

The Eurocentric Religions' Multiparous in African System of Governance in Mongo Béti And Ahmadou Kourouma's Selected Novels

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Abstract. Eurocentric religion is the belief in the eminence of foreign religion over the existing or “native” religion; giving birth to more than one adverse effect on African peace. Existing studies have examined revolt and oppression of Africans by Foreigners in francophone African novels with little attention paid to the domineering power of the foreign religions over African community. This study, therefore, is designed to examine the Eurocentric religions' multiparous in African system of governance in Mongo Béti and Ahmadou Kourouma's selected Novels with a view to establishing the denigration of foreign religions and the havoc caused in Francophone African society, and their implications on contemporary Africa. Postcolonialism and Realism theories were adopted as framework. Béti's *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* and *Le Roi Miraculé*; Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé* and *Quand on Refuse on dit Non* were purposively selected because they are novels of religions denunciation. Close reading was adopted as methodology. Data were subjected to literary analysis. In conclusion, we discovered that African system of governance has been taken over by the colonisers and this cause the reason they are still “observers” during African election process till date. Human entity been depersonalised to the extent that he leaves his comfort, spending his fortunes to perform pilgrimage to “Holy lands”. Béti and Kourouma portrayed alien religions as causes of disunity, war, hypocrisy, subjugation of African culture other than agents of peace, unity and progress and this is the bane of the contemporary Francophone African societies.

Keyword: Eurocentric, Multiparous, Peace and Conflict, Religion, Slavery

1. Introduction

Religion, in most cases is associated with two opposing realities- peace and conflict, unity and division, tonic and toxic, honey and poison in human society. This forms part of its nomenclature as it is often been referred to as “double-edged sword”. Up till the present times, “colonised” Africa depends on the “colonizing West” for its economic, socio-religious cum missionary aid, and liturgical style. Hence, African culture inspired by her native religion takes up Foreign religions in order to be considered pious or civilised in European context; the result that brings about cultural hybridity and multiparous effect on African system of governance. Thus, the paradigm shift between the coloniser and the colonised continues, till date, manifesting in all aspects of the Africa people's economy, socio-cultural and religious life (Sanusi, 2015).

There was peace, good governance, harmony, teamwork, and love; Africans were serving the Supreme Being in peace then suddenly, the Foreigners came and brought civilisation underpinned by colonisation, forced labour, assimilation slavery... (Olowo, O.O. & Babayemi, 2011).

The Foreign religions emerged with division; there are many sects of Christian religion today; this is based on the number of adherents of each sect. For instance, the Catholic Church, having the Pope in Rome as the head, happens to be a spiritual union of the Western church; the Protestants pulled out of the Catholic Church in the 16th-century Reformation and split in many denominations from where we have the Eastern Christianity comprising Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy and the Church of the East. From there, other smaller assemblies came up such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Latter Day Saint

movement, (her inclusion into the body of Christ is still being disputed till present), (Maluleke, 1996). Likewise, from the 1st century there have being up to three major sects, namely: the Sunnis, the Shi'as and the Kharijites among the Islam. Each of these sects develops distinctive legal system and school of thoughts called *madhhab* to reflect different methodologies of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) this giving birth to entire puzzlement. The major Sunni *madhhabs* are *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi'i*, and *Hanbali*. Today, we have: *Shuaibiyah/Hujjatiyah*, *Sufriyah*, *Sulaimaniah/Jaririyah*, *Tanasikhiya*, *Tha'libiyah*, *Thamamiyah*, *Wasiliyah*, *Yaqubiyya*, *Younasiyah* and *Zarariyah*, *Ahmadiyya*, Non denominational, Qur'anists and many more. The list runs to seventy and above sects (Ramadan, 2006).

Nyang, (2010), establishing what religion means in his article "Religion and Social Change in Contemporary Africa" said:

Religion is an important factor in the lives of human beings. Nowhere on this planet is this statement now so widely accepted as in Africa. In the continent of Africa religion is life itself, and no one thinks of life without simultaneously looking at religion. Because of the centrality of religion in the African consciousness, social developments have always assumed a religious character. Each new development in the African social universe has been a lesson in religious understanding; and each social event carries religious meanings attached to it by members of society. In pre-colonial Africa, society provided the opportunity for the average man to partake in the activities of the community; and through his participation he shared the fears and securities, joys and sorrows of his fellow human beings. (Nyang, 2010)

Due to the unstable nature of human circumstances, and owing to the wish for certainty and security among men, religion becomes a significant basis of potency for many humans that are confronted with social change in their lives and their societies.

