions.” CDA concern themselves not only with what is said or written in the text, but what is left out of it. Hence, critical discourse analysts do not merely read political and social ideologies onto texts; rather they try to figure out all the possibilities between texts, ways of representing and ways of being, and discover why certain people take up certain positions.

We have opted for Ruth Wodak’s (2001) discourse-historical approach to discourse analysis for our interpretation of northern Nigerian Islamic Feminist

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discourse in the literary texts that formed the basis for this paper. Her approach to mediation between discourse and society is an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological one that transcends mere linguistic and literary analysis. This is because its method integrates knowledge of the historical, political, sociological and psychological dimensions in the analysis and interpretation of a discursive occasion. The approach sees discourse as a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective (Fairclough, 1995:14). To Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258), discourse can be described as a social practice that implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive occasion and specific fields of action (e.g. situation, institution and social structures). They further describe discourse as being socially constitutive and socially conditioned because it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, social identities and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo on the one hand; and it contributes to transforming it on the other hand.

The Predator-Prey Metaphor and Islamic Feminist Discourse

Zillah Eisenstein (1984:90) defines patriarchy as a system that transforms “biological sex into politicized gender, which prioritizes the male while making the woman different (unequal), less than, or the ‘Other’”. Reading Usman and Zaria’s novels from an Islamic feminist perspective, it would seem that patriarchy has ensnared northern Nigerian Muslim females into base and carnal subhuman beings to be hunted, enjoyed and discarded at the pleasure of their male counterparts. Saliha Zaria presents a stark and uninhibited description of the reality of Muslim womanhood in northern Nigeria with the following remarks:

He is a man, isn’t he? And man is a predator, the hunter and the abuser of the female sex. Many of them don’t even realise or know that they have a responsibility to their family beside feeding and clothing (*Edge of Fate*, p.104).

The predator-prey metaphor is made particularly glaring on the night of Salmah’s wedding to Gidado. It was a night that turned out to be her worst nightmare; she discovered to her chagrin that what she expected to be a pleasurable night of shared love turned out to be a brutalisation of her womanhood. Salmah was literally raped by a much older and experienced husband who must have plunged into the void of temporary insanity on discovering that his young bride was a virgin. The brute force he put into the deflowering act had such physical and psychological effect on the inexperienced bride that she went into a state of coma

for three days and she had to be hospitalised for two weeks before she could recover from the aftermath of the sexual encounter.

Her lower abdomen throbbed painfully. She ached all over. She ached in places she hadn't even known she could ache. ... Is this what all women endured? Is this what the first night is all about?" (*Edge of Fate*, p.99)

Although the reader forgives Gidado when he showers love and care on fragile Salmah after her discharge from hospital, they are surprised that he could treat her with such calculating callousness barely three years after, merely because she couldn't give him a child. Gidado asks in typical patriarchal male style: "Why didn't you tell me that you don't want my child, Salmah?" (*Edge of Fate* p.106). Gidado indecorously drops Salmah, his wife of three years, like a burning metal on learning that his second wife has become pregnant; hence Zaria seizes the opportunity to express her view of the men in her world:

Salmah was ... shocked not by the news of her mate's pregnancy but by what she heard and their actions, especially her husband's. She now agrees that **most men are inhuman beasts; intent only on their own selfish desires**, without a thought as to the feelings of others around them." (*Edge of Fate*, p.109; emphasis ours)

Salmah soon gets an opportunity to plead with her husband for his understanding of her plight. His insensitive and callous response prompts her to make an unguarded statement that profoundly summarises the view of northern Nigerian Muslim women about men: "You never think of anyone but yourself."

"A little consideration Gidado. It is not my fault that I cannot bear you a child," She cried.

"Are you blaming me for **your misfortune**?" He snapped. She stood up from the kneeling position that she was before.

"I don't know which is worse, your relatives' and wife's accusation or your own. **You never think of anyone but yourself, do you?**" She demanded hysterically (*Edge of Fate*, p.111; emphasis ours)

The reader wonders about what became of the passion and the promise of a blissful marriage that propelled what started as a whirlwind courtship between Gidado and Salmah into marriage. The couple's loving relationship was suddenly eclipsed by the visible proof of Gidado's manhood in the pregnancy of his second wife.

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Gidado callously describes Salmah's inability to get pregnant as her "misfortune". Consequently, a hitherto loving and dutiful wife becomes expendable to the patriarchal male merely because she fails to boost his male ego with pregnancy. The death knell sounds on Gidado and Salmah's marriage when he remarks: "Don't you think it will be better for both of us? You can follow your destiny elsewhere" (*Edge of Fate*, p.111). Patriarchy does not compromise on the base and carnal instinct of males; they just have to be satisfied even if it is at the expense of female well-being. The predator has no scruples about the fulfilment of his pleasure. He is driven by pure animal instinct to satisfy his desires; hence he can be incurably selfish and predictably amoral in his pursuit of the fulfilment of such desires. In Usman's *Destinies of Life*, a friend advises Nafisah:

Let me tell you something, a man who walks out on his wife of twenty years when he finds one he likes better, a man who can leave his family for a girlfriend is not someone you should trust. Believe me Nafisah, if he could do it once, he will do it again" (*Destinies of Life*, p.55-56).

Something that patriarchy has in common with predators is their predilection for selecting weak animals as prey. The young, pregnant, sick or wounded animals in the wild often find it difficult to keep up with the rest of the herd; hence they become easy prey for stalking hyenas. Umar's choice of his niece, Nafisah, as second wife was not only a betrayal of his wife and children, but the act smirks of patriarchal opportunism. Centuries of male domination and suppression of women have produced the feeling of superiority in males and acceptance of inferiority by females in many Muslim-majority communities. This mind-set of unequal status as females in a male-centred society explains why Nafisah could not resist Umar's advances and why Aisha could not persuade her husband to reverse his unbecoming decision to marry their ward.

The plight of the northern Nigerian Muslim woman is often complicated by the stance of older women, exemplified by mothers, aunties and previous wives. Patriarchy enjoys the support of older women who have passed through its oppressive tendencies and do not see why the younger generation should be exempt from the humiliation and suffering that they had undergone. When Salmah decides to move on with her life by seeking her father's consent to remarry, her aunt and step mother proved to be more patriarchal than her father by registering their displeasure. Their protest was doused by Salmah's father's gentle admonition:

I am asking for forgiveness if I have wronged you. You must understand that this is Salmah's second marriage, and if we follow our Islamic rule, she has the right and privilege to choose her own husband now. What sin have I committed? (*Edge of Fate*, p.146)

Both female-authored novels portray the major male characters as ruthless hunters with little or no respect for the feelings of the heroines whom they portray as defenceless preys in a male-dominated world. The human relationships in both novels are built around male pleasure and are ultimately terminated at the pleasure of the male partners. The female partners on the other hand are left to pick up the broken pieces of what is left of their lives after having been emotionally mauled by their predatory male partners.

The Binarism of Islamic Feminism and the Discourse of the Female-Authored Novel

Literature has always played a pivotal role in the struggle against man's inhumanity to man and more specifically in the struggle of the black race for emancipation since the days of slavery. It was drafted into the frontline in the war against racial inequality and injustice in Great Britain with the publication of literary works exemplified by Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizens* in 1974. The world was outraged and the English people in particular were profoundly embarrassed by the stark revelations in the novel. It was a major weapon in the struggle against racial segregation in America in the 1960s and South Africa's Apartheid policy in much of the second half of the twentieth century. In the same vein, Asabe Kabir Usman and Saliha Abubakar Zaria use their writings to present the grave inequality and injustices that the northern Nigerian Muslim woman is subjected to under the guise of Islam and tradition. The portrayal of northern Nigerian Muslim womanhood in these novels raises many fundamental questions one of which is: "Are there still second class citizens on this planet in the twenty-first century?"

Binarism, a mode of analysing dichotomies such as maleness and femaleness, has been found particularly germane for the discussion of gender equality and patriarchal injustice in the discourse of northern Nigerian female-authored novels. One wonders: is the northern Nigerian Muslim female different from females in other parts of the world? If the answer is no, how come it is socially acceptable for Umar and Maina in *Destinies of Life* and *Edge of Fate*, respectively, to marry more than one wife, but it is taboo for their wives, Aisha and Salmah, to follow their example by marrying co-husbands? Secondly, if the heroines of the selected novels were not second class citizens in their country, why didn't they have the same

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privilege as males to divorce their spouses? They had to literally beg their husbands to divorce them before they could walk away from humiliation and male oppression in their homes. Both authors, Usman and Zaria, who are Muslim women themselves, found it difficult to come to terms with a social system that permits a wife to be divorced merely at the husband's pleasure and not necessarily because the woman commits *zina* (adultery) or some other grave offence. It would seem from a feminist reading of the two novels that Islamic patriarchy has trapped Muslim womanhood into a base and superficial relationship in which her feelings as a human being do not count. She in turn continues to endure inequality and injustice as her "destiny" or her "fate", a position that does not resonate with the principles of fundamental human rights, equity and good conscience espoused by the United Nation's Charter.

The emotional capital invested into the affectionate relationship between the heroines, Aisha and Salmah, and their respective spouses in both novels is so deep and natural that there is hardly any space left in the couples' hearts for a third party. According to Zaria, Muslim women too, like all other women, crave "a special intimacy that exists between two people who share a deep and genuine bond" (*Edge of Fate*, p.104). The arrival of a co-wife for Aisha in Usman's *Destinies of Life*; and Salmah in Zaria's *Edge of Fate*, are presented in the novels as antiquated, inharmonious and injurious to the well-being of all parties in a modern family setting. Umar's declaration, "As a Muslim, I can marry up to four wives if I can afford it" and his rhetorical question "Is it illegal for me to marry again?" (*Destinies of Life*, p.71), is tantamount to plunging a dagger to the depth of Aisha's soul. Although as a Muslim woman, she is familiar with the practice of polygamy as condoned by Islam, nonetheless she sees her husband's decision to take a second wife as a betrayal of the deep affection they both shared. When she requests divorce, Umar responds sneeringly with an air of superiority, "So you want to leave because I want to get married (p.72)? Suppose we ask, had Aisha opted for an alternative co-spouse like he did, would he have accepted it? The breakdown of the marital relationships in both novels points to northern Nigerian Muslim women's personal preference for monogamy over polygamy, which patriarchy condones.

An Islamic feminist reading of Usman's *Destinies of Life* shows that patriarchal ideals that permits a Muslim man to elevate his ward to a second wife is to be held partly responsible for Aisha's heartbreak and not her "destiny". Likewise, patriarchy is also responsible for the breakdown of Salmah and Gidado's marriage and for permitting Salmah's remarriage (as second wife) to polygamous Maina in

Edge of Fate. A superficial reading of the “happy ending” in *Edge of Fate* in which Salmah and her co-wife accept to share the same man gives the impression that Zaria condones polygamy and brands this fossilized patriarchal practice as acceptable to northern Nigerian Muslim women. However, a reader with an understanding of the nature of womanhood could easily deduce that the loving relationship between Salmah and Maina is too intense to accommodate a harmonious love triangle comprising a male and two rival females. Maina’s decision to take a second wife pitches his two wives in an unhealthy rivalry that is bound to erupt in violence in the near future.

Does a man have the capacity to love two or more women equally? The founder of Islam, Prophet Muhammed, was a monogamist during the fifteen or more years that he was married to Khadijat, his soul mate and the first convert to Islam. By the time she died, he had become so spiritually, militarily and materially endowed that he was assailed with the challenge of choosing wives from the array of marriageable females that were used to seal friendship bonds and family ties with him. This is a plausible explanation for his polygamous lifestyle after the death of Khadijat. According to Mernissi (1991:163), of the prophet’s nine wives, Aisha, was his favourite. He loved her so much that he caused her room to be located adjacent to the mosque where he spent most of his time especially towards the end of his life. Their loving relationship was so deep and special to him that he had little or no time for his other wives; hence jealousy which took the form of bellyaching and *fitna* (civil war) erupted frequently amongst his many women. Such incidents can be exemplified with his experience with Hafsat, who admitted to having “had a fit of anger with the prophet and sulked until nightfall” (Mernissi, 1991:143). At a stage, Prophet Muhammed had to leave home for 29 days to escape from his household palaver. There was also evidence that he gave his wives the choice to leave him as a solution to the “intense disputes” between him and them. Qayla Bint al-Ash~ath was the only wife recorded to have taken this option (ibid:172). Today’s northern Nigerian Muslim woman is tired of what generations of Muslim women have endured since the days of Prophet Muhammed; hence the discourse of *Destinies of Life* and *Edge of Fate* can be described as capturing the lacerations in the spirit of the northern Nigerian Muslim woman and her yearning to enjoy an exclusive heterosexual relationship with the man she loves.

Secondly, if we take a glance at history, we will observe that Islam came about during a period of frequent wars when too many men died on the battlefield. Women became so many that even if every man married four wives, there would still be many women without husbands. At the time Islam was instituted, a Muslim man was permitted to marry up to four wives by the patriarchal tradition that

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prevailed at the time. However, this practice is no longer popular amongst educated people who are better informed about the psychological and physiological nature of womanhood. A feminist reading of the selected novels leaves the reader with too many questions some of which are as follows: Does the same blood flow through the veins of Muslim and non-Muslim women? Why should the northern Nigerian Muslim woman be expected to endure her marriage as her “fate” or the “destiny” of femaleness instead of a relationship between two equals? Why should the northern Nigerian Muslim woman unlike her counterpart in other climes continue to accept the patriarchal practice of plurality of wives and other acts of gender inequality in the private sphere in this age of globalisation? Why should it be the man’s prerogative to divorce his wife and not the other way round? Questions like these point to the unequal treatment of northern Nigerian Muslim females as second class citizens in Usman and Zaria’s novels.

Perhaps, Usman and Zaria’s survivalist instinct or the need to remain alive and relevant made it imperative for both authors to employ ambivalence as a creative tool to mask the real import of their message. A patriarchal reading of *Destinies of Life* will blame Aisha’s exposure to western education and feminist ideals for the calamities that befell her marriage through the breakup of her marriage and the untimely death of her son. However, an Islamic feminist reading will see the novel as a demonstration of the disaster that accompanies patriarchy. Likewise, *Edge of Fate* could be misread as a celebration of polygamy on the one hand, or an exposé of the destructive consequences of polygamy on the other hand. Even when it seems the author conceals her message in ambivalence, the real message is not lost on a sophisticated reader who could discern overwhelming evidence of gender inequality and flagrant abuse of women’s rights in the novels. Although the literary works are not overtly critical of patriarchal culture in northern Nigeria *per se*, the heart-rending narrations by these female authors in male-centred communities speak volumes about their individual and joint perceptions of the plight of the northern Nigerian Muslim woman. Such reading between the lines is sufficient to make a modern reader arrive at the conclusion that the practice of Islamic patriarchy is unequal and anti-female.

Do Usman, Zaria and other northern Nigerian Muslim women who write on the plight of northern Nigerian women qualify for description as Islamic feminists? Or put differently, do they describe themselves as such? In the era of militant Islamic fundamentalism epitomised by the activities of the Boko Haram sect and the breakaway faction, JAMBS that abducted and killed seven expatriate workers in northern Nigeria, it is suicidal for these lone voices to shout their feminism over

the roof top. Basically, the practice of both Christianity and Islam in Nigeria does not encourage women to compete with men in the public space. While many Nigerian Christian women appear to have broken out of this mould, too few of their Muslim counterparts have dared to rock the applecart of Islamic patriarchy. This probably explains why many African feminist scholars, exemplified by Kolawole (1997) identify with a less confrontational version of feminism known as “womanism”. Asabe Kabir Usman and Saliha Abubakar Abdulahi Zaria live and work in a cultural milieu where women who are outspoken on patriarchal issues risk ostracism. Consequently, the tone of their creative efforts is not expected to be overtly critical of patriarchal culture in which they are lone voices in a desert of gender inequality and female oppression. They have survived as literary writers in a community that frowns at prose fiction mainly because of the relative immunity they enjoy as Nigerian academics. Asabe Kabir Usman lectures at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto Nigeria; while Zaria lectures at the Federal College of Education, Zaria, Nigeria. They both enjoy some form of protection from their respective higher institutions.

Conclusion

Margot Badran (2009:296) observed that Islamic feminism in Nigeria is “a work in progress”. Indeed the task of moving a culture away from patriarchal domination, as it is practiced in northern Nigeria, towards egalitarianism is bound to be “long and full of perils” (ibid:296). Debates about gender equality and justice for northern Nigerian Muslim women and elsewhere will continue to feature prominently in literary works by Nigerian and non-Nigerian authors. We did observe that there is an inherent contradiction in the methodology of confronting Islamic patriarchy with arguments from *The Qur’an* and other sacred Islamic texts because these are the tools that have been used successfully by generations of adherents of patriarchy to oppress females and assign them subhuman roles in relation to their male counterparts.

Our analysis of female-authored northern Nigerian novels has shown that the Hobbesian scenario of survival of the fittest, whereby males lord themselves over their female counterparts, exists in northern Nigeria and much of southern Nigeria. We like to observe that opportunities abound for empirical studies on oppression and unequal treatment of females in every part of Nigeria. We recommend that feminist scholars, or any analyst for that matter, should employ an analytical framework with a global appeal when researching into issues that border on freedom, equality and justice. With a better understanding of God as a fair and loving father by adherents of all faiths and the continued evolution of human

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development in the positive direction, the feeling of gender superiority would give way to a new era of mutual respect between the male and female genders.

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Security or Insecurity, the Gendarmerie and Popular Reaction in West Cameroon,

1961 – 1964

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Abstract

The Gendarmerie is not new in French Africa. Its activities in Cameroon since the re-birth of multi-party politics in 1990s sent shock waves across erstwhile West Cameroon and rekindled old memories of brutality and popular reaction. As a paramilitary force, it was intended for security purposes when it was introduced but paradoxically, it turned out in its activities in West Cameroon to be a source of fear and insecurity. This article examines those activities of the Gendarmerie paying close attention to the overall tradition and origin of Gendarmerie in West Cameroon. What were the circumstances which led to the introduction of the Gendarmerie in West Cameroon? What was the overall strength of West Cameroon security forces before the Gendarmerie was introduced? Primary sources from the National Archives Buea, Cameroon and secondary sources from libraries were consulted and from them, the paper contends that the Gendarmes were strongly abhorred by most West Cameroonians, because of their activities on the civilian population, police and custom officers. The paper also contends that in as much as there were security functions embedded in the Gendarmerie corps, it turned out to be more an insecure force to the population and even to some police and customs corps than anticipated.

Introduction

The democratic process in Africa south of the Sahara since the 1990s has been well documented to the extent that whatever one attempts to do now towards that direction will appear as the obvious. Far from being the obvious, this article takes 1990 as its datum point and traces the Gendarmerie from this period, even though it was introduced into erstwhile West Cameroon in 1961. The democratic process in Cameroon in the early 1990s witnessed violence and brutality of the civilian population from the Gendarmes. The use of the Gendarme by the incumbent government to clamp down on opposition and gag pro-democratic citizens raised a lot of questions on the mandate of the force. Apart from that, the Gendarmes constantly harassed citizens by requesting bribes on the country's main highway

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and travel documents like the national identity card which is a compulsory document held by any Cameroonian of 18 years and above. These activities enkindled old memories of activities in West Cameroon since 1960s, most of which have rarely been documented. This is the gap which this paper hopes to fill.

Cameroon, like most African countries, is a colonial construct. It was colonised by Germany in July 1884. During the First World War, the Germans were elbowed out of the territory. In 1916, the territory was provisionally partitioned between France and Britain. Britain took 1/5th of the territory while France took 4/5th. While France administered her portion as part of French Equatorial Africa, Britain administered her own section as an appendage to Nigeria. In 1922 these portions became Mandatory Territories under the supervision of the League of Nations but remained in their different respective administrative spheres. In 1946, they became Trust Territories under the newly formed United Nations Organisation which under Article 76(B), were to prepare the people of the territory towards self-government and independence (Fanso, 1989). This, in conjunction with other factors emanating from the Second World War, expedited the move towards independence. While French Cameroon had her independence in January 1960 and Nigeria in October 1960, the British Southern Cameroon was to decide in a plebiscite either to join French Cameroon or Nigeria. The plebiscite ended in favour of British Cameroon re-unifying with French Cameroons on 1st October 1961 (Ngoh, 1996). Between 1961 and 1972, British Southern Cameroons was known as West Cameroon.

