



Marxist ideology and revolution in Adéníyì Àkàngbé's Ayégún

Hezekiah Olúfémi Adéṣun

To cite this article: Hezekiah Olúfémi Adéṣun (2017) Marxist ideology and revolution in Adéníyì Àkàngbé's Ayégún, South African Journal of African Languages, 37:1, 51-57, DOI: [10.1080/02572117.2017.1316926](https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2017.1316926)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2017.1316926>



Published online: 26 Jun 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Marxist ideology and revolution in Adéníyì Àkàngbé's *Ayégún*

Hezekiah Olúfemi Adéọṣun

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria
Email: hezekiahadeosun@yahoo.com

Bad leadership, with its attendant consequence of bad governance, has been the major impediment to the development of Nigeria. This problem has, therefore, been a serious concern to most literary scholars in recent times. This paper is an examination of Marxist ideology and revolution in Àkàngbé's play text, *Ayégún* published in 2007. The thematic preoccupation of the text concerns the roles of political leaders in the act of governance in Nigeria. The paper adopts Marxism's aspect of economic determinism in which capitalists own the power and the proletariat have only their labour. This results in alienation of the proletariat from their products and societal affairs. The paper discovers that some of the leaders (i.e. political, traditional and religious leaders) are insensitive to the plight of the masses. The political leaders, security agents, electoral officers, bank chiefs and some religious leaders collaborate to rig elections and loot treasuries, thereby leaving the masses in perpetual suffering. The study concludes that unless the masses rise up to the challenge posed by the ruling class, oppression and impunity will continue.

Introduction

Leadership is employed in all facets of human endeavour, such as the home, school, place of worship, community and government. Apenda (2007: 2) notes that a selfless and acceptable leadership implies efficient and effective public administration, good public policies and optimal management of natural resources for equitable distribution, improved per capita income and overall development. It incorporates the features of accountability of public office holders, transparency in government procedures and processes, and adherence to the rule of law. This view has become imperative, taking cognisance of the misdirected vision of most Nigerian leaders in their service to humanity. The absence of true and incorruptible services of Nigerian leaders has distorted the real conception and purpose of 'leadership' through democratic manipulations aimed at personal, primitive accumulation and benefits. The type of leadership witnessed in Nigeria in recent times is at most disappointing. As a result of poor leadership style, many who aspire to leadership positions no longer do so for the purpose of selfless service and sacrifice, but for the benefits which such positions offer. Power offers them the opportunity of a lifetime to rise above the general level of poverty and squalor which pervade the society. It offers them rare opportunities to acquire wealth and prestige, to be able to distribute benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, scholarships and gifts of money to relatives and political allies (Dike, 1988: 41). Anyam and Adegá (2007: 33) maintain that because of these benefits accruable to leadership positions in Nigeria, prospective leaders utilise different means such as thugs and hooligans, arson, culpable homicide, illicit electoral processes and several others to get to the top. The result of this is seen in the economic, social and structural problems in the

development of the country. This paper attempts an analysis of Marxist ideology and revolution in Adéníyì Àkàngbé's (2007) *Ayégún*.

Literature and ideology

Jacobson (1962) in Eagleton's famous work, *Literary theory: An introduction* (1988: 2) defines literature as a kind of writing which represents an 'organised violence committed on ordinary speech'. Eagleton (1988: 2) notes that 'literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, and it deviates systematically from everyday speech'. He explains further that 'the texture, rhythm and resonance of literary words are in excess of their abstractable meaning – or, as the linguists might more technically put it, there is a disproportion between the signifiers and the signified' (Eagleton, 1988: 2).

Finnegan (1977: 270) describes literature as 'what people do: the way they act within a literary context, the social conventions connected with literary activity which they observe and manipulate, the different uses to which they can put literary formulations' – literature, according to Finnegan (1977: 270) is in fact, 'conceived as social action by people rather than as a static entity in its own right'. Eagleton (1988: 16) reasons along this line when he says that

literature is vitally engaged with the living situations of men and women: it is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its variety and rejects barren conceptual enquiry for the feel and taste of what it is to be alive.

