Translation and National Consciousness in Nigeria: A Socio-historical Study

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ABSTRACT

Translation and National Consciousness in Nigeria: A Socio-historical Study

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Interdisciplinary in orientation, this study draws knowledge from the fields of Translation Studies, History and Political Science in a bid to explore the interplay between translation and nationalism in a sub-Saharan African context. More specifically, the current research focuses on the Nigerian experience of nationhood and seeks to investigate the effect(s) of translation on the construction of a psychological notion of nationalism that aligns with the concept of the nation as an imagined community. The research upon which this study rests makes use of the socio-historical approach to translation theory and practice, which privileges such questions as: what was translated, by whom and in what social and political contexts. The findings point to the existence of several notions and experiences of translation that are specific to oralate communities, and further buttress the argument that Western conventions, despite their major contributions to knowledge, do not sufficiently account for the cultural sensibilities that animate the practice of translation in national contexts that boast a robust historical and ongoing relationship with orality. What's more, the current study reveals the roles played by precolonial translation practices in the sustenance of the prevailing religious and cultural traditions, which in turn helped corral the precolonial nation's inhabitants into a non-coerced form of social conformity and consciousness. Translation would subsequently replace the precolonial model of nationhood with a national imagination that was steeped in British colonial paradigms and fashioned to meet the ends of colonial nationalism. In the Nigerian postcolony, the role of translation in fashioning an anti-imperialist literary discourse as well as the production of fictional

representations of contemporary social realities has spurred "national texts," which have not only resonated within the consciousnesses of the nation's diverse peoples, but have also inspired them to think of themselves as members of the same community. This sense of community has, however, been fraught with myriad problems, such as translation's involvement in the consolidation and promotion of the Northern reality of Islamic fundamentalism and conservatism, which has, over the centuries, pulled most of the inhabitants of the Northern half of the nation-space into a regional sub-culture that is buoyed by ideological forces operating out of the Arabian peninsula. Translation has therefore facilitated a conflicting experience of nationhood in the contemporary nation-space that is deeply rooted in a historical legacy of religious and cultural alterity.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research draws from three main disciplines: translation studies, history and political science. It deals principally with the interplay between translation and orality as well as the impact of this discursive interconnectedness on the construction of a national consciousness in Nigeria. The current research therefore seeks to establish a symphony of pragmatic and theoretical connections between translation and nationalism in Nigeria. As will be seen in the course of this study, the establishment of that crucial link between translation and nationalism entails much more than a narratorial exposition of the historical trajectories of the two phenomena. This study will therefore benefit from a thorough genealogical inquisition into the dynamics of translation in the historical configurations of the Nigerian nation, in light of the prevailing socio-cultural and political realities. In order to expose the interplay between translation and nationalism in Nigeria, this study asks: what major forms of translation have animated the Nigerian nation-space and what effects have these had on the forging of a national consciousness?

1.1 Overview

The search for the origin and evolution of translation has always been a challenging exercise, given the oft-differing socio-cultural and political experiences across national boundaries. These complexities and challenges notwithstanding, the evolution of language mediation within the framework of the socio-political and cultural experiences of such contexts as the Western, Eastern and Middle-Eastern traditions has been well documented by some scholars (Paker 2001; Pym 2001; Baker 2001; Hung and Pollard 2001). Robert Valdéon (2013) mentions that translation, alongside military conquest and trade, played a significant role in the construction and expansion of the afore-mentioned national contexts - a point which Douglas Robinson also argues in

Translation and Empire (1997). The knowledge of the history, theory and practice of translation that we know of today draws mostly from these ancient traditions which are known to have a rich and extensive writing tradition. Popularized by print capitalism (à la Benedict Anderson 1983) and appropriated to serve the nation-building and expansionist motives of the West, this writing tradition has situated contemporary discourse on translation theory and practice almost exclusively within the framework of Western (and Eastern) pedagogy as well as the target language/source language dichotomy that it embodies.

Following Kothari & Wakabayashi (2009), this study argues that Western conventions and approaches cannot always be applied to other regions of the world where orality, as opposed to literacy, plays a significant role in nation-building. There is no doubt more to translation than the canonical postulations of Western (and Eastern) traditions, hence the need to embark on a major rethinking of theoretical paradigms surrounding the interplay between translation and national consciousness in light of the cultural experiences emanating from the margins of global society. Under-reported in global translation discourses, the phenomenon of translation in Africa has evolved dramatically over the past century, inspired, for the most part, by the socio-cultural and political events that have animated and shaped the history of the continent. In his contributions to the global discourse on translation history, Bandia (2009) attributes the evolution of language mediation in Africa to such paradigmatic frames in the continent's history as pre-colonial representations, colonialism and post-colonialism, while also drawing copiously from the peculiarities of various national contexts for empirical reference. African nations are known to possess a varied set of commonalities such as comparable precolonial societal configurations, a shared colonial history as well as similar postcolonial particulars. Each national context, however, boasts distinctive historical trajectories and experiences of governance, religiosity and socio-culture. The differences in societal experiences impose the need for a redirection of research focus toward a further exploration of the political, cultural and translational realities of each

of Africa's composing national units. This methodical unbundling of the African narrative will go a long way in capturing and exposing those experiences that are so intricately woven into the fabrics of individual, national and even sub-national contexts, thereby infusing new vigor into the discourse on translation in Africa. It is hoped that the deconstruction of the African narrative, which we hope to achieve in this research, will contribute to current attempts at relocating existing knowledge of translation in Africa to a richer and more catholic discursive platform that is representative of the continent's diverse social realities.

Our focus in this dissertation is on Nigeria, not only because we are originally from this geographical location and are desirous of getting a better sense of its social realities, but also due to its key role and status in the African political and social economy. It has also become imperative to focus on the Nigerian experience in view of the general notion that the nation currently suffers from a crisis of citizenship due in part to the incessant social unrests associated with its chaotically pluralistic ethno-cultural landscape (Nwanegbo et al 2014; Imam et al 2014) and the presumed absence of a national culture resulting from a historical experience of cultural 'othering' within the nation (Grillo 1998). Lastly, despite its rich and elaborate socio-linguistic, cultural and political profile, the cultural and sociological turns in Translation Studies have yet to gain traction in Nigeria. The foregoing attributes, combined, make Nigeria the ideal candidate for this discursive inquisition.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to bring to the limelight the impact of translation on national consciousness in Nigeria. This connection between translation and national consciousness, in our opinion, can best be established by means of thorough genealogical inquisitions into the political, cultural and historical contexts in which translation has occurred, as well as the ramifications and implications for past and

current understandings and thought. This study therefore seeks to expose the dynamics of translation in Nigeria's precolonial and colonial past, as well as its postcolonial present, the socio-cultural and political realities that have shaped them, as well as the effects of all of these on the construction of a national consciousness in the various manifestations of the Nigerian state. By "various manifestations of the Nigerian state," we allude to the evolution of the concept of the nation from precolonial ethnic communities or empires to the geo-political colonial construct referred to today as Nigeria.[1]

1.2.1 Research Questions

To expose the foregoing dynamics, this study asks:

- What major forms of translation have occurred within the temporal boundaries that define Nigeria's history?
- Under what socio-cultural and political circumstances have these translations thrived?
- What are the effects of these translations on the forging of a national consciousness in the nation?

Many intricate socio-historical factors must be highlighted in this quest to expose the Nigerian experience of translation and nationalism. A brief history is presented in the sub-section that follows.

[1]Nigeria as we know it today is a colonial construct, a nation of many nations. This description derives from the fact that the nation-space was, prior to colonialism, a potpourri of disparate ethnic nationalities. S. F. Nadel (1942) refers to these ethnic groups as "nations" on account of the dynamics of the prevailing patrimonial system of governance.

1.3 A Brief History of Nigeria

Prior to British Colonial conquest in the 19th century, the areas in and around the contemporary Nigerian nation-space played host to a great many sophisticated and influential societies, which boasted unique languages, cultures, customs and political systems. The Northern half of the country was occupied for the most part by a cluster of centralized states or kingdom, such as the Nupe, Hausa[2] and Kanem-Bornu. A combination of events – ranging from the conquest of the Northern kingdoms by Islamic Jihadists in the fourteenth century to sustained contact with itinerant Muslim traders and clerics from Mali and further afield – resulted in the large-scale conversion of these previously animist peoples to Islam. The South was a potpourri of centralized and non-centralized states or kingdoms, strewn across the South-West, the South-East and the South-South. The South-West was occupied for the most part by centralized states or Kingdoms, such as the Yoruba,[3] Benin and Itsekiri, to mention but a few. These kingdoms, akin to their Northern counterparts, depended on a Monarchical system of governance in which the king had the reins of power but his excesses were often checked by a council of chiefs. The South-East and South-South were occupied by the Ibos, Ijaw, Ibibio and several disparate minority groups, which were built around non-centralized socio-political systems in which the largest unit of government was the village. What's more, the inhabitants of these villages knew each other and were most often related through consanguine ties (Abayomi-Alli 2014). Though sovereign, these ethno-linguistic communities experienced several moments of inter-cultural interaction, which often self-manifested in the form of trade, migration and inter-marriage (Nadel 1942; Falola and Heaton 2008).The prevailing order was such that fostered an oral tradition, which nurtured native religious and cultural practices in each of these communities (Grillo 1998; Nadel 1942).

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[2]The Hausa Kingdom comprised seven major city-states: Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Gobir, Daura, Rano, Biram.

[3]In this section, "Yoruba kingdom" is used as a catch-all phrase for all Yoruba-speaking city-states or empires – the most notable of which were the Oyo, Ife and Ijebu empires.

The precolonial socio-political order came to a halt with the advent of British colonialism in Nigeria. The abolition of slave trade in the nineteenth century fostered a new relationship between Nigeria and Great Britain, which paved the way for the expansion of commercial ties especially in the trade of natural resources and agricultural products. The coastal city of Lagos in the South came under British rule in the mid-nineteenth century (1861) and soon became a site for economic expansion and political influence. An aggressive military incursion into much of the South and further inland from the coast would follow, culminating in the declaration of a protectorate over southern and northern Nigeria in 1900. While the religious, cultural and socio-political systems of southern communities caved in to the pressures of British colonialism – which included but were not limited to the spread of Christianity and the imposition of the English language, the Northern protectorate had negotiated and accepted nominal British domination in exchange for the ability to keep much of its religious, political, linguistic and cultural traditions. At the behest of Lord Frederick Lugard, the governor of Southern and Northern Nigeria protectorates, the North and South were amalgamated into a single territory in 1914 and English was introduced as official language of the colonial state of Nigeria. Though English occupied the status of *de facto* official language in the South, it was relegated to third place in the North where Hausa and Arabic had gained a foothold as regional lingua franca and medium of religious communication respectively (Adegbija 2004; Simpson and Oyetade 2008). Traditional rulers who had continued to administer their various communities or empires – albeit under the supervision of colonial authorities – would lose much of that authority with the establishment of a federal system of government in 1947. Built around three regions: Western, Eastern and Northern,[4] the federal system was designed chiefly to accommodate the interests of the diverse ethnic groups that make up the new nation and manage any religious tensions or ethno-linguistic conflicts that could arise as a result of this forced political union.

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[4]In recognition of the three major ethno-linguistic groups – Yorubas in the West, Ibos in the East and Hausas in the North.

Nigeria gained full independence from the United Kingdom on October 1, 1960 and was placed under a bespoke constitution that favored a parliamentary system of government that granted the three geo-political regions a substantial level of autonomy. The founding of political parties along ethnic lines during this period was, however, a significant pointer to the ethno-religious conflicts that would afflict the nation in the aftermath of independence. While the early parts of the post-independence period witnessed such dynamics as the emergence of ethnic conflicts, which culminated in the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 – 70, as well as various counter-hegemonic anti-colonialist movements and discourses geared towards undoing the legacies of colonialism, the latter part was animated mostly by the struggle against the forces of neo-colonialism and the search for new postcolonial cultural identities amidst a radically multicultural national existence. More recently, the struggle has shifted to such contemporary social realities as the dynamics of class inequality, power differentials between the elite and the masses, as well as economic and political inequalities in various shades or forms.

The linguistic, cultural, religious, and political ramifications of the merging of over 400 disparate ethno-linguistic groups into one entity are particularly telling as are questions as to how the inhabitants of the colonial construct that is Nigeria have succeeded in forging a nation out of this forced marriage of strange bedfellows. Several elaborate attempts have been made to foster a harmonious co-existence among the nation's composing ethno-linguistic groups[5] with varying degrees of success. What remains to be uncovered – and which constitutes the thrust of this study – is the impact of language mediation on the unfolding nation-building process. This study therefore seeks to contribute to the discourse on translation and nationalism by presenting a chronological analysis of the interconnectedness between translation and national consciousness in light of the period-specific socio-cultural and political realities, some of which have been broached in the preceding paragraphs.

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[5]Such as the National Youth Service Corps Scheme whose main objective is to foster inter-ethnic cooperation and understanding, and the Festival of Arts and Cultures (FESTAC), which was designed to achieve similar objectives – See Apter (2005).

1.4 Method and Scope of Research

There are generally two types of research: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research in the Humanities and Social sciences can be described as an empirical investigation of social issues, typically carried out through the use of statistical techniques (Given 2008). The main objective of this type of research, Given further reveals, is to come up with hypotheses or models that define the social issues being investigated. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is geared towards getting a better understanding of social issues as well as the underlying contexts or circumstances that shape those issues (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). We have found the qualitative research model better suited to this research for the simple reason that it helps to better expose the various forms of translation that have occurred through time in Nigeria as well as the pertinent social and political ramifications.

This is no doubt an interdisciplinary study as it straddles such divergent disciplines as translation, political science, anthropology, religious studies, literary studies, cultural studies and history. It seeks mainly to put an analytical spin on the trajectories of translation and nation-building in the Nigerian nation-space, in light of the socio-cultural and political realities that have animated the nation's past and present. Given the socio-historical nature of the current research, we have found it worth our while to adopt the historical approach to translation history detailed in Judith Woodsworth's *History of Translation* (1998). Following Woodsworth, this study attempts to expose the dynamics of translation in Nigeria by investigating such issues as: what was translated? By whom? Under what circumstances and in what social and political contexts?

The research upon which this socio-historical study rests makes use of two major data sources: primary and secondary sources. The primary data sources used in this study include: empirical works of leading historians and ethnographers, anthropological writings, religious texts, archival data and works of fiction. Our secondary sources consist of the interpretations by well-established scholars of select relevant topics, which come in the form of books and/or scholarly articles and book reviews. The data

sources employed in this research cut across the various disciplines mentioned earlier and are also representative of all three temporal periods that shape the nation's history.

To achieve the main objective of this study, we will conduct a close reading of these data sources/texts using pragmatic and socio-historical approaches. The benefit of the pragmatic approach to data extraction is that it helps to engage more realistically with crucial points in our research in a way that is based more on practical than theoretical considerations. Secondly, and more importantly, the pragmatic approach provides the requisite framework for the examination of ways in which the context within which a text is set helps to draw inferences that produce the meanings that are central to the success of a study. This allows us, for instance, to construct a narrative around the notion of translation in precolonial Nigeria based on insights drawn from the esoteric nature of the language used by traditional priests during communal rites and rituals, and the need for intralingual interpretation for the benefit of audience members. The socio-historical approach to data collection is equally very crucial to this research as it provides a framework that helps to grapple with ways through which a phenomenon came about in light of the social and political variables and/or events at play during a given period. This approach helps to critically examine select translations within pre-determined socio-cultural and political contexts with a view to identifying ways in which the latter has shaped the nature, contents and production of the former. This approach therefore enables us, for instance, to reevaluate colonial anthropological narratives as texts or translations produced within the socio-political context of British colonialism, designed to stimulate and strengthen colonial instruments of denigration, subjugation and exploitation, while simultaneously dismantling the cultural legacies bequeathed by the traditional African worldview. The combination of the pragmatic and socio-historical approaches procures for us the liberty to collect evidence, make inferences, draw conclusions and record these conclusions in a meaningful narrative (Busha and Harter 1980). In a nutshell, these approaches allow us to draw inferences from our data sources that help to shape our narrative on the nature of these

translations, the socio-cultural and political conditions under which they occurred as well as their impact on national consciousness.

This research is presented in two stages. The first stage entails an investigation into translation practices intrinsic to precolonial, colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, not leaving out the socio-cultural and political conditions under which they thrived. The precolonial era constitutes an interesting and somewhat challenging case study for two main reasons. First, the absence or near-absence[6] of a writing tradition means that our research will revolve exclusively around the dynamics of translation within the framework of the prevailing oral tradition.[7] Second, we must take into cognizance the non-existence of the Nigerian geo-political entity prior to the period of British colonialism. Our discussions on translation during this period will therefore be based on translating experiences within precolonial ethno-cultural communities and Empires.[8] These groups are referred to in this study as nations. Relevant data on this aspect of our study will be collected by means of a close reading of select historical pieces, including ethnographic accounts of the Nigerian oral tradition and intergroup relations in pre-colonial Nigeria.[9] The research outcome will comprise a critical appraisal of translation within the framework of an oral tradition that was buoyed by the prevailing cultural and religious ethos as well as inter-ethnic contact and dialogue.

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[6]There are arguments as to the existence of an extensive writing system within Nsibidi communities in pre-colonial Nigeria. See Dayrell (1911).

[7]It is often difficult to sustain arguments about the existence of a collective Nigerian oral tradition due to the multiplicity of cultural groups with varied (sometimes similar) oral literatures and traditions. By the Nigerian oral tradition, allusion is made in this study to the ensemble of oral traditions intrinsic to Nigeria's ethno-cultural groups. It's also pertinent to mention that some of these oral traditions were practiced in cultural communities and Empires that transcend current national boundaries.

[8]As stated earlier, many of these precolonial Empires transcend contemporary national boundaries established during the 1884-5 Berlin Conference on the partitioning of Africa. The old Oyo Empire, for instance, covered what is now known as Southwestern Nigeria and stretched as far out as such neighboring countries as the Republic of Bénin, Togo and Ghana.

[9]The terms 'Nigeria(n)' and 'pre-colonial Nigeria(n)' are used interchangeably, and deliberately so, in this part of the study purely for operational reasons - to facilitate a smoother rendition of our narrative. Besides, it helps to draw attention to the geographical location that is the subject of our study. Nigeria as a geo-political entity did not exist as a country until the amalgamation of the composing British protectorates in 1914.

The current study will also deal with the notion of translation within the context of colonial and postcolonial traditions. A select number of translated (written) texts will be examined with a view to critically evaluating the reasons behind their emergence as well as the socio-cultural and political circumstances surrounding their production. These translations will include anthropological writings, religious and literary texts.

In the second stage of this study, we attempt to situate the translation practices discussed in the previous stage within the discursive framework of nationalism. This part of our research entails discussions surrounding the effect of translation on national consciousness in the historical configurations of the Nigerian state.

This study is not definitive. As the socio-historical analyses presented will span several decades, we will attempt to present as comprehensive an account of the Nigerian experience as possible. We acknowledge that not all occurrences of translation or socio-political contexts will be captured; neither will all perspectives on the contact points between translation and national consciousness be covered. It is hoped, however, that this study will provide a framework for further research into this fascinating but somewhat under-studied aspect of translation studies.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Elaborate in subject matter and multi-faceted in approach, this research depends for the most part on an identifiable legacy of thought from the concepts of orality, translation and nationalism. Bandia (2008; 2009; 2011) has laid much of the groundwork for the conceptualization of translation as an agent of change in Africa via its interplay with orality, while Anderson (1983) has opened our eyes to new and unique ways in which nationhood can be conceived. The troika of translation, orality and nationalism constitute the key concepts upon which this study rests.

1.5.1 Translation and Orality

As evidenced by an abundance of literature on the topic, the term 'translation' can be just as broad as it is complicated. Conventionally, translation is understood as an activity or a process that straddles various forms and notions of reproduction, exchange, conversion and/or transfer of texts across linguistic and cultural frontiers. By extension, translators, in their various manifestations, are traditionally conceived as "humanistic bridges between peoples" (Robinson 1997, 39), links across linguistic divides and mediators that inhabit and negotiate the ubiquitous existential space between cultural and political divides. These definitions, this study argues, bear the trappings of the interlingual translation narrative that has dominated translation discourse for several centuries. Given the current study's near-exclusive focus on the dynamics of translation in cultural contexts that boast a historical and ongoing relationship with orality, it will be interesting to see what other definitions translation can assume and what these new forms mean for not just the host societies, but also the field of translation studies. It has thus become expedient to explore the relationship between the phenomena of translation and orality.

The definition of orality or oral literature is not in doubt as the topic has been subjected to a great many scholastic inquisitions. Walter J. Ong (2002) aptly defines orality as thought and its verbal expression in non-literate societies, while Finnegan (1976) views oral literature through the lens of the history, culture, customs, religious norms and values of a community as expressed by performers who formulate them into words in commemoration of specific occasions. For Finnegan, African orality can be expressed in such oral aesthetic forms as epics, panegyrics, elegies and poetry to mention but a few.

The relationship between translation and orality is not far-fetched. For Bandia, orality, in its various forms, is central to the expression of 'cultural or aesthetic practices involved in pre-modern traditions, modernist representations of the past or postmodernist expressions of artistry' (2011, 108). The definition of orality, Bandia continues, varies considerably across disciplines and occupations. While orality

constituted a vital tool in the recording and documentation of oralate cultures for the use of anthropologists and historians from the colonial *métropole*, the colonial powers appropriated it to suit the purpose of their search for insights into the minds and cultures of their supposedly primitive subjects. Besides, while the early Christian missionaries appropriated orality for the purposes of proselytism, it also subsequently served as a rallying point for colonial subjects in dire need of cultural emancipation and preservation. The concept of orality also represents, for the modernist, what Bandia refers to as a 'sounding board for calibrating the privileges of modernity,' while for the postmodernist, it is an instrument in the 'aesthetic representation of otherness, the assertion of marginalized identities through a variety of art forms such as literature, cinema, music and the spoken word' (ibid., 109). More to the point, the manifestation and 'appraisal' of orality across the aforementioned disciplines, occupations and time periods rely for the most part on the dynamics of language mediation (ibid.). This infers invariably that orality comes to life by way of translation or its sister-field, interpretation.[10] In pre-colonial Nigerian communities where the oral tradition held sway and communication was achieved almost exclusively by means of oral narrative practices (Bandia 2009), the recitation and performance of religious poetry for purposes of divination and community rituals and rites were made possible through a process of language mediation. The involvement of translation in the expression and performance of orality derives from the fact of these oral narratives (such as religious poetry) being couched in esoteric language, requiring simplifying or translating for the lay audience.[11]

Along with the colonial or "modern" era came print capitalism (Anderson 1983), which engendered a special bias for a writing tradition to the detriment of orality (Bandia 2011). Modernity therefore sought to impose stereotypical notions of "backwardness" or "primitiveness" on orality as a result of the colonialist agenda to relegate non-Western cultures to the backseat of global civilization. Following a renewed European interest in oral cultures and traditions of non-western societies in the early twentieth

[10]In this study, the term 'translation' denotes both written translation and verbal interpretation.
[11]This point will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

century (Horton and Finnegan, 1973), cultures of orality became 'a sounding board for modernity and the stages of its progress and enlightenment' (Bandia 2011, 109). European narratives on African cultures typically appeared in the form of anthropological writings and religious texts, which, as earlier stated, sought to portray African civilization and orality in an overwhelmingly negative light. This solely pejorative perception proliferated by the forces of colonialism on African orality did not endure the test of time. The emergence of anti-colonialist narratives and literary productions in the latter days of the colonial epoch provided an antithesis by conferring on orality a more positive status amidst the negative stereotyping that had gained traction in global literary and socio-cultural discourses. These anti-imperialist discourses owed their agency and vitality to the re-appropriation of the writing tradition to capture, express and glorify the oral literatures of Africa. The interplay between orality and translation during this period occurred in two major ways: first, the representation, coding or writing of purely oral narratives in written form in the local languages, referred to in Bandia (2009, 9) as 'vernacular-language writing,' was, in and of itself, a form of translation. Second, vernacular-language writing was followed by interlingual translations into European languages, thus facilitating cultural exchange beyond ethnic and national boundaries. The rebirth of African orality in the twilight of colonialism no doubt signaled a new direction in African literary and translation discourse that would take on a life of its own and snowball into a major field of scientific research in postcolonial times.

Deeply scarred by the violence of colonialism and compelled by a shared counter-hegemonic, anti-colonialist ideology, postcolonial subjects (especially writers) began to explore and mobilize liberatory efforts geared towards discarding the legacies of colonialism. Orality rose to prominence during this period by lending itself to various attempts at dismantling colonial structures and subsequent efforts geared towards valorizing and glorifying Nigerian humanity. As evidenced in African-Europhone literature, colonized peoples drew from the vitality, content and style of their respective

oral traditions in their attempts to translate themselves and their cultures for the purposes of emancipation and international recognition. According to Bandia (2011, 111), the representation of African oral aesthetics in European languages occurs typically through the 'deliberate and direct transcription of oral narratives and performance' and/or the 'selective use of oral artistry for creative purposes by writers of postcolonial fiction.' With the fusion of orality into European-language writing in what Mary Louise Pratt (2008, 1) describes as a 'contact zone' of interaction between western civilization and indigenous subaltern cultures, the orality-writing dichotomy pales into insignificance while the supposed superiority of European cultures over their dominated counterparts slips into oblivion in the consciousness of the subaltern subject (Bandia 2011). Ashcroft et al (1998, 166-167) make a similar point in their argument that, orality, within the context of postcolonial literatures, assumes a 'continuing and equal relationship' with writing traditions. This symbiotic interconnectedness between orality and translation therefore produces a hybrid writing form that occupies a cultural space described in Homi Bhabha (1994) as a 'third space,' and a 'space in-between.' The third space, Simon and St-Pierre (2000, 21) argue, is one that 'accommodates a whole fund of syncretisms, recombinations and mechanisms of acculturation,' where translation becomes what Bhabha (1994) describes as 'grounds for intervention,' leaving in its wake texts that defy 'categorization and renaturalization' (Simon and St-Pierre 2000). Translation is therefore no longer to be seen solely as a bridge between cultures, but also, and more importantly for this research, a strategy of intervention through which 'newness comes into the world' and a site where 'cultures are remixed' (ibid.). A deeper exploration of the cultural aesthetics that inhabit this existential 'third space' procures for African writers the liberty to consolidate liberatory efforts geared towards reinforcing notions of cultural difference and asserting their cultural identity on the global literary scene. As Bandia succinctly puts it

> The representation of oral artistry in writing or through other media recalls translation as a strategy for creativity,

asserting identity, and a means for cultural and linguistic appropriation and adaptation. (2011, 112)

It becomes apparent from the foregoing that the description, interpretation and emancipation of dominated African cultures, hitherto suppressed by a legacy of imperialist values and paradigms, have engendered alternate means of conceptualizing the notion of translation in decolonizing contexts. This study, as the chapters that follow will reveal, therefore deals with extra-linguistic notions of translation due mostly to their ability to authenticate the living traditions of societies that boast a historical and ongoing relationship with orality.

1.5.2 Nationalism

The concept of the nation assumes various meanings as exemplified in the oft-contrasting definitions espoused by primordialist and modernist scholars.[12] Described in Oakes and Warren (2009, 13) as the 'primordialism versus instrumentalism debate,' this dichotomy surrounds arguments as to whether nations are 'perennial'[13] or a product of the modern era.[14] In their analysis of patrimonial societies, Max Weber (1947) and S.F. Nadel (1942) view the "nation" through the lenses of pre-industrial, pre-colonial or early political systems comprised of ethno-cultural communities which had, at the centre of their existence, indigenous politico-legal and traditional systems of governance. These systems not only served the purpose of governance but also helped to authenticate the living traditions of the people and validate their shared myths, values, symbols and memories, thereby nudging them into a relaxed form of social conformity. Modernist thinkers such as Gellner, on the other hand, consider nationalism as a product of modernity, which emerged as a result of the need to meet socio-political

[12]These differences are understandable given the disparity in the social dynamics intrinsic to the time-periods in which both schools of thought thrived.
[13]See Max Weber (1947).
[14]See Ernest Gellner (1983) and Benedict Anderson (1983/2006).

and economic ends in the modern era. For Gellner (1983, 8), nationalism is a 'political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.' Nationalism, according to Gellner (ibid.) became a sociological necessity in the modern world due for the most part to the valorization of cultural homogeneity as a condition for industrialization. Nationalism, he further argues, arises and thrives in homogenous societies, which are not just steeped in modern paradigms, but are also better suited to meet the ends of industrialization.

Gellner's arguments are not without their criticisms, the least of which appears to be the argument that nationalism cannot be reduced to the 'one-language-one nation' concept that characterized the formation of modern European nations as this would amount to a deliberate imposition of Western conventions and models of nationhood and subordination of and disregard for the socio-historical realities of non-western decolonizing nations. For Anthony Smith (1998, 46), one of the major flaws in Gellner's concept of nationalism is its failure to 'account for the historical depth and spatial reach that underpin modern nations' on account of the absence of a 'theory of ethnicity and its relationship to modern nationalism.' Several scholars also disagree with Gellner's notion of the nation as a homogeneous entity with fixed national boundaries. Benedict Anderson, for instance, argues in *Imagined Communities* (1983) that the nation transcends geographical fixities or fixed national boundaries and should rather be conceptualized as an 'imagined political (and cultural) community' (ibid., 6) which draws on a collective consciousness and/or some form of affinity or kinship held by members of the community. The nation, Anderson continues, is 'imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (ibid., 6). Oakes and Warren (2009, 13) make a similar argument about the concept of the "cultural nation," which they describe as a community of people with common values, origins and civic responsibilities. Anderson has, without a shadow of doubt, made significant contributions to the concept of the nation in space and time. Following

Davidson, however, a brief exposé - such as the narrative presented so far - can only 'hint at the subtlety, complexity and sophistication of (his) arguments' (2007, 192). It should be noted, however, that while Anderson's arguments are not necessarily steeped in either pre-modern or postmodern thought, the most significant contribution, Smith (1998, 142) reveals, is the "idea of the nation as discourse to be interrogated and deconstructed."

Our discussions in this study are less on the concept of the nation as a geographical entity or "country," although this helps to frame our thoughts and restrict arguments to pre-defined geo-political sub-national or national contexts. The current study goes beyond a mere awareness of communality among a group of people and/or patriotism to a common cause, and focuses more on the idea of the framing of a collective imagination and shared consciousness in which citizens find expression and solidarity, and which defines their being, existence and worldview. Herein lies the major insight that Anderson's concept of nations as "imagined communities" brings to the current study.

Through a thorough exploration of the interplay between translation and orality, as well as the notion of the nation as an *imagined community*, a new understanding of the cultural, historical and translational realities of the Nigerian nation-space should begin to unfold.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

This dissertation comprises the current introductory narrative (Chapter 1) and five chapters.

Chapter Two examines the interplay between translation and orality within the context of the patrimonial nation and its dependence on the prevailing religious and cultural ethos. Through a detailed assessment of two sophisticated verbal art forms: ifa

divination and drum literature, the chapter attempts to establish theoretical and pragmatic parallels between intralingual and intersemiotic translation practices, and the oral narratives intrinsic to pre-literate Nigerian cultural traditions. While this chapter details the dynamics of translation within the framework of a purely oral tradition, the next chapter examines the experience of language mediation within the context of Western imperialism and the writing tradition that came with it.

Chapter Three provides a socio-historical background to the dynamics of translation within the context of British colonialism. It examines the modernist ideology that underpinned the colonial enterprise and, through a pragmatic examination of the phenomena of colonial anthropology and religious colonialism, illustrates the shameful role that translation played in perpetuating colonial rule and enforcing asymmetrical power relations in Nigeria. The current chapter also lays the groundwork for the postcolonial experience of language mediation by addressing the role of both African Afrophone and Europhone novels in subverting colonial representations of Nigerian thought.

Chapter Four examines the role of orality and translation in the rendition of the Nigerian postcolony's past struggles for cultural emancipation, and current yearning for self-purification in view of such contemporaneous self-inflicted social realities as political instability and socio-economic inequality. Through an analysis of select novels, the current chapter examines the role of postcolonial translation strategies in the production of African Europhone texts that are fashioned to bring the English and indigenous language cultures to the same 'level of representation, dialogue and contestation.'[15] These texts seek for the most part to replace dehumanizing colonial narratives with more positive accounts that celebrate Nigerian humanity. Several years after independence, the focus of African Europhone writing has shifted to the enscription of narratives that attempt to account for the challenges associated with the

[15]Gikandi (2003, 11)

process of decolonization, as well as the uncertainties that are strewn along the nation's path to the tradition that lies ahead of the postcolonial present.

Chapter Five examines the effect of the notions of language mediation discussed in this study on national consciousness, in an attempt to establish parallels between translation and nationalism. The current chapter explores the ways in which precolonial translation practices created a resonance that not only fostered a sense of belonging among the inhabitants of precolonial communities to a common cause, but also inspired a sense of attachment to a universal cultural consciousness. The precolonial concept of nationhood would, however, succumb to the overbearing influence of colonial nationalism, which was legitimized in the southern half of the nation through the intervention of translation, but undermined in the north by a historical legacy of Islamic fundamentalism and conservatism. Emphasis is also placed on how postcolonial texts that "speak" to the nation's historical and contemporary realities have fostered a national consciousness, which has continually inspired the nation's diverse peoples to imagine themselves as members of the same community. Attention is paid to the fact that this consciousness remains particularly more active in the south due to the northern reality of Islamic fundamentalism and popular allegiance to an ideological mindset that derives agency from the Arabian Peninsula.

Chapter Six summarizes the study's outcomes in terms of the major types of translation that animate Nigeria's history, the social conditions under which they thrived and their effects on national consciousness. The chapter also reiterates the significance of the study, its problems and flaws and suggests a framework for further areas of scholarship.

CHAPTER II

THE PATRIMONIAL NATION, NATIVE PHILOSOPHY AND TRANSLATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to establish theoretical and pragmatic parallels between translation and the mythico-religious and cultural practices that animated precolonial Nigerian communities. In a bid to expose the foregoing objective, we examine the notion of patrimonialism and oracular literature in the Nupe and Oyo empires respectively and argue in favour of the centrality of translation to the survival and sustenance of pre-modern African communities. In keeping with the focus of this study, which is on notions of translation that are capable of validating or authenticating the living traditions of precolonial/oralate Nigerian communities, this chapter excludes the notion of interlingual translation. Emphasis is placed, instead, on the infrequently broached but equally ubiquitous notions of intralingual and intersemiotic translation, which, we argue, are better suited to discussions surrounding the living traditions of these communities.