Shortly after the reunification, a pseudo-military force known as the Gendarmerie was quartered in all the administrative divisions of the territory. That force, like the police, was charged with maintaining safety and security of the state and her citizens. The Gendarmerie became a federal subject and although Ahmadu Ahidjo, the first President of Cameroon deleted the maintenance of law and order from the constitutional proposals for federal powers, in the 1960s this force caused panic and apprehension amongst West Cameroonians who had been used to the British and Nigerian Police Forces (Kah, 2010). To that effect, there was a litany of complaints from all the administrative divisions of West Cameroon against this force.¹ Despite the importance of this all too familiar historical event, no study has been undertaken detailing with the activities of the Gendarmes in Cameroon history. Using mostly archival data gathered from the Buea National Archives, Cameroon, this article hopes to contribute to the historiography of Cameroon.

The essay begins in 1961 because the Decree instituting the Gendarmerie in West Cameroon was signed in that year. It was also in that year that the State of West Cameroon came into being after reunification with French Cameroon. West Cameroon formally known as British Southern Cameroons was made up of six

administrative divisions. These were: Bamenda, Wum, Nkambe, Mamfe, Victoria and Kumba.² By 1964, most of the complaints concerning the atrocities of Gendarmes had petered out but resurfaced in 1990.

In this article I will start by confronting the dynamics which were responsible for the introduction of the Gendarmes in West Cameroon after reunification. In the second section, I will show what the overall strength of West Cameroon security forces was before the introduction of the Gendarmerie in order to appreciate the level of security and/or insecurity in the territory. The third part of the article examines the misdemeanour committed by Gendarmes in West Cameroon. The fourth section focuses on the general reaction shown towards the Gendarmerie, specifically by civilians, police and customs officers and consequences that followed.

The Tradition and Origin of Gendarmerie in West Cameroon

When the Cameroons under the British and French Trusteeship united in October 1961 and became the Federal Republic of Cameroon, Article 5 of the Federal Constitution supported the introduction of the Gendarmes which had become a federal affair. This had been deliberated and effected in Federal constitutional discussions at Foumban in July 1961. That conference included internal and external security among federal responsibilities (Ngoh, 1999). At Foumban, the Southern Cameroon Attorney General warned the Buea delegation of the dangers of federal domination in these areas, including federal incorporation of all police powers.³ John Ngu Foncha, however, intimated that “The drawing up of this constitution ... [was] a matter for Cameroonians themselves and it will be foolish to look to anyone else for help” (Ngoh, 1999). That notwithstanding, the constitutionality of Gendarmes in West Cameroon cannot be over emphasised. Politicians were of the view that “structures such as the security forces [gendarmes] exist to carry out necessary functions which could be for the good of the whole society” (Bassey, 2002: 33), even if, in the long run, these activities turn out to be the other way round and more so that it was necessary to harmonise structures in the two federated states (Bassey, 2002: 35). It therefore, meant that the introduction of Gendarmes in West Cameroon was a step towards harmonising Federal structures.

The first President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, Ahmadu Ahidjo had started off by dividing the Federal Republic of Cameroon into six administrative inspectorates manned by Inspectors of Administration (Johnson, 1970). The state

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of West Cameroon was only one of the six inspectorates and was headed by Jean Claude Ngoh. His powers were plenary in character and reported directly to Ahidjo. The application of Decree No. 61-DF-15 of 20 October, 1961 which carved out the six administrative inspectorates virtually metamorphosed West Cameroon into an administrative region (Ngoh, 1999). What was more pressing was the security situation in West Cameroon on the eve of reunification with French Cameroon and also at a time when Nigeria was scheduled to gain independence by 1st October, 1960.⁴

The introduction of Gendarmerie in West Cameroon caused great concern to the politicians of the day. One area of grave concern for Southern Cameroons, following discussions for reunification with the Cameroun Republic, was the question of general security when the British withdrew their forces in October 1961. The status and functions of the West Cameroon Police was certainly to find itself in a new dispensation, coupled with the return of Southern Cameroonians serving in Nigeria and other countries. The deployment of the Gendarmerie in the Southern Cameroons was generally seen in the best of defence and responsibility to the territory and its citizens filling the void left by the British Police Force. Yet after the withdrawal of British forces, several opinions were instead presented and debated. This would not have posed any problem if the Southern Cameroons had decided to join Nigeria in the 1961 plebiscite but since they voted for reunification, the country had to address this issue with Southern Cameroons (Johnson, 1970: 205; Milne, 1999).

The Kamerun National Congress Party (KNC), however, held a different view. During a conference in Mamfe in 1960, the party recommended that for security purposes, Nigerian troops in the Southern Cameroon should be retained even after the independence of Nigeria in 1960.⁵ Other views were expressed in memoranda by the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) and the Cameroon Peoples' National Convention Party (CPNC) all of which called for the British to assist in ensuring security was not at risk during the period of transition. Her Majesty's government was requested to remain in the Southern Cameroon for a few more months to undertake a rapid training and equipping of a military force that would provide security for the Southern Cameroons.⁶

That request had little meaning after the plebiscite results showed that a majority of Southern Cameroonians were in favour of reunification with the Cameroun Republic and not integration with Nigeria. The British had long dreamt of British Southern Cameroon joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria and when their dreams went contrary, they simply abandoned the territory to its own security (Johnson, 1970). Meanwhile, discussions between the Southern Cameroons and the

Cameroun Republic on general security of the territory culminated in the Tripartite Talks of August 1961. At the end of the talks, decisions concerning the maintenance of public security and law and order were taken in order not to have a lack of military security following the withdrawal of British forces from the Southern Cameroon on 1 October 1961.⁷

There were also heated debates on the status and functions of the Southern Cameroons Police if the Gendarmes were stationed in West Cameroon. Ordinary people were also concerned about the coming of the Gendarmerie and the confusion this would create in their functions and those of the Southern Cameroon Police. These were worries that would not have arisen if the territory voted for integration with the Federation of Nigeria. Members of the opposition party in parliament like Ajebe Sone from Kumba East proposed that the Southern Cameroon Police should work with the Gendarmerie to control the excesses of the latter because rumour had it that some of them were involved in 'terrorist' activities in the Cameroun Republic.⁸ To clarify the concerns of the people, Premier J.N. Foncha and the Minister of Social Services, A.N. Jua, dispelled rumours that the Southern Cameroon Police would become ordinary Native Authority orderlies or a gang of messengers. Hon. Jua quoted Article 18 of the Federal Constitution to brace his argument. The article stated that if any law was passed in the Federation which was considered by members of any one state contrary to their own constitution, those members could vote against it. He argued that if this happened, the law would not go through.⁹

Hon. Jua, in citing the article 18 of the Federal Constitution, meant that if a law was subsequently passed to denigrate the Southern Cameroon Police in a reunited Cameroon, the parliamentarians to the Federal Assembly would vote against it and block the reform. These arguments notwithstanding, the status of the Police was still to be clearly defined because at reunification, the Police and Gendarmerie were to function in the state of West Cameroon which would create some problems. Foncha, the leader of KNDP, said that at reunification, the Police would perform the same functions as they did before reunification but the story turned out to be different because after reunification, open clashes were recorded between the Police and Gendarmes in places like Mamfe and other towns of West Cameroon. The Police, though still very important, have come to play secondary roles to the Gendarmes in the modern Cameroon state.

From the above, it could be suggested that the gravity and intensity of insecurity was given an additional fillip following the withdrawal of the Nigerian and British

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forces that had been serving in the British Cameroon. The forces that remained in West Cameroon were pitifully small, at least to meet the West Cameroon security needs. This in effect justified the federal governments' view that Gendarmes were needed in West Cameroon, although West Cameroonians were quite sceptical about the presence of Gendarmes in their territory. Some, in fearful anticipation of flooding the state with troops from the east, referred to the Gendarmes as "armies of occupation" (Johnson, 1970). The fears of West Cameroonians as well as the doubts raised by West Cameroonian politicians at the time, notwithstanding, 400 Gendarmes were stationed in West Cameroon following reunification in October 1961. According to Article 5 of the Federal Constitution, the Gendarmerie in West Cameroon came under the federal authorities and not under the state authorities of West Cameroon. As a matter of fact, the Gendarmerie in West Cameroon were introduced because the British and Nigerian Police Force had been withdrawn and also because it was thought wise to harmonise federal structures.

The activities of Gendarmerie in West Cameroon

No sooner had the Gendarmerie entered West Cameroon than the West Cameroonian authorities started questioning the structure which would accommodate this force. In line with this, a security meeting was held in Buea on 25 January, 1962. In that meeting, it was suggested that the West Cameroon Police Mobile Wing should be merged with the national Gendarmerie platoons in the territory.

Admittedly, this was in agreement with the Federal Constitution, but the suggestion received a sharp and unequivocal negative reply from the West Cameroon Commissioner of Police to the Prime Minister. In a correspondence to the Prime Minister, the Commissioner of Police, H.M. Ntune, rejected the suggestion and pointed out categorically that the Mobile Wing had not failed in its responsibilities and so, saw no grounds for the merger. Instead, he pointed out that the Gendarmerie, because of their brutal treatment of the population, had become unpopular in West Cameroon at the first instant.¹⁰

Two issues could be deduced from Ntune's reaction: first, the seeds for a struggle for power between the federal and state authorities in the sphere of maintenance of law and order were sown. The brutalisation of the population, as Ntune suggests, gives the first impressions of insecurity and fear. The suggestion to merge the West Cameroon Mobile Wing with the national Gendarmerie fell in line with Article 6 and if the West Cameroon Police authorities started behaving the way they did, it was but logical to say that this was an indication of their criticism of the centralised Federal Constitution. Secondly, the West Cameroon authorities called into question

the actual nature of the federation. The behaviour of the Gendarmerie in the territory brought panic amongst the population in several ways.

The Gendarme officers in West Cameroon were often accused of arrogance and more often than not, brutalising the people. In some quarters it was held that:

The gendarmes in West Cameroon behaved with brutality and reckless arrogance as if they were an occupation force in a vanquished territory. The brandishing of weapons, the show of power and the throwing of weight around areas inhabited by the population gave rise to great concern and disquiet.¹¹

Indeed, the institution of the Gendarmerie as a federal service and the subsequent behaviour of its officers, if the above words are taken seriously, confirmed the allegation that they were like an “occupying force”. The wordings “occupying force” is, nevertheless and rather too heavy to describe the activities of the Gendarmerie. This is because the Gendarmes were constitutionally supposed to be in West Cameroon but their activities were not spelt out in the constitution.

However, the activities of Gendarmes continued to raise concerns and fears amongst West Cameroonians. In one instance, the Gendarmes were accused of harassing the population of Nkambe Division over private debts.¹² In another instance, they were accused of detaining and flogging citizens and extorting money from them.¹³ These were situations difficult to take at face value. Private debts are debts owed by individuals to individuals which might have come about as a result of borrowing. They are most of the time based on trust. It becomes therefore, a more serious issue to say that the Gendarmes were harassing people over private debts. At what point in time did that specific event occur and how much were these debts? Until one gets the total number of debts and the people who complained about their debts, that story remains at best, an unfounded rumour. To say that people were detained, flogged and money extorted from them is as unscientific as the issue of harassing people over debts.

It has also been maintained by West Cameroonians that the Gendarmes harassed Nigerian subjects who were found in West Cameroon. The brutal treatment of Nigerians by the Gendarmes drew an angry protest from the Nigerian Consul in Buea. In a confidential correspondence to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, the Consul decried the contemptuous behaviour of the Gendarmerie, stating that it was time the Gendarmes were called to order.¹⁴ This was closely followed by a strongly worded letter from the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, J. N Foncha to

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the Minister of Armed Forces, Sadou Daoudou, in February 1963, which reiterated the point of Gendarme brutality.¹⁵

It was in reaction to the unruly behaviour of the Gendarmes that the Federal Inspector of Administration for West Cameroon, Jean Claude Ngoh, convened a meeting in Buea in August 1962 with the objective of explaining the functions of the national Gendarmerie *vis-à-vis* the police force of West Cameroon. In that meeting, the Commander of the national Gendarmerie pointed out that the Gendarmerie had not come to substitute the West Cameroon Police Force, but rather “to ensure a complement for the security of the country”. In other words, the Gendarmerie was to act as a supplement to the West Cameroon police.¹⁶

Meanwhile, in an earlier dispatch, the commandant of the Gendarmerie in Buea explained that the duties of the Gendarmerie in West Cameroon included the search for suspects and subversive documents. This was necessitated by the conviction that subversive elements from East Cameroon had infiltrated West Cameroon, disposed of their identification papers and mingled with the population of the territory. Such a situation gave an extra dimension to the activities of the Gendarmerie, which formally included the checking of identification papers and tax tickets, the objective of which it was to insure that citizens had paid their taxes.¹⁷

Whether the speech of the commander of national Gendarmerie was ever understood by his boys remains a moot question. The fact is that the Gendarmes continued with their strange behaviour. They were accused of unethical behaviour by drinking in beer parlours while in uniform and also using official vehicles for private matters.¹⁸ This behaviour was unheard of in the state of West Cameroon, especially within the police force. Despite those complaints, there was no ocular proof that any Gendarme was called to order. Gendarmerie authorities requested that all such complaints be referred to Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon.¹⁹

Disagreement over these issues came about partly as a result of the traditions of the Gendarmerie in Cameroon. This might be explained by the fact that before the re-unification, the Gendarmerie in French Cameroon was used to maintain law and order. In fact, in their annual report for 1956, the French Administering Authority defined the functions of the Gendarmerie as including amongst others, “overseeing public security and maintaining order and executing laws” and “handling crimes”.²⁰ The results were that the differences between federal and state authorities in West Cameroon over who should enforce the law and which should prevail – state or federal law – were exposed. In any case, the Gendarmes, in executing their functions, clashed with the police, civilians, customs and landlords.

Gendarmes and the West Cameroon Police

Generally, it was assumed that the Gendarmes and the police were charged with the maintenance of law and the execution of order. Unfortunately, “overzealous Gendarmes were often insensitive to the legal or statutory limits of their jurisdiction and thereby, occasionally came into conflict with the West Cameroon Police.”²¹ On one occasion, Gendarmes reportedly forced their way into a West Cameroon jail guided and guarded by the West Cameroon police to retrieve one of their suspects. The prisoner was forcibly removed from jail and allegedly beaten and hospitalised.²²

In Mamfe division, police constable John Ndze became a scape goat of the Gendarmes brutality. He was handcuffed and beaten by Paul Bissiang. In fact, according to Confidential Note C. 205/172: “John Ndze was allegedly beaten by Paul Bissiang and hand-cuffed for taking bribe from one passenger in a vehicle to Ekok from Mamfe. This passenger never had a passport and was supposed to be repatriated as the tradition obtained. But he was not returned.”²³

Although the Gendarmes were assumed to be brutal, the case of John Ndze illustrates the fact that they were out to correct some of the ills of the society. John Ndze had allegedly taken bribe from a passenger and Paul Bissiang corrected him by handcuffing him and getting him beaten. The two of them had committed errors given the fact that Ndze had collected bribe and that Bissiang had beaten him. Since two wrongs cannot make a right and since one cannot right a wrong by doing wrong, it is fair to say here that Paul Bissiang was wrong to have meted out such punishment to his uniform colleague. This point was lucidly made in September 1963 by Senior District Officer for Mamfe, S.N Ekobena in the following words: “I consider it wrong for the constable [John Ndze] to have been hand-cuffed since a decision had not been made as to whether he was guilty.”²⁴

The wide range of Gendarme activities operated in both rural and urban areas only further led to conflicts with the West Cameroon Police. Upon its introduction in West Cameroon, the Gendarmerie handled all traffic cases involving both civil and military personnel without consultation with the police. In a correspondence to the Commissioner of Police; the Commander of the Gendarmerie in West Cameroon reiterated the priority of the Gendarmes over the West Cameroon police in traffic cases involving civilian and military personnel. According to the commander, in such cases, “the investigation must be carried out by the Gendarmerie.”²⁵ He went on to reiterate the prerogative of the Gendarmerie in initiating an inquiry in traffic

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cases in which only military personnel were involved. As if to buttress this point, the Gendarmes went out of their routine security searches to contravene drivers and collectors but refused to appear in court when they were convoked.²⁶

This was like the usurpation of the role of the West Cameroon Police by the Gendarmes. This point was elucidated by the Commissioner of Police who, in a confidential letter to the Prime Minister, wondered if there were any provisions in the Federal Constitution empowering Gendarmes to investigate traffic cases in West Cameroon, a duty that was in his interpretation of the law, strictly that of the West Cameroon Police.²⁷ In the Commissioner's view, the laws pertaining to West Cameroon were the responsibility of the police; hence they should investigate any violation of such laws. The interference of the Gendarmes, therefore, in a realm that was believed to be exclusively the preserve of the West Cameroon Police, poisoned the rapport between the two forces and rendered cooperation difficult.²⁸

In order to redress the situation, the Commissioner suggested that the Prime Minister define the duties of the Gendarmerie to ensure that they performed them strictly within limit. What the Commissioner failed to grasp, however, was that the Gendarmerie was a federal subject placed under the authority of the Federal Inspector of Administration.²⁹ Moreover, the activities of the Gendarmes indicated that they were ignorant of West Cameroon laws concerning the police and traffic cases. It is no wonder that Ntune took it as a point of duty to reaffirm the fact that the police had the responsibility of investigating all traffic and criminal cases in West Cameroon.³⁰

Despite the caution and meetings, it was common to hear of the Gendarmes beating up members of the police force as well as civil administrators. Acting Senior District Officer for Kumba lucidly made this point in a confidential letter to the Federal Inspector of Administration, in the following words:

I consider it wrong for another officer (Gendarme) of the same government to beat up his colleague because of the advantage of being in uniform. This, I consider, a case of taking laws into one's hand... such behaviour must be curbed (as) it only brings ill feelings and bad relations. The idea is going around that the gendarmes are above the law. As such they cannot be taken to any court ...³¹

Such friction between the two forces arose partly from disagreement over which of them had to implement law and security and also confusion as to when state or

federal law should prevail. Overall, the issue of security was a federal matter. Even the customs officers had problems with the Gendarmes.

The Gendarmes and Customs Officers

The Gendarme misbehaviour which caught the consternation of the public in a higher degree involved the Customs, especially D.N. Njele, Chief of Service for Mamfe. In a report written by Customs Superintendent, Henry G.J. Kinni on 2 January, 1963, Kinni said *inter alia*:

The chief of gendarmes left and not long a number of gendarmes surrounded the chief (sic) de secteur's car and said that their chief (sic) wanted him in his office. As chief [sic] de secteur's car opened the door of the right hand side of the car and dragged out chief de secteur where he was sitting and driving (sic) to their office. In the office the butt of a rifle was used at the back of chef de secteur which landed him flat on the ground with his face and kicks of boots came on one after the other. Chief [sic] was later on taken into one small room as he was crying so loudly with much pains and in this room his mouth was bandaged up with a piece of cloth...[a] good blow of hand was landed on his face of which I saw his left eye still red with blood on the 27th.³²

Revelations made by Kinni's report concerning the torture of Njele by the Gendarmes are too exact to have been coincidental assumptions or speculations. In other words, the Gendarme atrocities in Mamfe were a true reality and the case of Njele was just the tip of an iceberg and at the same time, marking the apotheosis of Gendarme misbehaviour in West Cameroon. That was exemplified in its ripple effects, which kept a good number of correspondences amongst the administrators at the time.

One of the memoranda written on 30 December, 1962 by the Senior District Officer, Mamfe to the Inspector of Administration about a report which had just reached the executive of Mamfe community concerning the way the Gendarmerie handled Mr. D.N.N Njele, *chef de secteur* on 23 December 1962³³ emphasised that the following points were made clear in their last meeting:

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- 1) How the Gendarmerie go about beating women merciless [sic] in their houses in town at night without any reasons for such ill-treatment (sic).
- 2) How the Gendarmerie mishandled police constables at two occasions (one at Ossing and one at Bachuo Akagbe)
- 3) The Mamfe community would be grateful for any efforts you may put in to bring the Gendarmerie menace to an end at no distant.³⁴

From the report, the District Officer, Ekobena was acting as the sounding board of the people. It was clear that the Mamfe community was bored with the Gendarmes especially Paul Bissiang and was requesting that they should be transferred out of Mamfe.

In a reply to the Senior District Officer, Mamfe, the Inspector of Administration said: "I have the honour to inform you that a copy of his report has been handed over by me to the Federal Minister of Armed Forces, [Sadou Daoudou] at the time of my last trip to Yaounde." The District Officer was not yet satisfied and had to write again to the Inspector of Administration on 19 January, 1963 wanting to know whether a copy should be sent to the Minister of Armed Forces or it should be reported directly to the Tribunal in Mamfe.³⁵ The District Officer wanted that the Gendarme boss should be dragged to court but it was unfortunate because the latter was obviously working in complicity with the Inspector of Administration.