Nyang further explains the implications colonialism had over Africa; he affirms it to be a great one looking critically into its effect on African religion, social change and government strata as a whole. It is the receptiveness of Africans to the novel ideas and their cultural wares that made some African groups fall for the missionaries' deceit accepting them in their midst. When the adherers of the two leading Eurocentric religions came to the soil of Africa with their strong promise to create a social and religious order where "the Bible-the Quran and the Plough"

would dictate, many African ethnic groups welcome them being naive of the repercussions. Most of the times, we look into religion as contributing a lot to the social, cultural and economic development of most first world societies. Religion has also been used as an economic tool to exploit the gullibility of the "Others" (Africans) in favour of the "élites" (foreigners). It has been used as a tool to maintain political dominance on the African society' system of government. This informs the reason for this topic: The Eurocentric Religions' Multiparous in African system of governance in Mongo Béti and Ahmadou Kourouma's selected Novels.

For the fact that the pre and post-independence novels selected for this study come from two regions of Africa, it will be adequate to portray the effects of Eurocentric religions on Africa holistically. For the purpose of this study, we will be referring to Christianity and Islam as "Eurocentric religions" henceforth. Eurocentric religions have their origins as alien to African society or sub-Sahara Africa.

It is necessary to examine the religious chemistry of the countries of our authors to shed light into what led to some characters to be subdued by the Eurocentric religions that give way to "*multiparousness*" in Africa. Cameroon, the country of Mongo Béti allows freedom of religion and diversity. About two-thirds of the population practise Christianity which is the predominant faith, but Islam has about one-fifth adherence meaning that a minority practise Islam in the country. Also, the African Traditional Religion has more followers than the two Eurocentric religions. Throughout the country of Cameroon, the rural dwellers follow African Traditional Religion but rarely practise it publicly in cities because of "civilisation": Many indigenous religious groups seem to operate locally.

On the other hand, Islam flourished in post-independence Côte d'Ivoire than in any other States of Africa. Even though, many of the new adherents still love to keep their cultural identity while going about their daily businesses as Muslims. However, current figures, as estimated by Statistical agencies, prominent among which is Institut National de la Statistique (National Statistical Institute) opines that Islam could no longer be claimed to be first religion among the Ivorian nationals, the first religion, when referred exclusively to the population. Hence, the extension of Moslem faith in Côte d'Ivoire thus depends on the immigration of Muslim foreigners from neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali to the north, a phenomenon presented as a threat to the nation's religious balance

and ultimate unity and harmony.
["The World Factbook Central Intelligence Agency".
 www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov). Retrieved 16 April 2018.

The combination of the two theories in this study will give room to analyse the selected novels as they relate to tradition, religion, culture and civil war. Religion being hermeneutical issue can be explained and dissected better with Realism; while cultural hybridity and the like will be taken care of by Postcolonialism.

Without minimizing the importance of sociological and institutional contexts that have made postcolonial theory so influential – the class backgrounds of postcolonial scholars, their prominent positions in Western academia and their capacities for articulation – realists cannot afford to dismiss the core arguments on those grounds alone as some scholars have tended to do. Postcolonial theory conjoins with postmodern theory starting from oppositions to metanarratives, dependence on written dissertation and deconstruction, self-referential engagement with philosophical issues, and elitism. But on the other hand, the realists should be aware of the material difference buttressing the two theoretical approaches (D'Souza, 2010).

Therefore, literature does not exist in a timeless, aesthetic realm as an object to be passively contemplated; it is ideologically conditioned by time and place in which they are written (Brace et al., 2006). Hence, this study needs to explain the relationship between literature and the two theories. A definition for "literature" is a road that is much travelled, though the point of arrival, if ever reached, is seldom satisfactory.

Postcolonialism is characterized by the historical facts of decolonization of the colonized. It permits people budding from religion, socio-political and economic domination to regain their sovereignty that gives them space for negotiating their equity ((Lazare, S. R. & Andries, 2007). Realism is habitually multiparous (Taghizadeh, 2014). Researchers regularly ascertain it to be in relation with the acclivity of the novel; hence rightly claim that it is narrative. He further stresses the "multiparoucity" of realism in relationship between literature and reality. This is to say that there is in tandem between what the word says and what the real life is. Such attribute is always taken care of where the novel (s) uses representation of characters' cognitive, affective and psychomotor as well as his/her source. Comprehensively, a novel could be analysed with realism theory when its author renders

ordinary people and sceneries so rich and persuasive to extend they persuade readers that men and women of such characters do exist the way they are depicted.

