

Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (Ed.)

Convergence:

ENGLISH & NIGERIAN LANGUAGES

A Festschrift for Munzali A. Jibril



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37. Features of Capitalism in the Novels of Fagunwa: A Marxist Approach

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This paper attempts a critique of some capitalistic tendencies in selected novels of Fagunwa, namely; *Igbó Olódùmarè* (1949), *Ireke Onibudo* (1949) and *Àdìitú Olódùmarè* (1961). Paper employs Marxist approach as a theoretical framework. Fagunwa, a frontier and prolific Yoruba literary writer, addresses a plethora of issues in his works, among which is the economic factor which is relevant to this study. In as much as one cannot declare unequivocally that Fagunwa was a capitalist, his narrative technique and use of language examined in this study, no doubt, portray some features of capitalism. Hence, Fagunwa could be said to have defended the ideology of the colonial order, which this study tends to condemn. The findings reveal that the havoc capitalist economy wrecks on the poor masses of Nigeria is enormous that the few bourgeoisie appropriate the wealth of the generality of the people to themselves, thereby using the wealth to perpetually oppress the masses. Also, the study emphasizes the need for the political leaders to be socially aware of and to reflect on the consequences of their economic policies on the masses. At the prescriptive level, therefore, the study suggests socialist economy as a better economic system that will be beneficial to a society like Nigeria.

2. Introduction

Various scholars have worked extensively on Fagunwa's novels, and there is no doubt that these works and many other related ones enhance our understanding of his novels. Notable among them are; Beier (1967), Bamgbose (1974), Irele (1982) Olabimtan (1975), Ajadi (1998), Yai (1977) and Ogunsina (1992).

For instance, scholars like Beier (1967), Bamgbose (1974) and Ogunsina (1992) examined Fagunwa's plot, narrative techniques, settings, characterization, theme and language. In his work titled "D.O. Fagunwa: A Yoruba Novelist", Beier comments on Fagunwa's plot as being rambling and somewhat disorganized fairy tale. He equally praises Fagunwa on his language, saying:

...Fagunwa has the humour, the rhetoric, the word play, the bizarre imagery that Yorubas like and appreciate in their language. He impresses the reader with his knowledge of classical Yoruba and he is as knowledgeable in proverbial expressions as an old-oracle priest... He uses the language creatively and inventively, constantly adding to the traditional stock of imagery and enriching the language (pp.189).

It is evident from the assertion above that Fagunwa was a master of rhetoric. This is why Beier (1967) calls, at the end of his paper, for the translation of Fagunwa's works into English, so that more people could share the pleasure of his writings. In response to Beier's call, Professor Wole Soyinka translated *Ògbójú* into English: *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* in 1968. Alao Olaye Abioye translated this same book into French: *Preux Chasseur dans la Forêt Infestée de Démons* in 1989, while Gabriel Ajadi translated *Igbó Olódumare* into English: *The Forest of God* in 1995.

Bamgbose (1974) and Ogunlana (1992) have also written critical works on Fagunwa's novels with a detailed analysis on his plot, narrative technique, characterization, themes and language. They both commend him for perfect handling of each aspect of his novels, especially the language.

Irele (1982) describes Fagunwa as a frontier in Yoruba literary world, whose achievement has been, by all accounts, a remarkable one. His work appeared in the appropriate phase in the development of the Yoruba language, from a purely oral to a written one. Irele further says:

Since he was the first to make a new and significant literature of the Yoruba language, to give the oral tradition an extended literary form, he can be called a pioneer (pp.99).

Having done a critique of Fagunwa's novels, Irele (1982:101) eulogises Fagunwa for his language, saying he possesses the Yoruba language to a high degree and employs it with consummate mastery. He adds:

His language expresses in particular the extraordinary sense of humour with which he infuses his subject matter. The atmosphere in each novel, despite its 'ghostly' character, is constantly lightened by touches of warm, familiar humour (pp.102).

In the same vein, Ajadi (1998) comments on didacticism in Fagunwa's novels, believing that it is not accidental but intentional. He rightly observes, however, that as Fagunwa instructs, he instructs persuasively, and through the medium of his language he pleases the imagination. Thus, he asserts:

Obviously, Fagunwa's aesthetic vision, artistic prowess, vividness of imagination, and all his literary excellence are manifested in his powerful and compelling use of language... it is almost impossible to read through his works without catching many glimpses of his dazzling and delightful use of language as he employs a full range of rhetorical means, such as metaphors, symbols, proverbs, epigrams, parallelism, and so on (Ajadi 1998:186).

From the departure of Fagunwa's use of language, Olabimtan (1975) examines the religion aspect of Fagunwa's novels in a paper titled "Religion as a Theme in Fagunwa's Novels". This is viewed in two perspectives. The first perspective is some aspects of Yoruba traditional Religion in Fagunwa's novels, while the second is the aspects of Christian Religion in Fagunwa's novels.

