

**Democratic omen and the myth of nation-building in Abdullahi  
Abubakar's *A new weft in the loom***

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**Abstract**

*Since most African nations became independent, democratic governance has been a matter of experiment because of the unpalatable experience of the continent. The continent's democratic journey has been overstretched with no good results to show for it. Africans are yet to distinguish between religious affiliation and partisan politics on the one hand and ethnicity and politics on the other. In fact, the interplay of religion, ethnicity and democracy is not only monstrously practised; the people usually put them in the front burner in matters of election and leadership. This paper x-rays democratic indices of most African nations, south of Sahara and apprehends religion and ethnicity as practices militating against democratic advancement. Using the creative platform and literary criticism, the paper sources its data from Abdullahi Abubakar's *A New Weft in the Loom* to illuminate and analyse the polity via Nigeria's democratic processes by her heterogeneous citizenry. The paper also focuses on Nigeria as Africa's most populous nation. The study adopts New Historicism to put into contextual perspectives the democratic experiments of the nation. The finding of the paper is that among other variables, as long as nations of Africa are able to fix their democratic practices, the much sought for development would be accelerated and sustained. It is recommended that critical engagement of the players and interrogation of the polity will help bring about the expected democratic reforms and productive ethno-religious tendencies.*

**Key Words:** Democracy, Religion, Ethnicity, Literature, Criticism

**Introduction**

A newspaper columnist once described Nigeria as a movie where projects and policies geared towards nation-building are usually abandoned midway. Such movie, with its not-too-pleasant scenes, I reckon are pointers to the dilapidated social and economic structures of the nation. In his words, Nnimo Bassey writes "Nigeria is a movie: a saga in abandoned babies, abandoned projects, abandoned responsibilities, abandoned economy; abandoned you and me."<sup>1</sup>

Invariably, Nigeria's wobble growth is symptomatic of the fate of many third world countries, particularly the on the African continent. From Ghana to Togo, Niger to Sudan, Ivory Coast to Senegal, it has been a tale of political and

<sup>1</sup> Bassey Nnimo "Nigeria is a Movie" The Guardian, Sunday, December 25, 1983, 8.



economic woes pervading the continent. From whatever angle or region we peep into the syndrome, using the socio-economic indices and

political variables, the symptoms of arrested progress are palpable. In terms of democratic governance, there is the forward-backward movement which deprives these nation states stability and coordinated leap and maturity. The signs are ominous as developmental measures are devoid of global reckoning as hallmarks of political independence which African continent could be said to have proudly attained since 1957. A number of factors have been identified by analysts and scholars as the viral infection eating deep into the fabric of development and geometry of growth. Ade Ajayi writing on development raises a poser about where it hurts in Africa.

Indeed, it is said that for five decades we have been in an age of Development in which you are either developed or underdeveloped. The attempt to insert an intermediate stage of "developing" has been recognised as mere quibbling in the sense that everybody is developing, the developed far more than the underdeveloped.

In other words, we need to query some of the factors as being suspect in our attempt to unravel the drawbacks in Africa's march toward political and economic greatness. Most African states are blessed with mineral resources rich enough to accelerate their economies if the accruable wealth is prudently managed. But Ayo Banjo blames the ineffectual impact of exploration and sales of mineral deposits on excessive materialism which seems to afflict the citizenry mainly because the government could not produce good citizens.

Inevitably, the accumulation of sufficient wealth to enable the citizen to keep his head above water takes precedence over everything else. Materialism comes to rule the citizen's life, pushing into the periphery any concern for strict behaviour. Thus the roots of obsessive materialism in the modern day have to be traced very clearly to the inability of a government to ensure the minimum material comforts for the citizen. The resulting disequilibrium between materialism and morality is further aggravated by a rat race in which conspicuous consumption becomes glorified, further intensifying the spiral of obsessive materialism. Materialism is a phenomenon that every society in the world has to cope with and it is, naturally exacerbated by the amount of wealth in the society and methods of distribution of wealth.<sup>2</sup>