2.2 Theoretical issues: the Concept of Patrimonialism

Patrimonialism is generally described as a traditional system of domination or governance in which the leader exercises full control over the community and oversees the administration of all human and material resources generated within the community. For Max Weber (1947, 347),[16] patrimonial societies are those in which 'authority is primarily oriented to tradition but in its exercise makes the claim of full personal powers.' Drawing from the monarchical system of governance in precolonial Nigerian communities in which the 'community was grounded in the belief in the rulers

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[16]Cited in Grillo (1998, 11).

traditional legitimacy' (Grillo 1998, 12), the patrimonial state can be conceived as one in which the 'monarch organizes his political power over extra-patrimonial areas and political subjects' (Weber 1978, 1013). Crucial to the patrimonial system of governance was the ruler-ruled relationship at the core of which was the extraction of resources from subjects in exchange for guaranteed protection. In this system, rulers, by virtue of the power vested in them by tradition, would extract products and labour from their subjects and deploy these material and immaterial resources to their household for their own personal use and for the enjoyment of their large families and retinue of aides. Whatever was left unconsumed by the ruler's household were considered "surpluses" and were consequently ploughed back into the community to sustain the system of control through which these human and material resources were extracted in the first place. But the ruler-ruled relationship within the patrimonial system was not necessarily a parasitic and exploitative one in which the ruler, in the exercise of his full powers, lived exclusively off the labour of his subjects, thereby subjecting the latter to a perpetual life of servitude. Far from being a master-servant one, the relationship, Grillo (1998) argues, thrived for the most part on the joining of the ruler and the ruled in a "consensual community" which depended on neither coercion nor the use of armed force as instrument of compliance. The idea of the community, Grillo emphasizes, was grounded in a universal belief in the ruler's traditional legitimacy and a voluntary devotion to that legitimacy on the part of the ruled. The patrimonial nation therefore depended on a patron-client system that was underpinned by the logic of extraction balanced by reciprocity and scored through by a convincing ideology. As Grillo (1998, 12) aptly puts it, membership of the patrimonial state therefore required active participation in the system as a 'client, dependant, a follower, or a retainer, accepting the obligations inherent in occupying these statutes, and enjoying such benefits as were attached to them.' In a nutshell, the system of governance was sustained physically through the redistribution of extracted surpluses, and ideologically through the prevailing cultural and religious ethos.

2.2.1 The Patrimonial Nupe nation

What's important for this research is not so much the political economy of the patrimonial nation as the argument that the obligations and benefits discussed heretofore were buoyed by the prevailing cultural and religious ethos. To get a sense of how the structuring, organization and administration of the patrimonial state ties in with the religious and cultural ethos, we now turn briefly to Nadel's (1942) *A Black Byzantium* - an anthropological exploration of the Nupe Empire. Nadel reveals, following traditional history, that the origins of the Nupe state can be traced to the fifteenth century, during which time the society consisted mainly of small chieftainships. Some of these chieftainships teamed up to form local confederacies consisting of tributary peoples that were linked to the Benin Empire. With the fall of the Benin Empire, an autonomous state system emerged in the Nupe axis in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating in the establishment of a Nupe dynasty, which survived until it was overthrown by Fulani Jihadists in the nineteenth century. The encroachment of the Fulani into Nupe territory had occurred gradually over centuries. Most Fulanis had started to migrate into the Nupe area centuries earlier mostly as itinerant cattle herders, freelance warriors engaged as mercenaries in the Nupe army and itinerant preachers who sought to plant their religion throughout the region. As was characteristic of the Fulani, the establishment of an emirate over Nupe peoples in the nineteenth century led to the invaders assimilating to the culture of the invaded. This was part of a general pattern in which the Fulani would conquer territories only to adopt the language and most aspects of the cultures of the invaded territories- perhaps in a bid to prevent popular uprising and maintain a perpetual hold over the conquered territories. The cultural and linguistic assimilation of the ruling Fulani dynasty to the local Nupe population set the pace for the wholesale incorporation of other migrant groups to the nucleus of precolonial Nupe society. Peoples of Yoruba, Bornu, Hausa, Igala and Igbo extraction - who had migrated from their respective ethno-linguistic

communities in search of greener pastures[17] and settled in the periphery of the Nupe empire - became an integral part of Nupe society and culture with unfettered access to the rights, privileges and benefits inherent in Nupe citizenship. Though these aliens were able to retain their native languages, which they spoke in their respective quarters, Nupe rose to become the lingua franca within the expanded society. The word 'Nupe' from that point on took on a new meaning, which captured anyone who voluntarily joined the Nupe nation, pledged allegiance to the ruler and willingly partook of the tradition and religious rituals. In the empire, the phrase *A ze Nupe*[18] was commonplace, and it referred to the absorption of marginal communities into the core Nupe state.[19] This system of non-coerced assimilation of non-natives had at its core not only the reciprocal relationship between ruler and ruled, but also a host of communal cultural practices and religious rituals to which all *Nupe-ized* citizens willingly subscribed. Corroborating this position, Nadel (1954, 19-20) argues that foreigners incorporated into the Nupe community also 'learn(t) about the ritual and shared in its possession,' thereby creating what Grillo (1998, 48) describes as an 'idealized notion of Nupe-ness' - a sense of community that puts the Nupe empire in the league of *imagined communities*.

Important for our study is the knowledge that the patrimonial Nupe, Oyo and numerous other ethno-cultural communities that occupied the pre-colonial Nigerian nation-space owe their sustenance to a combination of factors, which include but are not limited to the widespread belief in the traditional ruler's legitimacy, cultural diversity within the walls of the community on account of migrations and expansion, and most importantly, the prevailing cultural and religious ethos. As these cultural and religious practices were scored through by the omnipresent power of orality (Bandia 2011), it will be interesting to see how they interacted with translation practice within the precolonial nation-space.

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[17]While some had intermarried with the Nupe, others were prisoners of war who were enslaved and subsequently freed.

[18]This translates loosely as 'they have become Nupe.' See Grillo (1998, 51).

[19]Grillo (1998, 51) describes this as a process of 'Nupeization,' which involves linguistic, cultural and political assimilation.

2.3 Theoretical Issues: Translation in a Precolonial African Context

As indicated in a large body of historical scholarship, the precolonial Nigerian landscape was largely occupied by heterogeneous ethno-cultural communities inhabited by diverse peoples whose cultures, lives, subsistence and existence hinged on oral narrative practices. The near-absence of a writing tradition during this period in Africa's history[20] meant that interpersonal communication and inter-group dialogue were achieved solely by means of the spoken word. By the same token, wisdom and knowledgeability - which were often expressed in such oral forms as wise sayings, proverbs, panegyrics, religious poetry, among other stylistic narrative forms - were graciously handed down from one generation to the next solely by word of mouth and through pre-established lines of descent (Okpewoh 1992; Bandia 2009). The expression or enunciation and performance of these oral forms, Bandia (2009; 2011) stresses, occur through a process of translation. The role of translation in the expression of orality becomes all the more apparent in view of the fact that these oral forms are expressed in esoteric and/or obscure language, requiring mediation on various levels and of different kinds.

The notion of translation in pre-colonial African communities straddles different modes of communication and meaning-making processes. On the one hand, there is the conventional type of translation that insinuates and captures the transfer of messages or conversion of texts[21] between two or more disparate ethno-linguistic communities. On the other hand, a somewhat non-conventional variety of translation occurs within the confines of a specific ethno-linguistic context. While the former alludes to the conventional relationship between signs and meaning across linguistic and cultural lines- described in Jackobson (1959/2000) as interlingual translation, the latter defies the conventional take on translation as an interlingual activity and makes a case for a more

[20]While some researchers have found traces of a writing tradition among some precolonial Nigerian communities (such as the Nsibidi communities of Eastern Nigeria), the current study argues that the existence of such writing traditions was not the norm.

[21]Texts could be written or oral.

inclusive description of language mediation that captures the essentials and fundamentals of all language transactions. Drawing on the theory of signs and meanings, Roman Jackobson (1959/2000) outlines three types of translation, to wit: interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic. Interlingual translation refers to the conversion of texts or signs from one medium of expression into texts and or signs in some other language. Intralingual translation, on the other hand, is the interpretation of verbal signs within the confines of the same medium of expression, while intersemiotic translation captures the essence of textual conversion or transfer between verbal and non-verbal systems of communication.

Accepted by most scholars to the classic, prototypical kind of translation (Zethsen 2009), interlingual translation has had the unfortunate privilege of relegating other equally important forms of language mediation to the periphery of translation discourse. We acknowledge that interlingual translation played a crucial role in facilitating inter-group communication within the precolonial nation-space. However, we argue in this study that it is neither capable of authenticating the living traditions of the inhabitants of precolonial nations nor of bringing to the fore the nexus between translation and those religious artefacts and cultural sensibilities that conferred legitimacy on the precolonial nation. As stated earlier, both native Nupe citizens and nupe-ized foreigners were joined in some form of consensual community that depended, physically, on a reciprocal patron-client relationship and, ideologically, on a set of cultural practices and religious rituals in which all the inhabitants of the Empire willingly participated. What's more, these mythico-religious practices were made possible by the use and enunciation of esoteric expressions that were grounded in orality. The question however remains: how exactly does translation interact with orality within the context of these mythico-religious practices? In what ways can the translationality of orality be best appraised within the framework of a purely oral tradition? For answers to these kinds of questions, we need to turn to intralingual and intersemiotic meaning-making processes.

Jakobson’s definition of intralingual translation - as the conversion of texts within the framework of a specific language - is no doubt clear and apt. As with its interlingual counterpart, intralingual translation or *rewording* cannot be appraised in isolation of its social and cultural contexts. It is also true that when the linguistic domain remains unchanged, there is a higher propensity for the non-linguistic aspects of translation to gain more prominence. In the precolonial nation-space, those non-linguistic aspects of translation are none other than the “cultural,” the “religious” and numerous others that fall outside the scope of this study. To foreground practical and theoretical connections between orality and intralingual translation in the precolonial nation-space, we shall now examine some aspects of the Nigerian native philosophy, starting with a very important and prominent verbal art form in traditional African societies - religious poetry.

2.4 Nigerian Native Philosophy

2.4.1 Religious Poetry

Africa boasts a wide array of religious poetry - ranging from hymns, prayers, praises, oracular poetry, etc. - all of which vary significantly in content, functions and conventions. Poetry intersects with religion on account of the fact that its content focuses mainly on purely religious norms and broaches such critical issues in the African traditional religion as the mythical actions of gods, celestial instructions and invocation of divine presence during rituals and ceremonies. Poetry, according to Finnegan (ibid.), also overlaps with religion by virtue of the fact that it is enunciated by religious specialists and may also be performed during religious ceremonies. The use of religious poetry was as pronounced among the Nupe as it was among the inhabitants of the various other ethnic communities that littered the precolonial nation-space, who depended on such oral forms as oracular poetry for both their daily subsistence and community-building purposes. Religious poetry, Finnegan (1967) argues, is particularly

well-developed and has become such a striking phenomenon in West-African communities such as the Yoruba-speaking areas of Southern Nigeria, which boasts an elaborate corpus of Ifa oracular literature. Of the different forms in which religious poetry can occur, oracular poetry - more precisely Ifa divination- is of particular importance to this research due to the abundance of literature on the subject-matter. It is therefore expected that through a careful examination of the enunciation and performance of oracular poetry among the Yoruba, a better understanding of the dynamics of intralingual translation in the precolonial Nigerian nation-space will begin to unfold. For the sake of brevity and clarity, our discussions will be limited to the biggest and most prolific Yoruba-speaking precolonial nation- the Oyo empire.[22]

2.4.1.1 Oracular Poetry

Oracular poetry exists in several forms and is generally known to consist of utterances believed to be inspired by the spirit world. Known to have its own conventions, oracular poetry is often the exclusive preserve of specialist diviners who have undergone training and special initiation to gain mastery of the skills and techniques of divination and its interpretation, as well as develop the ability to memorize and recite the poems associated with the divination process. Oracular literature tends to be expressed for the most part in an obscure, esoteric form of the Yoruba language, which further lends credence to the notion that it is inspired by the spirit world and is a direct representation of the voice of the gods. The representation of oracular literature in an esoteric and obscure form of the Yoruba language stems from the belief that the gods are known to speak in veiled and mysterious ways that are beyond the understanding,

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[22]The change in focus from the Nupe to the Oyo empire is due to the abundance of literature on religious poetry as it relates to the Oyo nation. What's more, traditional history ascribed the origin of ifa divination to Ile-Ife (on the fringes of the Oyo empire) from where it spread to other parts of West Africa. This, for all intents and purposes, makes the Oyo empire the *de facto* birthplace of Ifa oracular poetry. The cultural and religious dynamics that Ifa divination embodies are largely transportable to most precolonial Nigerian communities.

scope and reach of the non-initiate. The concept of esotericism in the expression of Yoruba oracular literature is dealt with in Bascom's (1991) seminal book on *Ifa Divination*, a long and highly influential compendium where the divining process is viewed exclusively within the framework of its conceptualization as a system of communication between gods and men through the intermediation of diviners. In order to gain requisite insight into this all-important discourse on orality and intralingual translation in the patrimonial nation, we must now turn to the concept of ifa divination.

2.4.1.1.1 Ifa Divination

Known in local parlance as "odu ifa," Ifa literary corpus, as earlier stated, constitutes an important and indispensable aspect of Yoruba native religion and philosophy. Before exploring the depth of ifa divination, it will be necessary to first shed some light on the native philosophy and belief system associated with the Yoruba religion.

Yoruba native philosophy draws on an elaborate system that is associated with the concept of fate or destiny and the belief in the capacity of divine beings to intervene and interfere in the affairs of mere mortals on earth.[23] Three gods clearly stand out in the pantheon of Yoruba deities: Olorun, Eshu and Ifa. *Olorun* (the sky god) is highly revered as the Supreme Being who holds the destiny of all mortals in his hands and determines the fate that will ultimately befall all and sundry. *Eshu* is the trickster god and divine messenger who conveys messages and sacrifices to *Olorun* and ensures that those earthly mortals who offer sacrifices to the supreme One are duly compensated while the recalcitrant ones are made to face the consequences of insubordination. Ifa,[24] in his capacity as the god of divination, makes the wishes of Olorun known to mortals via the intercession of the diviner. In a bid to highlight the synergy and division of labour between these three deities, one popular myth has it that when the gods were famished because they had received few sacrifices from earthly mortals, the divine

[23]We draw extensively from Bascom (1991) and Finnegan (1976) in this section.
[24]Ifa sometimes appears under his alternate title - Orunmila.

messenger, Eshu, took it upon himself to show ifa the system of divination with the expectation that earthly beings would attain their ends by sacrificing to the gods, while the latter would benefit from the divine sanctioned sacrifices and thank-offerings made by the former.

The Yoruba native philosophy is a highly sophisticated and complicated belief system that should not be reduced to mere summaries. A brief exposition can, therefore, only hint at the sophistication and complexity of the belief system. It is important to note, however, that the precolonial Oyo Empire was for the most part a traditional society where a deep-seated belief in the supernatural was rife and religiosity, persistent. It was common practice for the inhabitants of the empire to ascribe their successes and failures to the wish of the Supreme Being for them, just as much as it was culturally expedient to seek the face of the gods prior to committing to any plans or endeavour. Deity worship and divination, Finnegan (1976) reveals, was the only way out of such common problems and social malaise as poverty, plagues, ill health, barrenness to mention but a few. Ifa divination was also used to gain insights into the potential outcome of impending sojourns, wars and competitions (Abimbola 1965). So important is Ifa in Yoruba religion that he is regarded as the 'impersonal principle by which (hu)mankind has access to what is otherwise hidden from them'[25] and the "Owner of the day and regulator of the universe.'[26] Ifa is also revered thus:

> Ifa is the master of today;
> Ifa is the master of tomorrow;
> Ifa is the master of the day after tomorrow;
> To Ifa belongs all four days
> Created by orisa into this world.[27]

[25]Finnegan (1976, 192)
[26]Olupona (2004)
[27]Abimbola (1965, 4)

2.4.1.1.1.1 The Diviner

Diviners are members of a highly trained and respected profession. Popularly referred to in local parlance as *babalawo* (father of mysteries), diviners must undergo several years of apprenticeship to acquire the minimum expertise necessary to gain access to the world of ifa divination. While the vast majority spend up to seven to ten years in apprenticeship, the learning process for most seasoned diviners is a life-long process. Depending on the needs and structuring of communal responsibilities in communities, senior diviners are attached to royal kingdoms and are expected to cater exclusively to the divining needs of kings and high chiefs, while the rest of the community makes do with the services of the chief diviner's deputies and apprentices (Finnegan 1976). In other communities, all the *babalawos* work in tandem to cater to the spiritual needs of all and sundry.

By and large, Ifa divination and its accompanying literary corpus are highly regarded in the Oyo Empire in view of the air of secrecy and mysticism built around the consultation process. This is further strengthened by the notion that the diviner is usually oblivious to the supplicant's realities and problems prior to the divination process but will ultimately provide solutions that are communally accepted as emanating from the Supreme Being. It must be stressed at this juncture that the answers to the supplicant's enquiries are more often than not enunciated in poetic allusions which are in turn accompanied by explanatory prose narratives.

2.4.1.1.1.2 The Divination Process

Ifa divination is a highly elaborate system that is based on a series of mathematical permutations, which are in turn intricately woven around a set of corresponding literary corpus. These permutations of figures are derived from two columns of four units each, which, when combined, produce different possibilities of eight units between themselves. With a total possible count of 256 figures, each with its own name

and associated literature, a brief exposition can only hint at the complexity and sophistication of the divination process. To set the divination process in motion, the diviner is required to obtain one of the 256 possible figures, which will in turn form the basis of his utterances and incantations. Before exploring this further, we need to quickly examine the two possible ways in which the figures are obtained. First, the diviner uses a simple mechanism involving a divining chain, known locally as *opele ifa*. With a total length of about three to four feet, the divining chain contains eight half-seeds split into two halves of four half-seeds each. The diviner hands over the chain of seeds to the supplicant who is then asked to communicate their queries and expectations in hush tones to the gods through the seeds. The supplicant hands back the divining chain to the diviner who, oblivious of the former's spiritual needs, holds the chain in the middle, and throws it on the mat to obtain a figure. The figures that appear in the aftermath of this throw will usually appear in a "U" shape, comprising two columns of four units each. The exact combination of the seeds will depend on whether they fell 'concave inner surface or the convex outer surface facing up' (Bascom 1991, 29).

The second method of obtaining figures, called the *ipin* is a lot more elaborate and prestigious as it is often used in more important consultations such as seeking the gods' advice on the choice of the king's successor or the outcome of an impending war. Using a set of sixteen palm-nuts and a small board, the diviner holds the nuts in both hands and throws them rapidly from one hand to the other. If after juggling the nuts between both hands none (or more than two) are left in his left hand, the throw is invalid and the juggling has to be repeated. If either one or two nuts are left behind, then the throw is valid and the diviner makes a corresponding mark on his board: a double mark for one nut and a single for two. The process is repeated eight times and eight marks are thus made in the dust on the board; these marks are made starting from the bottom right-hand side of the board and are laid out in the form of two parallel columns of four sets of marks each. The act of divination itself would only begin after the figures have been

obtained. Responses to the supplicant or client's queries are therefore to be found not in the figures so obtained but in their corresponding allusive literary verses.[28]

2.4.1.1.2.1 Sacrifices and Medicines

The point of this allusive literary corpus, Finnegan (1976, 194) adds, is to 'guide the inquirer by suggesting a sacrifice or type of worship, by indicating his likely fortune and by referring to a precedent from which he can judge his own case.' It is important to stress that this consultation process occurs through what Finnegan (ibid.) describes as 'poetic allusion and analogy' as opposed to 'straight answers to specific questions.' The direct consequence of this poetic form can be seen in its contributions to the development of a unique and elaborate corpus, simultaneously conferring a certain depth and meaning to the counsel that proceeds forthwith. The pieces associated with each figure all fall into a general pattern and will normally begin with a mention of the sacrifices and other actions that the supplicant must carry out in order to succeed in the assigned task. The first part of the piece is usually expressed in prose form:

> This person is intending to marry a new wife. He is warned to make
> a sacrifice to osun[29]
> so that the wife may be prosperous. He is warned never to flog the
> wife if he wants to live in his home. He should make the sacrifice
> with fifteen cowries and a big hen. Ifa says that if he observes all
> these warnings, success will be his.[30]

This is followed by the main part of the piece, which is expressed solely in poetic form and chanted all through. This part helps to set out a precedent in terms of a previous divination. First, the name of the Ifa priest who made the initial prophesy is mentioned, followed by the name of the clients for whom the divination was carried out: 'the big-

[28]Finnegan (1976); Bascom (1991).
[29]A river goddess in Yoruba religion.
[30]Abimbola (1965, 15).

and-terrible-Rainbow; cast ifa for the Iroko tree; of the town of Igbo.'[31] In other instances, the diviner is referred to as: 'I-have-no-time-to-waste' [32] or 'Oropa Niga; to fight and stir up dust like Buffalo; patched dust on the top of a rock.'[33] The use of elaborate and poetic names with symbolic meaning in this part of the divination process cannot be over-emphasised.

Next up is the recitation of an allusive religious poem, which would normally vary in length and content depending on the nature of the supplicant's needs. This poetic enunciation is usually accompanied by what Finnegan (1976, 198) calls a simultaneous 'explanatory prose narrative.' In this part of the process, the diviner, in a short enunciation of esoteric allusions, implicitly advises the listener to offer praises, worship and thanks to ifa or any other god that they deem fit and worthy of their praises:

> The sky is immense, but grows no grass.
> That is what the oracle said to Obatala,
> To whom the great God gave the reins of the world.
> God of the Igbo, I stretch out my hands.
> Give the reins of the world to me.[34]

The diviner could also allude to a previous divination bordering on events that are similar to the client's situation. By recalling this previous divination and its surrounding circumstances, the diviner assuages the client's fears by assuring them that their problems will be adequately taken care of by ifa.[35] The conclusion often shows that on the previous occasion, the supplicant who carried out the prescribed sacrifices excelled, while the recalcitrant one suffered the consequences of insubordination and non-compliance. The following literary piece describes a scenario where a defiant subject is called out and made to face the consequence of outright disobedience. The

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[31]Abimbola (1965, 15-16).
[32]Abimbola (1965, 15).
[33]Bascom (1943, 128).
[34]Gbadamosi and Beier (1959, 26).
[35]Olupona (2004).

supplicant is advised to listen carefully and to derive inferences on their own as to what the future holds for them:

I am blessing two, not one
This was prophesized to the sea lily
Which reaches down into the mud, the origin of creation
The time of creation has come

This is the oracle of a hunter
Who went hunting in the forest of Onikorogbo.
They asked him to sacrifice,
So that he might not meet his death.
They asked him to sacrifice eggs,
All the eggs in his house.
But he refused to sacrifice.
He came into the forest,
But found no animals to shoot.

After he had wandered about for a long time
He met Death.

For a while they were hunting together.
At last they found two eggs.
Death said to the hunter:
You may take them home.
The hunter proposed to divide them,
But Death refused.
The hunter went home lonely.
Soon after that famine came.
The hunter cooked the eggs
And ate them with his children.
Then Death arrived and said:
I have come for my share.
There is famine in heaven.
And we have nothing to eat.

> The hunter said: Alas,
> We have already eaten the eggs.
> Then Death killed the hunter and his children.[36]

While the general knowledge of ifa divination is often freely shared, the most potent divination verses are, however, only available to and accessible by ordained diviners and select descendants. African oral narratives, it must be stressed, are often passed down from one generation to the next through pre-established lines of descent. One would therefore need to be born 'privileged' or deemed spiritually worthy to access the enormous body of knowledge and elaborate literary corpus that are foundational to the divination process. As Edith Turner aptly puts it:

> (diviners) possess their own benevolent tutelary spirits. The person learning to be a (diviner) may acquire such a helper when the spirit of a revered healer ancestor chooses to visit him or her. Thereafter, the spirit instructs the (diviner) in the course of the work. The (diviner) now works in the spirit mode: the divinations performed are effected not through the doctor's own power but through that of the spirit.(2004, 55)

The shrouding of divination verses in secrecy and their restriction to a select few have their own merits in that they are guaranteed to be preserved in their purest, unadulterated mystical forms. The verses quoted in this study are therefore translations of some of the less potent verses, designed not with a pre-determined intent to reveal the contents of this otherwise secretly guarded world of mysticism, but for the sole purpose of providing greater insight into the social ramifications and translationality of this otherwise highly complex and elaborate subject-matter. As Hugh Urban argues, scholastic inquisitions into the notion of secrecy in spirituality and religiosity should be approached from a perspective that shifts the focus from the question of 'how one can

[36]Gbadamosi and Beier (1959, 26-28).

ever know the true substance of what is hidden' to the need for a thorough exposition of the essence, purposes and strategies of secrecy (1998, 214).

What's important for this study is not so much the knowledge that the divination verses differ according to the outcome of each divination casting as the fact they (the verses) are expressed in esoteric allusions and subjected to simultaneous interpretations into a simpler form of the language, for the benefit of the non-initiate. These attributes, combined, confer on ifa literary corpus a special status in not just the Yoruba imagination but also the nation-building process.

2.5 Ifa Divination and Intralingual Translation

The ramifications of ifa divination for intralingual translation discourse are significant and multifaceted. We have already established that ifa divination depends for the most part on a two-way communication process. First, there is the implicit dialogue between the supplicant and the instruments of divination - which comes in the form of beads or seeds - where the former is expected to make known their prayers and expectations to their deities through the latter. The second part of the communication process involves the manipulation of the aforementioned instruments of divination by the diviner to obtain divination castings, which in turn determine which *odu* or literary corpus to recite. We can infer from the foregoing discussions that the diviner, working in cahoots with various spiritual agencies,[37] becomes an indispensable arbitrator in the communication process between the inhabitants of the nation and their deities. What's more, the mediatory functions of the diviner are not to be located within two or more linguistic and cultural systems - as is the case with interlingual translation discourses. Rather, they are situated in and must be located within the logic of that mystical interconnectedness between earthly and celestial beings who are bound by a common socio-linguistic and cultural system, but divided on the same strength by a sub-liminal

[37]See Olupona (2004, 108).

mystical space that is accessible to and navigable only by specialists skilled in the art of spiritual communication. Through the linguistic intermediation of the diviner-cum-translator - as exemplified in this all-important notion of intralingual translation - the subliminal interaction between earthly mortals and cosmic powers becomes continually possible, leaving no one in doubt as to its capacity to generate, provide and sustain the socio-cultural conditions necessary for empire-building.

The ifa divination session no doubt involves a long tirade of verbal enunciations and incantations that are not only steeped in religious poetry but are geared for the most part towards invoking the intervention of mystical powers in the affairs of earthly mortals. The importance and significance of incantations in Yoruba religion is further strengthened by the widely-held belief in their magical prowess and efficacy in 'manipulating people and things, both natural and supernatural' (Sukarat 2009, 91). After the gods have spoken - through the divination castings - the diviner proceeds with a steadfast verbalization of the message from the gods, which appears in the form of allusive divination verses. The main argument here is that the chanting, verbalization or enunciation of these allusive narratives or divination verses occurs through a process of translation. Bandia makes a similar point in *Translation and Orality* where he attributes the 'pronouncement and performance of oral narratives and histories by specialists' to an act of language mediation oriented towards 'specific circumstances and occasions' (2011, 109). In other words, oral narratives are expressed and performed by specialists who are culturally mandated to interpret or translate them in accordance with the dictates of the specific circumstances that they embody. In the case of ifa divination, the text to be translated - the source text - is the message from the gods, spoken directly to the diviner in the form of divination castings. The divination castings or permutations of figures, as earlier mentioned, are always accompanied by an elaborate literary corpus. So when the diviner gazes steadily at the divination castings and chants the accompanying verses, he automatically accesses the source text in its original, unadulterated form, unlocks it from its subliminal mystical existence and

deposits it or carries it over into a secular target environment where it comes alive and lends itself to worldly purposes and interpretations. The "carrying over" of the source text from a celestial milieu to an earthly domain, for all intents and purposes, constitutes an act of translation. What's more, though this textual transfer takes place between two disparate cosmological realities or realms, it nonetheless occurs within the confines of a single language system and can therefore be said to bear all the trappings of this all-important discourse on intralingual translation within the precolonial nation-space. So when we argue that ifa divination, in its complexity and splendour, occurs through a process of intralingual translation, we are, among other arguments yet unexplored, referring to a mystical system of interaction between gods and earthly mortals, which involves the passage of texts from a purely spiritual location to a physical worldly site within the confines of a single socio-linguistic and cultural system. In other words, this interaction occurs in a subliminal unilingual contact zone of encounter between celestial beings and their earthly delegates.

The translationality of ifa divination certainly does not end with the recitation of divinatory oral narratives. As stated in preceding paragraphs, the verses associated with ifa divination are often expressed in poetic esoteric allusions which, based on the dictates of the belief system, are believed to be the voice of the gods. The deities, according to ifa religion, are known to speak in veiled and mysterious ways that are far beyond the comprehension and purview of the non-initiate:

> Owe ni Ifa npa,
> Omoran ni imo-
> Bi a ba wipe mo-
> Omoran a mo-
> Nigbati a ko ba mo,
> A ni, ko se!
>
> Ifa speaks always in parables,
> A wise man is he who understands his speech,
> When we say we understand it

The wise man always understands it,
But when we do not understand it-
We say it is of no account or the prediction is not fulfilled.[38]

As previously stated, the recitation of these poetic divinatory verses is always followed by an 'explanatory prose narrative,'[39] which serves the purpose of rendering or interpreting the divine messages or texts into a simpler form of the Yoruba language for the benefit of the supplicant. Bandia (2009) argues this position in *Translation matters* where he discusses the role of professional linguists as custodians and narrators of the oral tradition and cultural sensibilities of their respective communities. Professional linguists, Bandia continues, were often employed in the courts of great kings of ancient African kingdoms. Referred to as *akewi oba* (those who chant the praises of kings)[40] or *verbal artists*[41] in the Oyo Empire, professional linguists were able to efficiently safeguard and effortlessly narrate the history and customs of their people due to their ability to memorize huge chunks of information as well as their special gift of story-telling. Conceivably, these oral narratives were often deeply rooted and expressed in esoteric language, which implied that the onus was on the court poets to further simplify and interpret them for the benefit of the lay members of society. Akin to court poets of Roman Antiquity - Quintillian, Cicero, Horace and the like - professional linguists were also called upon especially during communal gatherings and ceremonies to interpret or simplify the speeches of kings, high chiefs and religious priests who were known to use esoteric language forms. Like their present day contemporaries, i.e. professional translators, it was incumbent upon professional linguists to ensure loyalty to the "source text" by not adding any new ideas. They may, however, '(…) extend the phrases and reconstruct the sentences and intersperse the speech with some of the celebrated witty and philosophical reflections for which (they) are justly celebrated to

[38]Extracts from *Yoruba Heathenism* by Bishop James Johnson (1899).Available at: www.sacred-texts.com/afr/mind/mind24.htm. Accessed: 31 December 2015.
[39]See Finnegan (1976, 198).
[40]See Akinyemi (2004).
[41]See Olajubu (1978).

the credit of both (themselves) and (their) chief' (Danquah (1928, 42).[42] Through a multi-layered process which involves bridging the language gap between the kings, high chiefs and their subjects, the court poet assumes the role of a translator in traditional African societies.

By the same token, the diviner - in addition to and in spite of his noble priestly obligations - assumes the position of a language mediator, saddled with the responsibility of bridging the language gap and bringing the target audience closer to the source text. Facilitated by the diviner, this rapprochement between the supplicant and the divination verses completes the chain of communication and paves the way for the implementation of the last phase of the divination session - the offering of sacrifices. What's important for this research, however, is the fact that this textual transfer from the realm of esotericism or the cryptic to that of normality or the familiar occurs strictly within the confines of a specific language system - in this case the Yoruba language, which further lends credence to the centrality of intralingual translation to the performance of ifa divination.

The last form of intralingual translation intrinsic to ifa divination is that which occurs within the consciousness of the supplicants themselves. In some instances, the diviner recites some divination verses, while the supplicant is advised to listen carefully and discern the exact canto in which ifa is speaking to them in order that they may come to the revelation of what the future holds for them.[43] In this specific instance, translation becomes an integral part of the divination process in that the divination verses – which for good reason are shrouded in esotericism – allow their meanings to unfold in the mind of the listener or supplicant. The supplicant is therefore called upon to discern or decode a precise message from an array of poetic allusions, and to draw inferences and meanings from a pile of mystical gibberish. This act of *discerning* or *decoding* imposes mediatory obligations of a psycho-linguistic nature on the supplicant, thereby forcing

[42]Cited in Bandia (2001, 295).
[43]The supplicant in this scenario is most often somewhat knowledgeable about and familiar with the esoteric language, e.g. a fellow diviner or a skilled hunter.

them to partake in the overall translating process that is ifa divination. Though it might be a bit of a stretch to refer to the supplicant in this specific instance as a translator *stricto sensu*, it can be argued nonetheless that their direct involvement in the meaning-making process described heretofore puts them in the league of those described in Bandia & Milton (2008) as "agents of translation."

It becomes obvious from the foregoing analysis that ifa divination involves a triple intralingual translation process: first, the enunciation of the oral literary pieces associated with divination castings constitutes an act of translation. Second, the divination verses are not just chanted in esoteric language but must also be simplified or translated into less complicated language forms for the benefit of the supplicant. Third, supplicants are sometimes drawn into the translation process when they are required to decode the divine messages themselves. The recitation, simplification and decoding of the ifa literary corpus, hitherto appraised from a purely literary and cultural perspective, have no doubt opened pathways to the conceptualization of deity worship and divination within the discursive framework of intralingual translation.

2.6 Intersemiotic Translation and Orality

We have, so far, examined intralingual translation and its interplay with orality in a precolonial Nigerian nation. In this section, our attention shifts to another prominent but infrequently broached meaning-making process in traditional Nigerian communities – intersemiotic translation. As earlier discussed, intersemiotic translation, also known as *transmutation*[44] alludes to a whole new system of language mediation that goes against the grain of the conventional understanding of translation as the transfer of oral or written texts from one linguistic system to another. Described in Jakobson (1959) as the 'interpretation of verbal signs by means of non-verbal sign systems,' intersemiotic translation involves the passage of texts between two completely

[44]Jackobson (1959).

different semiotic modes. To shed more light on this fascinating concept within the context of Africanist cultural and translational discourses, we shall briefly consider the example of D.O Fagunwa's epic *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*.[45] Written in the Yoruba language in the late 1930s, this epic work of fiction details the travails and encounters of a Yoruba hunter with such mythical folkloric elements as magic, monsters and the spirit world. Fagunwa's novel, for all intents and purposes, embodies the very essence of the notion of intersemiotic translation in view of the fact that the production of the novel involved a deliberate extraction of Yoruba oral forms from their original "oral" context and subsequent conversion or "translation" into written codes in book form. What's more, the adaptation of a literary piece, such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* into film can also be described as a form of intersemiotic translation given the implied conversion or interpretation of texts hitherto rendered in a purely linguistic form into codes of a more visual assortment. In other words, the writing of Yoruba oral aesthetics can be said to occur through a process of intersemiotic translation on account of the fact that this entextualization process involves the conversion of verbal signs into a non-verbal, written or linguistic code. By the same token, the adaptation of written narratives such as novels and other works of fiction into film can be conceptualized as a form of intersemiotic translation by virtue of the apparent textual transfer across semiotic codes: from the linguistic to the visual.

While intersemiotic translation occurs on so many levels and in far too many ways to be accounted for in a single piece, it should be noted that the concepts of entextualization and adaptation heretofore highlighted, though set in modern times, are only attempts at explicating and giving clarity to this rather interesting but under-studied meaning making process. Expectedly, the dynamics are bound to be significantly different in most traditional Nigerian societies where the writing tradition was markedly absent and the oral as well as other non-conventional modes of communication and textual transfer held sway. As discussed earlier in this chapter, translation in pre-colonial

[45]Translated into English by Wole Soyinka as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.

Nigerian communities occurred for the most part within the framework of those oral narrative practices that gave meaning and agency to the nation and which also provided the necessary conditions for the preservation and survival of local traditions and customs. The one issue that emerges at this juncture, and which we seek to explore in this section, has to do with the way in which orality intersects with the notion of intersemiotic translation in the pre-colonial nation-space. In other words, how do we account for meaning-making processes between/across semiotic codes in a cultural landscape defined by the marked absence of the writing tradition and the privileges of modernity that we know of today.

