

**A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF THE LITERARY AND CULTURAL
CONSEQUENCES OF THE ABOLITION OF THE 18TH CENTURY TRANS-
ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE ON THE YORUBA OF SOUTHWESTERN
NIGERIA**

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INTRODUCTION

Discourses on the 18th century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade have always been from the historical and political perspectives, rarely from the literary point of view. Hence, this paper focuses on the effects of its abolition on the culture and literature of the Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria. Data for the study were drawn from documentary works. Oral interviews on the subject were conducted with 12 purposively selected respondents comprising Yoruba elders, writers, artists, and historians. In addition, some Yoruba literary genres were diachronically selected and analyzed from the postcolonial point of view.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of the impact of the abolition of the 18th century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is based on the postcolonial theory which has been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experiences of societies that were former European colonies (Ashcroft, 2007). This post-colonial theory thus deals with the effects of colonization on the cultures and societies of the formerly colonized countries of the world. Although the term took its root from attempts by historians after the Second

World War to designate the post-independence period, literary critics have extended its frontiers to the various cultural effects of colonization. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007), the postcolonial theory is used to re-examine and re-evaluate the colonial legacies in pre-and post-independence nations and communities. In Gail's (1999) view, the postcolonial theory refers to a way of reading, theorizing, interpreting and investigating colonial oppression and its legacy that is informed by an oppositional ethical agenda.

Emerging from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies, the central task of postcolonial theory is to advocate a process of artistic and literary decolonization that involves dismantling of European cultural assumptions. There are three models of such theory: the Nativism, Metropolitan and Eclecticist models. The first, Nativism, rejects cultural imperialisms and advocates a rebirth of indigenous culture through the use of indigenous languages and literatures (Adeyemi, 2008).

THE YORÙBÁ PEOPLE

The Yoruba people forms one of the leading ethnic groups in Nigeria, a substantial part of them occupying the southwestern part of the country. A greater percentage of the Yoruba are located in Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo States, while some occupy parts of Kogi and Kwara States. Some of them also reside in the Republic of Benin, Cuba and Brazil (Atanda, 1996).

Going by historical accounts, as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade peaked in the 18th century, and the largest number of slaves captured on raiding expenditures in West Africa was from the Yorùbá kingdom.¹ This is the reason for the presence of some Yoruba people in the Diaspora.

THE YORUBA CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Culture encompasses the tangible and intangible aspects of the people's ways of life (Babawale, 2008). It is defined as the sum total of the material and immaterial tools, art works and knowledge accumulated by the people (Camilleri, 1986). Udu Yakubu has a broader exposition of culture:

[F]or human beings to build houses, cultivate farms, construct bridges, dams or electricity generating plants, manage successful formal education, manage successful business or organization, control population growth, prevent or cure sicknesses and diseases, ensure social trust, good governance, law and order etc, they need an established albeit critically receptive body of ideas and beliefs, designs, techniques and methodologies, rules and regulations; that is culture.

It is evident from the above that the term culture is all encompassing; its peculiarity is seen in the way it impacts on the attitudes, aspirations, skills, and behaviors of a people (Bates and Julian 1975)

Literature, a product of society, is an art composed in words in order to mirror the society. In most areas, a literary piece functions as a continuing symbolic criticism of social values. Literature, at times, is an ideological weapon. Thus, in Marxist view, literature also criticizes the society. This position is in consonance with Barber's view that literature:

plays an important part in shaping or crystallizing the views held by the members of the society: views about the world, about man, and about society. And it is in the light of views like this that the social order is both maintained and changed (Barber 1978, cited in Ogunsina 2006).

Ogunsina (2006) crystallizes the above view, stating that literature treads a common social, economic and political ground as sociology. Ogunsina's view is wrapped up in Warren's (1964) position that: Literature "penetrates the surfaces of social life,

revealing in much deeper sense the feelings of man in the face of his varying experiences within this society” (Ogunsina, 2006).

The summary of the above views is that literature and culture have a close link with sociology. The sociology of the Yorùbá is entrenched in their culture. Their language and literature are vital parts of culture and cultural transmission. Isola (2006) is of the opinion that

It is the duty of literature in the local language to craft those humane qualities into valuable genres, the nuggets and souvenirs of language that will produce the memorable images, that are stored in bank at the front and back of the minds of the owners of the culture.