The African continent has celebrated over six decades (60years) of independence. Most nations of Africa have had thirty to forty years of

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<sup>2</sup> Ade Ajayi "Development is About People". (ed) Ayo Banjo Ibadan: Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2000, 14.

independence. Unfortunately, the continent is yet to achieve an appreciable leap from infancy to adulthood and from dependence to independence. Palpably, it is an era of inadequacy or total lack to feed the citizenry. Instead, hunger and wastage are rife with the attendant poverty and misery.<sup>3</sup>

Africa's developmental setback can also be blamed on the meddlesomeness of the erstwhile colonial masters in the cloak of neocolonialism. This is palpable in the external economic policies and internal politics being influenced by the western world. Nigeria and most

African countries have had and still being under the tutelage of IMF, World bank, UNO etc. The introduction of SAP, IMF loan facilities etc. which could not be properly and prudently managed have untold hardship on the citizenry. It also affects the election or appointment of leaders, the process which many believe is being influenced by the super powers of the west.

Plausible and symptomatic as these indices may be and it is not out of place to rationalize on the parameters with regards to the socio-economic quagmire plaguing the African nation states, it is the contention of this paper that there are other genuine variables which should be investigated. Particularly, the paper interrogates political attitudes, ethnic politics and religious sentiments from the perspective of literary criticism for the interpretation and illumination of the unsavory developmental trends. The paper identifies that there is a national psychic pendulum or a central orbit which has the push and pull control and to which all palpable factors are tied. In this regard, Abdullahi Abubakar's *A New Weft in the Loom* offers insights into the political and ethno-religious practices that bedevil the nation's democratic advancement and sustained nation-building.

### New Historicism

An investigation of democratic journey via ethnic groupings and religious biases of the citizens of nation states in Africa or Africa, south of Sahara reveals an unpleasant cyclic chaotic rotund driving the nation's affairs. Such study requires historical excursion and insightful prognosis into the future using the current democratic experiences. As such, a critical approach to the criticism of the unethical or undemocratic behaviours of the nations would yield a far reaching realistic and pragmatic panacea. In this instance, New Historicism has been adopted to illuminate the analysis and application of the creative exposition obtainable in Abdullahi Abubakar's *A New Weft in the Loom*. The theory will help us put in historical perspective democratic struggles and ethno-religious crises so far witnessed all over the continent using Nigeria as the prototype. The rationale for the adoption of New Historicism stems from its plausible tenets which provide insights into socio-political events then and now in relation to literary probing.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Banjo Ayo, *The Wages of Obsessive Materialism* (ed) Olatunji Oloruntimehin Ibadan: Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2008, 5.

<sup>4</sup> .Abdullahi, Abubakar *A New Weft in the Loom*:(Ilorin: UNILORIN PRESS. Department of Performing Arts , University of Ilorin. 2018.

New Historicism employs history, text and context using a literary approach in explaining or analyzing events. Proponents of the theory include Michael Foucault, Stephen Greenblatt, Peter Barry, among others. The characteristics or tenets of the theory encompasses the life of the author, his background and psychology which should be taken into account in the criticism of a text. The theory historicises experiences or events as residues left behind by the original party from where new discoveries are made . in other words, there should be a recourse to the past by bringing focus to the current experience using imaginative and realistic methods.

It contends that literature should be studied from the interface of history and social reality as evident in socio-political, religious and ethnic matters. It also relates the form and context of African plays as capable of presenting issues bordering on political, ethnic and religious experiences of the people. In a nutshell, New Historicism explores the symbiosis that exists between culture and literature on the one hand, and the interrelationship which exists between religious beliefs and ethnic biases among others.

Laden adds his voice that

The critical practice of New Historicism is a model of "literary" history whose 'literariness' lies in bringing imaginative operations closer to the surface of non-literary texts and briefly describes some of the practices leading literary features and strategies.

