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THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ROMAN AND IGBO MARRIAGE RITES

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Abstract

This paper attempts an analytical and critical study of marriage rites among the ancient Romans and the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria. The choice of these two distinct cultural groups is because of the similarities that are noticeable in their marriage systems. In particular, the choice of the Igbo ethnic group is not for the reason of its having a system of marriage that is the best or most advanced in Nigeria. Rather, the choice is for the reason of the author's familiarity with the essential ideas in this culture as well as the language with which these ideas are communicated. But before going into the discussion proper, it is imperative to state from the outset that marriage is an important social institution, since no society exists that is known to prohibit or legislate against it. The truth of this claim is confirmed by the fact that even though marriage dates back to the period of antique history, in our highly scientific world of today, individuals and communities still put great premium on people getting married. When we juxtapose this assertion against the background of African culture, the point would be to say that for Africans marriage and the procreation of children are generally seen as the only sure ways of preserving the human heritage or perpetuating it from one generation to another generation *ad infinitum*. This paper adopts the comparative analytic

approach by providing insights from the connubial arrangements or marriage custom among the ancient Romans and a popular African tribe - the Igbo.

Introduction

It is important to know that no culture is autarkic or can subsist on its own without inputs from other cultures. The truth of this claim is evidenced in the fact that there is constant intermingling of cultures as well as similarities in the cultural practices of the different peoples in the world. Take, for instance, the issue of the procreation of children, which I have mentioned in passing in the preceding lines; among the ancient Romans, great importance was attached to a marital union being blessed with children or offspring, who, it was believed, would continue the family line after the demise of the older generation.

This point about the value of children in marriage is a crucially important one. In her historically significant entry, *Marriage Alliance in Ancient Rome*, Olakunbi Olasope remarks that in ancient Rome, the people placed great premium on a marriage producing legitimate *citizen* children who would help preserve the family lineage after the demise of the older generation or progenitors[1]. Like traditional Africans, the Romans considered the procreation of children as a *sine qua non* for the success of any marriage. Among the ancient Romans, apart from the issue of helping to perpetuate a family's lineage group or line of descent after death, children also served some practical social purpose: upon them lay the duty of helping to tend the tomb of their departed forebears, to prevent the abode of deceased family members becoming decrepit or bedraggled. More importantly, children helped ensure that ancestral or *cultus* worship of family deities would not be abrogated in the future. Usually too, "when the Roman census was held, senators and men of the equestrian rank were asked if they got married for the purpose of begetting citizen children" in the State.[2] An affirmative answer usually worked to enhance one's social status or ranking.

The foregoing thought on the value of marriage in enhancing community life is well-stated. These reflections on the social role of marriage will form the basis of the discussions in this paper. However, the paper has a more specific focus: while it examines the general issue of the role of marriage in human life, special attention will be paid to considering the long-established marriage practices among the Igbo people of Nigeria. But before getting into this discussion proper, the following narrative about Nigerian history and culture will suffice. In terms of social groupings, Nigeria is believed to be made up of over 250

ethnic nationalities - some sources say 350; others 374, or 450,[3] While no single group enjoys an absolute numeric majority, three of these groups - the Yoruba in the west, the Igbo in the east and the Hausa-Fulani in the north, constitute about 50% of the population. The three groups are also usually seen as the three major ethnic groups in the country. This paper will concentrate on the essential issues in the marriage custom of only one of the groups mentioned: the Igbo cultural group. The choice of this group is not for any special reason but for the mere purpose of convenience and familiarity. However, the discussion of Igbo marriage custom shall not be overly concerned with an analysis of all the essential ideas in the custom as with highlighting the philosophical as well as ethical significance of the custom itself.

Marriage as a Contract among Africans

In legal terms, marriage is sometimes seen as a contract between a man and one (or more women) for the purpose of establishing a family and maintaining conjugal relationship. The contractual nature of African marriages is a point that scholars have recognized and explored. Using traditional Igbo marriage custom as an illustrative example, V. C. Uchendu argues that among the Igbo of Nigeria, marriage is usually seen as "an alliance between two families rather than [as] a contract between individuals."[4] This also applies to Africa as a whole wherein ties of the marriage hue usually involves the whole clan or community of friends, relations and acquaintances. For example, in the matter of selecting a marriage partner, the choice is never left to the individual to make alone. On the contrary, there are many other people who would be required to make their input on the matter, or otherwise endorse the choice. The point then is that the choice of a marriage partner in many societies of Africa, particularly in the traditional setting, was usually seen as a collective decision. "A person who sees a girl he desires to marry must inform all relatives, grandparents, uncles, nephews, cousins and nieces distant or near for their inspection."[5] While modernity may, in some way, have altered this practice, it has not completely eliminated it.

As in other parts of Africa, Nigerian law recognizes three separate marriage systems, namely, marriage under the Marriage Act, Customary law marriage and Islamic law marriage. Of the three, customary law marriage is the oldest and "still enjoys considerable patronage."[6] With particular reference to customary marriages P. O. Kuye says they are "potentially polygamous" in nature.[7] They are, she adds further, legalised

by the payment of the 'bride price' or dowry, which may come in the form of goods, cattle, or cloth by the family of the husband to that of the wife.[8] This payment not only seals the social contract between the two families but also signifies proof of the families' consent. In other words, a customary marriage only becomes legal when the bride price is paid. What is true here about African marriage custom also held true with the Roman type: the dowry was seen as a means of authenticating the marriage contract among the ancient Romans. According to Olakunbi Olasope, not only was the dowry an integral requirement for a valid Roman marriage, it also served as the contribution of the bride's family to the upkeep of the newly established home.[9] However, in making this point one observes a major difference by the custom of payment of dowry among the Romans and Africans.

Whereas in Africa, it is the groom or his family that makes the dowry offer to the family of the bride - as an indication of a contractual agreement between families; in the case of the ancient Romans, the bride's family paid the dowry to the husband as part of its contribution to alleviate the financial burden that could come on the marriage and, also, as a way of securing their daughter's new home. Under Roman law, not only was the dowry a largesse that belonged to the groom, it also helped "to serve as a 'cushion' for the financial responsibility that would come to the husband upon getting married.[10] However, this aspect of the ancient Roman arrangement that required the bride's family to pay the dowry to their daughter's suitor is likely to bewilder the African. For the African, such a practice would be against cultural norm or expectation. Not only is the practice out of tune with cultural expectation, many would even see it as a sacrilege against the preternatural powers that rule in the cosmic realm or the social order.

To return to the point made earlier, in Africa, marriage under customary law is not just a relationship between two individuals, but a union between families, clans or even village units. Arguing in the same vein, A. N. Allot avers that in some parts of Africa, marriage relationships are sometimes entered into by couples involuntarily.[11] Such involuntary unions would apply especially to ladies whose hand could be given out in marriage by their parents without their consent or opinion in the matter. Many would not have even met or interacted with the men before. In pre-colonial Africa, this practice was rampant; and it particularly held true of communities where the practice of the custom of betrothing girls at infancy held sway. Like the pre-colonial Africans, the Romans also had a system of early marriages - a system which allowed parents to give out their teen daughters as brides to willing suitors as wives. In

the case of the Romans, the giving out of girls early in marriage was usually by the consent of their *paterfamilias* (head of household). The Roman bride, as is the case of the African, may not consort (in a way that is romantic or deeply intimate) with the groom before the wedding ceremony.

From the adumbrations above, it is clear that for the Romans, marriage was a source of social security. It also granted the married person a larger network of family members, friends and associates. For the woman in particular, one of the great gains of marriage was the respect and social status that came with being a wife and mother, a 'Matrona'- something that conferred on her considerable respect not only in the family but also in public life. Marriage qualified a woman to play a greater role in public worship; it granted her greater liberty as well as legal and economic autonomy. Perhaps this is what Guglielmo had in mind when he argued that among the ancient Romans marriage enabled the woman to attain "nearly...that condition of moral and civil equality with [the] man which makes her his comrade, and not his slave - that equality in which modern civilization sees one of the supreme ends of moral progress."[12] But did Roman marriage grant the woman equal status with her male counterpart as Guglielmo would wants us to believe? This is a moot question. It is also an issue that the paper would not want to debate. However, what is uncertain is if any ancient culture accorded men and women such *equality* that Guglielmo grants the ancient Romans.

But what is certain from the foregoing is that marriage - whether for traditional Africans or for the ancient Romans - is an important social institution. For Africans in particular, the marriage union is usually regarded as the high-water mark of a person's ambitions or achievements. But as important as marriage is for the African, the need may sometimes arise to dissolve or annul it by following some appropriate method or procedure. One such procedure would be the family of the woman returning to the family of the erstwhile husband the bride wealth paid it. Another would be the woman's family acceding to all legitimate demands made on it by erstwhile in-laws. But with the influence exerted on African culture by Western culture, marriages may, in addition to the traditional procedures, be liquefied through the intervention of the courts. Legally, a marriage may be dissolved through divorce, which may be brought about by a misdemeanour on the part of the husband or wife to perform what may be seen as the duties entailed

in the marriage agreement. Such misdemeanour could be the failure of the woman to give birth to children or because of cruelty of the man to the wife, etc. What is true here about Africa is to a large extent true about the ancient Romans; for as Olasope writes, even though the ancient Romans placed much store by on the sanctity of marriage, divorce was not only "widespread" but was a common feature of Roman marriages. Corroborating Olasope's opinion, Guglielmo remarks that divorce was "easy" and recurrent among the ancient Romans.[14]

The Social Importance of African Marriages

On the issue of the social value of marriage, it is observed that not only do Africans value marriage as socially significant; they also believe that it is vital to human joy and happiness. Whether as individuals, communities or village groups, African marriage is usually regarded as a mite-stone in the individual's life. It is as an indispensable factor that confers meaning on human life. To adopt Utibe Uko's catch-phrase, marriage "looms upon the horizon of" the African's social economy.[15] It is for the reason that marriage is perceived as an ineluctable part of the individual's life that Africans reject celibacy, and see it as something of an embarrassment not only to society but also to the individual who opts for such a life. In giving voice to this opinion J. S. Mbiti remarks that among Africans, marriage is not only seen as obligatory, but in a situation where a man fails to have children through his wife, he is encouraged or even bidden to find another wife (or wives) through whom he could raise up children who will survive him and keep him in "personal immortality" after the demise of the bodily frame.[16] The conclusion that can be drawn from the cultural bricolage made above is that for Africans marriage is not a mere social institution but a means of overcoming personal or group extinction through the instrumentality of the human offspring that result from it. Another is that the desire for personal or group survival after death accounts for why Africans place a high value on a marriage blessed with children.

In fact, the belief that children were an indispensable factor for group survival or the continuation of the family line of descent was universal to all traditional history. As with Africans, for Romans, the foremost function of marriage was the production of children. A high price was placed on couples begetting children because of the expectation that children would survive and succeed their parents as heirs or look after them in old age.[17] Even though this expectation was not always

met, it did not, however, deter married couples from the desire to procreate or have children.

Still on the social importance that marriage alliance holds for Africans - the Igbo of Nigeria, for example - it is not uncommon for an infertile woman to take it upon herself to find another wife for her husband through whom she hopes to raise up children in the home. However, this practice, commonly referred to as "surrogacy" is not peculiar to African culture - nor is it unique to traditional Igbo culture. On the contrary, Jewish anthology gives evidence that this was also a widespread custom in Judaic tradition. This view is validated by the account given in the Bible of Sarah surrendering her maid to her husband Abraham as a consort or gestational surrogate. As with the Jews and the Romans, in Africa, a childless marriage is usually seen as an evil to be overcome through ritual or propitiatory offerings to the spirits of departed ancestors in chthonian existence.

Marriage among the Igbo of Nigeria

Among the traditional Igbo, marriage was one indicator that a man had attained to adult status and therefore could be entrusted with special responsibilities in the society. For the woman, it was a signal for according her honour and respect: it was a key dynamic for feline nobility and dignity with her fellow women. And usually too, being married was regarded as a mark of great achievement and a sign that an individual was responsible or accountable.[18] lends weight to this view when he argues that among the Igbo, to be married was seen as the normal condition for both men and women, while *polyygny* (popularly known as polygamy), which was as "a symbol of high social status [was regarded as] the ideal." In a highly important entry by the Igbo historian L.C. Dioka, it is said that among the traditional Igbo, not only was marriage seen as something obligatory, but celibacy - the condition of being unmarried - was considered "an impossible prospect."[19] Corroborating this viewpoint, the English anthropologist G.T. Basden remarks:

> *Marriage is a most important event in the Igbo's life. From the time boys and girls are capable of thinking for themselves marriage is set before them as the one object to be attained...Unmarried persons of either sex except in special cases are object of derision, and to be childless is the greatest calamity that can befall a woman!*[20]

The Igbo place a high premium on marriage: it is something to desire or look up to. Similarly, the Igbo see marriage as a *sacred duty* which every member of society must perform. To underscore the kind of importance the people attach to the marriage union, the Igbo do not regard the coming together of a man and a woman as merely a relationship between two individuals. On the contrary, it is taken as a contractual agreement between families, whole clans or communities. This is the point Uzoma Onyemaechi makes when he writes that generally, the Igbo regard the marriage union as a family or clan affair. "When a boy betroths a girl, the matter does not end there. The families of the contracting parties will embark on a series of investigations about the character, home training, lineage, health, clan relationship. Where all the requirements are satisfactory to both sides, approval is readily given for continuation of betrothal intercourse, but if otherwise, any further relationship between the two youngsters will be discouraged."[21] Restating the point in a slightly different way, D. L. Smith remarks that the Igbo regard family by marriage as close blood relations are.[22]

Igbo proverbs capture the idea by speculating that an individual has membership of three families or homes as follows: one with his father's people, one with his mother's people, and one with his in-laws. The family system here illustrated is the extended family type, which is usually made up of a coterie of relations beside the couple and the children. In contrast to this type of family system referred to above, Western culture favours the nuclear family system, which comprises the husband, wife and their children without the overload of a medley of uncountable family relations. Each of these family systems (the extended and the nuclear) has both its weak points and areas of strength, although this is not the concern of this paper. Suffice it to say that for the African, marriage "is more for and about the couple's lineage and their communities, as much or more than it is for and about the man and woman who are marrying."[23]

Alongside a plethora of other social customs, the Igbo see marriage as an avenue through which the individual participates in group life. The custom of betrothing a female child to a boy (or a man) even before the girl was old enough to give her consent, was one of the features of traditional Igbo life. Somehow, modern ways seem not to have succeeded in eroding or liquefying this age-old or long-standing practice. For even in present day Nigerian society, this practice still persists among some groups or communities such that a father may indicate his desire to secure for his son a child who is still in the mother's womb, if born a

female. According to P. O. Kuye, this marriage custom still holds among such Nigerian groups as the Igbo, the Ibibio as well as the. Describing this marriage custom as both *evil* and *repugnant*, Kuye calls for its complete abolition or repudiation by Nigerians.[24] Interestingly, like the Igbo, the ancient Romans also had a system of infant betrothal; a system in which there existed no age restriction in betrothal. For example, among the Roman upper class, "marriage was usually preceded by a betrothal."[25]

Marriage and the Institution of the Bridal Price

With the Igbo, the marriage union is not believed to have been established until the bride price has been paid. Indeed, the bride price or dowry is counted as highly important such that a default in payment is capable of invalidating a 'marriage'. More significantly, children resulting from a union for which the bridal wealth was not paid will be counted as not belonging to their biological father but the woman's family. A man is not counted a real father or husband who defaulted in the payment of the bride price. The terms 'father' and 'husband' cannot apply to him sui generis. Rather, he a 'father' or 'husband' in a nominal or notional sense. Conversely, the payment of the bride price gives the man the right to dispose of his wife and children as he wills. Even where a woman deserts her husband to live with another man, any child born through the new arrangement is said to rightfully belong to her 'legitimate' husband who paid a bride price on her. Among the Igbo, divorce is effected "not only by the woman deserting her husband to live with another man, but in addition, by this second man refunding all the bride-wealth and expenses incurred by the first husband."[26]

Generally, the bride price is counted as very important among Africans. With the Igbo in particular, such payment puts a limit to a woman's liberty or freedom of choice. Even when the full dowry has not fully been paid and the man has merely indicated interest in the lady by bringing palm wine to her parents (a ceremony known as 'igba nkwu' by the Igbo) - this simple act was strong enough to ward off or keep other suitors at bay. In very extreme cases, where it takes the man some years to fulfil all marital obligations to his in-laws, this may even constrain the lady from giving her hand in marriage another man. Usually, since these marriage ceremonies were given wide publicity, they also served as indicators to other suitors to keep off the lady. A number of Igbo scholars have riled at the Igbo system of bridal payment; in their opinion,

it is akin to the sale of the girls into slavery or servitude. Others say it is dehumanizing of womanhood as ladies are made to appear as mere commodities that can be sold to the highest bidder. Arguing in this vein, G. I. Udom-Azuogu claims that the bride price paints the picture of merchandise and portrays the woman as her husband's 'investment'.[27] In the words of Udom-Azuogu, it is not just the case that native marriage customs reduce women to measly 'breeding machines' or 'servants' to their husbands, in addition:

> *[T]he relationship between man and wife under Customary Law has nothing to do with love between the spouses but has (sic) definite object of child breeding, looking after the home and assisting in farming or trading as the case may be."*[28]

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Igbo system of dowry payment needs an urgent review to eliminate the feeling that it is merely a means for disposing women as *commodities* to the highest bidder. As earlier shown, payment of the dowry was one of the conditions for a valid marriage among the ancient Romans. Unlike in the Igbo case, however, such payment was never seen as a means for *disposing* a lady or woman as an article of trade. Rather, it merely served as a contribution made by the bride's family for the upkeep of their daughter's new home. It was also meant to augment the husband's financial burdens and alleviate the fiscal burdens of marriage.[29] The important point to note in this comparative analysis is that the practice of dowry payment is not something unique to Africans. On the contrary, it is a universal human practice that transcends space and national boundaries.