Olabimtan (1975:102) views that Fagunwa recognized that before the advent of foreign religions, the Yoruba believed in one Supreme Being to whom numerous divinities were subject. Hence, he makes references to different attributes of God as believed by the traditional Yoruba. For example in *Ògbójú*:

Isé gbogbo ti ènìyàn bá n se ni Olórun n ri (Ògbójú, pp.18).

(Translation: God sees everything that man does)

Olábímtán (1975:102) likens the quotation with a verse in Ifa oral poetry, thus:

*Amoòkùn jalè,
Tí n rò p'óba ayé ò r'óun,
B'óba ayé ò rí o,
Oba òkè n wò ó*

Translation:

The man who steals in darkness
Believing that the earthly king does not see him,
If the earthly king doesn't see you
The heavenly king does behold you.

Olabimtan, however, observes that Fagunwa shifts emphasis in his novels that all efforts must be to please God and not the gods. Thus, he plays down the aspect of spiritism in Yoruba traditional religion, and his reference to any of the 'orisa' is very cursory except when he refers to Èsù (the trickster god). For example, in *Adiitu* and *Irinkerindo* he devotes considerable space to this god, bringing Esu to contrast with God.

Olabimtan (1975) stresses further the aspects of Yoruba traditional Religion which Fagunwa employs, such as the use of magic and incantations, sacrificial offering and the belief in the power of ancestral spirits.

In other words, Olabimtan views that it appears that Fagunwa feels most comfortable whenever he uses elements of Christian religion in his novels. No doubt in some of his references to God he echoes the traditional belief of the Yoruba, but his references are often made in the light of Christian ideas of God. For example:

- (i) *Eni mímó, Eni Íyanu, Alààyè... Ògá ògo.* (Ogburn 1975:109)
(The Holy one, The Wonderful, The living God... The Wonderful)
- (ii) *Olódùmarè a sì maa be èsè baba wo lára oma.* (Ogburn 1975:109)
(God visits the sins of the father upon the children)

Olabimtan also stresses that Fagunwa derives pleasure in using quotations or paraphrases of Biblical passages more than sayings in Yoruba thought or belief. Example of such is: "Omo tí ó se àfójúdí sí iyá rẹ̀ ti lu òfin àwọn Olódùmarè?" (Igbo pp.70). (The child who does not respect his mother has broken the fifth commandment of God). This is a reference to the fifth commandment in the Bible.

At this juncture, Olabimtan (1975:109) queries whether Fagunwa's goal in his novels is to fuse some acceptable elements of traditional religion with the Christian doctrine in order to produce a distinct set of religious tenets for the traditional Yoruba community, or his intention is to win converts to Christianity by showing how unacceptable the traditional religion is. To Olabimtan, Fagunwa makes use of the religious beliefs of the Yoruba, but there are very few places, if any at all, where a religious tenet of the Yoruba is used with a view to making it an acceptable one. For instance, the belief in magic is strongly attached to religion in the Yoruba tradition, and Fagunwa shows how unacceptable this belief is when compared to the Christian belief in a loving God who can be approached without magic or any intermediary.

As observed by Olabimtan (1975), we view that the idea of Fagunwa elevating Christian religion above the Yoruba traditional religion is unacceptable. If truly he is posed to portray the Yoruba religion, he would not have relegated it to the background at the expense of Christian religion. What we think was responsible for this was that Fagunwa himself had been converted to Christianity, hence he changed his name from Oròwolé to Olorunfemi to show how committed he was to the Christianity. However, as rightly observed by Olabimtan (1975:111) that the fact that Fagunwa's first novel, *Ògbójú* was published by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and distributed to the mission schools by them should not be taken lightly. It was not at all preposterous to suggest that the Christian Missionaries, having learnt that story-telling was a traditional way of transmitting beliefs into the young ones, encouraged Fagunwa to write a story book with traditional background in order to teach Christian ideals, and to suppress such elements of traditional religion as could be detrimental to the growth of the Christian religion.

In his own submission, Yai (1977) in a paper titled "New Literary and Political Reading of Fagunwa", views Fagunwa's works from a different angle. He argues that the accolades bestowed on Fagunwa by some writers are over-emphasised because most critics have ignored some political parameters that are present in his novels. He says:

A natural complement of this over-evaluation is the total neglect of the political and ideological content of Fagunwa's works. The reasons for the laudatory assessment of Fagunwa as a writer coupled with the "conspiracy of silence" about his political dimension are not far to seek. The critics are generally adepts of "non committed" and "objective scholarship". Incursions into the political and ideological implications of Fagunwa's novel would have forced them to the conclusion that they are part and parcel of the exploitation mechanism (1977:3).