New Historicism can also be said to be sociological as a writer harnesses all manners of societal or people's experiences for creative production. The ultimate thrust of the theory is to pass comment on societal experiences which may be political, historical, religious, economic, and environmental, among others. New Historicism relates the real to the imagined; the mundane to the religious or spiritual; the historical to the current; the cultural to the political, the ethnic to the societal- all in finding meaning to the socio-economic and political developments whether benevolent or malevolent. While Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* comments on reading text from historical antecedents, Stephen locates the cultural and linguistic characteristics of a particular period as imperative to understanding the tenet of the theory.

New Historicism points to the culturally specific nature of text as products of particular and discursive formation while viewing reality –history as itself mediated by linguistic codes which is impossible for the critic historian to bypass in the recuperation of past culture.

To the proponents of the theory, a literary text is not an autonomous material but that which functions or can be interpreted in relation to other aesthetics- culture, religion, politics, economy or business etc. This position is corroborated by Abrams that the literary text must interchange with other contextual

components arising from a network of institutions. The theory embraces non-literary text or events on medicine, rhetoric, economics, history, anthropology in other to help to expand the frontiers of meaning. In this way, literature is seen as a product of many <sup>5</sup>

voices or consciousness; a critical appraisal of history and a vision for society. The theory has it that the past is knowable and literature with its critical method can help interpret the present with the benefit of knowing what has gone before. Abdullahi Abubakar's *A New Weft in the Loom* will be x-rayed from historical(events and myths), political(democracy and governance), and realistic point of view (socio-economic developments). Olu Obafemi's elucidation on literature buttresses the point.

At the nexus of any authentic search for self-apprehension and self-actualization by any people , any nation, and through culture, is literature which is the sole means of its expression and a system embedded in the environment of a civilization, culture, and society. Literature tells a story of a nation better than history or any other forms of expression. Language is its poetics, its narrative vehicle. And it is through literature and language, the thesaurus of conscience available to man recording its mores, its joy and sorrows, its morals, ethics and values, its accomplishments and failings, that culture remains the social and spiritual soul of a nation. This is why, in any nation, and in the particular experience of Nigeria, the Nigerian writers have put their songs and stories at their service of society as long as politicians let them be. (4)

The events reconstructed dramatically in the play text are products of history with a heavy bearing on the democratic experience of Nigeria nay Africa taking into consideration political behaviour of the citizenry especially the elite, ethno-religious associations and their negative or positive attitudes toward governance or political leadership of their country.

### Democratic Icons and Campaign Diatribe

Abdullahi Abubakar in *A New Weft in the Loom* theatrically presents a political orchestration marked by campaign diatribe as a build up to voting exercise ahead of the nation. The dramatic action is resplendent of real life political activities being witnessed periodically in most parts of Africa and of course, the world over where democratic rule is embraced. In a Abdullahi Abubakar's *A*

<sup>5</sup>. Chung-Hsiung Laden "Recuperating the Archive: Anecdotal Evidence and Questions of Historical Realism" *Poetics Today*, 2004, 1-28

6. Peter, Barry *Beginning Theory* Manchester: UK: University Press. 1995.

7..Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning : From More to Shakespeare* Chicago: U of Chicago. 1980.

8. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

*New Weft in the Loom* Olu Obafemi theatrical sense, the play revolves around the national stage of Nigeria as the platform welcomes political gladiators from the major ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria. The audience is equally diverse and diluted as party candidates who jostle for the presidential seat have their different ethnic supporters following them. The audience chant songs of praises and political accolades and slogan that reflect their divergent ethnic background in favour of their candidates.<sup>6</sup>

There are four contestants from the four prominent regions of East, North, West and Mid-West. They are Azubike, Barmini Oworonsoki and Osadebe reflecting Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Niger Delta cultural names and ethnic groups. The choice of words, and accent on the one hand and the mode of dressing on the other hand capture the ethnic tongues that they represent. Like the politicians in real life, the object of competition here is the presidency, the seat of power at the centre. As each candidate takes turn to marshal his party's manifestoes, there is an unmistakable manifestation of ethnic Idiosyncrasy, political sentiment and religious colouration in their speeches. For instance, there are songs in their praises by their supporters as we get to know this through Dany, who double up as narrator and audience.