This study is subjected to literary and critical analysis of the chosen texts. The study also adopts close reading in examining eurocentric religions, their effects which occasioned the emergence and the widespread of colonisation, oppression and chaos in the African system of government. This methodology can be used for poetry, novels, drama, and any literary works in the domain of literature. It offers an exclusive, contextual approach as it brings together reading pleasure and analytic techniques that increases our interpretation capability (Greenham, 2018).

For the purpose of lucidity, we will be taking the four novels one after the other; the two authors show the effect of Eurocentric religions in our selected novels. The novels are: *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, *Le Roi Miraculé* by Mongo Béti and *Allah n'est pas obligé*, *Quand on refuse on dit non* by Ahmadou Kourouma.

2. Multiparous and Dominance of Eurocentric Religions on African System of Governance

In *Le Roi Miraculé: Chronique des Essazam*, Mongo Béti depicts how African democracy is deals with King Lazarus a caricature of African leaders accommodating one of the Eurocentric religions making his domain, a peaceful democratic Essazam community and it's environ ungovernable:

... renchérissant à qui mieux mieux sur l'insulte faite à leur fille par le Chef, accusant ce dernier d'avoir rompu les serments au mépris de la coutume. (P. 168) (Beti, 1958)

They competed in denouncing the Chief's insult to their fellow-clanswoman. He accused of having defied tradition by breaking his solemn word. (P. 124) (Beti Mongo, 1982)

Ezoum, the Catechist, a religious symbol wittingly inserted into the inner council to represent Le Guen, shows how the whites make a representation of themselves into the African system of government from the beginning of their stay. Le Guen is indirectly ruling Essazam by what Ezoum the Catechist report to him from the council meeting:

Il y avait aussi dans la sale, dissimulé dans un coin obscur, un homme... le catéchiste Ezoum, représentant de Le Guen au sein du clan... (P. 34, 37) (Beti, 1958)

Also among those present was Ezoum the Catechist, Le Guen's representative in the inner council of the clan... (Pp. 27, 29) (Beti Mongo, 1982)

Between the years 830-1235 A. D. according to historical records, "the people's king" called King Tenkamenin from Gold Coast Kingdom (now Ghana), happens to be one of the strongest ever, and the richest among the then African kingdoms laced with affluent cultural heritage. Tyrannical rule started in his leadership Islam had its way to the Palace and this caused tension on the land... Due to the way this king and his chiefs are ruling being authoritarians, forcing their subjects to pay taxes by exerting force, they increase in power through the "new religion" and clever exploitation and owning passage for trade (Sardarnia, Khalil & Bahrapour, 2017). As a result of this, the subjects were insulted him (the King), a taboo in African society that calls for stiffer penalty. But for a king that has lost his worth, power and control over his subjects, there will not be any adverse effect of this; be it on the individual or the community because he had let down the ancestors. This is caused by the effect of the multiparous of Eurocentric religions African Leaders beckon to.

In *Le pauvre Christ de Bomba*, the Chief rages on Reverend Father's attitude, disturbing the Evindi village's peace under the his authority; he is ready to protect his domain with his life. If not for the intervention of an old sage that wades into the matter: *...Quel homme ose passé-t-il donc ? Hein, que se passé-t-il ? Quel homme ose me porter la guerre jusque dans mon village ? Qui ose briser mes xylophones ? Que vais-je lui faire, je vous le demande ? Hein, que vais-je lui faire à cet homme qui ose briser mes xylophones, cet homme qui vient troubler la paix de ma maison ? Je crois bien que je vais le tuer. Je ne doute plus maintenant que je vais le tuer...* (P94) (Beti)

...What man has dared to carry war right into my village? Who dares to smash my xylophone? What shall I do to him now, tell me? What shall I do to this man who comes smashing my xylophone and breaking the peace of my household? I believe I shall kill him. Yes, kill him I must, indeed I must! (P54) (Mongo)

For Ahmadou Kourouma, no community agrees easily to the incursion of these Eurocentric religions. In *Allah n'est pas obligé*; Birahima reports that it is religion in a 'covert' sense that permits the inter-tribal war and the factions among the warlords. He describes how Samuel Doe flee to the USA « ...après avoir vidé la caisse, ...il s'est réfugié aux USA... »

(Kourouma) (p 67). « ...he took all their money and...went into hiding in the USA...» (Wynne, 2006) (p. 60). How did he enter into the country? The Europeans do not want peace for Africans so as to be getting the money from their end in order to boost their economy; which is part of breaking apart the African system of government.

