

ROYAL PATRIARCHY AND INTRA-GENDER CONSPIRACY IN AFRICA'S AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: THE DRAMATIST'S REFLECTIONS IN AHMED YERIMA'S *JAKADIYA*

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ABSTRACT The author examines the traumatic fate of the African woman in the patriarchal African royal oligarchy and the conspiracy of women against themselves within this realm, in the play *Jakadiya* by Ahmed Yerima (2017). The disposition of women in the royal establishment is oppressive. This paper is anchored on the principle of Thomas Carlyles's The Great Man Theory, and Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism, an African variant of the feminist ideology which advocates women's social inclusion in Africa. In *Jakadiya*, Yerima portrays and laments the objectification of women by the royal patriarchy. The main protagonists are two slave consorts, who are only to satisfy the sexual urge of the monarch, but not allowed any aspirations in life. In *Jakadiya*, Yerima relates the utter injustice that the patriarchal system in Africa commits against women aided, however, by women against fellow women. The dramatist suggests that Africa cannot progress in the age of globalization with feminine dehumanization and exclusion.

Key Words: Drama; Patriarchy; Monarchy; Africa; Feminism.

INTRODUCTION

The royal institution in Africa is a traditional structure that is highly revered. It is particularly revered in the northern part of Nigeria. Customarily, the royal institution is headed by men, the emirs, and this situation has formulated a pattern for men's relationship with women in Africa, especially in north Nigeria. On the account of this circumstance, the African royal institution could be adduced to still be patriarchal in spite of the civilization which globalization has brought to the African continent. In line with this, it has been observed that royals in Africa tend to see women as their possessions. This manifests more glaringly in the traditional Yoruba kingdom where a saying goes: *Oba gb'ese le'yawo e* (The king has commandeered your wife). This occurs when the king adds an already married woman to his consorts. The king would not treat the woman in question with dignity. This is an objectification of the African woman as she is regarded in all ramifications as mere property. The patriarchal nature of the African society has been further evinced in the royal enclave in Africa as seen in the situations in Nigeria where the male child is preferred to the female child. To the African worldview, the male child is of more social value and worth than the female child. This is perceived in the royal setting, the context of this paper, because monarchs are necessarily males. Such a perception of the sexes in the social realm in Africa,

Nigeria in particular, has created gender division, and disaffection in the social space on the continent. Literary writers have directed attention to this social situation. One of the playwrights who has addressed the gender strife in Africa (Nigeria) is Ahmed Yerima. The gender angst that Yerima shoulders is noticeable in the play, *Jakadiya*. The timing of the writing of this play is of fundamental interest. This is because Yerima highlights the hypocrisy of men against women in the era of hyper-civilization which globalization symbolizes currently in the world. By this it is suggested that Yerima finds it alarming that Africa has not overcome such a societal ill in an era when globalization has brought enlightenment to the innermost part of the world. At the same time, the playwright exposes the hypocrisy of women against women, pointing to the perforation in the feminist advocacy in Africa, especially in north Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Certain existing perspectives on gender-oriented dialogue are relevant to this paper at this juncture. The enabling theoretical concepts related to this paper are Thomas Carlyles's The Great Man Theory and the Stiwaniist Theory by Molar Ogundipe-Leslie, which are ultimately connected to the existing critical perspectives on Ahmed Yerima as a person and his literary works. The Great Man Theory (Carlyle, 1841) assumes that the male gender predominates, and leadership is inherent in men, because leaders are born, not made. The prerogative of leadership belongs to men as it was perceived on the theory that leadership was a masculine trait (Kendra, 2018). This assumptive arrogation has contributed to the emergence of the feminist advocacy globally and attracted a barrage of complaints by women against men. This has led to such sarcasm as "We thank God for our calamities" (Saadawi, 2000: 35). "Our" stands for "women's," and this means that their fate with men is calamitous. Traditional Africans even cherished mares and she-camels more than female children (Ali, 2010). Through feminism, therefore, women have sought redress through the attainment of equality with men. However, some women believe that women's equality with men in Africa is unattainable. One of whom holding this view is Molar Ogundipe-Leslie. She therefore requests the integration of women in the social scheme in Africa. She encapsulated this gender ideal in *Stiwaniism* (Soyinka, 2007), STIWA being the acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa (Ogundipe-Leslie, 2007). Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwaniism therefore is to pursue the feminist agenda in the African context, particularly because according to her, feminisms in Europe and America are under persecution.