No doubt when Ekobena pushed the case further, speculations were rife that he was transferred out of Mamfe. Thomas Mbua Ndoko, who had been the Private Secretary of Jean Claude Ngoh, Inspector of Administration, replaced him.³⁶ If that was true, then he might have owed his promotion to his boss. That did not change the situation. He wrote to his former boss in the following words:

Further to my confidential letter No 131/149 of 24 April 1963, I wish to inform you that continued stay of gendarme Paul Bissiang at Eyumojock will seriously damage the good reputation of the Gendarme. Paul Bissiang's transfer from Mamfe Division would take very early effect (sic).³⁷

Admittedly, pressure yielded fruits as Paul Bissiang was transferred by 1963. On 28 September, 1963, the chief and councillors of Bachuo-Akagbe wrote to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon thanking him for transferring Bissiang and bringing in the new Commander of Brigade, Tchundjang Cyrille.³⁸ According to them, peace had finally been restored. Chief Sam Etchu, who signed the report

appealed that many Gendarmes could be placed under Cyrille. By 1964, a host of Gendarmes were transferred to Widekum, another town found in West Cameroon.

The “thank you” letter to the Prime Minister had hardly been digested as the Gendarmes launched another attack on almost all the customs officers that were found in Mamfe. The following custom staffs were assaulted by the Gendarmes:

- 1) S.B.M. Nsail – Customs Officer
- 2) T.E. Mbuagbaw – Customs Clerk
- 3) J.M. Kalaji – Customs Guard
- 4) Martin Elokobi – Customs Guard
- 5) Aloysious Tume – Custom Guard
- 6) J.A Minang – Customs Guard
- 7) P. Njukeng – Customs Guard
- 8) S.M.N Puperzor – Customs Guard
- 9) J. Epey – Customs Guard
10. H. Salifu – Customs Guard.³⁹

However, the Gendarmes-Customs antagonism did not go on *sine die*. On the 23 January, 1963, the Senior District Officer for Mamfe convened a meeting with all these forces in order to reach a compromise. He pointed out that cordiality should exist between the two forces because each one of them had its own duties. Therefore, there was no way by which the Gendarmes could take over the customs⁴⁰ and [vice versa]. He ended up by quoting the text which lays down certain duties that the customs and Gendarmerie must perform.⁴¹ The Gendarmes activities with the police and customs also affected the civilians as well.

Gendarmes and the civilians

As far as their relations with the civilian population were concerned, the Gendarmes’ behaviour was horrifying. A case in point was with the women. In December 1962, the women of Ma-Obasi in Mamfe wrote directly to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, John Ngu Foncha complaining how the Gendarmes rough handled them. They said:

We are suffering in the hands of the gendarmes. Their system of governing [sic] this place is not in our satisfaction...Their bigman, so called Paul [Bisiang], is all that too naughty. In this our Ejagham tribe a(sic) you know we are not in the habit of meeting girls or women in the bush for useless action [sex] you

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cannot now get a single article seller on our hear [sic] of cruelties [sic] of gendarme in Eyomujock. We feel within our hearts...that this gendarme station at Eyomujock be posted elsewhere.⁴²

The Memorandum which the women of Ma-Obasi addressed to the Premier of West Cameroon was symptomatic of the Gendarme brutality towards them. One of these methods of brutality was rap and the person often responsible for this was their *bigman*, Paul Bissiang. This was illustrated in the way he handled one Alice Ben Ekong. On several occasions Ekong bemoaned to W.N.O Effiom, Member of Parliament for Mamfe in the West Cameroon House of Assembly on Bissiang's sexual and inhuman advances towards her. On 22 March, 1963, Bissiang "caught Ekong in his office and attempted to rape her and in another instance, he threatened to shoot her if she persistently rejected his sexual drives."⁴³ If it is true that he could behave in such a manner, one wonders what his subordinates could have done.

The entire civilian population felt the pinch of Gendarmes' severities in Mamfe. Writing to the Minister of Natural Resources on 24 March, 1963, Chief Nkamanda and Co, amongst other things, said:

We the people of Eyomujock received this group of Gendarmes with open hands. But for the fact that they beat us time on no occasion. People who are willing to come for market are afraid to attain the market again. Women and schoolgirls are being treated anyhow failing to accept to their request when the Gendarmes are beating people and knowing the native will run to help their fellow friends, they began to shoot guns here and there.⁴⁴

The Gendarmes went as far as eloping with peoples wives. The Senior District Officer for Mamfe, S.N. Ekobena reported such an instant in the following words: "This is to certify that the bearer, Simon Gaston, Trader and Farmer in Foubot came to Mamfe in search of his wife named Tonga Marguerette and daughter Teresia Jean Marie said to have been taken by Matchia Martin, Nurse Gendarmerie Peleton, Mamfe."⁴⁵

It was certain from the above that Matchia Martin had eloped with Gaston's wife and Ekobena was reporting this to the Inspector of Administration. The Gendarmes were noted for abusing the basic rights and freedoms of West Cameroonians. This was done primarily through the introduction of what was assumed as new practices in West Cameroon that the Gendarmes had to enforce. For instance, it was maintained that the Gendarmerie not only ensured that West Cameroonians carried

around with them their tax tickets, which was a practice hitherto unknown in West Cameroon, but their activities also curtailed the fundamental freedoms of citizens of West Cameroon. Such was the case with the brutal treatment of the Acting Education Officer for Kumba on 17 February, 1964 at the hands of the Gendarmes for allegedly not producing his tax ticket on demand. In spite of the fact that the said officer explained that he was on official duty, he was rough-handled and allegedly “marched-off at gun point...”⁴⁶

It was against that background that West Cameroonians kept on complaining about the notorious activities of the Gendarmes. An earlier meeting had taken place in Buea in 1962. That year, the KNDP National secretariat under the auspices of Zachary Abendong wrote to the Inspector of Administration. According to him, ever since the Gendarmes were posted to this territory [West Cameroon], they have created an atmosphere of fear which never existed since the departure of the German military rule from 1884-1916. “I think the people of West Cameroon will be happy with the police and the military but without the Gendarmes.”⁴⁷

Hon. Abendong was writing in direct response to complaints that had reached the KNDP secretariat and also from the point of view of what he heard from people while on tour. That drove him to conclude that the people of West Cameroon would be happy with the police and the military without the Gendarmes. This was because he probably felt that the opinion of West Cameroonians were not in accordance with the Gendarmes. It was grossly an exaggeration to maintain that it was the Gendarmes who introduced the practice into West Cameroon that West Cameroonians should be travelling with tax tickets. After the partition of the territory between the French and British in 1916, tax tickets, identity cards and laissez passers were some of the documents which citizens were obliged to have on them while moving around (Alpse, 2012). So to say that it was the Gendarmes who introduced it remain a matter of speculation. Apart from the civilians, Gendarmes had problems with landlords, another type of civilians.

Gendarmes and Landlords

Landlords who had rented out their houses to the Gendarmes also had problems with Gendarmes. This was because they (Gendarmes) consistently refused to foot their rents. On 15 June, 1962, one of the landlords, Martin Forbin, wrote to the Central Administrative unit of Gendarmerie, Yaounde, through the District Officer, Mamfe. In that letter, Forbin stressed that he had not received the rents of his house from 1st January to 30th June 1962.⁴⁸ He further stated that: “I have written through

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the *Le Commandant, Le Compagnie De Gendarmerie* at Bamenda twice but no reply has been received.”⁵³ He wrote again on the 16th October, 1962, lamenting that the payment of his house was being defaulted by the Gendarmerie. After waiting to the end of the year, Forbin wrote on the 22nd January, 1963, bemoaning that since the Gendarmes entered his house in January 1962, he had received only one quarter of his rents which was 42.000 FRS and was still owed nine months and cost to the neighbourhood of 126.000 FRS.⁴⁹

Another landlord, Anthony M. Abang wrote on the 31st of October, 1962 to the Chief Commander of Gendarmerie at Yaounde lamenting that the rents for his house at Widekum had not been paid. In his seven point report, his point 2 was unequivocal: “Sir, I have long expected for the rents of my house at Widekum which was given up to the Gendarmerie on their request was with good faith to the state and I do not expect to be treated in the reverse.”⁵⁰ This was an indication that he was frustrated because his rents had not been paid.

It was based on such frustration that he finally decided to champion the plight of the landlords and on 30 May, 1963 wrote on behalf of the landlords to the Federal Inspector of Administration in the following words:

Sir, the most dangerous point and regretting to us, also to the hearing of the public who were aware of the arrangement that the gendarmes have taken over our houses since January last year and our tenants were asked to leave the houses is that now that the Gendarmes have been asked to reside at Widekum instead of them going in our houses, they have passed to a different house (sic).⁵¹

One discernable fact which is plausible in the above citation is that the Gendarmes had handed over the houses they were renting to tenants of their choices. This was annoying to the landlords, given the fact that those Gendarmes had taken over their houses and as if that was not enough, they now filled those houses with tenants who were directly under their authority. The activities of the Gendarmes therefore, had far reaching consequences on West Cameroon.

Conclusion

Shortly after reunification in 1961, West Cameroon and Cameroonians embraced the Gendarmerie – a pseudo-military force which had been established in East Cameroon since the French colonial administration. The activities of that force were detested by West Cameroonians in all the administrative divisions of West Cameroon. By 1964, considerable calm was restored but the atrocities never

petered out completely. This enquiry has established that instead of maintaining law and order, the Gendarmerie paradoxically brought fear and panic to West Cameroon. The insecurity unleashed by the Gendarmerie has not in any sense ceased to exist as complaints are always heard in Cameroon highways about Gendarmes who extort money from highway drivers and those who mistakenly travel without their tax tickets or national identity papers. Following this, it is within the boundaries of common sense to hold that the Gendarmerie, instead of maintaining security which was their *prima facie* function, went beyond it and appeared as a source of insecurity not only to the civilian population of West Cameroon but also to the West Cameroonian police and customs officers.

Notes

1. Letter No 1566/52 A, 5 March 1962. From the Federal Minister of Armed Forces to Federal Inspector of Administration, National Archives Buea, henceforth cited as NAB.
2. File Vc/b (1962)2, constitutional talks in Southern Cameroons. NAB.
3. Ibid.
4. Representation of His Excellency, The President of the Republic of Cameroon by West Cameroon Government Requesting the Rectification of certain matters Tending to Hinder the Smooth and Effective Functioning of the Federal Republic, Top Secret N₀ 323/CFI/CAB/PR,/NAB
5. Ibid.
6. Federal Republic of Cameroon, Top Secret N₀ 323/CFI/CAB/PR,/NAB
7. Pc/i/1964 Petitions and Complaints against the activities of Gendarmes in West Cameroon.
8. Confidential letter from the District Officer Nkambe to the Federal Inspector of Administration, Buea 2nd October, 1962, NAB.
9. Ibid.
10. Pc/i/1964/7, Complaints against Gendarmerie/Military. Confidential Letter from the Consul for the Federation of Nigeria to the Prime Minister, 13

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November 1962, NAB.; Pc/:/1962/8, Gendarme Relations with West Cameroon Polices, NAB.

11. Confidential Letter from J.N. Foncha to the Minister of Armed Forces, PMO 330/s.1/24 January 1968; Letter from the Minister of Armed Forces to the Vice President of the Republic, Prime Minister of West Cameroon, no. 38/MINFA/cf/9, NAB.
12. Minutes of a meeting held in Buea on August 1, 1962 concerning the functions of the Gendarmerie in matters of judicial police in West Cameroon, NAB.
13. Pc/i/1964/8, Gendarmerie Relations with Cameroon Police, NAB.
14. PC/i/1964, Petitions and complaints against the activities of Gendarmes in West Cameroon 1964, NAB.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. PC/i/1963/7, Gendarmerie Relations with Cameroon Police, NAB.
18. Confidential Letter from the S.S.P. Kumba to the Commissioner of Police, Buea, 29 January 1962, NAB.
19. Confidential c. 205/172, Incident involving Paul Bissiang, Gendarme and P.C. 641 John Ndze Police, 9 February 1963, NAB.
20. From S.N. Ekobena to Federal Inspector of Administration, Buea. 9 September 1963: Incident involving Paul Bissiang, Gendarmerie and P.C. 641 John Ndze Police, 9 February 1963, NAB.
21. Note from F.N. Ndong, secretary to the Prime Minister in reply to confidential letter from Commissioner of police on Investigation of Traffic Cases and Motor Accidents on Gendarmes, 22nd January 1964, NAB.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Letter from the Commandant Gendarmerie, Buea, to the Commissioner of Police, No. 921 of 17th August 1962, NAB.

25. Confidential letter from the Commissioner of police to the Secretary of the Prime Minister, West Cameroon, 10th January, 1964, NAB.
26. Ibid.,
27. Confidential letter from Acting Senior District Officer Kumba Division to the Federal Inspector of Administration, C. 107/222,4th October, 1963, NAB.
28. The Incident concerning the Customs (D.N. Njele) and Paul Bissiang – a Gendarme Officer at Eyunjoek. A Report written by customs superintendent H.G. Kinni on 2nd January 1963; Also see “Gendarmes Torture Collector of Customs,” *Cameroon Times*. 4 January 1963, NAB.
29. Confidential Reference No. 34/cf. Mamfe 30 December 1962 to the Senior District Officer, Mamfe title Gendarmerie Menace, NAB.
30. PC/i/1964, Petitions and complaints against the activities of Gendarmes in West Cameroon 1964, NAB.
31. From Senior District Officer, Mamfe, S.N. Ekobena to Inspector of Administration, Buea, Letter No. 1566/52 A, 5 March 1962 NAB.
32. Confidential Reference No. 131/50 “Gendarme Paul Bissaing, MDL, Head of the Gendarmes at Eyumojock. From Thomas Mbua Ndoko to Federal Inspector of Administration.
33. Ibid.
34. Gendarmes Brutality in West Cameroon, Incident Involving Paul Bisiang and councillors of Bachuo-Akagbe, No. 641 PC/1/1962, NAB;
35. Confidential s. 1/14/9 – Customs and Excise Head Quarters to the Federal Secretary Ministry of finance, NAB.
36. File, Pc/I 1962/8, Minutes of the meeting convene by Senior District Officer, Mamfe, S.N. concerning the activities of Gendarmes in Mamfe, NAB.
37. Ibid.
38. File Pc/i/1962/6, Letter concerning the relations of Gendarmes and women – From Ma – Obasi and Co to Premier Foncha, December 1962.NAB.

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39. Confidential Reference No. 131/50 “Gendarme Paul Bissiang MDL, Head of the Gendarmes at Eyumojock. From Thomas Mbua Ndoko to Federal Inspector of Administration, NAB.
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**The Political Economy of the Egba Nation: A Study in Modernisation and Diversification,
1830 - 1960.**

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Introduction

Several works have been done on Egba history since the second half of the nineteenth century. Anna Tucker's *Abeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics* and Saburi Biobaku's book, *The Egba and Their Neighbours* are particularly noteworthy. Pallinder Law's "Government in Abeokuta with particular reference to the period of the Egba United Government" is also of immense contribution to the political history of the Egba. H.B. Harunah's "Evolution of Central Administration in Abeokuta, 1830-1898" is another contribution to the political and military history of the Egba in the nineteenth century. Adebeshin Folarin and Isaac Delano's works were all done on the political history of the Egba. Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin's work on Abeokuta is also a major work on the political and military history of the Egba. Segun Osunkeye's work titled: "Trade and Commerce in Traditional Egba Society " in *Abeokuta Home of the Egba*, and Harunah's article titled "Lagos-Abeokuta Relations in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland" in *The History of The Peoples of Lagos State*, are both written on the economic history of pre-colonial Egbaland. To date, most of what have been written on the Egba treats their political, military, or economic history. It is against this background that one is making the attempt to look into the political economy of the Egba nation in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

The term political economy was originally used for studying production and trade, and their relations with law, customs, and government, as well as with the distribution of national income and wealth. The term originated from moral philosophy. It was developed in the eighteenth century as the study of the economies of states, or polities, hence, the term political economy. Essentially, the paper will look at the political economy of the Egba *vis-à-vis* the modernisation and diversification of their body politic in the period under study.

Land and Vegetation

The Egba nation refers to Abeokuta and its environs. It comprised Abeokuta and several adjoining villages in the period under study. The villages of the Egba nation were located in the Egba forest which began on the colony of Lagos in the south and extended to Ketu in the west, to Isoya near Ile-Ife in the north, and to the borders of Ketu in the south-west. The area is far removed from the swampy coast,

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but directly connected by the Ogun River to the sea and had several routes leading to other Yoruba towns like Ijebu-Ode, Ibadan, Lagos, and Porto Novo in the Benin Republic (Ogunremi, 1982: 64).

Abeokuta, the chief city of the Egba nation, lies on the river Ogun about sixty (60) miles from the point where it enters the lagoon. The stretch of country between Abeokuta and the coast is composed of a series of sedimentary rocks, sand and gravel beds and lining shale dipping to the south, in which resistant beds cap two main belts of hilly land trending west-east. The southern highland between Ota and Ifo is interrupted by a broad flood plain of the river Ogun. The northern belt extends to Abeokuta and forms a marked line of flat topped hills composed of ferruginous grits with a hard ferruginous cap resting on sandy clays (Johnson, 1963: 91).

In terms of ecological zone, much of Egbaland falls within the Guinea zone, although its north-western part is in the sub-Guinean zone. According to Mabogunje and Gleave, the Guinean zone, could be further divided into three (3) sub-regions on the basis of their varying soil characteristics (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1).

(a) Well-drained soil region in the north-east. Soil here is developed on metamorphic rocks. They are well drained and tend to be finer in the south where they have been formed on fine-grained biotite gneiss and schist. The rainfall of this region is between 45-50 inches and tends to encourage fairly luxuriant growth of trees.

(b) Poorly drained soil region of the south-east. Soil here are developed on sedimentary rocks and the alluvial deposits of the Ogun flood plain, where water-logged conditions are common in the rainy season, particularly in the south, tend to preclude the use of large stretches of land for cultivation.

(c) The diversified soil of the region of the south-west. Soil here are developed on sand stones and shale. The soil here is well drained, except for the shale which is less fertile than the soil derived from the metamorphic rocks. Rainfall varies from 50-60 inches and given the right soil condition, favours a rich growth of tree vegetation (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1).

Thus forest was the dominant vegetation over most of Egbaland, although its density and richness varied from place to place. Given the level of technology, cultivation was easier in the grassland than in the forest. The forest in turn was more easily cultivated at its margin than deep inside it partly because at its margin,

the growth of trees was at its critical limits. Hence, until the nineteenth century, the Egba were to be found largely in the grassland and the northern margin of the forest where they organised themselves in a number of towns, with their cultivated lands spread out around them.

The landscape of Egbaland in the first half of the nineteenth century was not much different from what it was in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was noticed in 1853 that "fine green forest and giant timber with only single houses belonging to fisher and hunting men" (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1) dominated the landscape on both sides of the River Ogun until the village of Tepona was reached when cultivated land became more noticeable. Later in 1883, it was reported that the boundary between forest and cultivated land in this area was at Mokoloki, a few miles south of Tepona (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1). In the south-west, the forest was properly a marshland separating the Awori in the south from the Yewa and the Egba north of them. The forest was claimed as part of Awori land and its northern limit was at the village of Papa, and by 1858, expansion of the Egba-cultivated area had pushed the forest boundary to about two miles south of Papa. From this point, the forest extended in the direction of Lagos to the Ota farms beyond the ruined town of Ijako.

It should be noted that within the forest area, there was cultivation on a low scale just as there were isolated clusters of woodland and patches of fallow bushes in the cultivated area. A.W. Johnson's writing about the vegetation shows how travelling from Lagos, one emerged from "moist forest with cocoa and cultivated clearings, into open savannah with forest only in patches and along water courses" (Johnson, 1963: 39). There appear not to be a critical rainfall figure in this area which could cause a rapid change from the dominance of trees to that of grasses. The landscape analysed above made it possible for the Egba nation to develop an agrarian economy in the period under study.