Cases of Abuse of the Dowry

At this point in the discussion, it is pertinent to mention that the dowry has fallen into bad uses in many societies. In India, for example, dowry payment has remained a source of social discomfiture for most women. In that country, dowry (*Dahej* in the local language) refers to payment made by the bride's family to the groom or his family as a precondition for a lady being accepted for marriage. However, many Indian men have the unenviable record of abusing the dowry, employing it as means for extracting money and other material items from the bride's family. Many women have been subjected to abuses and have been made to suffer miserably who were unable pay or meet the men's demands. The

abuse can take the form of the husband or his family dousing the lady with gasoline and setting her ablaze. Many women have died in the process. Indian women suffer interminably and unremittingly in the hands of men for failure to meet their demands of high dowry. In a male-dominated society like India, records of cruelty against women are often not reliable. However, official statistics indicate a rise in the number of dowry-related murders in the country. In 1988, the number of women killed was 2,209. The figures were 4,835 and 5,377 in 1990 and 1993 respectively. In some cities such as Delhi it is reported that a woman gets killed almost every twelve hours. And even though there are legislations prohibiting dowry extractions in India, the legal system has however been weak in ending such a cultural practice that is so deeply ingrained in the social consciousness of the people.[30]

It is perhaps for reasons of misuse such as the above that Udom-Azuogu remonstrates against dowry rites, claiming that they amount to the 'purchase' of the woman by the man, and that such rites portray the woman as a commodity or item meant to be traded for pecuniary gain. Unlike the negative example of the Igbo or the Indians, no hard evidence exists to suggest that the dowry fell under such misuse among the ancient Romans. With the Igbo in particular, the issue of abuse comes in various dimensions. One dimension is the weight of the burden on the man who must accede to the demand of his shylock in-laws for a high pay for their daughter. The other is on the woman who ends as 'property' to her husband who paid a heavy price for her purchase. Whichever way we choose to look at the matter, the commercialization of the dowry among the Igbo does an irremediable harm not only to family life but to the marriage institution as a whole. Exorbitant dowry demands have the tendency to subordinate women in a male favouring environment like Africa. Evidently, there is a sense in which customary marriage practices incapacitate the woman and make her servile or unduly beholden to her husband. For example, it is not unusual for the man to feel that having paid 'so much' to 'purchase' the woman, he has the right to 'use' or dispose of her the way he wants. Perhaps, this is what Udom-Azuogu meant by Igbo women being 'servants' or mere 'breeding machines' for their husbands.

The problem of high bride price is part reason for problem of late marriage among Igbo young men. It is also reason for the high rate of sex workers among Igbo ladies. But the issue of concern here is eligible bachelors are unwilling to marry or are unable to do so because they lack the fiscal power to do so. On the contrary, the more worrisome problem

is that the pressure to meet with this cultural expectation may have unwittingly escalated the kidnapping saga in the southeast areas of Nigeria - a problem that has become a source of concern for everbody in Nigeria.[31] As argued earlier, a positive review of some aspects of Igbo marriage custom has become a matter of necessity. Such a review, the paper believes, will help eliminate those aspects of Igbo marriage custom that are not only anachronistic but also denigrating of womanhood. However, to call for an overhaul of Igbo dowry custom is not to suggest that it be completely abolished or eradicated. On the contrary, only those aspects should be jettisoned that debase the social worth of women. In making this point, however, we need to remind ourselves that sometimes what the scholarly writers describe as the "enslavement of the woman" with regards to African marriage practices is very often not the case. Oftentimes, Western authors who are ignorant of certain elements of the African culture are quick to describe such things as the normal assistance a woman renders her husband in the farm or at home as amounting to oppression of the African woman.

Even more puzzling is the use of the word 'breeding' by a fringe of the women's rights group to describe the normal biological activity of child-bearing which is usually undertaken by the woman. A world deprived of joy and human fellow-feeling, which family life provides is unimaginable. Such would be dull and gloomy, to say the least. Therefore, caution should be exercised not to confuse the normal roles that partners play in the family with what is called 'abuse' of a woman by the man. Such roles include a woman doing the dishes at home, preparing the meal for the family, or working with her husband to cultivate the farm, and so on. These are normal functions that any member of the family can perform - whether it is the man or woman - roles some scholars erroneously describe as instances of *oppression* of the African woman by the man.

The Custom of Female Marriages

A unique aspect of traditional Igbo marriage custom is that of the "female husband" or "marriage." Under the arrangement, a woman can acquire wives on her own account and become a *female husband* if she is able to pay the requisite bridal wealth. The incentive to do so may be infertility or the woman's obligation to her husband, which is to provide him with children or heirs. "In this situation a woman will use her own resources to acquire a co-wife and claim any of her children as her own. Alternatively, a woman, especially if she is very wealthy, will set up her own compound and take wives to establish and advance her own status.

In this case the wives involved will" co-habit with the woman's husband in order to bear children; children who will be counted as the female husband's. The *female husband* exercised such right over the 'wife', including the right to dispose (deal) with her 'wife' as she so desired.[32]

The concept of *female husband* is analogous to the bioethical notion of surrogate motherhood. A surrogate mother is a woman who acts as a substitute or proxy for another woman who is unable to have a baby of her own. The surrogate is paid to carry a pregnancy for another woman. The child that results from this arrangement legitimately belongs to the woman who paid for the service. The Biblical story of Sarah ceding her maid to her husband Abraham is a good example of a surrogate arrangement; and it is comparable to the Igbo notion of a *female husband*.[33] The surrogate, then, is one who acts as a stand-in, an alternate or deputy for another. A *female husband* is incapable of making another woman pregnant. That would be an unusual feat for *any* woman to accomplish. She 'marries' another of her type to have this task accomplished.

The Role of Children in Marriage

The Igbo society is highly patrilineal. It is a society in which family descent is traced through the male line. Igbo culture is also male-favouring. In the Igbo world, marriage is strengthened with the birth of children, particularly male children who will in the future inherit the pater's chattels or wealth. Some scholars have argued that love is not one of the factors that motivate Igbo - nay, African - marriage. Some scholars argue that what inspires traditional Igbo (and, by implication, African) courtship is the need to procreate and raise a family. As justification for this type of claim, these scholars argue that the foremost consideration in African marriage is not love but the fertility of the couple.[34] This assessment of African marital custom was popular among European scholars of the colonial era. A number of African scholars were to support this judgment later. But while there may be some truth in the claim that children are crucial to the success of African connubial relationship, there appears to be no justification for the claim that marital relationship among Africans is bereft of the ideal of romantic love. On this last claim, the response would be to say that the scholars who make such avouchment do not provide any data to support their opinion. Besides, the scholars seem to confuse love with passion or the emotional feigns that people display towards those of the opposite sex whereas in actual fact love is something much deeper than the mere effusion of passion that people feel towards one another.

In the Western world where people are so easily titillated by sex and romantic love, the rate of divorce and breakages of marital vows is so alarmingly high that many young people have come to conclude that marriage is not worth their while. In contrast, there is demonstrable evidence that African marriages are more enduring and loving than Western ones. For while in the West the emphasis is on emotional feeling that very easily ebbs away, in Africa the stress is on those core values that strengthen and stabilize relationships. On the declaration that children are crucial to couples enjoying connubial bliss among Africans, there is great truth in this adjuration. With the Igbo, underlying every conjugal relationship is the need to have children who *will* survive their progenitors or ensure the continuity of family line after the demise of the old forebears. As earlier mentioned, for the Igbo, just as it was for the ancient Romans, the foremost function of marriage was the production of children who, it was expected, would succeed and look after their parents in old age.

The view that children are crucial to maintaining the human line of descent has its basis in biology. According to Spanish philosopher Miguel De Unamuno, this desire for self-sustenance is much more pronounced in human organisms than in other beings. The argument also holds that all human efforts or strivings are geared towards satisfying this basic desire in every human heart. But it is not only that human strivings are aimed at satisfying the desire for self-perpetuation; even the very pursuit of knowledge, the hankering after fame, the search for meaning in life as well as the religious search for God, are ultimately aimed, says De Unamuno, at fulfilling this basic human desire.[35] These views expressed by De Unamuno above are perfectly Aristotelian. Aristotle says, "man is a living creature whose true nature is to live in a city-state or polis."[36] The Greek word *polis* in this statement means the *state* or society. The argument here is that it is because human beings are sociable by nature - there being few proper anchorites who turn from society to live in isolation - that we argue that human well-being and self-fulfilment can only be achieved in a social setting. To reiterate the point, the notion of the continuity of the race through offspring is a basic idea in the discipline of biology. With particular reference to living organisms, it is argued that they have the ability to engender offspring which will survive and replace them in existence thereby preventing the whole species from going into extinction at death. The idea is orthodox, therefore, which holds that the survival of the human species is only possible through the birth and continuance of human progeny or offspring.

In concluding this aspect of discussion on Igbo marriage institution, what remains to be said is that the need for the survival of the human

family accounts for why the Igbo decry childlessness as a grievous fate, or the worst thing that could happen to a person. It also explains why they place great value on a marriage being blessed with human offspring. Among the Igbo, to be a childless person is to be seen as a wastrel; or a good-for-nothing elder; in Igbo terminology, an 'efulefu' (a useless wanderer on earth) and 'onye di ndu onwu ka nma' (a person who is better dead than alive). For the Romans, failure to procreate or have children was good enough reason to dissolve or liquefy a marriage. So, whether for the ancient Romans or the primeval Africans, procreation was a sine qua non for the stability and success of a connubial relationship or marriage union. Conclusively, therefore, to be blessed with human descendants is not merely for the fact of promoting filial duty or filial piety; it is also for the reason that they (children) are believed to be the ones that will maintain the lineage bloodline after the demise of the older generations.

Conclusion

The important argument this paper makes is that marriage is not only crucial to human happiness, it is also essential to the continued survival of the human species. The truth of this statement is not voided by the disregard with which most modern people treat the marriage institution, especially in Europe and America. Against the time-honoured practice where a man and a woman were joined together in what is referred to as *holy matrimony*, in the West, individuals of the same sex now get yoked together in what may be called an *unholy* wedlock. And they even do it with glee and arrogant pride. Aside this perversion, marriage is the union of a man and a woman - or in the case of polygamy, of a man and two or more women - for the purpose of mutual love and companionship. Procreation of children is one other benefit of the married life. It is for this reason that Africans place great premium on a marriage being blessed with children.

Without meaning to rehash the issues discussed earlier, in the paper, the point has been made already that human well-being and solidarity are best enjoyed when individuals are attached to a family. If this statement is anything to go by, the need arises for Africans to be extra vigilant and to be constantly on the look out against those negative influences coming from far off climes - influences that threaten the family and seek to erode it. A highlight of such off-putting influences includes the phenomena of divorce and re-marriage, child-abandonment, street children and prostitution, which if not promptly dealt with, could

have a pernicious effect on the African family. The point, then, is that in order to save the family from complete collapse, Africans need to resist these negative influences outlined above. Without doubt, one of the easiest ways to destroy a nation or bring it to complete ruination is by first destroying the very foundation of its marriage or family institution. The strenghth of the African family lies in its ability to uphold the values of the family life. Such values include the love and trust family members have for one another. Others are fidelity among couples, honesty, empathy and truthfulness, to mention a few. The common opinion is that women are imbued with greater capacity than men to advance or uphold these family values.

As in the case of African women above, women in ancient Rome played the invaluable role of helping to maintain family harmony or peace. Explaining this point, Olakunbi Olasope says Roman women played the important social role of helping transmit the values of the moral life and quality education to the youth and those of the upcoming generations.[37] The Roman woman was both a brave wife and devoted mother. The virtues for which she was known were fidelity, humility, chastity, prudence, loyalty, and dignity. By devoting quality time to the education of the children, Roman women influenced politics and became instruments for social development. Olasope sees these qualities displayed by women in ancient Rome as qualities worth emulating by women of today, especially women in Africa. By embracing these values or quality of life of the ancient Roman women, we will be enabled to "bring decency to the family institution which Westernization is fast eroding."[38]

The admonition above is worth noting, especially in a place like Africa where the people have under-performed both politically and socio-economically. The family, therefore, remains the only bastion or bulwark for reviving a failing social life in Africa. In particular, it is in the areas of marriage and family life that Africans seem to have anything of note to offer a morally tottering Europe and America. To fail in this onerous but challenging task will be to do a disservice to ourselves as a people, to humanity and to posterity as a whole. In making the foregoing claims, the paper has neither quibbled nor nitpicked when it made the avowal that marriage and family life are indispensable to a life of fulfilment and full-orbed happiness.

Notes and References

[1]Olakunbi Olasope, *Marriage Alliance in Ancient Rome* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2006), p. 5.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Sholars have expressed differing views on the number of ethnic groups that exist in Nigeria. For some examples of such views see Eluwa, G. I. C. et al., *A History of Nigeria for Schools and Colleges* (Ibadan: Africana-Fep Publishers Ltd.), 1988, p. xii; see also Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), *History and People of Nigeria*. Available online at: http://www.nigeriaembassyusa.org/history.shtml.

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[5]F. C. Ogbalu, *Igbo Institutions and Customs* (Ibadan: Ibadan University, 1975), p. 13.

[6]J.O.A. Akintayo, "Contemporary Issues in Marriage under Yoruba Customary Law." In: Oyewo, A.T. and Osunwole, S.A. (eds.), *Readings in African Studies* (Ibadan: Jator Publishing Company, 1999), p. 88.

[7]P.O. Kuye, "Rights of Women under Customary Law," In: Osinbajo, Y. and Kalu, A.U. (eds.), *Towards a Restatement of Nigerian Customary Law* (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Justice, 1991), p. 385.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Olasope, op. cit., p. 40.

[10]Ibid.

[11]A.N. Allot, *Essays in African Law* (London: Butterworths, 1960), p. 214.

[12]F. Guglielmo, "Women and Marriage in Ancient Rome," *The Women of the Caesars* (New York: The Century Co., (1911) See e-text version by Lewis, J. J. (2003), Women and Marriage in Ancient Rome. Available at: http://womenshistory.about.com/cs/ancientrome/a/roman_wm_10101b_5.htm (accessed on February12, 2009).

[13]Olakunbi Olasope, "*Univira*: the Ideal Roman Matrona," in *Lumina*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2009, p. 3.

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[16]J. S. Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann,1975), p. 26.

[17]Lucette Gatehouse (1999), Marriage in ancient Rome. Available at: http://victorian.fortunecity.com/lion/373/roman/romarriage.html (accessed on January 9, 2009).

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Kuye, op. cit.

[25]Olasope, op. cit., p. 35.

[26]E. Ilogu, *Christianity and Ibo Culture* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1974), p. 29.

[27]G.I. Udom-Azuogu, "Women and children - A Disempowered Group under Customary Law." In: Osinbajo, Y. and Kalu, A.U. (eds.), *Towards a Restatement of Nigerian Customary Law* (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Justice, (1991), pp. 131-132.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Olasope, op. cit., p. 40.

[30]Dowry in India. Available at: http://www.indianchild.com/dowry_in_india.htm (accessed on February 3, 2009).

[31]The phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria refers to a social vice where social miscreants and other sundry criminals kidnap an individual for ransom. The victim is only let off the hook by his captors when relations are able to meet the monetary demands of captors. Unfortunately, this problem of kidnapping is more pronounced in the southeast of Nigeria, especially in the Igbo areas. It is also a problem that has made the southeast a fearful place to live in.

[32]For a more detailed discussion on the custom of female marriage among the Igbo, see V. C. Uchendu, op. cit., pp. 50-52.

[33]This Bible account of Sarah surrenderding her maid to her husband as a surrogate stand-in can be found in the sixteenth Book of Genesis. In this account Hagar acted as a surrogate for Sarah, and had a child on her behalf, named Ishmael.