Yai (1977:4) sees Fagunwa as a great defensor of the colonial order whose works may aptly be described as a hymn to meritocracy. He observes that it is not superfluous to note that Fagunwa has almost dedicated his novels to colonialist "educators" or missionaries, who, according to him are "highly interested in the development of Yoruba literature" (Igbo; VII). And when the novel is not dedicated to colonialists, it is dedicated to their Nigerian heirs. Thus, *A diitu* is dedicated to Chief Obafemi Awolowo who is presented as universal paragon of political leader.

Furthermore, Yai (1977) observes that Fagunwa's novels disseminate the capitalist fallacy that every poor man can become a millionaire in future. Therefore, every citizen should be content with the current social order with the hope that he may be the next millionaire. He cites the example of such when *Ànjònu-Ìbèrù* says:

Èyin omo mi gbogbo, mo fe kí e fii sí okàn láti òní lo pé, kò sí nkan kan tí enikéni kò lè se, eni tí ó bá n fé di olówó lè di olówó, eni tí ó bá n fé di èniyàn pàtàkì lè di èniyàn pàtàkì... (Igbo, pp. 45).

Translation:

My children all, I want you to put it in mind from this day on that, there is nothing anybody cannot do, one who wants to be rich may become rich, one who wants to be important may be an important person...

Therefore, Yai portends that an important aspect of Fagunwa's poetics is that his ideological allegiance to petty bourgeois and Christian values has some impact on the artistic texture of his novels.

In the light of Yai's (1977) position on Fagunwa's political ideology, this study delves into the features of capitalism as portrayed in Fagunwa's novels, for it is believed that there is a cordial relationship between the politics and the economic system of a nation. As Spero (1990:4) rightly observes that just as economic factors influence political outcomes, so political factors influence economic outcomes.

3. Theoretical Framework

The literary theory adopted for this study is Marxist theory. This theory has been found prominent in academics since the twentieth century. The philosophy of Marxist is materialism. Throughout the modern history of Europe, and especially at the end of the eighteenth century in France, where a resolute struggle was conducted against every kind of medieval rubbish, against serfdom in institutions and ideas, materialism has proved to be the only philosophy that is consistent, true to all the teachings of natural science and hostile to superstition.

Moreover, Marxists, like Goldman and Tiotelit, considered this theory as being useful for literary criticism (Kehinde, 1998:8). The justification for using this theory for literary criticism is borne out of the fact that politics and other human experiences, such as economy, law, culture, religion and so on, are the products of a society, hence it is such human experiences that are manifested in literary works. Literature reflects current social and economic conditions, and as long as literature deals with the activities of man in the society, it is deeply related to the economy.

Marxist theory is concerned with how to weaken the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Opefeyitimi (1997:48) states that Marxists are much concerned about the political and economic oppression of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat, and, are therefore, seeking for change. The Marxists are of the opinion that economy and politics are interwoven, because economy does influence political outcomes of society and vice versa. Therefore, Dolbeare (1976:193) emphasizes that, Marx realised that there was tendency for oppression from the ruling class that possesses both economic and political powers over the poor masses, hence, he suggested that the only appropriate strategy for development is revolution.

Dolbeare quickly added that, though, Marx did not see the option of revolution as something that was easy, he insisted it was the only solution because the ruling class was the implacable foe of positive development of the masses, for it meant the end of capitalism.

In the same vein, Abrahamson (1990:58) alerts:

So long as the means of production are owned by one group, there is oppression and estrangement. Recognize its true source. Don't blame it on the stars, and don't look to religion or to science for answers. And when you recognize the true source of your estrangement, act!

The Marxists see religion as an opium of the people. They perceive religion or teaching of morals as the instrument employed by the rich to blindfold the poor people so that they would be continually oppressed. This is why Mannan (1980:45) bluntly states:

Religions and morals are concocted by dominant classes to fortify their own interests; therefore, all religion and ethics hitherto prevalent among mankind are suspect.

Therefore, Marxists are of the opinion that it is the oppressed themselves that could make their own history under appropriate circumstances so as to change their condition in the direction of the new and thus become different people.

However, among the various approaches to the study of Marxist theory, Terry Eagleton's (1957) approach is adopted for this study. Eagleton believes that there is a cordial relationship between literature and politics, as literature is a fragment of society. Moreover, this approach opines that literature is a representation of a social class in the society, and as such it takes care of the class it is representing. This approach, therefore, will enable us to know the social class Fagunwa is representing in his novels.

4. Nigerian/Yoruba Economic System before and during Fagunwa's Novels

At this juncture, it is pertinent to review the Nigerian/Yoruba economic system before and during the writing of Fagunwa's novels, so as to enhance our understanding (in knowing, at each level of his writing), the system of economy that was operating in the country.

According to the historians, subsistence farming was the pre-occupation of the Nigerian people at the inception, before the arrival of the colonial masters. This, however, translates that each member of society had his own farms and herds which the family members were fed on, and also exchanged the goods and commodities among the neighbouring villages.

Gavin and Oyemakinde (1980:482) describe the Nigerian economic system at the beginning of 19th century thus:

In the early 19th century, Nigeria's economy like the economy of practically every other country in the world was based principally on agriculture. The vast majority of the population was fully engaged in agricultural pursuits and there were very few members of society who did not have their farms and herds.