The People

The Egba are a sub-group of the Yoruba people who lived at their homestead (Orile) independently for some time before they came under the yoke of the Oyo Empire. The Egba organised themselves into three different provinces of Egba Alake, Egba Gbagura, and Egba Oke-Ona at their Orile homestead. According to Biobaku, the Egba had penetrated the Egba forest in three successive waves in the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D (Biobaku, 1957: 3). One wave settled towards the north-west of Ile-Ife in the region of present day Oyo. This group of towns constituted the province of Gbagura under their group Oba-Agura. Iddo was the capital of the Gbagura province and is now part of the present Ibadan city. Another

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wave went beyond the first to the south and the Ona River, which gave the people their name - Egba Oke-Ona. The Oshile was their group Oba, and Oko was their capital. The third wave went further still and brought the Egba in contact with the Ijebu Remo (Biobaku, 1957: 3). This group was first known as Egba Agbeyin, with Ojoko of Keesi as the dominant Oba. Its present name Egba Alake was a later development in the Egba forest and this led to the emergence of Alake as the paramount Oba of the province.

Each of the three provinces of the Egba was made up of several towns each having its Oba at their Orile homestead but all of whom recognised the paramountcy of the group Oba-Agura, Oshile, or Alake as the case may be. The Oba of each town was the ultimate source of authority in each town. He was also the High Priest, but never a despot. According to Biobaku, the Oba was much more the symbol of authority than the instrument of its exercise (Biobaku, 1957: 5). The real rulers of the towns were the Ogboni who constituted at once the civic court, the town council, and the Electoral College for the selection of the Oba from candidates nominated by the ruling houses (Biobaku, 1957: 6). The Ogboni used the Oro to pronounce curfew when riots were expected, to apprehend criminals, and to execute the guilty ones in the secret recesses of the Oro grove (Biobaku, 1957: 6). In principle, the Ogboni whose nominal head was the Oluwo stood between the Oba and his subjects preventing the Oba from being despotic on one hand and ensuring the proper subordination of his subjects on the other. The Ogboni met every seventeenth day.

Each town also had its own Parakoyi (trade chiefs) who further the commercial interests of their towns, settled disputes at town markets, made rules and regulations to ensure just prices and safeguard the standards of workmanship in crafts. The Olori Parakoyi was at the head of this organisation ably assisted by other chiefs. It also met every seventeenth day. The third feature of town organisation was the Ode (hunter) society. In the early days, the hunters provided protection against robbers and also kept wild animals away at night. Much later, they were used in wars as scouts and warriors. The Lerin or Olorode was their chief. These three organisations existed side by side in the Egba forest and corresponded to the division of life into youth, middle age, and old age (Biobaku, 1957: 6). Thus, it was possible for a man to have been first an Ode, then a Parakoyi, and finally an Ogboni chief. If the town was the primary political unit, then the province was the secondary political unit - the distinctive group of towns under a senior Oba. The three Egba provinces remained quite distinct in the Egba forest. However, their distinguishing features have been greatly obscured by inter-marriages, common residence in Abeokuta and such other influences. The Owu

who were closely related to the Egba were their neighbours at the Orile Egba. The Olowu was the ruler of the Owu kingdom. During the time of Gaa as Bashorun of Oyo, the Alafin's direct control over the Egba forest diminished. The Oyo Ajele had managed to convert the problem of Oyo to their advantage. The Oyo Ajele were no longer contented with the collection of annual tributes from the Egba. They virtually usurped power from the Egba. They tyrannised the Egba by making excessive demands from them and also harassed their women.

The activities of the Oyo Ajele in administering the Egba people at Orile made Lisabi, an Itoku man who grew up at Igbein, to organise the Egba men into a mutual assistance society called Aaro in every Egba town. Lisabi later converted the society into the Olorogun society (war society) which he used to rid the Egba of the excesses of the Ilari/Ajele stationed in the various Egba towns of the three provinces. His principal lieutenants were Amosu of Ikija, in Oke-Ona, Arinkotu of Ojoo, and Akila of Iddo, in Gbagura (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 114). Lisabi and his associates armed their followers in secret with bows and arrows, slings, spears, daggers, swords, hatchets, and clubs. The violent uprising began in Lisabi's Igbein and soon spread to every other Egba town at their Orile. It is estimated that over 600 Ilari/Ajele were murdered by the Egba in one day (Gailey, 1982: 2). Thus the Egba Olorogun uprising under Lisabi brought an end to the political domination of Egbaland by the Oyo.

The attempt by the Alafin to re-conquer Egbaland proved abortive. An Oyo army made up of troops from Oyo, Ibarapa, and Yewa, crossed the River Ogun at Mokoloki and advanced towards Igbein, Lisabi's town. Lisabi had however, hidden the women and children of the town in a ravine called Melegu. When the Oyo army entered Igbein, they found it deserted. As the invading army was busy ransacking the town, Lisabi's militia suddenly and swiftly descended on them and put them to rout while the Egba remained independent (Gailey, 1982: 2). It has been argued that, apart from the military tactics employed by Lisabi, the Egba's victory could also be attributed to the military weakness of the Oyo army under Alafin Abiodun's prosperous reign (1774-1789) under who the Oyo army became inefficient and as a result of which it was defeated by Borgu in 1783, Ife in 1791, and Lisabi's militia in 1796 (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 116).

The victory of the Egba over the Oyo army made the Oke-Ogun people enter into a treaty of peace with the Egba under Lisabi. The alliance with the Oke-Ogun people made the Egba to pursue an active common frontier policy against Dahomey who raided Oke-Ogun periodically. This treaty was kept till after the Agbaje war, when it was broken by the Oke-Ogun people which resulted in the frequent attack by the Oke-Ogun people against the Egba territories consequent upon the internal feud

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among the Egba after the demise of Lisabi (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 116). Lisabi built a fortress on a hill in order to watch the activities of the enemies more easily. He remained in this fortress at the head of a garrison (Biobaku, 1957: 10). Therefore, it can be safely submitted that Lisabi was the first commander of a united Egba army in history though he was not officially addressed as Balogun of the Egba. He however, functioned as the Jagunna, which was the Egba equivalent of the Balogun title at that time.

But his achievement went beyond commanding the Egba forces. He became a military and a political leader under whom the Egba were not only united, but also prosperous (Ajisafe, 1964: 17). The Egba people took advantage of their newly won independence and security to engage in trade beyond their immediate neighbours. They traded in kolanut with the Hausa of northern Nigeria, and also engaged in coastal trade at Badagry. These commercial activities brought prosperity to the Egba people. J. B. O. Losi recorded how Lisabi was wont to saying that “I fought for them (the Egba people) to wrap alari cloth and I warred for them to wear sekini cloth” (Losi, 1924: 9).

The achievements of Lisabi in the areas of peace, unity, prosperity, and security of the Egba nation notwithstanding, he later became unpopular among his chiefs. Ajisafe, Losi, Biobaku, and Falola and Oguntomisin have given various reasons ranging from: jealousy of his fame by his chiefs; war wariness; resentment of conscription of young people who could be used on the farms into the army; to his old age among others. As a result of all these, Ajisafe and Losi noted how Lisabi was decoyed to a hill in the Egba forest by some of his chiefs who were critical of his government and pushed into the ditch below where he was seen no more (Losi, 1924: 9). Biobaku however, argued that Lisabi either perished in a Dahomian raid on the Egba frontiers or mysteriously took his own life in the forest (Biobaku, 1957: 10).

The importance of the military arrangement under Lisabi in the Egba forest cannot be over-emphasized. Local differences had been submerged under the spell of his personality and the need to combine to meet an external foe. His demise however, brought about a return to *status quo ante* which meant a return to town rivalries and jealousies, and the ineffectiveness of the old federal authorities which according to Biobaku “was neither clearly defined nor able to assert itself” (Biobaku, 1957: 11). With local differences and rivalries re-emerging among the various Egba towns, it was not long before civil wars occurred in the Egba forest. Although Biobaku has argued that many of these might have occurred in the Egba forest before the Owu war, the first to be recorded in Egba history was the

Ogedepagbo war between Igbein and Itoku which was the result of an attempt to run a salt monopoly which Igbein “had either imposed or violated” (Biobaku, 1957: 11). When the parties to the dispute threatened to involve all the other Egba Alake towns, the blockade runner or smuggler (Ogedepagbo of Itoku) was condemned to death and executed by the *Oro* (Biobaku, 1957: 11).

The civil wars attendant on the collapse of the first military arrangement initiated by Lisabi emphasized the weakness of the federal civil authorities in the Egba forest. Even though the Alake was *primus inter pares*, and was universally acknowledged as the supreme judicial authority, there was no binding obligation to resort to his court as powerful individual could ignore it altogether. There was the will to act collectively in settling inter-town disputes (as in the Ilugun civil war) but it did not bear fruit in the absence of recognisable military machinery as experienced under Lisabi. When Egba Alake towns established a central Parakoyi court, their success tempted them towards separatism. Again, when Alake Okikilu failed in his attempt to deal with seceding towns, his office fell into abeyance simply because there was no central coercive machinery (Biobaku, 1957: 14).

Their lack of cohesion and mutual jealousy proved fatal to the existence of the Egba towns at the time of the upheaval which engulfed Yorubaland in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when the allied forces of Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo refugees invaded the Owu kingdom, whose territory was adjacent to the Egba forest. After the destruction of Owu, the victorious forces attacked one Egba town after the other. The Egba lacked the leadership and internal cohesion to contain or even repel the attack of the enemies. Instead of evolving all Egba military machinery as practised under Lisabi, the Egba townships aided the enemies against their fellow Egba towns and even rejoiced at the fate of such towns until the same fate befell them. As a result, the whole Egba forest was completely devastated by the allied forces (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 118).

The inability of the Egba to unite against the invading forces of Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo spelt doom for the Egba towns which were destroyed by the enemies. In the demoralizing atmosphere of the period, the Egba failed to perceive the advantage of a united defensive action. The calamity that befell the Egba rendered many Egba towns desolate. Apart from Awe, Fiditi, Iloba, Abena, Akinmorin, Agerige, Aran, Kojoku, and Oroko, which had submitted one another to Oloyo, Ibadan was the only Egba town which was not destroyed (Ajisafe, 1964: 55). It used to be an Egba Gbagura town but which was now occupied by the invading forces. Dispersed and chastened, the Egba wondered for some time before they finally resorted to Ibadan, now under Okunade, the Maye of Ife, and the Commander-in-Chief of the allied

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forces, which proved to be the rallying point of the Yoruba and later the bulwark of the Yoruba defence against the Fulani.

However, the situation in Ibadan at that time did not encourage the continued co-existence of the Egba with the other Yoruba groups in the town. At this time, the assemblage of motley people in Ibadan lacked food and means of livelihood. As a result, the Oyo, Ijebu, and the Ife allies were in the habit of kidnapping the Egba and selling them into slavery. The Egba people tried to prevent this to no avail as they were outnumbered by the hostile forces in Ibadan. When the situation became unbearable, the Egba people decided to vacate Ibadan and encamped far away from the hostile forces on the western side of the Ona River.

Thereafter, the Egba decided to vacate their Oke-Ona camp for a safer place. It was clear to the Egba that the trans-Ona camp was too close to Ibadan for their safety. Balogun Sodeke had heard of a site far away from Ibadan, where three hunters had escaped in the course of the disturbance that swept away the Egba towns. Tradition claims that the site was the farm of a man from Itoko who was also a member of the Ogboni. It was this man that introduced the Olubara into the Ogboni statecraft. Other traditions maintain that the site belonged to a Yewa man called Adagba. Whatever it was, Sodeke quickly dispatched some hunters to make the necessary investigation preparatory to settlement in the area. Having also made the necessary enquiry from Ifa, through soil sample taken from the site, Balogun Sodeke led the Egba to the new settlement "under the stone." It was this site which grew to become a formidable city called Abeokuta from where military outposts were established at Osiele, Oba, and Aiyetoro.

In between the outposts and the town of Abeokuta, cultivation was intensively concentrated during this period. Beyond the outposts was waste and forest with occasional cultivation by warrior groups and hunters. The southern half between Ofada and Iperu was reported in 1878, as being "a large and thick forest wholly uncultivated said to be site of old Igbein Township" (Johnson, 1963: 91) in former Oke-Ona province. Forest also persisted along the Ogun River, probably for ecological rather than historical reasons.

The Egba provinces which migrated to and re-established at Abeokuta in 1830, retained the names of the places they had come from. This new town had some advantages as a defensive site with the Ogun River forming a barrier for over half of the year. The rocky hills also provided defence. A wall was built round the town with a ditch on the outer side. To the west, it lay beyond the river. To the north, it followed the crest line beyond the Lakuta stream, and to the east and south, the

wall lied beyond the Shokori stream. The wall was extended several times on this side to accommodate the new settlement at Ibara. The surviving Owu people reasoned that to be safe in the nearest future from the attacks of their enemies they would have to go and live in Abeokuta. They therefore joined the Egba in Abeokuta, in 1831. After the destruction of Ijaiye in March 1862, the Ijaiye people also joined the Egba in Abeokuta.

Economic Activities

Economic activities in Egbaland revolved around the production and exchange of goods among the Egba towns and also between the Egba and their neighbours. The economic activities also went beyond a local one to an international one. Trade was an important economic activity in Egbaland. The C.M.S reports show Abeokuta as the centre of trade in the hinterland. Biobaku's analysis of the various efforts made by the missionaries to keep Abeokuta as a centre of trade in the hinterland is illustrative of the above assertion. Trade served as a linking force between groups of people. It also helped to keep up continual inter-communication between adjacent towns as goods were exchanged between them. Towns often specialised in the production of certain commodities that were required by others. These trading relations that existed between the different groups were facilitated by the different trade routes through which trade passed and without which trade would have been limited to areas of production, as production would have remained at a little above subsistence level i.e. peasant economy. From the time the missionaries started arriving in Abeokuta in 1842; available evidence show that agricultural goods were in abundance in Abeokuta such that there was the need for exchange of goods and services, which actually took place. People exchanged or sold their agricultural goods for those they needed. In the first half of the twentieth century, various agricultural crops (both food and cash crops) existed in Egbaland. The Egba, through their interaction with their neighbours and Europeans, traded in all these. More importantly, the Egba took advantage of the vibrant economic activities to establish toll gates and later customs duty posts to generate revenue to run both the Egba United Board of Management (E.U.B.M) and the Egba United Government (E.U.G).

Articles of Trade

The articles of trade during both the pre-colonial and colonial periods were agricultural goods and products, European manufactures and some locally made

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products, which were first battered, and later sold, to the people. The main food crops were yam, maize, beans, rice, guinea corn and cassava, while oil palm served both food and cash crops in the period under study (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1). Other cash crops were cotton, cocoa, kolanut, coffee, pineapple and citrus. Within Egbaland, the main food crops were yam, beans and maize. Subsidiary crops included vegetables, potatoes, groundnuts, pepper, tobacco and plantain. Cassava would come to usurp the pivotal position of yam and become the staple of the people of Egba Division. It is difficult to say when the change-over from yam to cassava took place but it should be noted that it only became a notable food crop in Abeokuta and other parts of Egbaland in the first half of the twentieth century. Mabogunje and Gleave have shown how some farmers claimed that in their youth, before 1914, cassava was largely regarded as food for pigs and sheep (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 8).

Rice had been known on West African Coast since the time of the Portuguese arrival, probably in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. It was later introduced into Egba Division around 1849. Initially it was not popular with the masses of the farmers, because of the trouble and efforts needed to plant, harvest and process the crop. Later evidence however, reveals that the few farmers who tried to plant the crop were Christian converts or people in close touch with the missionaries. The majority of these farmers were in the Christian Village of *Ofada* which by the beginning of the twentieth century had become sufficiently reputed for the production of the crop to give its name to a type of rice called *Ofada*. From there, rice cultivation spread to other parts of Egba Division.

Oil-palm produce served both the food and export crop purposes. Since oil palm was already a part of the food crop complex, it was easy for it to become also an export crop once the existence of an overseas demand for it was appreciated. However, unlike other crops, the oil palm was not cultivated. It grew wild in the Division as in most parts of Southern Nigeria.

Cotton had been grown by farmers for local weaving and there was no move to export it before 1850. The missionaries, through their anti-slavery activities, encouraged the expansion of cotton cultivation in West Africa as a means of undermining the slave-centred cotton economy of the Southern United States. Decline, however, set in after 1870 due to the opening up of better-favoured areas in Northern Nigeria and the greater attraction of cocoa. However, the British Cotton Growing Association later resuscitated interest in cotton cultivation after 1903. The area of production which was sixteen (16) miles radius of Abeokuta in the second half of the nineteenth century had shifted slightly to the east i.e. the

areas just being settled in the twentieth century – Ilugun and Ishan were the main centres (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1).

The origin and spread of cocoa in Egba Division is not very clear. One can however assume that cocoa spread from Agege plantations into Egbaland after 1880. Webster has shown that by 1880, cocoa plantation had been established at Ijan by J.P.L. Davies (Webster, 1963: 428). It was probably from this area that cocoa spread to the Division via the areas around Ota and to the north of it i.e. Ifo and much later in the north-east i.e. around Asa and Ilogbo where it was reported that over 10,000 trees were planted by 1902 (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 12).

A species of kolanut, *abata* (*cola acuminata*) variety is indigenous to Nigeria. B.A. Agiri has argued that of the three important species of kolanut in the kola trade in Nigeria, *abata* was exported to Brazil from Lagos in the nineteenth century (Agiri, 1972: 48-80). In the nineteenth century, the most important area of its cultivation in Egba Division was in the south-west around Ota. At the beginning of the twentieth century, its cultivation was reported in the north-eastern part of Egbaland. Here, it was being planted along with cocoa by 1902.

Trade within Egbaland

The business of buying and selling or exchange of goods that had taken root since the Egba settled in Abeokuta in 1830, continued unabated and became more organised on a large scale as a result of their colonisation of new areas. By 1914, much of the forested eastern half described by Mabogunje and Gleave had been colonised by the Egba (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 3). In the south-west, their boundary had extended beyond Ota, the Awori town. As a result of this development, local trade was now carried out on a larger scale within Egbaland. The existence of large and permanent settlement such as Abeokuta, Ifo, Owode, Oba, Ota, Osiele, Ofada and several satellite villages also aided trade. Trade within Egbaland in the period under discussion involved both intra and inter-town trade in foodstuffs, cash crops, crafts and imported commodities. The agricultural products that have been listed above were the main articles of trade. Articles such as beans, rice, yam, plantain, vegetable, palm oil, pepper, kolanut, citrus, guinea-corn, groundnut, sweet potato, cassava, and cassava products such as *lafun* and *garri* were consumed as food. The main production centres were the villages from where they got to the various markets.

Trade was organised in such a way that many middlemen emerged. There were those who went to the farms to purchase the foodstuffs directly from the farmers or through their agents. There were those who purchased from middlemen or their agents who had earlier bought directly from the farmers. It should be noted that

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some farmers who were located close to major markets took their goods directly to the markets. When this happened, they still sold their goods to middlemen more often than not. The character of trade was such that it encouraged the proliferation of middlemen. Attendance at major markets such as Sapon, Itoku, Lafenwa, Omida, Olodo, Owode, Obafemi, and Ifo also showed that many people were involved in the trade. Middlemen and farmers sold at these different markets to retailers or in some cases to middlemen who re-sold again to retailers before the goods finally got to the consumers. It must be noted that kolanut, cotton and citrus also entered the local trade. In the period under study, kolanut trade became very important in the Ifo-Ota and Egba Owode area. Oranges and pineapples also featured in the markets from the second decade of the twentieth century. Cotton was still being used in the local weaving industry and as such was sold locally.

Although, there was no rigid division as to what a market could sell, certain ecological factors affected the range of goods available. Some markets were noted for particular articles of trade. For example, when kolanut became important in the first half of the twentieth century, the Ifo and Owode markets became important for the trade in Kolanut. Owode market was noted for the trade in rice because of its proximity to Ofada where rice was cultivated in abundance. Itoku market in Abeokuta was noted for the sale of Adire dye and cloth while Lafenwa was also noted for the sale of kola and cattle. The point being made here is that though these markets were noted for particular trades, other articles of trade could still be purchased from them.

In fact, a particular item, cassava product, garri became the staple food in Egbaland from the second quarter of the twentieth century and could be found in virtually all the markets. Its scarcity between 1949 and 1951 almost caused a crisis in Egbaland. This scarcity was evident in the sharp rise in its price. The price of garri increased from about eight pence (8d) an *olodo* to 2 shillings 2/ (N.A.I. ABP. ED 545). This was an increase of about two hundred percent (200%). Its dearth during this time was such that the Egba Native Administration (E.N.A.) under its three-man regency had to embark on food campaign in order to boost production (N.A.I. ABP. ED. 545) and avert bloody crisis that might result from such scarcity.