Bandia (2009) broaches this topic very briefly in his discussions on the significance of drum language to traditional African communities. Drum language, Bandia argues, is an important means of communication within and beyond these communities that relies on the capacity of the drum to produce sounds that mimic human speech patterns and words. This direct representation of the spoken word, Bandia (ibid., 4) continues, involves the 'translation of linguistic codes into musical notes.' Bandia has set the pace by opening up discussions into ways in which drum communication can be conceptualized within the framework of intersemiotic translation in traditional African communities. However, what remains to be uncovered are ways in which (and reasons for which) the oral literatures of specific cultures are expressed, performed and appraised within this framework, the major actors in this unique cultural experience as well as the link between these cultural processes and agents and the notion of intersemiotic translation. The interconnectedness between drum language and literatures and intersemiotic meaning-making processes will therefore constitute the crux of our discussions in the next section.

Divided into two parts, the section explores these themes by examining, first, the nature of drum language and literature in the Oyo nation, the agents responsible for its performance and its relevance in society. The second part is an analysis of ways in which translational activity can be posited in the performance and expression of drum

literature. Unless otherwise specified, all page references are to Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa* (1976).

2.6.1 Drum Language and Literature

Literature communicated via the drum and other musical instruments constitutes a very significant phenomenon in the Oyo nation. Long seen and analyzed strictly within the framework of its relationship with music[46], the literary nature and content of drum language has also been subjected to scholarly scrutiny.[47] Communication via the drum can be viewed through two different lenses: first, there is the conventional code through which "pre-arranged signals" are represented in a "given message."[48] This form of drum communication, Finnegan argues, has no direct linguistic basis. The second type of drum communication is more directly linked with the literary corpus associated with African drum language and involves the use of instruments such as drums and flutes, which communicate through what Finnegan (ibid., 481) describes as a "direct representation of the spoken language itself, simulating the tone and rhythm of actual speech." This form of drum communication has a strong linguistic basis to it and, according to Finnegan (ibid., 482), can only be "appreciated by translating it into (real audible) words..."

2.6.1.1 Tonal Nature of the Yoruba Language

In the Oyo nation, communication by means of the drum is made possible by the tonal nature of the Yoruba language. All Yoruba words have tones attached to them based on their syllabic divisions. In other words, words in the Yoruba language are typically divided into syllables whose pronunciations derive for the most part on the first three musical notes - Do, Re, Mi. Tones are considerably more important in the language than

[46] See Bankole, Bush et al (1975).
[47] See Finnegan (1976); Beier (1954).
[48] Finnegan (1976, 481).

vowels and consonants by virtue of the fact that while many words comprise the same vowels and consonants in the same order, they often have different tonal characteristics (Beier 1954). The word *ogun*, for instance, could have different signifiers depending upon the tones imposed on it: *Ògùn* translates in English to "medicine," while *ogun* refers to "war or conflict." *Ogún* refers to "inheritance," while *ògún* and *ógùn* allude to "the god of iron" and "it is long" respectively. It becomes obvious from the foregoing that meanings of words are derived from and distinguished by their phonetic elements and tones. According to Finnegan, it is the tone patterns of words that are directly transmitted and/or communicated, while the drums are built in such a way as to provide two or more tones. The intelligibility of the message to the hearer is also sometimes increased by the rhythmic pattern, which, once again reinforces the notion that drum language constitutes a direct representation of the spoken word. There are instances, however, when words cannot be distinguished solely on the basis of their tonal and rhythmic characteristics. An example of this is *ogún* which refers to both "inheritance" and "twenty." To achieve what Finnegan describes as 'tonal and rhythmic differentiation,' these similar-sounding words are further described with the aid of extra markers such that the final rendition leaves no one in doubt as to the true intent of the drummer and the exactness of the message being passed along. Textual differentiation is also achieved through the replacement of nouns (and verbs) with proverbs and other idiomatic expressions in what Carrington (1949, 38) describes as 'proverb-like-phrases.'[49] In this context, "money," for instance, could be replaced with 'the pieces of metal which arrange palavers,'[50] while rain could be rendered as 'the bad spirit son of spitting cobra and sunshine.'[51] These 'long stereotyped phrases'[52] constitute an important aspect of the Yoruba oral tradition in that they have their own peculiar poetic forms and are typically characterized by the use of 'duplication and repetition,

[49]Cited in Finnegan (1976, 482).
[50]Ibid.
[51]Ibid.
[52]Finnegan (1976, 482).

derogatory and diminutive terms, specific tonal contrasts, and typical structures.'[53] An illustration of "proverb-like-phrases" will be necessary to further deepen our understanding of these dynamics. In this illustration, the message to be communicated is: "The missionary is coming up river to our village tomorrow. Bring water and firewood to his house."

> White man spirit from the forest
> Of the leaf used for roofs
> Comes up-river, comes up-river
> When to-morrow has risen
> On high in the sky
> To the town and the village
> Of us
> Come, come, come, come
> Bring sticks of firewood
> To the house with shingles high up above
> Of the white man spirit from the forest
> Of the leaf used for roofs[54]

We notice that the afore-stated drum version is significantly longer than the original phrase, mainly due to the use of such stylistic dynamics as repetition - which helps to bring clarity to the meaning - and lengthy stereotyped phrases. By and large, we observe that the main principle upon which drum language rests has to do with the direct representation of the spoken word, which can alternatively also be achieved through the use of such other less elaborate instruments as flutes and horns (Beier 1954).

2.6.1.2 Master-drummers

The literature associated with drum language is a highly developed and specialized genre, carried out by master-drummers with a mastery of not just the vocabulary of the

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[53]Carrington (1949b 47-54) cited in Finnegan (1976, 483).
[54]Carrington (1949a, 54) cited in Finnegan (1976, 483).

art but also the religion, philosophy and culture that it embodies. Among the Yoruba, the vast majority of master-drummers are born into families with a long history of drum language and its associated literature. The drumming profession is normally restricted to male members of the family and is typically passed down through pre-established lines of descent in line with Yoruba tradition. The families are often referred to collectively as the house of *Ayan*.[55] Children born into the house of *Ayan* are considered future drum players who must not only be consecrated to the *Ayan* divinity, but must also be schooled in the art of *Ayan* worship as well as the social ramifications of their membership of the family. Bankole et al (1975, 50) reveal that the future or trainee drummer is expected to be knowledgeable in "matters of traditional importance, such as how to please the gods and his elders, and how to communicate more to his listeners than the message the drum speaks." The performativity of this trado-indigenous art form is further highlighted in the main objective of drumming sessions, which is to touch the heart of the listener and cause them to act in ways that are dictated by the message communicated via the drum. The trainee drummer is not usually motivated by verbal praise and encouragement due to the fear that this might lead to a loss of focus. On the contrary, he is often criticized by older master-drummers in a bid to nudge him into social and professional conformity and motivate him to reach higher levels of excellence without losing his sense of modesty and respect for others. As is the case with the trainee diviner, the learning process is, for the trainee drummer, a long, unending journey since both his drumming skills and knowledge of the Yoruba culture and religion are constantly put to the test by older drummers.

2.6.1.3 Relevance of Drum Language and Literature

The use of drum language in the performance of oral literature varies significantly, ranging from mundane communicative practices to cultural and religious functions. While it may be used in such banal activities as royal court summons and formal

[55]*Ayan* in Yoruba language and culture is the god of the drum; see Thieme (1969).

announcements, it also serves the purpose of communicating/transmitting more uncommon, complex and elaborate oral forms such as proverbs, panegyric, historical poems and religious dirges used in deity worship and divination.

2.6.1.3.1 Formal Communication

In the pre-colonial Oyo Empire, drum language served the communicative needs of kings who employed them as means to either summon their subjects to the palace for community meetings and events or to announce the arrival of visitors or foreign dignitaries to the entire community and beyond. Besides meeting the communicative needs of royal kings and chiefs, drum language was also employed in formal announcements regarding such events as marriages, deaths, births and contests. News regarding the demise of a member of society, for instance, was communicated through the drum in a somewhat stylized form:

> You will cry, you will cry
> Tears in the eyes
> Wailing in the mouth[56]

Similarly, messages may be communicated to farmers out in the fields, fishermen at sea or hunters in the deep forests to alert them to the onset of a thunderstorm so they may seek shelter at the nearest possible haven:

> Look out, look out, look out, rain
> Bad spirit, son of the spitting snake
> Do not come down, do not come down, do not come down
> To the clods, to the earth
> For we men of the village
> Will enter the house
> Do not come down, do not come down, do not come down[57]

[56]Carrington (1949b, 58) cited in Finnegan (1976, 485).
[57]Carrington (1949b, 88) cited in Finnegan (1976, 486).

2.6.1.3.2 Personal Drum Names

Besides its use in the dissemination of formal messages and announcements, drum language also serves the purpose of enunciating the names of kings, warriors and general members of society during special events. Among several Nigerian ethno-cultural groups, especially in Northern Nigeria, names and titles of traditional rulers are either beaten out on drums or whistled using horns and/or flutes during certain public events or ceremonies (Smith 1957).[58] In the Benue-Cross River axis, personal drum names consist of an individual's paternal lineage, events in their personal life as well as the individual's personal name (Armstrong 1954). In some other communities, personal drum names are bestowed upon children by their parents, and consist of the child's personal name, part of their father's name and the name of the mother's village of birth. The full drum name will therefore read thus: 'the spitting cobra whose virulence never abates, Son of the bad spirit with a spear, Yangonde.'[59] Other drum names read thus:

> The proud man will never listen to advice
> Owner of the town with the sheathed knife
> The moon looks down at the earth, son of the younger member of the family[60]

Drum names play a significant role in communities in which they are employed. Their use in the transmission of messages is clear: the elaborateness of the names in the above examples helps to differentiate tonal patterns, ruling out instances of ambiguity (Finnegan 1976). Drum names are known to have a very performative effect on the bearer, especially when they are enunciated for the purposes of entertainment or conciliation. Highlighting the performative function of drum names, Armstrong (1954, 360- 361) states: 'when an African hears his name drummed, he must jump up for joy even from his sick bed.' What's more, the literary and poetic qualities associated with drum names become all the more obvious in view of the 'elaboration, convention and

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[58]Cited in Finnegan (1976, 487).
[59]Finnegan (1976, 487).
[60]Carrington (1949a, 41) cited in Finnegan (1976, 487).

publicity necessarily involved in this particular medium of expression' (Finnegan 1976, 488).

2.6.1.3.3 More Elaborate/Specialized Forms

Drum literature often takes on more specialized forms such as drum proverbs, panegyrics, poetry for drums, and are also particularly useful in the narration of the history of communities. Panegyric poetry is of particular importance on account of its centrality to public and state ceremonial performances. In the royal court of the chief of Igumale in Benue state as well as among the Yoruba for instance, praises of the chief are performed by means of the wooden flute or talking drums. In the following poem, the wisdom and power of a village chief is likened to the prowess of a leopard:

> Akpa killed those who have horses *coza loga*
> The leopard in power is no toy!
> The mouth of him who goes wrongly and pays a fine is what is guilty!
> *Ogo tikpa logwu gokpaawaga!*
> When the land is dry ('strong') they will wait for the rains!
> When the leopard is on the way, the animals fear.
> When the kite calls, it is noon.
> The locusts swarm!
> *Big, powerful man cuna zegha.*
> When there is a lion, there is a leopard!
> The Chief, a full-bodied leopard in the hole!
> The horses, here they are!
> When the Chief did this, did that, they said it is not fitting. The Chieftaincy is not a plaything!
> When the girls have no husbands, they say they belong to the Chief! The girl from the corner with shame in her head, for dancing is no plaything!
> The leopard and the Chief have claws, have claws; the leopard and the Chief are coming today!
> When the good thing is coming into public, what will the singer do today?

He who sits on the (royal) stool, Lion of lions, Chief, it is of him that I worry; the leopard and the Chief are no plaything!
He who is fitted for the kingship, let him be king! It is God who makes the King.[61]

Elaborate drum praises are also used extensively among the Yoruba. As Finnegan (1976, 491) has revealed, the rulers of the old kingdom of Ede were praised on the talking drum either on a monthly basis and/or during important festivals and ceremonies. Finnegan (ibid.) further reveals that the drum praise or eulogies of Adetoyese Laoye (the eleventh ruler) is built up on a 'series of praise verses' with the 'whole poem bound together by both the subject (the king) and the recurrent image of the tree.' The drum poem below further illustrates this point:

Adetoyese Akanji, mighty elephant.
Once can worship you, as one worships his head.
Son of Moware.
You enter the town like a whirlwind. You, son of Odefunke.
Egungun blesses more quickly when you worship him
Orisha blesses more quickly when you worship him.
My father Akanji is an orisha.
The more devoutly you worship him
The greater blessings you receive from Adetoyese Akanji.
Bless, and bless me continuously;
Akanji, and do not leave me unblessed.
Do not attempt to shake a tree trunk.
One who shakes a tree trunk, shakes himself.
One who tries to undo himself.
A wine tapper cannot tap wine from a coconut palm.
An elephant eats up the entire roots of an oro tree.
Do not behead me, I am not among them.
I am not among the conspirators.
Conspirators, the hair on whose heads

[61]Armstrong (1954, 362-3).

Is ugly and ruffled.
A serious case may worry one but it will come to an end.
A serious case worries one, as if it will never be settled.
The case will be settled, and the slanderers and gossipers
Will be put to shame.
You met them in front, and you greet and greet them.
You met them behind you, and you greet and greet them
Your being courteous does not please them, like being insolent.
Keep on being insolent to them and their fathers!
It is unusual for one to greet his father's slave and prostrate.
You Adetoyese Akanji, bend one foot to greet them,
You leave the other unbent!
You, a notorious confuser! You confused everybody by your appearance!
Akanji you confused all those
Who tie cloth round their waists, without carrying a child
I beg you in the name of God the great king, confuse me not!
Do not allow me to starve.
The leaves on a tree, do not allow the tree to feel the scorching sun.
You are a lucky person to wear the crown
A person who is on the throne
When the town prospers,
Is a lucky person to wear the crown.[62]

Lastly, drum literature is also used widely in deity worship and divination, especially in the invocation of various spirits and deities:

The Heavens are wide, exceedingly wide.
The Earth is wide, very very wide.
We have lifted it and taken away.
We have lifted it and brought it back,
From time immemorial.
The God of old bids us all
Abide by his injunctions.

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[62]Oba Adetoyese Laoye I, *The Orikis of 13 of the Timis of Ede,* (1965) cited in Finnegan (1976, 491-492).

Then shall we get whatever we want,
Be it white or red.
It is God, the creator, the Gracious one.
'Good morning to you, God, Good morning.'
I am learning, let me succeed.[63]

2.6.2 Drum Language and Inter-semiotic Translation

Drum language is no doubt an indispensable aspect of social life and a cultural *sine qua non* in traditional societies such as the Oyo Empire where its role and importance in empire-building knows no bounds. The interplay between drum language and translation is not far-fetched. We had earlier defined inter-semiotic translation as the transfer of texts between two completely different semiotic modes. We argue in this section that drum language - employed either as a form of communication or a means through which the oral literature of a community is expressed - constitutes an act of inter-semiotic translation given that it involves the transfer of "texts" between different semiotic modes. The translationality of drum language can be appraised in two major ways: first, drum language and literature is a form of communication that derives for the most part from the tonal character of the Yoruba language and occurs through a direct representation of the spoken word (Finnegan 1976). It follows therefore that the drumming session itself occurs through an act of language mediation given the conversion process/textual transfer that occurs in the course of beating out messages on the drums. When, for instance, a drummer performs a religious poem at a religious ritual, he reaches into a rich mental repertoire of oral narratives, identifies and unlocks the literary corpus associated with that ritual or event and beats it out on his drum in fulfilment of the local religious and cultural ethos. The conversion of these oral narratives or "texts" into drum beats or "codes" in line with the cultural sensibilities of the community, for all intents and purposes, constitutes an act of inter-semiotic translation. What's more, the drummer, in his capacity as a linguist,

[63]Nketia (1963, 44, cited in Finnegan (1976, 493-4))

performer and custodian of local traditions and customs, becomes an agent of translation by virtue of the fact that through him, various event-specific oral art forms are performed and mediated.

Second, in certain instances, drum messages are best appreciated when further translated into real audible words - a scenario which would more likely occur during religious or community rituals where messages communicated via the drum are of an esoteric nature and would need to be further simplified for the benefit of the non-initiate. In this context, the drummer beats out messages that are representative of either religious poems or incantations while a professional linguist stands by to perform a simultaneous interpretation of the messages for the consumption of the audience-members. The interpretation of esoteric drum messages into audible words can therefore be viewed through the lens of inter-semiotic translation by virtue of the inherent conversion of drum codes into verbal signs. Similarly, the expression of drum messages or texts through dance - as is often the case during cultural festivals - can be ascribed to the all-important notion of inter-semiotic translation. The semiotic modes at play in this instance are none other than drum sounds or codes and their accompanying dance steps.

The use of drum language knew no bounds in precolonial Nigerian societies where it lent itself to religious, cultural and social purposes. In postcolonial times, drum literature continues to serve the same religious, cultural and communicative purposes, especially in rural Nigerian communities where orality still plays a vital role in society.

2.7 Conclusion

We have, so far, explored some of the major religious and cultural practices that animated the precolonial nation-space as well as ways in which translation facilitated, shaped and enhanced them. Unlike their interlingual counterpart, which is better suited to purposes of cross-cultural language exchange, intralingual and intersemiotic

translation practices have proven themselves capable of authenticating the living traditions of societies where orality has taken center stage in the reification of the prevailing religious and cultural ethos. While this chapter details the dynamics of translation within the framework of a purely oral tradition, the next chapter examines the notion of translation within the context of British colonialism and the writing tradition that it stimulated.

CHAPTER III

ORALITY, TRANSLATION AND THE COLONIAL ENCOUNTER

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the representation of Nigerian orality in anthropological, religious and literary texts produced during the period of British colonialism in Nigeria. We shall proceed by discussing the concept of the modern state as a forerunner to European colonization of Africa as well as the social conditions that animated the colonial era. By situating select texts within the socio-cultural and political realities of the time, we shall examine ways in which translation shaped and took shape within the discursive framework of British colonialism in Nigeria.[64]

3.2 A Glance into the Modern State

In the previous chapter, we examined Grillo's first configuration of state - the patrimonial nation-state, which derived from a system of governance and administration where absolute power and resource-control were vested in the traditional ruler. The focus in this chapter is on Grillo's second configuration of state - the modern state. Defined in Weber (1941)[65] as a 'system of administration and law which is modifiable by statute, and which guides the collective actions of an executive staff,' the modern state, Grillo (1998) argues, epitomizes the idea of rational governance which relies for the most part on the institution of sophisticated bureaucratic structures to oil the wheels of governance. While patrimonial states were known to have had bureaucratic structures, they 'lacked the procedural predictability stemming from the systematic application of the rational rules of conduct established by modern

[64]The translation techniques involved in the unfolding narratives are discussed as the chapter moves along.
[65]Cited in Runciman (1978, 41).

bureaucratic procedures' (ibid., 13). In other words, the appointment of government officials as well as the performance of daily commercial activities, for instance, was greatly influenced by tradition and customs in the patrimonial state, compared to the modern state which relied more on what Grillo describes as 'objective criteria of organization' (Ibid.).

The modern state was founded upon two main principles, the first of which was the need to provide better living conditions for the entire citizenry through the adoption of policies and practices designed to reform communities and expose their inhabitants to a new, civilized way of thinking, acting and being. This, the ruling powers surmised, could be achieved by reforming the state's role in society and consolidating its powers with the aim of creating a "powerful state" which claimed to act on behalf of the governed. Second, it was generally agreed at all levels of government and throughout all facets of governance that a state that was built around ethnic diversity was bound to disintegrate along ethnic fault lines. Against this backdrop, a new vision was designed for the modern state that revolved around the conceptualization of the state as a homogenous entity that sought, among other things, a 'common, uniform identity and a common uniform loyalty among its citizens' (Grillo 1998, 15).

The modern state therefore came into existence as a result of a deep-seated ambition on the part of Europe to modernize the state's role in society through the implementation of rapid industrialization schemes and to rally the citizenry around the redemptive qualities of modernity. The modernist ideology therefore continued unabated for centuries until Europe's leaders came to terms with the fact that new sources of raw materials for European industries as well as new markets for their finished products must be found for the European concept of modernity and its inherent benefits to survive. Herein lie the initial ideological undercurrents that fuelled the colonial enterprise.

The focus of this chapter is not so much on the theoretical and pragmatic origins of the modern state as the transplantation of the modernist ideology onto other parts of the

world - which goes to the core of the colonial social order. Regardless of whether the focus is on Africa, the Americas or Asia, the main rationale for European colonization of the rest of the world appears to be the same: self-enrichment and the emancipation of the cultural other. The former borders on the exploitation of the colonies' vast human and natural resources while the latter highlights the self-imposed moral obligation to bring empowerment and civilization to peoples who had hitherto been deemed most in need of social, economic and spiritual redemption. In his justification of the colonial enterprise, Christopher Colombus, the famous Italian explorer, emphasized the materiality and redemptive qualities of the natural resources that littered the conquered territories:

> Gold is the most precious of all commodities... He who possesses it has all he needs in the world, as also the means of rescuing souls from Purgatory, and restoring them to the enjoyment of paradise.[66]

Bernal Diaz, a famous Spanish colonial officer who cut his teeth during his stint in Mexico, corroborates Colombus' allusion to the spiritual and material intent of colonialism with the rather audacious confession that the colonizers came to Mexico to 'serve God and get rich.'[67] Speaking specifically of the African experience, Young (1985, 69) argues that colonialism derived not only from the yearning for a 'mere tributary suzerainty over distant populations,' but also the desire to 'impose upon them new social and cultural patterns identified with civilization.' Lord Lugard, a British soldier and colonial administrator for the British protectorates in Nigeria, describes the colonial project in Africa as a 'Dual Mandate' - a description that aptly captures Europe's lust for Africa's untapped resources and the initiative that is popularly referred to in French colonial discourse as *la mission civilisatrice*:

[66]Cited in McAllister (1984, 80-81).
[67]See Thomas (1993, 60).

> The civilized nations have at last recognized that while on the one hand the abounding wealth of the tropical regions of the earth must be developed and used for the benefit of mankind, on the other hand, an obligation rests on the controlling power not only to safeguard the material rights of the natives, but to promote their moral and educational progress. (1922, 18)

More to the point, Lugard attributes the invasion and colonization of Africa to Europe's decision to take the moral high ground by casting a shadow of modern light on African cultures and civilizations hitherto recognized as primitive and bereft of all the benefits of European modernity, the values that it embodies as well as the lifestyle and social realities that it epitomizes:

> As Roman imperialism laid the foundations of a modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of these islands along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying the debt and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of culture and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization. (1922, 618)

In addition to these afore-stated justifications for European colonization, some scholars have argued that Europe also saw Africa and other conquered territories as representations of its own primitive past and a reminder of how far along the path of progress, enlightenment and modernity it (Europe) had come:

> Europe was in search of a pristine and unadulterated past, and therefore conveniently transfixed Africa in colonial representations of the continent in a distant and primitive era, which it held up to itself as the mirror image of a Europe

> that had not yet lost its innocence, but also a reflection of the very opposite of European modernity.[68]

We find that the colonial state was borne out of the desire to spread the benefits of modernity, however contrived, to other parts of the world. One of those benefits, Grillo (1998) posits, was the modern state's decision to take responsibility for the social and economic well-being of its citizens. The modern state therefore represented a well-orchestrated departure from the pre-modern system of governance and social ordering which had little interest in the economic and social empowerment of its citizens (ibid.). While both the patrimonial and modern systems had at the centre of their subsistence and survival the extraction of resources and the maintenance of order among other responsibilities, they differ in that the former had little interest in civilizing and transforming its subjects (even when those were considered barbarian) while the latter sought to transform societies and cultures in addition to the focus on resource extraction and mobilization. It is on the basis of the emphasis on social empowerment, transformation and civility that they are considered "modern." The transplantation of the modern state onto colonized lands no doubt triggered a paradigm shift in the latter in the areas of governance, social ordering, culture, religion and the economy.

3.2.1 Transformation of the Political and Cultural Space

While the colonial government is generally known to be the face or poster child of the colonial agenda of subjugation, enlightenment and exploitation, such other agents as traders, businesspeople, farmers, mining companies and missionaries, among several other interest groups, were just as complicit in the enterprise. From this array of participants, Young singles out Christian missionaries, describing them as an 'informal extension of the state domain' due to their involvement in the formulation, projection and implementation of policies in the areas of language and education (1985, 78). For

[68] Bandia (2009, 5).

Grillo, the missionaries' assignment can best be described as 'sword in one hand, Bible in the other' (1998, 99). Ado K Tiberondwa (1988) puts it more succinctly in his argument that missionaries sowed the seeds of political, economic and cultural imperialism in Africa, thereby contributing to the destruction of African indigenous values.

What's important for this research at this point is the knowledge that colonialism fostered the emergence of a new social order, leaving in its wake a radical transformation of the African socio-political and cultural space. The fate of pre-colonial African communities or nation-states was therefore sealed by the violence and destructiveness of colonial rule which, according to Southall (1970, 72), sought to undo the 'incorporative processes' intrinsic to traditional communities with a view to bringing them in line with the social order orchestrated by the modernist colonial regime. The patrimonial nation-state, hitherto renowned for its unique and boisterous political and cultural systems, was suddenly brought into a forced union with its ilk[69] and transported into a new socio-political space whose inhabitants would subsequently be subjected to the coercive machinery of the colonial state. For these traditional communities, the era of political independence was gone, and the pillar upon which their authentic traditions and worldviews rested would be shattered *ad infinitum*. In a nutshell, European modernity and all its trappings worked together to uproot the foundations upon which the local authenticity and living traditions of African cultures and civilizations were built, while the exclusive use of and reliance on orality was soon to be supplanted with a supposedly more superior writing tradition.

In the colonial state of Nigeria, the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and well over four hundred other disparate ethno-linguistic groups were thus brought together under the banner of a new nation via the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern British Protectorates in 1914 (Adegbija 2004). As colonialism spread further into the hinterlands, so did the language of the colonizers, which was eventually implanted as official language of the

[69]i.e. other formerly sovereign states.

new nation. In addition to the spread of colonialism and the Western values that came with it, Christian missionaries also penetrated deep into the territories, especially in the West, East and north-central regions,[70] thereby supplanting the traditional religions that hitherto held sway in the 'conquered' territories. Slowly but surely, colonialism decimated the imagination of the colonized peoples of Nigeria and distorted their cultural sensibilities through the combined pressures of a coerced multicultural existence and exposure to the language and culture of the Imperial Centre. In the middle of all of this, the natural resources of the Nigerian peoples were harnessed and spirited away to nurture the modernist developmental initiatives of the métropole. These were the socio-political and cultural conditions to which citizens of the new nation and all that they held dear to their hearts - their cultures, customs, languages and imagination - were subjected.

3.3 Translation within the Colonial Nation

A new nation was born with clearly defined physical boundaries, but the major ingredients that made the nation possible occurred in ways that were more psychological than physical. As highlighted in the first chapter, the role of translation in the making and sustenance of the colonial nation state cannot be downplayed. As this chapter is concerned with the experiences of translation within the discursive framework of colonialism, we contend that the major forms of translation carried out within the colonial state of Nigeria, especially under the auspices of anthropological research and religious proselytism, were designed to perpetuate the underlying colonial principles of denigration, subjugation and exploitation. However, literary translations surfaced in the early years of colonialism in a bid to rein in the negative stereotyping and deliberate misrepresentation of African worldviews perpetuated by hegemonic

[70]Christianity was definitely not the only foreign religion that existed in the colonial state. Islam had already gained a foothold in the core North as well as some parts of the West and North-Central regions long before the advent of British colonialism. See Adegbija (2004).

anthropological narratives and religious texts. We note, however, that many of those literary texts, though steeped in an anti-colonialist ideology and infused with a deep-seated longing for the valorization of Nigerian cultural sensibilities, were often tainted with some of those anti-African colonial legacies that they set out to displace in the first place. Having set the pace with a brief exposition of the ideological undercurrents that define and accentuate the troika of anthropological, religious and literary translation, we shall now examine the pragmatic ways in which these translation practices shaped and took shape within what Niranjana (1992, 2) describes as "the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism."

3.3.1 Anthropological translations

3.3.1.1 Theoretical Issues

While the groundwork for the conceptualization of anthropological writings as 'translations' was created in Austen's *African Speaks, Colonialism Writes,* Bandia takes it a notch further in *Orality and Translation* by making a case for the translationality of anthropological writings on the basis of the implicit transformation of texts from 'oral to written form' (2011, 110). Besides, the collection and inscription of African orality is further ascribed to such translation-related practices as transcription, entextualization and pseudotranslation. Within the framework of linguistic anthropology, transcription refers to the representation of language or texts in written form, especially in contexts in which the source text exists in non-written varieties, such as oral or sign language forms or as written texts in a completely different writing system.[71] From the viewpoint of oralate cultures, transcription can be described as the 'reification or fixation of verbal interaction, making it transportable in space and time' (Haberland & Mortensen 2016, 586). In other words, in oralate communities transcription refers to the creation of written texts from utterances.

[71]An example of this would be coding cryptic language forms in the Roman alphabet system.

Entextualization, on the other hand, refers to the rendition of a 'given instance of discourse as text, detachable from its local context' (Silverstein and Urban 1996, 21). Drawing from Bauman and Briggs (1990), we argue that the process of entextualization involves not only the extraction of texts from their local contexts or 'interactional setting' but also their reproduction as single units. In a related definition, Park and Bucholtz (2009, 485) describe entextualization as a 'process by which circulable texts are produced by extracting discourse from its original context, and reifying it as a bounded object.' Within the context of colonial anthropology, entextualization therefore allowed those ephemeral verbal and non-verbal discourses that defined and animated pre-colonial African cultures – such as incantations, ritual performances and divination sessions – to be captured and codified in a way that guarantees what Park and Bucholtz (ibid., 2) refer to as 'a certain degree of fixity and permanence.' The capturing and codification of African orality via the process of entextualization typically occurred through an initial process of recording long stretches of linguistic production or cultural performances (such as the recitation of praise poems, incantations and dirges), followed by a more detailed and structured documentation process that involved the inscription of these verbal and non-verbal utterances and performances in some form of written representation. This methodical encoding of oral and performed texts is described in Haberland & Mortensen (2016) as 'transcription as second-order entextualization.'

Lastly, pseudotranslation, refers to the presentation of texts as 'translations with no corresponding source texts' (Toury 1995, 40). For Bandia (2011, 110), a good number of oral texts emanate from 'cultures with colonial histories, which are often stereotyped as primitive, marginal or exotic' on account of the preponderance of orality. The representation of "oral aesthetics" by modern, literate cultures through 'writing and other forms of encoding' demonstrates what Bandia (ibid.) aptly describes as the 'modernist preference for the permanence of writing over the ephemerality and unpredictability of orality.'

3.3.1.2 Colonial Representation of Nigerian Orality

The production of anthropological writings in the early years of colonialism derived from a certain degree of ambivalence. First, the vast majority of the Africanist anthropological writings produced during this period were carried out by agents of the colonial state - colonial officers and administrators - who, first and foremost, were not only bent on controlling African minds but also considered the collection and codification of African oral texts as a 'valuable key to native psychology' (Austen 1990, 31). In deference to the potency of this imperialist initiative, F. V Equilbecq, a French folklorist and former colonial administrator, argues in favour of the need to 'know those whom one wishes to dominate' (1972, 22).[72] In other words, the general thinking among the agents of imperialism was that the needs of the colonial enterprise would be best served through the acquisition of a detailed knowledge of the inner workings of the mind of the native subject, the society which they inhabited and the worldview that animated their being.

Besides the hegemonic intentions of colonialism, early colonial anthropology was also inspired by the altruistic, even if modernist, mission to protect both African orality and its entire paraphernalia of existence[73] from the violence and destructiveness of colonialism.

3.3.1.2.1 Early Colonial Anthropology

The collection and inscription of colonial anthropological texts, it must be stressed, occurred mostly through such translation techniques as entextualization and transcription. If the rationale behind the production of these ethnographic writings was contentious and steeped in ambivalence, the methods through which African oral literatures were collected were no less controversial and did indeed leave much to be desired. The raw data that formed the bulk of African anthropological writing in the

[72]Cited in Austen (1990, 31).
[73]Equilbecq (1972, 22) refers to these as the 'supreme vestiges of the primitive beliefs of the black race.'

early stages of colonialism were either collected directly by colonial officers themselves or through the use of native informants. 'Early' colonial anthropologists, described in Austen (1990) as 'pre-tape recorder scholars,' derived their primary material mostly from nocturnal performances of African orality. This entextualization process – which for the most part involved the observation and recording of African oral works under the cover of darkness by aliens who were largely unfamiliar with the peculiarities of the local culture - no doubt cast a cloud of suspicion on the narratives that emanated from the ensuing codification or transcription processes. The suspicions generated over the reliability and/or authenticity of such narratives can also be ascribed to the near-impossibility of adequately capturing and coding what was heard and seen, given the element of nocturnality intrinsic to some of these oral performances. The inscription or *translation* of these anthropological texts was also heavily tainted by the 'modernist belief in the superiority of writing over orality' (Bandia 2009, 8), which process exposed the resulting narratives or *target texts* to conscious or unintentional acts of misrepresentation or under-reporting.

More to the point, Austen (1990) reveals that most colonial administrators-cum-anthropologists hardly bothered to attend such performances, while those who did were for the most part self-excluded from the ideological underpinnings, cultural intricacies and utterances that animated them on account of their linguistic and cultural alterity. This somewhat top-down, blasé approach to the translation (i.e. collection and inscription) of African orality led to the production of anthropological texts in what Austen describes as the 'verandas or (…) tents of colonialism' (ibid., 31). Second on the list of data sources for early colonial anthropology were native informants who were sourced from the local communities associated with the cultures that were the object of anthropological inquisition. While some of the informants were active participants in the performance of African orality desirous of partaking in the feast of crumbs from the colonial masters' table, others were drawn from either a pool of locals willing to serve

the colonial regime in return for financial gratification or low-ranking public service officers of native extraction.

The use of local informants in the collection and inscription of colonial anthropology was no doubt fraught with several problems. Besides being ill-equipped and untrained for the task, public servants who doubled as local informants for the colonial regime were confronted with the prospect of losing their jobs and its associated privileges[74] if they pushed through afro-centric narratives that valorized African cultural sensibilities to the detriment of romanticized colonialist versions of African civilization. Faced with the threat of possible unemployment as well as loss of privileged status in society, these local public service officials were left with no choice but to provide the much-needed logistical support for the colonial regime's inadequate (and sometimes deliberately falsified) renditions of African orality. Linguistic insufficiency on the part of both the informants and their colonial paymasters also played a significant role in the underrepresentation of African oral narratives. While the native informants provided much of the raw data in their local languages, the interpreters were most often native government officials whose command of the language of colonialist imposition left much to be desired (Austen 1990; Bandia 2009). More to the point, some of the performer-cum-informants were not necessarily skilled in the art of oral performance and may not even have been exposed to the subtleties, aesthetic canons and spiritual ramifications of these performances. It is important, at this juncture, to reiterate the fact that the bulk of African verbal art involves elaborate poetic forms that are usually the exclusive preserve of specialist poets and performers. A lot of pertinent cultural nuances were therefore either lost in translation or incorrectly coded in the resulting draft, which was subsequently revised by the author, preparatory to being published and dished out to the unwary public. The narratives collected via the use of local informants, Austen continues, were therefore riddled with the type of 'philological shortcomings' expected from 'colonialist inscription' (ibid., 32) due in part to the

[74]By privileges, allusion is made to the high social status that they occupied in their communities by virtue of their employment.

marked absence of a source text to control the 'translations' and the fact of the authors being twice removed from the source text in its pure, unadulterated form. Corroborating this argument, Finnegan points out that the early scholars were

> Using inadequate sources, perhaps second-hand (so that they themselves had not direct experience of the actual performance involved), or in synopsis only with the artistic elaborations or repetitions omitted. This in itself goes a long way to account for the very simplified impression of African oral literature we often receive from these collections (particularly when it is remembered that they emphasized prose narrative rather than the more elaborate and difficult poetic forms). (1976, 13)

The collections were therefore (mis)construed and perceived as elementary, undeveloped versions of what the average European considered "authentic literature" and were thus easily relegated to the realm of fables designed for the consumption of a European audience with an uncontrollable appetite for what Bandia describes as 'the unknown and the exotic'(2009, 5).