**DANY:** (joins in the dance, boastfully) Wetin I tell you? I no be small man for politics. This na the group from the East  
(song: Onye bu Eze, na Nigeria, eh

Igbo bu Eze, eh x 3

(Oworonsoki moves to one side of the stage with contempt as the Akoro (Igbo) dancers take the centre stage)  
(The Algaita music ushers in Barmini).

A ranan zabe wa zamu so? ) 4x

A ranan zabe sai Arewa

Ah zamy zabi Barnin

A rana zabe wa za muso?

The drummers and dancers form the entourage of a party man (Oworonsoki) who is gorgeously dressed)

Oworonsoki yo won se bosu lo yo (4x)

Asese le osu

Abara tin tin Oworonsoki yo

Won se b'osu loyo

Bata ti owo

Olowo f'ara mo'lowo

Ewu ti o wo

Olowo jogun idera,

Fila ti ode

Suku-suku bambam

Eni to ba wu kobe

Oworonisoki yo

<sup>6</sup> .Lynn, Steve. *Text and Context: Writing about Literature with Critical Theory* New York: Harper Press, 1994.

9.Olu, Obafemi "Literacy and Nigerian Polity: Issues of Language, Literature and Education". *Journal of Science& Humanities* vol.1 No.1 2006, 1-10

Won se b'osu loyo  
(As Dany opens his mouth to address the people, Osadebe  
appears with his Owigiri dancers).  
Do do do (2ce)  
Ogbene mi ye ruwe  
Do do ogbene do.

From the songs rendered by party supporters of the four (4) candidates, the audience are fed with satire and sarcastic comments, outright abusive words mockery and pride. As the candidates are: Oworonsoki is Yoruba, Azubike is Igbo, Barmini is Hausa while Osadebe is Delta. With this display, can't we say democracy as at work? The big politicking is shrouded in their mouthing of the country's unity and each candidate's pretentious resolve or declaration to hold the nation together with his last drop of blood.

The narration / drama continues:

*(DANY: Thank you .... thank you very plentiful. We don have all the four corners wey make this Obodo Country tanda. Now make we begin the show. We go hear the kind soup wey each aspirant go cook for us (the crowd hails him). Na Chief Azubike go begin).*

Consider the playwright's choice of words here: SHOW (as emphasized by me) soup, cook, four corners of the country – representing four major ethnic groups – and their “soup” means “sweet words”, “campaign promises” etc.

Now the candidates take turn to address the audience:

**Azubike:** Igbo Kwenu!

Chorus: Ihia

**Azubike:** Nigeria Kewenu!

Chorus: Ihia

**Azubike:** Umu Nigeria Kwezionnu

Chorus: Oooh!

***Azubike:** Industry is the hallmark of development and my people are renowned for industry; they are naturally endowed. Therefore to advance the course of this nation, I, Azubike, Eze, ego one of Imuna, present myself as a presidential candidate to champion the herculean task.*

**Osadebe:** [Looks serious as he adjusts his beads and clears his throat]

Osadebe, wado wado

South, South, wado wado

Our Country, wado wado

***Osadebe:** Some people overprize themselves. It is not their fault; when a tenant overstays in a house, he challenges the landlord. I want to believe everybody knows his father's door step (murmuring is heard from Azubike's side). On the issue of presidential candidate, we produce the highest percentage of the nation's wealth inspite of the risks involved, the South – South has contributed immensely to the level the nation has*

*reached today more than anyone can dispute. But what do we have in return? Poverty! Pollution? ... and there are half hearted efforts to rescue the situation ... only the man with an itching back knows where to scratch. Therefore, as the son of the soil and a human rights activist, who believes in justice for all, I donate myself for the job of riding this country of injustice, corruption and corrupt leadership.*

**[DANY:** (smiling) Alright, Alright ... [to the integrated audience] We tin I tell una? You don dey smell the aroma from our party's pot. Now it is the turn of our candidate from the North. [Barmini gets up gracefully with a nasal sound of ayirrrr ... and a song].