In essence, language and literature are culture bound. This view justifies the need for a holistic approach to the 18th century abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its impact on the literary life of the Yoruba people.

CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ABOLITION

A change in the cultural heritage of the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria started with the migration of the missionaries, repatriates and liberated freed slaves from Sierra Leone to Lagos between 1852 and 1853. The Sierra Leonian immigrants known as *Sàró Emigres* and the Brazilian Emigres known as *Ìmàrò* were liberated slaves who traced their roots back to the Yorùbá ethnic group. The arrival of these groups of people in Lagos resulted in a change of the Yoruba economic and demographic patterns during the second half of the nineteenth century. One conspicuous effect of this situation was the production of a multi-cultural Yoruba society. According to Baker (1970), the plural characteristic of Lagos was obvious in very many ways. Some of the affected areas were

the emerging patterns of residence, social satisfaction, dressing, diet and social organization. Different contrasting lifestyles were also introduced into the Yorubaland.

Some of the consequences of the abolition of the 18th century slave trade on the Yorùbá people could copiously be traced to the attitude of the *Saro* immigrants to Yoruba. Ogunsina captures this vividly:

Sàró Town, indicates the settlements of repatriates from Sierra Leone. Nearly all the *Saro* immigrants lived there. The *Saro* community produced the first professional and intellectual elite of Lagos. *Sàró* Town was virtually an autonomous settlements, with its schools, church, police force, jail and court house... Even though they were fully conscious of their Yorùbá origin, they were socially aloof from the indigenous community and rejected native authority. They were fond of emulating English behavior and mannerism (Ogunsina 2006)

The contributing factor to the attitude of these liberated slaves, that is, the *Sàró* and *Ìmàrò*, lies in the fact that they were products of a syncretized culture in their new world. Thus, they had assimilated the culture of their ex-masters. Thus, Western culture, which was the culture of their ex-masters, was subtly introduced to the Yorùbá communities.

EFFECTS OF THE ABOLITION ON YORUBA SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Western education is one of the by-products of the abolition of the 18th century Tran-Atlantic Slave Trade. The introduction of Western education produced the pioneer class of literates in the Yorùbá society and the emergence of a new class of people called the *Sàró* and *Ìmàrò*. The lifestyle of the new immigrants had a negative impact on the Yorùbá lineage system. The most cherished kinship relation, which is composed of a number of kindred nuclear families, is a pivot on which the Yorùbá social organization

stands. The extended family - which comprises father, mother and children of the nuclear generation or the first generation and their offsprings - is given much value among the Yorùbá (Atanda 1996) who practice the communal way of life, which is contrary to the Western solitary way of life. Thus, kinship among the Yoruba is essential even in the care of a child (Fadipe 1970).

The importance of the African concept of kinship was also recognized even among the slaves in the new world (Miller, 1997). The kinship relation affected the spread of Christianity among the freed slaves when they came back to the Yoruba land after the abolition. According to Denzer (1997), the traces of how strong the slaves embraced kinship relation was seen in the conversion process when the slaves were freed. There was no way a missionary could enter a compound without asking permission from the head of the family. Consequently, conversion processes went slowly due to the Yorùbá rejection of the new ideology and the enforcement of harsh social sanctions against family and community members who embraced Christianity. This was possible because of the Yorùbá social organization that was closely linked with kinship. Still, the missionaries' influx into the Yorùbá society as a result of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade affected the kinship relation and Yorùbá communal life.

An overview of the missionary impact on the Yorùbá society as a whole is encapsulated in Ayandele's statement that:

missionary activity was a disruptive force, rocking traditional society to its very foundation. No one can argue against the fact that the Christian missions broke into tribal solidarity with their denominational varieties and rivalries... When a missionary converted individuals in a community he removed units from an organic whole and thereby undermined the monolithic structure of the community. The converts not only imbibed a new set of

religious belief but began to nurse alien ideas, economic ambitions and political aspirations of their own, detrimental to the welfare and solidarity of the community (Ayandele 1966)

Because of the subtle introduction of education which prevented non-Christians from registering their children and wards in missionary schools, many who wanted their children and wards to attend school were lured into Christianity. Owing to the contact with Christianity and Western education, the Yorùbá kinship relation started to fade away. Subsequently, the erosion of the kinship relation influenced many aspects of the Yorùbá culture. One aspect of the Yorùbá cultural heritage which was affected negatively is the 'shame culture' which gradually eroded. As a result, there began a nonchalant attitude to Yoruba norms and values by some members of the society.