[34]For more on this type of claim see B. Schwimmer, *Igbo Marriage Patterns* (Winnipeg, Canada: University of Manitoba, 2002); J. S. Hirsch & H. Wardlow, *Modern Loves* (The University of Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2006); & U. Onyemaechi, op. cit.

[35]Miguel De Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. J.E. Crawford (New York: Flitch, Dover, 1954), p. 24.

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TRANSCULTURALISM IN THE CHORAL SONGS OF EURIPIDES' *TROJAN WOMEN* AND OSOFISAN'S *WOMEN OF OWU*

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Abstract

The incorporation of ancient Greek drama especially of Sophocles and Euripides in adaptations within the Yoruba culture is particularly large and growing. Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*, which is an adaptation of Euripides' *Trojan Women* is one of such.
Choral songs, which is an integral component of ancient Greek tragic drama diminished in importance as Greek drama advanced in development. However the flavour of the choral songs is enhanced in the transmission of these plays to African/Yoruba setting.

The objective here is to do an inter-textual analysis by examining the choral songs of the original Greek play in comparison with songs of the chorus in the adapted play by a dramatist of Yoruba origin and to demonstrate the cultural mechanisms employed thereby interpreting the socio-religious implicating of the cultural interplay between the two cultures which the songs effect.

Introduction

Osofisan's *Women of Owu*, which has been described by *Exeter Press and Echo* as a "...a rhythmic mix of Chorus, songs and dance punctuated

by individual stories of woe", [1] is an African adaptation of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, and was first commissioned by the Chipping Norton Theatre in the United Kingdom.

As an adaptation, *Women of Owu* follows quite closely in plot and structure and for most part its' Euripidean original, *Trojan Women*, which is a part of a connected trilogy that has the Trojan War as its subject. The trilogy presented in 415 BC contained three tragedies - *Alexander, Palamedes, Trojan Women* and a satyr - play *Sisyphus*. The other plays are lost. The tragedy of two nations - Greece and Troy - started in the first two plays and is consummated in the third.

Trojan Women occupies the time between the fall of Troy and the departure of the Greeks for their homes. At the opening of the play, all the Trojan men are dead or vanished and Troy burns in ruins. The women have been shared out to their future masters and Astyanax, the son of Hector, is slaughtered "as a safety measure" to forestall a future uprising.

Women of Owu like *Trojan Women* is a play about sufferings which war inflicts on a community. So the tragedy is a communal one in which the chorus and the women all face similar struggles. In the both plays there is no dramatic solution, no relief; the innocent suffer and Owu like Troy is totally annihilated. Troy becomes a:

> *... city fallen to the spear*
> *fades as smoke winged in the sky*
> *halls hot in the swept fire*
> *and the fierce lances. (Lines 1297-1301)*[2]

Owu becomes a city "smouldering", "reduced to ruin" and lives in it have been "scattered" into "potshards."[3] However Osofisan offers a hope at the end.

The god Anlugba, the African counterpart of Euripides' Poseidon prophesises:

> *... I promise:*
> *Owu will rise again! Not here,*
> *Not as a single city again - ...*
> *- but in little community elsewhere,*
> *Within other cities of Yoruba land.* [4]

This "prophesy" in contemporary reality has translated into pockets of Owu Kingdom in the entire Yoruba land. There are presently twenty-seven Owu kingdoms in Yoruba land.

The ray of hope offered in Osofisan, which is missing in Euripides, recalls the prophecy of Jove at the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The end

of the war at Troy is not available in the *Iliad*, which is predominantly about the wrath of Achilles and subsequent events resulting from his quarrel with Agamemnon. Virgil however starts his *Aeneid* with Aeneas, "the hero who first from Troy's frontier, displaced by destiny, came to the Lavinian shores."[5] And as the focus of the epic, it is Aeneas who tells the end of the war as he recounts the events in a banquet at the palace of Queen Dido in Books II and III of the *Aeneid*.

Earlier in Book I, Venus, the mother of Aeneas, grieving for her son's misfortunes and shipwreck in his bid to reach Latium his place of destiny, takes Jove to task in line 253, asking if this is Jove's 'reward for being true or the manner in which "you restore a king?" It is the reply of Jove to the inquisition of Venus that the prophesy of Anlugbua in *Women of Owu* recalls:

> *Fear no more, Cytherea, take comfort, for your people's*
> *Destiny in unaltered; you shall behold the promised City*
> *walls of Lavinium, and exact great-hearted Aeneas even to*
> *the starry skies...*
> *Aeneas, mightily warring in Italy, shall crush*
> *Proud tribes, to establish city walls and a way of life,*
> *Till a third summer has seen him reigning in Latium....*
> *His son Ascanius, ... shall move the kingdom from*
> *Lavinium and make Long Alba his sure stronghold.*
> *Here for three hundred years shall rule the dynasty*
> *Of Hector, until a priestess and queen of Trojan blood,*
> *With child by Mars, shall presently give birth to twin sons.*
> *Romulus, then, gay in the coat of the tawny she-wolf*
> *Which suckled him, shall succeed to power and found the*
> *city*

Of Mars and with his own name endow the Roman nation. (*Aeneid* lines 257 - 277).

In the Euripides' *Trojan Women*, the heroic focus of the *Iliad* shifts to the fate of a city's women in the disaster that war brings: the concentration of women as the object of men's sexual and military aggression helps to develop the harshness of this play[6]. In both *Trojan Women* and *Women of Owu* there is the interrelation of military behaviour as an act of brigands in the face of utter helplessness.

In marked reversal of the focus of epic literature, both plays concentrate on the women with a particular emphasis on suffering, maltreatment and the arguments that support such behaviour rather than the actions of heroism that distinguish the battle field. Moreover, the suffering of the female protagonists is conceived as the direct outcome of the actions of men,

whose motivations, arguments and responsibilities are presented in various unpleasant and ignoble guises.

The production of the plays, each of which offers a continual lament is therefore a serious challenge, especially since "tidy notions of sequence and logic are not what guide those telling ... war stories"[7]. However both playwrights succeed in this onerous task. The *Trojan Women* won second prize in 415 BC and the *Women of Owu* has been produced several times since its first public reading in 2003. The lastest production being the one of Nigeria sponsored by Mr. G. O. Onosode through the Classical Association of Nigeria and the Department of Classics, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, which ran from the 30th of April to the 2nd of May 2011, with two productions per day.

The Choruses and the Choral Songs

In both the *Trojan Women* and the *Women of Owu*, the "positive use" of the chorus is one device that enables an interplay of the chorus and actors as co-ordinate forces. In Euripides, the chorus does not obey dramatic canons but rather, remaining unmoved from its "mournful *ostinato*" sticks positively to one theme - the fall of Troy. Its lyrical nature enables it to penetrate more deeply to the inner tragedy than the actors[8]. In both plays the chorus sing of s of ruin and death - not the run of Hecuba nor of Erelu Afin, which is but a shadow, but of Troy and subsequently of Owu. The chorus of Women of Troy sings:

So pitiful, so pitiful
Your shame and your lamentation.
No longer shall I move the shifting pace of shuttle at the looms of Ida. I shall look no more on the bodies of my sons.
No more shall I a drudge besides or be forced to the bed of Greek masters? Night is a queen, but I curse her.
Must I draw the water of Pirene, a servant at sacred springs?
Might I only be taken to Athens, domain of Theseus, the bright, the blessed!

...

see now, from the host of the Danaans
the herald , charged with the new orders,
takes the speed of his way toward us.
What message? What command? Since we come as slaves.
Even now in the Dorian Kingdom. (Lines 197 -234)

The song here is a lament about the new position of the women, which is quite distressing especially in comparison to what it used to be. Very similar is the lament of the chorus in *Women of Owu's:*

The storms of life are many
War has broken out
If we've tried all we could
And yet to no avail
We'll be frustrated
To the point of suicide! (by poisoning)

Mother braved all But mother died
Father tried his best
Alt to no avail
The family's scattered
To drive one to suicide (by hanging)

Where are we going
But to the house of slavery?
We've cried out our eyes dry
All to no avail
We're tired of life
To the point of suicide (by poisoning) [9]

In each of the songs, the chorus is able to project a vision of loss; of a lost world, a lost system of values, a lost heritage and a lost life and the lyrics show that the chorus is right in the heart of the tragedy as proclaims the tragic bearing of the play.

The *Trojan Women* is an episodic play in which the separate actions point to one overriding idea - the suffering that the human race brings upon itself through its follies and wicked acts. This central idea is continually re-inforced in the minds of the reader/audience in the series of choral odes:

Voice of singing, stay
With me now, for Ilium's sake;
take up the burden of tears,
the song of sorrow;
the dirge of Troy's death
must be chanted;
the tale of my captivity
by the wheeled stride of the four-foot beast of the Argives,
the horse they left in the gates,
thin gold at its brows,
inward, the spears' high thunder
...

Besides their altars the Trojans
died in their blood. Desolate now,

men murdered, our sleeping rooms gave up
their brides' beauty
to bread sons for Greek men,
sorrow for our own country. (lines 511 - 567)

This rather long lyrical lament gives a summary of the traditional narrative of the final fall of Troy through a ploy[10], which lured the Trojans to disarm, feast and open up their gates, break their wall to bring in the "votive Greek horse" and to the onslaught of the Greek soldiers. The choral songs offers Euripides the device of flashback that powerfully and brilliantly paints the sequence of events that led to point at which the play itself begins.

There is no doubt that Euripides has used heroic legend to express his feelings about the horrors of war to the audience of his own days in the *Trojan Women*. He is even able to expand his catalogue of mythological references through the lyrics of the chorus. The choral song that comes up just after Astayanax is taken by the Greek guard, obviously for slaughter, and just before the Menelaus - Hecuba - Helen scene is full of such references:

Telamon, O king in the land where the bees swarm,
Salamis the surf-founded isle where you founded your city
to front that hallowed coast where Athene broke
forth the primeval pale branch of olive,
Wreath of the bright air and a glory on Athens the shinning:
O Telamon, you came in your pride of arms
with Alcmena's archer
to Ilium, our city, to sack and destroy it
on that age-old venture.
This was the first flower of Hellenic strength Heracles
brought in anger for the horses promised; amd Simois' calm
waters checked the surf-wandering oars and made fast the
ships' stern cables.
...
for the gods loved Troy once.
Now they have forgotten. (Lines 799 - 858)

In these words of the chorus, the precariousness of social and political order is reflected precisely in a manner prefiguring the inner tragedy and inner drama of the poet's own conception - the conception that sees war as "an accelerated condensed version of life itself".[11]

Lines 799 - 819 (first strophe and antistrophe) Telamon, king of Salamis and father of Ajax, is addressed. His relevance is that he participated in the first overthrow of Troy, along with Heracles, who is

actually the central figure of that occasion, and is referred to in lines 804 - 5. Heracles saved Hesione, daughter of Laomedon from a sea-monster, and subsequently destroyed Troy because Laomedon reneged on his promise to give Heracles the famous mares of the stock of Troy.

The meaning of the first half of l.61 is not quite clear to me, but we have 'the mighty son of Zeus (sc. Heracles) destroyed the lovely city' (61-2) and 'on account of the horses of Laomedon (64). The building of the walls by Pheobus Apollo (and Poseidon) is mentioned in l. 814, also at ll. 4-6.

The mention of Salamis, lying close by Athens, allows Euripides to indulge in a bit of glorification of Athens (playing to the gallery) - the holy heights where Athene first showed the branch of the green olive, heavenly crown and glory for gleaming Athens. Euripides does this elsewhere. The stanzas are rich with adjectives, 'the wave-ringed island', 'Salamis, nurturer of bees', 'fair-flowing Simoeis', the sea-crossing oar-blade.

The chorus is also of tremendous significance to Osofisan in the *Women of Owu* as it is to Euripides in the Trojan Women. Osofisan's play, being an adaptation has to follow the plot of Euripides closely and this in itself is a limitation to how adventurous the adapting playwright can be. The choral lyrics, however, is one weapon that offers him the opportunity to be as independent as possible and this Osofisan has made the optimal use of in his adaptation.

The choral songs of *Women of Owu* consists largely of dirges, bride chants (*êkún ìyàwó*) [12] and *oríkì* (praise poems) [13] and are heavily based on the corresponding generic structures of traditional Yoruba music".[14] The playwright has also used a combination of various dialectical Yoruba parlances and tunes from art drama, masquerade tradition, dirges and folklore although the words are entirely his creations.[15]

The songs are rich in imageries and it is pertinent to consider a few here. The dirge beginning with: *Lèsí gbo gbìgbì lérekoo* - "Who heard the frightening sound on the farm?" [16] is of interest in this respect because of its metaphorical richness. This dirge tolls the fall and destruction of Owu with a combination of metaphorical allusions that have didactic implications. Some of the metaphors in this dirge include, "a big tree is fallen," "a giant has fallen," "a big egg has cracked" and "the family head fainted". A user of Yoruba language understands when it is said that "a big tree has fallen". Often this refers to the death of a very important person in the society. At such an occurrence, a dirge declares:

Erin wo o	The elephant has crashed
Ajanaku sun bi oke	The elephant sleeps like a mountain
Erin wo, ko lee dide	The elephant has fallen and cannot get up.

The dirge in the *Women of Owu* under reference portrays Owu as the tree that has fallen, the big egg that has cracked and Owu is the head of family that has fainted. The family head denoted in this dirge by the Yoruba word "*baale*" is very similar to the Greek *kurios*. He is expected to be a strong man imbued with the ability to cope with the various demands of his household and its members, so fainting is not an attribute normally associated with him in both cultures. Rather this is an attribute demonstrative of female weakness in both ancient Greek and Yoruba traditional cultures. So when Owu becomes the family head that has fainted, the time is indeed very grave and dire consequences have fallen upon the kingdom.

Another point of interest in this dirge is the Yoruba word "*gbigbi*", which cannot be properly translated into English. The word renders an onomatopoetic effect in Yoruba. It is a word that denotes a sudden, deep sound that evokes great fright and palpitations of the heart. The "gb" is a heavy plosive and the double use of it as well as its constant repetition in each of each line of the dirge reinforces the effects of the calamity that has come upon the people. And it is the songs, the dirges that are left for the women as comfort in this terrible time. Erelu summons the chorus:

> Ah, raise your dirges again,...
> It's much better than
> Our needless questions. (p. 16)

And the Chorus Leader grimly enjoins her chorus members:

> So, let us dance my friends as we wait, as
> Our mothers taught us to do at such moments.
> Dance the Dance of the Days of Woe! (p. 17)

Of the many onomatopoetic effects in the choral songs of *Women of Owu* is another found in the dirge that starts with:

Wẹ́lé wẹ́lé lèrì nsẹ o	Softly, softly falls the dew
Wẹ́lé wẹ́lé lèrì ó	Softly, softly falls the dew
Ṣẹ́wẹ́lẹ́ ṣẹ́wẹ́lẹ́ lòjò allele o	Gently, gently rain in the evening
Ṣẹ́wẹ́lẹ́ ṣẹ́wẹ́lẹ́ lòjò.	Gently falls the rain

The Yoruba words "*wẹ́lé wẹ́lé*" and "*ṣẹ́wẹ́lẹ́ ṣẹ́wẹ́lẹ́*" translated respective

into English as "softly, s[illegible]," and "gently, gently" are used to denote the continuous rhythmic droning of the fall of the dew and a gentle rainfall.

Osofisan has also used the choral songs in this play, which is a continuous lament, to offer a brief respite to the constant battering of the emotion. In the scene where Orisaye, the half-mad daughter of Erelu; votary of the god Obatala and the Yoruba counterpart of Cassandra is preparing to be taken off to the camp of Balogun Kusa to join his harem, she, in her frenzied state, declares that she is getting married and prevails upon the chorus to see her off properly. This would have been a function performed with joy by her age group members in a normal situation. Osofisan in this instanced creates three bridal songs for the chorus.[17]

In the performance of these bridal songs, the chorus of *Women of Owu* is able to offer respite to the audience, which is momentarily translated to a happy time that exudes the characteristic joy associated with weddings. And as this period of momentary vision of the joy that would have been ends, the realisation of the tragic pathos is intensified.

Conclusion

Considered superficially, the *Trojan Women* and its adaptation *Women of Owu* lack both unity and a tragic idea in the sense that "the spectacle of the strong trampling on the impotent is not tragedy but may be salutary propaganda".[18] There is also no moral structure in their episodic plots as the Aristotelian cause and effect do not apply. However all these seeming flaws in the plays are in places mitigated and in some totally eradicated by the presence of the chorus with their songs.

The chorus in ancient Greek tragedy had almost gone into extinction by the time of the *Trojan Women* and Euripides himself had been a great threat to the survival of the chorus in Greek tragedy. It must therefore have been surprising to find the chorus and actors as "co-ordinate forces" in this tragedy. And it must have been retributive justice on Euripides when he found out that he needed the chorus to coordinate the episodic plots of the play he had created.