Presidency, sai Arewa

Ah, zamu zabi Barmi

Presidency, sai Arewa

**Barmini:** *[Contemptuously] Mmm ... my people! Having listened to my brothers, I begin to wonder what democracy is all about. I ask myself! "is it about sentiments or about number?" As a populous region that has found unity in ethnic and religious diversities, the North has been the source of the nation's unity (shouts). This achievement is the result of our ingenuity as born leaders. Those who feel they could do better (pointing at Oworonsoki) we are all witnesses to the gradual degeneration of democracy into autocracy. [Furious, Oworonsoki moves towards Barmini. But his drummer immediately calms him down]*

**Oworonosoki:** *I am really surprised when I heard somebody attributes the unity of the nation to his people and the other claiming to have a resource, it is one thing to have material resource and another to possess the human resource to manage it. My people are intellectuals and technocrats who manage human and natural resources. (Contemptuously) it could be recalled that when my brothers, here [referring to Azubike and Barmini] were at each other's throats for thirty months, my people came to the rescue. [pp. 10 – 15]*

The above quoted speeches made by the presidential election candidates are rich and suspect as coming from the four aspirants from the four regions of Nigeria. From their campaign we get to know about the human and material resources of the nation – the most populous nation. In Africa of course, with the size of each region, Nigeria can produce four other bigger nations. Also, given the heterogeneous associations, Nigeria is not a nation state but a country – (committee of nations). Nigeria could not manage its resources for the benefit of her citizenry.

There is a serious inter-ethnic rivalry arising from the urge to dominate one another. The democratic journey is awash with bitterness, thuggery, acrimony and ethno – religious sentiments.



Even from the campaign, there are tell-tale signs of discord and bitter rivalry. The political context is ominous and the citizens are the worst for it. Expectedly the crises that followed the campaign is an eyesore and quite undemocratic. Mayhem is let loose on the electorates as everybody scampers for safety. What we witness:

*Thugs from all the sides seize the opportunity to settle old scores. After a relative calm, a ballot box is brought out for voting. Only a few people cast their votes before a gun-shot is heard. The place turns rowdy. There are distress calls in the various languages. The gun men carry the ballot box. As the four party men make to escape through the other exit led by Dany, a shrill voice comes from the back stage shouting "STOP" (P.16)*

The playwright is not yet done with his dramatic display of the mess with which politicians have been making of democracy and its rules. The hallmark of democratic rule is good governance as may be evident of healthy living guaranteed by viable economy, job opportunities, affordable and qualitative health care delivery, good transportation system, accessible potable water and constant electricity supply, security of life and property, quality and accessible educational system among others. In Nigeria and many African countries, the reverse has been the case as citizens groan under abject poverty, excruciating pain of inflation and joblessness, insecurity, incessant terrorist strikes and so on. Hunger and famine have taken over the land and this has been aggravated by outbreak of different diseases almost periodically.

From the conversation between Delu and Saude from the Northern part of the country (pp. 21), The Amir has just sent out his town crier to notify his subject's that they should assemble at his palace in a bid to find solution to myriad of problems ravaging their community. A cleric has been summoned to help ask Allah or Rauhan about the solution to the problems.

*[Sankira, enters beating a gong or to draw the attention in every you of cotton and groundnut we produced, the Amir and his men make huge profits]. of passers- by. At intervals, he makes the following announcement: the Amir directs that everyone, male or female should converge at the fada, immediately. Mallam Zaina who has just come out from seclusion (halwa) has a good tiding for us". People begin to move towards the palace. Delu and Saude converse on their way.*

In their conversation, Delu hints that there is hunger in the land and this happens because the leaders have collaborated with foreigners to sell their resources.