In the same vein, Alao as cited in Adesina and Olorunfemi (1998:127) adds:

Long before the arrival of the Europeans with their massive demand for tropical raw materials, the people engaged in food farming combined with palm oil processing mainly for home consumption with the unit of production being the farmer and dependent members of his own family, comprising his wives and children.

The above quotations emphasize that within each community, there was a specialisation built upon the agricultural base. Each household in the communities, had its own line in food preparation which could be made available to others at a price or for an exchange.

Apart from food production, there were specialist craftsmen and others who would take up a particular craft. Also, there were hunters and fishermen and those who devoted their whole energies to trade. All these were grist to the mill of the multitude of local periodical markets which covered practically the whole land. Furthermore, there were smelters all over the country and the same may be said of mat-making, which was more highly developed in some areas than in others, pottery, calabash-carving, leather-working, fishing and so on.

However, the whole system turned around when the colonialists came, they ventured into exporting the farm products such as cocoa, coffee, cotton and so on. Thus, Gavin & Oyemakin (1980: 496): "The colonial regime was imposed upon a Nigerian economy which was as yet only marginally involved in the European-dominated system of world-trade".

Ironically, the exported products having been refined would be subsequently sold back to Nigeria at a prohibitive cost.

Webster & Boahen (1967:281) also testify that at the period: "Cocoa was West Africa's most important export crop. Ghana became the world's largest producer followed by Yorubaland".

However, there is no doubt that the presence of the colonialists made the Nigerian economy to expand in term of agriculture. It also enhanced the development of Yorubaland and the whole of Nigeria. This is corroborated by Gavin & Oyemakin (1980:500) saying:

The first phase of colonial rule which might be said to have ended in 1914 was in many respects a period during which Nigeria's economy could really be said to have developed.

During the period, the Nigerian enterprise was very much appreciated. Heavy investments were made by Yoruba farmers and landowners in the establishment of Kola and Cocoa plantations which could multiply the productivity of land in cash terms several times over.

Moreover, as observed by Gavin & Oyemakin (1980:506) that, as at 1930s when the depression was so severe that the whole colonial economy together with the European metropolis appeared to falter and lose its nerve, the indigenous Nigerian economy (at least at the early stages of the depression), appeared to flourish. There was harvest after harvest of unprecedented size and value in Nigeria. Coincidentally, this was the time Fagunwa wrote his first novel *Ògbóju Ode Ninú Igbó Irúnmalè* (1938).

After the second world war which could be said to last from 1940 to 1950, was a period of more outright exploitation of the Nigerian economy by the

colonial power. The colonial state was seen essentially as an impartial policeman holding the ring for the operation of economic forces. It held open Nigeria's market to world trade which, it was hoped would mean predominantly British trade. This was the period Fagunwa wrote the trio of *Igbó Olódùmarè* (1949), *Ìrèké Oníbùdó* (1949) and *Ìrìnkèrindò Ninú Igbó Elégbèje* (1954).

Consequently, Nigeria got her independence from the British government in 1960. And before their departure, they had already exposed the Nigerians to the viability of the natural resources such as the crude oil. The money generated from the crude oil made the Nigerian government abandoned agriculture.

However, the sudden departure of Nigerian economy from the era of agriculture to the era of oil exploration, reflects in Fagunwa's fifth novel, *Àdìitú Olódùmarè* (1961).

Now that we have examined Nigerian economic system before and, as at the time Fagunwa wrote his five novels, it will be convenient for us to do a critical analysis of the economic system the writer is advocating.

5. Features of Capitalism in Fagunwa's Novels

Here, our major preoccupation is to justify the interest of Fagunwa in advocating a capitalist economy via the adoption of Marxist theory.

Fagunwa, as a writer, supports the idea of capitalism as depicted in his novels. As we are made to understand by Eagleton (1957), a writer has his own ideology or that of the social class he belongs to. It is the interest of his ideology, or of his class, that he is representing in his work.

Fagunwa's first novel, *Ogboju* was written in 1938. If we trace the line of history, this was the period Nigerian economy was based mainly on agriculture, and it was reflected in the novel. The happenings in the novel typify what Yoruba hunters usually experience in the course of their hunting adventures. The brave and courageous among them were usually popular and rich. This is what Fagunwa is revealing to us. Also, he makes us understand that subsistence farming was found prominent among the Yorubas before the coming of the colonialists.

However, as at the time he wrote *Igbó*, the control of the Nigerian economy had been hijacked by the colonial masters. Though, the economy was still based on agriculture, it had been shifted from subsistence to large scale farming, whereby the farm crops were being exported in large quantity and a huge sum of money was forthcoming for the farmers and the landowners.