For Osofisan however the chorus is a delightful weapon because songs are central to the relationship between indigenous African theatre aesthetics and dramaturgy. Aafa, a character in one of Osofisan's plays, *Once Upon for Robbers* declares:

> Yes, sing and dance
> It is an irresistible power. (p. 22)

The chorus may have been a little rustic in the hands of Euripides especially after such a long nonuse but it is a vibrant force in the hands of Osofisan and this is why Osofisan has been able to create a chorus that is more active and more credible as citizens and as victims than their Euripidean counterparts even in Osofisan's adaption of this Euripides' tragic play. The fact that Osofisan is completely independent of Euripides in his own use of the chorus and the choral lyric informs the dynamism of dirges as of all other songs. Dirges travel and in the process they accumulate and lose some things, but they still retain the ability to touch the soul of listeners who may or may not even understand the words. This dynamism is an essential feature of transcuturalism, which implies a two-way intermixing of cultures and ideas described as "a cross-cultural collaboration and appropriation which brings forth art works that combine elements from separate cultures and their indigenous artistic traditions"[19]. This collaboration and appropriation involves the adoption of ideology, values, structures and contents inscribed in the predominant models for performance. Transculturalism therefore fuses forms of a foreign culture with features of indigenous traditions or experiments and it is this that makes possible the fusion of ancient Greek myths and theatrical performance structures with African theatrical performance practice to create an intercultural theatre in the *Women of Owu*. This dynamism has enabled Osofisan to create songs in Yoruba language, which evince unmistakably Yoruba cultural aesthetics and conventions and which are also applicable and appropriate for a tragic play from ancient Greek culture.

Notes and References

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10. The ploy as conceived by Odysseus
11. Tatum, *Op Cit*. p.1
12. Eku Iyawo has been discussed by thei sauthor. See Folake Onayemi, "Anthropological Reflections in Sapphic Epithalania and Yoruba Ekun Iyawo" in *Drumspeak* Vol. 3 (2010) University of Cape Coast, Ghana. pp. 158-182.
13. *Owu* p.68
14. Osofisan himself told me this in an interview conducted with him in the course of writing this paper on the 21st of May 2011 at the University of Ibadan Senior Staff Club.
15. Song No. 3 in the appendix p. 70 in *Owu*.
16. Song No. 4 in *Owu*, p. 73
17. These are songs No. 5 ,6 and 7 in the appendix in *Owu* p. 72 & 73
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RE-ENACTING *OEDIPUS REX* WITH YORUBA WITTICISM

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Abstract

Yoruba proverbs are witty expressions, the effective use of which requires being apt and clever. These traits that dominate the work of Ola Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, do more than reflecting the Yoruba's perception of the world. Hence, this paper examines how strong opinions, foreboding and misfortunes are conveyed with the Yoruba literary devices to produce Sophoclean emotions. Yoruba proverbs or witty sayings are demonstrated in this work as very rich in figures of speech and meaning; products of human experiences or relations as well as observation of natural phenomena , which are communicated with words of mouth, songs and talking-drums. These elements constitute the witticism shown in this paper as powerfully employed by the playwright who has succeeded in recreating the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex* in a Yoruba setting, before, as it were, an African audience.

Introduction

Oedipus Rex is considered a founding text in European culture, a most revealing drama that portrays the often unknown limitations of man, who often relies on intellectual and rational ability to discover himself. In the true sense of tragedy, Sophocles depicts a man who struggles vulnerably, yet heroically, to avert a fatal end. From June 16 to 20, 1999, the feat of the literary giant, Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, was re-

enacted at Toronto, Canada, by a group largely made up of Canadian Africans with *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the work of a leading African playwright, Ola Rotimi' whose famous literature text was used in Nigerian high schools in the 1970s and the 80s.

Even now, relative to other works of Ola Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* remains what *Oedipus Rex* is to other plays of Sophocles. In this paper, the emphasis is on how Ola Rotimi has skilfully employed what is termed Yoruba witticism [1] to transpose the Oedipus myth to a Yoruba belief setting. As soon as the story of misfortune starts in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, Odewale, the protagonist, with prompt and consistent use of apposite expressions, leaves no room for blinking. Ola Rotimi successfully portrays a tragic hero who encounters limits despite his great wish to achieve a lofty goal. The hero's fault (*hamartia*) is glaring even when he appears to be a paragon of virtue and justice. The drama, as a work of tragedy, with the use of fitting Yoruba symbolic expressions, creates an environment most suitable for the main character who suffers extreme sorrow as a consequence of a tragic flaw and circumstances beyond his control. Dreadfully, he falls off the precipice without any inclination to stop. Yet, the fascination here is; he would not pause to think, for the words are either readily flowing from his mouth or supplied to set the stage for the inevitable calamity.

The *Gods Are Not To Blame* and Yoruba Witticism

Proverbs, the wisdom lore of the Yoruba, evidence the high value the people place on the use of witty expressions[2]. Proverb as a literary device has served to settle disputes and bring intractable situations under control. Hence, anyone who can frequently and appropriately make use of proverbs to appeal to people's intellect, steer matters in the right direction and bring about conflict resolution, is greatly respected. In a traditional Yoruba society, an elder is expected to prevent the state from running into a chaos[3] and this is sometimes accomplished with the use of wise, terse and pithy expressions.

Yoruba witticism in this work refers to the use of proverbs that are full of imagery, allusions and riddles which take poetic forms. This potent literary weapon has been skilfully utilised by Ola Rotimi to present a protagonist, King Odewale, who perfectly fits the picture of a tragic hero. The king journeys towards the final fulfilment of the prediction that he would kill his father and marry his mother, armed with all the

force in Yoruba expressions, to the admiration of anyone who respects the words of wisdom that flow from the mouth of an elder. Although his people become despondent, having fought an outbreak of disease in vain, the king urges them on with fitting illustrations and allusions that got them back on their feet with the renewed determination to solve the problem. The shocking news of a murderer who is resident in his domain being the cause of the woes of his people arouses in the king a burning zeal to unravel the mystery of the killer of his predecessor and the culprit of incest. Even as he reaches the climax of self-discovery, his wits, rather than failing him, elicit both awe and pity. With all courage he accepts the judgment he himself had pronounced.

The King Asserts Authority as the Saviour

The situation at the beginning of the play is well described by the Yoruba proverb, *Àisí nílé ologìnní,ilé di ilé èkúté, baálé ilé kú ilé daoro* **When the cat is absent, the rat takes over the control of the house; 'when the head of a household dies, the house becomes an empty shell'**[4] **(1.i,10-11)** This Yoruba expression suitably conveys a helpless situation that calls for a saviour. At the death of king Adetusa, Odewale's predecessor, the people of Ikolu began to harass the land of Kutuje. There were attacks; the invaders 'killed hundreds, they seized hundreds and enslaved hundreds more', plundering the village and leaving 'behind... hunger, thirst and fear' (Prologue, 96-100). When the need was most dire, Odewale came, saved the people and became their popular potentate; the highly esteemed one. But now, the people feel very insecure and powerless in the face of the terrible plagues that ravage the land and express their misgivings in the words above to Odewale.

The challenge before the king is further heightened when another citizen says: **'when the chameleon brings forth a child, is not that child expected to dance?'** (1.i, 15-16). It is interesting to consider the background to the Yoruba adage here rendered in English: alágẹmọ ti bí ọmọ rẹ̀ ná àìmọ̀ jó kù sí ọwọ́ ọmọ alágẹmọ. According to the Yoruba traditional belief, ágẹmọ (of the same root as alágẹmọ, which means chameleon) is a god who dances with a mat wrapped around his body. Dancing in this state requires the training and practice that ágẹmọ gives his child from infancy. As it were, the child is born from under the mat of the adult ágẹmọ. If the child grows up to be a poor dancer, the fault is his; he must accept the responsibility. In this instance, Odewale's

strength and intelligence, the traits that bring him closer to the gods, are highly trusted in by the citizens who made him the king. And now, he is the chameleon that is expected to 'dance', yes, act by coming to the rescue of the people.

Yet, Odewale would not be ruffled by the proverbial sayings; rather, he is drawn out to a battle of words that will more than addressing the need of his people, redeem his glory that is seemingly taunted. Hence, he reasons with the suffering townspeople:

> *...Whoever the rain sees, on him it rains.*
> *You do me great wrong therefore to think that,*
> *like a rock in the middle of a lake, forever cooled*
> *by the flowing waters, I do not know, and cannot*
> *Know the sun's hotness that burns and dries up the*
> *open land, indeed you do me a great wrong my people...*
> *(1.i, 38-45)*

The sickness that afflicts the people, just like a rainfall, indiscriminately affects all and makes even the king no exception; he enjoys no comfort of a rock that is always cooled by refreshing waters, nor spared the discomfort characteristic of a land exposed to the burning heat of the tropics. Typical of the sympathy that a tragic hero often elicits, the passionate appeal that is made with the use of simile and metaphor produces the desirable effects as the people beg for forgiveness (1.i, 46). Nevertheless, practical steps must be taken to further remedy the situation. Hence, Odewale, basking in the glory of his ever-rising confidence, alludes to a risk of fire outbreak that may exist in a traditional village setting. He exhibits an admirable paternalistic sense of urgency and responsibility by saying:

> *To what god have we not made sacrifice, my chiefs*
> *and I? Sopona, the god of the poxes? Ela, the god*
> *of Deliverance ?What god? Sango, the god of thunder*
> *and rainfall, Whose showers can help wash away*
> *the evil in the soil? On which we stand? What god*
> *have we not called upon to help us?*
> *(1.i, 77-82)*

The Greeks made sacrifices to the gods to escape or pacify their anger, altars of the gods were inundated with sacrifices. Similar to their ancient journeys to the oracle at Delphi, Odewale says: 'we have sent Aderopo to Ile-Ife (known as the Yoruba spiritual cradle of civilization[5]), the land of Orunmila, to ask the all-seeing god why we are in pain'. Odewale possesses qualities that are akin to Oedipus' who solved the riddle of the Sphinx by his superior intelligence and suffered for his people like an ideal Greek king. Odewale delivered his people from the hand of their oppressors and he has not come to his wit's end. With all the strength in his words, more is done to demonstrate his mastery over the state affairs. He gives direction:

> *...It is sickness that man can cure, not death.*
> *What did you do to cure the sickness? Nothing?*
> *Oh, I see, your body is too weak, your bone suddenly*
> *gone soft, You cannot move, you cannot go into the*
> *bush and cut herbs to boil For your children to drink.*
> *Is that so? Answer. (1.i, 111-116)*

The Yoruba believe that all efforts must be made to save the life of a sick person. This informs the saying: *ìpé à npe s'ókú, bì a bá pé wo aláàárẹ̀ bẹ́ẹ̀ yóò yè* (The size of the crowd at a burial ceremony is sufficient to prevent a critically-ill person from dying) . Hence, the people must muster up all the strength in them and no stone should be left unturned to stop the affliction. Some of the citizens have acted, yet, the king knows what the problems may be. He further engages them with more questions:

Odewale: What herbs did you boil?
Citizen: Asufe eiyeje leaves.
Odewale: Y-e-s
Citizen: I and my household drank the medicine, yet we do not get better, my lord. (To this there is a quick response)
Odewale: For how long did you boil it?
Citizen: As soon as it boiled, I put it down.
(a quicker response now)
Odewale: No, no. You must boil it longer, woman longer, so that

the medicines in the herbs can come out in full spirit to fight the sickness. Boil it longer.

(1.i, 144-148)

Another citizen appears to have outwitted Odewale, claiming that he did the best:

Citizen: I boiled mine longer-a long time.
I even added dogo-yaro leaves to it.
Odewale: And how does the body feel?
Citizen: Not as well as the heart wishes, my lord.
(1.i, 149-152)

While the situation may appear frustrating, Odewale hardly feels defeated. Effective words are yet inexhaustible, and with the confidence of a philosopher, he draws attention to a popular amateur observation concerning the movement of the moon that, although is hardly scientific is ably used:

Our talk is of illness, sister. To get fully cured
one needs patience. ***The moon moves slowly ,***
but by daybreak it crosses the sky.
Keep on drinking the medicine, one day you will see the change. Patience.
(1.i, 153-156)

As if the above is not satisfactory, he further uses an analogy: **'by trying often, the monkey learns to jump from tree to tree without falling'** (1.i, 163-164). Again, his reasoning works. Ultimately, he has not only elicited the sympathy of the townspeople, but has also engendered in them the strength to keep contending with the plagues, and with a rather more positive outlook, they begin to sing:

Come round everybody,
let us go into the bush
get your cutlasses,
get your cooking pots
get ready for work
all herbs are medicine

all medicine are herbs.
(1.i, 242-246)

The citizens are summoned to get ready for actions with their cutlasses. The remedy seems to be in the bush where herbs, the medicinal plants, could be obtained and then cooked in various homes with the pots that are specially designated for that purpose. While this may appear to be a trial and error situation, no one dares contradict the traditional belief in the efficacy of herbs, especially in the face of a devastating plague.

A Hero with Renewed Determination to Expose the Murder

The background to the next episode is the Yoruba expression, *gbogbo aṣọ kọ́ là ñ sá lòòrùn* **(some kinds of fabrics should not be exposed to the sun)**. This is best understood with an experience of the intensely hot tropical African sun that may easily cause some fabrics to fade when dried after washing them. At a moment when matters should be kept confidential, it suffices among the Yoruba to tactfully use this phrase in obtaining private audience and preventing any unwanted publicity. However, the tragic hero, Odewale refuses to grant the request for privacy to hear the message from the oracle. 'NO!' he says, and urges on with other resourceful words: 'speak openly, son, before all- **a cooking pot for the chameleon is a cooking pot for the lizard'** (1.ii, 25-27).

Chameleon is a common name for a lizard with the ability to change colours, either when they are frightened or they are responding to light, temperature, and other environmental changes. This unique characteristics, it is believed, does not necessarily require for a chameleon a cooking pot that is different from that of other lizards. Saying that the chameleons belong to the reptile family and deserves the same treatment with other lizards probably lends support to the argument of Odewale. The king thinks that there is nothing to hide, and as shortly expressed by the queen, there is no need to dread bearing any possible dire consequences of breaking the news, since **'the horn cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them'** (1.ii, 58-60). As it were, a cow can not assign the task of carrying its own horns, no matter their weight, to another cow. Metaphorically, the horns are the burden or the responsibility that a king in a traditional Yoruba society

is not expected to shrink back from but rather shoulder courageously. However, Aderopo, the bearer of the news from the oracle, believes that the unfolding situation requires caution. The condition is likened to a diseased condition of a tooth in the mouth which necessitates adjusting the eating style:

> *'until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth*
> *must* ***chew with caution'*** *he warns*
> *(1.ii, 94-96).*

All the same, the king's composure does not falter; first, he hastily pronounces judgment on the unknown murderer:

> *Slowly. We will kill him slowly,*
> *so that he spends the rest of*
> *his living days dying*
> *with each moment that passes.*
> *(1.ii, 104-106)*

Next, he proverbially announces his systematic search: **'when trees fall on trees, first the topmost must be removed'** (1.ii, 115-116). Ironically, as he burns with zeal, to discover himself unknowingly as the murderer of king Adetusa, he becomes full of suspicion and insinuation. Alluding to the activity of amphibians and reptiles, he reasons:

> *When the frog in front falls into a pit,*
> *others behind to take caution...*
> *When crocodiles eat their own eggs,*
> *what will they not do to the flesh of a frog...*
> *All lizards lie prostrate: how can a man tell*
> ***which lizard suffers from bellyache*** *?*
> *(1. ii, 147-163)*

Yet, doing all to retain his control as he becomes more embattled, with a metaphor he issues a threat to anyone who might harbour evil plans against him. 'In time', continuing with his allusion to the family of reptile (the lizards that are lying face down), 'the pain will make one of them lie flat on its back ...' (1.ii, 164-165) he said. By this, he tauntingly pronounces that his imaginary enemies will die in silence with their

supposed wicked intentions.

When Baba Fakunle, the most famous Ifa oracle priests arrives, Odewale, in the manner of a triumphant soldier who is rejoicing over the glory of a victory that is scarcely won, eulogizes the priest, having the conviction that his search for the truth will presently yield the much desired results. Referring to the insight of the blind old man that is allegedly not diminished by his loss of sight, the king sings the priest's praise in glowing terms:

> *A chicken eats corn, drinks water*
> *swallow pebbles, yet she complains*
> *of having no teeth. If she had teeth,*
> *would she eat gold? Let her ask the*
> *cow who has teeth yet eats grass.*
> *(II. i, 24-29)*

However, this presumably hope-inspiring moment is short-lived. As soon as he is declared to be the murderer, the king's impatience and deadly temper become manifest. He abruptly replaces the respect and confidence he has had in the ability of the old seer to prophesy accurately with disdain for him.