3.3.1.2.2 Second Wave of Anthropological Inscription

While early colonial anthropology was largely dominated by inexperienced colonial administrator-anthropologists, the late 1800s and early 1900s witnessed a new wave of colonial anthropological inscription that was powered by a genuine desire to modernize the field of anthropological research. As Austen (1990) and Jones (1974) reveal, a new set of anthropologists emerged out of European institutions of higher learning with an eye to establishing best practices for the future collection and inscription of African orality. Two main groups of European scholars rose to prominence during this period, to wit: anthropological linguists and aficionados of African literature.[75] Expectedly, the

[75]Austen (1990) refers to this group as 'colonial-era students of African literature.'

linguists - walking in the footsteps of early European missionaries - were mostly concerned with documenting Africa's numerous languages and analyzing their vocabulary, syntax, grammar and phonology (Austen 1990). Linguistic anthropology is mainly concerned with the relationship between language, culture and society. It is therefore not surprising that the colonialist initiative to document and study African languages derived for the most part from the fear that many African languages and cultures might go into extinction in the face of the hegemonic pressures of colonialism. Large numbers of oral narratives were therefore collected and studied as part of the linguistic project, and subsequently coded in a bid to develop training manuals and set technical standards (ibid., 34). It must be noted, however, that most of the texts collected under this initiative were a mix of 'formal tales and personal narratives' and were, therefore, of very little value to the literary discourse of the time (ibid.).

The texts collected by the second category of anthropologists - heretofore described as colonial era students of African literature - however, added the much-needed vigour and vitality to the inscription or translation of African - and in this specific instance - Nigerian orality during this period. For all intents and purposes, this category of translator-anthropologists included colonial administrators, Christian missionaries and professional anthropologists. Three types of anthropological inquisition stood out during this period, to wit: village-based participant observation, territorial-based ethnographic work and itinerant artefact collection (ibid.). As will be seen in the paragraphs that follow, these methods of data collection were scored through by such translation-oriented techniques as entextualization and transcription, which paved the way for the conversion of oral and performed texts from a state of ephemerality to one of permanence.

3.3.1.2.2.1 Village-based Participant Observation Approach

The village-based participant-observation fieldwork was dominated by anthropologists with a strong bias for structuralist-functionalist research. Though structuralist-functionalist researchers were not sold on the prospects of narrative texts, they nonetheless conducted high-quality ethnographic research that focused on the performance of culture in various social contexts, and ultimately set the standard for future scientific anthropological and Africanist scholarship (ibid.). Major works produced under the structuralist-functionalist banner include S. F. Nadel's *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*[76] and *Nupe Religion*.[77]

Easily described as one of the most important 'monographs on a West African people that has yet appeared,[78] *A Black Byzantium* draws on an extensive research into Nupe social organization, focussing on issues surrounding the linguistic, political and economic aspects of Nupe culture. Tracing the history of the Nupe state back to the sixteenth century, Nadel showcases how the empire developed culturally, politically and geographically, through a dynamic, yet subtle expansionist policy that oversaw the incorporation of several non-Nupe communities into the core Nupe state. In the early nineteenth century, the empire fell to the Fulani invaders who took over the reins of government. For reasons yet unknown, the Fulani conquerors came to be absorbed racially, linguistically and culturally by the Nupe, such that the conqueror and the conquered could only be told apart through the existence of class differences. The class differences, Nadel observes, led to the partitioning of the empire along urban-rural divides. The urban centres were largely dominated by Mohammedan nobles, while the rural areas were inhabited for the most part by peasants, most of whom subscribed to pagan religious practices. *A Black Byzantium* also discusses such economic concerns as the dynamics of labour, trade and production, with especial emphasis on the production and sale of goods, the profitability of trading ventures, and taxation. Nupe

[76]Published in 1942.
[77]Published in 1954.
[78]See Green (1946)

men were typically subsistent farmers who took pride in their occupation and – in the spirit of subsistent farming - tilled the lands to provide food for their families. In the pre-colonial past, surpluses were handed over to local chiefs in accordance with patrimonial taxation principles. With the advent of British colonialism, however, any surpluses were sold to the wives who subsequently resold them in the markets for profit and handed over applicable taxes to the colonial government. A brief exposition of the Nadel's monograph amounts to nothing but a scratch on the surface of the issues raised therein. The one salient point which aptly captures its most central theme, however, remains the ability of the state to corral its inhabitants into a semblance of national consciousness and unity in spite of its history of conquest and large-scale incorporation of disparate non-indigenous ethno-cultural communities.

A little over a decade after the publication of his monograph, Nadel published *Nupe Religion* with an eye to enhancing the value of his previous publication - *A Black Byzantium*. In *Nupe Religion*, Nadel provides a simultaneous analysis of the religious beliefs and cultural practices of the Nupe, and concludes that Nupe religion operates within the realm of and in accordance with a set of logical and intelligible principles. The book discusses Nupe philosophy based on a perspective that places a high premium on the centrality of God, rituals and medicine to the affairs of earthly mortals. God is seen as the Supreme Being who determines the fate of each individual and the turns that their lives may take. The face of God, Nadel reveals, may be sought through the performance of a wide array of rituals available to the Nupe. For all intents and purposes, the Nupe see rituals through the prism of intermediary forces that permeate the unseen barriers that exist between the physical world and the spirit realm, which ultimately bridge the gap between man's failings and God's infinite strength and compassion. When rituals fail to either alleviate an individual's sufferings or turn their fortune around for the better, the Nupe automatically resort to the notions of medicine and witchcraft. Medicines serve the somewhat mundane purpose of physical and spiritual healing and may be used for good or evil. Witchcraft, on the other hand, is

often blamed as the cause of all negative life experiences that have defied physical intervention. What's more, Nadel ascribes the prevalence of negativity in the world (in spite of the supremacy of God) to the Nupe belief that the scope of religion was limited and that the universe was 'inadequately controlled.'

Compared to the early colonial anthropologists, Nadel seemed to have had noble intentions and was as a matter of fact renowned for his professionalism, attention to detail, and well-researched narratives (Jones 1974). His works, however, had the unfortunate privilege of lending themselves to colonial agendas in that they provided vivid insights into the customs, tradition and psychology of the natives, which in turn procured for the colonial administrators the tools to subjugate the natives to colonial purposes.[79]

As earlier indicated, the data that constituted the core of Nadel's works were collected through methods that embody and celebrate the translation techniques of entextualization and transcription. The participant observation methodology adopted in his research emerged the leading approach to ethnographic research in the twentieth century, offering anthropologists an opportunity to gain close and valuable insights into the social practices of a people or community. Leveraging this approach, Nadel and his cohorts were able to endear themselves to the Nupe and immerse themselves in the local culture, which process facilitated a considerably seamless collection or recording of data and observations.[80] The data collection process itself involved such rigorous activities as active participation in the daily life of the Nupe, conducting informal interviews, recording life histories and directly observing their oral performances, customs and practices. The observation, recording and documentation of these ephemeral oral texts and performances are, for all intents and purposes, scored through by the translation technique of entextualization which, as we recall, infers the capturing and codification of ephemeral texts in a way that guarantees fixity and permanence.

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[79]See Austen (1990, 35) and Theodore H. Von Laue. 1976. "Anthropology and Power; R. S. Rattray among the Ashanti." *African Affairs,* 75: 33-54.
[80]See Howell (1972).

What's more, the subsequent inscription of the oral and performed texts (or verbal and non-verbal discourses) in written form corroborates Haberland and Mortensen's notion of 'transcription as second-order entextualization' (2016).

3.3.1.2.2.2 Territorial-based Ethnographic Work

Akin to the participant observation approach, territorial-based ethnographic works also relied on translation-oriented processes such as entextualization and transcription for their reification. Anthropological writings produced within this framework were mostly carried out by colonial officers working in museums and government offices who served long stints in various communities and had developed sufficient skills in the local languages to support the inscription of the oral literatures intrinsic to their host communities (Austen 1990). Conceivably, the narratives or target texts produced by these colonial officers were bereft of the mix of theoretical and practical undercurrents that shaped structural-functionalist narratives and, as such, were mostly excluded from the sophisticated readership and scientific vetting that the latter enjoyed. Among the most prolific colonial administrator-writers of this period was Lt. Colonel Alfred Burdon Ellis, a British army officer stationed in West Africa. Drawing from his extensive work experience in Yoruba speaking communities, Ellis published *The Yoruba Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* - a highly-engaging narrative that accounts for the social and political systems, customs, laws, language, religious beliefs, folklore and proverbs of the Yoruba. He had, prior to this book, published a similar account on the *Ewe-speaking people of West Africa*[81] as well as *A history of the Gold Coast of West Africa.*[82]. Also worthy of mention among the 'non-commissioned,' self-professed colonial officer-anthropologists of the mid-colonial period was Richard Edward Dennett, whose collection, titled *At the back of the black man's mind*[83] resonated deeply

[81]Published in 1890.
[82]Published in 1893.
[83]Published in 1906.

not only within the colonial community but also, and more importantly, in mainland Britain.

While these ethnographic writings broached the performance of orality in different communities and among tribes as well as the social contexts in which oral narratives were performed, many of them contained gross inaccuracies and were for the most part written under the inspiration of what Jones (1974, 281) describes as "armchair mentors" in mainland Britain operating with their biases and agendas. *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*, for instance, was written by a European officer who had spent time studying Bantu and Bini folklore, spiritual practices and philosophy. The book engages with precolonial Bini customs and religious practices (as well as those of other cultures), and even goes so far as to capture some of the esoteric texts intrinsic to some of these cultures. It is, however, fraught with so many half-baked theories and obvious colonialist assumptions such as the insinuation that African natives lack the capacity to tell the supernatural apart from that which is real:

> Their higher conception of God cannot be separated from the kingly office, for the king is priest as well. Rotten and degenerate as an African kingdom may have become, its only hope of regeneration rests in the purification of the kingly office and of the ancient system of government attached to it. (Dennett 1906, 1)

This misrepresentation or mistranslation of African modes of thought is a significant pointer to the sort of damage that ill-informed European writer-anthropologists did to the African imagination during this period.

3.3.1.2.2.3 Traveller-ethnographers

Itinerant colonial administrators-cum- anthropologists, sent to cover wide areas could not be expected to learn the languages of their host communities let alone appreciate the socio-cultural contexts within which the oral literatures of these communities were

performed. Ethnographic works produced by this category of anthropologists were therefore carried out with the help and collaboration of local interpreters and informants, and were motivated for the most part by the need to collect as much material and as many intelligence records as possible on African oral narratives (Jones 1974, 283). It should be noted that the colonial government had justified the practice of anthropology as intelligence gathering due to the fact that it gave useful insight into the cultures, thought-processes and worldviews of the natives that they sought to dominate. As O. Temple and C. L. Temple (1919) have revealed, anthropology provided the European administrator with 'a close and detailed knowledge of the habits and customs of the native.'[84] One of the most prolific ethnographers in the itinerant anthropologist category was District officer P. Amoury Talbot - who dedicated his entire life to collecting anthropological and linguistic material on Nigerian orality. Talbot collected anthropological material wherever he was posted culminating in the publication of several anthropological pieces, such as *In the Shadow of the Bush* (1912),[85] *Life in Southern Nigeria* (1914)[86] among many others, while his first wife, D. Amaury Talbot, published *Women's Mysteries of a Primitive People* in 1915. Expectedly, most of these publications were not very successful and were promptly relegated to the backseat of academic discourse. Following Jones (1974), the titles of some of these monographs - which were deliberately chosen to foster sales in the metropole - were derogatory enough to make any self-respecting African cringe: *Women's Mysteries of a Primitive People*, *Tailed Headhunters* and *At Home with the Savage*.[87] Nigerians, Jones continues, took exception to being labelled "savages" and were also dismayed by the negative stereotyping and misrepresentation of their cultures and traditions by the agents of colonialism.

[84]Cited in Jones (1974, 283).
[85]On the Ekoi people of Southern Nigeria.
[86]On the Ibibio ethnic group of the same geo-political location.
[87]Cited in Jones (1974).

3.3.2 Religious Translations

Religious translations were, arguably, one of the most important forms of language mediation that animated the colonial period in Nigeria's history. Translation is understood in this context in the conventional sense – that is, the exchange of texts between two disparate language systems. Within the specific context of religious colonialism, translation involves the transfer of texts between the imperialist languages of Europe and the subaltern languages of Africa.

Scholars have argued that the intersection between European missionaries and African orality was a lot more complicated than the experience of colonial anthropologists.[88] In the previous section on anthropological translations, we argued, based on evidence from various colonial anthropological writings, that attempts were made to at least preserve African oral literatures, beliefs and customs from the disruptiveness and violence of colonialism, even if the end-goal was to divert any knowledge gained towards subjugating the natives to colonial purposes. The religious translation landscape, as would be seen shortly, presented a totally different set of dynamics. European missionaries, unlike the anthropologists that came before them, were initially much less interested in the preservation of African (and by extension, Nigerian) orality and the beliefs that they embodied, as these were contrary to the Christian values with which they had come to replace them. Christian missionaries came to Africa with what can be termed a modernist preconception of religiosity that sought to demolish the strongholds of African cosmology and its religious paraphernalia, and illuminate the path of humanity with the Christly message of hope, love and repentance. However, faced with the near-impossibility of replacing the *darkness* of native African religiosity with the light of the gospel of Christ (and its associated values) without adequate knowledge of and insight into African languages, the Euro-Christian light-bearers set out to capture, code and learn these languages hoping that this would facilitate their proselytic efforts. More to the point, European missionaries also came to terms with the

[88]See Austen (1990) and Tiberondwa (1988).

need to understand African orality if the belief system that it embodied must be smothered for the Christian faith to grow unimpeded. This paved the way for the collection and translation of some African oral narratives alongside the codification of the languages in which they were expressed.[89] As Austen (1990) notes, the collection and codification of these oral texts were restricted to those narratives that were deemed compatible with Christian values while those that conflicted with the teachings of the body of Christ were deliberately excluded.

The role of translation in the spread of the Gospel becomes increasingly evident if we are to consider the fact that the European conqueror and the African conquered spoke totally different languages and subscribed to different religious beliefs. Translation therefore lent itself to colonial purposes by providing the tools necessary to conquer and convert the natives to British ways of thinking and articulating the Divine (Sugirtharaj 2002). Two key words stand out in the business of religious colonialism - "conquer" and "convert"- and it would be interesting to see what theoretical and pragmatic insights they bring to this all-important discourse on translation.

3.3.2.1 "Conquest" and "Conversion": Symbolic Elements in Religious Colonialism

Vincente L. Rafael explores the elements of "translation," "conquest" and "conversion" under Spanish colonialism in *Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*.[90] In this seminal piece, Rafael argues that the trio of translation, conquest and conversion are historically semantically related and as such should be seen as working together towards a common ideological purpose. Citing the Academia's *Diccionario de la lengua Espanola*, Rafael (1993) defines *Conquista* (conquest) as the 'forcible occupation of a territory' and 'winning someone's voluntary submission and consequently attaining his or her love and affection.' *Conversion* would normally

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[89]Most of these oral texts, as will be seen much later in this chapter, were collected by literate Christian converts of Nigerian extraction.
[90] See Rafael (1988).

denote the act of transforming a thing or changing it into something else but could also infer bringing someone over to a religion or a practice. Conversion, like conquest, can therefore be seen as crossing over into someone else's physical, emotional, religious and/or cultural space, and claiming the territory for oneself (Rafael 1993, xviii). It follows therefore, based on Rafael's logic, that the Spanish invasion and colonization of the Philippines and subsequent conversion of the Tagalog to Christianity set the pace for the wholesome transformation of the natives in the image of the colonizers. In this instance, 'conversion' and 'conquest' worked hand-in-hand to achieve the modernist objective of bringing empowerment and civilization to peoples who had hitherto been deemed most in need of social, economic and spiritual redemption.

Translation both as an activity and a process was undoubtedly implicated in the implementation of these transformatory objectives in the areas of textual exchange and the modernist logic of 'psychological conversion' of the natives. While textual exchange refers to the mundane process of language transfer on account of the language gap between the conquerors and the conquered, the logic of 'psychological conversion,' for its part, revolves around the fact that the conqueror's religion (drawing from the modernist ideology) forbade the economic exploitation of conquered territories without prior or simultaneous attempts at religious proselytism (Sugirtharajah 2005; Thomas 1993). In other words, the hegemonic and exploitative processes of European colonialism had to be accompanied by a corresponding altruistic act of liberating the natives from the *darkness* of their primitive ways and welcoming them into the light of Christianity and the salvation that it offers. England's mission, B. G. Johns reveals, was to

> reclaim these kingdoms of darkness and of Satan, and bring
> them beneath the sway of truth, light, and knowledge.[91]

The requirement by Spanish Catholicism that the Tagalog be totally transformed i.e. colonized as *conquista* and *conversion*[92] also solidified the role of translation in religious

[91]B. G. Johns, *The Times*, 8 October 1857, pg. 8, col. 3., cited in Sugirtharajah (2005, 84).

colonialism. This wholesome transformation of the natives and their consciousness was carried out in two major ways:

First, akin to the Nigerian experience where missionaries were obliged to learn local languages and produce texts in them, fundamental Christian texts had to be translated into Filipino languages as well. This imposed the need for Spanish missionaries to learn the local languages (especially Tagalog) in order to preach and produce religious texts or translations in them. Tagalog and other local languages were thereafter codified in the Roman alphabet, while the native syllabic script in which they were previously coded was relegated to the backseat on account of its alleged ephemerality and incompatibility with Spanish culture, religiosity and pedagogy. The codification of native Tagalog culture during Spanish rule was therefore heavily tainted by an elaborate logic of translational reductionism that relied on the overt simplification and reduction of Tagalog cultural artistry and artefacts into signs interpretable in Spanish terms. Following Rafael, we find that translation, in light of these dynamics, automatically became synonymous with the process of publicising or 'making known' the unknown, distinguishing between 'legitimate and illegitimate native practices' and 'harnessing native signs' in furtherance of the mission to propagate the Gospel and 'consolidate its gains' (1993, 106).

The second transformatory experience has to do with the way in which the Tagalog were 'converted' or 'translated' into what Rafael refers to as 'imitation Spaniards.' The transformation and representation of the Tagalog in the image of their Spanish invaders occurred through the implantation of the Spanish language (as official language and therefore a means to achieving upward mobility) in the colony, the conversion of the Tagalog to Christianity and the transfiguration of the machinery of governance and social ordering to reflect Spanish ways of thinking, acting and being. The Spanish verb *convertere*, Rafael argues, originally meant "to translate," while *convertir*, as far back as the sixteenth century, meant 'to translate.' In contemporary times, we translate texts

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[92]In other words, they must be conquered body and soul.

and convert people whereas it was commonplace to convert texts back in the day. The argument here is that the duo of "translate" and "convert" both refer to the process of translating Spanish texts and terms into Tagalog, which process also led to the morphological transformation of Tagalog language and thought via the importation of Spanish words, expressions, worldview and ways of thinking. The representation of Spanish thought in Tagalog, for all intents and purposes, led to its native speakers being transported body and soul into a new psycho-cultural space that was designed to reify and valorize the Spanish model or conceptualization of humanity. So when Rafael alluded to the translation or conversion of the Tagalog into 'imitation Spaniards,' he was referring to this psycho-cultural transformation of the native-subject in the hands of the agents of Spanish colonialism.

The dynamics involved in the foray of Christian doctrine into native vernaculars are also worthy of mention. In his exploration of the Tagalog experience of religious colonialism, Rafael argues that the Spaniards were unable to find local equivalents for such important terms as *Dios* (God), *Espiritu Santo* (Holy Spirit) and *Jesu Cristo* (Jesus Christ) and as such took the executive decision to retain them in the source-language forms in order to 'punctuate the flow of Christian discourse in the vernacular' (1993, 20-21). Operating under the logic that certain concepts cannot be translated due to cultural and ideological differences, Spanish missionary-translators therefore sought to 'prescribe' and 'proscribe' the medium through which the natives were to 'receive and return God's word' for the sake of conversion (ibid., 21). The question remains: what does it mean to prescribe and proscribe a language? To the Spanish missionaries, Tagalog suffered from significant morphological deficiencies that rendered it unemployable for the expression and propagation of Christian thought. Its words for *God, spirit* and *God's son*, for example, were deemed too distant from Christian doctrine to capture the essence of God, Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ (Robinson 1997). The perceived untranslatability of these Spanish Biblical notions meant that they had to be calqued into Tagalog. The production of Christian doctrine in Tagalog therefore

prescribed the language as the medium in which the natives would accept, imbibe and radiate God's word, which process led to the stripping of the old native tongue of all 'unwanted indigenous cultural and religious baggage' (Nadella 2012, 55) and subsequent enrichment with terms and notions that valorized Christian values.

These transformative processes *proscribed* the Tagalog language such that the one in which the natives received and returned God's word – the Tagalog of old - was no longer the one to which they were accustomed before the advent of Spanish colonialism (Rafael 1993). The transformation of Tagalog described heretofore was underscored by the principle of the "hierarchy of languages" (Robinson 1997), which laid the groundwork for the adoption of a top-down approach to translation, signalling the birth of vertical translations within the colony. This hierarchical view of languages accounts for the progression of religious translations in the Philippines from Latin into Castilian, and from Castilian into Tagalog. More to the point, the principle of the hierarchy of languages paved the way for each target language in the translation chain to be deemed significantly 'weaker' and 'less adequate to Christian truth' than its predecessor (ibid.). Castilian was therefore less adequate than Latin and Tagalog inevitably fared much worse in terms of its relationship with Latin.

The principle of the hierarchy of languages foregrounds the presence of the logic of untranslatability as evidenced in Rafael's argument about the use of the Spanish word for God as opposed to the Tagalog representation of the concept of God in Tagalog religious texts:

> To use the signifier *Dios* rather than the Tagalog *bathala* presupposed the perfect fit between the Spanish word and its Christian referent in a way that would be unlikely to occur were the Tagalog word used instead. (1993, 29)

This linguistic inadequacy, according to the Spanish missionaries, derived not from the banal difference or variance between languages, rather, from what Robinson (1997, 86) describes as 'increasing historical and geographical distances from God.' In other

words, the farther away from God a language and its culture are, the less able its speakers will be to participate in what is popularly referred to in religious discourse as 'divine commerce'.[93] The Spanish missionaries therefore relied on translation to facilitate the displacement of subaltern languages like Tagalog towards a more Godly presence - which process involved their transformation into mirror images of languages that were considered closer to God and therefore infused with Godly presence. As the Tagalog experience of religious colonialism has shown, religious translations became a useful tool in the hands of colonizers for perpetuating asymmetrical power relations in the colonies.

The Tagalog experience, it must be noted, is largely transportable to other nations of the world that experienced colonialism in one way or another. By and large, the experience of religious colonialism in the Philippines demonstrates the ways in which religious translations – especially the Bible and other liturgical texts – were deployed as weapons of Western hegemony and used to denigrate subaltern cultures in a bid to further the ends of colonialism.

3.3.2.2 Translation and Religious Colonialism in Nigeria

The dynamics of translation and religious colonialism in Nigeria followed patterns that were largely similar to the Filipino experience discussed in the preceding section. Adegbija (2004) reports that Christian missionary contact in Nigeria predates the arrival of the British as Portuguese missionaries had initially arrived in Nigeria alongside traders in the 15th century, leaving in their wake such place names as Lagos, in the South West and Forcados in the Niger-Delta region. Unlike their British counterparts, the Portuguese only sought to establish religious and commercial ties with the cultures with which they came in contact. British missionaries arrived in the 19th century and, as earlier, mentioned, teamed up with the State to bring empowerment and civilization to

[93]This term denotes the exchange of prayers and answers, gifts and gratitude between God and believers; See Grau (2004) and Robinson (1997, 86).

Nigerian cultures. The civilizing and evangelization initiatives were initially carried out in the English language - the use of which spread as the colonialists made inroads into the hinterlands. The missionaries, Adegbija continues, soon realized that the 'message of the soul' would be better communicated and understood when 'couched in the native language or mother tongues of the addressee' (ibid., 21). Dieldrin Westerman, a missionary-linguist of repute notes:

> We do not want Christianity to appear in the eyes of the natives as the religion of the white man, an opinion to prevail that the African must become a pseudo-European in order to become a Christian, but we want to implant the Gospel deep into the soil of the African mind, so that it may grow there in its own African form, not as a gift of the white man...[94]

While religious colonialism brought the Gospel of Christ to the Nigerian native in either their native tongue or the language of colonialist imposition, it also sought to demolish the cultural and religious ethos that hitherto held sway in Nigerian communities.[95] Bishop Ajayi Crowther's translation of the Bible and other religious texts into Nigerian languages provides a concrete example of ways in which religious colonialism contributed to the destruction of indigenous values and belief systems.[96] Renowned as the first African native to be ordained a priest, Samuel Ajayi Crowther's life was shaped for the most part by his experience with the horror of slavery. After being sold into slavery at a tender age, Ajayi Crowther was rescued by British anti-slavery forces and released into the care of the Christian Mission Society in Sierra Leone. He was nurtured by the missionaries, who facilitated his conversion to Christianity and thereafter sent him off to England to train as a missionary. His zeal for Jesus Christ and talent as a linguist who spoke several African (Nigerian) languages earned him a lot of respect and admiration among his fellow missionaries, and endeared him to his superiors. Upon

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[94]Cited in Omolewa (1979).
[95]See Bandia (2009, 7); Tiberondaw (1998).
[96]See Adegbija (2004).

completing his missionary training in England, he returned to West Africa where he was put to use as a key player in the mission to bring civilization to the region through Christianity and various industrialization initiatives. Ajayi Crowther established a mission station in Abeokuta where, in addition to spreading the Word, he was instrumental to the diversification of the local economy to include the cultivation and trade of cotton as a substitute to slave trade. In a bid to facilitate the spread of the Gospel in Nigerian languages, he spearheaded the codification and standardization of the Yoruba language and proceeded to develop a vocabulary and dictionary to nurture the central dialect of the language.[97]After assisting with the codification and standardization of the Yoruba language, Bishop Crowther translated the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and other religious texts into Yoruba (and subsequently Igbo), paving the way for the dissemination of the Gospel within Yoruba communities and beyond (Adegbija 2004). It should be noted at this juncture that the codification of Yoruba and other local vernaculars, the translation of Christian texts and other literatures into these vernaculars as well as the implantation of English as official language all worked together to create a major space for print capitalism (and the writing tradition that it embodies), thus furthering the preference for the written word over oral literary forms in the colony.

Ajayi Crowther's translations of the Holy Bible into a Yoruba edition entitled *Bibeli Mimọ tabi Majẹmu Lailai ati Titun* (1900) as well as other Christian literatures into Yoruba and other Nigerian languages earned him a lot of accolades within and beyond the Church. The representation of Yoruba traditional values in his works, however, generated a lot of criticisms on account of the decimation of Yoruba religious beliefs, values and artefacts for the benefit of Christianity.

[97]Prior to Ajayi Crowther's intervention, there were several dialects of Yoruba associated with their respective regional and sub-ethnic groups. Most of these regional variations, such as Ijebu, Ijesa, Egba, Yewa, Ekiti, Ilaje, to mention but a few are still spoken today alongside the standard variety of the language.

The liturgical texts published by Bishop Crowther and his team, especially the Yoruba Bible, were particularly unkind to the most crucial supernatural being or concept in Yoruba cosmology – *Èsù* – whom they associated with the Christian Devil or Satan. As demonstrated in the verses below, taken from the English Bible, the Christian Devil is depicted either as Èsù or an indigenized rendition of Satan – Satani – throughout the Yoruba Bible:[98]

> and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by *Satan*. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. (Mk. 1:13 [New International version])(My italics)
>
> I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of *Satan* to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. (Acts 26:17-18 [New International version]) (My italics)

Yoruba translations:

> Ó sì wà ní ogójì ní ijù, a ti owó *Sàtánì* dan wò, ó sì wà pèlúàwon eranko ìgbé; àwon ángélì sì ńse ìránsé fun. (Máàkù 1:13) (My italics)
>
> Èmi ó máa gbàó láti owóàwon ènìyàn àti lówóàwon kèfèrí tíèmi rán o sí nísinsìnyíí láti là wón lójú, kí wón le yípadà kúrò nínú òkùnkùn sí ìmólèàti kúrò lówó agbára *Sàtánì* sí Olórun, kí wón lè gba ìdáríjíèsè, àti ogún pèlúàwon tí a so di mímó nípa ìgbàgbó nínú mi. (Iséàwon Àpóstélì 26:17-18) (My italics)

In Crowther's translations of the Bible into other Nigerian languages, similar supernatural beings and/or concepts were identified among select ethno-linguistic

[98]While Èsù was used in initial versions of the Yoruba Bible, Satani was coined and used in revised editions. Èsù and Satani were used interchangeably in other religious and secular texts, which practice has endured to date.

communities and subjected to the same treatment as the Yoruba *Èsù*. *Ekwensu*,[99] for instance, which occupies a comparable position in Igbo cosmology as *Èsù*, was superimposed on the concept of the Christian Devil and rendered in the same Biblical passages, either as Ekwensu or the *Ibo-ized* Setan[100], thus:

> O we no n'ohia ogu ubochi abua, *Setan* nanwa Ya; Yan a anu ohia nile no kwa; ndi-mo-ozi nēje-kwa-ra Ya ozi. (Mark 1: 13) (My italics)
>
> Neweputa gi n'aka ndi-Ju, na n'aka ndi mba ozo, ndi Mu onwem nēziga gi jekuru ha, isaghe anya-ha, ka ha we si n'ochichiri chigharia ba n'ihè, si kwa n'ike *Setan* chigharikute Chineke, ka ha we nara nbaghara nmehie nile na ihe-nketa n'etiti ndi edoworo nso site n'ikwere na Mu. (Acts 26:17-18) (My italics)

In his rejection of the depiction of the Yoruba divinity – Èsù – as the local equivalent of the Christian Devil or Satan, Bewaji (1998) accused Bishop Crowther and his team of pandering to their Euro-Christian co-conspirators in a bid to pull down the strongholds of Yoruba religion and divert worship away from Èsù towards the Christian God. Following closely in Bewaji's footsteps, Funsho Aiyejina (2010) argues that the Èsù in Yoruba cosmology is not and should never have been misconstrued for the Euro-Christian Devil who comes only to steal, kill and destroy. The Yoruba Èsù, he continues, is:

> a divine trickster, a disguise-artist, a mischief-maker, a rebel, a challenger of orthodoxy, a shape-shifter, and an enforcer deity. Èsù is the keeper of the divine *ase* with which Olodumare created the universe; a neutral force who controls both the benevolent and the malevolent supernatural powers; he is the guardian of Orunmila's

[99] In Igbo cosmology, Ekwensu is both a trickster god and the god of war.
[100] As is the case with Satani in the Yoruba Bible, the word "Setan" is strange to Igbo cosmology and was only coined after the fact and used in later editions of the Igbo Bible in response to the criticisms that trailed the use of Ekwensu.

> oracular utterances. Without Èsù to open the portals to the past and the future, Orunmila, the divination deity would be blind. As a neutral force, he straddles all realms and acts as an essential factor in any attempt to resolve the conflicts between contrasting but coterminous forces in the world. Although he is sometimes portrayed as whimsical, Èsù is actually devoid of all emotions. He supports only those who perform prescribed sacrifices and act in conformity with the moral laws of the universe as laid down by Olodumare. As the deity of the "orita"... it is Èsù's duty to take sacrifices to target-deities. Without his intervention, the Yoruba people believe, no sacrifice, no matter how sumptuous, will be efficacious. Philosophically speaking, Èsù is the deity of choice and free will. So, while Ogun may be the deity of war and creativity and Orunmila the deity of wisdom, Èsù is the deity of prescience, imagination and criticism - literary or otherwise. (2009, 4)

In a comparative analysis of the traditional Èsù in Yoruba cosmology and the "new Èsù" espoused by Ajayi Crowther and his cohorts, Remi Oyeyemi (2012) reveals that Èsù seeks to fulfil the will of the Supreme Being at all times while the Christian Devil is all out to destroy God's work and undermine His authority every chance he gets. The Yoruba Èsù is also renowned for intervening on behalf of the afflicted so long as they aren't reluctant to submit to God's commandments, whereas the Christian Devil's main objective is to intensify the misery of the afflicted, while also creating physical and spiritual distance between them and the Supreme Being. Lastly, the Èsù in Yoruba religion is a 'straddle,' a 'neutral force' and a factor in 'any attempt to resolve conflicts between contrasting but conterminous forces in the new world,' while the Christian Devil is far from neutral, seeks total devotion to himself and his ways and creates rather than resolves conflicts (Oyeyemi 2012).

The representation of the Christian Devil as Èsù in the Yoruba Bible, in spite of the obvious distinction between the two concepts, lends credence to Bandia's position on

the dehumanizing effects of religious colonialism on African cultures. According to him, religious translations in colonial Africa sought above all things to

> minimize those elements of African religious belief that were in contradiction with Christian doctrine, and to establish parallels between African and Christian belief systems likely to enhance proselytizing and conversion. (2009, 7)

The new definition of Èsù in terms that aptly capture the essence of the Christian Devil gained a foothold in the popular imagination, making its way into the *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* published in 1913 by the Church Missionary Society Bookshop[101], the 1958 University of London's *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* and several other literatures, religious and otherwise.[102] Suffice it to say that this view of Èsù has since displaced the original concept from its rightful place in the Yoruba imagination, earning for itself an underserved status in popular discourse even in contemporary times.

Rejecting the argument that the misrepresentation of the Christian Devil in the Yoruba and Igbo Bibles may have occurred due to morphological restrictions in the two languages, Aiyejina argues that Ajayi Crowther was too knowledgeable to be caged by that logic and suggests that he may have deliberately and demonized the concept of Èsù in a bid to avenge the atrocities committed by Yoruba slave traders:

> The irony of choices made by the Crowthers of the African world is that in their psychological disdain for, and rejection of, African culture, which was in part, a response to the African involvement in their enslavement, they became a new generation of middle-men and women who functioned as arrowheads for the denigration of African cultures. So, while a number of pre-colonial African chiefs and merchants betrayed their fellow Africans by selling them into slavery, the intellectual Crowthers, acting as priests, interpreters, translators, policemen, postmasters and school teachers,

[101]See *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* (1913, 40).
[102]See Aiyejina (2009, 4).

> were key players in the process of the religious, psychological and mental enslavement of African peoples. (2009, 4-5)

Furthering his argument that Ajayi Crowther and his ilk were out to deliberately undermine and disparage African traditional values, Aiyejina argues that those who comfortably likened the Christian Devil to the Yoruba Èsù - despite evidence to the contrary - should have been just as comfortable finding a dynamic equivalent for Jesus Christ in the local vernacular, instead of adopting a more foreignized variant - Jesu Kristi:

> If Satan translates into Èsù because of some perceived incidental similarities between the two, how come Jesus does not translate into Orunmila, given the fact that Orunmila is as proverbial, wise, calm, peaceful, and forbearing as Jesus? How come he does not translate to Ela, the divinity of regeneration? (ibid.)