While distinguishing literary language from other forms of discourse, Eagleton (1988: 4) notes that it 'deforms' ordinary language in various ways. 'Under the pressure of literary devices, ordinary language is intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, turned on its

head' (Eagleton, 1988: 4). According to Mayhead (1981: 3), literature has been found over the centuries to have certain important kinds of value for human beings. One of these kinds of value has to do with the medium which literature employs: the medium of language. All literature uses language, but by no means everything that is written can be called literature.

Mayhead (1981: 10) states further that 'the reading of good literature can bring a man more closely into contact with the "real world" than he could ever have been brought without a degree of personal experience for which the span of most lives is insufficient'. Because of this, literature, as noted by Mayhead (1981: 3), 'far from making a man anti-social, can equip him to lead his life among his fellows with the kind of adequacy, satisfaction, and understanding he would not otherwise have known'.

To this end, in literature, how words say what they say is just as important as what they signify. This is why Ngara (1990: 4) is of the view that

the critic is a judge of effective communication and seeks to explore the soundness of the artist's assumptions about the world. In order to perform his or her task satisfactorily, the critic must be in a position not only to tell us what the writer says but also to comment on the value of the writer's message and how effectively it is communicated.

From the foregoing, literature could be described as the mirror of the society which 'grapples with language in a more strenuous, self-conscious way than usual. The world which that language contains is vividly renewed' (Ngara, 1990: 4). On the other hand, Balogun (2007: 197) observes that

the history of literature is the history of literary criticism. The latter as an ally of the former makes creative writing more complementary and helps to conceptualise the pedagogical import of texts of literature into ideological standpoints.

Ideology, as observed by Hawkes (1996: 60), 'originates as a "meta-science", a science of science. It claims to be able to explain where the other sciences come from, and to give a scientific genealogy of thought'. Ideology traces ideas, through sensation, to their material surroundings. The term 'ideology' according to Adéyemí (2003: 12), is a borrowed word from Greek – 'ideos' and 'logos'. The Greek root of the word indicates that it has to do with the 'science of ideas'. 'Ideos' originally connotes light, that which illuminates, while 'logos' connotes unfolding, bringing together and grasping. So, whichever way one looks at it, in the words of Wilmot (1980: 15), cited in Adéyemí (2003: 12–13), 'ideology should lead to an unfolding of reality and understanding of reality'. The message of Wilmot is that ideology seeks to remove the veils of superstition, ignorance, obscurantism and mystification. It seeks to allow the truth of reality to come forth. Hawkes (1996: 56) posits that, 'ideology achieves a momentous philosophical breakthrough, by transcending the ancient oppositions between matter and spirit, things and concepts'. He says 'the new discipline of "ideology", then, claimed to be nothing less than the science to explain all sciences'. It had ambitions to establish 'a grammar and language modelled after mathematics...in which each idea was assigned its corresponding linguistic sign'. According to Joseph (2007: 186), 'ideology is an act of reasoning by an

individual, a group or a class in the society. Literature is a product of a series of ideological phenomena in its attempt to rid the society of its several ills across time'.

The concept of ideology is succinctly defined by Ngara (1990: 11) as 'that aspect of the human condition under which people operate as conscious actors. Ideology is the medium through which human consciousness works'. He says that [o]ur conception of religion, politics, morality, art and science is deeply influenced by our ideology. In other words, what we see and believe largely depends on our ideology, ideology being the medium through which we comprehend and interpret reality. Reality itself exists objectively outside our consciousness and independently of any particular individual, but how one sees and interprets it depends in part on one's level of ideological development.

From Ngara's point of view, ideology serves as the medium through which human consciousness operates. Human beings perceive issues differently as related to their experiences and how well they understand and interpret these experiences into reality. Thus, a writer freely expresses his ideology through his writings.