The irony at this point is obvious: Odewale has eyes but will not see what the blind old man sees until he becomes sightless! Nevertheless, until then, fulfilling his role as the tragic hero, the king must continue with grandeur to be apt in giving answers that heightens the pity he enjoys at his fall. His disappointment, though, causes him to unleash more of his offensive verbal weapons and insult the priest with the idiom: **'let pigs eat shame and men eat dung'** (II. i, 72-73). A pig is known among the Yoruba to be a very dirty animal. Odewale believes the priest has succumbed to a dirty practice of accepting a bribe from the chiefs, an ignoble act that should bring shame upon the seer and a terrible humiliation to the chiefs who are to 'eat the dung'. Nevertheless, the old man would not yield to intimidation and with confidence in the triumph of Ifa whose message he convincingly bears, he challenges Odewale's bodyguards: 'Let them attack me ...**Is it not ignorance that makes the rat attack the cat?**'.

Odewale will never imagine himself to be a 'rat' at the mercy of a 'cat'. His overriding passion is anger that cannot tolerate any opposition.

The monarch is determined to overcome every obstacle on his path as he persistently seeks to exonerate himself by exposing the truth. His suspicion is rife; not only over who is the murderer, but also over disloyalty among his chiefs and a threat to his life. The repository of the witty expressions is far from being exhausted as he addresses the situation: **'When evil-plotter beats drum for the downfall of the innocent, the gods will not let that drum sound!'** (II. ii, 1-3). Here is a reference to the message that may be sent through a Yoruba Talking Drum[6]; it means a mere wishful thinking that cannot succeed because it lacks the backing of the gods. The embattled tragic hero finds solace in the belief that divine justice is on his side. He further argues:

> ***The hyena flirts with hen, the hen is happy,***
> ***not knowing that her death has come.*** *.. I was*
> *happy, ignorant that plots, subversion and intrigues*
> *would forever keep me company. Oh, but you wait*
> *...you will know me...* *(II. ii, 9-15)*

The present situation is comparable to **when water is not enough in a pond or a river to submerge a fish; it is not difficult to imagine the fatal outcome.** Despite the dispute between him and Aderopo, the king has continued to swim in the water of the loyal supports of his subjects. They appear to be very much there to reassure him and urge him on, making him all the more oblivious of the evil that looms as he struggles unsuspectingly in opposition to himself. The royal bard, accompanied by drummers, generates this sentiment:

> *There are kings, and there are kings*
> *if you mean to hurt our king you will fail:*
> ***the lion's liver is a vain wish for dogs****...Ehn...*
> *whoever thinks that he can rule better than*
> *our king, let him first go home and rule his*
> *own wives, then he will know how hard to rule*
> *is hard. Meat that has fat will prove it by the heat of fire!*
> *(II. iii, 16-28)*

No sane dog would crave for the liver of a lion who is recognised as the king of all animals in the Yoruba folklore. Similarly, king Odewale's

position seems to remain unassailable, since he has done more than a man would do in managing a polygamous home. However, it is noteworthy that Act II scene iii opening part is foreboding and fittingly begins with a dirge:

Onikuluku njeje ewure,ewure, ewure,
onikuluku njeje agutan,agutan gbolojo,
Olurombi njeje omore, omore aponbi epo,
Olurombi o join -join, iroko join -join

Some individuals promise goats,
Others promise sheep, plump sheep,
Olurombi, firm like an iroko tree,
Promises her child, the pride of beauty[7]
(II. iii, 2-5)

The Irony of a Man full of Force and Wits

In a folklore setting, Ojuola, the mother, and now the wife of Odewale, tells her children the story of Olurombi. The story may invoke a wistful feeling, even in elderly ones who had heard the mythological narration when they sat peacefully as little children on straw mats under the moonlight in a village. A version of the story goes thus: Once upon a time, the people of a village generally offered the best of their flocks to no avail to end a pestilence. At last, the pestilence was halted when Olurombi presented her child, the pride of beauty. Similar in some way to Olurombi, the poor Ojuola will soon experience a loss of immense magnitude. The misfortune of Ojuola is well illustrated by the saying: 'Ojuola n ri iyonu'.[8] Ojuola will shortly no longer thrive in any splendour of noble life. The royal bard and the drummer further make her most pitiable when naively they praise her and husband[9] with words full of irony:

You and your husband–
two part of the same calabash,
split equal by the gods.
Indeed, what is the difference
between the right ear of a horse
And the left ear of that same
horse ? Nothing.
(II. iii, 40-48)

Indeed, of the same stock, no difference. Paradoxically, Odewale, commending Ojuola for taking sides with him rather than with her son, Aderopo, complements the picture of a woman heading irreversibly for misfortune. Full of confidence in his judgment, Odewale says:

> *A son is a son: a husband is a husband.*
> *A woman cannot love both equally. Everything*
> *has its own place. Why, the tortoise is not tall,*
> *but it is taller than the snail; the snail is taller*
> *than the frog...the fly is taller than the ant; the*
> *ant in turn is taller than the ground on which it walks.*
> *(ll. iv, 9-15)*

Good logic, one may conclude. But the psychoanalytical theories of Electra complex and Oedipus complex (that he is unwittingly enacting) tend to contradict the king's opinion on expression of love in a family circle. Fittingly, though, he portrays how differences in heights determine the positions of the lowly creatures.

The protagonist is all the more impulsive, yet resolute. Considering himself far-sighted as an eagle, he believes his search will be fruitful. However, the time of the stark revelation is imminent and the audience, entrapped in high admiration of a man who has consistently been subduing with words must be emotionally set free. Before then, Odewale, speaking rather incisively with one of his guards whom he portrayed as impetuous, utters expressions that characterise the trait of a man reaching the climax of his tragedy:

> *Man, man, man.... Look at him! Everything:*
> *gira, gira,gira...(being impetuous)power , power ,*
> *force, force...action, action! No thoughts, no patience,*
> *no coolness of blood, yet you go about shouting that*
> *you are better than women, superior to women.*
> *Get out braggart, go marry a woman and learn coolness*
> *of mind from her.*
> *(ll. iv, 59-65)*

Ironically, Odewale here summarises what dominates his life; full of 'force'; full of 'action'. He is married, yet his temper easily becomes hot, indeed, lacking in patience. While marriage is seen as an evidence of maturity among the Yoruba[10], it is hardly so with a man living in a

cocoon and completely unmindful of the impending doom. Below is a record of his *gira, gira, gira* (impetuousness) in resolving a dispute over a farm land, unwittingly, with his father:

> *Remain standing, remain rooted-*
> *a tree stump never shifts stand there...stand*
> *back and sleep, sleep I say,sleep till the sun*
> *goes to sleep and you wake up to know my*
> *power. Sleep...sleep...sleep...s-l-e-e-p*
> *(Ill. i, 188-193)*

The command to remain motionless is reinforced with the use of the repetition of the word 'sleep'; sounding like a pun, the old man is expected soon slips and sleeps just like the personified sun, although never to wake up again. The incantation was not sufficient, so he added more *force* to it:

> *No termite ever boasts of devouring rock!*
> *...Venom of viper does nothing to the back*
> *of tortoise...the day partridge meets the*
> *lord of the farm it jumps into the bush with*
> *its back or it drops dead. Drop dead, drop dead...*
> *(Ill. i, 194-209)*

That also failed. He invoked more power:

> *When Ogun, the god of iron was returning*
> *from Ire, his loincloth was a hoop of fire.*
> *Blood...the deep red stain of victim's his cloaks...*
> *Ogun says: flow ! flow...flow...f-l-o-w...*
> *(Ill. i, 222 -232)*

Incantation, an item of the Yoruba culture that is 'channelled through words'[11], involves uttering words that are considered magically potent In the Yoruba traditional society, acquiring, understanding and skilfully employing of traditional sayings would be seen as crucial in determining the greatness of a man,[12] and especially so when two men fight with incantation as their instrument of attack. By this standard, Odewale is indeed great.

However, just as his name suggests,[13] Odewale is about to complete his assignment as a hunter; a man-hunter. The expression he used above, *'man man man...Everything: gira gira gira power power force force action action,* aptly applies to him. His confidence in the backing of Ogun, the bloodthirsty patron god, grows. It is interesting to note that the reference to Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron[14] still worshiped by some Yoruba commercial vehicles' drivers, is symbolic and ominous. The god is appeased with blood. Usually, his sacrifice is a dog and when a roaming dog, or any other dog is inadvertently killed by an automobile on the motion, the worshipers believe that a sacrifice has been made to Ogun. The adherents also use the epithet, *Òlómi nìlé fẹ̀jẹ̀ wẹ̀*[15]. Some Yoruba claim that an automobile accident resulting in loss of lives may indicate that Ogun is thirsty.

Interestingly, on the whole, the setting of 'The Gods Are Not to Blame' is the Ogun Festival. Ogun's thirst for blood seems to be reaching its peak, but hardly satisfied. Odewale tells his mother, the wife: 'the people come tonight, at the end of the feast of Ogun, for answers to their suffering. I must have something to tell them. I have sworn' (III. ii, 13-16) Ogun is 'seen as a symbol of the superior, conquering one'[16], this does not only explain Odewale's earlier appeal to him when contending with his father, but also why he is confident of success at the end of the Ogun festival.

Yet, before gratifying Ogun's thirst for more blood, he fights on with the potent missiles of his mouth. Still full of suspicions, he foretells his eventual lot:

> *The monkey and gorilla may claim oneness*
> *but monkey is Monkey and the gorilla ,Gorilla...*
> *The mangrove tree dwells in the river, but does*
> *that make it a crocodile?*
>
> *(III. ii, 27-33)*

Odewale's talk about where he killed his father does not only develop the theme of his misfortune, but appropriately introduces another aspect of Yoruba mythology, which sets a perfect stage for the tragedy that must follow. The reference to **'the place where three footpaths meet'** brings to mind the favourite spot of Esu, a companion of Ogun. 'The Yoruba believe that Esu can, and does instigate men to offend the god-

thereby providing food for the angry gods'[17]. Odewale now reaches the spot where Esu helps Ogun with victims. Yet, the blind hero fights to the end with his wits:

> Let no one stop us and let no one
> *come with us or I shall curse him...*
> *When the wood-insect Gathers sticks,*
> *On its own head it carries them*
> *(III iv, 176-181)*

Conclusion

True to what is expected of a work of tragedy, Ola Rotimi has deliberately employed Yoruba witticism to paint a picture of a man struggling in the strength of his intelligence, striving in vain against the metaphysical powers that are to bring him to ruin; the man who has vehemently lauded virtues and condemned vices, pronouncing adverse judgement unwittingly against self. So to speak, he now descends the Olympic height and just at a short distance to Hades. The very baby that was counted unworthy of living has risen to greatness and then follows a precipitous fall. Yet, as he fulfils the dire prophesies, he will not seek an escape, but rather accept the responsibility. When his witty expressions appear to be bringing him close to remedying the situation, they bring him closer to his doom. Nevertheless, he never exhausted his arsenals of resourceful words.

To a very laudable extent,' 'The Gods Are Not To Blame', reminiscent of 'Oedipus Rex', is indeed a successful experiment in a creative use of the Yoruba rich idioms and metaphors of the culture in adaptation of the ancient play. With incessant use of powerful and captivating elements of speech, the Yoruba witticism, Ola Rotimi, holds his readers with uninterrupted and burning curiosity from the beginning to the finale. His ingenious use of Yoruba names, the traditional settings and expressions typical of a sage in a classic Yoruba community, alternates fear and hope and ultimately invoke the sober feeling similar to what was evidently engendered in the ancient Attic audience of Sophocles. As the Ogun festival apparently ends, the pity and terror also reach the climax when the noble and innocent victim submitted to the will of unknown forces with which he has contended in futility.

Endnotes

[1] Witticism generally refers to the art of thinking quickly and making a resourceful use of words to promptly address needs as they arise

[2] Olatunji O.O. *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry University Press, Ibadan. p. 170*

[3] This informs the proverb, *àgbà kò sí ìlù bàjé? (*a town gets confused when an elder is not around*)*

[4] The translation is mine

[5] In the Yoruba traditional society, no activity was engaged in without first consulting the oracle. See Daramola O. and Jeje A., *Awon Asa Ati Orisa Ile Yoruba*, Onibon-Oje Press, Ibadan. 1967. p. 250

[6] See Ayanlowo P.B. *Language of the Drum Among the Yoruba People*. B.A. Long Essay, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. 1978.

[7] Translation is mine

[8] The eye that will see wealth or glory should also be prepared to see trouble

[9] Or better still, her son and the father of her children

[10] Daramola O. and Jeje, op. cit p.35

[11] Goody, J. and Watt, I. *The Consequences of Literacy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1968. p. 28

[12] Olatunji, O.O. *Adebayo Faleti: A Study of His Poems (1954-1964)*, Heinemann, Ibadan. p. 130

[13] Odewale literally means 'an hunter has come or arrived at home'. The use of this name for the protagonist in this work of tragedy may be deliberate.

[14] Also known as the god of war. See *A Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*. University Press PLC. Ibadan, 2005. p. 167

[15] A person who takes his bath with blood even when water is available

[16] Awolalu, J.O. *Yoruba beliefs and Sacrificial Rite*. Longman, London. 1979. p.32

[17] Awolalu ,Op. cit. p..29

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MALARIA, THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN ANTIQUITY

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Abstract

Various factors such as diseases, superstitious beliefs, lead poisoning, infanticide, plagues, and much more can be attributed to death in antiquity. People died more from diseases than from the aforementioned factors. Such diseases included fevers (*causes, tertian, quartan,* and *quotidian*), tuberculosis, cough, dysentery, tenesmus, diarrhea, brain fever, paroxysms, opthalmia, hemipleghia, strangury, and many more. Of the above named disorders, the fevers which is malaria was the leading cause of death in antiquity. The tertian, quartan, quotidian and the irregular fevers were frequently mentioned in the works of ancient medical practitioners such as Hippocrates, Aulus Cornelius Celsus, Varro and Pliny the Elder Some contemporary authors such as David Soren and Robert Sallares through intense research unraveled and pronounced *plasmodium falciparum* (malaria) as the cause of death of children whose bones were excavated in Lugnano Teverina. This paper however, considers the aforesaid fevers which are malarial in nature as the principal cause of death in antiquity.

Introduction

In antiquity, some people were of the opinion that some sicknesses were brought on man by supernatural beings (gods). Therefore, they believed that the cure for diseases was dependent on the gods. Such diseases

included; the plague, sacred disease (epilepsy) and malaria. For plague and the sacred disease, most people permitted the disease to take its course without resorting to orthodox practice in order to alleviate them. Consequently, many people died. With malaria, some people adopted both orthodox and unorthodox methods to deal with the disease. Positive results were palpable; however, a majority did not outlive the disease. It is important to note here that excepting malaria, the frequency of occurrence of these other diseases was very low. Livy recorded two occurrences of the plague. The first one occurred between 463 and 462 B.C.[1] The second one occurred in 435 and lasted through to 432 B.C.[2] Thucydides recorded plague and epidemics of 430 and 426 B.C. Other plagues; the Antonine, the Cyprian and the Justinian plagues occurred in 165/180 A.D[3], [4]; c A.D 125 -c A.D. 182[5]; 259 A.D[6] and 500 -650 AD respectively[7]. These plagues were not as common as malaria although the occurrences spanned through decades and centuries. The sacred disease was also not as common as malaria especially as recorded in the Hippocratic Writings.

The frequent mention of the occurrences and effects of the fevers in the Hippocratic Writings, the works of Celsus, Varro, Pliny the Elder and other Classical authors goes a long way to prove that it was the leading cause of death in antiquity. Also every illness that caused death in antiquity was linked with the fevers or malaria.

One of the features of Italy the land of ancient Romans is malaria[8] (*Plasmodium falciparum*, the most virulent of the four species of human malaria). It is the disease that the Romans or the inhabitants have suffered from the most due to the presence of extensive marshy areas in the valleys of the River Tiber and along the coast. These marshy areas in the river valleys were produced because of the jamming of conduit of streams by soils that were washed down from the hills and thus forming a breeding ground for malaria parasites.

Many reasons caused death in antiquity. These reasons ranged from the effect of diseases to religious beliefs, chemical reactions, infanticide, plagues, and social deprivation. Hope [9] asserts that poor sanitation, disease, famine, malnutrition and warfare are some factors that caused mortality. However, malaria which was termed fever in ancient times, among various other factors, remained the principal cause of death in antiquity.

The Hippocratic Writings mentions incidences and effects of the fevers which are unmistakably malaria. Even when other diseases that caused death were mentioned, more often than not, malaria worsened the sickness and consequently death occurred. The fevers wrecked havoc on the populace, young and old, rich and poor. Some of the rich who

could access orthodox medicine, received cure, while others in spite of the cure, did not survive. Malaria was indeed deleterious. Classical authors did throw light on this disease and its effects on people, especially when it was a co-morbid condition to other diseases.