It is under this liberal spirit enunciated in Stiwaniism that the playwright Ahmed Yerima is advancing the cause of women in Africa with his emphasis on Nigerian society. Ahmed Yerima is one of the foremost Nigerian playwrights. He was born in May 1957, in Lagos, southwestern Nigeria. He obtained his PhD in Theater Studies and Dramatic Criticism at the Royal Holloway College, University of London. Yerima is a theatre arts professor, and he started his teaching career at

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, in 1985. He is a former Director-General of the National Theatre and National Troupe of Nigeria. He has written many dramatic texts which include *Queen Amina*, *Hendu*, *Lampapa*, *Odenigbo*, *Drugga*, *Iyase*, *Igatibi*, *Mojagbe*, *Akuabata*, *Athairu*, *The Sisters*, *Abobaku*, *Orisa Ibeji*, *No Pennies for Mama*, *Ajagunmale*, *Pari*, and *Jakadiya* to mention a few. His towering acclaim in African literary and theatrical circles could be partly traced to the tutelage and proficiency he received from Africa's literary luminary and 1986 Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka. Yerima's theatrical renown also could be attributed to his prolific output which has led to the formation of the view that the playwright's prolific production coupled with his artistic prowess "have attracted a catalogue of critical responses from numerous scholars" (Eruaga, 2018: 212). Another factor accounting for the uniqueness and renown of this dramatist is the attention he pays to a myriad of socio-political and cultural topics in the Nigerian worldview. Such focus which he maintains on a large number of his Nigerian social system accounts for his description as "the leading Nigerian dramatist of this generation," and "one of the most complete artists ever produced by the country" (Onyerionwu, 2017: 3). The completeness that Onyerionwu alludes to suggests that Yerima covered the Nigerian socio-cultural milieu in his dramaturgy. And this is a perception corroborated in the opinions of many others (Coker, 2017: xi/x), that Yerima "has a grasp of the Nigerian psyche," and that "Ahmed's plays cover such a breadth and span of both historical and contemporary issues." There is, however, a divergent yet complementary perspective to the reason for Yerima's prominence in Africa's literary theater as well as his understanding of the Nigerian socio-cultural life. This is the view that:

Yerima owes much to Soyinka under whom he trained at the University of Ife. However, he does not share the sustained antiestablishment temperament and radical confrontational politics of Soyinka. Besides, Yerima's plays unmistakably view life from an optimistic prism (Adeoti, 2007: 2).

The context of optimism in the comment above is at variance with Yerima's attitude in the play, *Jakadiya*, in that here the playwright seems to be of the view that the continent of Africa tilts towards stagnation if the culture of feminine exclusion continues as he believes that the rest of the world has left this stage of masculine atrocity behind as a result of civilization through globalization. This makes the play a lamentation of the patriarchal Machiavellian treatment of African women in the royal circle.

The cause of women in the Nigerian society has been Yerima's thematic focus in his dramaturgy, but he has approached the cause in different ways for different purposes at different periods. For example, in *The Sisters*, Yerima (2001) told the pathetic story of Funmi and her three sisters, Taiwo, Toun, and Nana. These women were maltreated by men (their fathers and husbands). For example, the father of the four sisters had an extramarital relationship with a woman that produced Nana. Funmi's husband, died and five different women called her and brought forth his five children out of wedlock. Toun's husband, whom she married because he was

handsome, was a wife beater. Taiwo was not cared for and is on wheelchair after an accident, as there are no funds to perform surgery. There is therefore loss of trust in men by these women. In the play, Yerima laments and condemns the betrayal of women by men in history, and draws the attention of readers and audience to the impelling needs to redress the situation. “The four women in Yerima’s work reflect historical snapshots of women exploitation in the social system.” (Emenyi, 2007: 68). The obvious social system that Emenyi is referring to is the African social system. From the foregoing, it is noticeable that Yerima’s commitment to the cause of women in Africa includes the past and the present. The essence of such an endeavor is to weigh the difference or progress in the condition of African women as time passes, in preparation for the future. A similar sentiment and cause are pursued by the playwright in his other play, *Mojagbe*. The play is the portrayal of King Mojagbe’s molestation of women of the land who have embarked on a peaceful procession to the palace to call the attention of the king to the calamities in the land. The calamities have befallen the land as results of the persecution of the prince murderer in the marketplace. Other reasons for the calamities include wars with the Oyo people and the Igbo Odo, as well as utter disregard for the spiritual mothers of the land. Mojagbe’s hubris of love of women meets its fate when he commandeers a slave girl, captured at war with the Igbo Odo people, not knowing that she was Death that came to him in the personification of a woman. This is a deflation of African patriarchy. In this play, there is an intentional attempt to exalt the capabilities of women through heroic female characterization. In fact, the heroic deeds of female characters in the play are “an attempt to give voice to females” in the African society that fails to address the plight of women” (Julius-Adeoye, 2013: 156). Therefore, this author asserts that Yerima’s (2008) concern for women in his play, *Jakadiya*, demonstrates his sustenance of a social commitment and cause. However, there is a new dimension in this latest play: while the playwright laments the atrocities of men in the royal sphere, he also finds women guilty of their own plight, and since he has written this play in the age of globalization, he is opining that Africa cannot make progress with gender controversies. To him, a Stiwaniist regard for women is the right approach.