In this sense, Ngara (1990: 11) singles out three categories of ideology which, he says, are crucial in the criticism of African literature: the dominant ideology or ideologies, authorial ideology and aesthetic ideology. By the dominant ideology of an epoch, he means, 'the beliefs, assumptions and set of values that inform the thoughts and actions of a people in a particular era'. For example, the ideology of a ruling class is projected through ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) such as the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the political ISA and the cultural ISA, which includes literature and the arts. Ngara emphasises that in colonial Africa the dominant colonial ideology, which was bourgeois, was projected through the various ISAs, principally the educational, the religious and the cultural ISAs.

Ngara clarifies that in class society the dominant ideologies such as those of colonial rulers will inevitably be threatened by oppositional or competing ideologies such as nationalism. In a situation where conflicting ideologies are symptomatic of a class struggle, a writer will project an ideological stance which may or may not be homologous with one or the other opposing ideology. In Africa, most writers write from nationalist standpoints, but, as is the case in any such situation, the ideological stance of each writer will in part depend on his or her level of political consciousness. A writer may adopt a moderate or radical nationalist standpoint or even display symptoms of what has been called 'the colonial mentality'. Whatever stance the writer takes constitutes his or her authorial ideology (Ngara, 1990: 11–12).

The second category of Ngara's ideologies is authorial ideology. Authorial ideology is what determines the writer's perception of reality. Whether a writer presents an accurate analysis of social reality or not, whether a writer presents a view of society characterised by false consciousness or not, depends largely on authorial ideology. The third category, aesthetic ideology, refers to the literary convention and stylistic stances adopted by the writer.

From the foregoing, it could be understood that literature and ideology are intertwined. This is explained in Eagleton's (1988: 22) view that

to speak of 'literature and ideology' as two separate phenomena which can be interrelated is...in one sense, quite unnecessary. Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, is an ideology. It has the most intimate relations to questions of social power.

Like religion, literature, as noted by Eagleton, works primarily by emotion and experience and so was admirably well-fitted to carry through the ideological task which religion left off. Indirectly, literature has been communicating ideological dogmas disguised as *timeless* truths, thus distracting the masses from their immediate commitments, nurturing in them a spirit of tolerance and generosity, and so ensuring the survival of private property (Eagleton, 1988: 2, emphasis in original).

Literature is

vitaly engaged with the living situations of men and women: it is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its variety and rejects barren conceptual enquiry for the feel and taste of what it is to be alive (Eagleton, 1988: 16).

Theoretical framework

Marxism is an ideological theory that was introduced by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels (Joseph, 2007: 191). Marx's thesis is dualistic in nature. First and foremost, he highlights the prominence of economic factors in the functional structure of society and its development. Marx postulates the economic substructure of economy as so strong that it affects virtually all the spheres of life on the one hand, and this economic substructure ensures dangerous orientation and precedence on the other hand. To him, this economic stronghold is the edifice on which the society is hinged. The second postulate relates to change in society through triadic stages: thesis (affirmation), antithesis (negation) and synthesis (reconciliation). This affirms a continuous dialectical process which follows the synthesis (Otite & Ogionwo, 1979: 30). Here, it must be emphasised that Marx parted ways with Hegel on the different interpretations of the dialectical synthesis: while Hegel was somewhat spiritual and abstract in his interpretation, Marx interpreted his synthesis on the social structure of the society (Alamu, 2010: 61). Marx's class theory, according to Otite and Ogionwo (1979: 30), hinges on the first postulate, with the premise that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles'. Ever since human society emerged from the dawn of consciousness, 'it has remained fundamentally divided into classes which clash in the pursuit of class interest'. The pivot of the capitalist system is the persistence and dichotomy between the exploiters and the exploited; between the bourgeoisie and proletariat; between buyers and sellers of labour power other than functional collaboration. Coser (1971: 48) opines that 'class interests and the confrontations of power show that they brought in their wake what Marx referred to as "determinant of social and historical process"'. Thus, this social and historical process in the hitherto existing human society is inherently 'conflictual' because 'it breeds class consciousness and militant class conflicts which, with time,

will destroy the existing social system and lead to a new social order' (Coser, 1971: 48).

Karl Marx argued that the mode of production is the economic foundation of any society. It is this mode of production that forms the economic structure on which the super-structure rests (Otite & Ogionwo, 1979: 31). Alamu (2010: 61) submits that

the mode of production gives rise to bourgeoisie and the proletariat who are the poor, weak and property-less class. The wealthier and more powerful class exploits the relationship between the classes and gets the profits off the labour of the poor.