The 'shame culture' among the Yorùbá is rooted in the fact that Yorùbá society condemns shameful behavior and, therefore, people are expected to avoid things which might put them and the members of their lineage into shame. In Fadipe's view, "the Yorùbá cannot afford to pretend to be indifferent to the public...and its opinion" (Fadipe, 1970). If a member of a family or lineage errs with respect to the accepted norm, he and the members of his family will be publicly ridiculed; public ridicule is thus an important character-molding device.

Satire, a form of weapon for public ridicule, is used among the Yorùbá to checkmate erring members of the society. It is even used as a form of traditional judicial system. Satirists are like traditional policemen, who bring deviants to book. In fact they have the license to do so without being sued (Adejumo, 2007 and 2008). In other words, the Yorùbá principle of reconciliation, conflict resolution and societal harmony could be

found in the use of satire. However, with the incursion of Western culture into the Yorùbá society, the traditional culture of maintaining social order nose-dived and gradually faded away. The effect of this is seen in the way the younger generation dress anyhow, all in the name of dynamism of culture.

Another aspect of the Yorùbá culture that was impaired by the assimilation of the European culture by the freed slaves from Sierra Leone is its polite culture. An average Yorùbá has the attribute of politeness. Politeness is even a key part of the socialization process. Yorùbá people have forms of greeting for all occasions. Thus, anybody that fails to greet appropriately cannot be regarded as *Omólúàbí* (gentle man and gentle woman). The formal traditional ways of greeting have faded away and nowadays there is an elusive search for a complete *Omólúàbí* culture among the youths, who have erroneously imbibed the arrogant manners of the *Sàró* and Brazil immigrants.

The European form of dressing was also introduced into the Yorùbá society. Among the Yorùbá, the way a person dresses speaks a lot about whether he or she is an *Omólúàbí* or not. The Yorùbá have a customary way of dressing. *Buba*, *Agbada*, *Sokoto* and *Filà* constitute the dressing of Yorùbá for men, while *Iró*, *Bùbá*, *Gèlè* and *Ipèlè* constitute the dressing formula for women. The above formulae were eroded by the liberated slaves because they saw them as a mark of barbarism. Instead, they absorbed the Western mode of dressing, which, to them, is a mark of civilization. However, by the time the youth in the Yorùbá society saw these and wanted to practice it, they failed properly to digest the culture. Today, many of them dress frivolously and provocatively, thereby promoting promiscuity. This encourages the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and other related diseases.

Another affected cultural institution is the Yorùbá worldview and religion. Although historical facts establish that some slaves still practiced their traditional religions when they were in the Diaspora, the fauna and flora of their new world could not allow them to do some of their traditional rites.² Therefore, many of the slaves took to Christianity which was the religion of their masters. The abolition of the slave trade, however, encouraged the British incursion into the Yorùbá society. Before the British incursion, many Yorùbá people were traditionalists and atheists, while some were Muslims. The *Sàró* and *Ìmàrò*, on the other hand, embraced the religion of their ex-masters because they had absorbed and assimilated the cultural characteristics of the Europeans and Portuguese. (Ogunsina 2006) The benefits enjoyed by the immigrants as a result of embracing the religion of the colonial masters, that is Christianity, made them win many converts to their camp, and many dropped the traditional religion with a view to achieving the following:

- Education
- Access to administrative power
- Access to the Colonial Masters
- Wealth
- Power and
- Prestige

The implication of assimilating the cultural traits of the Europeans and Portuguese could be vividly seen in the way some immigrants from Sierra Leone and Brazil dropped their indigenous names in exchange for Biblical names. Naming among the Yorùbá is so significant that parents do not just pick names for their children. The Yorùbá believe that the name which a person bears affects his/her life and determines his fortune. This is reflected in the Yorùbá proverb that says:

A so omo ní sódé, ó lo s'Ébí

*ó dé, a so omo ní sóbò, ó lo
 àjò, ó bò; a wá so omo ní
 sórinlo, ó lo s'ájò kò dé mó,
 à nsò; ta ni kò mó pé ilé lomo ti mú orúko anù lo*
 (Adeoye 1972)

A child is named Sódé, (Osó has arrived) he goes to Ebì and returns; a child is named Sóbò (Osó has returned), he goes on a journey and returns; a child is then named Sórinlo (Osó has walked away), he goes on a journey and fails to return and people start to complain, who is it that doesn't know that it is from home that the child has taken a name that inflicts loss?