Without a shadow of doubt, such an approach would have chipped away at the colonizers attempts to pull down the pillars of African traditional religion. Besides the use of equivalent terms for Christian concepts of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, for example, in Yoruba religious texts would have met with the disapproval of the agents of colonialism due to the allusion to some sort of cultural equity between the source and target cultures. As Raj Nadella notes with respect to the Indian colony:

> the process of translating (religious) texts from English into Telugu (was) seen not as a mutual transaction or as a symbiotic process between two languages and cultures of similar value and importance, but as (a) one-way traffic whereby one language spoke, while the *other* sat at the feet of the master language and listened. (2012, 54)

The logic of cultural equity between Western (Christian) cultures and traditional African values eventually gained a foothold in such far-flung places as the Caribbean

and Brazil where Baptist missionaries (working in cahoots with freed African slaves) created a platform that paved the way for dialogue between Christianity and traditional African religions.

By and large, we find that, akin to the Tagalog experience, religious colonialism contributed to the conquering of the Nigerian native and their conversion to Euro-Christian ways of thinking, acting and being. The translations of religious texts into Yoruba, for instance, proscribed the language and the culture that it carries by demonizing and undermining those mystical terms and notions that valorized and conferred on Yoruba traditional religion its splendour and authenticity. Conceivably, the negative connotations imposed upon Yoruba traditional values and their paraphernalia inspired the abandonment of Yoruba cultural practices in favour of Euro-Christian notions of religiosity (and their associated values) on account of their perceived proximity to modern enlightenment.

In this treatise on religious colonialism, translation is used in pragmatic and symbolic ways to expose the roles of Western colonial administrators and missionaries in the implementation of the tripartite colonial ideology of denigration, subjugation and exploitation. The translation of the Bible into indigenous Nigerian languages, as we have seen, focused more on the representation of indigenous religious and cultural icons and symbols in an overwhelmingly negative light. To this end, such concepts as Esu, Aje and Orunmila, which go to the core of Yoruba mythology, were stripped of their agency, demonized and associated with Euro-Christian notions of darkness, negativity and destruction.

3.3.3 Pseudotranslations

In response to the negative stereotyping and misrepresentation of Nigerian traditional values and religions, colonized peoples, especially those with the ability to write, resorted to 'translating' Nigerian orality and mythical beliefs into written forms - both

in the local vernaculars and in the language of the colonial métropole - for the sake of posterity and the benefit of African humanity. Herein lies the foundation of the emergence of pseudotranslations as ideological weapons of cultural and political emancipation in the colonies. Before moving on to the crux of the matter, it behooves us to briefly foreground a theoretical connection between translation and the production of literary texts in the Nigerian colony. The interplay between translation and the writing of African literature during the British occupation of Africa occurred in three major ways: transcriptions, vertical translations and metaphorical translations. Transcriptions refer to not just the writing of African orality in European languages but also cover the use of the vernacular for the written word. In other words, the representation, coding and writing of purely oral narratives in written form in local vernaculars, in and of itself, constitutes an act of translation (Bandia 2009). Second, a good number of those texts written and produced in the local vernaculars were subsequently translated into the language of colonialist imposition, thereby introducing a vertical dimension to the literary translation enterprise. Third, many other texts were produced directly in the colonial language with no known source versions in the local vernacular. These pseudotranslations or 'metaphorical translations' are better suited to postcolonial discourses and will therefore be the subject of more detailed discussions in the chapter that follows. By and large, indigenous narratives were produced with an eye to reinstating the lost glory of Nigerian oral traditions and restoring native cultural sensibilities to their rightful positions in the anal of history and in the national consciousness.

One of the famous texts produced during this period with a view to valorizing Nigerian cultures and orality is Wole Soyinka's *Idanre and Other Poems* (1967).[103] [104] This fascinating collection of poetry discusses Nigeria's political dynamics as well as its cultures and traditions, especially myths surrounding *Ogun* - the Yoruba god of iron.

[103]Though this literary piece was published 7 years after independence in 1967, it nonetheless helps to make the argument.

[104]This argument was inspired for the most part by Funsho Aiyejina's treatise on Esu Elagbara. See Aiyejina (2010).

Ogun is portrayed in this seminal work as a warrior of repute who never lost a battle. On one fateful occasion, he led his men in battle once again. When the war had slowed down, he sought to catch his breath beneath a tree. Èsù, the trickster god, strolled past and, noticing that Ogun had descended into a deep slumber, placed a gourd of palm-wine[105] in a strategic position beside him (Ogun). Èsù then lay in wait amidst the nearby shrubs to observe Ogun's reaction to the beverage upon waking up. Ogun eventually woke up from his deep slumber and, thrilled by the sight of the gourd of palm-wine, emptied the contents into his stomach without so much as questioning the source of it. This would later become his greatest undoing. He ordered his men back to the battlefield where they fought ever so gallantly and succeeded in breaching the enemy trench line. They advanced deep into the enemies' strong hold and went on a slaughtering spree, decimating all enemy soldiers in the process. Unbeknownst to Ogun's army, however, the effect of the alcoholic beverage had kicked in and beclouded his sense of reasoning to the point where Ogun was no longer able to tell his own apart from his foes. Acting under the influence, he turned on his own army and annihilated every soul without fear or favour.

As is typical of all Èsù stories, there is always some moral to be passed across. This narrative seeks to teach a lesson, which is the need for self-restraint, lest one should fall into the abyss of their excesses. The role of Èsù in the Yoruba imagination is once again brought to the fore, not only as a trickster god - for this (act of treachery) was the genesis of his interaction with Ogun in the preceding narrative - but also, and perhaps more importantly, as the messenger of the gods and a deity who teaches lessons and imparts knowledge. The role and essence of Èsù is generally seen in the light of its ambiguity for it seems highly improbable that a deity that is associated with such negativity as trickery and deception would also be capable of a more positive role as one who seeks to redeem by imparting knowledge. In the Yoruba imagination, however, Èsù is known to assume both positions and is widely accepted as a deity who

[105]A local alcoholic beverage derived from the sap of palm trees.

tricks people into making mistakes, not because he wants to disparage them, but because his ultimate desire is for them to learn from their mistakes so that they may be infused with the knowledge, light and positivity of which their world is so much in need.

The centrality of orality to the African worldview - especially the role of Èsù and other deities in the Yoruba imagination - is further underscored in the work of the pioneer Yoruba writer, Daniel Fagunwa whose influence work of fiction, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (The Brave Hunter in the Forest of Four Hundred Deities),[106] stands out among other numerous indigenous literary works published in its time. Demonstrating the shift from oral to written literature in Yoruba culture, Fagunwa's novel depicts the story of a famous hunter, Akara-Ogun, and his adventures in an evil forest where he encounters such Yoruba folklore elements as magic, monsters, spirits, gods and witchcraft. In the course of this treacherous journey through the land of mysticism, Akara-Ogun and his friends are subjected to a cocktail of tests as well as physical and paranormal events and experiences. Each of these events points to a moral, which is in turn scoured through by Fagunwa's use of a mix of Christian and traditional concepts of acting, doing and being. His grasp of Yoruba tradition and orality is unmatched and this is aptly demonstrated throughout the novel. The contributions of this piece to the valorization of the Yoruba worldview is, however, the subject of various criticisms as scholars of African literature argue that it celebrates a more Eurocentric construction of African religiosity to the detriment of the authentic Yoruba traditional religion and all that it depends on for its survival:

> In every instance in which Fagunwa introduces a Yoruba deity into his work, he manipulates the narrative to underscore the view that no matter the extent of the power of that deity, only the Supreme God is credited with the power to grant salvation. By doing so, Fagunwa subtly alters the Yoruba world-view which accords significant autonomy

[106]Translated into English in 1982 by Wole Soyinka as *A Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.

> to such deities as God's agents in his attempt to privilege a monotheistic Christian world-view. Nowhere is Fagunwa's attempt to Christianize the Yoruba world-view more glaring than in his presentation of Èsù in terms reminiscent of the biblical story of the rise and fall of Lucifer. (Aiyejina 2010, 5)

While Ajayi Crowther's gaffe was attributed to his quest to avenge his native culture's shameful involvement in slave trade, it has been alleged that Fagunwa's misrepresentation of the Yoruba concept of divinity was, for the most part, due to the abiding influence of Christianity[107]. Born to a family of *heathens* in 1903, Daniel Fagunwa is reported to have converted to Christianity and changed his middle name from the Yoruba-centric Orowole (The Oro cult has come home) to one that is more in tune with the foundations of Christianity - Olorunfemi (God loves me) (Akyeampong and Gates 2012). It is interesting to note that the major critics of these Eurocentric representations of Yoruba mythology were African writers who rode on the back of Fagunwa's deep and extensive knowledge of Yoruba orality to literary stardom. One of such writers, Aiyejina argues, is Wole Soyinka who, despite the 'constricting Christian ethos' imposed by his parents, was sold on the idea of a 'progressive examination and valorization' of African culture and orality (2009, 6). While Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* is replete with notions, insinuations and nuances that seek to Christianize the Yoruba world-view, the likes of Soyinka take exception to the demonization of these local deities and spiritual concepts. As shown in his depiction of Èsù in *Idanre and Other Poems*, Soyinka strips Èsù of all the Biblical undertones which Fagunwa had bestowed on him and restores him to his traditional ritual status as a trickster deity, mischief-maker and enforcer-deity (ibid.).

[107]Aiyejina (2010).

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the ways in which orality and translation were appropriated to give agency to the colonial ideology of denigration, subjugation and exploitation, while also providing subaltern peoples with the cultural firepower necessary for self-emancipation. It will be interesting to see, in the next chapter, what attempts were made to sustain this counter-hegemonic discourse in the post-colonial Nigerian nation-space.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSLATION, RESISTANCE AND EMANCIPATION IN THE NIGERIAN POSTCOLONY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a counter-narrative to the colonial-centric discourses that sought to keep the Nigerian people in a perpetual state of servitude and subservience to British modes of thinking, doing and being. The current chapter focuses on the roles played by postcolonial translation practices in dismantling the unsavoury legacies of colonialism and exposing the socio-political and cultural realities of the contemporary Nigerian nation-space. While the previous chapter examined the oppressive role of translation within the context of colonialism, this chapter focuses on the role of language mediation as a means of resistance and emancipation in the postcolony. As shall be seen shortly, the current chapter revisits the politics of ethnographic representation and its centrality to the construction of the negative stereotypes about Nigerian cultures, as well as the resulting asymmetrical power relations between Western and non-Western cultural sensibilities that persist even in contemporary times. We argue that while translation was complicit in the implementation and perpetuation of the colonial enterprise, it would much later become a useful instrument in the hands of Nigerian literary craftspeople in their quest to resist dominant imperial paradigms and restore the image of the nation, its people and their worldview to their rightful positions in the annals of history and in the public imagination. In the sections that follow, we discuss some of the negative notions, prejudices and stereotypes that have made the rounds about African cultures and peoples as well as discussions surrounding the African experience of resistance, cultural emancipation and self-glorification, and the role of postcolonial translation practices in all of these.

4.2 Politics of Ethnographic Representation

In his highly engaging book entitled *On the Postcolony* (2001), Achilles Mbembe exposes the (mis)representation of the African human experience in Western political and cultural discourse and seeks to upturn Western theoretical approaches that claim to have a perfect understanding of and solution to Africa's socio-political and economic challenges. In his critique of Western representation of African civility, Mbembe alludes to the condescending perception of Africa in contemporary Western discourse that reduces Africans to a people whose cultural experience can only be understood through a negative interpretation of the tradition and values that animate the African social fabric. Besides the view of Africans as never-do-wells whose traditions exist and operate outside the walls of human civility, there is also the notion that those socially recognized African values that seem to be at par with those of the West are of 'lesser value, little importance and poor quality' (2001, 1). Moreover, Western discourse on Africa is also skewed in favour of the European conspiracy to relegate African society and cultures to the backseat of global civilization such that the history, culture and language of the continent are disconnected from the realm of what is humanly possible, and lumped with such vices as chaos, disorganization, barbarism and brutality that are the norm in the animal kingdom. An atmosphere is thus built around the African subject that depicts them as one who belongs in a somewhat unfathomable and impenetrable world that can only be understood by way of a change of methodology that favours the analysis of the life of the African subject in the same way the 'psychic life of a beast' is analyzed (ibid., 2). While the concept of otherness has always existed in the Western imagination, it was taken several notches further to the level of "absolute otherness" when the African subject became the focus of research in the West. The apparent similarities between the corporeal and psychological appearance of the African and the European began to pose problems for Western consciousness and as Mbembe rightly observes, 'Africa as an idea, a concept… continues to serve as a polemical argument for the West's desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest

of the World' (ibid.). A host of other condescending sentiments are brought to the fore, such as the notion that nothing about Africa is translatable into a human language and that African societies are incompatible with and unable to fathom the complexities of modern (Western) life and the supposedly more sophisticated lifestyle that comes with it. All these prejudices only serve the purpose of reinforcing Western perception of Africa as a perfect example of a society that is deeply rooted in a primitive past and resistant to the enlightenment and progress that Western civilization represents (Bandia 1999; Achebe 2001).

Mbembe makes a case for the inability or difficulty of modern-day theoretical devices to account for the political, social and cultural reality on contemporary African societies in such a way that they project what Bayart (1993) refers to as the 'true historicity of African societies.' One of the major reasons for this difficulty is the dearth of political science and economics literature on Africa (Mbembe 2001, 5). Western literatures have therefore conspired to undermine global perception of African economic and political facts in various ways, especially through their 'conception of their object (of study) and (…) choice of methods' (ibid., 7). Besides, African agents' justification for African values and what they consider socially acceptable and valid are of inconsequential import to the Western political economist or Historian whose major preoccupation is to analyze the dynamics of African social life based on universally acceptable (Western-oriented) standards. Achebe (1995, 75) condemns the notion of universality in literary and public discourses, arguing that the term 'universal' should 'extend to include all the world' as opposed to being a 'synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe' which makes it out to be the exclusive preserve of Euro-American paradigms. What's more, the knowledge of African languages, hitherto deemed pivotal to the theoretical and philosophical understanding of the African consciousness, was relegated to the backseat of modern civilization and therefore made almost redundant in some contexts. The implication of this is an obvious relegation of the African political and economic experience to a state of lack and nothingness, while the continent itself became an object

of disparagement, a society that is 'powerless, engaged in rampant self-destruction (and a site where) human action … is seen as stupid and mad, always proceeding from anything but rational calculation' (Mbembe 2001, 8). This symbolic misrepresentation of African civilization was also the object of scrutiny in V. Y. Mudimbe's *The Idea of Africa* (1994). In a chapter entitled "Symbols and the Interpretation of the African Past," Mudimbe alludes to Western philosophers' construction of the idea of Africa as

> (…) a "refused place" … a hot piece of land on which pathetic beings live on roots, herbs, and camel's milk… a monstrous place (where) madness and melancholia reign supreme (ibid., 9).

Remarkably absent from this Western political discourse is the lack of mention of ways in which Africa questions social theory's explanation of such events as the 'collapse of the worlds, their fluctuations and tremblings' (Mbembe 2001, 8). The main argument here is that all human societies, Western and non-Western, will at some point find themselves permeated by some form of instability and fluctuations, which does not necessarily translate to a permanent state of chaos, anarchy and lack of order. This therefore leaves much to ponder about how Imperialist thinkers can purport to make legitimate assumptions and/or assertions about non-Western (African) cultures and worldviews of which they are reputed to have extremely superficial knowledge.

To counter Western (mis)representations of African civility and social life, it has been argued that African thinkers of the time sought to create an emancipatory platform to facilitate the promotion of an African 'historical destiny that is dense with meaning' (ibid., 12). This undoubtedly led to the development of a discourse geared for the most part towards exposing the beauty, philosophy and poesy intrinsic to sub-Saharan African cultures as well as the traditional ingenuity and cultural aesthetics on which African people pride themselves. The euphoria associated with the emergence of this new consciousness would soon fade away as subaltern thinkers increasingly began to come to terms with the fact that the psyche of the average African citizen had

undergone some form of mutation over the colonial years. As for the possibility of achieving a truly African modernity, the real problem for the African subject seemed to lie in their allegiance to the rural African life, and the consequences of immersing these local cultural sensibilities in the European modernity that had since become an integral part of the modern African worldview. This dilemma re-echoes Mbembe's argument that the 'tension inherent in the twin project of emancipation and assimilation has resulted in the 'acceptance of a tragic duality and an inner twoness (…) or an extraordinary sensitivity about identity' (ibid.).

The foregoing discussions on the politics of ethnographic representation highlights the processes employed and ideologies involved in the demonization of African civility which, for all intents and purposes, helped to reinforce Eurocentric narratives that falsify and misreport the historical and cultural achievements of African peoples, cultures and societies. In the section that follows, we explore African responses and resistance to these stereotypes, which derived for the most part from an anti-imperialist nationalist ideology. This ideology, as will be seen much later in the chapter, prepared the grounds for the emergence and development of postcolonial translation practices.

4.3 Literature, African Writers and the Struggle for Liberation

In response to the negative stereotypes perpetuated by the West about African civility, Nigerian literary craftsmen began to advocate the production and dissemination of narratives that portray their homeland in a more positive light. In an essay entitled 'Colonialist Criticism' (1995), Achebe takes exception to the labelling of African cultures as primitive and anarchistic – a notion that was continually hammered on in Honor Tracy and Iris Andreski's critique of African society and the literature that it embodies. Tracy's critique of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, entitled "Three cheers for mere Anarchy,"[108] was for the most part an attempt to ridicule and satirize Achebe's

[108]Cited in "Colonialist Criticism" (1995).

illustration of a civilized, enlightened and highly organized pre-colonial African society. Tracy describes Africa's inglorious past as one that was saturated with several communities of quasi-nude, raffia-spotting natives to whom Europe brought the blessing of civilization and modern enlightenment and progress. Rather than show appreciation for Europe's magnanimity, Africa, through its community of native intellectuals such as Achebe and his ilk, have chosen to return ingratitude through incredulous novels like *Things Fall Apart* which seek for the most part to demonize Europe's intervention and place African cultures on an equal footing with European civilization. Achebe also cites Andreski's (1971) essay as yet another imperialist attempt to cast aspersion on the exclusivity and magnificence of traditional African society. In this essay, entitled "Old Wives' Tales: Life Stories of African Women," Andreski portrays the typical African community in an unpleasant light, alluding to the British Administration's efforts to protect African women from their alcoholic, cantankerous husbands and tyrannous rulers. What's more, African writers such as Achebe whose literary works seek to project more positive narratives about African civility are labelled sons and beneficiaries of the sweat and labour of these emancipated African women. Objecting to these stereotypes, Achebe describes Tracy and Andreski as imperial writers who lay 'claim to a deeper knowledge and a more reliable appraisal of Africa than the educated African writer has shown himself capable of' (1995, 58). This view mirrors the colonist's claim to a perfect understanding of all that concerns their native subjects – something which Achebe believes only implied absolute control of the former over the latter. While colonialism held sway and effectively nipped in the bud most forms of unrest and resentment through a supposedly perfect understanding of the inner-workings of the minds of the natives, a new situation began to unfold that would challenge the position of the colonial regime. A handful of natives acquired Western education and began to challenge the presence and position of the forces of Western Imperialism in native lands with the aid of what Achebe describes as 'the intellectual weapons of Europe itself' (ibid.). In response to this, the agents of colonialism resorted to creating a 'man of two worlds theory' in a bid to discredit the intellectual reasoning

of the educated native. This Eurocentric position was designed to tarnish the image of African native intellectuals by depicting them as semi-educated *European-wannabes* who not only failed in their attempt to imbibe European language and culture, but also found themselves further dissociated, physically and mentally, from their native cultures. Could such educated natives then lay valid claim to understanding their own people and culture better than the agents of colonialism? Herein lies the crux of the matter - the stereotypical impression of the average African, which Achebe and his ilk seek to undo through their much-celebrated postcolonial writings.

While denouncing European critics who dismiss the African novel as invalid for the simple reason that it scarcely appeals to European cultural sensibilities, Achebe wonders through whose lenses African literature should be judged. Would one be right in dismissing the African novel as 'African' and labelling it instead as 'Western' simply because it is written in the language of the imperial centre and therefore a peculiarly Western genre? Achebe disagrees vehemently with this Eurocentric notion, citing the emergence of jazz music as a direct reflection of creativity and flexibility on the part of African-Americans who, due to being deprived of and alienated from their native musical instruments and the source of their native worldview on account of forced slavery, took solace and delight in the instruments of the imperialists (such as the trumpet and the trombone) which they blew to their hearts' content in new and creative ways. The adoption of such critical skills as creativity, flexibility and open-mindedness in cultural contexts best described as heterogeneous, Achebe, opines, will unquestionably lead to the emergence of a global people united in diversity:

> Let every people bring their gifts to the great festival of the world's cultural harvest and mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings. (61)

The notion of literature as a tool for cultural emancipation and national liberation is also the main object of inquisition in Chidi Amuta's (1995) readings of the works of Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi. In this highly engaging treatise, Amuta amalgamates the ideological

positions of these prolific writers on the role of culture in national liberation - as represented through literature. Amuta begins his analysis with Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, which he describes as the most orchestrated articulation of the cultural ramifications of colonialism and anti-colonialism. Fanon and most other contributors to discourses on culture and colonialism, Amuta opines, are usually influenced and motivated by such thematic areas as the economic exploitation of colonialism and ways in which subaltern cultures have been shaped by the oppressive forces and intent of colonialism. Fanon is renowned for pioneering the evolutionary schema in the development of subaltern cultural sensibilities, which derive from an almost exclusive focus on the 'national dimension of the anti-colonial consciousness' as opposed to the 'racial emphasis of his contemporaries' (1995, 158). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues that the development of subaltern cultural sensibilities occurred in three phases. The first stage - termed the *assimilationist phase* - is so described on account of the native intellectual's desire to demonstrate their ability to imbibe the hegemonic culture. Further evidence of this assimilation can be seen in the literary productions of the time which were remarkably similar in style, form and content to the literary tradition of the imperial centre (Amuta 1995). Corroborating this argument, Robinson (1997) ascribes the emergence of nationalist sensibilities in subaltern contexts to the rejection of Eurocentric views by nationalist historians who opposed Orientalist historiography with Indocentric narratives that were similar in style and appearance to the ones they sought to dislodge. Fanon describes the second phase in the development of subaltern nationalist discourse as the *cultural nationalist phase* considering that it allows for some degree of cultural reaffirmation through a process whereby the native intellectual remembers their authentic/original identity and then refuses to assimilate to the imperial centre. This stage, however, involves some degree of cultural alienation on the part of the native intellectual, which in turn creates an impetus for the latter to depend on the philosophical traditions and canons of the colonizer for the inspiration and literary aesthetics required to create and/or develop a native-culture literary consciousness. The third phase, described as the *revolutionary and nationalist phase*, is

particularly marked off by a couple of local dynamics, such as the exposure of the native intellectual to the realities of colonial oppression. This sudden realization of the negative impact of colonialism sparked a renewed determination in the consciousness of the native intellectual to right the wrongs of the colonial past through recourse to literary modes of expression. The second major attribute of this phase is the return to a form of cultural reaffirmation that draws from a mythical pre-colonial past and its accompanying oral tradition and practices in a bid to restore the core of African humanity to its rightful place in the subaltern subject's consciousness. This re-orientation towards the African mythical past should create the much-needed incentive to resist the pressures of colonialism and the presence of its alluring cultural sensibilities. For Fanon, the native intellectual who attempts to undo the wrongs of the colonial past should be seen as a national hero whose labour must not be in vain. He cautions, however, that cultural reaffirmation – the type espoused in the third phase – must not be promoted over and above national culture, lest it should lose its relevance. The native intellectual-cum-nationalist writer must therefore endeavour to engage with the past only as a means of 'opening the future as an invitation to action and a basis for hope' (1968, 232).

Amuta also provides an interesting analysis of Cabral's exposé on *Culture and National Liberation*, which he places on an equal footing with Fanon's. Cabral's essay espouses a blurring of the line between culture and history such that culture is viewed as an essential element of the history of a people and at the same time the product of that history.[109] This definition of culture helps us to make sense of the national liberation struggle as an act of cultural resistance, given that it seeks for the most part to liberate subaltern societies and their cultural traditions from foreign domination. Cabral refuses to see culture as a simple ideology that is devoid of variation. Citing the native-intellectual/indigenous-native dichotomy that raged in the twilight of colonialism and early years of independence, he denounces the view of culture as an 'undifferentiated

[109] Also see Amuta (1995, 160).

continuum' and argues that subaltern cultures were inherently multilayered and capable of 'different levels of cultural expression' (1995, 161). In sharp contrast to Fanon's arguments, Cabral considers the *indigenous* subaltern culture a more suitable site for the birth of a national literature movement given that the values and sensibilities that it embodies and espouses have remained largely undiluted by the culture of the Imperial centre. This argument derives from Cabral's acceptance of the culture of the rural peasantry as a more authentic, all-embracing one under which the vast majority of subaltern subjects take refuge.

Shifting his focus to the East African experience, Amuta explores Ngugi wa Thiongo's works and attributes the latter's writings to his progressive social orientation which, over the years, transformed into an anti-imperialist consciousness. Amuta's focus is not so much on Ngugi's novels as his essays, which can best be described as theoretical elaborations of his creative works of fiction. Ngugi's social philosophy was no doubt heavily influenced by Fanon and Cabral's works and sharpened by Marxist/Leninist philosophy. Following Amuta, we contend that Ngugi's support for the emergence of an independent national literature, history and culture cannot be divorced from the impact of the violence of colonialism and the 'turbulence of the anti-colonial struggle' on his childhood (162). His belief in the importance of literature as a means of seeking redress – and undoing the wrongs of the colonial past – is anchored on the knowledge that the lies told about Africa's historic past, present and future were dissipated via the same means – literature. Ngugi's anti-imperialist stance and arguments in favour of an authentic Kenyan literary and cultural heritage came about mainly as a result of three major events. First, as was the case in most decolonizing nations, Kenyan schools were awash with literary productions emanating from the Imperial centre in a bid to fan the flames of Western imperialism and continually sway young, impressionable Kenyan minds in search of upward mobility in the direction of Western norms and traditions.[110] Second, Euro-American influences on the Kenyan film industry continued unabated

[110]See Ngugi's *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986).

even in post-independence times, leaving in its wake a nation-wide yearning for everything foreign to the detriment of local styles and content. Third, the over-bearing influence of Western interests in the mass media and publishing companies in Kenya also led to local Kenyan communities and traditions being short-changed in this ideological battle of wits for the native Kenyan's attention. As Ngugi puts it, the contemporary situation of the Kenyan cultural space is such that is characterized by a 'fierce struggle between cultural forces representing foreign interests and those representing patriotic national interests' (1981, 42).

The texts discussed heretofore tell a compelling story about the African experience of resistance and emancipation by exploring ways in which thinkers and writers of African descent have resisted those imperialist ideological positions that relegate their cultures to the backseat of human civilization. Achebe and Mbembe particularly expose the negative stereotypes about African cultures, peoples and civilization that have been perpetuated in Western discourses since the advent of colonialism. Africa, the two critics point out, becomes a sounding board against which the West continually tracks its performance in the global pursuit of a more sophisticated civilization. In a bid to counter these negative Eurocentric stereotypes, literary-minded Africans sought to re-create the African story by presenting narratives that project a more realistic and positive image about African civilization. The consciousness that derived from this new emancipatory platform was initially fraught with an identity crisis that derived from the socio-cultural and psychological displacement that colonialism had triggered in the minds of African peoples. This psycho-social shift in the African cultural identity readily explains the 'man of two worlds theory' described in Achebe's exposé as well as Mbembe's allusion to the recognition of a tragic duality and an 'inner twoness' in the African cultural space.

The African experience of decolonization no doubt involves a gradual transition from the rejection of imperialist ideologies to the consolidation of efforts geared towards emancipating African hearts and minds from the stranglehold of Western hegemonic

practices, as well as the asymmetrical power relations that belie them. As will be seen in the sections that follow, the recognition and acceptance of the hybrid cultural identity that emanated from the colonial encounter foreclosed the possibility of a return to the 'pristine' precolonial past, thus opening up the African mind to new postcolonial encounters and possibilities.

4.4 Postcolonial Representation and Hybridity: a Theoretical Background

Literary production in various postcolonial national contexts cannot be excluded from the global drive towards uniformity in cultures, lifestyles and ideologies. Facilitated by the forces of globalization, this convergence of ideas and lifestyles is for the most part scored through by the dynamics of asymmetrical power relations, which privilege the ascendancy of the Euro-American worldview over subaltern cultures. In many non-Western societies, especially the subaltern context that is the focus of our study, these asymmetrical power relations date back to the period of European occupation and domination during which the cultural sensibilities of dominated peoples were relegated to the realm of primitiveness and supplanted by the supposedly more sophisticated and modern European worldview. As discussed in the preceding chapter, translation as an activity, practice or a phenomenon that shapes and takes shape within certain socio-historical and political contexts was considerably complicit in the colonial enterprise and the asymmetrical power relations that it fostered. Translation played a most crucial role in the production of anthropological, religious and literary texts, which facilitated the foregrounding and perpetuation in the occupied territories of colonial structures, such as the negative stereotyping of local cultures and traditions, the displacement of African languages from official circles and the gradual replacement of local religions with Euro-Christian practices and beliefs. If a list were to be drawn of the unsavory legacies of colonialism in subaltern contexts such as African states, for instance, the implantation and perpetuation of unequal power relations would feature prominently to the same extent as the likes of the politics of cultural difference, tribalism, the loss of

traditional values and customs, and the Transatlantic slave trade and its implications for African civility, to mention but a few.[111] [112]

Postcolonialism, for its part, captures and showcases the ways of thinking and modes of behaviour in the new states, which were fuelled for the most part by the desire to uproot the unsavoury legacies of colonialism and replace them with structures that embrace, celebrate and epitomize African humanity in all its glory. It must be stressed that this experience is not unique to Africa alone as three-quarters of the world's population have had their lives shaped in one way or another by the experience of colonialism (Wolf 2000). Global impacting developments such as post-Cold war events as well as the dynamics of globalization have however brought about a more dynamic foregrounding of the notion of postcolonialism (ibid.). In the classical piece entitled *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), Frantz Fanon calls into question dominant cultural canons, arguing that modern Western states and cultures were founded on the principle of exclusion and delimitation which privileged a system of distinction between the West and the cultural *Others* and reified an ideological position that was deeply rooted in unequal power relations that favoured Euro-American traditions. Western cultures thus tended to represent their authority primarily through such binary divisions as self-other, centre-margin, colonized-colonizer, good-evil, thus preventing subaltern cultures (otherwise renowned for their radically multicultural nature) from translating their social realities beyond the 'polarities of us and them, East and West, First and Third World' (Wolf 2000, 129).

A counter narrative to this assertion can be found in Huntington's (1996) concept of visible and invisible "clashes of civilization" which, Wolf reports, has resulted in 'different forms of acculturation, syncreticism, hybridization or pidginization' (2000,

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[111]We acknowledge that colonialism brought about many changes to African societies, leaving in its wake a cocktail of good and unsavory legacies. We do not purport to argue in this dissertation that colonialism was solely an evil and destructive enterprise of which nothing good came out.
[112] The dynamics of Slavery and its impact on the African consciousness present a whole new set of questions and arguments which, though somewhat related to the present discourse, will not be touched upon in this dissertation.

129). This notion, Wolf continues, implies a 'dramatic turn in the representation of the *Other* that goes far beyond the Manichean division of self and other...' (ibid.). Rather than advocate for an abrupt and total reversal of these binary oppositions in decolonizing multicultural contexts, postcolonial scholars have sought to 'analyze the complex processes involved in cultural contact' by focusing on and reifying the notion of 'difference' in the 'formation of cultural identity' (Ibid.). In other words, scholars with an eye on cultural experiences emanating from decolonizing multicultural contexts have argued in favour of a paradigm shift from a perspective that focuses solely on vertical and asymmetrical power relations to an ideological position that emphasizes and celebrates the notion of cultural hybridity within the postcolony. Herein lies the foundation of the notion of hybridity in postcolonial studies, a topic to which we shall soon return.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Edward Said's *Orientalism* has triggered a shift in the way the concept of postcolonialism is conceived. Said's focus on discourse analysis à la Foucault has no doubt contributed to the unmasking of the representation**s** of the Orient in Western literatures and imagination**.** Drawing from several Western texts, which cut across a wide range of genres, Said draws conceptual and pragmatic parallels between literary production and Western political and cultural hegemony and makes the argument that this interconnectedness portrays the Orient in negative light whilst simultaneously giving agency to the colonizer-colonized narrative.[113] Through his analysis of colonial discourse, Said shows how the West 'objectified the rest of the world and constituted itself as the subject of history within the framework of the emerging constellation of modernity' (Chambers 1996, 47). This move enabled the West to produce and codify knowledge about non-Western societies – especially the colonies. Orientalism was, therefore, according to Said, a 'Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient' (1978, 95). These arguments were certainly not without their criticisms. Robert Young (1990), for instance, takes exception to Said's mono-directional

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[113]Wolf makes a similar argument in 'The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation' (2000).

and somewhat myopic view of Western colonialism as an enterprise that derived solely from the desire of the West to capture, rule and ride roughshod over subaltern societies. Young's grouse has less to do with the veracity of Said's claims but more with the fact that the latter failed to offer a balanced view of the colonial experience due to his bias for narratives that served the sole purpose of projecting orientalist nationalist discourse. One other fundamental weakness, Dennis Porter argues, is Said's failure to adequately 'historicize... texts that he cites and summarizes, finding always the same triumphant discourse where several are frequently in conflict' (1983, 192). In response to these and many more criticisms, perhaps, Said sought to further develop the arguments espoused in *Orientalism* in a new book entitled *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). In this highly engaging piece, Said puts forward a more comprehensive theory about the interplay between culture and imperialism, drawing inferences and insights from a much wider range of decolonizing contexts.[114] He not only emphasizes anti-imperialist resistance but also, in an attempt to paint a balanced picture of the dynamics of colonization and decolonization, abandons the use of binary oppositions in favour of a more comprehensive position that captures the views and arguments of both sides of the imperial divide. This decision to stay neutral, as opposed to taking sides with the one side of the divide to the detriment of the other, led to the birth of a new dawn in cultural studies which disapproved of the us/them dichotomy and sought instead to celebrate, reify and project the notion of diversity and cultural heterogeneity. For Said, no society is historically culturally homogeneous. All societies are therefore inherently culturally diverse and it is within this logic of cultural heterogeneity that hybridity can be located.

[114]Said's analysis extends beyond the Orient and focuses on such subaltern contexts as sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and India.