It should be noted that this was a period of interregnum in Egbaland, after the forceful removal of Ademola II (Davies, 1992: 17). However, there is nothing to show that the crisis that resulted in the interregnum was responsible for the scarcity of garri about this time. The exportation of gari to the northern part of the country, scarcity of labour in Egbaland and the effect of insects on farms and crops, among others, could be said to be the causes of the dearth of garri in Egbaland about this

time. These problems were recognised by the interim administration, and it embarked on measures of banning exportation of garri out of Egbaland and used various propaganda to enlist young men (especially unmarried ones), in farming through the provision of various incentives like cash and parcels of land. Whether these measures yielded the expected returns is another thing entirely. Suffice it to say that most of the young men that were to be enlisted for the job declined the offer, in spite of the incentive, for greener pasture elsewhere, especially Lagos.

Apart from kolanut and cotton, other cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, palm oil and palm-kernel also featured in the inter-town trade in Egbaland. All these crops were bought from the various production centres (i.e. villages and towns) by traders/middlemen and produce buyers who later resold to those who would export the crops or exported them directly.

Particular attention should also be paid to local craft as products of this sector entered the internal trade of Egbaland although not on a large scale as trade in agricultural products. Egbaland, and in particular Abeokuta, was blessed with experienced carvers. One of them, an Itoko man, was said to be particularly important such that he made masks for Gelede and Egungun dancers (N.A.I. ABP. 902). It was even claimed that the masks were brought back to the carver to be repainted just before the festivals. This man's works were such that the colonial administration proposed to have them exhibited in the Nigerian Crafts Show room, established at building number 9, Martins Street, Lagos, in 1941, as many other works of art were on display there. Although, it is impossible to say exactly how many of his works were sold locally as there is no record of his sales, yet that his works entered the local trade however, is not in doubt. Any analysis of trade in Egbaland in the period under study would be incomplete without mentioning the place of indigo dyeing and Adire cloth in Egbaland. The Adire industry was so important that it became prominent in the West African sub-region. Its products were also proposed for exhibition in the Lagos Craft Show room in 1937.

The importance of trade and the Adire industry in the political economy of the Egba nation cannot be over-emphasised. It showcased the important role of women not only in the economy of the Egba, but also in the modernisation drive of the Egba nation. The Egba women were very prominent in the Adire trade so much that they formed the Adire Dyers' Association in 1926 (Afolabi, 1981). Some of these women became so rich that they became the "economic pillars" of their homes and by extension, the Egba society. Missionary papers revealed several occasions when a local Catechist's family could not stay at his duty post but chose to remain in Abeokuta because of the wife's "trading activities" (C.M.S. Papers, 1847).

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The activities of Madam Tinubu among others and later, members of the Abeokuta Women Union (A.W.U) under the leadership of Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, are particularly noteworthy. It should be noted that the early growth of interest in education by the Egba youth was also aided by the thriving businesses of their mothers which in turn helped the women to be exposed to foreign ideas. Since Adire traders came from faraway places such as Senegal, Dyula in Cameroon, Ghana, Congo, and even all over Nigeria, among others, the Egba traders initially relied on interpreters to translate from English to Yoruba. The Egba women later invested their money in their own children not only to cut cost but also as status symbol. The return of these foreign bred educated elite of the Egba women helped in the modernisation programmes of the Egba nation. For example, Adegboyega Edun and several others were said to have benefitted from their mothers' wealth (Afolabi, 1981).

In addition, as "economic pillars" of their homes and by extension the Egba society, they were at the forefront of political activities in Egbaland, especially after the Ijemo massacre and the Adubi rising. The activities of Abeokuta Ladies Club, which metamorphosed into A.W.U shaped the political development of Egbaland at a time that the colonial government thought that Egbaland had been coerced into political inaction. The Egba women collaborated with some other groups to press the colonial government to back down on some of its policies while the Egba men stayed at the background as a result of the experiences of 1914 and 1918. For example, they organised demonstrations and even kept vigil at the Afin Ake until Ladapo Ademola II, was sent on temporary exile in 1948.

Trade in Egbaland in the period under study was not limited to agricultural products and crafts alone. It also went on in imported commodities. It is true that the economy had become gradually monetised as the barter trade had given way to real money economy by the twentieth century. It should also be noted that the Europeans, the Saro elements and various other nationals had penetrated Egbaland in the nineteenth century. Some of them like J.P.L. Davies, and Madam Tinubu operated retail shops where these imported commodities, some of which were exotic could be procured. The people bought most of these commodities for their social values. Some of them got to the villages through the middlemen and farmers who came to town once in a while and later, frequently with the advent of road and railway transportation. Some of the imported commodities that entered the local trade were soap, matches, clothing materials, cement among others.

External Trade

The external trade concerned the long-distance trade between the Egba and their immediate and distant neighbours and the Europeans. Egba's external trade involved trade in both food and cash crops with the Ijebu, Yewa, Porto Novo, Ibadan, Lagos, Cameroon, Ghana, and Congo among others. They also traded with the people of the 'North'. This trade increased with the construction of the railways that linked Egbaland with the northern part of Nigeria. Also, during this period, Egba's external trade with the Europeans saw the exportation of cash crops to Europe.

In fact, the Egba people had been known to be involved in long-distance trade with their neighbours from the middle of the nineteenth century. That the Egba traded with Yewa and through Yewa with Porto Novo has been well documented. With the rise of the Egba state in early 1830, Abeokuta gradually became the chief nodal point for the northern sector of Yewa's commercial life (Folayan, 1980: 85). Abeokuta traded with Ketu and Badagry and later Oke-Odan and Porto Novo. The Egba-Porto Novo trade tapped the farm products of the region of central and southern Yewa in addition to those of the Egba. In the first half of the nineteenth century, slaves formed the most important article of trade, which the Egba exchanged for the European manufactures from Porto Novo. However, the Egba nation later changed from a slave economy into an agro-based one. The introduction of legitimate trade consequent upon abolition of slave trade, the intensification of agriculture with the advent of missionaries and the Saro elements and the activities of both the E.U.B.M. and the E.U.G in Abeokuta brought about a real change in the slave economy.

The middleman position of the Egba was still jealously guarded by the Egba by the second quarter of the twentieth century until the advent of vehicles. Even then, their middlemen position was not seriously affected. Agricultural products were taken from various production centres to towns such as Abeokuta, Ilugun, Ota, Ifo and Owode from where they were finally taken to different neighbouring areas such as Yewa, Ibadan, the Ijebu country, Kano, Zaria, and Lagos via Ota and Ofada-Gaun route (Davies, 1992: 46). The advantage of road connection made it possible for the above towns within Egbaland to act as receivers of local goods. Various agricultural goods and products like cassava, rice, palm-oil, kolanut, coffee and garri to mention a few, were taken out of Egbaland to these neighbouring towns. The problem here again, is that most of Egba's trades with their neighbours went unrecorded in our period. However, through oral evidence, we know that these agricultural products were taken from Egbaland by road transport to Yewa area where they later found their way to Porto Novo (Benin Republic). It is also claimed that these agricultural goods and products especially garri found their way to Ibadan. The Ijebu also featured prominently in Egba's

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trade with their neighbours. They came to Abeokuta and other towns with road connection to buy garri. Available evidence reveals that the Ijebu and Ibadan were involved in the shipment of garri from Egbaland to the northern part of the country between 1949 and 1951 (N.A.I. ABP. ED. 545). This incidence almost caused civil disturbance in Egbaland as shown earlier. It should be noted that the northern part referred to here is probably Kano and Zaira, which apart from the fact that they enjoyed railway connections were mentioned by some of the informants contacted.

Moreover, strangers' communities such as Sango in Ota and Sabo in both Owode and Abeokuta are reminiscent of Egba's trade with their neighbours. These areas served as transmittal centres of Egba's trade with their distant northern neighbours. Cassava products, garri were railed from Sabo through Lafenwa to the north on a daily basis between 1949 and 1951. Also, kolanut trade featured prominently in Sabo (Abeokuta and Owode), Ifo and Ilugun from where they were railed to the north on a daily basis. It must also be noted that cattle and other northern products such as hides and skin got to Egbaland through these settlers' communities.

Modernisation

Modernisation is a stage in development. Generally, historians attribute modernisation to processes such as urbanisation, industrialisation, and literacy. In an urbanised society, the individual becomes the basic unit of the society and this makes the individual more important than the family or community. The importance of traditional religious beliefs also decline, leading to the loss of distinctive cultural traits. The concept of modernisation adopted by this paper conforms to these processes.

The victory of the Egba over the Ijebu, at the battle of Owiwi (1832) and Ibadan, at the battle of Arakanga (1835) marked a turning point in the history of the Egba nation. Refugees poured into Abeokuta between 1836 and 1842. Abeokuta's fame spread far and wide. All the Egba who had hidden in the forest during Egba's dispersal from the Egba forest now found their way back to Abeokuta. Inhabitants of friendly towns, especially from Oke-Ogun, who fled before invaders found refuge in Abeokuta. Captives of war, especially of Oyo, Ife, and Ijebu, brought back by the Olorogun, when not sold into slavery, were absorbed into the Egba household as domestic slaves (Biobaku, 1957: 24). Thus Abeokuta was fortified with immigrants and hence became more impregnable than ever to withstand any attack. More importantly, Egba returnees, missionaries, and Europeans also made Abeokuta their abode. The agglomeration of diverse people in Abeokuta was a factor in the modernisation of the Egba nation.

It should be noted that some Egba citizens, including some Saro who had settled in Lagos, advised the Egba authority on the best way to fashion the body politic of Abeokuta. They therefore acted as stimulus in assisting the Egba nation in establishing the E.U.B.M in 1865 (Biobaku, 1957: 79). The E.U.B.M made attempt to foster cooperation between the traditional chiefs and the educated elements, with a view to establishing a stable and civilised government in Abeokuta. Chief Shomoye, the Bashorun, was styled President-General, Chief Akodu, the Seriki, was the High Sheriff, and Asalu, the head of the Ogboni was also included in this novel arrangement (Biobaku, 1957; 79). The Board was directed by its Secretary, G.W. Johnson and other leading Egba Saro. The E.U.B.M did not evolve a proper council representative of the traditional, sectional and immigrant elements in Abeokuta. However, the E.U.B.M. made some positive achievement in the establishment of Customs Department for levying export duties instead of the customary bills collected at the gates (Biobaku, 1957: 79). Defaulting goods were seized and auctioned. One-third was assigned to the seizer, while the remaining two-thirds went to the E.U.B.M. Customs houses were placed on the Ogun River at Isheri and Agbamaiya to record movements of produce and levy duties according to the Egba Customs Duties Ordinance. The E.U.B.M customs duties were collected and accounted for by the use of printed forms and vouchers (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70).

By 1873, the E.U.B.M customs duties were discontinued as a result of the British opposition in Lagos. Subsequent attempts to re-establish it by Johnson failed. Despite this, the E.U.B.M still managed to introduce many modernised programmes. It organised a postal service to Lagos via the Ogun River. Senior schools were opened. There was also the encouragement of the use of English language to improve communication in the external political and economic relations of Abeokuta. It also took to sanitary improvements (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70).

Furthermore, on the invitation of some Egba elite in Lagos, Governor McCallum undertook a political re-organisation of the Egba in 1898. The E.U.G that emerged continued from where the E.U.B.M stopped and was able to finance its undertakings through customs and imported duties on spirits (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70). The E.U.G did not have full control over its customs duties, as it had to make changes in the tariffs only with the consent of the British government in an agreement concluded in 1903.

The pacification of adjoining territories to Abeokuta by the British seemed to have aided the new political structure in Abeokuta. The establishment of the E.U.G was aided by the situation of 1898 – Lagos, Ilaro, Ijebu, and Ibadan, had been annexed

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by the British. Some studies (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 71) on Egba have described the establishment of the E.U.G in 1898 as a novel one proposed by Governor McCallum. According to Pallinder-Law, although the constitution of the Egba Council of 1898 “shows much influence from ideas put forward and tried by G.W. Johnson and his associates, it included one completely novel feature (Pallinder-Law, 1972L 66). It should however, be noted that there was nothing new in that constitutional arrangement. Years before 1898, that is, as far back as 1871, Johnson (also known as Reversible Johnson) had proposed a re-organisation of Abeokuta government into a three-tier federal structure. The supreme ruler of the town was to bear the title of *Oba Onile* (The king who owns the land). Oyekan was to be first holder. Under *Oba Onile*, there were to be four *Oba Alade* (the king who wears a beaded crown) representing the four sections of Abeokuta. Below the *Oba Alade* were the *Oba Alakete* (the king who wears crown), representing the township kings. Johnson himself was to be the first *Amono Oba* (Vizier/Prime Minister) through whom the *Oba Onile* could be contacted and vice-versa.

This was the first federal structure taking into account the diverse political nature of Abeokuta. It was the precursor of a modern federal system in Nigeria, which gave everybody a sense of belonging and a peaceful society. It can be safely submitted that the Egba nation's modernising programme of political development is today reflected in the Nigeria's government practice of the dichotomy of Ministers of State and substantive or senior ministers. It has also been argued that the proposal put forward in 1898 by McCallum was a suggestion and advice given by Prince Ademola when the Governor sought his advice on the best way to solve the problem of political crisis in Abeokuta (C.M.S. CAZ/90). Prince Ademola was of great help to the Governor in making the new type of government work. He had also been busy in other ways. He arranged the Egba Railway Agreement with the British government in 1898, and three years later became the Egba Government Agent in Lagos (Delano, 1969: 8-9).

Therefore, with the help of Prince Ademola and W.A. Allen, the representative of the Lagos government in Abeokuta, Sir Henry McCallum proposed in February 1898, a state council of eight ministers with the Alake as Chairman (Delano, 1969: 8). The Osile was to become Minister of Justice, the Olowu, Minister of Finance, the Agura, Minister of Roads and Works, the Oba Imale, Minister of Public Order, the Balogun of the Christians, Minister of Sanitation, the Olori Parakoyi, Minister of Trade and Agriculture, the Seriki, Assistant Minister of Justice, and the Apena of Iporo, Government Secretary. It should be pointed out that the composition of the E.U.G continued to be extended as the need was felt for certain individuals or interests to be drawn into the central government. When Gbadebo became the

Alake, his friend and Personal Secretary, Mr. P.P Martins became the Secretary to the E.U.G (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 76). Mr. C.B Moore who had been unpaid treasurer for some time also became paid and full time member of the E.U.G. Reverend D.O Williams was also made a member of the Council. As early as May, 1898, one representative each of Itoko and Ijemo townships had been added.

The argument of Pallinder-Law that these appointments were simply concessions to the “owners of the soil” seems to have been buttressed by the fact that they did not attend any council meeting. The decision to invite the federal or all-Egba Ologun title-holders to the council was an important one. Being wealthy and influential, they might become dangerous leaders of dissenting groups if not incorporated. The Seriki had been a member since the beginning of the E.U.G and by January, 1899, when the Balogun of Ilugun was appointed the Balogun of Abeokuta, following the deportation of Aboaba, he was included in the council. Later in 1899, the Otun Balogun and Osi Balogun became members. They were later joined by the Ekerin Balogun, an Owu Chief. Also, the Apena of Itoku and Apena of Ake who as leaders of the Ogboni Council of *Omo Iya* townships, joined the council in 1901. Two township Ologun, the Jaguna of Igbein and Jaguna of Ijeja (both Egba Alake) joined the council in 1901 (Pallinder-Law, 76).

In addition, provision was also made for chiefs who were not original members of the council to take part in Council meetings occasionally. By 1901, membership of the council had increased to about twenty-two including the Alake. These members received monthly stipend right from the Alake who received an initial amount of £8.6.8d down to the lowest paid who received £1.0.0d totalling £43.13.4d monthly and £524 yearly. Stipends were later increased and the number of councillors also increased such that by April 1899, the yearly cost of council stipends was £915 and by January 1900, £1059. The Alake was then receiving £15 per month while the lowest paid council member received £2. The stipend was paid from the revenue yielded by the government’s customs levy (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 78).

By 1902, J.H Samuel who later became Adegboyega Edun replaced P.P Martins as the Secretary while J.O George succeeded C.B Moore after his death in 1906. In order to fulfil the role of support–generating and generally mediating link between the townships and the central government, the council pursued a policy of enlarged council so as to include increasing number of chiefs with township titles. By the end of 1910, there were eighteen such chiefs on the council. During 1911, four more appointments were made but in August, the council was warned by the Financial Advisory Board (FAB) that no further ‘unnecessary multiplication’ of members of council would be authorised. This intervention by FAB prevented a further appointment which the council had already decided on in principle. Only two more township representatives were admitted in the last three years of the

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EUG. However, as a result of loss through deaths and other causes, the number of townships chiefs on the council had fallen to nineteen by September, 1914. Moreover, the number of chiefs with all-Egba titles fell, as the incumbents died and new appointments were not made. By September, 1914, there were three such title-holders on the council compared to the nine existing before in 1909 (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 78). The total number of membership which had been thirty-two in December, 1910, had risen to a peak of thirty-five in December, 1912, and came down to thirty by December, 1914. Average attendance fell from 26 in May-June 1912 to 19 in December, 1913 – January 1914.

The membership of the council by township chiefs did not stop them from conducting their private courts – a practice which ran counter to E.U.G's policy of centralisation of judicial authority. Individual council members had been repeatedly found guilty of deviations from it. It was obvious that the practice of settling disputes in chiefs' private courts continued to be common. Therefore, the right of chiefs to settle uncomplicated cases concerning people from their own townships was admitted, in 1911, though the chiefs were not officially to receive hearing fees or presents, at least, not until after the amicable settlement of a case. Later in 1911, it was further conceded that township chiefs might settle cases that should properly be heard by the Egba court, provided regular court fees were collected and paid over to the Egba court (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 78). A further concession was made when an order-in-council of September, 1911, empowered township chiefs to investigate cases of burglary. This was in recognition of the traditional role of the Ogboni in suppression of crime.

It has been argued that it is fair to say that the achievements of the E.U.G did not go beyond those of the E.U.B.M, but the “modernizing” interests were far more solidly entrenched than they had been in the 1860s, and there was no risk of a setback like that which the E.U.B.M had suffered (Pallinder-Law, 1974: 75). The development policy of the E.U.G saw a strong push forward with the appointment of Adegboyega Edun. Development was concentrated in three areas vis: the political; the administrative; and the technological. It has been argued above that the E.U.G established a conscious policy of increasing the number of members of the council so as to make it more representative of the many divisions of Abeokuta society.

The administrative establishment of the E.U.G was rapidly expanded. In 1898, about twenty people were employed – clerks, messengers, post-master and a host of others. By 1908, the E.U.G had employed about 350 people of whom eighty-five were in higher and lower clerical positions. The number of government departments also increased. In 1908, there was a secretariat, a treasury, audit

office, customs department, judicial department, public works department, medical and sanitary department, police, prison, printing office, forest and agricultural office, post office and an education department. The annual expenditure which had been about £1,500 in 1898 was about £17,000 in 1908 and over £40,000 in 1911 (Pallinder-Law, 1974: 760). Also, from 1904, yearly estimates of expenditure and revenue were printed by the E.U.G printing office.

In the technological field, the E.U.G undertook a considerable programme of road building, although most of the roads were hammock roads rather than intended for wheeled transport. In Abeokuta town, motor transport was introduced by the E.U.G in the first decade of the twentieth century (N.A.A. Egba Govt. Gazette). The Roman Catholic Hospital was also financially assisted in addition to the employment of two Egba doctors and a number of smallpox vaccinators. A corn mill was installed for the use of the general public and a museum was founded to exhibit the economic products of the country. The E.U.G also built water works which distributed piped water taken from the Ogun River to public fountains along the main roads of Abeokuta. The E.U.G also undertook a considerable programme of building of government offices and other public buildings in Abeokuta and in rural centres (Ajisafe, 1964: 85).

To a large extent, the E.U.G was able to finance its undertakings from its revenue derived mainly from custom duties. Because the E.U.G did not have full control over its main source of revenue – customs duties – since it had agreed to make changes in the tariffs only with the consent of the British, it could not derive the expected revenue to finance its projects. However, the finance of the E.U.G soon dwindled as a result of the dwindling resources of the E.U.G and the over-expansion of the E.U.G among others. Hence, when the E.U.G wanted to embark on the construction of pipe-borne water in 1910, there was no finance for it except through a loan of thirty thousand pounds from the Lagos government (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70). Subsequently, direct taxation was introduced by the E.U.G to improve its precarious financial situation. The agitation and resentment that followed the introduction of direct taxation culminated in the Ijemo massacre, which the British government used as an excuse to institute a political change in Abeokuta. A new arrangement was carved out and the E.U.G. became the Egba Native Authority (E.N.A) with the Alake as the Sole Native Authority (S.N.A) and assisted by two others in the district (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70).