THE AFRICAN ROYAL ATTITUDE

The royal institution in Africa is a significant part of the culture of the continent. In fact, the African royal enclave is the custodian of the cultures of different societies on the continent. On this account and on the basis of the characteristic and natural subservience of the African peoples, the royal figure, be it the king or the emir, is revered highly by the communities that these monarchs administer dominion over. The royal leaders live in opulence and command respect from their people. The reverence that the peoples accord their royal personalities takes form in a number of acts and conditions. First of all, in most African communities, the royal figure is the ultimate adjudicator in communal or domestic

disputes. Whatever their verdicts are, such verdicts hold and bind the people in dispute. This practice still occurs despite the advent of the Western model of social organization and management. Apart from this, the royal personalities in Africa are veritable and coordinated sources of opinion formation, modulation, and articulation. Again, kings or emirs in Africa are the representatives of their people in government affairs to whom the governments take recourse on matters affecting the communities of the monarchs. This, the governments believe, is the most appropriate way of meeting the yearnings of the people of a community. Also, some royal personalities are religious leaders. By the virtue of this, the people believe that such royal figures are the representatives of God. They, therefore, accord their emirs spiritual reverence. The vital roles of the royalty in the African social construct is known to and exploited by politicians who influence the royal circle so that the palace would prevail on the social populace to vote in a certain way. The above illustrate parts of what make the African royalty immensely esteemed by the people of the communities they control.

However, what is the attitude of the African royalty to the people in their custody? How do the royal personalities see the people? How do they relate with the people of the communities? This author would argue that the questions are best answered with the assertion that the African royalty relates with the people, especially women, with disdain. They oppress the people and repress their aspirations. Suffice, then, to state that the African royal circle is tyrannical and the tyranny manifests in various forms ranging from forceful collection of rebate from indigenous artisans to confiscation of property owned by the local artisans, owning slaves, and objectification of women. Among the Yoruba in the west of Nigeria, it is believed in the royal enclave that the king owns everything and can, therefore, point at anything (including women/wives) and own it. This phenomenon is known among the Yoruba of the western Nigeria as *Oba gb'ese le* (The king has placed his legs on the property), which is a metaphor for confiscation. Such tyrannical absolutism has attracted the attention of literary writers who have argued against such regal atrocities not in tandem with civilized realities of the modern day. The literary antagonism is to the effect that such regal practices are obsolete. They make African culture brutish, stagnant, and unproductive. After all, a people need to uncloset their closed culture, because man does rethink the ethics of existence (Yerima, 2015).

SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF FEMININE DEHUMANIZATION IN *JAKADIYA*

Ahmed Yerima is one of the African writers who have expressed concern for the regal Mephistophelean tendencies over the people they administer dominion. Such is manifest in his play, *Jakadiya*. The play is the story of Hajiya Bilikisu, enslaved in the palace since age five, and a consort to the late and former emir, Sarkin Abdul Gafar, who promised her the title *Magajiya*, the head of the women in the kingdom. Forty-five years had lapsed, and the promise was not kept by the emir before his death. It is also denied by Madawaki, a senior palace chief who was present when the promise was made. Madawaki argues that a slave like

Bilikisu is only good to provide sexual calm to the emir's lust. This was why Bilikisu's son was exchanged with the dead son of the legitimate queen. This secret is revealed by Ahmed Datijo, a blind old soldier/guard who witnessed the atrocity before he became blind. The baby exchange was perpetrated so that the son of a slave would not become an emir. In spite of the calamities that have befallen Bilikisu as a consort to the former emir, she prepares Atine, a young girl and slave, to be a consort to the new emir, El-Rasheed Rufai under the strict supervision of Uwar Soro, the queen. These are royal acts of inhumanity and Machiavellian extent/ manifesting in perpetual slavery, objectification of women, patriarchal duplicity, and regal autarchy. All are perpetrated by the emirs and officers, with their command-overriding hegemony of all else over the indigenes, and this is inconsistent with twenty-first century global worldview.