4.4.1 Hybridity

The original definition of the word 'hybrid' can be traced back to the fields of biology and botany where it is used in reference to the phenomenon of fertility (Young 1995). The term subsequently rose to prominence in nineteenth century positivist discourse in relation to the historical development and structure of languages (Wolf 2000). In the twentieth century, hybridity as a conceptual and pragmatic concept has moved beyond its philological affiliations and crept into postcolonial discourse where it has since lent itself to useful and fascinating purposes, especially in the description of postmodern cultural phenomena. This newly found role/definition, Young posits, evokes the ever-expanding gap between 'contemporary thinking' and the 'racialized formulations of the past' (1995, 6). It must be noted that the concept of hybridity itself made its way into what Wolf describes as 'philological reflections on representation' (2000, 133) à la Bakhtin. Following Bakhtin, hybridity permits the imposition of a system of double-voicing or double-consciousness on utterances and/or sentences made within a single language system. In other words, a language can represent yet another and at the same time retain the 'capacity to sound simultaneously both outside it and within it' (1994, 358). Bakhtin continues:

> What is hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. (1994, 358)

Hybridity therefore showcases the ability of a language to appear to be the same, yet dissimilar (Young 1995; Wolf 2000). Often linked with Romantic irony, this argument about the potential dual nature of language informed the work of Derrida and de Man who, according to Young, see hybridity as a 'general characteristic of language, an undecidable oscillation in which it is impossible to tell which is the primary meaning' (1995, 9). Bakhtin adopts a more radical approach in his description of hybridization as

the capacity of one voice to 'ironize' and reveal the other within the framework of the same utterance.[115] Hybrid formulations à la Bakhtin therefore involve the use of words which belong to two language and belief systems, two accents and cultural consciousnesses:

> What we are calling a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (synctactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological systems. We repeat, there is no formal-compositional and syntactic-boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single sentence. It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction - and consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents. (Bakhtin 1994, 304-5).

Suffice it to say that it is at this juncture that authoritative discourse – which is representative of univocal colonial-centric narratives and stereotypes – becomes undone. Authoritative discourse is in and of itself univocal in the sense that it is incapable of accommodating within its structures a positive representation of the belief systems that it so desperately seeks to undermine and replace. It is therefore inherently incapable of being 'double-voiced' and as such cannot be expected to engage in 'hybrid constructions' (344). Corroborating this assertion, Young (1995) discusses the futility of imposing the structures and inherent qualities of hybridity on authoritative discourse and argues that any attempt to force the intrinsic qualities of hybrid constructions on authoritative discourse will only lead to an irreversible subversion of its normalizing authoritative power and univocal authority.

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[115]Also see Young (1995, 20-21).

Bhabha (1994) examines this notion of hybridization as subversion of authority within the framework of colonialism. He makes the point that the experience of individuals caught or positioned at the intersection between two cultures bound by unequal power relations[116] can best be described as one that is characterized by a 'double vision.' This evokes the notion of double-consciousness, a concept with which Du Bois (1903) aptly describes the feeling of ambivalence experienced by African-Americans in the wake of the social and institutional discriminatory practices that animated twentieth-century American society. Double-consciousness, Du Bois argues, is 'this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (45). The feeling of double-consciousness arises when the oppressed is able to see and reject the stereotyped vision of the self as an object of ridicule. This experience creates the psychological burden of attempting to live with 'two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body' (38). The racialization of the Negro and the darker races is thus the product of misrecognition of identity and experience, which is structurally and systemically embedded in political, social, economic and cultural life, thus creating a state of disharmony and opposition in not just the consciousness of the individual, but also society at large. Bhabha's notion of double-vision also corroborates Norbet Elias' analogy of a man on the threshold of a new age, situated somewhere between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (1900, 107).[117] He is standing on a bridge and, akin to Janus – the Roman god of beginnings, passages and endings, is depicted as having two faces: simultaneously peering into the past and into the future. As Wolf has taught us, the double-vision sentiment entails a situation in which the 'complex perspective of the marginalized is transmitted through the creativity of translation and transformation, thereby contributing to transcending social binarities of race, nation, gender or generation' (2000, 134). Perhaps inspired by his own socio-cultural experiences, Bhabha's analysis of the hybrid formations emanating from multilingual

[116]Pratt (1992) describes this space as a 'contact zone' of encounter between two or more cultures, characterized by a dialectical show of power, control and asymmetrical power relations.
[117]Cited in Wolf (2000, 134).

decolonizing contexts tend more toward the argument that cultural hybridity occurs in a contact zone of encounter (Pratt 1992) where 'self' and 'other' simultaneously and incessantly interact and tug away at each other, leaving each other open to mutual self-contamination (Wolf 2000). This contact zone of encounter, Wolf stresses, is not only steeped in asymmetrical power relations but also makes room for a new wave of acculturation, creativity and representation**.** Bhabha's perspective is therefore such that sees hybridity as a means to an end and not an end in and of itself since it opens up a (new) space that allows subaltern cultures to challenge and resist dominant cultural canons, thereby inspiring a discourse through which colonial authority 'loses its univocal claim to meaning' (1994). For Bhabha, hybridity is:

> a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority - its rules of recognition. (1994, 114)

Following Bhabha's logic, the role of hybridity within the colonial space goes beyond the resolution of the tension between two cultures caught within the web of asymmetrical power relations. For Bhabha, a major shift in perspective occurs when the 'effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions' (ibid., 112). Hybridity, according to Young, therefore inspires a movement through which the 'single voice of colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing and disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced' (1995, 23). Hybridity, Wolf continues, should therefore be viewed as 'radically heterogeneous and discontinuous, a dialectical articulation that involves a new perspective of cultural representation' (2000, 134). This perspective inspires a new school of thought that sees cultural difference as the end product of systemic and societal inequity, as opposed to the old line of thinking that readily espouses the idea of alterity as a source of conflict. The production of 'cultural differentiation,' Bhabha

argues, becomes a 'sign of authority,' which changes the 'value of difference' as well as 'its rules of recognition' (1994, 114). Furthermore, cultural dimensions such as space and time are no longer seen as homogeneous and self-contained. Cultures, Bhabha continues, are not in and of themselves unitary, neither are they 'simply dualistic as in the relation self/other' (1994, 36). Bhabha argues, on the contrary, in favour of the existence of a *Third Space*, which goes beyond the fixed territories or polarities of *Self* and *Other*, colonized and colonizer, centre and peripheral (ibid.). It is within this Third Space or in-between space that meaning is produced and located:

> The production of meaning requires that these places (self and other) be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. (1994, 36)

The Third Space allows for the production of a wide variety of hybrid formations, 'fragile syncreticisms, contrapuntual recombinations and acculturation' (Wolf 2000, 135). Following Bhabha, the Third Space ultimately constitutes a construction site and point of departure for postcolonial texts, writings or translations:

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (1994, 37)

We have, so far, examined two key concepts that are central to our understanding of the role of translation in the Nigerian postcolony: the dynamics of postcolonial representation and hybridity. The major forms of translation or texts that emerged in the postcolony, as we have already mentioned, were fashioned for the most part to serve the purposes of dismantling the legacies of colonialism and emancipating African

cultures from the stranglehold of Western imperialism. In the section that follows, we examine the strategies involved in the production of these hybrid postcolonial texts as well as their deployment in the neo-colonial struggles of the Nigerian postcolony.

4.4.2 Postcolonial Translation in Africa

Numerous resources abound that deal with the notion of postcolonial translation and our objective is not to rehash a fairly robust scholarly debate. However, we find it expedient to foreground the similarities between the phenomenon of postcolonial translation and the notion of re-writing within the context of literary production. In his seminal work titled *Translation, Rewriting and the Production of Literary Fame*, André Lefevere examines the processes involved in the production of literary texts and argues that the main factors that underpin and govern the reception and acceptance or otherwise of these texts are none other than 'power, ideology, institution and manipulation' (1992, 2). At the centre of these power relations, Lefevere opines, are the 'rewriters' of literature who regulate its reception and consumption by the public. These rewritings, he adds, can be motivated by a variety of factors ranging from the ideological to the poetological. An ideological impetus to rewrite a piece of literature can either stem from the need to promote certain dominant conventions and norms or the desire to undermine them. By the same token, the incentive to 'rewrite' may be underpinned by the need to conform to or resist the dominant poetics in a given society. Citing the example of the translation or 'rewriting' of the works of Persian poet, Omar Kayyam, in the nineteenth century, Lefevere argues that the translator, Edward Fitzgerald, sought to improve on the original Persian poems which he considered weak, inferior and unworthy of consumption by a civilized Western readership with a supposedly more sophisticated taste. By rewriting the poems to conform to the Western literary canons of the time, the translator earned for himself a good reputation as a power broker in the business of literary production. Further concretizing his arguments on the interplay between the two phenomena, Lefevere argues:

> Translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting, and… it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin. (1992, 9)

The need to resist the dominant Western canons, prejudices and negative stereotypes about African cultures form the basis of most postcolonial writings or translations that occurred in the African postcolony. Also referred to as African Europhone literature, African European language creative writing or postcolonial intercultural writing, African postcolonial translations draw immensely from African oral traditions for their literary aesthetics and cultural content (Chinweizu et al. 1980). The use of and reliance on orality in the writing of African Europhone fiction by bilingual and bicultural African writers is dealt with extensively in Bandia's *Translation as Reparation*(2008). In this seminal book, Bandia argues that the enscription or representation of African oral texts or pieces such as religious poetry, praise poems and elegies in African Europhone literature occurs either through a process of literal translation or as 'creative renditions' in the European medium of writing (2008, 3). For him, the representation or translation of African orality - also referred to as postcolonial intercultural writing - can be likened to a process of interlingual writing given that the two concepts involve the transfer of texts between two language cultures. The two phenomena, however, differ in a number of ways. Interlingual writing refers to the exchange or transfer of tangible texts between two language cultures while postcolonial intercultural writing involves a metaphorical notion of translation in which texts existing in abstract, oral forms in the source culture are converted into written codes in a foreign dominant language. What's more, in postcolonial African translation discourse, interlingual translation entails the introduction of foreign texts into African language-cultures while intercultural writing or translation involves what Bandia aptly describes as 'an inverse movement of representation of the Self in the language of the Other' (ibid.). A form of displacement therefore occurs in which African realities are extracted from their natural habitat and

transplanted onto a new territory where they take on a new life, creating in the process a new life-world that is neither entirely subaltern nor completely imperial, but is at the same time reflective of both world views. Postcolonial intercultural writing therefore allows for the subversion of hegemonic values and standards imposed on subaltern contexts by the forces of imperialism. The representation of orality in fiction, Bandia argues, involves a 'double movement from an oral tradition to a writing culture and from a peripheral colonized language to an imperial or colonial language' (ibid.), which process imposes translation-related traits on postcolonial intercultural writing. For African postcolonial writers, the literary language that emanated from this linguistic and cultural experiment has no doubt provided a tool for the expression and projection of the African identity and experience on the world stage. The development of an Africanized variety of the languages of colonialist imposition recalls Bhabha's (1994) notion of the formation of 'hybrid' or 'in-between' languages in culturally heterogeneous decolonizing nations, which transcend fixed polarities of Self/Other, colonized/colonizer and occupy a space in-between' (Mehrez 1992), thereby making the expression of the subaltern world view in global languages continually possible. Casanova describes the linguistic and cultural burden foisted on subaltern writers as follows:

> In the absence of an alternative language, writers are forced to devise a new idiom within their own language; subverting established literary usages and the rules of grammatical and literary correctness, they affirm the specificity of a popular language. … It therefore became necessary to reinstate a paradoxical form of bilingualism by making it possible to be different, linguistically and literarily, within a given language. In this way a new idiom was created, through the *littérarisation* of oral practices. Here, in the linguistic form, one encounters the mechanisms

> underlying the literary transmutation of traditional folk narratives. (2004, 282)[118]

Following Bandia, we argue that this creative adaptation of colonial languages to express African socio-cultural reality derives from the quest for a middle position between African and European language cultures that blends 'source and target language strategies' and is 'fine-tuned and adapted to deal with the linguistic and cultural hybridity... characteristic of the postcolonial text' (5). This form of postcolonial writing no doubt goes against the grain of dominant discourse in that it defies conventional notions of translation that are grounded in the logic of translation as textual transfer between two entirely different language systems. Postcolonial translation theory, Bandia argues, 'provides a critical framework for understanding the hybridity and polylinguality of African Europhone literature and the complexity involved in theorizing the translation of culturally and linguistically multilayered texts' (ibid.). What's more, rather than reify the idea of translation as transfer between single language systems, postcolonial translation strategies reiterate the hybrid nature of literary texts as well as the heterogeneous character of their original socio-political and geographic domains or contexts. Besides highlighting the heterogeneity of the contexts from which postcolonial texts emanate, postcolonial translations also engage with the notion of asymmetrical power relations between hegemonic and subaltern cultures. The role of language and translation in resisting imperialist notions of African primitiveness as well as imperialist attempts at keeping African nations in a perpetual state of servitude and dependency is particularly telling. These unequal power relations and the accompanying resistance and counter-hegemonic narratives are mostly captured and reflected in African Europhone writings or translations. African postcolonial texts or translations are therefore fashioned in such a way that they force colonial languages to 'perform the work of indigenous language cultures through the representation of African orature in European language fiction' (ibid., 7).

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[118]Cited in Bandia (2008, 5)

African postcolonial texts are therefore inspired for the most part by the need to resist imperialist notions of African primitiveness, rid African societies of the shackles of conformity to imperialist norms as well as the desire to promote an authentic African identity on the world stage. These motivating factors have in turn spurred an in-between language-culture that reflects the socio-cultural and political realities of the African postcolony. The realities of the postcolony, we would recall, include but are not limited to the fact of a plurilingual, multicultural existence that is structured along such bipolar lines as us/them, colonized/colonizer and the pressure that these impose on the African subject to choose between their native tongue and the language of colonialist imposition. The onus to initiate and implement these tasks no doubt falls on African writers whose literary works are, by reason of their socio-cultural background, underlain by a rich and elaborate oral tradition.

The use of orality as a means of cultural and political emancipation through the subversion of imperialist language conventions is not unique to Nigeria or other African nations. Simon (1999), for instance, reveals that orality was implicated in the quest for literary and cultural emancipation in Quebec during the Quiet revolution in the 1960s and in its aftermath. The same can be said for Irish writers who, Tymoczko (1999) reveals, drew from an imaginary source or a metatext of culture to create a *third* code which played a huge role in the liberation of Ireland from the grips of British colonialism. According to Bandia, these cultures sought to 'emphasize their identities by creating or simply asserting marked differences in language usage and pronunciation, in some cases exaggerating these differences by instituting deliberately incorrect usage' (2008, 9-10). The encoding or writing of orality, he adds, 'results in the translation of identity through the transmutation of language' (ibid.). The creation of this *third* code or in-between language for all intents and purposes highlights the attempts made by African Europhone writers to navigate the linguistic and ideological challenges imposed by the multicultural, hybrid nature of their postcolonial existence. African postcolonial societies, it must be stressed, are inherently hybrid on account of

their well-established pre-colonial history of migration, trade and imperial domination and are therefore far from being situated in a mono-cultural, unilingual space. As Mehrez puts it:

> It was crucial for the postcolonial text to challenge both its own indigenous, conventional models as well as the dominant structures and institutions of the colonizer in a newly forged language that would accomplish this double movement. Indeed, the ultimate goal of such literature was to subvert hierarchies by bringing together the 'dominant' and the 'underdeveloped', by exploding and confounding different symbolic worlds and separate systems of signification in order to create a mutual interdependence and intersignification. (1992, 121-22)

4.4.2.1 Orality and Creativity in Postcolonial Nigerian Fiction

Postcolonial African writings have been influenced in equal proportions by the aesthetics of the African oral tradition as well as the linguistic structures around which African languages are built (Bandia 2008). Drawing from a large repository of oral forms and spurred on by the perceived benefits of writing in a language with global literary capital, African Europhone writers have developed a linguistic system through which to appropriate the language of colonialist imposition in an attempt to emancipate African cultures from the stranglehold of Western imperialism and create for the citizenry a language that resonates with their socio-cultural and political realities. In African nations such as Nigeria where English is official language, the language has been (and continues to be) appropriated to capture local realities and express local thought, religion, folklore and imagery. Nigerian literary craftsmen have, for instance, since taken solace in and resorted to a variety of exciting strategies and innovative writing practices that draw on Nigerian orality for their form and content.

These creative writing strategies reveal themselves in texts that are not only faithful to the Nigerian oral tradition[119] and popular discourse, but also tell the story of Nigeria's postcolonial struggles and realities in a sophisticated and amazing narrative prose that defies well-established Anglo-European literary paradigms. Zabus (1990) describes this approach to fiction writing as a process of indigenization, which she defines simply as the 'othering' of European languages. As Zabus has taught us, the process of othering the languages of Europe in the production of African fiction occurs in two major ways: relexification and the duo of cushioning and contextualization. Relexification, within this context, refers to the amalgamation of African and European language cultures for the purposes of creating a *third* code, an in-between language, which depends for the most part on the European language for its lexis and grammar and the African idiom for its form and style. In other words, relexification allows for the production of texts that boast a typically European body or appearance, but an African soul. Cushioning as the term already infers generally refers to the use of a word or expression to aid, support or explain yet another. Within the current context, cushioning alludes to the process of assigning an explanatory word or expression in the European language to a word in an indigenous Nigerian language. Contextualization on the other hand refers to the process of assigning meaning in a bid to provide a larger hermeneutic environment or space within which a text or linguistic element can be evaluated, interpreted and read anew.[120] Bandia puts it more succinctly in his discussion on the dynamics of orality and creativity in African Europhone literature:

> Contextualization... may occur when African writers introduce African indigenous words and expressions into the European language structure, assign new meaning to European language words or combine African words with

[119]The term 'Nigerian oral tradition' may sound a bit far-fetched, given Nigeria's radically diverse cultural terrain. However, we find the use of the term appropriate in view of the fact that one of the postcolonial writers' main objectives is to appropriate elements of orality from various local sources and expose them as national symbols. In other words, one of the main objectives of the writing techniques adopted by postcolonial Nigerian writers is to facilitate the conversion of diverse local artifacts into material of national value.

[120]See Eerdmans et al (2002) and Van Engen (2015).

> European ones (or two European words for that matter) without regard for combinatory or collocational rules, all in an attempt to capture African reality within an alien colonial language. (2008, 100)

Indigenization strategies are robust and diverse and the approaches discussed in Zabus' article are by no means exhaustive. If anything, they should be seen in the light of catch-all concepts that encapsulate several other sub-approaches to creative writing in African Europhone literature. Some of these strategies or sub-approaches will be examined shortly as they are employed in three novels authored by literary craftsmen of Nigerian extraction: Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964), Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964), and Wole Soyinka's *Collected Plays 2* (1973). Before getting into the crux of the aesthetic use of orality in Nigerian Europhone literature, however, we find it expedient to conduct a quick review of the afore-mentioned novels in order to highlight their relevance to this all-important discourse on postcolonial translation.

Arrow of God was published in 1964 – four years after Nigeria's declaration of independence from Great Britain. Set in the early twentieth century at a time when the British imperialist administration was at its peak and Christian missionaries had established a foothold in much of the Southern Protectorate, this novel seeks to put Igbo tradition and customs in confrontation with British civilization in a bid to showcase the violence of colonialism as well as the inadequacies of the Igbo belief system and the hypocrisy that pervaded its politico-religious systems and institutions. Achebe highlights the ways in which the colonial administration, Christian missionaries and local power brokers worked independently to perpetuate internal strife and division among the Igbo people and exploited the ensuing commotion to further their individual ends. The resulting communal strife triggered an unprecedented level of disharmony among former compatriots, leading to the disintegration of mainstream Igbo society along ideological lines as well as a major disdain for and rejection of the traditional and religious systems upon which the community was founded. The desertion of Igbo ancestral values and belief system engendered a weak, fractured and quasi soul-less

society, thus setting in motion the wholesome conversion of large swaths of Ibos to Christianity and their re-orientation towards British values and paradigms. *Arrow of God* is an important novel for so many reasons. The one factor that makes it particularly relevant to this discourse on postcolonial translation, however, is none other than Achebe's creative use of language. The novel is a highly political and cultural one that is replete with Igbo words as well as expressions that are representative of the Igbo worldview and fashioned to capture Igbo folklore, proverbs, imagery and cultural values, thus conferring on the narrative the status of a cultural text per excellence.

The ascendancy of modern traditions over past preliterate norms in decolonizing subaltern contexts also features extensively in Wole Soyinka's *Collected Plays volume 2* – a collection of five plays: *The Lion and the Jewel*, *Kongi's Harvest*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *Jero's Metamorphosis* and *Madmen and Specialists*. Unlike *Arrow of God,* which deals with the Igbo experience in a colonial context, however, the stories in Soyinka's collection are a satire of the socio-cultural and political realities of post-independence Nigeria, which deals with such thematic elements as the ironic development and consequences of modernity as well as the impact of modernisation on a formerly preliterate society.

For its part, *The Voice* showcases society's general contempt for and negative stereotyping of social non-conformists – those members of society who are not just courageous enough to question dominant paradigms, but also choose to go against socially accepted norms. On the other side of the spectrum, however, are the "conformists" who would rather bury their heads in the sand than think outside the box and open up their *insides*[121] to new ideas and possibilities**.** The novel tells the story of a social reformer who challenges social and spiritual decadence in his community and embarks on a perpetual questioning of the norms imposed by modern society. His unending search for the truth – dubbed an ephemeral *it* – often pits him against his fellow citizens and the powers that be, resulting in his expulsion from the community.

[121]The term 'inside' is used extensively in Okara's *The Voice* as a replacement for 'mind,' 'soul' or 'inner-consciousness.' The importance and functionality of this term will be discussed shortly.

He returns from exile with a renewed determination to confront and stamp out the social ills plaguing his society but meets his waterloo in the hands of the elders and is martyred. The novel, akin to the two discussed before it, showcases a symbolic battle of supremacy between African traditional values and the legacies of Western modernism and attributes the moral decadence in African societies to the negative influences of modernism and the culture of materialism that it fosters. *The Voice* is generally described as a social and linguistic experiment in view of the author's innovative writing style which, as would be seen shortly, was inspired by the native Ijaw thought and imagery, and modeled upon the syntax of the language of its expression. The style of writing employed by the author reinforces the central theme of the novel in the sense that it calls into question Eurocentric language standards and usage, and refuses to tell the Nigerian story in a way that is consistent with Euro-English linguistic and literary paradigms. Instead, it embodies and celebrates an idiom that has shown itself capable of bearing the full weight of the author's socio-cultural realities, thus facilitating an easier rendition of African (Ijaw) concepts, thought patterns and philosophy. Akin to its predecessors (*Arrow of God* and *Collected Plays 2)* the unique and unprecedented writing style employed by Okara, as well as the socio-cultural and political ramifications of the main thematic elements of the novel both confer on it a special status in African postcolonial translation discourse.

We shall now briefly examine three creative writing strategies with a view to highlighting their relevance to the African postcolonial translation project: vernacularization, semantic shifts and idiomatization or the use of idiomatic expressions.

4.4.2.1.1 Vernacularization

Vernacularization entails the transplantation of African words and expressions into European language texts in order to give the text a distinct local flavour. This process

helps to ensure authenticity by conveying a sense of distinctiveness (Ashcroft et al 2002). Most often than not, the indigenous words are transplanted in such a way that they sit in perfectly with the syntactic characteristics and grammatical structures of the receiving European language (Bandia 2008). Although there have been concerns that this strategy may achieve the unexpected effect of alienating the foreign reader who may not be familiar with the author's native tongue, those fears have since been laid to rest as the language used in most postcolonial texts or novels, especially those discussed in this chapter, are fashioned in a such a way that the meanings of the vernacular words can be deduced from their surrounding contexts. Zabus (1990) describes this process as 'contextualization by inference,' which process suggests that all references are self-explanatory and designed to draw the reader nearer to the source culture. Speaking specifically about the wholesome injection of untranslated indigenous words into European language texts, Ashcroft et al argue that vernacularized postcolonial texts are designed to force 'the reader into an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these terms have meaning' (1989, 65). Bandia sums this up appositely as follows:

> The untranslated vernacular word calls attention to itself, rendering the text occasionally inaccessible, hence forcing the non-native reader to engage in a reading process that involves a fair measure of translating and that recognizes the autonomy and authenticity of the postcolonial novel. (2008, 113)

In the following excerpts from *Arrow of God*, we notice a deliberate injection of an Igbo word within a larger English context in a bid to give the text a more exotic feel:

(1)

"... He checked the remaining ones again and went back to his *obi*, shutting the door of the barn carefully after him" (3) (My italics)

(2)

"Men of Umuaro, why do you think our fathers told us this story? They told it because they wanted to teach us that no matter how strong or great a man was he should never challenge his *chi*" (27) (My italics)

In the first phrase, we notice the transplantation of the Igbo word *Obi* in a way that aligns with the grammatical structure of the English language. Judging from the context in which it is used, especially the accompanying clause '*shutting the door,*' it becomes evident that *obi* refers to an abode or a place of dwelling. But *obi* is not an ordinary place of abode; it is one of many buildings that make up a family compound in traditional Igbo society. Traditional Igbo chiefs are known to have large families comprising a few wives and children. The family lives in a large compound comprising several huts that are customized based on the size of each sub-component of the household. The father of the home has a hut to himself while each wife is given a hut, the size of which depends on the number of children she has been blessed with. Achebe uses the word *obi* in several other instances in the novel in a bid to draw attention to this specific socio-cultural reality, while also reinforcing the patriarchal concept of family in traditional Igbo society. The second phrase also features the use of a very important socio-religious concept and cultural reality in the Igbo worldview – *chi*. The lexical item *chi* refers to a variety of concepts such as an individual god, fate, destiny or a spiritual alter ego. As Ashcroft et al (2002) have observed, the use of the word *chi* generates cultural nuances that can only be accessed through a careful observation of the way in which they are employed in a phrase.

On a similar note, Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* details an extensive and deliberate use of Yoruba words carefully embedded within English sentences in such a way that the grammatical structures remain undisrupted:

(1)

"(Towards the end of this speech, the sound of '*gangan*' drums is heard, coming from the side opposite the hut. A boy enters carrying a drum on each shoulder. He walks towards her, drumming. She turns almost at once.)" (152) (My italics)

(2)

"A man in an elaborate '*agbada*' outfit, with long train and a cap is standing right, downstage, with a sheaf of notes in his hand. He is obviously delivering a speech, but we don't hear it…" (167) (My italics)

The use of the Yoruba word *gangan* in the first phrase serves two main purposes. First, Soyinka successfully draws his readers closer to the source culture in such a way that the meaning of the Yoruba word is not lost on them. He does this with the help of the cushioning technique, which allows for the English explanatory word *drum* to be tagged to the Yoruba *gangan* in a way that guarantees a smooth, free-flowing delivery of the plot. Second, the word *gangan* does more than provide an exotic feel or a foreignizing effect on the English text. As discussed in chapter two, *gangan* is not the run-of-the-mill drum that is beaten willy-nilly. In traditional Yoruba society, it is not to be used out-of-season and must be beaten only in specific circumstances and under specific conditions by pre-ordained drummers to pass across specific spiritual messages to the "initiated ones" who are trained to decode them. The deliberate use of *gangan* in the phrase therefore serves a cultural and religious purpose in that it attempts to rally Soyinka's readers around a certain religious concept that is intricately woven around the Yoruba oral tradition. It goes without saying that a deliberate omission of the Yoruba word would have left the phrase grammatically correct and readable but bereft of the cultural connotation and nuances that bestow upon the story its distinct Yoruba identity. The same goes for the use of the Yoruba word *agbada* in the second excerpt. *Agbada* translates loosely to English as a free-flowing gown that is worn to important public functions and ceremonies by upper class, aristocratic Yoruba men. As is typical of the

cushioning technique, Soyinka places the English word *outfit* directly in apposition to its Yoruba referent *agbada* so that the non-native reader is not totally excluded from the overall idea being conveyed by the author.

Vernacularization, as we have established, serves the purpose of drawing attention to the author's socio-cultural realities as well as the role of these realities in the forging of a postcolonial African identity through the intermediary of multicultural literary texts. As Bandia has taught us, the local word calls the reader's attention to the existence of an 'imaginary original' (2008, 114), described in Tymoczko (1999) as a 'meta-text of culture.'

4.4.2.1.2 Semantic Shifts

Semantic shifts, according to Chishimba, refer to the imposition of new meanings on a source language word such that the new or 'derived meaning' becomes more pertinent in the target text while the actual word or lexical item is rendered less native to the native speaker (1984, 217).[122] Semantic shifts are used extensively in many African novels and more so in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* to convey a wide variety of Ijaw thought patterns:

"So the town of Amatu talked and whispered; so the world talked and whispered. Okolo had no *chest*, they said. His chest was not strong and he had no *shadow*. Everything in this world that spoiled a man's name they said of him, all because he dared to search for *it*. He was in search of it with all his *inside* and with all his *shadow*" (23) (My italics)

Three major English lexical items stand out in the above excerpt on account of the way in which they are used and the implicit meanings attached to them: chest, shadow and inside. The concept of lacking a 'chest' should be understood metaphorically as a form of cowardice or weakness and Okolo, the main character, is depicted in this context as

[122]Cited in Bandia (2008, 101)

one who is bereft of the inner strength expected of a self-declared warrior. The same goes for the word *shadow*, which is used here as a metaphorical replacement for *strong personality* or *individuality*. Lastly, the word *inside* in Ijaw philosophy is dense with meaning and could refer to a variety of concepts ranging from mind, will and might to spirit, emotion and soul depending on its usage and functionality within the text. In the excerpt cited above, once can deduce that it is used in relation to *soul, being* or *might*. It becomes obvious therefore that in the excerpt, the inhabitants of Amatu are describing Okolo as a timid, cowardly social reject who is bent in his ways and blinded by an inner conviction to search for an ephemeral truth. The appropriation of the English words – chest, shadow and inside – to capture and express Ijaw thought and imagery is but one of several attempts to create an in-between language that accounts for African socio-cultural realities in a language with global literary capital.

4.4.2.1.3 Idiomatization or Use of Idiomatic Expressions

Besides vernacularization and semantic shifts, Nigerian literary craftsmen, such as Achebe and Soyinka, are also known to have bent the English language to capture Nigerian idiomatic expressions. While some of these expressions are obvious transliterations, others seem to sit in much better with Western literary and linguistic conventions. The following excerpts from *Arrow of God* showcase Achebe's mastery of Igbo proverbs and idioms as well as the abundant use of these expressions in the rendition of his narratives:

(1)

"When he likes a man *wealth flows like a river into his house; his yams grow as big as human beings, his goats produce threes and his hens hatch nines*" (9) (My Italics)

Meaning: He succeeds in all his endeavours. The Igbo and indeed all Nigerian ethno-cultural groups generally believe in the supremacy of God in all things human, which

explains their deference to the Supreme Being and the reason they attribute their successes and failures to God's will and plan for them.

(2)

"Ogbuefi Nwaka, *please do not speak into my words*. You stood up here and spoke to your fill and no one answered you back" (14) (My Italics)

Meaning: Do not talk over me or do not talk while I am talking.

(3)

"If a man of Okperi says to you come, he means run away with all your strength. If you are not used to their ways you may sit with them from *now* cock-crow until roosting time and join in their talk and their food, but all the while you will be floating on the surface of the water. So leave them to me because *when a man of cunning dies a man of cunning buries him*" (20) (My Italics)

Meaning: They cannot outsmart me.

The phrase 'when a man of cunning dies a man of cunning buries him' derives from the original Igbo expression 'Onye aghugho nwuru; onye aghugho enie ya.' The expression makes for a particularly interesting example given that it has, in the aftermath of its appearance in *Arrow of God*, crept surreptitiously into the national consciousness and is now a common feature in political and cultural discourses in the country. It is therefore not unusual to find the Pidgin English equivalent 'cunning man die, cunning man bury am' in written and verbal narratives attributable to politicians, celebrities, entertainers, writers and other Nigerians from all walks of life.

The appropriation of the English language to express indigenous thought and ideas is also a common feature in Soyinka's *The Trial of Brother Jero*, as demonstrated in the

following excerpt, which details an early-morning conversation between a street hawker and a potential customer:[123]

"AMOPE: Isn't it money you are going to the market for, and isn't it money I'm going to pay you?

TRADER [as Amope gets up and *unloads her*.] Well, just remember *it is early in the morning*. Don't start me off by haggling.

AMOPE: All right, all right. [looks at the fish.] How much a dozen?

TRADER: One and three, and I'm not taking a penny less.

AMOPE: It is last week's, isn't it?

TRADER: I've told you, you're my first customer, so *don't ruin my trade with the ill-luck of the morning*" (151) (My Italics)

The italicized expressions in the above excerpt are transliterations of their Yoruba original. *It is early in the morning* is a direct translation of *O saaro o* while *don't ruin my trade with the ill-luck of the morning* back-translated into Yoruba sounds something like *ma fi nkan buruku se mi l'owo l'aaro kutukutu*. According to Yoruba ontological and cosmological beliefs, the morning signifies a new beginning, a fresh start. Whatever happens to an individual in the early hours of the day, good or bad, is generally taken to be an indication of the fate that awaits them throughout the course of the day. The trader cited in the above dialogue, like any other itinerant hawker, sets out in the wee hours of the day with her merchandise neatly arranged on a wooden tray sitting comfortably on her head, expecting to make huge sales and a decent profit. Operating from a mythico-religious mindset that dictates that the morning is precious and a harbinger of good tidings, she is quick to remind a potentially cantankerous first client of the importance of the time of the day and the need to start off on a positive note in anticipation that the rest of the day will be kind to her. Through the use of these

[123]This argument was inspired in part by Timothy Ajani's (2005) article on 'Creativity and Innovation' in Wole Soyinka's novels.

expressions, Soyinka not only draws attention to his socio-cultural experience but also brings an entire belief system into the limelight.

The techniques and writing strategies employed in the production of postcolonial translations or literatures are too numerous to be discussed in a single compendium. Important for this research, however, is the knowledge that the use of these techniques in the writing of African Europhone fiction demonstrates ways in which the languages of Europe (in the case of Nigeria, English) are manipulated or appropriated in such a way as to resist the ideological assumptions that underpin Eurocentric negative stereotyping of African cultures and civility. The postcolonial novels discussed so far not only celebrate Nigerian humanity, but also showcase ways in which Nigerian literary craftsmen have circumvented European linguistic and literary paradigms in a bid to resist Western cultural and political hegemony. There is therefore no gainsaying that African Europhone novels demonstrate the role of translation and orality in the eradication of the unsavoury legacies of colonialism in the postcolonial nation-space, while simultaneously creating a space for the Nigerian and larger African worldview in the global literary sphere.

Several decades after independence, anti-colonial nationalist sentiments have waned significantly and the focus has since shifted from the obliteration of the unsavoury legacies of colonialism to the need to confront the disenfranchisement of the masses by the ruthless, corrupt and oppressive ruling elite, and expose such other social realities as poverty, multiculturalism, divergent modes of religiosity and the like. Within this context, the English language is no longer seen as a language of colonialist imposition that needs to be tamed and indigenized in accordance with the nationalist orientation that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of independence. It has become a means of intercultural communication in contemporary Nigerian society, as well as a tool in the hands of Nigerian creative writers in their quest to resist the oppressive ruling elite and make greater sense of the socio-cultural and political climate that has enveloped the

contemporary nation-space.[124] Achebe alludes to this new socio-political climate in an essay entitled *Named for Victoria, Queen of England* (1995):

> I had hardly begun to bask in the sunshine of reconciliation when a new cloud appeared, a new estrangement. Political independence had come. The nationalist leader of yesterday (with whom it had not been too difficult to make common cause) had become the not so attractive party boss. And the boss was chased out by the bright military boys, new idols of the people. But the party boss knows how to wait… knows by heart the counsel Mother Bedbug gave her little ones when the harassed owner of the bed poured hot water on them: 'Be patient,' said she, 'for what is hot will in the end be cold.'
>
> One hears that the party boss is already conducting a whispering campaign: 'You done see us chop,' he says, 'now you see dem chop. Which one you like pass?'[125] And the people are truly confused. (193)

This shift in social realities birthed a new ideology in Nigerian literary circles and triggered a change of ideological focus and thematic concerns among the older generation of literary artists[126] as well as the emergence of a younger generation of talented literary craftspeople, such as Ben Okri, Chimamanda Adichie, Chris Abani to mention but a few. Like their predecessors, many of the new generation of artists have given free rein to their imagination by opening up their creative minds to the authority and influence of orality in the pursuit of a new literary movement and nationalist discourse that seeks to analyse and expose both the malignant and benign social

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[124]This argument was inspired by Fanon's (1968) musings on Literature and National culture in the chapter entitled 'On National Culture' and Bandia's (2009) deliberations on the African Writer as Translator.