The water scheme initiated by the E.U.G and for which it incurred a loan of £30,000.00 initially displeased the general public. However, the E.N.A vigorously pursued the policy such that by the end of the colonial period, a water works had been constructed in Abeokuta and the people benefitted from it. Moreover, arrangement was also made with Lagos Government for the introduction of

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electricity to Abeokuta. By the time electricity was finally introduced to Abeokuta, the Europeans were the first beneficiaries before others could benefit. The E.N.A further reinforced electricity in Abeokuta by a grid link with Lagos (N.A.I./ABE. PROF. ABP. 232).

Diversification

The concept of diversification is not here conceived strictly in terms of its economic sense of reducing non-systemic risk by investing in a variety of assets alone. It is construed in terms of the variety of activities - politically, economically, socially, and otherwise - that the Egba people engaged in, in Abeokuta and its environs.

Like all modernised societies, the Egba people delineated their work places from their towns. Many of their work places in those days were their farmlands where they engaged in their day to day production activities. And so, it was customary in those days to talk of Egba Oko (the Egba of the village) and Egba Ile (the town Egba). Much later, the farmlands developed into towns on their own. It was in this way that areas such as Ifo, Owode, Osiele, Oba, and Ilugun among others transited from mere farmlands to small towns. Furthermore, traditional festivals such as Egungun and Agemo, and modern religious celebrations such as Christmas and Eid-el-Kabir, were occasions for all to return home. During these periods, Abeokuta wore a new look with so much fanfare. Abeokuta's uniqueness lied in the fact that no Egba man would want to be buried in his farmland (Oral information).

The role of the Agege planters in the diversification of the Egba economy must also be mentioned. The Agege planters were the Egba in the diaspora so-called. Jacob Kehinde Coker, whose father Ajobo Coker, owned a cotton farm in Abeokuta, and an export business in Lagos, pioneered the Agege plantation. He was instrumental to the development of the area for plantation agriculture. The initiative of the planters was such that some food and cash crops later borrowed by the Egba entered Egbaland through Agege plantations. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Jacob Kehinde Coker leased the Davies' farm (Woodland Estate) and worked it alongside his own Ifako plantation (Davies, 1992: 84).

It has been argued that a lot of changes were introduced in Abeokuta consequent upon the incursion of the missionaries, Europeans, and the Saro elements. Some of the changes introduced came into being after 1914, in order to boost agricultural production for export. Farmers were now encouraged and assisted to produce cash crops for export. Model farms were set up, nurseries established, cooperative societies formed, marketing boards established, seedling distributed, insecticide introduced, and various incentives given to cash crop farmers. The British Cotton

Growing Association was formed (B.C.G.A) to resuscitate cotton production for export. The production of palm-oil and palm kernel was resuscitated by the Egba nation after 1914 (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 71). There was also the introduction of new cash crops into Egbaland. Cash crops such as coffee and cocoa were introduced around this time. In the same vein, the Egba economy diversified into pineapple, orange, and grape production around this time. The cultivation of cocoa was greatly encouraged by the colonial administration and many farmers took to it at the expense of palm produce and food crops (N.A.I. ABP. 62). The Agege plantation was used as nursery by the colonial government for cocoa cultivation in Egbaland. The cultivation of coffee was also encouraged as an export product. Available evidence however, revealed that not many farmers took to coffee cultivation in Egbaland. Also pineapple, orange, and grape were exported around this time.

Increase in trade revealed the shortcomings of traditional means of transportation - head portage and canoe through the Ogun River. The Ogun River was also dredged to facilitate smooth and easy movement of canoes on the river. The British had introduced the railway system into Egbaland by 1900. It was extended to Ibara by 1901. Ifo junction to Ilaro was opened in the 1930s. Points along the railway track (Railway stations) developed into economic centres and later towns. Thus, areas like Wasimi, Kajola , Ijoko, Agbado, and Itoki among others became economic towns.

The introduction of road transport followed the railway. The E.U.G under Adgboyega Edun first started the construction of good and wide roads preparatory to the introduction of motor vehicle. Thereafter the E.U.G introduced motor vehicle transport into Abeokuta and environs. After the initial operations, individuals were allowed to run vehicle transport in Egbaland (Ajisafe, 1964: 159). However, wheeled transport had serious implication on the average Egba trader as it brought many European merchants and African traders to Abeokuta at the expense of the Egba traders.

The period of the E.U.G also coincided with the diversification of the Egba economy into mechanised industry. Corn crushing machine was introduced by P.V Young, then as President of the Financial Advisory Board (F.A.B) to the E.U.G in 1909. This machine was set up at Sapon and opened for the use of the entire public.

A quarry was opened at Aro in 1904. The stone was sold to the Lagos government for the construction of the break waters in Lagos. Between 1906 and 1916, over two million tons of Abeokuta stone were used. Further large quantities were used

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in harbour development, especially for the extension to Apapa wharf in the 1950s. The stone was also used for buildings and railway ballast (Johnson, 1963: 89).

The Nigerian Concrete Company was established to manufacture poles, bridge beams, fencing posts, culverts etc. The factory was situated in Abeokuta because of the presence of mica-free gravels and sands obtainable locally from the base of the sedimentary rocks. A sawmill was also established at Sapon roundabout. It had a hand saw for cutting logs into planks. Logs were brought from a distance of over forty miles to Sapon.

In addition, the Blaize Memorial Institute established a fruit squash industry where fruit drinks were produced. Grape fruits were grown on the Blaize compound and lemons and pineapples were brought from the Western Nigerian Development Corporation plantation at Ijebu-Igbo and Apitipiti while oranges were bought from farmers in and around Abeokuta. Production later increased to about a thousand bottles a day.

Diversification should also be seen in terms of the political arrangement that was all inclusive. The political arrangement in Abeokuta was such that everybody was accommodated whether at the level of the E.U.B.M or the E.U.G. Apart from this, other sections of Abeokuta that later joined the Egba in Abeokuta, were allowed to have their sectional Oba - Owu, Yewa etc. In addition, the Egba Alake section had Oba who were not originally Egba on their father's side - Ademola (1869-1877) and Ladapo Ademola II (1920-1960). Ademola was an Owu man but whose mother was the daughter of Jibodu, an Alake at the Orile Egba. Ladapo Ademola II was the son of Ademola (Ajisafe, 1964: 211).

Conclusion

The conducive vegetation of Egbaland, no doubt, provided the foundation upon which the Egba erected a stable and strong economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Egba produced and traded in diverse food and cash crops both within Egbaland and with their immediate and distant neighbours. Egba's cash crops and products also entered the European markets. For the most parts of the nineteenth century, Abeokuta was the main hinterland of Lagos. The economic prosperity of Egbaland did not only result in political power for the Egba, which made them to defend their nascent town against all their enemies in the period under study, but also acted as a pull factor for many people who later made Abeokuta their abode.

The modernisation of Egbaland pre-dated colonial rule and it made the Egba people to stand out not only in Nigeria generally, but even among other Yoruba sub-groups. The acceptance of various groups into Egbaland and the evolution of a federal system of government helped in the mutual exchange of ideas on modernisation and integration. The federal system of government which the Egba designed in Abeokuta after 1830 was unique and the first of its kind in Nigeria. It could be said to have foreshadowed the federal principle in Nigeria. It also predated the Richards constitution of 1946, which is today regarded, in many quarters, as an adumbration of federal principle in the evolution of constitutional arrangement in Nigeria.

In addition, the whole idea of senior and junior ministers practiced by the Nigerian state today can be said to have been borrowed from the E.U.B.M and the E.U.G. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the Egba are pace setters not only in Nigeria but throughout the West African sub-region. The imposition of colonial rule on the Egba nation consequent upon the abrogation of the E. U. G in 1914 retarded the modernisation zeal of the Egba. The E.N.A that succeeded the E.U.G could not match the modernising zeal of its predecessor in office as it had to work within the ambits and dictates of the colonial administration in Nigeria in general.

After independence, Egbaland became part and parcel of the Western Regional Government which later metamorphosed into Western State, out of which the present Ogun State was created in 1976. Therefore, the political evolution of Nigeria, through the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Republics altered the academic climate under which the present exercise was conceived, as it is strictly speaking, difficult to talk about the Egba nation under the various political transformations and agglomeration that Abeokuta, the home of the Egba, has undergone since the 1960s.

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Global Media and the End of the Nation-State: Myth or Reality?

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Abstract

Debates about the influence of international media moguls on feeble African nation-states in particular often focus on whether the end of state sovereignty is a hyperbolic myth or a literal truth. This paper argues that, far from being an either/or question, contemplations of the phenomenon can be effectively enhanced if we adopt a middle-ground. Such a posture requires that we examine the dialectic between so-called global media and the nation-state within the orbit of critical theories such as Marxist political economy, in understanding their implications for sub-Saharan African states.

Keywords: global media, Marxism, nation-state, political economy, sovereignty

Introduction

When Plato in *The Republic* spoke of the captives in his allegorical cave, little did he say about the ideologies at work in that cave. He did not, for instance, tell us with much clarity why those bondsmen continually apperceived the shadows on the wall rather than the forms. Plato's theory of perception, *strictu sensus*, established a kind of base/superstructure mode of existence in which 'shadows' would always have to subsist on 'forms'. Put summarily, his work valorises a mechanistic mode of cognition between binaries – as in his analogy of the divided line – such as the oft-perceived dualism between the state and the global world. To be sure, those who unflinchingly support the sovereignty thesis of the state often argue that nation-states are primordial, self-contained, and naturally existing geographically bounded spaces. This container-model of logic has been adequately described by Ingrid Volkmer (2012) in *The Handbook of Global Media Research* as territorial essentialism. While it is practically impossible for us to give a full account of the emergence of the nation-state *hic et nunc*, suffice it to say that the concept is a modernist, political construct birthed in the early morning of the

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Enlightenment (Thompson, 1992; Smith & Riley, 2009). Admittedly, nation-states are not a *fait accompli*. We view the idea of the nation-state as a technology, the essence of which was to politically organize, regulate, and control the then fragmented, less united tribes of Europe for the sake of economically maximizing their material and non-material modes of production. Negri and Hardt (2000) remind us that nations that achieved sterling success in this respect blossomed into empires.

Today, we know too well that such a feat was both economically and politically rewarding. Ironically, the growth of an empire implies the demise of others, or the suppression of other states, a claim well-rehearsed in postcolonial scholarship and subaltern studies (Said, 1978; Ngugi, 1993; Loomba, 1998; Gikandi, 2003). The merging of giant transnational media corporations (TNCs) into supra-mega news agencies, for example, is leading some scholars to posit that the nation-state has reached its worst decline (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Price, 2002; Herman & McChesney, 2004). They insist that what is left of the state are its paraphernalia, the hoisted flag and coat of arms for example, and that the most productive sectors of the economy of many nation-states have been hijacked by global powers. The Nigerian scholar, Arthur-Martins Aginam (2005), paints a very dark picture of this turn of events in Nigeria and South Africa in relation to the work of global media in these nations. Aginam contends that giant conglomerates such as AFP, AP, UPI, and Reuters whose operations are backed by the siamese twin principle of neoliberal democracy and a free market economy, have literally pillaged the broadcasting industries of Nigeria and South Africa. What he decries the most is that the *modus operandi* of these international media bodies is displacing the thriving neo-Habermasian public spheres of African nations with a high sense of effeminate consumer culture, commercialization, and entertainment (See also Chibuwe, 2013; Omenugha *et al*, 2013).

Without doubt, there are issues of base/superstructure, commodity fetishism, and the Althusserian-Gramscian inspired notions of ideology and hegemony that need to be examined in this essay in the orbit of a Marxist political economy. For instance, what factors explain the continual dominance of international media giants in global news marketing, and what resistance strategies have weak nation-states been mapping out to curb this ebb and flow? What reasons are there to explain why many consumers in the Third World prefer media deliverables from, say, CNN, BBC, or AFP? Thus, any account of the impact of so-called global media (henceforth global media) on the destiny of nation-states (most of whom are putatively subaltern) must be critically acute and theoretically Marxist. Beyond any other conspicuous reasons, the main objective of TNCs' expansion beyond the shores of their countries of origin is for economic gains. Marx (1867/2009) himself

repeatedly observed in *Kapital*, contrary to liberal economists such as Adam Smith (1776/2012) and David Ricardo (1817) who taught that profit is the function of shrewd market deals, that profit is mainly derived from the surplus production of a commodity. The labourer is made to produce more than they are paid for. This surplus value in Marx's writings is the basic unit of the capitalist economic structure. Commodities such as those delivered by global media moguls are produced *en masse* for the purpose of exchange and therefore mass consumption. This means that the capitalist who produces a commodity, like international news, is interested in selling it rather than using it. Within the context of global media, we would note that the massive production and distribution of news work, film, and other media deliverables, ought to find their way from the Metropole into the consumption markets of nations at the Periphery. Capitalist ventures such as these bring the subaltern state on its knees, says the political economist. Is the decline of the nation-state thus a myth or reality?

The End of the Nation-state Thesis

Political economists strongly posit that the nation-state is under serious threat as a result of the unparalleled influence of global media giants on their states. They vociferously hold that TNCs are in fact shadow states working in the interests of their mother-nations. Political economy of the media *mutatis mutandis* is the tradition that focuses on how media texts relate not only to their conditions of production, but more importantly to the broader political and economic structures of society (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Herman & McChesney, 2004). In a word, it is a critique of media institutions. Its underlying thesis is that the globalization of the media is a threat to state sovereignty, largely defined as the power of the state or its accumulation of power to make and enforce laws and to seek to have a monopoly over the use of force (cf. Coker, 2014).

This thesis is lucidly developed in Monroe Price's *Media and Sovereignty* in which he explores the forces that undercut the autonomy of nation-states in their control and regulation of their broadcasting houses by international media influence and domination. For Price (2002), new technologies, the convergence of media conglomerates, political upheavals, and newly emerging concepts of human rights make it difficult for subaltern nation-states to offer resistance and restrictions of mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996). New communication technologies, for example, in his words, have led to "a widespread discounting of the capacity of the state to maintain control over the flow of images within its borders (p. 17). These technologies, he contends, have a negative effect on the sustenance of local languages in individual states, the enrichment of their history, and the

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strengthening of their internal political and creative processes. We are not willing to accept this view. Developed nations like Canada, China, and Hong Kong, for example, may be exceptional cases as they have mapped out active strategies of state responses to challenges to their authority by the CNNization of their home broadcasting houses. These include the use of ownership rules to reliably affect content. Canada's regulatory regime and its Income Tax Act, for instance, were enacted to favour Canadian advertisers using Canadian stations and other Canadian options before giving space to those from the United States (Price, 2002). Another coping strategy against the global tide is Malaysia's technology of boundary which regulates activities on the direct-to-home broadcasting by one of its own private service provider Malaysia EastAsia Satellite (MEASAT).

Some scholars go as far as positing that the nation-state itself is dead, and that it was from the word go destined to fail because it is an artificial political construct. Proponents of this extremist view consequently maintain that economically feeble states are no match to the capitalist drive of giant media conglomerates. According to Herman and McChesney (2004), the global media indeed are the new missionaries of corporate capitalism, and that their business is to consolidate economic and political power. As they put it, "We regard the primary effect of the globalization process--the crucial feature of globalization, and the manifestation of the strength of the great powers and TNCs, such as News Corporation, Time Warner, Disney, and Sony, whose interests they serve--to be the implantation of the commercial model of communication, its extension to broadcasting and the 'new media', and its gradual intensification under the force of competition and bottom-line pressures" (Herman & McChesney, 2004: 9). They are convinced that media outputs are commodified, and are designed to serve market ends, not citizenship needs. They say that the work of the media, *viz.* the film, radio, and television industries, is to promote the aspiration of empire for the countries they work. These industries while promoting Westphalian ideologies and values also engage in propaganda and suppress any resistance of subaltern nations to the hegemony. One such is the Reagan-Thatcher New World Information and Communication Order (NWIOC) that led to the passing of the free flow of information law by UNESCO. Many critics are agreed that it is the NWIOC that paved the way for the penetration of the global media apparatus into national territories and crashed their national media on their heads. Such critics have also noted that international media policies and regulations are seriously anti-democratic, and thus weaken the sovereignty of feeble nation-states. This lack of resistance, contrary to Price's (2002) empirical accounts, is made possible through the work of global corporate ideology championed by the global media.

There is therefore a growing discontent among purists that international media policies are skewed in such a way to promote Western interests only. These include a free market economy, political freedom and deregulation, a strong private sector, and the belief that the proper objective of the economy and economic policies should be sustainable economic growth. The editors of *Democratizing Media*, Zhao and Hackett (2005), have observed that these policies are very harmful to the growth of nation-states at the periphery. As they note, “Transnational media conglomerates are probably more concerned with protection of intellectual property rights and their bottom-line issues than with diversity and freedom of public expression” (Zhao & Hackett, 2005: 16). In fact, Zhao and Hackett strongly insist that TNCs are shadow states. Examining the nexus among globalization, media, and democracy, they argue that the globalization of media flows implies the globalization of media effects, and therefore identify four waves of media democratization: (a) the huge gap in the worldwide distribution of the means of communication between technologically advanced nations and non-technologically poor nations; (b) the commodification of information and its negative implications for universal access, (c) major imbalances in the flow of information and media content between North and South, (d) the threat posed to the information/communications sovereignty of nations, and (e) the development of grassroots or alternative communication forms.

Meanwhile the commercialization of global media also has dire consequences on the values of peripheral states as it promotes consumption, individual freedom to choose, and weakens collective social action. As laments Aginam (2005) in the case of Nigeria and South Africa, Herman and McChesney (2004) similarly bemoan that the commercial ethos of the global media is vigorously displacing the public sphere with entertainment, and is committed to meeting consumers’ needs than informing and educating the citizenry (see also Price, 2002), and therefore gradually eroding local cultures. On the basis of these arguments Herman and McChesney reached four basic conclusions: (1) the presence of a commercial global media shapes and directs the content of national media, leaving them incapacitated; (2) the global mediascape is increasingly dominated by Anglo-American transnational corporations with a market-model ethos; (3) the global media system is an indispensable component of the globalizing market economy as a whole, and that (4) the oligopolistic tendencies of global media have fundamental flaws that weaken and militate against the thriving of democracies and are a barrier to meaningful self-government and public participation.

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Media Globalization as a Myth

Interestingly, another school of thought maintains that the end of the nation-state is a hyperbole. This school insists that nation-states have what it takes to remain the locus for decision making on domestic policies, in spite of the Sisyphean forces of global media. Distancing themselves from the cultural imperialism thesis, defendistas argue, on the contrary, that many states do still maintain their sovereignty unperturbed by the claws of international media operations. Many states, some authors believe, till this day have the final word in matters of lawmaking and media policies such as privatization, liberalization, and deregulation (See Price, 2002; Hackett & Zhao, 2005). But this is where the argument gets messy for while Herman and McChesney (2004) on the one hand insist that it is through the passing of information and media laws such as the free information flow that megacorporate megamergers penetrate other states' media, Morris and Waisbord (2001), on the other hand, turn the argument on its head. We think it is only by empirical studies such as ethnographies that the verities of these claims could be best appreciated. Besides I am also convinced that it is not an either/or question. As Morris and Waisbord (2001) rightly point, state and global interests interact in very complex ways. For example, there is no question concerning the ability of sovereign states to control the processes and mechanisms of formal citizenship and the movement of people across borders. It is at this juncture that Morris and Waisbord should have paused for a while to catch their breath. It appears to me that the authors see the clash between state and global not as an ideological battle, as Herman and McChesney (2004) brilliantly demonstrate. If they (Morris and Waisbord, 2001) are ready to admit that "globalization has made it more difficult for all states to monopolize the information that citizens consume" (p. xvi), why then do they engage in a rather *prima facie* analysis? Other resistance strategies against global media hegemony include the promotion and maintenance of national and cultural identities, and imposing domestic content quotas on foreign material, as evident in Brazil (Straubhaar, 2001), South Africa (Horwitz, 2001), and Australia (White, 2001).