The above opinion is no longer taken into consideration while naming children since the tradition of picking up English and Biblical names was introduced into the Yorùbá society by the liberated slaves. Even in the contemporary time, some converted Christians who bear names associated with the gods and goddesses worshipped in their lineages have dropped such names for Christian names. Therefore, names like Sàngódayin, Esubiyi, Oyadeyi and Oguntomisin have been changed to Jesudoyin, Jesubiyi, Oluwadeyi and Jesutomisin respectively. The action is always taken to show their loyalty to the newly embraced God of the Christians, which to them differs from *Eledumare*, the Yorùbá God. However, the irony of the situation is that many do not totally practice the Christian doctrine they claim to have accepted.

LITERARY CONSEQUENCES OF THE ABOLITION

The discourse on the literary consequences of the abolition of the 18th century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade will be placed in the right perspective if we understand the development of the language. Yorùbá was predominantly an oral society before the introduction of Western education. Until 1819, when the Yorùbá language was reduced to writing by Bowdich, the Yorùbá oral genres could not be documented (Hair 1967). The

pacesetting efforts of Bowdich also spurred other linguists and missionaries to produce orthographies for the Yorùbá language.

The effort of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, an ex-slave who was later taken to Sierra Leone after the abolition of slave trade, is relevant to our discussion. Crowther spent the early part of his freedom in acquiring the Western education given to the ex-slaves in Sierra Leone. However, his encounter with Rev. John Raban, a missionary who baptized him, enhanced the interest he had in the Yorùbá language. Raban identified Yorùbá which is Crowther's mother tongue as a language. Between 1828 and 1870, Crowther became the chief informant for Raban who was able to collect data for the production of three different published texts on the Yorùbá language³. The interest of Raban in the development of the Yorùbá language directly influenced Crowther, who also developed a sustained interest in the indigenous African languages. Although Crowther took interest in languages like Igbo and Yorùbá, he systematically worked on Yorùbá which was his own language. In 1849, he published the first Yorùbá primer and focused on the development of Yorùbá vocabulary. Earlier, in 1843, he published a Yorùbá dictionary.⁴ Although early written Yorùbá was the product of a mission committee, Crowther interacted with the European linguists and missionaries on matters of orthography, and he was the chief contributor to the Yorùbá version of the Scriptures.

In 1843, he published a grammar book and a Yorùbá version of *The Anglican Book of Common Prayer*. He also began translating the Bible into the Yorùbá language and compiled a Yorùbá dictionary. Crowther's legacy in the area of language development had a great impact on subsequent attempts made by Yorùbá linguists⁵. The

language is now well developed, and it is a subject of study from the primary to the university levels, both in Nigeria and in the Diaspora.

The collective effort of European and African missionaries as well as linguists on the development of the Yorùbá language has an influence on the documentation of Yorùbá literature, which was predominantly oral before the introduction of Western education. However, with the introduction of Western education and the reduction of Yorùbá into writing, the Yorùbá literary tradition took a new look, as we now have both the oral and the written literary traditions.

The documentation of the oral poetic and narrative forms was taken seriously by the new converts who had attained literacy in the Yorùbá language. In order to re-write, and re-present the outlook of their missionaries on the Yorùbá traditional belief and religion, some of the traditional genres, like Ifá verse, were documented. Thus, we have Lijadu's *Òrúnmìlá* (1908) and *Ifá* (1908). *Òrúnmìlá* and *Ifá* are collections of various tales and myths of *Odù Ifá* (Ifá verses). Some other publications were also published for cultural re-awakening. Examples are Ajisáfe's *Enia Soro* and *Ìwé Ìgbádùn Aiye*. These are a re-working of folk narratives by the authors. The aim of *Enia Soro* and *Ìwé Ìgbádùn Aiye* is to expose the Yorùbá social values, norms and beliefs. The early efforts of Lijadu, Ajisafe and other writers were systematically done, as Yorùbá scholars began the collection of oral literary genres, like proverbs, *Ìjàlá*, *Iwì egúngún Sàngó-pípè* and *Ofò*. Documents on Yoruba oral poetic genres later became subject for literary criticism by African literary critics in Nigeria and in the Diaspora. The significance of the attempt made on the documentation of Yorùbá oral genres is phenomenal. This attempt answered the curiosity of European literary scholars and anthropologists on whether Africans had