*DELU: (dejectedly) I told you, Saude that this mad rush for the tingling corns would produce a blind child. I knew there would*

*be trouble when we decided to rob the stomach and pay the hungry foreign machines.*

**SAUDE:** *(with nostalgic) imagine, mama na, it is just this year that the rains fail us and we are already scrambling for crumbs. And Saude responding:*

**SAUDE:** *From the Amir and his cohorts who hoard the aids they collect from their white friends.*

**DELU:** *Is it not a well planned coup against us, the masses? We feed their machines and we are now at their mercies to feed our stomach. I was told in every ton of cotton and groundnut we produced, the Amir and his men make huge profits.*

**SAUDE:** *(Surprised) And who bears the brunt?*

**DELU:** *We, women, of course bear the brunt ...*

*the crying children, the bleating animals, the shouting husbands, the sniffing neighbours ... name it.*

This is the Northern part of the country of Nigeria. The situation of things has gone bad that a spiritualist who was in seclusion for months is being contracted to unravel and proffer solution to the problem. Eventually, the Amir is found wanting and he is urged to make sacrifice which his daughter, Salama to carry by embarking on a mission to a strange land. But this is an impossibility for the Amir who orders that everybody leaves the palace including Mallam Zainu, the cleric in annoyance. From the Western part, we have two hunters who are at each others throat with their followers. They are Oluode Okeodo and Oluode Isaleodo. They engage in battle of words, chanting incantations over who possesses the land as the superior<sup>7</sup>

From the Eastern part comes the crying voice of women carrying their afflicted babies without solution in sight (p. 36). There are terrifying incidents manifesting in different parts of the country brought about by the ineptitude, corruption and undemocratic actions of the political class. But for the intervention of the mythic figures such as Mallam Zainu. (North) Orunmila (West), Edho Arne (South east) all led by the priestess, the people would have perished in hunger and starvation. This rescue is further buttressed through accountability interface with legends and deities on one hand and the political gladiators and the citizenry on the other.<sup>8</sup>

### Interface of Hope

All hope is not lost for Africa as her democratic experiment can get better and sustained. This hope mission is contained the playwright's redemptive interface between the current political gladiators and their mythic predecessors. In proffering solutions to the unedifying democratic journey of Nigeria, Abubakar provides a dramatic interface between the current crop of politicians and their iconic forebears. It is a conscientious reflection of the symptomatic democratic

<sup>7</sup> Abdullahi, Abubakar *A New Weft in the Loom*: (Ilorin: UNILORIN PRESS. Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. 2018, (pp. 27 – 32).

<sup>8</sup> Abdullahi, Abubakar *A New Weft in the Loom*: (Ilorin: UNILORIN PRESS. Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. 2018.

indices for a country that got her independence in 1960 and a continent that began a new journey in 1957. The current politicians are rotten and wayward as against their much more disciplined forebears.

In Nigeria of yesteryears when regional governments of east, west, north and mid west were in place, the playwright recalls this past in comparison with the new Nigeria. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was premier of western region; Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto was premier of Northern region, and Nnamdi Azikwe in the east and Sam Opara in the Midwest. The regional democratic journey had produced benevolent government marking the golden era of Nigeria. There were remarkable achievements as pioneering efforts geared towards nation-building and developments. Obafemi Awolowo led government was credited with the establishment of 1<sup>st</sup> television station in Africa, Free Education Programme, and setting up of Odua Investment among others. Sir Ahmadu Bello too established the now Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the Arewa Investments among others. The east too witnessed tremendous development such as University of Nigeria, Nsukka etc. The hallmark of their governance was either meticulous planning or pragmatic leadership.

The democratic reforms cum political journey of Nigeria are far from redeeming. These virtues of leadership exhibited by the political leaders of the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic have been jettisoned by the new politicians and leaders. Only a few of them are worthy of leadership as democrats. Instead of deepening democratic reforms and good governance in African nations presently, what the citizenry and the rest of the world witness now are inconclusive elections, election violence, political thuggery, annihilation of political opponents and so on. Governance in these nations yields nothing better than unemployment, corruption, youth restiveness, terrorism, kidnapping, economic sabotage, militarism, sit-tight syndrome among others.