Thus, the state of Yoruba economy at that period was clearly portrayed in *Igbó*. For example, the name given the hero in the novel, Olówó-Ayé Omo Akòwédìran, does not have any link with the name of Yorùbá hunters as in the case of Àkàrà-Oògùn in *Ògbójú*. This informs Adegemi's (2002:9) observation that, what we see in *Igbó* is a portrayal of an educated hunter and not the one peculiar with the Yorubas. He maintains that the name 'Olówó-Ayé is an embodiment of capitalist economy. Also, the forest in which he is hunting, is not

to kill animals, rather he is attempting to accumulate wealth for himself. Hence, Adeyemi (2002:9) asserts:

Fágúnwà fara mó ètò orò-ajé olówólólayé pèlú èrò báyéserí pé gbogbo èniyàn ló lè dolówó tí wón bá múra sise. Ogbón burúkú tí n fa irètí òfò nìyí. Èyí ni àwon aláse n lò lóri àwon òsísé ìjoba tí won kii tètè fura pé wón n ré won je, mèkúnnù yóò ti gbàgbé pé ojo òla yóò dára bí òun bá ti n sisé.

Adeyemi's assertion is confirmed in *Igbó*, when Fagunwa presents it through one of the characters named, Ànjònnú-Ìbèrù that:

Èyin omo mi gbogbo mo fé ki e fi si okàn láti òní lo pé kò sí nnkan tí n be ní orí ilẹ̀ ayé tí enìkan kò lé se, eni tí ó bá fé di olówó lè di olówó, eni tí ó bá fé di ènià pàtàkì l'è di ènià pàtàkì... (Igbó, o.i. 45).

Translation:

My children all, I want you to put it in mind from this day on that, there is nothing on earth that anybody cannot do, he who wants to be rich can be rich, he who wants to be an important person can become an important person...

Moreover, Adeyemi (2002:10) concludes that Fagunwa's position that everybody could be rich, provided we do not antagonize the rulers, is a sheer deceit.

Fagunwa, however, further intensifies his preaching by saying that:

... bí ènià nlá bá n lò ó bí enikejì ara rè túbò máa gbé e ga, tóbè tí yio fì mò pé ìwo kò rí òun fin (Igbó, o.i. 42).

Translation:

... If a big person is using you as his companion, do continue to exalt him, that he will know that you don't have a contempt for him.

In Fagunwa's message, he is obviously creating an avenue for the rich to further exploit and oppress the poor. This is an opposed view of the Marxists who believe that the rich will never dream of a better future for the poor. However, Dolbeare, (1976:195) an apostle of Marx, declares: "the ruling class was the implacable foe of such realization, for it meant the end of capitalism".

In our own opinion, what we think could be responsible for Fagunwa advocating for the capitalists (the white men) could not be unconnected with the favour he had earlier received from the British government in his educational career. In 1946, Fagunwa went to Britain on a British Council scholarship and remained there until 1948. For this reason, therefore, we think he did not want to bite the fingers that fed him.

There are a lot of such a message in *Igbó*, which makes it clear that Fagunwa is in support of capitalist economy. For instance, he makes us realise that, in a capitalist society, there is a right for an individual to bequeath wealth to the unborn generation. He puts it thus:

Léhìn igbà tí olúkúlùkù lo sí ilé rè tán, bàbá mi ko àwon ohun àlùmòóní tí wón fì ta á lore jo eléyìnì sí mú kí 'o di olówó fún ojó pipe. Bí kò bá sí olè tí ó jà á nìgbà tí òun kúrò nínú Igbó Olódùmarè tí ó wá sí ilé ni, owó nàà ì bá pò tò bée tí irú àwa wònyí kò bá tí sisé kí á tò maa jeun (Igbó, o.i. 49).

Translation:

After everyone had left for his house, my father packed all the valuables that were given to him together, which made him became rich for a long time. If not for the experience he had with the thieves when he left the forest of God for home, the money would have been so plenty that people like us would not have worked before we eat.

The above is a similar thought that usually cuts across the minds of our rulers or leaders whenever they are in position of authority. They believe the more they are able to embezzle the public money the better for them and their unborn generations.

Moreover, Fagunwa portrays the importance of western education in capitalist societies. He believes that the formal education one possesses is a means to an end of attaining a position of authority, where one will not be relegated to the background. He says:

Nítorí mo fẹ́ kí o rántí pé bàbá mi ti lo sí ilé iwé kí ó tò di pé ó bèrè ode síse, ogbón tò sí kò ní ilé iwé n ràn án lówó àti kó owó jo. Ìdilé òmòwé kò sí ní ipò tálákà, bí won kò ní owó ní òní, won n bò wá ní lóla (Igbó, o.i. 49).

Translation:

For I want you to remember that my father had earlier attended school before he started hunting, the wisdom he acquired at school did help him in accumulating money. The educated families are not in the position of poverty, if they don't have riches today, they will have tomorrow.