literature and whether this literature was comparable in any way to the literature of the Euro-American worlds. (Akporobaro, 2005:36). The answer to the above questions is now visible. However, this would not have been possible without the effort of missionaries like Rev. Raban and Ajayi Crowther, an ex-slave who tediously worked in Sierra Leone on the reduction of the Yoruba language into writing.

The Yorùbá written tradition also owes much to the development of the Yorùbá language. Besides, the written literature was employed to decolonize the Yorùbá cultural heritage and liberate the Yorùbá slave mentality.

THE WRITTEN TRADITION

The call for the reconstruction of the African past from the psychological defeat they had suffered from the Europeans and by some Europeanized Africans who migrated from Sierra-Leone led the Yorùbá writers to take the issue of cultural re-awakening seriously. The Yorùbá have philosophy, value and beauty, but these were negatively affected due to colonialism.

Yorùbá writers, like all African writers, are seen as teachers, chroniclers, men of vision, messiahs and agents of change. In fulfilling these roles, early Yorùbá literary writers focused on the issue of cultural rebirth. I. B. Thomas' *Itàn Emi Segilola Eleyinju Ege Elégbèrún Oko laye* (1930), the first Yoruba novel, is a good response to the call for re-awakening of the battered Yorùbá cultural heritage by the immigrants. According to Ogunsina (1992), *Itàn Emi Segilola Eleyinju Ege Elégbèrún Oko laye* is a reaction to the moral degeneration in Lagos, a city where many of the freed slaves settled. As a result of the cultural syncretism that emerged through the liberated slaves, traditional ethics faded away. The traditional thinkers believed then that such a situation spelt doom and woe.

Newspapers began to condemn the new culture that annihilated the old cultural heritage.

Ogunsina (1992:16) claims that the problem of moral decadence that cropped up as a result of the hybrid culture was decried in *Eletí-Ofe*, a newspaper, in 1923, thus:

The problem of the decayed morality in Lagos which has baffled the minds of a good many would-be reforming ecclesiastics is still to be solved... It was once our pride that Lagos girls would have nothing to do with foreigners, even a white one at that. It was then the glory of our girls to carry their honor bright and shining to their husband's house.... (Scrutator column in *Eletí Ofe* March 14, 1923)

Sexual chastity is extolled in the Yorùbá society. The issue of virginity and how ladies were deflowered by the new class of people that emerged as a result of the freed slaves that came to Lagos was decried in the above excerpt. The urbanization, materialism, capitalism and individualism that emerged in the Yoruba society brought a change to the economic and socio-political structure of the society. The quest to amass wealth prompted many ladies to take to prostitution. This is opposed to the Yorùbá culture of sexual chastity. Thus, *Itan Emi Segilola Eleyinju Ege Elegberun Oko Laye* reacted to the above shameful act.

The success of I. B. Thomas later encouraged other writers to write didactic novelette and stories that were aimed at cultural re-awakening. Examples include E. A. Akintan's novelette, *Ìtàn Omo Orukan* (1931), and Akintunde Sowunmi's *Àyóká Féláyò* (1948). The novels of the Fagunwa tradition,⁶ which emerged after the attempt of I. B. Thomas, depended on the Yorùbá cultural heritage as their sources, but the focus of Fagunwa was quite different from his predecessors. Fagunwa's first novel, *Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irúnmolè*, was sponsored by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Hence, his preoccupation was to extol the *Olórun*, the God of Christianity that the CMS was

evangelizing. The middle course novelists tried to attack imperialism and the state of cultural amnesia that now exists in the Yorùbá society in different forms.