The Chinese Communist Party, for example, employs negotiated liberalization in curbing the operations of private and foreign capital in the state. Three processes are involved: (a) negotiating terms for the entry and operation of non-media state capital, private capital, and foreign capital in the media market, (b) limiting their areas of operation, and (c) making efforts to contain them through the carrot-and-stick strategy (Zhao, 2004). Already known for its tight Sisyphean strategies such as propaganda, censorship, detention of active journalists and shutting down dissident media houses, the Party intensified its control regime in the early 2000s by its move towards conglomeration, and merging of local industries. Zhao (2004)

puts on record that the Party strategically announced at the turn of the millennium that the 800-or so local newspapers could only be allowed to operate if their circulation capacity reached 350, 0000. Other mechanisms of control in China against the influence of global media include firewalls, chat-room monitoring, jailing of website operators, shutting down internet cafes, and the establishment of strict content regulations and cyber police squads.

If nations such as China, Canada, and Hong Kong have been vigorously dealing with the influence of international media networks in their states, then to what extent can we say that giant media conglomerates are truly global? Are there really global media? It has been argued that Cable News Network, for instance, cannot be described as a global media because it is hugely American-centered, and does little to promote the values of the states it broadcasts to. It is questions of the sort that drive Hafez's (2007) brilliant work *The Myth of Globalization*. According to Hafez, there is too little empirical evidence to support the globalization thesis. He cautions us not to believe in media globalization preached on the power of new media and new communication technologies as Thompson (1995) holds. In his view we cannot say we are globally interconnected on the footing of hi-tech systems because access to these systems is structured and filtered on the basis of geographical location, gender, class, and technological literacy (See also Zeleza, 2003). He notes that neither the existence of satellite radio nor television should delude us into thinking that we live in a McLuhanian 'global village' or a Castellsian 'network society'. These technologies are not a sufficient condition for global communication in the sense that they tell us little about their actual reach and potential to change cultures and societies. Often the debate about media globalization essentializes technological reach at the expense of user reach. Thus one important way to understand user reach of global media is to analyze occluded ideologies imbricated in international reporting and their effects on nation-states.

Ideologies of International Reporting

On ideological grounds the international mode of reporting by many global media actually tends to betray what they claim to stand for. It demonstrates that the globalization of international news reporting is a myth: International reporting domesticates rather than globalize the world. It is increasingly becoming difficult if not impossible for journalists to keep to their mandate of objective, fair, and balanced reportage because international reporting takes place within the prism of unipolar, national interests, cultural stereotypes, and a biased othering of nation-states, and therefore is more about reporting *about* countries rather than *with* countries. International reporting, Hafez (2007) notes, defies the definitional logic

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of news and news values of topicality, novelty, and universality. Quite on the contrary, it overemphasizes irrelevant news, engages in misapplication by implication, produces negative concepts of the other as legitimation for action, and fails to examine significant developments and problems. For all these mistakes, international news, Hafez (2007) observes, is guilty of regionalism, conflict perspective, political focus, elitism, and decontextualization. He writes, "One might formulate the thesis that the conflict perspective of international reporting stands in diametrical opposition to the 'harmony perspective' in local reporting and thus the construction of a negative-chaotic distant world correlates with the construction of a positive-harmonious familiar world" (Hafez, 2007: 31). It is on this basis that I have been arguing for the de-Westernization of the media and its theoretical apparatus in the context of Ghana. Taking a cue from Hafez, Western media have more often than not been accused of seeking Western interests only. For example using the 9/11 attacks on the US, Hafez (2007) shows how international media reporting can be used for propaganda ends. He is convinced that reports of the events were sharply divided between opponents and supporters of US counter-attacks on Iraq and the demonization of Islam, and that discourses on the subject were impassioned by acts of patriotism far more than they were led by rational debates, the former being favored on the airwaves (See Said, 1978). He also speaks of the complicity of CNN in promoting the agenda of the United States by making use of its tabloid-like albeit satellite advantages of production speed, information gathering and viewer reach. On the basis of his observation, Hafez (2007) concludes that "it would be illusory to believe that in the age of mass democracy media no longer produce propaganda or that media discourses are always pluralist" (p. 55).

In Africanist discourses, media globalization has similarly been looked at with suspicious eyes. Often transnational media corporations are considered tools of essentialism, othering, and above all imperialism. Scholars here express angst about the expansion of global capitalism and patterns of capitalist accumulation with all their social and spatial inequalities and divisions of labor. The emergence of global media in African nations, they intimate, marks the return to conquest, domination, exploitation, and the production of inequality, disorder, and crises. In *Rethinking Africa's Globalization*, the Malawian historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2003) bemoans the almost rapturous usurpation of the cultural, economic, and political space of the South by the agglomerated force of the North masqueraded under the banner of a neo-liberalist market economy and the new work order (See Aginam, 2005). He also rejects the claim that the presence of TNCs is a sure way for African nations in particular to emerge from darkness as international news could reach the North by the operations of TNCs. As far as Africa is concerned,

what is being globalized, critics point out, is not the globalization of African values and world-views for Africans but those of the Occident. A challenge such as the need “to bring globalization discourses, the experiences, and expectations of our societies, and refrain from becoming mindless parrots for Northern perspectives, preoccupations, and paradigms, not in pursuit of narrow nationalisms or the dangerous myths and essentialisms ... but as part of the struggle to create a global civilization in which we Africans, for so long victims of oppressive forces emanating from elsewhere can feel at home” (Zezeza, 2003: 61), in the minds of such scholars, requires urgent attention. This call may be justifiable on grounds that global media are vigorously promoting the sub-culture of commodity fetishism in many parts of the world.

Global Media and the Rise of Commodity Fetishism

It is one thing for scholars to demarcate the contours of powerful international media on economically weak states, and another thing to examine their influence on social and cultural patterns in those states. At the very least, we posit that the influence of TNCs is much more pronounced on nations (collective individuals) than on their states (the people who represent them). Here I am singling out the idea of commodity fetishism, a term Marx originally used to explain not simply the product of hyper-consumerism but more important the fact that money is a fetishized commodity *par excellence* (Kamenka, 1983). We have already noted that one major deleterious impact of TNCs is the displacement of the public sphere with mass consumption, mass culture, and entertainment. Are the activities of global media in nation-states similar to the concerns raised by two of Frankfurt School’s eminent thinkers, Adorno and Horkheimer? In “The Dialectic of Enlightenment”, the duo critiqued how humans are descending in the abyss of self-destruction because of our modes of reasoning. For Adorno and Horkheimer (1949, the belief that what distinguishes (post)modern societies from those that precede them is enlightenment needs reconsideration insofar as the claim is illusory. Our capacity for sound reason is called to question in an age obsessed with commodity fetishism. The point is made that mass culture and the commercialization of almost every single atom of production in society have brought with them a kind of brainwashing and dependence on the media, Hollywood and the capitalist ideas of entrepreneurs. In this light, humans have become so consumed in the things they amass that they are shaped, defined and identified by them, said Adorno and Horkheimer (1949). Reason in a consumerist culture, is interpretive of what the individual possesses. In a sense the Cartesian maxim *cogito ergo sum* is making way for *consumo ergo sum*.

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It thus is important to note that the workings of capitalism through the agents of mass culture and the global media may lead to domination. When individuals are dominated and consequently subjugated under the claws of a capitalist project, they are but reduced to what Adorno (1991) describes as *psychological de-individualized social atoms*. In this type of state the individual becomes obsessed by consumerism, and regrettably develops a fetish for commodities, in the context of the media, such as international news, American action thrillers, and romantic comedies. At the realm of politics, individuals are in a like manner conditioned through the presentation of the stimuli of mass media to elicit responses of compliance, patriotism, and social order in favor of the states of those media houses. Although some critics have sharply described the work of Adorno and Horkheimer as too nihilistic, only few are ready to deny its relevance for richly engaging popular culture and the media.

Conclusion

We would like to conclude by returning to our analogy of Plato's allegorical cave vis-à-vis the influence of global media and state sovereignty. Far from being a myth/reality binary, media globalization poses interesting philosophical problems such as the one Plato anticipated. To be sure the cave of globalization is a problem of how to naturally perceive globalization. We reckon that in order to behold the true forms of the influence of global media, there is the need to back scholarly speculations with evidence, and theory with empirical research (qualitative, quantitative, mixed). Thus it's high time that pro- and anti-globalization theorists stopped apperceiving the 'shadows' in their own caves, in order to step unto a middle-ground that they may understand that the forms of influence of global media on nation-states do exist in varied degrees, and can never be even. We recommend that they draw on the tools critical theorists like Marx lovingly bequeathed us.

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*Jeunesse Active pour Chantal Biya (JACHABY)/Cercle des Amis du Cameroun (CERAC)
and Femocracy in 21st Century Cameroon¹*

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Abstract

This paper critically examines two organisations charged with the mobilisation of support for Chantal Biya, Cameroon's 1st lady. Created in 1995 in accordance by Law No. 90/053 of December 19, 1990 by Cameroon's first lady Chantal Biya, it was to promote Cameroon's image. It was also to provide compassionate aid to the deprived and needy, promote education of the woman and girl child and wrestle against suffering and poverty. CERAC like JACHABY have become tools for the veneration and 'worship' of Chantal Biya and "femocracy" in Cameroon's democratic and multiparty experience. This has been through gifts and other forms of mass mobilisation, cheerleading and grandstanding for the ruling party, the Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (CPDM). This is a challenge to good democratic practice and ascendancy. The personalisation of governance within a democratic dispensation in Cameroon should be discouraged and democratic values encouraged for good governance in the country. Through a content analysis of internet and secondary sources and observation the study concludes that both JACHABY and CERAC have deviated for their noble mission and now serve as lobby groups for the First Lady and the President of Cameroon.

Keywords: Women mobilisation, femocracy, Cameroon

Contextualising or Delimiting the Debate

The role of women in politics and governance in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular has remained a subject of intense discussion among scholars and the general public. In Morocco for example, the challenges are in the domain of radical reform and in Uganda there is a clamour for women to become visible in leadership positions in the country. These pressures have an effect on the attitude of Ugandan men and women towards the presence and active participation of women in politics² (Tamale 2001; Dalmasso 2008)). Similarly, discussions about citizenship and control of the public space in South Africa have been generally universalised. The argument now is the distinction between the public and private spheres within the South African society. Women's caring roles in the private sphere have limited their level of participation in the public sphere as equal citizens with men³ (Lister

¹ This paper was first presented at an international conference on "Two Decades of Democracy in Africa: Lessons, Challenges and Prospects" co-organised by the Economic Commission for Africa, CODESRIA and the Johns Hopkins University, Dakar, Senegal, 20-22 June 2011.

² Ahikire, <http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/firs-lady-syndrome>, accessed: April 18, 2011

³ Gouws, <http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/firs-lady-syndrome>, accessed: April 17, 2011; Pheko, <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/55641>, accessed: April 18, 2011.

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1997, 69), some progress in South Africa notwithstanding. In the preamble of the constitution of Cameroon Article 1 paragraph 2, the equality of all citizens before the law is clearly stated but in paragraph 12 of the country's report to the Human Rights Committee in 1999, the government stated that "the cultural and religious foundation of most African peoples establish a more or less clear-cut hierarchy between men and women" and that Cameroonian society "is no exception (Cameroon 1999).

The consequence is that the state machinery has functioned over the years in a way that women importance has only been trumpeted when used as domestic patronage networks of the national machinery by politicians. In fact, there is little or no commitment among high level government officials about the need to improve the status of women (Adams 2007, 176-197) and their participation in politics and governance in different countries. This view is re-echoed by Mouiche (2007, 391-408) who intimates that the administration of Cameroon has been monopolised by men over time and space to the exclusion of women. He argues that the source of this imbalance was in the colonial period when the colonial administration was male dominated and women were responsible for the domestic and private spaces. Mouiche intimates that women need to be seen and heard in the administration of Cameroon to balance the male/female equation and promote democratic principles and good governance in the country.

Other authors like Raul (2006) argue that the number of women representation in the national assembly has been on the decrease instead of increasing in a more liberalised environment. The percentage of women representation was 14, in 1988, 6 in 1992, 5 in 1997 and 10 in 2002. The fluctuation is an indication that women are still to be fully integrated into the political arena in the country. Raul has also argued that the marginalisation of women in politics in Cameroon is a result of the co-existence of customary and statutory laws, the corrupt political system and fraudulent practices. The irony is however that from the findings of Raul, a majority of the female respondents opine that female political figures are more trustworthy and capable of delivering the goods than their male counterparts. In spite of this, many of them have not succeeded to be voted into the councils and parliament probably because women hate themselves.

Why is it that in spite of the fact that women are considered to be more reliable than men they are more or less invisible within the political structures of Cameroon such as the councils and parliament? While several reasons may be advanced to explain this unfortunate situation, the cultural and religious environment in traditional Cameroon like other African countries have virtually made it a taboo for women to compete with men (Abunaw 1997, 11) and besides, men have often amassed wealth from earlier appointive positions and have often used this to rig or bribe their way through during electoral consultations in Cameroon.⁴ Such elections have often been described by the masses as unfair because of several unorthodox methods used by competitors such as the transportation of voters, multiple registrations and voting, ghost ballot boxes, poor establishment of electoral lists and the stuffing of ballot boxes with papers of the incumbents who never lose elections in many African countries. Christian Cardinal Tumi (2006, 80) of the Douala archdiocese contends that since independence "our governing authority has never organised transparent elections in Cameroon, even during the one-party period."

⁴ This is seen in the way they lavishly spend money in buying drinks, rice, sugar and maggi during campaigns for election into parliament and councils.

Women from different walks of life in Cameroon including, politicians, and educationists have observed that the status of women in the political arena in the country is secondary to that of men because of several factors. Rose Abunaw (1997, 11), former parliamentarian of the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) representing Manyu Division (former Vice Speaker of the National Assembly and parliamentarian of the ruling Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (CPDM), intimated that the level of women participation in politics was very low as there were 27 of them in a National Assembly of 180 members in 1997. She regretted the fact that women were made to remain in sectors such as animation and for those who took interest in vying for positions in parliament; they were discriminated, ridiculed and fought against by men. She argued that this precarious situation of women in the political arena was compounded by the fact that the central committee of the ruling CPDM chose only men to run for elections and not women. Abunaw also intimated that men have made people to believe that politics is a man's world and female politicians once threatened easily give up or are bought over.

There is however lip service today in Cameroon about women active participation in politics. The different political parties trumpet it in their rallies and other meetings but the situation has not changed. Women remain at the background of political activism in Cameroon but not without resistance through socio-professional groups and non-governmental organisations. They have used these groups to create space for liberal expression about the way the country should be governed but concrete results are still far-fetched.

While the political landscape in Cameroon has witnessed some changes in male/female participation in politics and the electoral process, the *status quo* has virtually remained fourteen years after Abunaw made this observation about the role of women in politics in Cameroon. The visibility of women in the political arena in Cameroon is low and a few of those who have braved the odds and ventured into this male dominated space have literally been swallowed up by a crushing male majority or have failed to make a good case on female representation (Forbinake 2011, 12). Another lady politician, Lydia Effimba (1997, 11), leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Lawong Helen (1996, 6), a parliamentarian from the Bui constituency of the North West Region of Cameroon ably defended the fact that women were second class citizens in the political arena but that they were a more action oriented people than their male counterparts (1995, 6).

Other challenges stirring at Cameroonian women in the face include the fear of insecurity. Women always want security for themselves and their children (Okala 1997, 11) but men are generally egoistic, selfish, self-centredness and love only themselves (Monju 1997, 11), some are bossy (Morfaw 1997, 11), unwilling to implement rights for both men and women (Morfaw 1997, 11). Some of the Cameroonian governing elite have the attitude of not giving women a chance to be managers (Wendi 1997, 11) and above all, many of them exclude women from having access to education, health services, political power and decision making (Beleoken 1996 6). Although efforts are being made to recognise that women are an important force to reckon with in public spaces in Cameroon, the gap between them and men is still very wide. There is still a patriarchal tendency where women are only consulted when there is need to use them for the greater empowerment of men to their own detriment. Men have continued to exhibit those characteristics that make them ever ready to exclude women from positions of influence in the political structures of the country.

The fact that women are in a disadvantaged position in politics and other sectors of national life is not limited to Cameroon but obtains in other African countries in varying degrees.

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Democratic freedoms are occasionally suppressed and a critical mass of the citizens including women are disenfranchised through effective rigging machinery set up by different governments.⁵ For a long time there was a paternalistic approach to women's representation and rights in South Africa. Those who were at the forefront of greater women participation in politics and governance encountered considerable obstacles. In many instances, female political candidates are excluded from their parties strong backing through prejudice and the persistence of a self-serving 'old boys club' behind the selection of candidates.⁶

Conceptualising the Study

Femocracy has been defined by Amina Mama (1997,1) as:

An anti-democratic female power structure, which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own.

This definition of Amina Mama describes femocracy as a form of political participation or government where women set up a power structure of their own which serves to create or replicate the same problems of inequality created by men that they sought to fight against.

This study does not limit itself to Mama's definition and observation. It defines femocracy from what is taking place in Cameroon. Femocracy can be defined to mean the ability of married and/or unmarried women holding positions of recognition and influence to mobilise both an educated and a largely uninformed and uneducated number of women using state resources and other instruments of power at their disposal. Their ability to mobilise may also be based on some 'faces behind the mask' who include men of position and who are willing to share political space and prolong their stay in leadership positions in the country. The mass mobilisation of other people is for the purpose of achieving a socio-economic and more importantly a political goal for self aggrandisement and edification. It is also a way of breaking into a male dominated socio-political space as allies or partners or both.

The Cameroonian example shows that in trying to reinforce an existing patriarchal state structure, privileged women have rather promoted the personalisation of power for the First Lady as well as the President of the Republic. Contrary to Tsikata's argument that First Ladies attempts to make themselves role models is a way of saying women can be considered successful only when they are married (Tsikata 1998), in the Cameroonian case, there are several divorced women or single mothers who have fought for women rights and control of the socio-political space in their own right as women and are not married to powerful and influential men in the society.

The visibility of First Ladies in their 'humanitarian' activities has led to what might be aptly described as "First Ladyism" which is a sub strand of femocracy. Many African First Ladies have built careers of their own and support bases which have made them actively involved in politics in their own right and not simply following their husbands as was the case before (Pokam 2006, 1). Their success has been due to the argument that they as women need to be

⁵ Ibrahim, <http://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/expanding-democratic-space-in-nigeria>, accessed: April 16, 2011.

⁶ Pheko, <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/55641>, accessed: April 18, 2011.

given a chance to prove that they can do better than men. Many of them claim that they are closer to the people and so understand better than anyone else their needs. The fact that the powers of First Ladies in Africa have been systematically augmented through the creation of specific state structures that provide them with independent instruments has been baptised or christened as one of the forms of manifestation of femocracy.⁷

Some of these First Ladies like Nana Agyeman-Rawlings, former First Lady of Ghana developed a very powerful machinery and was described as the President while the husband Ft. Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings was given rather the title of First Gentleman (Sakyi-Addo 1998). This was indeed a reversal of roles in state protocol and proved that the wife of Rawlings was able to use the power of manipulation to influence policy while the husband more or less succumbed to her power of influence. Very recently she was again in the news for trying to take over the leadership of the National Democratic Committee (NDC) but was beaten woefully at the primaries. Among other consequences “First Ladyism” has in some cases led to an increase in the number of female political activists which is a gradual though insignificant step of female invasion of hitherto male dominated spaces. What they will effectively do with these spaces in the future is difficult to say but one thing is that their number is likely to increase with time.

The study of women and feminist activism can be conveniently captured in the concept of femocracy. The political arena for long was the preserve of men and women were only able to play a role through a remote control state mechanism but yet the differences remained glaring between men and women because no separate structures existed for the women. In the African continent as Mama (1997) opines, femocracies emerged out of the commitment of the international community’s move to promote greater gender equality but which was beneficial only to a small female elite. The end result was and remains a reinforcement of patriarchal social systems that these women had initially intended to avoid or discourage. Femocrats otherwise people who defend women participation or leadership in elections and governance argue that it is the right of women to control the affairs of society since their husbands are in positions of influence or control power (Tsikata 1998).

Following the 1992 World Summit for the Economic Advancement of Rural Women in Geneva and the Beijing Conference in 1995, some African First Ladies held a conference in Yaounde Cameroon hosted by Chantal Biya, the First Lady of Cameroon in 1996. This took place at the same time with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit that was held in Cameroon that year. Among the First Ladies who attended the first gathering were those of Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. In the communiqué which was incorporated into the official communiqué of the OAU, there emerged the need to develop strategies to improve the lives of rural women (Mama 1997). This gathering of some African First Ladies was a kind of femocracy because as the husbands of First Ladies were deliberating on the way forward for the African continent as men, their wives were doing same as women. If the discussions of African Heads of State were a form of ‘mascocracy,’ the meetings and discussions of the First Ladies were about basic social issues and the improvement of the lot of rural women. It was in fact femocracy, the counterpart of ‘mascocracy.’