There are a number of cases of inhumanity in the play, *Jakadiya*. All of which highlight the playwright's inclination towards advocating the opening of the closed culture of Africa. In this instance, this author will add that "opening" signifies "making to be civilized or 'modernized,'" while "closed" means "obsolete." To this end, Yerima is advocating an extermination of inhumanity to give way to humane-ness, empathy, and understanding, between the monarchs and indigenes.

The first of the acts of royal inhumanity in the play is slavery in perpetuity. Slavery is a barbaric act. It shows lack of consideration for the other human being. It could be seen as sadistic. From the religious perspective, it is a violent denigration of God's work, which means that it is sacrilegious. All these are compounded by the perpetuity of the practice of slavery by emirs. This becomes manifest in the case of Bilikisu, the *Jakadiya*. Bilikisu has been a slave for more than seventy years. She establishes her age in the play in her response, "Beautiful?... after seventy years?" to the blind Ahmed Datijo who asked, "are you still as beautiful?" (Yerima, 2017: 13). This scenario is an abuse of humanity. Keeping a woman as a slave to toil day and night, could only be described as barbarism itself. It is worse because Sarkin Abdul Gafar, the late emir had granted her freedom. As Bilikisu declares to Madawaki, senior palace chief and interim emir pending the forthcoming coronation who has the power to fulfill the age-long promise of the promotion of Bilikisu from *Jakadiya*, head of the female slaves, to Magajiya, the head of all women in the kingdom: "Sarkin Abdul Gafar, the late emir. He gave me my freedom. You were there, Madawaki" (Yerima, 2017: 20). However, her amnesty is denied by the royal institution and structure. Madawaki's angry and nonchalant words, "The coronation is tomorrow, and she sits us down to remember stupid promises made by a late Emir" (Yerima, 2017: 22), could only be described as inconsiderate and de-humanizing. Such denial has made Bilikisu remain a slave for decades. The royal circle in this context could be seen as unjust. It is of great concern to the playwright, who created the character Atine, a young maid who is a slave in the palace, as a symbol of the sustenance of the practice in the modern time in a diachronic process. If enslavement disregards the brittle innocence of a child in Atine, and Bilikisu when she was age 5 and captured as a slave, and the frailty of an old Bilikisu, now an octogenarian and yet still a slave, then, the wickedness inherent in the regal practice is better imagined than experienced.

The playwright reflects the gravity of the brutality of the institutionalization of regal hegemony and dominion through the capturing of Bilikisu and later Atine, as ingrained in this recollection:

Atine: Remember you told me that you were brought here at the age of five. The Muslim warriors came into my village with their horses, heads all wrapped wielding spears ...swords... bows and arrows with a wind waving flag of fear and death when they came to take us. It was a day before I became a woman. I was fifteen years old. (Yerima, 2017: 48)

In the above, brutal force is noted, and it reminds this author of the primitive stage in human development. There is imagery of extermination (annihilation). Covering or wrapping of heads, wielding of spears, swords, bows, and arrows are lethal acts of barbarism. Apparently, the warriors (captors) were emissaries of the royal circle. This makes the African royalty an omitted item in Wole Soyinka's list of "ambitions enemies of humanity." Soyinka has opined that "The most ambitions enemies of humanity are the absolutist interpreters of the Divine Will, be they Sikhs, Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, born-again of every religious calling" (Soyinka, 2007: 143). The obvious reference Soyinka is making is to the destructive consequences of the interpretative absolutism of the above on the Divine Will. The lethal brigandage as perpetrated by the warriors as above is destruction of the Divine Will for every individual human destiny which the regal brutal hegemony vandalizes. Yerima insinuates that the royal institutions break the trust the indigenes repose in them, as the same royal personality that the indigenes hold in high esteem puts them in perpetual captivity.

THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

In the play *Jakadiya*, the royal circle is presented as desecrating and denigrating women. The royal patriarchy sees and uses women as personal effects, as common property. This brings to the fore, consequently, the alleged gender dichotomy in Africa, where men of the African traditional sensibility use women to service their physiological and psychological needs. In this play, both the late emir and the soon-to-be emir use women (the slaves), namely Bilikisu and (as being proposed) Atine as consorts. Yerima conveys this perspective when he makes Uwar Soro, Hajiya Hauwa, the queen mother, beneficiary of the child exchange and supervisor for the preparation of the new consort for the new emir, declare to Atine in a stern tone thus:

Uwar Soro: Young girl, I hope you know your place? Take good care of yourself. No mistakes. There must be no attempt to rise beyond your place. You are nothing but a *kwakwa*... a common consort, and you shall remain one until you die. No dreams... no aspirations... just consort. The Emir has wives to touch his heart. Definitely, not you. No bastard child is allowed in the palace.... Do you comprehend, girl? (Yerima, 2017: 10)

When, a woman, a young woman, has been constrained in life and her purpose in life has been obliterated by the self-aggrandizement of a monarchical cabal, the conclusion could only be that the monarchical system in Africa represents primitive brutishness. Above expressions as “you are nothing,” “a common consort,” “you shall remain one until you die,” “no dreams,” and “no aspiration” could have traumatized the slave girl, Atine. Or how could a woman’s essence of being be minimized to serving only as a sex tool, and this made clear to her, point-blank? The sternness in the Uwar Soro’s declaration to Atine as above is a revelation that all the acts are deliberate and institutionalized cultural practices. After all, culture is a construction of a people and, as such, it is an evolvment “from the psycho analytical of the totality of the owners of the culture” (Yerima, 2015: 16).

This circumstance in the play which exemplifies the traditional African man disregarding the essence and purpose of the African woman lends credence to the claim by the feminist apologists that the “African woman is oppressed by the virtue of economic exploitation and marginalization in the scheme of things” (Davies, 2007: 561). There should, however, be an end to the royal injustice—the disregard of the African woman. This constitutes part of the social reordering that will bring about the “alternative society” aimed at correcting the ills of the contemporary society (Yerima, 2013). The current situation when the African monarch is deified and placed at the Olympian height where nothing is wrong, or when/if he is angry, so angry that he kills a kwakwara (a consort) because she is ugly and not worthy for his radiant sexual desire. Uwar Soro tells Atine (and the readers or the audience) that the emir of Kalunga killed a consort because the consort’s armpit was unkempt and her mouth was smelly. The question may be posed if the emir of Kalunga, who is the symbol of autocratic monarchy in this context, would wish that the calamity that they mete out to the slaves should befall them. Perhaps the response is in the negative. That means, then, that their actions are a betrayal of the Golden Rule in the School of Morality, that is, “Do unto others as you would they do unto you.” Or this can be modified into: “Don’t do unto others what you wouldn’t want done to you” (Herrick, 2006: 23). Both of these versions of the moral philosophy, Herrick avers, indicate the difference between benevolence and malevolence. In any case, the playwright is inclined to the argument that a society where the ruling elite (the monarchs) take women as items of possession is retrogressive.

However, with the liberalization of the African gender space marked in the disclosure that:

Ever since women won the right to vote and be voted for, as well as the right to education, to choose a profession, to earn and own property, the right to equal opportunity and treatment, the world has witnessed the emergence of a different crop of women. This age has witnessed women in roles hitherto forbidden to women. (Udengwu, 2014: 45–46)

If a new generation of women is emerging in Africa against the matrixes of gender roles as Udengwu highlights above, it means that the African continent is

exuding the tendencies to develop. Using the playwright's logical perspective in *Jakadiya*, the breakaway of women from the manacles as set by men is a certain way to move Africa forward. Such a perspective is in line with the view that the current socio-cultural and political situation in Africa including gender oppression is a quagmire which the continent has found itself in (Lagunju, 2005). Such a social reconstructionist redemption of the African society has been perceived to be a social cause for Yerima who depicts the fate of the African woman in a patriarchal African society. He has portrayed himself, in the process, as an advocate of the liberation of the African woman who, herself, "may have considered her feminist tangents even as modestly outlined as they were, as sufficient radical departure for a woman practicing in a trade dominated by men" (Onyerionwu, 2017: 369). And this is seen in his concern for and address of the objectification of the African woman by the emirate kingdom in the play, *Jakadiya*.