According to the quotation above, it is observed that Fagunwa is objectively representing his own ideology and that of the educated ones in the society. This claim could be substantiated through his biography. Fagunwa had the opportunity of Western Education and schooled in Britain. He was subsequently appointed as Education Officer with the Publications Branch of the Ministry of Education in Western Nigeria between 1955 and 1959. He was also in the service of Heinemann Educational Books Limited, where he acted as the Representative in

Nigeria between 1959 and 1963. These important positions he held, perhaps, would not have been possible, according to his claim, if he had not acquired a Western Education. From this perspective, therefore, Fagunwa seems to enlighten his readers on the significance of Western education in capitalist society.

On the other hand, in *Ìrèké*, Fagunwa advises that it is unwise for the workers or the poor to oppose the will of their employers or bosses. And that they should be patient in whatever hardship they may encounter, hoping that tomorrow may be better for them. He puts it that:

... àwon elòmíràn á wà ní ibi isé, ògá won á fì yà je wón, sùgbón dípò kí wón rora máa bá isé won lo ní tiwon, wón á wa orùn kì, wón á ni àwon n wá ifarapa ògá àwon, àwon were, àwon dòngísolá gbogbo, dípò kí wón rójú, kí wón fì ara da isòro títi àwon náà á fì di ògá fún àwon elòmíràn, won a máa se iléí ohun tí àwon yóò se. won tí gbàgbé pé kí èniyàn tóó lè rí ànfààní nlá olúwarè nílátì jìyà nlá, kí èniyàn tóó lè dé ipò nlá, olúwarè nílátì mú sùúrù nlá, omo òdò kò lè gbón ju olúwa rè lo (*Ìrèké*, o.i. 16).

Translation:

... some will be in their places of work, their bosses will cheat them, but rather for them to continue with their work, they will be proofing stubborn, saying that they want to hurt their bosses, fool ones, the stupid ones, instead of them to persevere, to tolerate the hardship before they too become bosses for others, they will be promising what they will do. They have forgotten that for one to have a big opportunity, one has to taste a big affliction, before one gets to a big position, one has to have a big patience, a servant cannot be wiser than his lord.

Obviously, Karl Marx and his followers were antagonistic to the statement above, describing it as unprogressive and unpalatable to the plight of the workers. Marxists believe that so long as the means of production belong to the ruling class, there would be oppression over the poor masses, therefore, they call for revolution.

Abrahamson (1990:57) argues that Karl Marx observed that, in capitalist societies, as the productivity of labour increased, the workers themselves became more depreciated. This seeming anomaly is resolved by remembering that labour itself is a production commodity. Therefore, the more commodities it produces, the more its individuality is lost. Now, how do we reconcile Fagunwa's preaching of patience and perseverance with Marxist's resistance of oppression? Can a worker that has already been depreciated be useful for himself in the nearest future as claimed by Abrahamson (1990:57)? This is highly paradoxical.

Here, Fagunwa is echoing what the religion teaches about patience and perseverance. And it was commended by the colonial masters that were at the helms of affairs. No wonder, he was awarded the M.B.E. by the British Government in 1959.

In Marxists' opinion, perseverance and patience could not end the issue of exploitation of the workers by the employers, but rather a revolution. They also believe that religion and the teaching of ethics are enemies of workers' progress. This is why Mannan (1980:45) alerts that religions and morals are concocted by dominant classes to fortify their own interests, hence, they should be suspected.

In our own opinion, what Fagunwa is preaching is deceitful, because the employers are enemies of such realization, for it will mean an end to their exploitation. We observe that Fagunwa was saying this to please his benefactors and also to solicit support for their administrative and economic system.

Furthermore, in *Àdìitú*, Fagunwa shows how the Nigerian economic system changed from agriculture to the exploration of oil and other natural resources. This is why he changed his narrative style from the hunter that embarks on a hunting adventure to a character that goes to a neighbouring town in search of money. The elephant's tusk (ehín-erin) that symbolises natural resources makes *Àdìitú* a wealthy man in Ajédùbùlè. This, however, translates that since Nigeria got her independence in 1960, attention has been shifted from the agricultural produce to the exploration of oil and other natural resources. Thus, Fagunwa portrays the sudden development in his *Àdìitú* (1961). For instance, when *Àdìitú*'s boss was preparing his will, he writes:

Mo fi egbèrún àpò owó fún omo mi obìnrin... mo fi ilè mi tí wón tí n wa epo móto fún un pèlu... (Àdìitú, o.i. 40).

Translation:

I will a thousand pound to my daughter... I also will my land, where crude oil is explored to her ...

He further adds:

Mo fi èèdégbèta àpò owó fún Àdìitú Olódùmarè tí mo ti gbà se omo, mo sì fún un ní ilè mi tí wón tí n wa gòólù àti gbogbo oko róba mi (Àdìitú, o.i. 40).

Translation:

I will a five hundred pound to *Adiitu* Olodumare whom I have adopted as a child, I also will my land, where gold is explored and my rubber plantation, to him.