The Fevers of the diverse and dangerous diseases that plagued people, the various fevers which are malarial in nature were the most dangerous. They exterminated rich and poor; old and young including feotuses.

The *Hippocratic Writings* distinguished the irregular malarial fever from the continuous fever of other infectious diseases, and also noted the daily, every-other-day, and every-third-day temperature rise. *The Hippocratic Writings* also mentions the splenic change in malaria, related the fevers to the time of the year and to where the patients lived. The fevers mentioned in the book which include the tertian, quartan and quotidian fevers were malaria in nature and were caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*. The author did mention other ailments such as tuberculosis, cough, dysentery, tenesmus, diarrhea, brain fever, paroxysms, opthalmia, hemipleghia and strangury, but none were more lethal than the various types of fevers indicated in the work.

Below are some of the descriptions of the effects of the various fevers described in the *Hippocratic Writings* as well as one of the cases. However the cases mentioned probably represent a minute fraction of the cases that had occurred in antiquity. In *Epidemics I*, fourteen cases are described while in *Epidemics III* twenty-seven cases are noted making a total of forty-one cases illustrated. This seems infinitesimal compared to the vast population of people in antiquity.

During the autumn and on into the winter there were cases of continued fever, in a few cases causus, diurnal and nocturnal fevers, roughly tertian and exact tertian fevers, quartans and fevers of no regular form. There were many cases of each of the fevers . . .

Causus was the least frequent of these fevers and those affected by it suffered the least. . .

The tertian fevers were more common than causus and more troublesome. . .

The quartan fevers showed, in many cases, their quartan nature from the start. In not a few cases, however, they emerged as quartans only on the departure of other fevers and ailments. . .

There were many cases of quotidian, nocturnal and irregular fever; they lasted a long time whether the patients were confined to bed or not. . . Often the disease was accompanied by convulsions, especially in the case of children. . .

The worst most protracted and most painful of all the diseases then occurring were the continued fevers. These showed no real intermissions although they show paroxysms, in the fashion of tertian fevers, one day remitting slightly and becoming worse the next. They began mildly, but continually increased, each paroxysms carrying the disease a stage further. A slight remission would be followed by a worse paroxysms and the malady generally became worse on the critical days. Although all patients suffering from these various fevers showed shivering fits at irregular times, such fits were least frequent and most regular in patients with these continued fevers. Again, the fevers generally were attended with many fits of sweating but in cases of continued fevers they were infrequent and brought harm rather than relief. In continued fevers too the extremities were chilled and could only be warmed with difficulty, and insomnia was followed by coma. In the fevers generally, digestion was disturbed and difficult but this was most marked in these cases of continued fever. In them too, the urine was either (a) Thin, raw and colourless, becoming slightly more concocted at a crisis, (b) thick, but cloudy rather than forming sediment or (c) of small quantity, bad and forming a raw sediment. Urine of this last variety was the most serious. Cough accompanied the fever . . (Epidemics I. 6-11)

All the diseases described caused death, but the greater number was among those suffering from these continued fever and especially children, including infants, older children (eight and ten year olds) and those approaching puberty. (Epidemics I. 10)

This long passage from the *Hippocratic Writings* goes a long way to demonstrate how deleterious malaria was to people in the ancient Empire of Rome especially children less than five years of age. Malaria was so harmful and it encouraged the incursion of so many other ailments such as insomnia, indigestion cough and many others. Also, the patients suffering from malaria were more likely to fall into coma. All these other ailments brought general discomfort to the body system. Although some survived, the majority of the people who contracted these various forms of malaria infections died. Documented below is one of the forty-seven cases recorded in the *Hippocratic Writings*. This reveals the doctor's perception of the process of malaria fever and its effect. Erasinus, the patient, whose case is mentioned below, may have been a child less than five. The fact that he had convulsions, which according to the doctor was exhibited by children who contracted the disease, may be indicative

of it.

Erasinus lived near the gully of Bootes. He was taken ill after dinner and passed a disturbed night. The first day was restful; was distressed during the night.

Second day: all symptoms more pronounced, delirium at night.
Third day: painful, more delirium.

Fourth day: worst of all so far, did not sleep at all at night. Visual hallucinations, delirium. These were followed by even more marked disturbances, feelings of fear and his illness was very severe.

Fifth day: in the early morning he became lucid and quite regained consciousness of his wits. But some time before noon, he became mad and could not be restrained; extremities cold and somewhat livid. Suppression of urine, He died about sunset. He had fever throughout the illness accompanied by sweating. The hypochondrium was distended and contracted only with pain. The urine was dark containing suspended globular particles which did not form a sediment on standing. His bowels remained open and he passed solid stools. Thirst throughout was not excessive. He had many convulsions accompanied by sweating at the time of death.[10]

The above case represents so many other cases of this sort in antiquity. On its own, malaria was a deathly disease, while working in synergy with other pathogens it had the capacity of claiming its victims within days of attack.

By about 30 A.D., Celsus described two types of tertian fevers as well as other types of fevers which are unmistakably malaria fever.

Ex his una cotidiana, altera tertiana, altera quartana est. Interdum etiam longiore circuitu quaedam redeunt, sed id raro fit.
Et quartanae quidem simpliciores sunt. Incipiunt febres ab horrore, deinde calor erumpit, finitaque febre biduum integrum est: ita quarto die revertitur.

Tertianarum vero duo genera sunt. Alterum eodem modo, quo quartana, et incipiens et desinens, illo tantum interposito discrimine, quod unum diem praestat integrum, tertio redit. Alterum longe perniciosius, quod tertio quidem die revertitur, ex quadraginta autem et octo horis fere triginta et sex per accessionem occupat (interdum etiam vel minus vel plus), neque ex toto in remissione desistit, sed tantum levius est. Id genus plerique medici !!ìéôñéôáÖïí appellant.

Cottidianae vero variae sunt et multiplices. Aliae enim protinus a calore incipiunt, aliae a frigore, aliae ab horrore. Frigus vero, ubi

extremae partes membrorum inalgescunt, horrorem, ubi corpus totum intremit. Rursus aliae sic desinunt, ut ex toto sequitur integritas; aliae sic, ut aliquantum quidem minuatur ex febre, nihilo minus tamen quaedam reliquiae remaneant, donec altera accessio accedat; ac saepe aliae . . . vix quicquam aut nihil remittant sed continuent.

Of fevers, one is quotidian, another tertian, a third quartan. At times certain fevers recur in even longer cycles, but that is seldom.

Now quartan fevers have the simpler characteristics. Nearly always they begin with shivering, then heat breaks out, and the fever having ended, there are two days free; this on the fourth day it recurs.

But of tertian fevers there are two classes. The one, beginning and desisting in the same way as a quartan, has merely this distinction, that it affords one day free, and recurs on the third day. The other is far more pernicious; and it does indeed recur on the third day, yet out of forty-eight hours, about thirty-six, sometimes less, sometimes more, are in fact occupied by the paroxysm, nor does the fever entirely cease in the remission, but it only becomes less violent. This class most practitioners term hemitritaion.

Quotidian fevers, however, vary and have many forms. For some begin straightaway with a feeling of heat, others of chill, others with shivering. I call it a chill when the extremities become cold, shivering when the whole body shakes. Again, some desist so that complete freedom follows, others so that there is some diminution of the fever, yet none the less some remnants persist until the onset of the next paroxysm; and others often run together so that there is little or no remission, but the attacks are continuous.[11]

These fevers as described by Celsus can be compared to the type of malaria fever that the lay man in my community in Nigeria describes as "relapsing fever." This relapsing fever is actually malaria fever that has not succumbed to treatment and therefore, would need additional drug that is potent enough to eliminate it. If nothing is done about this type of fever, the patient usually died. The fevers as documented by Celsus were caused by *Plasmodium. falciparum,* although Celsus did proffer solutions towards the treatment of these fevers it is highly probable that not everyone who underwent the treatment outlived the disease. Celsus did mention other diseases as factors that led to death, but the fevers were more prominent in the work than any other ailment. Therefore, one can conclude that malaria was the leading cause of death in antiquity.

The tertian fever is "an infectious disease characterized by febrile paroxysms which occurs every 3rd day, as in the 48-hour febrile peaks in

P vivax malaria-benign tertian malaria; malignant TF is caused by the virulent *P falciparum* which, in its most intense form, may be fatal within days.[12]" *The Dictionary of Cell and Molecular Biology - Online*[13] affirms that "P. vivax causes the tertian type, P. malariae the **quartan** type and P. falciparum the quotidian or irregular type of disease, the names referring to the frequency of **fevers.**" From one perspective, it seems probably therefore that since there is benign tertian malaria and a malignant TF then there is also a benign and malignant quartan, quotidian and the other irregular fevers. Also the malignant type of fevers, were caused by the *plasmodium falciparum*. From another perspective, Irrespective of the type of plasmodium that caused fevers, none of the fevers were less harmful on their victims. In their intense form they all led to death. In the words of the doctor, "All the diseases described," (referring to the different fevers), "caused death . . ." (Epidemics I. 10). Medicine in the Graeco-Roman world was less advanced compared to what obtains in the modern world so many people died from this disease.

The recurrence of malaria in antiquity even as a critical condition, is a phenomenon that was recorded by the Roman Poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus otherwise called Horace (December 8, 65 BC - November 27, 8 BC). In the third satire of Book II Horace made a reference to the quartan fever while pinpointing the effect of superstition.

> *"O Lord who givest and takest away our heaviest sorrows,"*
> *(a mother is praying for her son, who has been five months in bed)*
> *"If my boy succeeds in shaking off the quartan fever he will stand naked in the Tiber on the morning of the day which thou*
> *dost appoint for fasting."*
> *If thanks to luck or the doctor the patient is saved from his critical condition, the crazy mother will hold him in the freezing water and kill him by bringing back his fever.*
> *And what destroyed her reason? Superstition, pure and simple.*[14]

Horace mentions that the boy was in bed for five months probably because the sick boy may had been undergoing some form of treatment that the fever had not yet succumbed to. As have earlier been indicated the quartan fever is caused by *plasmodium falciparum* and has the capacity to kill within days of its attack, except something is done about it. The fact of the matter is that the child was attacked by the quartan fever which, in other words, is malaria fever. The mother taking the child to

the Tiber River in honour of an oath or an allegiance to some form of religiosity whose effect would result in the death of the child is also pinpointing superstitious beliefs of the people. For some people believed that the gods were capable of providing cure for malaria infections. The general picture this part of the satire portrays is recurring incidences of the attack of malaria and its effects on the people in antiquity; men and women, boys and girls. Given this, the disease must have been the leading cause of death.

In the first century A.D., Marcus Terentius Varro, the Roman scholar whom Caesar named director of the imperial library, attributed some diseases, which are probably malaria infections, to the swamps. Varro advises:

> *Advertendum etiam, siqua erunt loca palustria, et propter easdem causas, et quod crescunt animalia quaedam minuta, quae non possunt oculi consequi, et per aera intus in corpus per os ac nares perveniunt atque efficiunt difficilis morbos. Fundanius, Quid potero, inquit, facere, si istius modi mi fundus hereditati obvenerit, quo minus pestilentia noceat? Istuc vel ego possum respondere, inquit Agrius; vendas, quot assibus possis, aut si nequeas, relinquas.*

At Scrofa, Vitandum, inquit, ne in eas partes spectet villa, e quibus ventus gravior afflare soleat, neve in convalli cava et ut potius in sublimi loco aedifices, qui quod perflatur, siquid est quod adversarium inferatur, facilius discutitur. Praeterea quod a sole toto die illustratur, salubrior est, quod et bestiolae, siquae prope nascuntur et inferuntur, aut efflantur aut aritudine cito pereunt.

Precautions must also be taken in the neighbourhood of swamps, both for the reasons given, and because there are bred certain minute creatures which cannot be seen by the eyes, which float in the air and enter the body through the mouth and nose and there cause serious diseases." "What can I do," asked Fundanius, "to prevent disease if I should inherit a farm of that kind?" "Even I can answer that question," replied Agrius; "sell it for the highest cash price; or if you can't sell it, abandon it."

Scrofa, however, replied: "See that the steading does not face in the direction from which the infected wind usually comes, and do not build in a hollow, but rather on elevated ground, as a well-ventilated place is more easily cleared if anything obnoxious is brought in. Furthermore, being exposed to the sun during the whole day, it is more wholesome, as any animalculae which are bred near by and brought in

are either blown away or quickly die from the lack of humidity.[15]

The hypothesis suggested here is that there may be certain creatures other than mosquitoes that breed in swamps which cannot be seen by the eyes. However it seems probable that Varro could also be referring to mosquitoes which breed in swampy areas and are tiny such that they are not easily seen by the eyes. The problems that mosquitoes cause are enormous and ultimately deathly. Because of the infections from these *animaculae* Varro advised that swampy areas be avoided, and Agrius counsels that the farm should either be sold or abandoned. Scrofa also advised that Fundamnius should build on a well ventilated place. This instruction from Scrofa is not different from what we hear today from medical practitioners with regard to disease control especially that of malaria, in our environment.

Contemporary scholars have also postulated that malaria was a killer disease in the ancient empire of Rome. Russel J.C (1985) states that malaria was a major health determinant in ancient Rome; it caused more harm than good. He adduces the Antonine plague of the second century A.D to *P falciparum malaria* and suggests that extremely high adult mortality in ancient Rome was consequent on malaria infections. Needless to say, if malaria infection was responsible for high adult mortality, then it must follow that child mortality would not have been lesser as against what obtained in the case of extreme high adult mortality.

It is estimated that twenty-five percent of children in ancient Rome, died before their first birthday and also children between ages 0 and 10 died from malarial infections.[16] Lanciani (1888)[17] postulates that malaria may have become prevalent in antiquity after the volcanic fires in Campagna, which caused a lot of destruction, had died out. In the words of Luciani, "there can no longer be any doubt that malaria invaded the volcanic regions the very minute they ceased to be volcanic." Although he lacked scientific evidence, the discoveries which he himself unearthed may have prompted the statement. In ancient Rome there were altars dedicated to various deities; among these altars was one dedicated to the goddess of fever and other similar deities. Lanciani himself mentions two which he discovered.

> Near the modern railway station I have found, myself, an altar dedicated to Verninus, the god of microbes: and . . . in the very centre of the Roman forum, there was an altar sacred to Cloacina, a goddess of typhoid, I suppose.[18]

From the above discoveries and statements from Lanciani, one can conclude that malaria may have been the principal cause of death in antiquity. It is pertinent to note here that malaria had been in the

ancient empire before the event of the volcanic fires at Campagna. It was one of the features of ancient Italy because of the marshy and swampy areas that were caused by overflows from the Tiber River. The works of classical authors documenting the different types of fevers are a proof that malaria infections have been in existence in the ancient empire prior to the event of the volcanic fires of Campagna.

Research in biomolecular science has shown that this *plasmodium falciparum* is a parasite that causes malaria and there are about two hundred species of malaria however, only four attack humans, but *Plasmodium falciparum* is the most virulent of these human species of malaria[19]. The four identified species of this parasite causing human malaria, include; *Plasmodium vivax, P. falciparum, P. ovale* and *P. malariae. Plasmodium falciparum*[20] is transmitted by the female anopheles mosquito. Although malaria can be diagnosed easily and treated within twenty-four hours, it possesses the capacity to cause fatal complications if the diagnosis and treatment are delayed.

In 1998, the University of Arizona excavated a Roman villa on a hillside called Poggio Gramignano, near the town of Lugnano in Teverina[21] in southern Umbria, Italy. According to Soren, this villa was built in about 15 B.C when Augustus was Emperor. At the time it was built it was massive and impressive and it was fitted out with elegant mosaic-paved quarters it was quite massive. Because the building was established on a jerky or shaky substratum, it began to crack rendering the building useless by the mid third century. By the mid 5th century the building had been converted to a cemetery exclusively for infants. It was in this building that the skeletal remains of feotuses, neonates and those of a two to three year old were discovered. Soren[22] postulates that the burial suggests the possibility of an epidemic leading to the deaths of these children. In attempting to discover the probable cause of death, he affirms that *Brucella* a bacteria which can infect dairy products and *Toxoplasma gondii* which can also be found in uncooked red meat could cause aborted fetuses. In spite of the effects of these bacteria, he affirms it was not sufficient a reason to cause such an epidemic. He then suggests that only *Plasmodium falciparum* commonly known as Blackwater Fever had the capacity to wreck such havoc.[23] And so in describing the process and effects of malaria below, he believes that *P falciparum* was potent enough to cause the death of the children whose skeletal remains were excavated at Lugnano in Teverina.