Indeed, this dehumanization through objectification is a resolute cultural practice which is so ingrained in the way of life of the people of the northern part of Nigeria, that it cannot be changed. Bilikisu, too, was objectified as Atine is prepared to be. The rules read out to Atine by Uwa Soro, part of which is that a consort should not dream or nurse any aspiration, have had an implication and outcome, alternatively. Bilikisu has been used, denied freedom, kept in bondage in perpetuity, and her dream of being a *Magajiya*, to head all the women in the kingdom, dashed in spite of the promise the late emir made to her. She is now disillusioned with an *educated* consciousness. It is a realization that has earned her or brought out of her, sound logic on matters of the unreliability of the words of African men as symbolized in the male characters, Sarki Abdul Gafar, Madawaki, and Ahmed Datijo, in conspiracy with Nwar Soro. Bilikisu's new consciousness and sound mind is signified in the logic in this rhetorical question "What about today?can you shed the blood of the people you swore to save with your life for a mere spent slave?" (Yerima, 2017: 38). This question is an utter affront to Ahmed Datijo who symbolizes the emirate cabal in this conversation with Bilikisu. There is immense propensity that Datijo, and the emirate palace, indeed, would feel a sense of shock due to the fact that an old slave is demonstrating sound mind. Her demonstration of sound thinking is so intimidating that Datijo has to confess in frustration: "You ask too many questions" (Yerima, 2017: 48). It is incontrovertible that somebody who asks questions is an individual who reasons deeply; somebody of a sound mind. Bilikisu's sense of self-discovery and sound mind is so overriding that she considers the overtures that Datijo is making in apparent defense of the culture and the palace, and in a subtle move towards denouement, as childish pranks. The explanation that Datijo makes appears incapable of undoing the psychic damage that the lie or deception of the palace has caused. This is because lying or deception is capable of restricting the options for the future steps of the victim of such a deception (Houlgate, 1999). The situation is worse in an institutional lie such as this that Bilikisu has been made to be a victim of. With this new consciousness and self-discovery and the demonstration of it, Yerima is seen as establishing that the lowly in society are not in any way dregs, just as the royal elite are not any better. The condi-

tions that the slaves have found themselves are not by Nature or Providence; it is rather man-made. It is through a show of bestiality that the royal oligarchy has employed as a dehumanization and de-womanization tool in achieving their women-objectification agenda.

AND WOMEN CRY WOLF

There is, however, a *crack* in the female circle, and such a *crack* is sustained on the compromise, conspiracy, and willingness of the influential rank of women to service patriarchal aggrandizement. This manifests in the activities and deeds of Uwar Soro in the play. Uwar Soro could be characterized as Bilikisu's foil in the play. The emirate oligarchy uses Uwar Soro as a tool for the decimation of the female rank. It is this female character that assesses and certifies the would-be consort from the rank of the slaves. She plays the role quite well; howling at the innocent would-be consort (a woman herself) to frighten her into submission. Uwar Soro knows so well that she is preparing another woman for unbridled life-long sexual exploitation. Although sex can be regarded as nearly culturally universal (Olurode & Oyefara, 2010: 1), personalization ought to be respected. That is, sex should be based on free-will, not coerced as the monarchs have made it, only achieved with the compromise of a woman. A further instance of the crack in the circle of African women is Bilikisu's act of compromise with the ruling royal oligarchy, to mislead innocent Atine. She has prepared Atine for presentation as consort to the new emir even though her own experience as a consort has been wretched, unfulfilling, and, hence, lamentable. One in her position would have at least sensitized the unknowing little girl. Bilikisu knows that she has not achieved her visions and aspirations, yet nothing of such is mentioned to sensitize the little girl. She presents Atine to Uwar Soro as her roles require, knowing that she has to appease the palace elements who are influential to grant her desire to move from *Jakadiya*, the head female servant in the palace, to *Magajiya*, the head woman in the kingdom. She knows, yet compromises with the cultural structures and stipulations in the kingdom. That is, Bilikisu has complied with a culture that kills hopes and aspirations, that which limits the achievements of women.

This is a culture that abuses the sanctity, purity, and muliebrity of women. And there is no end to the current arrangement, which Bilikisu is aware of

After all, Madawaki has once declared to her thus: "Our culture is our tomorrow; it must be kept intact" (Yerima, 2017: 14). If the essence of a culture is to possess the power to make life better, and humans indeed have been harnessing the power of culture to make their lives better (Myers, 2008), this author points out that to force such a culture on Atine while Bilikisu knows so much is disingenuous. To this extent, it could be asserted that the playwright, here, is portraying to the readership and the audience that Bilikisu is guilty of the ills and vices that she tries to rise against in the play. She is, therefore, part of the symbols of the crack among the women in the cultural sphere of Africa.