However, the fight against cultural amnesia is not limited to the Yorùbá novelists. The Yorùbá playwrights also tried as much as possible to reflect the consequences of the abolition of slave trade on the Yorùbá cultural heritage. Akinwumi Isola's *Madam Tinubu* (1998) is a typical example of such attempts. The exploits of Tinubu, a Yorùbá nationalist and historical figure in Lagos, are brought to the fore, but Isola, through the protagonist, derides the colonial administration and Yorùbá indigenes that cringe because of their colonial mentality. The indigenes that cringe in this play symbolize the freed slaves that were then working for the colonial masters in Lagos. In the play, Isola derides the Sierra Leonian Emigres who had forgotten their roots and had assimilated the culture of the Europeans. To Ìsòlá, dropping one's indigenous name for an European one is madness. Hence, characters like Maiden Toker and Vikiansony, who dropped their Yorùbá names to pick foreign ones because they served the Europeans, are ridiculed in the play. The position of the playwright is captured in the following excerpt:

I believe in the useful preservation of my culture. I hate imitators I hate usurpers, and hypocrites. It is good to know, Maiden Toker, that the maintenance of one's honor is more important and is a source of greater joy than the little pleasures and small monetary gains one may derive from dishonoring oneself. (Madam Tinnubu)

Ìsòlá's perception of culture affirms the fact that he is a nativist who desires to regain Yorùbá identity and honour from its demeaned state by the Europeans and Europeanized-Yoruba in the society. In the main, Ìsòlá's disdain for the colonial mentality introduced by the colonial missionaries and the Saro Émigré into the Yorùbá society and its aftermath on the contemporary Yorùbá are also portrayed in his poem

titled 'Èwe Ìwòyí' (Isola, 1978). In the poem, Ìsòlá lampoons the Yorùbá youths who prefer the European ways of life to the Yorùbá ways of life. He encourages them to embrace and extol the Yorùbá culture because their pride, glory and identity lie in their culture and how well they could display it.

The effect of the abolition of the 18th Century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is also echoed in Yorùbá poems. For instance, Sobo Arobiodu, an astute Yorùbá poet, also uses his poem *Awon Orin Arofo Sobo Arobiodu* (Lijadu, 1974) to censure the activities of the colonial masters and the evil perpetrated by the Saro and Brazilian Emigres who were working with the Europeans. Some of the impacts of the incursion of missionaries on the traditional religions is bellowed in his poem titled 'Ni 'gbà òyìnbó Dàmò Ègbá Nsèlú'.

He says:

*Èyin omodé Imàrò-tí olígbàgbó ilé, t'Olúgbàgbó oko,
T'Ègbá ilè, t'Ègbá oko, mo kiyesi òrò kàn:
Ìgbà òyìnbó 'yú dé yù, bí kò j'ènyàn na súúrù sù, ó bògìn
Ìjò àbúrò ti ju ègbón rẹ lo, aíye kèsèsèsò!
Òyìnbó yù gbà lú kò dùn mí to Irúnmòle yí gbòrun lo
(Lijàdù: 1974)*

Young Imàrò: the Christians all over the villages and towns
The Egba's living in towns and villages
I noticed an issue:
The presence of the Europeans in our midst requires patience
If you failed to be patient that's too bad
The day the younger is higher than the elder is embarrassing
The presence of the Europeans does not annoy me,
It is the demise of the gods that do

The fact that the Yorùbá means of social control is eroded by the introduction of Christianity is also portrayed in Sóbò's poem as he says:

*Òyìnbó parí òtè ogun títun ja ni
Èlúku wo gbó, Àrùngbé wo'ko
Egúngún ns'arìsan*

*A kò dè ri wún d'erú lójú aya ru
Ó mà pò kè o!*

The European put an end to conflict, another erupted
Èlúkú lies in the bush, *Arungbe* lies in the farm
Egúngún is sick
Nothing to instill fear into our wives
This is embarrassing

One of the ways the males subjugate their female counterparts is through the *egúngún* (masquerade) and oro festival, which *èlúkú* signifies. Anybody in the society, male or female, that errs will be lampooned with *àrùngbè* song. With the demise of traditional religion, *àrùngbè* has no place. Thus, some female members of the society are given license to live the way they like. The aftermath of this is promiscuity, as it is portrayed in the following excerpt:

*Oko kò dè tó fowó sàiyà
Lór' aya won aiyé bògìrì o!...*

*Iye eni ibá bímo púpò lilé oko
Nwon d'àgbèrè*

(Olatunji 1982)

Husband cannot boast
They cannot boast of their wives

Many that ought to bear children in their husband's house
Have turned to harlots

The network between the traditional religion and Yorùbá weapon of social control is seen in the above excerpt. Owing to Christianity, the demise of *èlúkú* and *orò* deity gives room for ridiculing erring members of the society and encourages deviant behavior, and this is detrimental to the Yorùbá culture of sexual chastity.