A mosquito transmits the disease by drawing out parasite-tainted blood from one individual and depositing the parasites in another. The parasite invades the liver eight to twelve days after the bite, and multiplies to hundreds of parasites, which enter the blood stream,

attacking red blood cells and invading them in a three- to four-day synchronized cycle. The process, which can clog capillaries and affect the kidneys and spleen, produces symptoms which include, initially, anorexia, headache and nausea. As the disease progresses, the individual experiences paroxysms, chills and fever, severe headache, nausea and vomiting, and severe gastric pain, and exhibits an emaciated and gaunt appearance. There may be tertiary (three-day) cycles of symptoms or a daily fever. The victim is left anaemic and weak, with an enlarged spleen. The disease can be fatal, especially when the blood vessels are occluded by masses of infected red blood cells. It is particularly lethal to infants and can cause aborted foetuses in pregnant mothers, for it can lead to intra-uterine death of the foetus and toxaemia or blood poisoning for the mother.[24]

The "tertiary cycles" suggest somewhat that which fit the description of the tertian fever. Another reason Soren would believe that the deaths were probably caused by *P. Falciparum* was the discovery of other items at the burial site. Among the objects was a toad which was placed on the body of an infant; this was a device which according to Pliny in his *Natural History* XXII.49 was used to alleviate the tertian or quartan fevers of malaria. The toad may have been placed on the body of the infant with the hope that the child would be healed but when it was the opposite that occurred they decided to bury the toad with the infant. A considerable measure of honeysuckle known as *Lonicera caprifolia*, the ancient *periclymenon* was also discovered at the burial site. Pliny advises that if taken for thirty days and dissolved in white wine, it would cure the tertian or quartan fevers. (NH XXX. 42). Honeysuckle was used to cure a medical condition known as splenomegaly or enlarged spleen, and this medical condition can be caused by *Plasmodium falciparum malaria*. Because honeysuckle blooms in the dead of summer Soren suggests that the epidemic may have occurred in later July or August.

However these new theories about malaria being the probable cause of death of the fetuses, the neonates and the two or three year old child whose skeletal remains were discovered at Lugnano in Teverina, stirred up some controversy and came under attack. To disagree is Marshall Becker of the West Chester College, a forensic anthropologist. He claimed that the infant cemetery was a normal graveyard which showed no suggestion of malaria as a number of diseases could have led to the death of the infants. As a result of these arguments, Dr. Robert Sallares, a molecular biologist from the University of Manchester, who was undertaking new developments in DNA analyses, took specimens of the bones discovered at this graveyard, and comparing with bones of children in contemporary times that have been exposed to *P. falciparum malaria*

discovered that the children did succumb to the most virulent of human malaria, *plasmodium falciparum*. The above findings suggest that malaria, among other diseases, may have been the leading cause of death in antiquity.

Malaria increased mortality rate as it worked in synergy with other pathogens, even when malaria itself was not directly to be blamed. The malaria parasite decreased birthrates by infesting the placenta and causing stillbirths, and by sapping fetal nutrition so that low birth weight infants were more susceptible to other diseases. Large fertile areas near Rome became uninhabitable by free men, as a result of malaria, whose effect reduced available calories among the people and created the demand for large-scale slave labor with consequent revolts and instability.[25]

Origins of Malaria

Jones, Ross and Ellet (1907) agree that Modern Greece is intensely malarious and that in 1905, six thousand of the nearly one million people attacked by malaria, died. At this period the country's population was about two and a half million. However, they suggest that Africa and Asia are the ancient homes of malaria and that it was introduced into Greece by soldiers, merchants or slaves who migrated from these continents. They also claim that malaria led to weakness and inefficiency among the Greeks, and also in the 4th century B.C, sentimentalism in art, negativity in philosophy and decay in morality was as a result of malaria. Furthermore, deficiency in mannish dynamism and intellectual prowess, the "sterner Roman becoming a bloodthirsty brute" was consequent on malaria.[26]

If malaria indeed originated from Africa, why is it that history is not replete with such attributes as alluded to the Greeks and the Romans, on Africans? Is it that *plasmodium falciparum* took exceptions to Africans? In referring to his personal communication with Coluzzi (2001) the director of the Istituto di Parassitologia at the University of Rome, Soren assumes that *plasmodium falciparum* malaria "may have been transported to Lugnano in Teverina in ancient Rome from Africa by trade through Sardinia or Rome's harbor of Ostia and continued along the Tiber River to strike suddenly in epidemic form by late antiquity."[27] If this indeed occurred, it is highly probable that malaria would have struck in the towns of Sardinia or Ostia, either in epidemic form or otherwise, it didn't have to wait until late antiquity. The claim that malaria originated from Africa may be regarded as an overstatement.

Furthermore, Macdonell (1913) consequent on his study on life

expectation in antiquity and through an in depth study of inscriptions from CIL VI and CIL VIII presented broad conclusions. The following are some of the conclusions: He construes that life expectation in Africa was better in Rome. He deduces that the evidence from inscriptions "brings out very clearly the extreme unhealthiness of ancient Rome, and as for Africa he concludes that "conditions were much more favourable to longevity than in Rome and Hispania."[28] Again Macdonell states that "life expectation for the Africans after 40 years of age was probably due to the weather and strict selection in childhood and also to the considerable influx of colonists from Italy."[29] The influence from colonists could be doubtful. Since these colonists could not influence Rome to better health conditions, it is highly unlikely that they would do same for Africa especially Carthage who was a long time enemy that must be *delenda*.

Research in molecular evolution indicates that malaria is a disease that originated about two hundred million years ago.[30] If this is anything to go by, it is unjustifiable to conclude that *plasmodium falciparum* originated from Africa. There is nowhere in history that proves that the earliest human occupation in Africa or the earliest African civilization dates as far back as two hundred million years.

The fact of the matter is that ancient Romans were attacked by malaria as a result of the marshy and swampy areas that they were surrounded by and therefore, they were exterminated especially by malaria fevers, among other diseases.

Conclusion

Having examined the works of classical authors, malaria which was termed tertian, quartan, quotidian and the irregular fevers caused havoc and was the principal cause of death in antiquity. Further research could examine tuberculosis which was termed consumption in the works of classical authors as a co-morbid condition to malaria in antiquity.

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PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE ANCIENT ROMAN EMPIRE

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Abstract

The paper examines the causes of persecution of the Christians in the ancient Roman Empire. It also examines the Period and the extent of the persecution. Finally the paper relates the nature of persecution in the Roman Empire to existing persecution of Christians as it exists now and the lessons to be learnt from the persecution.

Introduction

The word Persecute means "to treat badly; to do harm to again and again (that is repeatedly), and to oppress[1]

To persecute also includes "to treat badly because of ones principles or beliefs i.e. Christians were persecuted in ancient Rome[2]. The bible for example refers to persecution in (Mathew 5:10) when it says:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake. To persecute also means to annoy and to harass consistently. Persecution can also be referred to as 'a course or period of systematic punishment or oppression[3]

The notion of persecution is probably not new to an average individual or an adult. Even children have experienced persecution one way or the other or at one time or the other. Areas where an individual can experience or face persecution include the home, in the school, in places of work, in a town or state or country especially where an individual who is being persecuted does not identify with originally or where he or where he or she does not really belong. Differences in ideas opinion or principles can

also bring about persecution. However the kind of persecution we are dealing with or concentrating on in this paper is persecution in connection with religious differences or beliefs.

It is the persecution of the Christian in the ancient Roman Empire. The church suffered persecution for more than there hundred years after its birth or was in danger of it in the ancient Roman Empire.

The persecution the church suffered in the empire during this time was extremely painful but they were also extremely fruitful. In the very act of suffering, the church was growing[4] The persecution of the Christians in the ancient Roman Empire became on advantage to the Christians once it ended, where as it was initially a disadvantage. Christianity was established throughout the empire after the persecution and a Christian even became the emperor! What an irony of faith! The position of the Christian became secured and it was no longer dangerous to be a Christian at the end of the persecution[5] (Boer Harry, 1976) p. 42.

The persecution of the church in the Roman Empire can be divided into two main periods. The first was from the persecutions under Nero in A.D. 64 to that of Decins in 250 A.D while the second was from Decius to the end of the persecution under Constantine (313) in the western part of the empire and ten years later in the eastern part of the Empire. This paper while addressing persecution generally, focuses on the persecution in the first period, which was from A.D. 64 to 250.

Causes or Reasons for The Persecution

The causes or the reasons for the persecution of the Christians in the ancient Roman Empire are numerous and diverse.

The chief cause which can also be referred to as the central cause of persecution is the fact that the Christians refused to participate in Emperor worship. This is the most important factor, and it has often led to persecution of Christian in many other instances even apart from the persecution in the Roman Empire.

Here it should be recalled that in the biblical days Daniel was persecuted for the same offence, that is, refusing to join in worshipping the Babylonian King but would rather pray to Jehovah God[6] (See Daniel chapter 6). The Shema of the Jews had warned expressly that they should serve no other God but Yahweh: Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God and thou shall serve the Lord Your God with all your heart and all your soul and all you mind[7].

Needless to reiterate that this always presents itself as a dilemma

in the life of the Christian and the church. In a situation where the Christian or the Church is faced with a compulsory alternative that is, to serve other gods or human beings. The Roman Empire was a large one. There were therefore many local customs tribal laws and religious convictions and practices. While the Roman authority recognized this, there was however the need for a rallying factor, a point of unity within the Empire. This was the Emperor. There was the need to respect, reverend and if possible worship the emperor in order to forge unity and uniformity in the Empire. This was almost necessary.

Initially, it was a matter of compulsion for the whole Empire to participate in ancestral worship that is, the worship of Dead Emperors who were believed to have done well. This is also applicable in African traditional religion especially among the Yorubas of Nigeria where ancestral worship is part of the religion.

The ancestors are called different names by different peoples. For example, the Yoruba call them Baba Nla, the Igbo call them Ndichie, the Ewe and Eon call them Tovodu, and the Akan call them Samanfo. They are spirits and are approached as spirits in the sense that they are no longer visible[8]. Both scholars reiterate further:

> *But since the ancestors are no longer visible in the physical sense, some element of enhanced power is attributed to them. Death has given them more potentialities, and has greatly enhanced their dignity, power, and prestige. They posses considerable power both for good and for evil. Sickness and misfortune of every kind can be attributed to the influence of those offended among them. They can influence rainfall or bring good harvest; they can promote prosperity or cause adversity. They can also give protection and general well being or cause disruption and calamity*[9].

Gradually, it became compulsory to participate in Emperor worship, this time it was the worship of the living Emperor on the throne! The reasons for the compulsory Emperor worship cannot be far fetched. It was believed that the Emperor represented the Roman God that brought about Peace, prosperity, tranquility, increase in farm products, procreation and a host of other related factors. The Romans therefore made it compulsory for all in Rome to participate in this Emperor worship.

It was considered a very great insult by the Romans for anyone living within the Empire not to participate in worshipping this Emperor. All religions that accepted Emperor worship were promptly labelled *Religio Licita* (Legal religion) while all religions that refused or rejected emperor

worship were labelled *religio illilicta* (illegal religions). Unfortunately, Christianity fell within the bracket of *religio illicita* because it rejected Emperor worship.

Boer presents a concise description of the situation:

> *With Angustus (in 27 B.C.) The (Roman) empire began to be governed by one man in whose hands all power was concentrated. It was thus necessary to make his authority as strong and respected as possible. For that purpose, religious veneration of the emperor increased even more than the authority he already held through his legal, economic, military and social power. The Romans gradually began to see their emperor as a god to whom they sacrificed in their temples. This worship became a powerful force in support of the majesty, prestige and authority of the emperor. It was a religion of ritual: there was no doctrine to be taught or learned, and, it was practiced only on official occasions. Emperor worship stood alongside the worship of the ancient gods that men served throughout the empire, and was practiced along with the traditional religions. The state recognized these religions and called such worship* religio illicita *(lawful religion). Any religion however, that did not permit the worship of the emperor was considered* religio illicita, *(unlawful religion)*[10].

The Jews were however exempted from this emperor worship because of their population and influence. The Jews were also prosperous and well organized by common bonds of race and religion. They were therefore an influential people. They were also monotheists and they considered it a sacrilege to worship a god other than the God of their fathers, the creator of the world, the covenant God of Israel.

The Christians were initially exempted along with the Jews, but when the apostles extended the Gospel to the Gentiles Christians embraced people of other races other than Jews.

As Christianity spread, the Jews made it plain to the government that the followers of the Mosaic Law and followers of Christ were not the same. From then on Christians risked their goods, their freedom, even their lives to confess the name of Christ. This was the situation in A.D. 64 when Emperor Nero undertook the first persecution of Christians in Rome[11] For refusing to participate in emperor worship, Christians were hated, imprisoned, banished to lonely Island, condemned to work as slaves in the mines, cast to lonely Islands cast to the lions as a public spetacle and executed by the sword.

The church could not compromise the directive of the Roman authority because it could neither agree with polytheism or idolatry. On the other hand the Romans saw emperor worship as normal because they reasoned that the emperor was an emblem of a god that gave victory at war, and blessed the empire with prosperity in time of peace, justice of law, progress of the arts, with fruitfulness, of the filed and fertility of the herd. The refusal of the church to permit emperor worship meant that it rejected the state as a god to be worshipped. The Romans therefore accused the Christian of being *atheoi* (atheists). Thus atheism became the chief accusation against the Christians and the main cause of their persecution by the Roman State.

Additional causes of Persecution

In summary, the additional causes of persecution of the Christian in the Roman Empire can be listed thus:

(a) They were seen as haters of mankind.
(b) They (the Christians) refused to serve in the Roman army and in the government.
(c) They would not attend public spectacles or theatre.
(d) They refused to send their children to local or public schools.

Persecution of Christians did not end with the Roman Empire. Similar persecutions are still experienced even in contemporary societies. Many Christians, especially the extreme ones, still face almost the same embarrassment or persecution with the public. These happen when they hold extreme beliefs similar to such that we have mentioned above. Christians who do not attend parties, public functions, theatre, and social functions are still labelled and criticized by the public. One can imagine how much worse the situation would have been in the ancient Roman Empire.

The early Christians in the Roman Empire refused to serve in the army. This would be misinterpreted as an unpatriotic act. It could also be seen as sabotage. Worse still the early Christians were organized and they referred to themselves as soldiers of Christ". Whereas this position can be acceptable from a spiritual point of view but such an attitude could be misinterpreted as being a threat to the security of the state. Some religious groups that have such postures in Nigeria today are sometimes given similar treatments.

Such groups are those that would neither join the army, nor sing the national anthem or the pledge. As it was in those day so it is today

probably.

Christians were accused of preaching the approaching destruction of the world. We still have similar religious groups today who preach that the world would come to an end at one particular time or the other. A religious group in Nigeria Preached that the world would come to an end in 1990, 1995 and then some said the year 2000 would bring an end to the world.

The Montanist led by Montanus assisted by Maximilla and Priscilla taught their followers that the world would soon come to an end and hence every one should move to and live in perpuza which will be the New Jerusalem. Although these predictions have not come to be yet they are capable of attracting persecution to those who believe such.

The religion of the Christian was seen as breaking up families. These happen when husbands and wives do no share the same belief or when the one that believe goes to an extreme making the other party uncomfortable. Such situations still occur presently in homes.

Christians were also accused of mocking other gods in the empire. They probably were confident about their God and were looking down on other gods or religions. The church was also accused of immoral practices, incest, drunkenness, cannibalism, adultery and a host of other similar faults. The holy communion was misinterpreted as drunkenness and cannibalism because it refers to eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus. When Christians got married to one another, it was referred to us incest because they once called one another "brother" and "sister". These misunderstandings and misrepresentations still occur in societies today although in a lesser magnitude.

The Christian scripture was seen as self contradictory and the church declined to work on Sunday regarding it as a holy day. Also the resurrection of Jesus was seen as an invention of his disciples, while Jesus was seen as of illegitimate birth! Some still have this opinion today but the only defence that the church has is the *bible* which is the scripture of the church. The *bible* puts all these facts straight and does not mince words as regards these issues.

Jesus was accused of associating with publicans and sinners and that He lived a life of poverty and died on the cross. Here it should be recalled that the Pharisees and Sadducees once accused Jesus of the same offences in the *bible*.

For all these offences, the Christians were persecuted heavily in the ancient Roman Empire. They were beheaded, thrown, to the lion's

Den, (Like Daniel) some were guillotined, some were thrown into hot oil, some were shot while others forfeited their properties or were denied their rights. However, if they sacrificed or worshiped the Emperor they were released or relieved of their suffering.

Defence or Apology

In the face of all these persecutions, some Christians writers referred to as Apologists rose and wrote in defence of the church. Whereas in English today the word "apology" means regret but then it meant "defence". The Apologists therefore were men who defended the Christians cause mainly in writing.

Such Apologists were Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Marty, Tatian, Municius, Felix, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian and others. The Apologists utilized the following factics to defend the Christians in writing:

1. Appeal to the authorities to treat Christians justly.
2. Attack on Pagan religious beliefs and practices.
3. Presentation of Christian beliefs and way of life.
4. Theological ideas to justify Christianity.