[125]This Pidgin English expression is a euphemism for corruption, which roughly translates to something like 'You have seen us both in our corrupt ways, embezzling and sharing public funds. Whose methods do you prefer?'

[126]By 'older generation,' we allude to the like of Achebe, Soyinka, Okara and the likes who witnessed firsthand the destructiveness of colonialism.

realities that animate the contemporary nation-space. Prominent among these contemporary works of fiction are Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) and Abani's *Graceland* (2004).

The Famished Road is of particular importance to this sub-section because of the fascinating ways in which the author draws from a variety of indigenous systems and rhetorical practices in his exposition of religious, political and cultural phenomena in a contemporary phantom African community. The novel chronicles the life of a child, Azaro, who continually straddles the physical world and the spirit realm, and is caught between his preference for life in the spirit world and his love for his biological mother. Through the struggles and experiences of the narrator-protagonist – Azaro, Okri presents a satire of the realities of an unnamed postcolonial African community that is beset by political instability and economic difficulties. The story is told of a community where violence, corruption and poverty abound and the powerful elite rides roughshod over the powerless, impoverished masses. On the surface, life appears rosy, but behind this disguise lies a community afflicted with political strife and a comatose economy. All hope is not lost, however, as the novel showcases how a sense of common purpose and communal consciousness can suddenly build up and coalesce in the face of existential threats to the community.

Okri delivers his plot in a language that is simple, yet highly imbued with African mythological reflections and imagery. His style is based on the urban narrative technique and his work thrives on a conscious criticism of the government's shortcomings, while also drawing copiously from the magical realism and fantasy that animate his worldview (Alu Moh 2001). Okri uses a variety of writing techniques, including vernacularization, idiomatization and neologization to capture and express those cultural concepts that find little or no expression in Western varieties of the English language. The excerpts discussed below highlight his mastery of indigenous cultural concepts, magical realism and various African oral devices, as well as the

strategic way in which these are deployed in the author's description of various socio-cultural phenomena:

(1)

"Ours too is an *abiku* nation, a spirit-child nation that keeps being reborn" (498) (My italics)

Abiku is not a run-of-the-mill term that can be used in a nondescript manner in banal conversations. According to Yoruba cosmology, it is a mythical concept that describes children who go through a never-ending cycle of death and rebirth (Mobolade 1973).The main character, Azaro, is depicted as an *abiku*, a spirit-child who keeps oscillating between life and death. In keeping with the satirical nature of the novel, Okri transplants the *abiku* concept onto the postcolonial nation-space and uses it in a symbolic way to describe the struggles and challenges of contemporary African societies, especially the one-step-forward-two-step-back dynamic that personifies the political and economic landscape.

(2)

"It's me,' he said, a little hesitantly, 'the *International* Photographer'" (230) (My italics)

The italicized word in the above excerpt recalls the concept of semantic shift discussed earlier. The word *international* as deployed in the novel has less to do with the imposition of a global, supra-national appeal on its referent. In the Nigerian context, the conferment of the word 'international' on a person automatically creates an air of uniqueness and sophistication around them such that they become, in the eyes of the general public, an expert of some sort in their trade or occupation.[127] The photographer so-described in this novel shot to the limelight and earned for himself the famed title 'international' because he succeeded in capturing corrupt dealings among crooked

[127]This argument was inspired in part by Roland Ngam's MA dissertation entitled "Ben Okri's The Famished Road: A Case Study in the Translation of New Englishes" (2004).

politicians on camera – a feat that was deemed almost impossible to achieve by his contemporaries. The use of the word 'international' no doubt draws attention to the reality of social inequality and corruption in the postcolony as well as various forms of resistance to these unsavoury practices.

(3)

"'*They are hiding now behind their wives' wrappers* and yet in broad daylight they THREATENED my WIFE and SON and STOLE ALL MY THINGS! They are RATS COWARDS THIEVES AND ROGUES. Let them come out and DENY it!'"(97) (My italics)

We notice in the above excerpt the use of an idiomatic expression "They are hiding now behind their wives' wrappers" which is representative of an act of cowardice among the menfolk and is used in the novel to present a vivid illustration of Azaro's father's creditors' response to his vociferous outburst of anger. The creditors seize Azaro's father's household effects as a consequence of his indebtedness to them and in retaliation for his inability to pay up within a mutually agreed timeframe. When he shows up unleashing a litany of invectives and demanding to have his properties back, they scamper to safety and hide in their homes, leaving their wives to face the full wrath of his anger. The expression is fairly popular in contemporary Nigerian society where it is used mostly in reference to lily-livered men who avoid confrontations with their competitors or adversaries or chicken out of arguments or contests due to the fear of defeat.

The novel is no doubt riddled with several other fascinating expressions that derive from a conscious and strategic dependence on various African oral forms. The few excerpts discussed heretofore are testament to the omnipresent influence of orality in the production of postcolonial Nigerian fiction. Within the current context of contemporary Nigerian Europhone fiction, orality assumes a new definition which expands its reach beyond the focus on traditional or precolonial artifacts to include

expressions that are steeped in post-modern thought and reflective of contemporary Nigerian popular discourse. Ong (1982) makes a similar argument in *Orality and Literacy* where he distinguishes between secondary orality and what he refers to as the orality of pre-literate cultures. The former, Ong argues, is a 'more deliberate and self-conscious orality' that not only draws on the use of 'writing and print' (133) but also rests upon literate thought and expression. Expressions such as *international photographer,*[128] *bushmeat,*[129] *agbada,*[130] as well as a host of other contemporary coinages would therefore fall within the expanded definition of orality. In the Nigerian context, primary orality would therefore include concepts, words and expressions that derived from mystical and physical realities as they played out in the precolonial nation-space. Secondary orality, on the other hand, captures a wide range of popular expressions and concepts that are representative of the contemporary realities of the postcolony and its inhabitants. In other words, while primary orality captures and depicts cultural artifacts and experiences that are deeply rooted in precolonial traditions and thought, secondary orality lends itself to the expression of postcolonial cultural experiences, realities and sensibilities.

4.5 Conclusion

By and large, African Europhone novels have made enormous contributions to the creation and fostering of an authentic, home-grown postcolonial identity and imagination that transcend negative imperialist stereotypes about African civility. This new identity fosters a consciousness that celebrates Nigerian humanity and engages with the nation's precolonial and colonial past, as well as its postcolonial present as a means of opening the nation and its inhabitants to new challenges and possibilities as they make their way into uncharted post-modern territories.

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[128]See *The Famished Road*, p. 230.
[129]Ibid., 44.
[130]See *The Trials of Brother Jero*, p. 167.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS ON THE EFFECTS OF TRANSLATION ON NIGERIAN NATIONHOOD

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we examined several notions of translation in relation to the socio-historical conditions that shaped, informed and buoyed them. The current chapter takes these discussions further by situating these meaning-making processes within the framework of nationalism. In other words, we seek, in this chapter, to highlight the effects of translation on national consciousness in the spatio-temporal configurations of the Nigerian nation. This study, it must be stressed, looks beyond the traditional paradigms and notions of nationalism which advocate the modernist view of the nation as a homogeneous political entity with fixed territorial boundaries. Our focus is, rather, on a broader, psychological conceptualization of nationalism that draws on the framing of a collective imagination around which members of a community or nation coalesce as they confront their daily realities. Nationalism, in this specific context, is viewed exclusively through the lens of a collective or national consciousness that shapes and is shaped by Anderson's notion of the nation as an 'imagined community' whose inhabitants may never come into physical contact or even hear about one another, but in whose minds inhabits an iconic representation of their affinity (1983). This concept of the nation is thus grounded in a conviction that permeates the consciousness of each member of the community and instills an idealized sense of belonging to a higher cause, thus creating, in a fundamental sense, a universal imagination. This conviction becomes the driving force behind the zeal to keep the nation afloat amidst the turmoil of its time, as each member finds representations of their individual struggles, realities and socio-historical experiences in the collective imagination. To get to the crux of these issues, we shall now explore the interplay between translation and national consciousness within

the three temporal landmarks that animate Nigeria's history: the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods.

5.2 Translation and National Consciousness in Pre-literate Communities

Drawing from our discussions on the precolonial dynamics of translation and orality, it becomes evident that a national consciousness had always existed in preliterate Nigerian communities, although this may not have been explicitly expressed in terms reminiscent of Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities.' The precolonial nation-space played host to a great many disparate traditional communities or empires that were, contrary to what Eurocentric historical narratives might have us believe, sovereign, economically viable and ethnically diverse. As discussed in chapter one, these communities depended on a patrimonial system of governance which legitimized the ascendancy of tradition and gave it pride of place in the precolonial social landscape. The primacy of tradition over other social factors therefore ensured that the nation was built around an idealized notion of belonging and patriotism that was deeply rooted in shared mythico-religious and cultural values.

The religious sensibilities that held the nation together derived from a deep-seated, longstanding belief in the intervention of supernatural forces in the affairs of humankind, as demonstrated in such important religious practices as deity worship and divination. Ifa divination, for instance, was so prevalent in the Oyo empire that the king, priests and inhabitants of the community were known to consult the oracle prior to committing to personal or communal endeavours. What's more, there was a widespread appreciation for the non-coercive nature of the belief system on the part of the inhabitants of the community who willingly subscribed to it in an attempt to mitigate their spiritual needs and grapple with their daily realities. It is our contention that divinatory practices fostered among all and sundry a sense of belonging to a higher spiritual cause, which process inspired a consciousness that provided the basis for the

empire to be seen in the light of a consensual community. As we have already noted, translation, in its intralingual and intersemiotic forms, was complicit in the verbal enunciation or drum performance of the verses that confer legitimacy and agency on the divination process. Intralingual translation proved particularly useful during private divination sessions where it provided the means through which messages from the deities were received, enunciated and decoded, much to the benefit of individual supplicants. Within the current context of deity worship and divination, intersemiotic translation lent itself to the purposes of religious communication, especially during community rituals and rites where divination verses must be beaten out on the talking drum in fulfilment of the conditions surrounding the performance of such rituals. These community rituals, for all intents and purposes, can be seen in the light of communal activities, which brought members of precolonial communities together in some form of collective action. The rapprochement between translation, divination and nation-building in the precolonial nation-space evokes the notion of religious nationalism, which van der Veer describes as one of the 'transformations of pre-modern traditions and identities' (2013, 1). Friedland takes this view further, describing religious nationalism as an ideology that provides

> a particular ontology revealed and affirmed through... practices... that locate collective solidarity in religious faith shared by embodied families. (2001, 1)

Besides religious ritual, cultural practices also provided a rallying point for the inhabitants of pre-modern Nigerian communities and were deemed particularly pivotal to the symbolic order of the state in view of their involvement in the nourishment and sustenance of the traditional values upon which the state was founded. Practices such as royal ceremonies and festivals were mediated by intralingual translation practices, especially in instances where professional linguists were called upon to either narrate the histories of these communities or simplify the speeches of kings and chiefs who

were known to speak in esoteric language forms.[131] Besides, the oral traditions and histories of these communities, which were often couched in esoteric expressions, were passed down from one generation to the next through intralingual translation practices.[132] These narratives, it must be stressed, conveyed the communal norms, taboos and values intrinsic to these communities, which all members, including the absorbed aliens, had come to willingly accept and adopt. Like religious rituals, communal participation in these cultural practices – coupled with widespread adherence to the norms that underpinned them - nudged the diverse inhabitants into some form of collective reasoning and action. These cultural practices therefore placed emphasis on the logic of communalism as opposed to the doctrine of individualism, and celebrated the ascendancy of collective actions over individual tribal considerations. Speaking specifically about the role of traditional practices in nation-building in the Nupe empire, Nadel adds:

> They teach a new meaning of the word Nupe, which is the meaning of nation. Collective pride, otherwise vested in the tribe or the local community, and its counterpart, the aloof or critical attitude towards other groups and their culture, fuses with and is supplanted by the sentiments of national pride. (1942, 144)

Translation no doubt inspired these expressions of communalism, which embodied conceptualizations of peoples bound by shared religious and cultural beliefs, norms and concerns that were mediated by orality. There is therefore a sense in which oral narratives – expressed verbally or performed via the drum – could transcend the heterogeneous nature of traditional communities, permeate the boundaries of cultural fixities and create a common consciousness around which the inhabitants coalesced, all in a bid to foster symbolic unity. In this specific context, intralingual and intersemiotic translation practices rose to the occasion to elevate the prevailing religious and cultural

[131] See Bandia (2009).
[132] Ibid.

ethos to the status of "national treasures,"[133] thus placing orality in a position to foster a national consciousness within the precolonial nation-space. Though the inhabitants of these communities may not have known or heard about every other person that walked the grounds, one of the main reasons the centre held was because each member harboured in their minds an image of their collective union, expressed in the form of shared mythico-religious and cultural practices. This study, it must be noted, does not purport to argue that translation was solely responsible for all the expressions of nationalism that animated the precolonial nation-space. Rather, we contend that the major impact of translation on the making of the precolonial nation lies in its dialogic relationship with those orality-dependent traditional practices that conferred legitimacy and agency on the nation. The interplay between translation and orality can thus be said to have inspired a consensual community in the precolonial nation-space that mirrors Anderson's concept of the nation as an "imagined community."

5.3 Translation and National Consciousness in the Colonial State

Precolonial expressions of national consciousness suffered a major reversal of fortunes with the advent of European colonialism, which pulled the native subject into a new social order that was grounded in 'social and cultural patterns, identified with (modern) civilization (Grillo 1998, 97).[134] Much unlike the precolonial context where nation-building occurred in a subtle manner, the colonial nation-space was characterized for the most part by a legacy of hegemony, which sought to undo the 'incorporative processes' intrinsic to precolonial states (Southall 1970, 72) as well as the mechanisms through which they regulated themselves. The reversal of the collective imagination inspired by the precolonial experience of communalism by the agents of imperialism birthed a new notion of collectivism, which sought to rally the inhabitants of the colonial state around British paradigmatic frames as well as the cultural imagination

[133] See Holbek (1981).
[134]Also see Young C. 1985. 'Ethnicity and the Colonial and Postcolonial State in Africa', in P. Brass.,*Ethnic Groups and the State.* London: Croom Helm. 57-93.

that they fostered. The inhabitants of precolonial traditional communities could no longer, as a result, continue to think of themselves solely in terms of their relationship with their historical communities and the cultural sensibilities that kept them afloat, as these had been co-opted into a much larger socio-cultural space and brought into a forced union with social values that were grounded in imperialist ways of thinking, acting and being. Drawing from Fanon (1968), we argue that the European incursion into the African socio-cultural and political space disarmed the subaltern subject and robbed them of their ancestral heritage and tradition, and the imagination that they embodied.

Translation was no doubt complicit in the unfolding saga, especially with respect to its interplay with the phenomena of colonial anthropology and religious colonialism. We had, in chapter three, examined the translationality of colonial anthropology in the colonial state of Nigeria and determined that the texts produced by the agents of colonialism were designed to provide in-depth insights into native psychology and customs, which in turn helped to further the colonial enterprise. Translation practices such as transcription and entextualization lent themselves to colonial purposes in that they facilitated the collection and codification of numerous oral narratives, which constituted the bulk of the raw texts used in the production of colonial anthropology. Operating under the auspices of ethnographic studies, colonial anthropological texts helped to stimulate and strengthen the tripartite colonial legacies of denigration, subjugation and exploitation, which process provided the physical and psychological tools that facilitated the dismantling of the communal consciousness upon which precolonial communities were founded. Colonial anthropology therefore oversaw the replacement of the legacy of communal solidarity intrinsic to traditional communities with a doctrine of colonial nationalism, which, for good or ill, sought to instill great pride in the tenets of colonialism and rally colonized subjects around an imperialist notion of modern enlightenment and progress. It must be noted, however, that the patterns associated with the debilitating effect of colonial anthropology on national

consciousness did resonate evenly across the length and breadth of the colonial state of Nigeria, in spite of the socio-historical and political disparities between the Northern and Southern Protectorates.[135] The nation-wide replication of these patterns can be attributed in part to the ultimate objective of colonial anthropology, which was to arm colonial administrators with a profound understanding of the psychology, mythological reflections and imagery of all native subjects, regardless of ethno-linguistic affiliation or geographical location. The social ramifications of the historical differences between Northern and Southern Nigeria, it must be stressed, are better suited to discussions surrounding religious colonialism and nationalism – a topic to which we now turn.

5.3.1 Religious Colonialism, Translation and National Consciousness

The colonial era in Nigeria's history was characterized by a legacy of hegemony in which imperialist religions – especially Christianity – worked in cahoots with translation to dismantle native belief systems and expressions of nationalism, and replace them with doctrinal positions that reified the logic of colonial nationalism. As discussed in chapter three, the decision to plant Christianity on native soil and preach the Gospel to the natives in the language(s) of their imagination led to a series of events that had far-reaching implications for the status of these languages as well as the cultural imagination that they express and epitomize. The major languages of the South – Yoruba and Igbo – were subsequently coded, modernized and taught to expatriate missionaries in a bid to facilitate their proselytic efforts, which process explains their current status as the 'most linguistically modernized languages in Nigeria today' (Adegbija 2004, 22).[136] The codification of Yoruba and Ibo languages by Bishop Crowther and his crew came with the added advantage that religious texts, such as the Bible, could now be translated into native languages for the purposes of evangelism.

[135] These differences and their impact on national consciousness are elaborated upon in the sub-section on religious colonialism.
[136] Hausa, the lingua franca of the North, is just as developed as Yoruba and Igbo, although the process of its development occurred under different circumstances.

Bishop Crowther's translations of the English Bible into Yoruba and Igbo (as well as other liturgical texts) therefore proved particularly useful in bringing the gospel closer to the natives in the languages of their imagination. On the surface, this seemed like a noble, altruistic act, borne out of the ultimate desire to bring enlightenment and civilization to a people deemed most in need of it. Beneath the surface, however, we find that Bishop Crowther's translations were grounded in imperialist ideological positions that saw African belief systems in a negative, primitive light and ensured that indigenous language versions or translations of the Bible were subjected to deliberate acts of translational reductionism and/or misrepresentation. Uchegbue (2010, 164) argues:

> The advent of Christianity and the European values that came with it, fostered a culture of cultural depreciation or outright loss in which native traditions and values are 'either lost, given up, forgotten or (…) neglected while some are (…) reinterpreted, partially preserved, and absorbed in or interpolated with Christianity.'

In other words, Christian missionaries sought to minimize local cultural artefacts that found expression in Christianity, while those indigenous cultural icons that were deemed incompatible with Euro-Christian beliefs were demonized and misrepresented in indigenous language versions of the Bible. Prominent among the indigenous artefacts that suffered from these acts of demonization and misrepresentation are the pantheons of deities intrinsic to native religions and mythology, such as the Yoruba *Esu* or the Igbo *Ekwensu*, which had the concept of the Christian Devil foisted upon them, despite the obvious differences in their mythological appearances and functions. Also identified as a perfect candidate for deliberate imperialist misrepresentation was the Yoruba concept of *aje*, which was super-imposed on notions of negativity associated with witchcraft. *Aje*, Clark (2007) argues, is not so much a negative force as a special (supernatural) ability bestowed on (some) women to do good or turn unfortunate occurrences or circumstances around for the better and/or to their advantage. The main objective of

these imperialist attempts at demonizing and misrepresenting local religious and cultural concepts was no doubt to cause disharmony between the natives and their mythico-religious sensibilities, in a bid to sway them in the direction of the Euro-Christian God. Christianity, as we have seen, disagrees with native religious orthodoxy, which it sees as primitive and barbaric (Alam 2014). Aime Cesaire makes a similar argument in *Discourse on Colonialism* where he attributes the Euro-Christian disavowal of pagan traditions to 'Christian pedantry,' which associates Christianity with civilization, and paganism with savagery (2010, 33). The colonizer's condemnation of the religious practices and sensibilities of the colonized native is further highlighted in the following excerpt, taken from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:

> At this point an old man said he had a question. 'Which is this god of yours,' he asked, 'the goddess of the earth, the god of the sky, Amadiora of the thunderbolt, or what?'
>
> The interpreter spoke to the white man and he immediately gave his answer. '*All the gods you have named are not gods at all. They are gods of deceit who will tell you to kill your fellows and destroy your innocent children. There is only one true God and He has made the Earth, the sky, you and me and all of us*.'
>
> 'If we leave our gods and follow your god,' asked another man, 'who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?'
>
> '*Your gods are not alive and cannot do any harm,' replied the white man. 'They are pieces of wood and stone*.'[137] (Italics mine)

Religious translations no doubt played a rather ambivalent role in the colonial nation-space, simultaneously dismantling and building various expressions of national consciousness. In other words, while translation disarmed native subjects through a methodical evisceration of the mythico-religious and ideological paradigms that underpinned traditional expressions of nationalism, it would subsequently lend itself to

[137] Achebe (1958, 103)

imperialist purposes by facilitating the psychological conversion of colonial subjects to Euro-Christian modes of thinking, acting and being, much to the benefit of the logic of colonial nationalism. Religious translations were therefore partly responsible for the dismantling and displacement of the precolonial national consciousness, which paved the way for the construction of a colonial consciousness in the colony.

Much unlike colonial anthropology whose impact on national consciousness arguably resonated evenly across the board, the impact of religious translation on national consciousness played out rather unevenly across the Northern and Southern parts of the nation due to the popularity and progression of Christianity in the South and a historical legacy of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism in the North. To fully appreciate the impact of Islamic fundamentalism on national consciousness in Nigeria, it is useful to briefly examine its historical context.[138]

The Islamic faith became firmly established in Northern Nigeria in the aftermath of the 14th century wave of Jihadist incursion into the Northern parts of Africa. Though many Northern communities still held on to their animist beliefs, the main Hausa kingdoms came under the influence of the Jihadists who transformed them into Islamic sultanates. Over the next five centuries, Islam would gain more influence in the North with the help of traders, imams and other agents of the Caliphate who established trading centres, Koranic schools and Sharia courts throughout the region. The 19th century Fulani Jihadist incursion led by Usman dan Fodio, however, put an end to the old order and brought about a change in the political and religious status quo. Many of the sultanates established by the old regime were overrun by the Fulani Jihadists and brought under a puritanical Islamist movement led by the Sokoto Caliphate. The puritanical brand of Islam introduced by the Fulani Jihadists engendered a form of Islamist fundamentalist ideology, which swept through the entire region and became the standard for the Islamic faith in Northern Nigeria. Besides, Arabic was implanted

[138] The narrative that follows was inspired for the most part by Adegbija's (2004) treatise on the history of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria.

by the Jihadists as the language of religious communication and made to co-exist with Hausa – the regional lingua franca. The political and religious institutions of the North were not only interwoven but also deeply entrenched in the region that the colonial administrators were forced to negotiate nominal British rule over the North in exchange for access to the region's natural resources. This, in effect, allowed the North to retain much of its linguistic, political and religious legacies, as opposed to Southern communities whose cultural traditions were surreptitiously and progressively supplanted by colonial legacies. It is therefore not surprising that attempts to introduce the English language in the North, in the aftermath of the 1914 amalgamation, were rebuffed and resisted by Northern political and religious leaders who saw the introduction of a European language as an affront to their collective religious and cultural sensibilities.[139] One of the conditions for accepting British nominal rule, Adeniran reveals, was that Lord Lugard, the British Governor and alleged 'Chief of Christians' would not 'oppose (the) religion (of the north), sway (northerners) from Islam, and order (them) to adopt (the Christian) religion' (1979, 61). This agreement, Adeniran continues, derived from a general apathy in the North towards Christianity - which was considered an 'enemy religion' – and by extension, British colonial administrators who were seen as defenders of the Christian faith:

> Christianity (or Nasaranci) was an enemy religion
> Europeans were Christians
> Therefore Europeans were enemies. (ibid.)

The implications of the North-South dichotomy for national consciousness is evident: Christianity, operating under the auspices of religious colonialism, gained traction in the South, and brought the inhabitants of the region into a collective consciousness that was grounded in imperialist paradigms. On the contrary, the general disdain for (and rejection of) Christianity in the North on account of the preponderance of Islamic fundamentalist ideals, for all intents and purposes, fostered a regional sub-culture that

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[139] The social ramifications of the North's rejection of the English language are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

was underpinned by an Islamic nationalist ideology with roots in the Arabian Peninsula. The islamization of the North and widespread adherence to its doctrines by the Islamic faithful, therefore, provided an alternate reality that insulated the North from the national imagination and precluded its peoples from imagining themselves as members of the same national community as their largely Christian Southern neighbours.

Translation – operating under the auspices of anthropology and religion – therefore lent itself to colonial purposes by undermining indigenous notions of national consciousness. It would subsequently, by virtue of its involvement in the production of postcolonial fiction, help to purge the nation of the shackles of imperialist ontological demands and set in motion a new form of national consciousness that would gain a foothold in the public imagination in the postcolonial era.

5.4 Postcolonial Translation and National consciousness

The idea of the national consciousness in the postcolonial era has drawn mostly on political agency and collective attempts on the part of the subaltern to dismantle the socio-political and cultural legacies of colonial rule. This counter-hegemonic initiative was for the most part aligned with the literary-oriented nationalist activities of Nigerian literary craftspeople who dug into the nation's history and diverse oral traditions in a bid to make sense of their postcolonial reality. The codification and documentation of oral narratives in the form of postcolonial fiction through the use of various translation techniques has not only inspired the transformation of tradition into heritage, but has also birthed a movement that celebrates the emergence of "national texts" that are authored by nation-oriented postcolonial writers who are known to "speak" in the voice and language of the nation. Writing about the interplay between orality and the role of the native intellectual in nation-building, Wilson opines:

> A driving force behind the development of folklore studies, nationalistic studies were in the beginning intimately associated with the efforts of zealous scholar-patriots who collected and studied the love of commonfolk, not just to satisfy their intellectual curiosity or enlarge their understanding of human behavior, but primarily to lay the foundations on which their emergent nation-states would one day rest. In this movement, the nationalist attempt (…) merged with the romantic emphasis on feeling and intuition, on nature, and on the past as the source of inspiration for the present. (1998, 441)

The interplay between postcolonial fiction and national consciousness initially derived from the politics of ethnographic representation which facilitated the production of colonialist narratives that persistently undermined African civility and disavowed the existence of sane, civilized African societies prior to the commencement of European colonization. In a book chapter entitled "The Red and the Blacks: The Historical Novels in The Soviet Union and Postcolonial Africa," Juraga and Booker allude to the exclusion of subaltern societies from Western discourses bordering on civility and modern development. Such narratives, the authors continue, were grounded in a

> long and woeful tradition of colonialist historiography which played a crucial role in the European colonial domination of Africa by envisioning Africa as a timeless place without history, mired in the primeval past and unable to move forward until European colonizers brought new energies and new knowledge to the continent. (2002, 19)

Corroborating this argument, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch argues that colonialist narratives about Africa

> have long perpetuated the myth of a sub-saharan Africa conquered fairly easily and profiting from pacification. … The local populations, according to these histories, were finally delivered by the "colonial peace" from the internal

> struggles of little local rulers forever raiding their neighbors' territories in search of slaves or livestock. (1988, 66)

These colonial-centric narratives, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe posits, cannot purport to represent the views of Africa nor its inhabitants, but 'rather justify the process of inventing and conquering a continent and naming its "primitiveness" or "disorder" as well as the subsequent means of its exploitation and methods for its regeneration' (1988, 20). In an attempt to counter the effects of these imperialist stereotypes on the collective African consciousness, Africans with the ability to write have resorted to the use of what Juraga and Booker refer to as the 'historical novel,' which help to construct 'new postcolonial (…) cultural identities that transcend this inherited tradition of European bourgeois and that escape definition by the colonial past' (2002, 18). Postcolonial Nigerian novels – regardless of whether they were produced in the twilight of colonialism or in contemporary times – must be seen in the light of 'sweeping historical narrative(s) that tell the story (of the nation) from the early days of British colonization to the contemporary postcolonial period, focusing on the strong (…) tradition of resistance to oppression' (ibid.). Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, provides a counter discourse to colonialist misrepresentations of the Nigerian worldview and attempts to paint the cultural imagination of Nigerian peoples in a more positive light by providing an insider's perspective that depends on a generous reliance on native oratorical devices and imagery. More contemporary literary works, such as Okri's *The Famished Road*, take their predecessors' redemptive efforts a notch further by resorting to the use of orality in the production of narratives that capture and expose contemporary Nigerian realities and struggles. Both the old and the new provide an insider's perspective on the peculiarities of the times in which they were produced, all in a bid to dispel negative imperialist narratives about the Nigerian experience.

Nigerian writers and critics have been at the forefront of the struggle against those critical universalist readings that seek to undermine African cultures. Prominent on the list of those writer-critics is Chinua Achebe who, as discussed in chapter four,

denounced Honor Tracy and Iris Andreski's critique of African society and the literature that it embodies on the basis that they sought to reify negative Western stereotypes about African primitiveness. Chinweizu and Ihechukwu, in a seminal book entitled *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980) also take on such authors as Eustace Palmer and Charles Lawson who were particularly tolerant of African literary productions and were much more willing to embrace its value, but whose works were unwittingly underpinned by a universalist logic of Western superiority which assumes that Western cultures are more sophisticated and therefore set the standards for the global literary and cultural landscape. The duo further argue that African literature must be judged on its own merits and in relation to the role and use of orality in the dissemination of those narratives that seek to expose Africa's social realities. Western narratives which purport to celebrate African literary production but downplay the role of oral tradition in the production of African fiction should, therefore, be seen as products of a neocolonialist mindset. The two scholars are however not impervious to the fact that African Europhone writers have been largely influenced by Western models, which explains the contemporary view and acceptance of African fiction as a conglomeration of complex hybrid narratives that combine both Western and African cultural phenomena. The element of hybridity in African fiction, they conclude, sets it apart from the Western models from which it draws some of its inspiration, and creates for it a new space that allows for its effectiveness to be judged in relation to the peculiarities of postcolonial African societies.

The use of hybrid nationalist texts as a means of constructing a new postcolonial identity and imagination that defies imperialist stereotypes has not been without its difficulties and challenges, prominent among which are the epistemological distinctions between African Afrophone literatures and African Europhone writings. Critics from within and outside the continent have urged a complete adoption of the nativist approach, which advocates a conscious reconnection with the pristine past as a way of discarding the legacies of the former British colonizers, while others consider the

tradition of European language writing best suited to the peculiar needs of the decolonizing multicultural space into which post-independence African states have since morphed.

Among the proponents of African Afrophone writings is Obiajunwa Wali who, in an article entitled “The Dead End of African Literature” (1963), advocates the writing of African literature in African languages as a means of preserving the native African imagination and restoring it to its rightful place in the social and literary landscape. To Wali, the use of English in the writing of African literature via techniques such as transliteration does a great disservice to the African imagination and only leads to the discarding of the *original* in favour of a *copy*. This process, he continues, will only stifle the creativity and originality for which African literature is highly renowned:

> The whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing, is misdirected, and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture. In other words, until these writers and their western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration. (ibid., 14)

Ngugi wa Thiong’o corroborates Wali’s position on the role of African languages in the preservation of the African imagination and argues in a seminal book entitled *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) that the implantation of European languages on African soil remains the greatest disservice ever done to the African imagination. The imposition of an alien language on the minds of native Africans, he continues, resulted in the uprooting of the latter group from its natural environment, followed by a violent transplantation into an alien language-culture, which process put significant distance between subaltern subjects and their native imagination. The adoption of European languages coupled with the zeal, commitment and efforts dedicated to making them bear the weight of the African imagination through conscious and unconscious

borrowings from the African oral tradition are, Ngugi argues, pointers to the acceptance of the 'fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature... culture... politics' (ibid., 9). Ngugi attributes the relegation of the African consciousness to the realm of near-obscurity to the violence of colonialism and the language of its expression, and sees European languages as the 'most important vehicle through which (the) power (of imperialism) fascinated and held the (African) soul prisoner' (ibid.). Drawing from his personal experience of colonialism and its impact on Kenyan languages and cultures, Ngugi exposes ways in which the forces of colonialism deliberately broke up the nexus between the cultural consciousness and imagination of the Kenyan child and the language of its expression. The replacement of Gikuyu - his native tongue - with English as language of formal education can be seen in the light of DuBois' (1903) metaphorical veil which, akin to the Afro-American experience, shut out the Kenyan child from their worldview and rendered their humanity invisible. To curtail the impact of the disruptiveness of colonialism on the African consciousness, Ngugi makes a case for the representation and expression of the African imagination and worldview in a language that aligns with and naturally conveys the cultural sensibilities associated with this imagination. A return to writing exclusively in Gikuyu would therefore provide Ngugi with the ideological support-system through which to disavow and rebut Euro-American assumptions of African primitiveness. What's more, the dissemination of the African worldview in the language of its expression is bound to not only stimulate a restoration of the African child to their natural cultural environment, but also provide the incentive for African writers to exploit the creative potentials of their individual languages by opening them up to philosophical reasoning and scientific endeavours. The onus is therefore on African writers to produce texts that evoke a reinvigoration of African cultures by ensuring that their thematic concerns are attuned to the African subject's 'anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control' (ibid.).

Critics such as Amoko (2010) disagree with Ngugi's approach, which they consider inherently exclusionist and better suited to discourses on ethnic nationalism. Ngugi's literary nationalism, Amoko argues, is capable of stifling manifestations of otherness in multicultural decolonizing contexts, given the implicit promotion of the ethnic self over and above the ethnic other as well as the potential to create a culture of divisiveness and distrust within an otherwise fragile heterogeneous landscape. The need to mitigate the potential for divisiveness in culturally plural national contexts such as Nigeria – among other reasons – explains Achebe's preference for *nationalist* literatures produced in the language of national unity - English. In an article entitled "English and the African Writer," Achebe makes a case for the acceptance and promotion of literary texts that privilege the primacy of collective sentiments over ethnic affiliations and argues that postcolonial literatures serve nationalist ends in decolonizing, multicultural contexts:

> A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province, and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory. In other words a literature that is written in the *national* language. An ethnic literature is one which is available only to one ethnic group within the nation. If you take Nigeria as an example, the national literature, as I see it, is the literature written in English; and the ethnic literatures are in Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Edo, Ijaw, etc., etc. (1965, 27)

Elsewhere, he writes:

> … I am leaving out writers in the various Nigerian languages. It is not that I under-rate their importance, but since I am considering the role of the writer in building a new nation I wish to concentrate on those who write for the *whole* nation whose audience cuts across tribe or clan. And these, for good or ill, are the writers in English. (1973, 12)

This infers, among other arguments, that ethnic literatures speak to the experiences and realities of a section of the nation and could, potentially, be appropriated to serve

ethnic-nationalist ends in multicultural decolonizing national contexts. Conversely, nationalist (postcolonial) texts – which are produced in the English language – are intended to unify all ethnic and sub-national units under one socio-cultural and political umbrella. The English language in Nigeria, Achebe continues, must therefore be seen, not only as language of literary expression but also, and more importantly, a language that must be nourished by other indigenous language-cultures in order to validate its status as national language and conveyor of the national imagination. Achebe takes exception to Wali's claims about the futility of attempting to express and represent local cultural sensibilities and imagery in a foreign language, arguing that only the works of the 'nondescript writer' who has nothing but a 'small, nondescript routine sacrifice (of a) chick or less' would show signs of sterility and non-creativity (1965, 29). A gifted writer, he continues, 'must look for an animal whose blood can match the power of his offering' (ibid.). Citing J. P. Clark's poem *Night Rain* as evidence of creativity and non-sterility, Achebe makes the point that the interests of the African imagination can be very well served in the English language without undermining its lexical and grammatical structures. *Night Rain* speaks to the plight of poor African households who seem defenseless against nature's excesses:

> Out of the run of water
> That like ants filing out of the wood
> Will scatter and gain possession
> Of the floor…[140]

Achebe finds the idea of "Ants filing out of woods" particularly creative and goes on to admit that readers who are unfamiliar with the cultural context in which the poem is situated will find themselves excluded from the cultural nuances that it embodies and expresses. However, the poem and the language of its expression speak to the presence of a 'new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of the African experience in a world-wide language' (ibid.). Not ruling out the prospects of African language writing and its

[140]Quoted in Achebe (1965, 29).

significance for the preservation of the African imagination, Achebe argues that they should be allowed to grow unimpeded, but on the condition that they co-exist peacefully and flourish alongside the national literatures written in English. The variety of English used in these literatures, he continues, should, however, be a new (hybrid) type that is 'still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings' (ibid., 30).