Birth and Mission of CERAC and JACHABY

⁷ Ibrahim, <http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/first-lady-syndrome>, accessed: April 16, 2011.

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The *Cercle des Amis du Cameroun* (CERAC) was created in 1995 pursuant to Law No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990 by 'Her Excellency' Mrs Chantal Biya, the first lady of Cameroon. It is a humanitarian, apolitical and non-profit making organisation. The main aim of the organisation is to participate actively in the development of Cameroon by providing major assistance to the poorest segments of the society such as the sick and the disadvantaged in society. It is particularly concerned with fighting against suffering and poverty from the poorest social strata of society. Besides, it has since 1995 focused on preventing the risk of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS. As an association of women, it also hopes to develop dialogue between generations, provide didactic material for kids in school, encourage agriculture through farm implements, assist victims of disasters, build the capacity of women to raise funds, rehabilitate structures among others⁸ (Yufeh 2010, 14; Yufeh 2010, 15; Yufeh 2011, 21; Yufeh 2011, 16; Ndouyou-Mouliom 2011, 16; Essogo 2011, 15; Loh 2011, 15; Loh 2011, 17; Tchakounte 2011, 7). Its other goal is to promote the image of Cameroon to the external world.⁹ The generosity of the First Lady received criticisms from Cameroonians living in the United States following the gift of \$6,000.00 to them during a visit to Los Angeles.¹⁰ Many of those who criticised it argued that this money should have been used to develop Cameroon and not give it to Cameroonians who were working abroad and sending remittances home to their family members because of the poor economic situation of the country.

The CERAC is also involved in the support of rural women and health centres in the rural areas with material gifts. These include sewing machines, wheel barrows, bags of fertiliser, diabetic machines, delivery and circumcision sets, bush lamps, hoes, cutlasses, grinding mills, fungicides, seeds among others as they did to the Awing population on 27 February 2011 (Loh 2011, 15). Meanwhile on 28 February 2011, CERAC was again in the news as the organisation donated material to the Mbiyeh Integrated Health Centre in Donga Mantung Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Among the gifts were beds, mattresses, lamps, wheel barrows, wheel chairs for people with disabilities, foodstuff, corn mills, bags of fertiliser, animal feed, hand carts or trucks and treated mosquito bed nets (Loh 2011, 17). Earlier on 14 February 2011, CERAC had extended its largesse to the women of Lom and Djerem in the East Region with gifts of farm tools which included wheelbarrows, watering cans, bags of fertiliser, hand carts and some seedlings (Yufeh 2011, 21).

In some circles, it is argued that CERAC was founded by former First Lady Jeanne Irene Biya as an association of wives of diplomats posted to Yaounde (*Expression Directe* of the SDF, 18-19 May 2000) but today the association has embraced wives of ministers and other top ranking parastatal organisations in the country. Since April 2003 new members of CERAC include Marie Madeleine Esengue Avoki who became the Chargé des Affaires for the DRC, Rina Louise Pretorius, Chargé des Affaires for the Republic of South Africa, Talya Omer, the wife of the former Israeli ambassador, Isabelle Savaria, wife of the Canadian High

⁸ Moussala, http://www.cameroon-info.net/cmi_show_news; Etaka, allafrica.com/stories/200605090902.html; Morikang, www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/205.html; www.prc.cm/index_en.php?link=le-mag/lecture-audience-pd&; Ndouyou-Mouliom, fr.allafrica.com/stories/200812100600.html, accessed: April 17, 2011.

⁹ http://www.cameroon-info.net/cmi_show_news, accessed: April 9, 2011.

¹⁰ Dongmo, <http://www.laptopdirect.co.za/laptops-sony.php>, accessed: April 18, 2011.

Commissioner at the time, Marina Valette, wife of the then ambassador of France and Bintou Bamba, Assistant Executive Secretary of African Synergy.¹¹

This association has as its President the First Lady Chantal Biya. The General Coordinator who was appointed by the first lady in 2009 is Linda Yang, wife of the current Prime Minister of Cameroon, Philemon Yang and the Secretary General is Madam Jacqueline Koung, a Bessike who succeeded Madam Cecile Akame Mfoumou. Gladys Inoni, wife of the former Prime Minister, Ephraim Inoni is now an honorary member of CERAC. Wives of Ministers, women Ministers and other important women within the civil society circles are members of this association and are delegated from time to time to perform duties on behalf of CERAC in different parts of the country such as the giving of gifts to the poor, needy and disadvantaged populations.

On the other hand, the *Jeunesse Active pour Chantal Biya* (JACHABY) is a pro- government lobby group. In fact, it has been described as an organ of the Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (CPDM), which coincidentally is also the ruling party in the country. It is involved in lobbying for the First Lady Chantal Biya and by extension for the ruling party with the aim of perpetuating the incumbent's stay in power for as long as possible. It has simply been observed that JACHABY was created to honour Chantal Biya.¹² It is very logical to also state that JACHABY was created to give young people and especially women the opportunity to participate in the process of governing Cameroon. They felt excluded or under-represented in the structures of the Young Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (YCPDM), the youth wing of the ruling CPDM. Many of those leading the YCPDM are not young people and so do not articulate their aspirations but those of the leadership of the party. Dongmo argues that people join JACHABY and President Biya's Youth (PRESBY) simply because they are searching for opportunities and self positioning.¹³ The association was formed after the formation of President Biya's Youths (PRESBY) to support the actions of the Head of State of Cameroon. PRESBY itself has been a subject of debate and it is also presently in crisis because of a power tussle between the elected president Paul Ngam and a usurper Ali Adji (Atanga 2011, 4; Ngam 2011, 7). More recently, another lobby group, the Biya Friends Club (BFC) led by Fru Ndi Edison of Bamenda has been formed to rally support for the ruling party and its leadership, President Paul Biya

Politicisation, Personalisation and Femocratisation of JACHABY/CERAC

Although JACHABY/CERAC pass for apolitical associations of elite women and the First Lady of Cameroon, these have been highly publicly politicised, personalised and 'femocratised.' If First Ladyism is anything to go by as a form of imposed femocracy from above in Cameroon, then the activities of Chantal Biya are nothing but a continuation of the policies of the husband, President Paul Biya (Pokam 2006, 4). These policies are focused on keeping power at all cost. It has also been argued that CERAC's extension of its tentacles to all the nooks and crannies of Cameroon through 'humanitarian' endeavours is a subtle campaign for the ruling CPDM party which has been ridiculously described in pidgin English as *chop people dem money*, meaning a party that siphons peoples' money. Delegations of

¹¹ www.cameroon50.com/.../171-cerac.html, accessed: April 17, 2011.

¹² Dikouba, http://www.cameroon-info.net/cmi_show_news, accessed: April 9, 2011.

¹³ Camerounlink.net, accessed: April 18, 2011.

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CERAC are provided big cars, missions, accommodation in hotels from the state treasury because the state is using them as a cover for tenure prolongation for the CPDM ‘natural candidate.’ Besides, the gifts of CERAC are purchased from tax payers’ money¹⁴ although Cameroonians have never been told the source of money for these gifts which are distributed discriminately and mostly during a run up to crucial elections in the country.

In a political parties programme *Expression Directe* over the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) on 18-19 May 2000, the opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF) questioned the source of finances of CERAC. The party also intimated that CERAC had been “transformed into an Association that allows CPDM big shots to travel around the country to carry out a subtle campaign for the CPDM party.”¹⁵ The SDF party also faulted CERAC on the basis of the fact that through it “long lines of vehicles of all makes virtually all belong to the state; and civil servants, ministers and other politicians who come around are paid from the state treasury.” The sister association JACHABY has been described as an organ of the CPDM¹⁶. If that is the role of JACHABY, then it is not the Chantal Biya’s Youths but simply youths of the CPDM party of President Paul Biya.

Besides, through CERAC and JACHABY, has emerged the personalisation and deification of the First Lady of Cameroon and by extension her husband the president of the country. Dikouba argues that JACHABY was created to honour Chantal Biya.¹⁷ This is a form of personalisation of position, leadership and power. Through JACHABY, the First Lady personalises power as the wife of the President who is a ‘natural candidate’ for the country. Through the so called gifts from the First Lady to different groups and people, she has received titles such as *Mafor* (Queen Mother) in the North West Region of Cameroon during the visit of the presidential couple to the region to preside over the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Cameroon Armed Forces in December 2010. Other titles have been given to her in different parts of the country like the ‘fon of fons’ title which was given to the husband in the North West Region in 1983, during a state visit to the region barely a few months after his accession to the helm of state affairs in Cameroon. Title giving gives one the impression that those awarded these titles will forever remain queen mother of queen mothers’ whether the husband leaves power or not. Such is a culture that breeds the personalisation of governance and use of public space within a liberalised environment. Neither the First Lady nor her collaborators and beneficiaries of her ‘gifts’ think that apart from CERAC, there are no other avenues for their assistance. The association has more or less replaced the Ministry of Social Affairs and Agriculture in doing what these ministries should be doing to the socially derived and rural farmers.

In one of the outings of CERAC to Mbiyeh village in Donga Mantung following a renovation of the Mbiyeh Integrated Health Centre in February 2011, the Mayor for Ndu Mr Nfor David Karngong poured encomiums on CERAC and by extension the First Lady when he said that “CERAC has become the mother of mothers, the parent of orphans and the husband of widows.” This statement is a form of worship of Chantal Biya who is the founder President and sponsor of its activities by a Mayor who was voted into office from the opposition SDF.

¹⁴ Dikouba, http://www.cameroon-info.net/cmi_show_news, accessed: April 9, 2011.

¹⁵ www.sdfparty.org/english/releases/205.php, accessed: April 17, 2011.

¹⁶ www.freebase.com/view/en/chantal_biya

¹⁷ (Dikouba, http://www.cameroon-info.net/cmi_show_news), accessed: April 9, 2011.

A deeper interpretation of this statement shows that the First Lady is regarded as that mother who can solve all the problems of the people but in reality this cannot be true because CERAC cannot claim to play the role of the Cameroon government in providing solutions to the problems of its people.

Through CERAC and JACHABY, the First Lady's effigies like those of her husband have been placed on clothes, calendars, offices and other public places. How else can an association be personalised and the First Lady deified through the conspicuous display of her effigies in public. The SDF opposition party lambasted this personality cult as anti-democratic.¹⁸ The public display of effigies breeds democratic intolerance and promotes deification of individuals beyond their ability to deliver and govern to the satisfaction of all and sundry. This may make them to erroneously think that they are being worshipped and puffed-up because they are very popular when in actual fact those doing so are engaged in self positioning¹⁹ and not support. This culture of effigy public display and worship in public and private spaces is a manifestation of sycophancy for circumstantial supporters and pretentious leadership. The First Lady of Niger in the 1960s Aisha Hamani Diouri was reputed to have personalised power to the extent that it was alleged that she controlled the husband like a marionette. Through the personalisation of power, she manipulated the country's elite and dictated the pace of cultural and social trends. When the *coup d'état* of 1966 took place, she was killed and her husband spared. Her crime was the personalisation of power in Niger.²⁰

In addition, through the activities of JACHABY and CERAC in Cameroon, women of all walks of life have found space to exercise power in their own way and to contribute to filling a void in the management and distribution of resources of the country. Many women of position within the civil service and parastatals have found in CERAC an avenue through which to share their experiences on socio-economic issues of the Cameroonian masses. More importantly, they have used it to examine best strategies of manipulation to remain in leading positions and reap the benefits there from. This is what wives of ministers, women ministers, female directors of companies and other state structures do to survive and support their husbands' political ambitions. Prior to the creation of CERAC, these women did not have a structured association through which they could mobilise different capabilities more meaningfully for their good as well as for their kinsmen and women. They take all forms of excuses and lavishly squander public resources placed under their control in the name of supporting or running errands for CERAC.

Through CERAC, the elite women who are fewer than the ordinary rural women have tried to occupy a higher socio-political space and to maintain it by hook or crook. They occasionally organise meetings in the different regions of the country during which they deliver gifts of farm implements, drugs, beds and other basic needs for the rural women. Through this, they have justified access to state funds through missions, petrol bonds, accommodation in hotels and other associated benefits. As long as they carry out many sensitisation tours to the region, they secure state resources to justify their continuous expenditure and loyalty to the ruling party however unconvincing this might be.

¹⁸ www.sdfparty.org/english/releases/205.php, accessed: April 17, 2011.

¹⁹ Dongmo, Camerounlink.net, accessed: April 18, 2011.

²⁰ Ibrahim, <http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/first-lady-syndrome>, accessed: April 16, 2011.

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The participation of elite women in the activities of CERAC has made some of them to become popular in their own constituency although this seems not to be visible for all cases. From the visibility of these women, it is likely many of them will gradually and steadily become a force to reckon with during future electoral consultations at both the local and national levels. These activities of CERAC also offer some of these women the opportunity to enrich their private accounts which can be used during future campaigns for elective positions into municipal councils and parliament. Besides, smart women have used their militancy in CERAC to mobilise rural women to discuss common socio-economic problems and find ways of solving them. They collect material from CERAC like farm implements and use them to generate additional wealth through group work although this is not the case in all circumstances. It is becoming clear to them that economic power leads to political influence and power. Although mobilisation has not been easy, it remains a good method for women to capture power from below. Using the masses, the elite women can unleash meaningful change which will see women leaders in the political terrain in Cameroon. Through CERAC women have found space to provide an alternative solution to the empowerment of the rural population by providing them not only with immediate consumable products like maggi, rice and soap but those that can stimulate economic growth wheel-barrows and hoes.

Through friends of Cameroon, women leaders of CERAC have reached out to wives of diplomats and other international female workers working in Cameroon and broaden their space for lobbying through them to their governments to address burning issues about the emancipation of women in different African countries. Women issues have continued to preoccupy the international community and during important national and international events these concerns have been re-echoed. During the celebration of the Commonwealth Day in March 2011 for example, the Minister Delegate in the Ministry of External Relations Dion Ngute while recounting the contributions of the government of Cameroon towards the improvement of the lot of women, recognised that the number of women in positions of authority still remains low when compared with the proportion of the country's population (Bainkong 2011). The inability of CERAC women to occupy very influential positions in the governing structure of Cameroon has made them to find in the activities of the association, an opportunity for participation in governance indirectly and to use bed time discussions to determine the direction of government social policy.

While some elderly and working class women have monopolised CERAC to the exclusion of young girls, these girls have carved out for themselves space to exercise freedom of speech and to debate party issues. In fact, they have opted to circumvent their exclusion in CERAC to express themselves without strings attached in a grouping of their own. This explains why JACHABY was styled as active youths for Chantal Biya so that they could take part and be seen to be visible in the socio-political arena. The creation of JACHABY is what might be described as competing femocracies based on age and class. Competition such as the one between the YCPDM and PRESBY have only created more problems because party structures have been abandoned for other structures which offer opportunities like the JACHABY and PRESBY. Dongmo²¹ has observed that competitions by JACHABY and PRESBY are a search for opportunities and self positioning within the political structure of Cameroon. This positioning might take the form of socio-political or economic benefits. Others have also pointed to PRESBY as doing for Biya just what JACHABY does for Chantal Biya (Ngam 2011: 7). In spite of these, there are lessons that can be drawn from the activities of CERAC and JACHABY.

²¹ Camerounlink.net, accessed: April 18, 2011.

Lessons for Gender and Democratic Governance in Cameroon

Following the female ‘invasion’ of the socio-political space in Cameroon and the consequences on the country and women several lessons can be drawn from it as a way of improving participation and governance in Cameroon. The support and participation of women in the political life of a country through an enabling environment can be valuable for its image, development and the promotion of equality. In Cameroon, women make up more than half the population and need to seize the opportunity to assert themselves through official state structures and not associated structures which are basically *ad hoc*. Elsewhere in the continent like in Senegal and Ghana, Elizabeth Diouf and Nana Rawlings (former First Ladies of Senegal and Ghana) recognised and used the female vote to secure a tenure prolongation for their husbands (Pokam 2006, 4). This was however through the use of unofficial state structures and it did not serve the interest of the female voters but a narrow group of privileged female elite. It laid the foundation for strife in the future.

The projection of ‘charitable’ activities to secure the stay in power of bad leaders has always been a source of conflict. CERAC and JACHABY were formed as apolitical associations but their activities have shown that they are not apolitical because apart from worshipping Chantal Biya, these two associations have in their public activities become political arms of the ruling CPDM. This again only reinforces the argument that women cannot seek to occupy socio-political space and at the same time abandon their right of leadership to support those who continue to exclude them from leadership. Society should recognise that cultural barriers notwithstanding, women should be given the opportunity because they have and will continue to prove their mettle as competent members of parliament and other important positions of decision making in the society (Kinsai 1999, 7). In fact, Cameroonian women need to come out in their force so that men may know that in politics these days the front bench is for the one who can deliver the goods and not necessarily whether the person is male or female (Liga 1995, 1-2).

The dynamic nature of some women has broken the myth that some professions or businesses are reserved only for men. The case of Francoise Foning, current President of the Worldwide Network of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM) has shown that women have successfully gotten into the spaces of men and doing well. Another prominent woman Hon Rameline Kamga is the head of the Cameroon Association of Women Entrepreneurs (Mosima 2011, 10). Such achievements are pointers that women should fight for their rights because they will succeed as a group in the struggle than as individuals. The success of a few of them who actually serve the population will cause many to rethink their place in society and how this can be pulled together for the common good.

There is a subtle political cronyism which is a result of ‘First Ladyism.’ It has made the First Lady a very powerful individual who is more or less “worshipped” by the womenfolk. Femocracy is doomed to create other problems for women and governance related problems if used as a form of political cronyism. The activities of the First Lady, her networks and rationale for them as well as sources of finance need to be publicly known. If this remains a secret because the system is using cronies to perpetuate its stay in power, then femocracy from the point of view of the humanitarian activities of the First Lady will become a source of strife rather than an opportunity for women to successfully negotiate their way into the governing structures of Cameroon. As it now stands, many of them have no voice and the activities of Chantal Biya are a kind of an imposition of femocratic governance. More often than not, those who are sent to the field to distribute things to the rural poor by CERAC

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spend time talking about the First Lady doing this or that for them. The most interesting thing about it is that the opinions of these rural women are never sought before the things are given them. This is because they will need to make their own contribution to the things they would prefer to have and the way CERAC functions. This is however taken for granted and a hiatus remains between the elite and the population. This kind of personalisation of humanitarian activities, which in the first place should be carried out by the state needs to be discouraged for female participatory approach to development issues in all its forms in Cameroon.

Femocracy should be meant for the general good or the collective good of women and not for a restricted few who are accountable only to themselves. This cannot help the womenfolk in Cameroon. Rather, Cameroonian elite women should openly declare their candidacies for elective positions and stop being tossed about by way of distribution of gifts from sources that remain a guided secret. How can the state have limitation of funds to provide social services to its population but an association without defined sources of funding is able to do so within the same state. Very few women are chasing the wind rather than militate in politics in their own right. It is only when they militate fully in politics as part of the decision making process that they can lobby for the implementation of laws that would guarantee rural development, education and the provision of the health needs of the population. When they limit themselves to gifts to a people who have been neglected deliberately by the state structure and cannot continuously sustain this, then they rather create serious problems for the people who should be taught how to raise these things rather than wait to be given to them all the time.

Conclusion

During the past twenty one years, the democratic culture in Cameroon has evolved to include things that were hitherto not part of the culture of the people. In spite of the reintroduction of democracy in the 1990s the single party mentality continues. Representation in the political structures of the country is overwhelmingly male centred. There are very few women leaders of political parties and civil society organisations and this has given room for men to dictate policies and their implementation.

Around this same period, there is sustained global pressure for African societies to open up to equal opportunities for women and men. While this has received lip service for most of the time, some elite women use their positions and association with state functionaries to create spaces for themselves and articulate common challenges for women as a whole. Besides, the system pretends to promote gender equality through the formation of associations to sing the praises of the First Lady and prolong the President's stay in power.

In this essay we have examined how two associations namely JACHABY and CERAC have effectively been used to venerate and deify Chantal Biya and the President of the Republic of Cameroon, Paul Biya. This has been made possible through wives of ministers, women ministers, illiterate women and other influential women in the society. State resources have been mobilised to grandstand and cheerlead women into acquiescence within a system that has lost its legitimacy and vitality. Femocracy in Cameroon needs to be redefined so that it does not remain egoistic, exclusive and a stepping stone for a privileged elite few within the women-folk as it is with the men-folk.

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