To this end, the bourgeoisie employ all types of ideologies, economic, religious and political, as strategies to retain their position as they continue to exploit the masses. The bourgeoisie also use their economic power to acquire political power.

Karl Marx was primarily challenged with the problem of alienation of man in capitalist society. Coser (1971: 51) asserts that 'alienation in the domain of work has a fourfold aspect: man is alienated from the object he produces, from the process of production, from himself, and from the community of his fellows'. According to Alamu (2010: 62),

for Marx, man is denied the reward of his creative power, hence resignation to fate becomes the order of the day. The exploiters enjoy their incumbents while the exploited resign to fate. Thus, the proletarians would hide under the guise of religion to seek for solace in fantasy.

To Marx, the role of religion is to sedate or pacify the masses. He emphasised that religion could be a channel of protest, resignation or acceptance of the suffering and miseries of the capitalist exploitation.

Alamu (2010: 62) remarks that Marx is embittered by the social inequality and unfairness in a capitalist society and negates the role religion plays against the interest of proletarians. Marx sees religion as an illusion which eases the pain produced by politico-economic exploitation and oppression. Dzurgba (2000: 45) notes that Marx perceives religion as the distortion of reality which provides reasons for the deceptions that form the basis of the exploiters, political or economic ideology and a false class consciousness. Therefore, Marx and Engels (1932), in Scharf (1970: 82), opine that 'religion is the moan of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the sense of senseless conditions. It is the opium of the people'.

Religion does not solve the problem of human suffering, but it is simply a misguided attempt to make life more bearable. For Marx, most religious movements originated from the oppressed classes whose social conditions of poverty provided the most fertile ground for the growth of new religions (Haralambos & Holborn, 1980: 460). Thus, religion makes poverty more tolerable by offering a reward for suffering and promising a justified redress for injustice in the kingdom of God. Religion discourages the masses from making efforts to change their social situations.

Prominent Marxist features are therefore class propaganda, revolutionary didacticism and ideological specifications of the total state. Although formalists believe that literature is a special art that should be separated or distinguished from the sociopolitical world, Marxists have

contrary beliefs as they specify what the society wants and what it does not want and that literature cannot be understood without its historical context.

Hence, in the words of Àlàbá (1985: 19), the point of view of Marxist literary theory, that the socio-economic conditions prevalent in a society prominently shape the consciousness of the people as often expressed in their art forms (including literature), philosophy and religion, becomes relevant in the interpretation of Àkàngbé's *Ayégún*.

The Yorùbá People

It is pertinent at this juncture to give a brief account on the Yorùbá tradition in which the text *Ayégún* is situated. The Yorùbá have several traditions about how they began life. One of the traditions says that it was at Ilé-Ife, which the Yorùbá regard as the birthplace of their nation, that mankind was first created. Another tradition tells the story of a great ancestor and hero called Odùduwà. He is said to have come from far in the east and settled at Ilé-Ife, and it was from here that his descendants went out to rule the various branches of the Yorùbá. One of his sons, for example, is said to have become the first *Alààfin* of Oyo, as well as being the father of the first *Qba* of Benin, while another was the first *Onísábẹ* of Sábẹ; his eldest daughter is remembered as the mother of the first *Alákétu* of Kétu (in modern Dahomey), while another daughter gave birth to the *Olówu* of Ówu (Davidson, 1981, cited in Adeṣun, 2015: 247–248).

Yorùbá people are found today in the south-western states of Nigeria namely Ogun, Lagos, Oyo, Oṣun, Èkìtì, Ondo, and part of Kwara and Kogi States. According to Falola (2012: 20), the massive expansion of the Yorùbá occurred in the context of the Atlantic World, the four continents united by the Atlantic Ocean. The Yorùbá were among the African slaves drawn from Central and West Africa and tragically relocated to the Americas. As the enslaved, they were funnelled to the Atlantic. After the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, secondary migrations occurred as freed slaves returned to West Africa, and thousands migrated within various countries in the Atlantic World. Falola (2012) states that the slave trade violently took the Yorùbá to several places in the Americas: Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay, Argentina, Haiti, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States. The Yorùbá extended themselves in West Africa and gained tremendous influence in various parts, notably along the coastal areas.