Conclusion

These methods of the apologists worked to a large extent hence at the end of the persecution a Christians emperor was installed and it was no longer unsafe to be a Christian. In fact at the end of the day Christianity became fashionable!

These probably paved the way for the situation that we have today in which Christianity is no longer an illegal religion but a legal religion. Churches are freely built in Nigeria and all over the world today while Christians worshipped unmolested and freely.

Although some persecutions are witnessed or noticed today in Nigeria and other countries. These can never be compared in magnitude to those that existed in the ancient Roman Empire!

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PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP IN ANCIENT ROME AND GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Godfatherism, as a concept, has long been a constant issue in the socio-political space of many societies of the world. Hardly is there any society that does not have traces of godfatherism either in its socio-political, economic or religious life. The concept 'Godfatherism' connotes different meaning to different people. As a result, many societies have different appellations to describe the concept.

In antiquity, particularly in ancient Rome, Godfatherism is represented in the Patron-client relationship; a relationship between two unequal parties in which the weaker party looked to the stronger for protection and the stronger expected the weaker to show gratitude, loyalty and respect.

In Nigeria, nevertheless, Godfatherism has a socio-cultural root in almost all the ethnic groups of the country. But it is more pronounced in Nigeria politics due to its controversial nature. Activities of the so called 'godfathers' are vehemently condemned because of the claim that it has a 'negative impact' on the socio-political space of the country.

Thus, this paper, simply traces the concept of Godfatherism to ancient Roman society, particularly to the Republican Rome, and attempts to elucidate on the patterns, resemblances and metamorphoses which it has taken in recent times in Nigeria. Exploring the parallels between the two concepts, the paper concludes by briefly explaining the ingredients

or contractual elements in both patronage and Godfatherism in ancient Rome and contemporary Nigeria respectively.

Patron-Client Relationship in ancient Rome

Works of Roman writers and historians such as Horace, Seneca, Juvenal and even Cicero concentrated largely on the social relationship between *patronus* (patron) and *cliens* (client) or what modernClassical scholars conceptualized as 'patronage, in ancient. This partly is as a result of the social and political relevance of the relationships to the survival of Rome on one hand and the class groupings or social stratification on the other.

According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus[1], Romulus the founder of Rome, divided the original population of Rome into two classes, the first on hereditary aristocracy, the patricians, the second the ordinary free citizen populace, the plebs. Each plebeian was to select a patrician as his patron. Romulus defined the obligations of the two parties to the relationship[2]

The word patronus was derived from pater in the same way as matron was derived from mater. The use of the paternal model in both contexts is important given the exceptional position of authority held by the pater-familias within the Roman household. Thus, Isidior of Seville explained the title patronus by reference to the fact that a patron ruled his clients like a father. As far as we know, that is factually inaccurate, but the father-son relationship functioned as a moral template for the relationship that ought to exist between a client and his protector, the patron, and between a manumiter and his former slave.

Early Romans evolved a characteristic social structures , whose origin are obscurely seem news to have believed that all men were created equally and preferred to organize their lives on the assumption that certain men were born to lead and that others were natural followers[3] this view has expressed in the institution of patronage and clientship, if not uniquely Roman, was fundamental to their development clients were obliged to follow their patrons to war and to the political arena, to render him respectful attention and on important occasion, pecuniary support. Such duties were called *officio*-offices. The patron, in his turn, was obliged to do anything of *benefica*-beneficial to his client such as protecting his life and interests, especially in courts of law. Legal protection was important to clients, since patricians controlled the judicial system. The ties that bound client and patron were accordingly extra-legal and moral in nature. For either patron or client to fail in his obligations was a sacrilege. This relationship, called *patronatus* on the side of the *patron*,

clientele on that of the client, was hereditary on both sides. The client-patron relationship was one of the most important characteristics, and permanent features of Roman life, and, in one form or another, it was to determine the further development of society, politics, and even foreign policy[4].

In defining what patronage is, most scholars subscribe to the tripartite definition offered by Saller: (1) reciprocity, involving exchanges of services over a period of time between two parties (ii) personal as opposed to commercial and (iii) asymmetrical i.e between parties of different status. However, we may also include the fourth element added by Garnsey and Woolf, namely that it is voluntary, not legally enforceable[5]

The fact that the patron-client relationship bonds were not legally enforceable nor formally regulated made it a relationship that was based solely on fides[6], trust. Furthermore, clientship did not involve any formal ceremony and did not confer any formal power over the client's property on the patron. Also, the patron did not possess *pater potestas* on the clients property. The client ultimately remained in charge of his own affairs with his own household, property and item, he was not obliged to participate in his patron's family cult nor did he become part of his patron's family cult nor did he become part of his patron's familia, lineage[7].

The Roman political system at all times avoided any sort of direct regional representation in government. Instead, access was mediated by individuals. It was this inaccessibility of the centre except through personal links that generated the power of patronage; and it was through the exercise of this power that patronage placed social integration within limits and so secured social control[8].

Classical scholars on patronage have agreed that the essential and irreducible characteristic of patronage is that it is a personal relationship-akin to friendship, but existing between unequals. These rational definition often include a number of other crucial elements, such as the existence of a process of reciprocal exchange on the claim that the patron-client relationship as entered into on a voluntary basis. Such agreement reflects the widespread tendency, not just among ancient historians to launch the analysis of patronage from the base of such relational definition. For instance Scott cited by Saller argues that patronage is a

> *....largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (the patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (the client) who for*

> *his part Mreciprocates by offering social support and assistance including personal services to the patron.*

The essence of patronage defined in such a fashion is 'inequality, reciprocity and intimacy', a durable, two-way relationship of 'top-sided' or 'vertical' friendship. Again, the additional emphasis on voluntarism along with reciprocal exchange-unequal in varying degrees-distinguishes patronage quite clearly from master-slave (patronus- libertus) or Lord-Serf relationship[9]. Numerous passages throughout the republican period tell the same story: that the Roman noble felt almost without an entourage of dependants which he expanded to the best of his ability, and who acted as the visible symbol of his social standing[10].

Patronage as revealed is an elementary form of social life, found in the most diverse social settings; from the internal struggles of modern bureaucracies, and the hierarchical relations of organized crime, to those personalized relations which have periodically been constructed between landowners and peasants through history.

While stressing the capacity for change, it is important not to loose sight of the integration functions of patronage as a system. As already mentioned, patronage is characterized by the dominance of vertical over horizontal relations of solidarity. As Drummond points out in relation to early Rome, Patronage:

> *....a voluntary personal bond between full citizens can be seen as a fulfilling an integrating role, reconciling the realities of power and its unequal distribution with the need to preserve the sense of common citizen identity...* [11]

This point is reinforced by Gernsey and Woolf

It has frequently been observed that horizontal association in society, and that the vertical bodings that it creates undermine the solidarity of individual status groups especially those of the client

Those in the middle and lower strata of social structure, in seeking social advancement and security for themselves and their families, looked upwards to patron for assistance rather than outwards to those at a similar social level in order to pursue collective class-bound interest against those of a higher and privilege social level. Not even the collective outbursts of violence such as food riots have been found to be homogeneous in terms of status or class.[12]

As earlier mentioned, it is obvious that Rome beginning from its early period had remained stratified into two distinct classes namely the patrician class and the plebeian class. With this class differentiation, a

great deal of inequalities in the areas of social status, rights and privileges were noticed. Because of the distinction between the two classes, the plebeian population was never allowed to marry from the patrician class. This consequently, for a long time, rendered the plebeians class completely separated from the patricians. However, each plebian had to select a patrician as his patron. The duty of the patron was to expound the law to his client, assets him in contractual affairs and depend law suits on his behalf his client duty was to provide financial assistance, the expenses of offices, fines or the reason of his person. Both parties were forbidden to take legal actions, give evidence or vote against each other; the punishment was outlawry.

Patron-client relationship in Ancient Rome offered one way of security protection against violence and hunger, but it was only one option. And study of patronage, as is conceded by specialists in the field (Waterbury 1977; Saller 1982, 205-8), runs the risk that it will overrate the significance of that one institution. Patronage is 'a way of doing things because it is voluntary, an option which an actor my (but need not) take up, because his thinks it offers some advantage over the 'official system', over the 'normal' status quo. It is a gap filler, doing what the open and established order cannot do or does less efficiently[13] .

Emergence of Godfatherism in Nigeria

Now looking at the difference societies of the world, show that Godfatherism has formed a distinctive and central element in the socio-political and religious existence of the various peoples of the world. Albert (2005), in trying to explain the origin of Godfather says.the word 'godfather' conjures up different meanings to different people. In many part of Europe of and America, it is simply associated with a cuddly uncle. In the Catholic Church, the word 'godfather' is enshrined in the church tradition. A child or man who, wishes to baptized or marry into the Catholic Church is expected to choose a godfather among the congregation who will serve as role model and counsel the new convert on how to live a responsible[14].

This is equally true in the case of the 19th century America where the significance of Godfatherism has not only in the reciprocal exchange of goods and services between the patron and client. But, also, as a strategic mechanism for the reproduction of structure of power in which fractions of community leaders dominate the political life of the state.

According to William Riordon George Washington Plunkitt, a statesman and leader of Tammany Hall, was a leader of many clients:

> *You went to the district leader (Plunkitt) with your personal problems, and all he asked in exchange for his help was vote. He was the man to see for a job, a liquor or a pushcart license, a bucket of coal when there was no money to buy one, help in making out citizenship papers, or in bailing a husband or son out of jail. There's no need to go on; plunkitt supplies the details and his concluding chapter in particular is a classic of its kind*[15].

William Riordon goes further to explain that:

> *Politics was a way out of the slums. In this way Tammany was equal to the catholic church's hierarchy as an engine of social mobility for gifted, ambitious Irish-American's who lacked the capital, the educational advantages, and the connections of the sons of established families. In both, institutional career were open to talents.*

From these excerpts, it is evident that in the earliest period of America's political history, there had been cases of political figures with pockets of clients as supporters. However, the Nigerian situation which we are examining, like the case of the 19th century American socio-political history, has some resemblance with that of Ancient Rome. Albert, while explaining how Godfatherism works maintains that discourses have raised two questions as regard to the concept: hierarchy and inequality:

> *Hierarchy has to do with the vertical ranking of people in the society into two categories, namely, those at the top and those occupying the lowest positions. Those at the bottom are assumed to be less important than those on top and those at the top are responsible for exercising social, economic and political powers*[16].

This social stratification is quite similar with that of the Roman society in which there was a class division between the patrician and the plebs. And this social inequality, perhaps, is one factor that has made Godfatherism discernible. As earlier mentioned godfatherism has a socio-cultural root among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The patron-client relationships that popularized the term in Nigeria politics have cultural roots among Nigerian peoples. It is and totally new experience in the sociology of the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo for people to have one other type of 'godfather'. For instance, the word 'godfather' has a local equivalence in Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages and these words have been in usage since the pre-colonial era. For instance, a godfather is referred to in Yourbaland as either 'Baba kekere', 'Baba islae' (the father

of the underground), or 'Babanigbejo' (ather (father in jurisprudence)[17]. In Igbo society, Dickson Dimia cited in Albert (2005), made reference to the popular relationship between 'Nmam-ukwu (my master) and Ohu or Odibo (the servant). A relationship whereby a younger person is entrusted to a more mature and experienced person for training. The role played by the man in this kind of relationship is akin to that of a godfather[18]. In Hausa society, a godfather is referred to as 'Maigida' (landlord or the head of household). The term goes beyond it literary meaning it is used to describe those who provided brokerage-services to Hausa traders in transit in different parts of west Africa.

However, we shall only look at godfathers in the Nigerian political space. And it is slightly different from the types identified above. To start with godfathers can be defined 'as 'men who have the power personally to determine who gets nominated and win (an election) in a state'. The 'political godfathers' in Nigeria like the patron in ancient Rome build array of loyalists around them and use their influence to manipulate the rest of the society. They also use their influence to block the participation of others in Nigerian politics.

However, two types of godfathers have been identified by Albert[19]. The first is the geo-political or ethnic godfathers. This is reflected in organizations that arrogate to themselves the right to decide who represent their jurisdiction in government. Such organization include "Afenifere', the Yoruba socio-cultural organization; Arewa consultative council (ACF) which represent the people of the North; and Ohaneze, the pan-Igbo cultural group.

The second types of godfathers are prominent individuals within the geo-political group they belong to. The godfathers in this regard include sir Ahamadu Bello, who led the NPC; Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who led the AG, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of NCNC. This is clearest in regard to the Western Region, whose history of city-states provided nationalists leaders with ready-made networks of influence of substantial geographical and social reach. Awolowo's political machine (AG) became dominant in the western Region, one of the three components of the Nigeria federation, at the moment the colonial authorities were conceding political space to Nigerian parties. This is equally the case in the current political dispensation whereby leaders of political parties use their influence to secure political appointments for their loyalists.

Conclusion

The stability and success of Rome was founded-at least from an elite perspective- on the maintenance of proper distinction between people of different class and personal ability. The gradus dignitati, 'grade

of honour', remained the cornerstone of any free and just society, and Cicero stressed the fundamental inequality entailed by complete equality which ignored the natural differences that are bound to exist between people. He famously declared that 'so-called equality is most inequitable; for when the same honour is accorded to the highest and the lowest, equity itself is unequal'. The gradus was not just a question of formal rank; it defined who was allowed to exercise authority over whom, and such reflected the given hierarchy by which the higher being dominates and controls the lower- in the interest of all parties. Disregard for this rule was therefore more than a social transgression; it was in effect a violation of the natural order. It is this inequality in the society that forms the basis for patron-client relationship in ancient Rome and godfatherism in Nigerian socio-political space.

In addition, a good observation of the relationship that exist between a patron and his client in ancient Rome and a godfather and his godson in Nigerian socio-political space shows the instruments both normally employ. In the first stage of godfatherism, a godfather tries to carve out for himself a nich as someone with good reputation, of course, reputation is a treasure which people have learnt to heard. Most godfathers choose not to appear desperate in self-defence .They rather work hard to establish the reputation for outstanding qualities in the areas of wealth, connections and cunning which they sell to the people through generosity tied to the state treasury. Thus, generosity is the beginning of politics of godfatherism. It makes the beneficiaries to make positive remarks about the benefactors and the aura-created around them instills respects and even fear in others.

Finally, this paper posits that godfatherism is obtained in many democratic societies of the world. It is very usual to have people of great influence in the societies who provide strong backing and protection to candidates during electronic. There is nothing wrong in this if the goal is to get the best people into elective offices. What is wrong, however, in the Nigerian case is that godfathers have turned politics into a money-making business whereby elections are rigged with a view of forcing pre-determined candidates into office. Wallace-Hadrill explains it better:

> *We meet tensions and conflicts surrounding various*
> *aspects of patronage on a scale not seen before.*
> *Patronage is now frequently presented to us as*
> *"corrupt. So the role of patronage in appointment*
> *To public office becomes problematic in a way:..*
> *not indeed because it is in itself seen as objectionable,*
> *but because it is believed to be abused.*

Enonotes

[1] In the course of his attempt to turn Romulus into the creator of Rome's basic social and political institutions in the Greek style, the first country BC Institution Dionysius of Halicarnassus provides our only surviving evidence of early clientship.

[2] See Badian's Classics (1958), Foreign clientele(264-7080). Oxford press , p. 1

[3] Ibid

[4] See A Saller, P. Richard, 1982, Personal Patronage

Under The Early Empire, University of Cambridge press, London.

[5] Saller's tripartite definition is based on modern anthropological and sociological studies. See Wallace-Hadrill's 1989,introduction in Patronage in Ancient-society, p 2-3

[6] As early as in the Republic, Fides' implies trust, and therefore trustworthiness, it is a term of moral obligation and moral judgement

[7] See Saller, R.P. article in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed., Andrew WIllance, T.J. Press (Padstow), Cornwal, 1984, Chap, 2, p. 49

[8] ibid

[9] Ibid

[10] Voluntarism, reciprocity and fields ,(trust or loyalty) are factors that mark off Patron -client relationships from other types such as patronus libertus; patronus-amici (Literary Patronage) and foreign clientele (Patronage of colonized states)

[11] Scullard H.H. 1969, *A History of the Roman World*, 753 to 146 BC, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd. P. 42

[12] Ibid

[13] During the struggle of the orders, the plebeians despite their solidarity could not break this social system of patron-client relationship. Even after they were granted some of their requests, some rich plebeians were still attached to highly placed patron for support.

[14] Garnsey and Woolf, 1989, *Patronage of the rural poor, in Patronage In Ancient society. Wallace-Hadrill* (ed) 1989, p. 54.

[15] Ibid

[16] See Albert D.A. (2005),' Explaining Godfatherism in Nigeria Politics',

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[17] Ibid p. 85

[18] Ibid

[19] Ibid

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