In the dramatic interface, the playwright produces the following scenes and interrogation. I reproduce the interface here in full for purpose of providing textual evidential details. The Earth Priestess, one of the mythic figures presides: the first dramatic encounter or dialogue takes place between two southerners of the defunct western region.

**OBAWO:** (for AWOLOWO) *and they are a lot of issue to be clarified { some people hail him: "ore mekunnu" he calls Oworonsoki to step forward} I remember enrolling you in school with others to ensure that everyone had access to education. My hope was that with sound education there will be decorum and respect for others' views which are mainstays of democracy. Why then do you become so intolerant to a point of eliminating contenders, including those of your own blood?*

**OWORONSOKI:** *{jittery} I didn't mean to...I just wanted to harass them. It was ...my boys...they were over charge.*

**OBAWO:** *that's another angle. If I had raise you and your generation as tugs, would you have risen to this level.*

**OWORONSOKI:** {dubiously} during your time too, sir, there was 'wetie'. {they all freeze, as lights come on three thugs with a gallon of petrol and matches in a hot chase of their victim. They catch up with him and set ablaze}

**OBAWO:** that was a result of ignorance which I spent all my time wiping out. People over reacted to what they felt was injustice and allowed anger to consume them. But you breed people to violently engender injustice.

The second conversation is resplendent of the eastern Nigeria:

**KIZ:** (for AZIKWE){clear his throat. Raises his hand to respond to shout of 'kiz of Africa' Osadebe, Osadebe{ comes forward} you are a leader of the vanguard that cries foul over the deterioration ecological condition of the southern part. You even give underground support to the violent reaction of the youth.

**OSADEBE:** {uncomfortably} I only want the central government to pay more attention to the plights of the common people in the south.

**KIZ:** did you not head a commission that is specially to alleviate some of the problems? How far did you go in doing that?

**OSADEBE:** {confused now} I... tried. But the fund were paltry

**KIZ:** at least there ought to have been an impact, no matter how little. Unity, which is my legacy, can only strive with justice.

**OSADEBE:** the chiefs and elders decide how money was spent...

**KIZ:** by catering for the interest of the few?

**OSADEBE:** I tried my best...

**KIZ:** Are you fair to this people you want to rule?

**CROWD:** Na God go punish all of una

And now from the northern region:

**SADAU:** (for SARDAUNA) Barmini. He adjust his alkebba as people "Sarkin yaki"} during my time, I united the north and created a north without biases. Why the recent advanced political hooligalism coasted with religion.

**BARMINI:** you mean Boko Haram?

**SADAU:** you should know better.

**BARMINI:** it is the people from the nearby towns.

**SADAU:** who sponsor and coordinate their activities, especially when elections or appointment to posts are near?

**BARMINI:** we, politicians, only rouse those sentiments to gain peoples sympathy. We never ask them to fight

**SADUA:** *But you usually lie to them about issues affecting their welfare when actually is your interests you sensitize them to protect. After using them, don't you wine and dine with your so called professed enemies from the south?*

**BARMINI:** *{defensively} it is politics*

**SADAU:** *but you all cooperate with one another to rob the poor.*

**BARMINI:** *we rob them to pay them back during the campaigns. We the politician find a common front in that, sir.*

**SADAU:** *that is why you have turned all of them into beggars, waiting at the door of offices, your gates and the streets rather than assisting them grow as I did to you.*

**BARMINI:** *the people themselves have turned lazy, sir. They wait for you even to your chagrin.*

**SADAU:** *You made them so by refusing to provide the necessary infrastructure and tools for them to work.*

The moderator now turns to the electorate symbolically represented here by Dany and Dende