Finally, Sobò Arobiodu highlights some of the evil perpetrated by the Sàró and Ìmàrò immigrants who were serving under the Europeans as emissaries and administrators. He says:

*Ohun Dánásungbó òyìnbó nse I'Íbádàn
Ng káa wí e na?
Nwon nkeran lójà láisàn wo'eran
Nwon nyo kélé, wolé ènìyàn lo báya won se dápò*

(Lijadu, 1974)

The acts of the European- emissaries in Ibadan
Is it not unbelievable?
They disrupted the market to steal goat
They disrupted the market to steal palm oil and seasonings
They tiptoed into houses to rape women.

The acts of the emissaries of the European administrators were a product of colonialism. Many of the emissaries were immigrants who had decided to pitch their camps with the Europeans against the African indigenes. From the two excerpts, the dignity and honor given to Oba in traditional Yorùbá society has been eroded. However, Sobo Arobiodu also takes cognizance of the fact that the incursion of the European and the Europeanized–African that came with them has both negative and positive impacts on the culture of the Yorùbá, as he says:

*Enyin omodé Ègbá e ko ngb'orò ni na?
Ng ko je peri òyìnbó l'ibi, af'a ba nsàwada
Ìgbà òyìnbó yi dé yi, ibi o fi wunwòn dé opin ni.
Iyi buru n'nu rè o pò ju're, ki 's'àwada,*

(Olatunji 1982)

You young people of Egba, won't you listen?
I cannot speak ill of the Europeans except while am joking
The era of the European is quite alright
The evil has not overshadowed the good, this is not a joke

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has revealed that the abolition of the 18th century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade has both negative and positive consequences on the culture of the Yorùbá people. Urbanization, visibility of the Yorùbá in the international trade, and Western education are some of the gains of the abolition.

The effect of Western education on the development of Yoruba literature is enormous. First, the metamorphosing of Yorùbá oral tradition into the written tradition owes much to the influx of the European missionaries and immigrants from Sierra Leone into the Yorùbá land between 1852 and 1853. The emergence of the written tradition was made possible as a result of the acquisition of Western education by some Yorùbá people. Today, many oral poetic genres that would have been buried with their custodians were documented and are being relayed to the younger generations through the new technological media. In addition, the literary genres in the form of novels, plays and poetry are legion and diverse. Second, the issue of 18th Century Trans-Atlantic Slave trade has been a veritable material deployed for the development of plot, theme, setting and characterization in some literary texts.

However, the abolition of the 18th century Trans-Atlantic slave trade and its aftermath have also impacted the Yorùbá culture negatively. It is revealed in the paper that though the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade has been abolished, slavery is still practiced in many parts of the Yorùbá of Southwest Nigeria. Many Yorùbá indigenes are still enslaved to the impacted culture introduced into the Yorùbá society by the freed slaves who migrated to the Yorùbá society from Sierra Leone. The fact that the Yorùbá society became a multi-cultural society ushered in a syncretized culture into the society. The

Yorùbá civilization was corrupted and absolutely lost to the hybrid culture. Consequently, the socio-political and economic structure of the Yorùbá gave way to the European individualistic culture. The result of the above is disharmony and riotous living among some indigenous Yorùbá and the Europeanized Yorùbá.

Endnotes

¹ The above historical account was obtained from the following websites:

- a) The Great Slaves Empires of Africa ([http://www. Internetpu ppets.Org/afrghans.htm](http://www.Internetpu ppets.Org/afrghans.htm)/access on March 30, 2009.
- b) The Transatlantic Slave Trade (<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/slav/hdslav/htm/> access on March 30, 2009.

² Glimpses of Christian History, 3.

⁴ Ibid., 4-6.

⁵ The novels of Fagunwa's tradition are novels of early writers with weird characters. They are replete with metaphysical and philosophical views about life.

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