Through foreign aids too, the "colonisers" are still causing havoc making the sub-Saharan region ungovernable. The same protagonist of *Allah n'est pas obligé* still continues in *Quand on refuse on dit non* with his analysis as regards the cause of chaos in many parts of Africa which is one Eurocentric religion or the other. Birahima points out the foundational cause of Côte d'Ivoire's civil war...religious sentiment: "les Bétés n'aiment pas les Dioulas comme moi parce que nous sommes opportunistes, versatiles et obséquieux envers Allah avec les cinq prières journalières » (Kourouma) (p 16) "The Bétés don't like not the Dioulas like me because we are opportunistes, versatile and obsequious towards Allah with the five daily prayers" (our translation). The Bétés and the Dioulas are living together in peace and harmony before one of these Eurocentric religions (Islam) breaks their peaceful co-existence. How will their chiefs be able to govern them without prejudice? Hence, the effect of alien religions and their effects on African system of governance is still a major problem living with Africans.

Among the African religious erudite class, it is the deity of their new found faith in the Eurocentric religions that causes everything that happens to them or their country. Africans have the saying: *it is the will of God*, or *we are getting there*. The question is: Is the God introduced by these two Eurocentric religions too callous to be causing trouble for His African faithful? When do we get to the same academic, social and political level as the people who plunge us into these religions that seem to draw us into more bondage?

Fanta, who represents erudite class in *Quand on refuse on dit non*, is seen to have been so submerged into religion to extent of not being able to tell the good or bad character of Allah again. Birahima asks if the Ivorians deserve what is happening to them. She answered:

Mon père, ton maître Youssouf, a dit que l'omniprésent au ciel, Allah, n'agit jamais sans raison. Toute épreuve pour un peuple ou bien sert à purger des fautes ou bien signifie la promesse d'un immense bonheur. Ce bonheur immense, pour le peuple ivoirien, pourrait être simplement la

démocratie. La démocratie est l'abaissement des passions, la tolérance de l'autre. (Kourouma, 2004)

My father, your master Youssouf, said that the omnipresent in heaven, Allah, never acts without reason. The entire test he allows for a people is used to purge the mistakes or a means of promise of an immense happiness. This immense happiness for the Ivorian people could simply be democracy. Democracy is the lowering of the passions, the tolerance for others. (Our Translation)

Africans literates are still in the cocoons of the stooze of religion even up to this century.

Because of this Konaté et al (2015)'s book *Crise Ivoirien et religion. Reflexions pour un nouveau contrat social Ivoirien* can be summarised in this format and even attests to by the authors the main cause of "never forgotten" Côte d'Ivoire's war that lingers for years. They attest to the fact that religion, « foreign in nature » causes catastrophes in Africa: Nous avons choisi de bouter le silence hors de nos quartiers intellectuels et le thème qui nous paraît mieux indiqué pour cette initiative de 'prise de la parole' est 'Le rôle de la religion dans la politique ivoirienne.' Il s'agit ici pour nous 'd'ouvrir le couvercle d'une marmite qui bout et dont tout le monde a peur.' (...) Tout le monde sait plus ou moins que certains chefs religieux (...) ainsi que certains hommes et femmes politiques au zèle religieux inégalable ont contribué au pourrissement des frictions intercommunautaires et à l'effritement du tissu social...et dessous religieux d'une crise (et) d'établir la collusion des leaders religieux et politique et partant, leur responsabilité pour enfin asseoir une ligne de conduite qui remette le religieux politique et le politique religieux dans le cadre de leur vocation sociale première.» (Konaté et al, 2015)

"We chose to remove the silence out of our intellectual neighborhood and the theme that seems to us more appropriate for this initiative of 'taking the word' is 'The role of religion in Ivorian politics.'" It is here for us 'to open the lid of a pot boiling and everyone is afraid.' (...) Everyone knows more or less that some religious leaders (...) as well as some politicians: men and women to the incomparable religious zeal contributed to rotting of the intercommunal friction and the erosion of the socio-religious crisis (and) to establish the collusion of the leading religious and political, and therefore, their responsibility to finally sit a first line of conduct which back the political religious and the religious

policy in the context of their social purpose. (Our Translation)

Eurocentric religion in Africa is always the cause of racism and ethnocentrism. The northerners look down on the southerners who are less likely to be Muslims and more likely to be enslaved by the northerners now or in the past; causing tribal prejudice. The southerners got tired of being dominated, kill, enslave, and having their oil used to support an anti-Western, too severe version of Islam. The southerners have more in common with people in the West than in the North. Then, a civil war went on for 30 years among the people of the same family (Côte d'Ivoire) living and being governed by the same ideology before Eurocentric religion set them apart (*Quand on Refuse on Dit Non*).