PATRIARCHAL DUPLICITY IN *JAKADIYA* AS INHUMANITY

For the convenience of this paper, this author defines duplicity broadly as deceptiveness, which is a form of human cruelty. Such is perpetrated by men against women in the regal play, *Jakadiya*. It needs to be stressed that duplicity in this context is not the same as the objectification of women by men that reflects the conception of the worth of women in a traditional African milieu. This is because, in this context, objectification is a maltreatment of women. Duplicity is a crime in the moral realm while objectification is an offensive attitudinal disregard for people. The royal men's objectification of women in the play is on its own while duplicity, that is, betrayal, is perpetrated by the royal establishment against women. They do this to pursue their own purpose, to confirm the view that there is duplicity in humanity, and that when it comes to dealing with people, what one sees is not what one gets (Bella, 2014). This assertion is true of the royal treatment of Bilikisu in the unfolding play. The amnesty granted her by the late emir, is upturned by the emirate chiefs and administrators, prominent among whom is Madawaki. This is in spite of the verifiable evidence she gives in support of the claim of having been granted amnesty by the late emir. As Bilikisu reveals "Sakin Abdul Gafar, the late Emir. He gave me my freedom" (Yerima, 2017: 20). Bilikisu does not make a lazy claim; she tells it to these agents of the emirate establishment, "you were there, Madawaki. Ahmed Datijo, too, was there, remember?" This confrontation is an indictment, and has repercussion for the emirate chiefs and the monarchical structure that they represent. Despite the evidence she provides, she is still denied and betrayed. This is manifest in Madawaki's derogatory vituperation against Bilikisu's claim as he bemoans, "...just go (*Dejected, exit Bilikisu*). Look at her go. I have four wives and I still don't understand the stupidity of women. The coronation is tomorrow and she sits us down to remember stupid promises..." (Yerima, 2017: 22). When an agent of cultural custody describes women and their reasoning as stupid in the process of denying a woman of her legitimate desire, then, the patriarchal disposition to women cannot fall short of being designated as vitriolic.

The duplicity of African patriarchy is more prominently evinced in the baby exchange scene in the play. First of all, this author states that here is a defeat of African patriarchal pride, and, consequently, it is posited, covertly, that the patriarchal concept of themselves and women is all convoluted and defective. The emirate patriarchal establishment has nursed the perception that a slave is worth less yet the *worthless* female slave (Bilikisu) was pregnant at the same time when Uwar Soro, the queen, was pregnant. This is a development that proves to the patriarchal circle that a female slave is worth more than just a consort. If the consort's son lived at birth and that of Uwar Soro, the queen, died, the consort could even be, and actually is, superior to the queen biologically, physiologically, and by destiny. The consort even gave birth to a son. But the Machiavellian intent of the emirate establishment headed by the late emir denies Bilikisu the glory of destiny by refusing her the right to be the one to produce an heir. As Ahmed Datijo who witnessed it all declares to her in a flashback thus:

If your baby had been pronounced as the heir, and the Queen's child announced dead, you would have had to die too. They would have killed you. (Yerima, 2017: 43)

Although “they” above refer to the other queens, they would not be able to accomplish this dastardly act without the express permission of the emir, which would have been required. The natural course of Providence was perverted because she (Bilikisu) was a consort. Again, readers and the audience are made to see the women being used by African patriarchy against one another. Women have not demonstrated the knowledge that procreation is a biological situation. This accounts for why Madawaki earlier described them as stupid. In a demonstration of this psychic ill, a woman, Gogo Halima, was employed to exchange the babies—the living son taken away from the consort, while the dead son was taken away from Uwar Soro and taken to the consort. This was a situation that Bilikisu assumed was intended to mock the significance of her motherhood. And of this, the late emir was in the know as Ahmed Datijo averred that the late emir was aware of the commission of the atrocious crime. Through conspiracy, the emirate denies the consort of the legitimacy of being closer to or part of the emirate lineage. Such a denial through conspiracy violates equity which, in the context of alternative knowledge system, is crucial in sustaining a cultural practice (Afonja, 2007). If a consort is good enough to be a consort, yet considered not noble enough to be part of the royal lineage, this is human cruelty. If emirs are leaders and faithfulness is an iconic mark of good leadership, then the upturning of the promise made to Bilikisu by the late emir if she could produce him a son is, to say the least, barbaric and Mephistophelian. Unfortunately, this act of distrust is perpetrated with a woman as a tool. Bilikisu recalls that having recovered from the *de javu* and trance that attended the delivery of her son, it was Gogo Halima that broke the news that the baby was *dead*. She recalls that “The Emir stood behind her head bent” (Yerima, 2017: 43). Why couldn't the emir tell the brutal lie himself? It is because African women are against each other in the name of caressing patriarchal ego, as a mark of cultural glorification and preservation.