The Yorùbá originally were traditional worshippers. They, however, believe in the existence of an Almighty God, whom they term *Qlqrun* (Lord of Heaven). They acknowledge Him, Maker of heaven and earth, but too exalted to concern Himself directly with men and their affairs, hence they admit the existence of many gods as intermediaries, and these they term *Oríṣas* (Johnson, 1976: 26). Politically, the government of Yorùbá proper was an absolute monarchy; the king (*Qba*) was more dreaded than even the gods. The office was (and still is) hereditary in the same family, but not necessarily from father to son. The word 'king' as generally used in this country includes all more or less distinguished chiefs, who stand at the head of a clan, or one who is the ruler of an important district or province, especially those who can trace their descent from the founder, or from one

of the great leaders or heroes who settled with him in the country (Johnson, 1976: 40–41).

Marxist ideology and revolution in Àkàngbé's *Ayégún*

The play text, *Ayégún*, is a representation of the Nigerian political milieu. The setting of the play is a town named Ayégún. The story centres on the sociopolitical activities of the town where governor Kòrólárí is directing its affairs. The play opens with the celebration of Kòrólárí, who has just won a gubernatorial election in Ayégún state. The first assignment on assuming office is the deliberation on the sharing formula between the Governor and the members of his cabinet (Àkàngbé, 2007: 10).

This depicts what Nigerian political class stands for. They go into politics or leadership positions simply to enrich their private purse and thereby widen the horizons of their fortune. It is a reflection of the political scenario in Nigeria, both at local, state and national levels, where politicians are only interested in money sharing, and neglect the people they are representing. In as much as one is not disputing the fact that the politicians should be paid salaries, the jumbo pay assigned to themselves is what one is concerned about. A leader's perception and preoccupation in governance should be the benefit of the people. Governor Kòrólárí and his commissioners go further to discuss how government infrastructure such as a refinery, university, mining industry etc. would be located and built in their respective localities. Apart from the governor and his commissioners, the party stalwarts and friends of the governor, including the king, the chairman of the electoral commission, an army general, a bank manager and a cleric, also visit the governor in his house to get their own share of contracts in the state. These people are involved in rigging the election that brought in Kòrólárí as governor of Ayégún. Their discussion on the just concluded election goes thus (Àkàngbé, 2007: 18–19):

Kábíyèsí: *Şé mo sọ fún ọ pé ọọ àgbà bí kò ọ lówùúrọ, ó n bọ wá ọ ọjọ alẹ. Bọmọdẹ bá tì n gégì nígbo làgbà tì í mọbi tigi qhún yóò wó sí.*

'Did I not tell you that if a word spoken by an elder does not come to pass in the morning, it will definitely come to pass later in the day. If a young one is cutting a tree in the forest, it is the elder around that knows the direction the tree will fall'.

Góminà: *Ẹ ò parọ baba.*

'It is the truth, old one.'

Kábíyèsí: *Àwọn tí gbà pé báwọn bá tì lárá ilú tó pọ lẹyin, àwọn yóò gbégbà orókẹ gẹgẹ bí òfin ọ ọ.*

'They were so confident of having more supporters, therefore, victory would be theirs as the constitution says.'

Jẹnẹrà: *Ìgbàgbé ló ọ ọ.*

'They were so ignorant.'

Kábíyèsí: *...ìgbàgbé náà ló ọ ọ Oníyọ tí kò fì mọ pé báwọn kan tì n bẹ lábẹ òfin làwọn miiṛàn wà lókè òfin.*

'...it was ignorance that did not make the opposition party realise that as some are under the law so are some above the law.'