The quotations above are testimonies of a right to inherit and bequeath wealth in a capitalist society. Fagunwa was referring, in the will, the resources that can make one be excessively rich in a capitalist society. The resources include; money, landed properties (where gold, cotton and crude oil are explored).

Till the present time, in Nigeria, what Fagunwa describes in *Àdìitú*, is still happening. The politicians are desperately looking for political power so that they

will be in control of the economy. Since petroleum is the pillar of Nigerian economy, so is the means through which Nigerian leaders use in amassing wealth. Ironically, it is the same society that honours these people with various chieftaincy titles.

6. Benefits and Demerits of Capitalist Economy

Adesina and Olorunfemi (1998:128) describe the economy adopted and foisted on Nigeria by the colonialists, as the one directed towards capitalist development. They say:

This peculiar economic system proceeded to create large scale capitalist farmers out of city-dwellers, transform small-holders into modernised commercial farmers, stimulate a new class of export goods oriented traders and also saw to the monetisation of the economy.

The above could be seen as an advantage to the peasant farmers who were suddenly transformed to a large scale and modernized commercial farmers. The new development enhanced their chances of getting more money through the exportation of agricultural produce. Also, this type of economic system (capitalism) makes possible the relationship between one country and others.

Another benefit derived from a capitalist economy is that it promotes the development of a society. For example, a society whose economy was based on subsistence farming and thereafter transformed to a large scale farming would no doubt bring a tremendous development in terms of infrastructure such as: good motorable roads, which would make easy the transportation of farm produce from one place to another. Moreover, the people of such community would enjoy the social amenities like electricity, pipe-borne water, both small and large scale industries and so on.

On the other hand, the havoc capitalist economy wrecks on the poor masses is so enormous than its benefits. For instance, when the Yoruba economy changed to a capitalist one, cocoa cultivation was the concentration of the Yoruba farmers because of its marketability via the world market, thus showing little or no attention to other food crops. Adesina and Olorunfemi (1998:129) testify by saying:

The result has been that wherever suitable land was available, the Yoruba farmer for example, had concentrated on cocoa cultivation, and in some districts growing little food crops barely enough for his family, the general belief being that no food farmer could prosper like the cocoa farmer.

This encouraged every farmer to concentrate fully on cocoa plantation because money was forthcoming from there. Food that was surplus earlier, had become so scarce. Unfortunately, the similar scenario is still prevalent in the present Nigerian

economic situation. The number of people engaged in farming is very few, while the majority's interest lies in the money accrued from the crude oil or other lucrative jobs.

Moreover, the concept of a global economic system common among the capitalist societies, is a suspect. One of the most significant characteristics of the contemporary world is that the economic prospects of nations, regions, and even individual communities are fundamentally interrelated. The new regimes of global power have incapacitated ordinary people from satisfying basic needs, let alone acquiring assets. The international market is under the monopolistic control of the developed economies and thus operates to the detriment of the underdeveloped countries tied to it. International market operations enable the developed countries to extract the economic wealth of the underdeveloped countries for their own use.

For this reason, Adesina and Olorunfemi (1998:132) frankly declare:

Thus, instead of alleviating the sufferings of the rural dwellers, who incidentally were the producers of the nation's wealth, their fate was left to the caprices of international finance capital which not only made them economically unenthusiastic and widened the gap between the rich and the poor, but also left their farming methods antediluvian.

Thus, liberalized trade policy has not led to greater equality or an alleviation of poverty, but rather, a growth in the disparity between the rich and the poor.

Another demerit of capitalist economy is that most gestures received from the developed countries, in the sake of financial assistance by the underdeveloped nations, could be well referred to as a "Greek gift". They never sow where they will not reap in abundance. Foreign aid is a familiar economic tool used for strategic and diplomatic ends. It has also been used by former colonial powers to retain political influence in those newly independent former colonies. For instance, Fagunwa illustrates this kind of gesture in *Igbó*. After Bábá Onirùngbònyéúkè had given the hunters some gifts, he gave them some conditions concerning their usage. He directs:

Nígbà tí e bá n lo omi yìí, e kò gbodò je epo, e kò gbodò je iyò, e kò gbodò je ata, e sì nílati wà ní ìhòhò gidigbi. (Igbó, o.i. 139).

Translation:

While using this water, you should not taste palm-oil, you should not taste salt, you should not taste pepper, and you have to be in strip naked.

The conditions given to the hunters were unbearable. To them, at that point, it may look as if he has done them a great favour, but when they are about to commence its implementation, then, they will realise that it is full of hardship. The same scenario could be likened with the loan received by the Nigerian government in 1986, from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Aftermath of the loan was

the introduction of an economic measure tagged, "Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)", which brought a great economic hardship to the poor masses.

Goodman (2001:388) corroborates this claim that:

Austerity measures imposed by world financial organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the name of expanding free trade ensure that poor nations stay poor by imposing 'fiscal discipline' and public disinvestment.