Achebe's first novel - *Things Fall Apart* (1958) – benefitted immensely from this postcolonial, anti-imperialist medium of expression, and would, on the basis of this, earn for itself an enviable reputation in the African literary landscape, as well as the status of the archetypal modern African novel in English. Appreciated by many for the cultural nationalist ideology that the novel embodies, the language of its expression has come to be recognized as one of the most widely accepted, if not the standard, in the writing of postcolonial African literatures (Bishop 1988). Ben Obumselu makes a similar point about Achebe's use of language in his review of *Things Fall Apart*:

> … Such an experiment requires both imagination and originality... His experiment is a very positive contribution to the writing of West African English literature, and I believe it will make the work of subsequent authors easier. (1959, 38)

Although other variants of the in-between language or *third code* can be found in the works of other writers of Achebe's generation,[141] they do not seem to have received as much literary acclaim and acceptability as Achebe's style. Achebe's use of language in *Things Fall Apart* and subsequent novels has become the standard in African creative writing mainly due to the way in which his nationalist narratives have brought the English and African language cultures to what Gikandi describes as the 'same level of

[141]Examples of these would be Amos Tutuola's style which smacks of deliberate distortions of English syntax and grammar, Gabriel Okara's transliterated phrases which tend to exclude non-Ijaw speaking readers, and Soyinka's obscurantism which derives mostly from a mix of Yoruba mythopoetics and Shakespearean archaisms. (See Macebuh 1975; Chinweizu et al. 1980).

representation, dialogue and contestation' (2003, 11). Achebe's literary works span several decades and can be divided into two categories of thought: the old or anti-imperialist and the new or contemporary. In the anti-imperialist category are *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* (1964) which engage with attempts to recover and represent an African precolonial culture 'struggling to retain its integrity' in the face of 'the onslaught of colonialism' (ibid.). Achebe's anti-colonial novels seek to counter Western stereotypical positions that presented precolonial Africans as culture-less and barbaric, whilst also making the point that precolonial African societies were endowed with rich, sophisticated indigenous cultures with their own internal logic and imperfections. In an essay entitled "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," Achebe describes the African writer as a cultural nationalist who must, besides other postcolonial engagements, first strive to reinforce the fundamental notion that:

> African people did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans (and) that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty... they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain. (1973,8)

The main duty of the African writer, he continues, is to help the people of Africa regain their lost dignity by producing narratives that reconstruct the African identity and provide a historical account of the African experience in a language that defies imperialist traditions and escapes European domination.

Achebe's second set of novels, among which are *No longer at ease* (1960), *A Man of the people* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) however, represent a shift in the focus on the colonial past to more contemporary issues that border on what Gikandi calls the 'crisis of postcoloniality... a prophetic sense of African history, the attendant promise of decolonization and its failure or sense of discontent' (2003, 10). Corroborating this position, Achebe argues in "The African writer and the Biafran Cause" that the

contemporary African writer must be prepared to perform the functions of a social critic whose major preoccupation is to criticize and expose such contemporary societal ills as tribalism, injustice, inequality and corruption in all shapes and forms:

> It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant, like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames... If an artist is anything he is a human being with heightened sensitivities; he must be aware of the faintest nuances of injustice in human relations. The African writer cannot therefore be unaware of, or indifferent to, the monumental injustice which his people suffer. (1975, 78 - 79)

The ideological positions that these novels embody and the hybrid language in which they are expressed have not only endeared Achebe to the hearts of many, but have also conferred on him the status of the 'premier novelist on the discourse of African identity, nationalism and decolonization' (ibid.). To this end, his novels have become deeply embedded in the Nigerian (and larger African consciousness) and have now come to occupy what Jago Morrison describes as 'permanent landmarks in the high school curriculum' in Nigeria (2007, 127) and a 'staple of the college and university curriculum throughout the English-speaking world' (ibid., 1). What's more, they are taught and accepted as important sources of knowledge about the Nigerian literary, cultural and political contexts. Taking this further, Gikandi (2003) argues that *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of* God are better suited to academic inquisitions of a historical and anthropological nature on the basis that they engage with what Gakwandi describes as the pragmatic encounters between 'Western values and the ancestral values of their communities' (1977, 9). *No Longer at ease*, for its part, provides authentic insights into the societal changes that occurred as African nations broke loose from the stranglehold of colonial rule and attempted to establish their feet on post-independence grounds. *A man of the people*, for its part, speaks to the crisis of decolonization in African national

contexts, focussing for the most part on such contemporary issues as corruption as well as social inequalities between the masses and the ruling elite.

These literary works, it must be noted, not only provide insights into the socio-historical trajectories of national life, but also tell the story of the nation in a language that embodies the nation's socio-cultural and political realities. Though the language is, literally, a product of the nation's colonial history, which prioritized and institutionalized asymmetrical power relations between local and imperialist languages and cultures, it would subsequently self-reinvent and lend itself to nationalist purposes by not just constituting a rallying point for the nation's diverse cultures, but also neutralizing the unequal power relations that it was originally designed to perpetuate.

Besides engendering nationalist pride within the Nigerian (and African) literary and cultural landscape, Achebe's works have also had a tremendous influence on other postcolonial writers who broke into print after him. As Sickels (2011) has taught us, well established literary craftspeople, such as Cyprian Ekwensi and Nkem Nwankwo, and a host of others who published before and shortly after independence, all looked to Achebe for inspiration, drawing extensively from either or both his writing style and/or the ideological undercurrents that his oeuvres embody. Achebe's nationalist writings have equally projected a strong presence of achievement and pride that resonated profoundly among younger authors of Nigerian extraction who were born in the postcolonial era and were therefore excluded from much of the disruptiveness of British colonialism. Popularly referred to as Achebe's literary descendants, the likes of Chris Abani, Ben Okri, Chimamanda Adichie and many others whose novels have received accolades around the world have successfully leveraged their literary works to "speak" to the (Nigerian) nation about the nation in the language of the nation. Chris Abani, author of several books of poetry and novels that draw mainly from African oral traditions, for example, owes his writing style and the ideological convictions that underlie his literary works to Achebe's stylistic and ideological engagements, and has often ascribed his entrance into the literary scene and the success of his writings to the

language experiments and literary breakthroughs achieved by Achebe and his ilk.[142] Abani is particularly smitten by the way in which Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* engage with the encounter between Nigerian cultural traditions and Western values and goes on to admit that these novels 'had a profound influence on (him) for the same things that drew (him) to Dostoevsky, Steinbeck, Orwell and Baldwin.'[143] It is therefore not surprising that the cultural tropes that helped foreground the African imagination in Achebe's works – such as palm wine, tortoise, yam, chi, etc. – would feature extensively in Abani's *Graceland* and other literary masterpieces that have received global acclaim.

Achebe's legacy has had a considerable impact on yet another contemporary nationalist writer, Chimamanda Adichie. With award winning novels such as *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus* below her belt, Adichie admitted, in a 2005 interview, that her literary imagination was shaped for the most part by Achebe's philosophical engagements:

> Chinua Achebe will always be important to me because his work influenced not so much my style as my writing philosophy: reading him emboldened me, gave me permission to write about the things I knew well.[144]

Similar to Achebe's more recent novels, such as *A man of the people*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* takes on some of the contemporary issues dogging the inhabitants of the contemporary Nigerian nation-space, such as ethnic tensions, political strife as well as the pervasive influence of religion on society. The novel revolves around a pair of adolescents who grew up amidst political turmoil and whose strict upbringing forces them to abandon their past in favour of a present that encourages them to discover their true passion and harness the potentials therein to create a path for themselves in the

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[142] Jane Ciabattari "Was Chinua Achebe Africa's most influential author?" March 20, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140319-africas-most-influential-author (accessed June 14, 2017).
[143] Ibid.
[144]The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Website, http://www.cerep.ulg.ac.be/adichie/cnainterview.html (accessed July 2, 2017).

future. Similar to Okri's depiction of contemporary Nigerian realities through the life of the protagonist – Azaro – in *The Famished Road*, Adichie uses the story of the adolescents as a metaphor for postcolonial Nigerian realities by painting the picture of a nation whose inhabitants must look beyond the bitterness of the past as they chart their way towards future national objectives. Audrey Peters corroborates this position in an essay entitled "Issues of Personal and National Identity in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*:"

> Purple Hibiscus is not a "Biafra" novel. It does not attempt to retell the horrors experienced during that conflict. Adichie, however, does not shy away from her identity as a Nigerian but rather uses the history of Biafra to describe a new Nigeria. She uses children— who, by definition, have yet to achieve a fully defined identity—to explore the options of a national identity for Nigeria. Jaja and Kambili negotiate their own futures, which, while certainly not free from problems, are allegorical to the current state of Nigerian politics even as they maintain hope for a better future.[145]

The representation of contemporary Nigerian realities via the two adolescents' life's experiences no doubt informed Susan Andrade's view of *Purple Hibiscus* as a postcolonial novel that represents 'a politics of the family while quietly but clearly telling stories of the nation' (2011, 91).

Drawing from the foregoing discussions, we find that postcolonial Nigerian fiction has contributed to the forging of a national consciousness in a variety of ways. The Achebe-Soyinka-Okara generation of literary craftspeople forged an anti-imperialist consciousness for the Nigeria peoples by publishing works of fiction that undermined British socio-cultural and literary paradigms, and defied the asymmetrical power relations that were the brainchild of Western ideological traditions and practices. These novels, as we have already seen, shaped and took shape within the anti-imperialist

[145]Audery, Peters. 2012. "Issues of Personal and National Identity in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*," *The ALAN Review* 40, no. 1, https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v40n1/peters.html(accessed July 18, 2017).

nationalist sentiments that prevailed in the pre- and post-independence nation-space, and were mainly pre-occupied with the idea of fashioning an authentic Pan-Nigerian story and projecting a postcolonial identity that resonated across all Nigerian cultures and peoples. Building on the thematic and stylistic achievements of the older generation, the Okri-Abani-Adichie group has elected to produce novels that attempt to rally the citizenry around the contemporary issues, struggles and realities of the postcolony. By narrating the story of the contemporary nation in a language that synchronizes with its realities, this new generation of writers have created a resonance among the nation's diverse inhabitants that puts the universality of their postcolonial experiences and struggles on the front burner of social discourse. This resonance, for all intents and purposes, reinforces the notion of the nation as an imagined community in the sense that it fosters a sense of belonging among the nation's diverse cultures to a common cause and also inspires a communal attachment to a shared destiny and a collective future.

What's more, the production and dissemination of postcolonial Nigerian novels and their contributions to the making of the nation also recall the notion of "print capitalism" discussed in Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Print capitalism, Anderson argues, gave rise to the notion of modern European nations as imagined communities in the sense that it facilitated the production and proliferation of printed books and media in the vernacular, which process led to the emergence of a common language and discourse in society. Akin to the experiences of the modern European nation, Print Capitalism has lent itself to nation-building purposes in the Nigerian postcolony by facilitating the creation and dissemination of a national imagination through the postcolonial novel in a language that not only unifies the nation's diverse cultures, but is also attuned to its historical and contemporary realities.

As has been observed throughout this sub-section, the universal imagination or consciousness created and disseminated by postcolonial Nigerian novels has been largely restricted to Southern Nigerian communities due mainly to the peculiar nature

of the North's religious and linguistic traditions. Drawing from earlier discussions on religious colonialism and national consciousness, we find that Northern Nigerian communities have been excluded from much of the nation-building initiatives forged by postcolonial Nigerian novels due to a historical legacy of cultural and religious conservatism that ensured that the North was able to retain much of its religious and linguistic traditions during the colonial era and beyond. Much unlike the South which accepted British rule and welcomed the language and religion of the colonizers, the arrival of the British authorities would do little to change the status quo in the North whose local elite was more predisposed to closing the region's doors to the religion and language of the European invaders. The prevalent thinking among the Northern elites, Ali Mazrui reveals, was:

> Europeans were Christians
> Europeans spoke English
> Therefore Christians spoke English[146]

As discussed much earlier in the chapter, the idea that English was the language of the colonizers who were bent on Christianizing the majority Muslim North fuelled the decision on the part of the Northern Oligarchy to negotiate nominal British rule over the territory and extract a promise from the British colonialists that the religion of the North and the languages of its expression (Arabic and Hausa) would be left untouched. The consequences of these policy decisions for nation-building in the contemporary nation-space have been far-reaching. As Adegbija notes:

> This legacy of not tampering with Hausa and Arabic was inherited in Northern Nigeria by the British from the 19th century jihadists and is largely responsible for the significant role of Hausa as a lingua franca in most parts of Northern Nigeria today. (2004, 25-26)

[146] Quoted in Adeniran (1979, 61).

The disparity in the linguistic profiles of the two regions has meant that while the South[147] has largely benefitted from the unifying role of English as official language as well as its status as language of literary expression – and by extension, conveyor of the national imagination - the North has remained largely excluded from the national consciousness forged by the postcolonial novel. Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, a Nigerian novelist of Northern (Hausa) extraction, corroborates this position in an interview granted in 2015:

> The North of Nigeria is severely under-represented in the body of Nigerian literature. You know, it's a huge population and for this part not to have its story told, not to be represented in the canon of Nigerian literature, is atrocious. So I set out deliberately to address this issue. To write the kind of stories I want. And have the kind of characters I want to have in those stories, characters that have names like mine and speak like me and have similar beliefs and ideas like me, who would react to things the way I probably would.[148]

The quest to bring the Northern agenda to the limelight and create a space for the region's realities and experiences in the canon of Nigerian literatures fuelled the writing of what is arguably the region's most popular contemporary Europhone novels – Abubakar Ibrahim's award-winning *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2015) and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* (2015). The fact that the North's first Europhone novels were produced almost six decades after Southern Europhone writers broke into print speaks volume about the disparity between the socio-cultural imaginations intrinsic to the two regions, not leaving out the implications for national consciousness.

[147] The South, as highlighted in chapter one, comprises two of the country's largest three ethno-linguistic groups as well as hundreds of other minority groups.
[148]Emma Shercliff, "Q&A with author and Africa Writes guest: Abubakar Adam Ibrahim," *Africa Writes*, June 18, 2015, https://africainwords.com/2015/06/18/qa-with-author-and-africa-writes-guest-abubakar-adam-ibrahim/ (accessed July 1, 2017).

To fully appreciate the impact of Northern Nigerian Europhone novels on national consciousness, however, it is important to briefly discuss the thematic concerns that they embody and address. Set in a conservative Muslim-Hausa society that is awash with Islamic fundamentalist beliefs, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* chronicles the life of a fifty-five-year-old Muslim widow who is involved in a steamy, illicit love affair with a twenty-five-year-old gang leader and weed dealer. The clandestine affair, which clearly breaches the societal and religious norms of the Islamic North, draws condemnation from society when it eventually comes to light, unleashing a litany of outcomes that impacts both lovers in different ways. John's *Born on a Tuesday* addresses similar concerns, especially the socio-political and religious realities of contemporary Northern Nigeria. The novel chronicles the life of a young boy, Dantala, who, like many Northern youngsters from extremely poor homes, runs away from his family house in order to eke out a living for himself. He grows up amidst a gang of street boys on the streets of a community that is beset by political violence and religious fundamentalism, and finds himself at a crossroads: should he stick to a life of religious modesty and piety or toe the path of Islamic radicalism? In a nutshell, he must face his inner-truth and decide what kind of man he wants to grow up to become.

Looking beyond the thematic element of love and romance illuminated in *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, we find that the two novels tell a compelling story about the Northern legacy of Islamic fundamentalism as well as the socio-religious and political conflicts that have ravaged the region over the past several decades – conflicts that derive mostly from a legacy of religious othering, intolerance and disenfranchisement in which Northern-Muslim majority groups and the Southern and/or Christian minorities who live among them often collide and attempt to delegitimize each other on the basis of their religious and cultural alterity. What's more, akin to the postcolonial novels that came before them, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Born on a Tuesday* are interspersed with oral aesthetics and imagery intrinsic to the Hausa-Islamic culture as well as an array of other literary devices that impose a distinct local flavour and grant visibility to

the peculiar realities of the North. The novels therefore speak to the socio-cultural and political realities of the North in a variety of the national language that has been re-appropriated through various translation strategies to capture the sub-region's realities and secure for its people a place in the canon of Nigerian literatures. However, much unlike the novels produced in the South - which take the whole nation for their province, the postcolonial Northern novel, though written in the national language, addresses the specific concerns of the North, invariably creating for its inhabitants a sub-regional cultural imagination that not only derives from the logic of cultural othering, but is also underpinned by a historical legacy of Islamic orthodoxy in the region. In other words, while the contemporary Northern novel attempts to legitimize the Northern agenda by evoking the social, religious and political climate of the region, it does so – wittingly or unwittingly – through a process that undermines the universal imagination inspired by the postcolonial literatures produced by Southern writers.

Although the contextual otherness of the contemporary Northern novel raises important arguments in favour of the possibility of a system of multicultural nationalism,[149] it remains to be seen how this has played out in a fractured nation whose composing sub-regional/ethnic units have remained divided based on conflicting socio-religious allegiances and ideological commitments. The challenges emanating from these regional differences, it must be stressed, are exacerbated by a postcolonial quandary that is defined by the actions of both Southern and Northern literary craftspeople. While Southern writers have found a voice in nationalist discourses that are, on an ideological plane, largely devoid of ethno-religious allegiances, their Northern counterparts have elected to tell the story of a region that has created for itself a socio-religious sub-culture that is tied to supranational Islamic communities or movements with roots in the Arabian peninsula. In other words, while the South has resorted to anti-imperialist discourses geared towards creating a postcolonial national imagination, allegiance on the part of the majority Muslim

[149]By multicultural nationalism, we allude to a system that allows for manifestations of religious and cultural otherness within the national configuration.

Northern population to Islamic fundamentalist ideals that are shaped by forces operating outside the realm of the nation, as well as the role of these supranational forces in the creation of a Northern sub-culture have both prevented the inhabitants of the Nigerian nation from imagining themselves as members of the same community.

The discussion so far leads us to see postcolonial translation in the contemporary nation-space as double-edged: it facilitates nation-building by providing creative writers with the linguistic and cultural wherewithal with which to express the national agenda while at the same time it undermines the national configuration by allowing sub-regional cultural imaginations to thrive at the expense of national consciousness.

While orality and its influence on literary production seem to be front and center in the postcolonial struggles discussed heretofore, it must be stressed that the production of the Europhone novels that formed the bulk of our discussions were underpinned by such postcolonial translation techniques as idiomatization, vernacularization and semantic shift, to mention but a few. Translation can thus be said to have worked behind the scenes to facilitate a conflicting experience of nationhood within the contemporary nation-space that is deeply rooted in a legacy of religious and cultural alterity that dates back to the precolonial and colonial periods in the nation's history.

This focus of this research has been on the role of translation and orality on the forging of a national consciousness in Nigeria. However, the contributions of these two phenomena to the forging of a national consciousness in the nation-space cannot be isolated from the role of several other factors/agents, prominent among which are the Nigerian Army whose composition is somewhat representative of most of the nation's ethno-linguistic communities,[150] the National Youth Service Corps Scheme whose principal objective is to foster national unity and intercultural understanding among the

[150]See http://www.tribuneonlineng.com/recruitment-civilian-jtf-nigerian-army/ Accessed January 3, 2018.

nation's youth,[151] as well as numerous other equally important factors that are largely extraneous to this research.

[151] See http://www.nysc.gov.ng/aboutscheme.html Accessed January 3, 2018.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study has intersected the fields of translation studies, history, anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies and political science, in a bid to explore and expose the socio-historical dynamics of translation in Nigeria, the social conditions under which these translations have thrived, as well as their effects on the forging of a national consciousness in the various configurations of the nation. As demonstrated throughout the course of this study, Western conventions surrounding the theory and practice of translation, despite their major contributions to the field, have not sufficiently accounted for the cultural sensibilities that animate the practice of translation in national contexts that boast a vibrant historical and ongoing relationship with orality. To this end, this study has focused exclusively on non-conventional notions of translation that recognize and legitimize the ubiquitous existence and relevance of orality in the historical configurations of Nigerian nationhood. In our quest to shed more light on the historical trajectory of translation and its interplay with national consciousness in Nigeria, we have been guided by three major questions:

- What major forms of translation have occurred within the temporal boundaries that define Nigeria's history?
- Under what socio-cultural and political circumstances have these translations thrived? And,
- What are the effects of these translations on the forging of a national consciousness in the nation?

Responses to the first two questions were elaborated in chapters two, three and four, while chapter five dealt exclusively with the third research question.

In a bid to expose the dynamics of orality and translation in precolonial Nigerian communities, chapter two examined the political concept of patrimonialism, which it discussed in relation to its role in legitimizing the primacy of tradition over all other

social considerations in the precolonial nation. The precolonial nation, this chapter argued, owed its survival to a great many factors, including widespread belief in and adherence to tradition and the prevailing religious and cultural ethos. Our contention has also been that the cultural and religious practices that buoyed these communities were underlain by the omnipresent power of orality and translation. In keeping with the focus on non-conventional notions of translation, the chapter examined intralingual and intersemiotic translation processes in relation to their engagements with such important indigenous verbal art forms as Ifa divination and drum literature in the precolonial Oyo empire and argued in favour of the centrality of these meaning making processes to the reification and nourishment of the prevailing religious and cultural ethos. Operating within the realm of ifa divination, intralingual translation, the chapter further argued, helped to bridge the gap between supplicants and their deities who were known to "speak" through divination castings in veiled and mysterious (and therefore esoteric) language forms. Central to this system was the diviner through whose linguistic intermediation esoteric divination verses were conveyed across disparate cosmological realities or realms and "translated" into simpler versions of the language of their conception for the benefit of the supplicant. The practice of intralingual translation was also recorded in instances where supplicants such as fellow-diviners who were not strangers to the divination system served as agents of translation in whose minds the true meanings of the esoteric divination verses were reputed to unfold.

The chapter also examined the dynamics of intersemiotic translation as they unfolded within the framework of drum literature in the Oyo empire. Drum language and literature was an indispensable component of social and religious life in the Oyo empire where it lent itself to the purposes of formal communication, specialized divination sessions, community rituals, as well as such mundane cultural practices as naming ceremonies and marriages. It was argued that the beating of the drum during those religious or social events facilitated a kind of textual transfer between two different

semiotic modes: from an intangible, abstract form to a physical, tangible state of being. In other words, whenever the master-drummer tapped his drum, he automatically accessed the literary corpus associated with each event or ritual in its pristine, unadulterated form, unlocked it from its ethereal abstract existence and made it available to his receptor audience in the form of audible and discernible drum sounds. The conversion of these ethereal oral texts into codes discernible by the human ear in the form of drum beats, for all intents and purposes, constitutes an act of inter-semiotic translation.

While the previous chapter explored the dynamics of translation within the framework of a purely oral tradition, chapter three adopted the socio-historical approach in an attempt to expose the element of translation in some of the major anthropological, religious and literary texts that were produced within the context of the modernist ideology and the colonial tradition that it engendered. While most of the anthropological and religious translations that animated the colonial period in Nigeria's history were carried out in line with the tripartite colonial ideology of denigration, subjugation and exploitation, it was argued that pseudotranslations emerged during and towards the end of colonial rule as an ideological weapon for cultural and political emancipation, although some of these were denounced for reiterating Eurocentric assumptions and representations of African religiosity. Through a detailed study of the concept of colonial anthropology, the chapter examined the adoption by agents of the colonial state of such translation techniques as transcription and entextualization in their quest to understand native political systems and capture the cultural and religious practices that underpinned native communities, much to the benefit of the colonial enterprise. What's more, religious colonialism allowed for a large-scale codification of the languages and oral forms of local communities, which process facilitated the translation of religious texts into the vernaculars for the purposes of proselytism. The religious translations that emerged from this process were therefore such that undermined native religious icons and values, and legitimized the primacy of Western

religious paradigms over native traditions and beliefs, thereby relegating the latter to the realm of primitive thought. Weary and despondent as a result of this negative stereotyping, colonized peoples began to advocate for the representation of their cultures in a more positive light. In response to this call, local literary craftspeople sought to rewrite the Nigerian story by representing native beliefs and orality in written form, first in the local vernaculars and subsequently in the language of colonialist imposition. Our main contention in this chapter has been that translation was, for the most part, complicit in imperialist attempts at denigrating Nigerian cultures and subjecting its peoples to colonial purposes.

Chapter four examined the role of postcolonial translation strategies in capturing and exposing the Nigerian postcolony's past struggles for cultural emancipation and glorification, and current yearning for self-purification in view of such contemporaneous self-inflicted social realities as cultural, economic and political inequalities. The chapter revisited the politics of ethnographic representation in Africa and its centrality to the perpetuation of Western misrepresentations of African civility. It was argued that though translation played a significant role in perpetuating these stereotypes as well as reinforcing unequal power relations in the colonial state, it would, in the postcolonial era, lend itself to the purposes of resistance and emancipation. Through a literary analysis of select postcolonial novels, the chapter highlighted the ways in which Nigerian creative writers have resorted to the use of writing strategies that are fashioned to replace dehumanizing colonial narratives with more positive accounts that embrace and celebrate Nigerian humanity. These writing strategies depend on such postcolonial translation techniques as vernacularization, semantic shifts and idiomatization for their agency, and focus for the most part on the enscription of Nigerian oral aesthetics and realities in the language of colonialist imposition. As the desire to undo the unsavoury legacies of the colonial past tapered off decades after independence, the focus of Nigerian creative writing has increasingly shifted to the need to fashion a narrative that accounts for the challenges of

postcoloniality, which include but are not limited to the prospects and inadequacies of the process of decolonization.

The impact of translation on national consciousness within the historical configurations of the Nigerian nation was addressed in chapter five. The chapter highlighted the centrality of precolonial translation practices to the sustenance of those communal religious and cultural events that helped corral the nation's inhabitants into a relaxed form of social conformity and consciousness. In what can be best described as a monumental reversal of fortune, translation would serve the colonial agenda by uprooting the precolonial model of nationhood and installing in its place a national imagination that was steeped in British colonial paradigms and fashioned to meet the ends of colonial nationalism. Colonial nationalism, it was argued, sought to instill great pride in the tenets of colonialism by rallying colonized subjects around the imperialist logic of modern enlightenment and progress. The universal consciousness espoused by colonialism was however largely restricted to Southern Nigerian communities due to a historical legacy of Islamic fundamentalism and conservatism in the North that ensured that precolonial Northern political, religious and cultural traditions were left unscathed during the onslaught of British colonialism. Despite the fact of being brought into a political union with the South, the North was excluded for the most part from much of the national consciousness that was conceived, nurtured and imposed over much of the country during British colonial rule. The chapter also examined the ways in which translation subverted the collective consciousness inspired by British colonialism by fostering a counter-hegemonic, anti-imperialist ideology and discourse within the postcolony. It was argued that fictional representations of contemporary social realities by nation-oriented writers have spurred national texts, which have in turn created a resonance that continually fosters a sense of belonging among the nation's diverse cultures to a common cause, a shared destiny and a collective future. The prospects of achieving a truly national consciousness in the nation-space through the intervention of postcolonial novels that speak to the nation's realities have, however, been dashed by

the Northern reality of Islamic fundamentalism, which has, over the centuries, pulled the inhabitants of the territory into a regional sub-culture that is buoyed by ideological forces operating beyond the shores of the nation.

The research upon which this study rests made use of the socio-historical approach to translation theory and practice, pioneered by Judith Woodsworth. This approach privileges such questions as: what was translated, by whom and in what social and political contexts. The translation practices examined in the current study shaped and took shape within socio-cultural and political contexts that varied significantly from one time-period to the next. The major forms of translation that characterized the precolonial era – intralingual and intersemiotic translations – occurred within the context of patrimonialism, which legitimized the ascendancy of the prevailing religious and cultural ethos. Within this specific context, the texts to be translated were none other than esoteric oral narratives such as dirges, oracular poems, praise poems and the like, which required simplification or interpretation for the benefit of the non-initiate. One of the consequences of the non-conventional nature of these translation practices was the emergence of a unique set of language mediators, such as the diviner and the master-drummer, whose status and duties no doubt fall outside the margins of the conventional understanding of the translation profession. For its part, the period of British occupation was animated for the most part by the dynamics of Western imperialism, which ensured the subjugation of the natives and facilitated the implementation of policies that served the needs of the imperial centre. Much unlike the precolonial experience of language mediation, colonial translation practice mostly entailed the representation of Nigerian orality in a way that undermined indigenous religious and cultural institutions and paradigms. The translators therefore included a host of native and non-native professionals who were sympathetic to the redemptive mission and modernist aspirations of the colonial regime, such as anthropologists, colonial officers and missionaries. The postcolonial era, as demonstrated in this study, has played host to anti-colonial, counter-hegemonic discourses that have laid the

groundwork for the construction of a hybrid cultural identity in the Nigerian postcolony. The fictional representation or "translation" of Nigerian orality and social realities during this period has birthed a new literary movement that has at its forefront agents of translation such as Nigerian Europhone writers.

Although this study has not paid much attention to the dynamics of interlingual translation in Nigeria, it acknowledges nonetheless that the interlingual assortment of translation has permeated the nation-space in several ways. In precolonial Nigeria, for instance, it served the purpose of fostering intercultural communication and dialogue among disparate communities, while in the colonial state, it facilitated the representation of Nigerian orality in the language of colonialist imposition and also (as highlighted in chapter three) proved particularly useful to Christian missionaries who used it to bring the Gospel closer to the colonized in their native languages. In the postcolonial era, it has continued to lend itself to useful purposes in the area of international relations, especially within the current context of globalization. However, save for occasional allusions to its influence on society within the context of religious colonialism, interlingual translation has been deliberately excluded from this study due to the fact that we have found its intralingual and intersemiotic counterparts, as well as other non-conventional translation techniques such as entextualization, transcription, vernacularization and idiomatization better suited to the theoretical and pragmatic insights examined in this research.

Besides the deliberate focus on non-conventional notions of translation, this study has also opened our eyes to new and exciting ways in which nationalism can be conceived. Looking beyond the conventional take on nationalism as a political ideology or a socio-political movement, the current study has flirted with the idea of nationalism as a symbolic, psychological notion of belonging, in an attempt to show the ways in which orality can be appropriated through various translation strategies to whip up nationalist concerns or sentiments, which in turn create a resonance that binds the diverse inhabitants of a social space together in a symbolic union. Though cultural (or even

linguistic) affiliations may differ, the feeling of attachment to a common cause, as well as the fact of having a shared destiny and a collective future are often enough to make formerly disparate peoples begin to imagine themselves as part of the same community. Herein lies the major contribution that Anderson's notion of the nation as an imagined community brings to this study.

The current study could have benefitted from several other fascinating theoretical and pragmatic insights, many of which have been excluded either due to space constraints or for operational reasons. There is, for instance, the issue of faithfulness in divination-related intralingual translation processes, which raises questions as to whether the diviner's "translations" could always be trusted to be true representations of the esoteric messages being conveyed. This evokes numerous other related issues such as the extent to which the divination system protected supplicants from manipulation and subjective interpretations by diviner-translators with sinister motives. It will also be interesting to uncover what safeguards existed to check the excesses of overzealous or crooked diviner-translators, as well as the ramifications of these experiences for social cohesion and national consciousness in the precolonial nation-space.

One other worthy candidate for further academic inquisition is the notion of intersemiotic translation in sub-Saharan Africa. Because the socio-historical and cultural approach was found to be better suited to the objectives of the current study, a lot of emphasis was placed on empirical evidence of drum literature from anthropological works, as well as the cultural ramifications of the intersemiotic translation of drum messages within the precolonial nation-space. Intersemiotic meaning-making processes deserve special treatment in a separate study that is dedicated to the linguistic processes involved in textual transfer across semiotic modes, as well as their interactions with the cultural dynamics that animate both oralate and literate communities. Future research endeavours will therefore benefit from an approach that places emphasis on the linguistic underpinnings of intersemiotic translations of African orality.

What's more, in order to strike the right balance between the Southern and Northern Nigerian realities, it will also be beneficial to look into the experience of religious colonialism in the Islamic North, especially the role of translation in the Islamization of the North between the fourteenth century and the decades leading up to the arrival of British colonial administrators. Given the multiplicity of ethno-cultural units within the nation-space, future research endeavours could, for instance, benefit from an approach that seeks to further deconstruct the national narrative in a way that relocates the knowledge gained in this study from its "national" boundaries to an even more diverse platform that accounts for various sub-regional experiences of language mediation.

Lastly, it must be stressed that our treatise on the effects of translation on national consciousness in Nigeria is only a first step to a wider research initiative. Possible areas for further studies may include textual and discourse analyses of the speeches and writings of nation-oriented postcolonial citizens with a view to determining the extent to which postcolonial translation strategies have permeated the production of texts that fall outside the purview of the Nigerian Europhone novel, as well as the impact of these texts on nation-building. Within this specific scheme of thought, the use of language in contemporary pop culture, as well as cinematic representations of Nigerian thought will make for worthy case-studies, given the national recognition and global fame that the Nigerian Nollywood and music industries have garnered over the last two decades.

This study is by no means exhaustive as it only attempts to address a fraction of the Nigerian story as it has unfolded over the past several centuries. The translation practices discussed herein are therefore representative of some of the numerous possibilities or occurrences of translation that have animated the nation-space. The major contribution of the current study to knowledge, however, lies in its treatment of some of those translation practices that go against the grain of dominant discourse on translation but are nonetheless central to the making of the Nigerian nation. In doing this, the study brings to the fore some of the major socio-cultural and political issues that have impacted the theory and practice of translation in decolonizing multicultural

contexts – such as Nigeria – that boast a historical and ongoing relationship with orality. Besides highlighting those non-conventional, extra-linguistic translation practices and phenomena that help to authenticate the living traditions of both the historical and contemporary nation-space, this study also attempts to foreground a causal relationship between translation and nationalism in a way that reinforces and expands our understanding of Anderson's notion of the nation as an "imagined community." The current study, it must be stressed, does not purport to claim that translation was solely responsible for the manifestations of nationalism that the nation has experienced over the last two or more centuries. Rather, our contention has been that translation has both aided and undermined the forging of a national consciousness in the historical configurations of the nation-space. While this interdisciplinary study may not have addressed all the issues that the Nigerian experience of translation and nationhood raises, it is our hope that the theoretical and pragmatic insights provided herein will open pathways for future academic inquisitions into this fascinating but understudied subject-matter.

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