**LEBAWA:** *thank you, fellow compatriots. {the crows shouts: the golden voice}...no doubt, we are all touched and highly worried at the turn of events after all we had to sacrifice. I have heard my colleagues chastise our successors as leaders. But the masses have contributed also, either through their inaction or hero worshipping.*

**DENDE:** *{trying to exonerate himself} some of us do talk, but no one listens.*

**LEBAWA:** *I know your type, long speech without action and very easy to buy over. You identify with the masses because you've not got an outlet*

**DANY:** *{Apologetically} me no know say dem dey deceive us. I just join party because I no get money to but engine for the vulcanizer job wey I learn*

**LEBAWA:** *you have rights to claim from them. You don't need to beg politicians for anything. Anyone one that fails you, use your power to disarm him...*

The playwright's commentary and position is reflected or conveyed by Lebawa who contends that the problems bedeviling the nation are a collective failure and that both the electorate and the leaders are culpable. He points out that the way out is to fix the elections right and sincerely. In dismissing the excuses by the womenfolk that those in power and politicians alike often deploy force to coerce and silence them. The citizens complain that they are usually rendered powerless during elections.

**WOMAN:** *We no get power, sir. They get police and guns.*

**MAN 1:** *They discountenance our votes and impose themselves on us*

**LEBAWA:** *Who are in the police?*

**CROWD:** *It is we, the poor.*

**LEBAWA:** *Who are the electoral officers?*

**MAN 3:** *The teachers of course and our children who they teach. As government worker zombie them be. If dey refuse dem fit sack them.*

**LEBAWA:** *Who recommend them for punitive measures?*

**MAN L:** *Civil servants like us who have nothing to show for their long service.*

**LEBAWA:** *Who then aids and abets bad governance and violence?*

**CROWD:** *All of us.*

**LEBAWA:** *Then the choice to continue or change lies with you.*

The playwright's positive notion and hope reside in the following anthem.

*Nigeria we hail thee  
Our own dear native land  
Though tribes and tongues  
may differ  
In brotherhood we stand  
Nigerians all are proud to serve  
Our sovereign mother land.<sup>9</sup>*

The democratic journey or democratic experiment cuts across many variables. It should be clarified as well that democracy is about people. The above lengthy extracts from the text capture the nation's democratic rigmarole for decades. It is an encompassing syndrome: The political class is corrupt, mismanages the electoral processes and fails to deliver on campaign promises. The electorates too are also to blame for democratic failure of the political class. A number of the citizenry is bemused and they become misled to the point of selling their votes. In most African countries over time, especially since becoming independent, the voting culture has favoured ethno-religious considerations and choices. Electoral fraud had given way to military interventions with no positive results. There is palpable economic failure as these nations cannot meet their statutory obligations. It has been a convoluted case as accusing fingers are pointing in all directions. Yet, democracy remains the answer to nation-building.

### Conclusion

The above analysis is a fertile and an insightful exploration of leadership conundrum in virtually all African modern states. The playwright has succeeded in his transposition of mythic materials to interrogate leadership and nation-building in Africa. The playwright has artistically captured the bane of Africa's development through the political experiential trajectory of Nigeria. Being the

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<sup>9</sup> Abdullahi Abubakar *A New Weft in the Loom*: (Ilorin: UNILORIN PRESS. Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. 2018.

giant of Africa, the Nigeria's socio-political plight is a plausible prototype of the continent of Africa. The political future of the African continent is still tied to orderly democratic conducts where both the electorate and the political class would play the game according to the standards. Of course, once the process is wrongly orchestrated, the outcome will be calamitous as well. Unfortunately, the heterogeneous nature of the states being precarious in itself, it is further aggravated by religious polarization. But our hope of fixing it right democratically is not dead as efforts are being made on daily basis to nib in the bud the monsters of politics, religion and ethnicity. With a creative exposition as Abdullahi Abubakar's dramatic presentation as *A New Weft in the Loom*, hope is alive as Africa's politicians and the electorate can always learn from the past and be remorseful and repentant.

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