Also, in *Àdiitú*, we observe same experience when *Àdiitú*'s boss was writing his will. He writes:

Sùgbón kí Àdiitú Olódùmarè tó lè je ànfàní wònyí, ó ní láti fí owó sí iwé pèlù àwon tí yíò pín ogún mí pé iyàwó tí òun ó kó fẹ́ nílátí jé omo Ajédùbùlè, kí ó sì tó lè fẹ́ òmíràn tẹ̀lẹ̀ e, ó nílátí tó ódún mēwàá gbáko tí ó ti fẹ́ e (Àdiitú, o.i. 40).

Translation:

But before *Adiitu* *Olodumare* can benefit from these, he has to write an undertaking with those that are in charge of my will, that his first wife must be an indigene of *Ajedubule*, and before he dares marry another wife, it should be after ten years of his first marriage.

The conditions given *Adiitú* before he could bequeath from his master's property would have temporarily incapacitated him (at least for ten years), before he could be free to make his own choice of marriage. Thus, his master is less concerned whether *Àdiitú* had determined to marry from his own town, *Ìlákòsè*. As an English adage says, "he who pays the piper, dictates the tone", *Àdiitú*'s master possesses the secret of how *Àdiitú* could be rich, the choice now belongs to *Àdiitú*. Assuming *Àdiitú* does not comply with his master's directive, his wealth would not have been enormous as it were.

This is the case with the developing nations (like Nigeria), that trade with the developed nations. Rather than alleviating poverty in the developing nations, they employ the concept of globalization to ensure that poor nations stay poor. Moreover, local elites with a vested interest in the structure of dominance and a monopoly of domestic power cooperate with international capitalist elites to perpetuate the international capitalist system.

However, *Adéyemi* (2002:10) notes that though, *Fagunwa* advocates a capitalist economy, he calls the attention of Nigerians on the havoc globalization of economy tends to portend on the development of the developing nations. Hence, Marxists, according to *Spero* (1990:149-150) believe that the only solution is total destruction of the international capitalist system and its replacement with an international socialist system.

7. Suggestion/Observation

As observed by the Marxists, we also view that capitalism be substituted with socialism, for the sake of the poor masses. Under socialism, a better spirit of cooperation and service will prevail; that with competition removed, new standards of morality and ethics will take their place (Mannan 1980:39).

For this to take place, there should be total re-orientation and enlightenment of the whole society. Spirit of co-operation and service will prevail, only if we return to the old system of communalism that once existed in Nigeria, before the erosion of our culture by the western culture. Then, the members of a large family saw themselves as one and subjected themselves to the authority of the elders in the family. The sharing pattern was collectively agreed upon and the communal work was done with all zeal and enthusiasm. As a result, there was no unnecessary competition over the wealth of the society.

In addition, there was a high standard of morality and ethics as compared to what exists in this present society. If the idea of alien religion and administration is eschewed, the genuine spirit of co-operation, of love and of loyalty among the people, will return. Hence, there will be a new standard of morality and ethics.

However, Mannan (1980:43) notes that there is a popular misconception about the relation between socialism and religion. Also, it has frequently been alleged that socialists are atheists and that socialism would destroy religious institutions. But there is nothing in socialism, however, which is necessarily antagonistic to religion. Although it is true that socialists in some countries have grievances against the organized church, it is not fair to say that socialism is anti-religious. After all, we have our own religions in Africa before the imposition of the western religions.

Moreover, the Marxists have suggested that in building a new socialism, we cannot totally ignore the materials inherited from the old capitalist world, we must utilise them. Kommuna 1919 as cited in Lenin (1985:60-61) suggests:

This is the only way we can build. If you are unable to erect the edifice with the materials bequeathed to us by the bourgeois world, you will not be able to build it at all. For the purpose of building socialism, we must make the fullest use of the science, technology and in general, everything that capitalist Russia bequeathed to us.

What Kommuna is saying in essence, is that, we have to place people of the old type in new conditions, keep them under proper control, under the vigilant supervision of the proletariat, and make them do the work we need under the new system of socialism.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have extensively examined the three novels of Fagunwa and established that the author represents the ideology of the bourgeois class, thus

advocating capitalist economy. The Marxist theory adopted for this study, however, made us comprehend better, the evil capitalist economy portends to the welfare of the masses. Hence, an option of socialism was suggested in the study. For, socialism claims to reduce the wastes and eliminate depressions and unemployment through central planning of the economy as a whole. It would hope to eliminate unearned incomes and reduce inequality while promoting the welfare of the masses. And finally, hope to bridge the lacuna created between the rich and the poor in capitalist societies.

Lastly, as a way of contributing to scholarship, this study has been able to enlighten us further on the contribution of the writers, especially Fagunwa, to the socio-economic development of the society. Thus, giving us the critics the opportunity to prescribe a socialist economy, as an antidote to Nigerian economic problems.

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