All the important male personalities in the play are guilty of betrayal through their pronouncements or disposition to Bilikisu's cause. Madawaki is heard in sarcasm when the *Jakadiya* attempts to make them remember the promise, when he says “Ahmed Datijo, you have heard the *Jakadiya*, do you remember? My memory escapes me” (Yerima, 2017: 20). Datijo in a knowing gesture retorts “I, too, remember nothing... I saw nothing, and heard nothing.” This is an obvious conspiratorial complement to Madawaki's denial. The word “too” is, in this context, signifying subservience to Madawaki and this is why in the penultimate line of the Ahmed Datijo's speech, he says “*Rankadede*,” which is an honourific used by the subordinate for the superior. Yakubu, the palace-appointed grave tender whose duty is to tend the needs of the past emirs, rather than motivate Bilikisu to be persistent in her demand, discourages her by asking her to let the seventeen dead men in the grave to whom Bilikisu has brought her case, be. He sickens Bilikisu by maintaining that the ears of the dead are deafened, yet here is Bilikisu

who declares, "No. My heart burns I have unfinished pains to unravel" (Yerima, 2017: 24). Yakubu's discouragement is part of the overall royal Machiavellian agenda against Bilikisu in this culture play. Waziri, a palace elder who contributes to critical issues as the District Officer, on his own is more belligerent swearing:

"May Allah continue to rain a shower of shame on all the false claimers to the throne." This could be a covert reference to the *Jakadiya's* request. Kassim is another elder in the palace who is known to have spoken unfavorably about the education of the women. When his disposition against women's education is considered, it becomes obvious that he feels part of the factors igniting *Jakadiya's* agitation is consciousness and sensitization which he misconstrues to mean education. He feels there would be peace in the form of caressing African monarchical patriarchy, "if they could change their minds about allowing women go to school" (Yerima, 2017: 28). Ibrahim, a palace elder known to have maintained a stand against girl-child education and who marries his daughter out at age eight, calls the awareness or sensitization, "*Rikisi*," that is, conspiracy. In that case, to Ibrahim, when a woman asks for her right as Bilikisu does, it is a conspiracy against men.

One may be tempted to exonerate the late emir in the plight of Bilikisu on the account that he lives no more, but he is the ultimate mastermind of the predicament of the innocent slave-consort. In the first instance, why did he not fulfill the promise he made himself so long before he died? Why did he wait for so long that the *Jakadiya* becomes old and spent? It is the grand plan of maximum objectification and perpetual bondage, because fulfilling the promise made by someone else would require a process of confirmation and authenticity. No one would want to shoulder responsibility. So, instructing Rufai when the late emir was on his death bed is disingenuous. Rufai relates to Bilikisu that Sarkin Abdul Gafar changed his mind about her freedom. Doing so, that is, having to change his mind drastically on such a crucial issue is a reflection of patriarchal hypocrisy. Therefore, the late emir is not absolved from the grand emirate hypocrisy against the old consort, Bilikisu, the *Jakadiya*, reflecting and confirming the opinion that "...life on earth is so unjust..." (Smoker, 2006: 38).

IN CONCLUSION

In *Jakadiya*, Ahmed Yerima portrays the deplorable fate of the African woman in the context of the Mephistophelean African royal patriarchy with women as co-conspirators, making them enemies of themselves. The playwright laments the atrocities perpetrated by the emirate oligarchy against women on the continent as aided by the collaboration and conspiracy of women within their rank. Such atrocities include objectification of women using them for sexual exploits. By the instance of sexual exploitation agenda, the woman involved must not nurse ambitions or aspirations. To this extent, women are used only as personal effects. This is a ridicule of women and humanity. The situation in the play is made worse when women are enslaved in the palace. If a monarch considers a slave good

enough for sexual exploits, but the same woman is considered unfit to be a wife, then it could be asserted that the African emirate patriarchy is, to say the least, Mephistophelean. The atrocious intents of the royal patriarchy are exacerbated in the duplicity perpetrated by the emirate establishment when the baby of the consort is exchanged with the dead son of the substantive queen. Sinister as it is, the plan is revealed as having protected the consort, Bilikisu, from being murdered. This is because, to the emirate, the consort was not woman enough to bequeath an heir to the palace. The exchange of her son could be seen as the height of Machiavellian tendencies, which the playwright laments in the dramatic piece. The essence of the revelation of the patriarchal atrocities as committed by the royal elite, in the twenty-first century worldview of millennial consciousness and globalization, is to draw the attention of the African peoples to the defects in the cultural practices on the continent. It could be deduced from the presentation of the events in the play that the playwright believes that Africa cannot record meaningful developments with such gender controversies.

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