Also, on another occasion in *Le Roi Miraculé*, the Reverend Father threatens the Chief with death if he does not accept his religion. The Chief is the Head of State, the President and Commander in Chief of the armed Forces of the Community; Le Guen threatening the Chief with death shows how our African leaders are being threatened with one "World Power sanction" or the other. Any attempt to say no to their bid, will incur their (the coloniser's) displeasure.

We can see this example in Libya; the process of funding and providing education, health care and housing for every citizenry free at all levels. Under Gaddafi's led government, the per capita income of Libya rose to more than US \$11,000, becoming the fifth highest in Africa. The increase in prosperity was accompanied by a controversial foreign policy (with religious quoted power undertone), and the "world power" caused increased domestic political repression because he will not yield to foreign policy. This is in tandem to what Béti highlights in *Le Roi Miraculé*:

Le Guen, avec l'accord du Chef, sans aucun doute, fit dès le début de la journée, répandre la rumeur que le Chef... au risque de mourir subitement dans le péché. Ce bruit jeta la panique parmi ceux que le collégien traitait maintenant d'orangs-outans.... (Pp.179-180) (Beti, 1958)

Early in the morning, Le Guen... Spread the report that the Chief ...with risk of dying in a state of Mortal sin. This announcement produced a panic throughout that most respectable body... (P. 133). (Beti Mongo, 1982)

The "foreign body" will always take advantage of the African secret they are privy to and lace it with

“foreign policy” to nail such country to their bid. They fully encourage corrupt African leaders to do more, since they know the corrupt proceed is coming to their economy:

....parce que le président Gbagbo est lui-même d'ethnie bête. Il a mis tout le budget de la Côte-d'Ivoire sur la table. Il a recruté des mercenaires à prix d'or (les mercenaires sont des soldats blancs à la solde d'un gouvernement africain ; on les appelle aussi les affreux). Il a fait venir les mercenaires du monde entier ; de l'Afrique du Sud, des pays de l'Est, de la France, de l'Allemagne.....(P 23) (Kourouma, 2004)

...because president Gbagbo himself is of bête ethnicity. He put the entire budget of the Côte-d'Ivoire on the table. He recruited mercenaries in gold price (mercenaries are white soldiers in the pay of an African Government; this is also an ugly thing). He brought mercenaries from around the world; ... countries of the East, the France of the Germany... (Our Translation)

One is able to openly note that the effect of Eurocentrism over African governance is still a major problem living with Africans; a cause for serious concern among African States. Mongo Béti and Ahmadou Kourouma practically reveal the application of Eurocentric religions over the political and economic force of the Africans from colonial era in (Cameroon and post-colonial period in Côte d'Ivoire the native countries of the writers respectively) contemporary African society till date. The four novels that serve as our data bring out the way the Eurocentric religions tore apart the African democratic government, how the so called “Eurocentric religions” are used as pen knife to cause division amidst the African system of governance.

3. Conclusion

The human entity has been depersonalised to the extent that he leaves his comfort, spending his fortunes to perform pilgrimage to “Holy lands” of the religion, talking to stones to pray or throwing stones at an object being used to represent the evil one (Satan); what was condemned in Africa by the Religious peddlers as idolatry.

Serious effects of the Eurocentric religions erode and put into total extinction African cultural values. In all the four novels, there are vivid evidences of the missionaries fighting against African cultural ways of worship, entertainments, marriages, system of governance and the like. Mongo Béti and Ahmadou Kourouma in our selected novels for this study,

represent Eurocentric religions as means of causing chaos and anarchy in African communities where there had been peaceful coexistence in the people's way of life.

Kourouma and Béti's wish that instead of African leaders going out there for summer, winter; the creator has not forgotten Africa in any way. African leaders going for 'medicare, pilgrimages and the like, can invest their wealth African on soil too. They believe that time is coming that luck will shine African continent too. The future of Africa represented by Béti in the failure of the Reverend Father's effort and how the Essazam community asked for the transfer of Le Guen, and Kourouma in Fanta and Birahima's journey to Bouaké, signifies hope as they do not run away from Africa, this means that the adults and youths of Africa will have rest and peace from the seem endless toil very soon.

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