People's votes do not count, as is evident in Kábíyèsí's and Jẹnẹrà's statements above. These people represent the

upper class in society, who use their positions to continually oppress the masses. The pivot of the capitalist system is the persistence and dichotomy between the rulers and the ruled; between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. In the text, while the governor is appreciating roles played during the election by some influential and prominent people in the state, he says (Àkàngbè, 2007: 22):

Ta ni kò mọ nínú Ègbẹ̀ Onírú pe àtiwọlé wa kò ẹyin Kábiyèsí Qba Amáyégún, Jẹnẹrà ọgá ológun, Abárotan Kòşọfẹ tii ẹ ọga ọlọpáá àti Arijẹ Alápapín, ọgá àgbà igbimọ olùsètò idibò.

'Who does not know in our party that our victory would not have been possible if not for the involvement of His Majesty, King Amáyégún, the Army General, Abárotan Kòşọfẹ, who is a commissioner of police and Arijẹ Alápapín, the Electoral Commission chairman?'

The writer identifies the accomplices in election rigging as powerful people in society who see themselves as being above the law of the country. Those identified are traditional rulers, security agents (army and the police) and electoral commission officers. The names given to these characters suggest their roles as dubious government officials. 'Abárotan Kòşọfẹ', name of the police boss, signifies lies and bribery. 'Arijẹ Alápapín' also connotes bribery and sharing of money looted from government treasury. According to the playwright, election rigging would not have been possible if it were not for the support of these people. At the end of elections, these people are compensated with juicy contracts and appointments. Most times, the contracts are either done half way or not at all. For instance, in awarding contracts to his associates, governor Kòrólári declares

Kábiyèsí Amáyégún ni yóò fowọ mú gbogbo kòngilá to jẹmọ ilé kíkọ pátá jákèjádó ilẹ̀ wa, tí ó fi mọ ilé-ìwé Yunifásítì méjì tí a fẹ̀ kọ, ilé-işẹ̀ lóríşíríşì, ilé-ìtura, àti bẹẹ bẹẹ lọ.

'His majesty, Amáyégún will handle all building contracts including two proposed universities, companies, hotels, etc.' (Àkàngbè, 2007: 22–23).

Similar contracts are awarded to other collaborators like the army chief, the police boss and the electoral commission chairman. In order to avert military incursion in their democratic arrangement, an extra assignment is given to General Àlábí Alápamọpamọ to caution and monitor his boys very well. The governor promises to be 'settling' them every month and to increase their salaries. One wonders how such traditional rulers will be bold enough to tell the politicians that the people they are governing are suffering. In a capitalist economy like Nigeria, people in the lower class are exploited and oppressed by the people in the upper class. The writer equally brings to the fore the strategies employed by the Nigerian political leaders in the present political dispensation to checkmate the military in taking power from them as has been done in the past. One such strategy is to increase their salaries and allowances, upgrade the infrastructure in the barracks, give out car loans at affordable rates, and so on.

Having succeeded in sharing the state's resources and wealth among the ruling class and their cohorts, the proletariat such as the artisans, peasant farmers, teachers, students, etc. are left in abject poverty and suffering. In the

text, governor Kòrólári connives with the bank manager to divert a sum of 2.5 billion naira meant for the procurement of fertiliser for the farmers to his personal account. This money is used to celebrate his grandfather's death, who had died thirty-two years before. Governor Kòrólári, while discussing the burial arrangements with his wife, Fọláfẹwọ, says:

Góminà: ...ináwó tí a bá fi bílìyonù naira ẹ, aráyé yóò pòkíkí rẹ.

'...a ceremony that two billion is expended on will be the talk of the town.'

Fọláfẹwọ: Ó di dandan. Bí kò bá tilẹ̀ wá kájú rẹ tán pátápátá, owo oşù àwọn tíşà ni yóò faragbá iyókù...

'Very sure. Even if it is not enough, teachers' salaries will take care of the rest...' (Àkàngbè, 2007: 28–29).

It is generally believed that the crop of Nigerian leaders are insensitive to the plight of the people. Nigeria's resources are lavished on frivolities like partying, clothing, buying houses, acquiring private jets and the like, which ordinarily cannot be done with their hard-earned money, thereby neglecting the masses. Money that is expected to boost agriculture is diverted to individual purses. That is why in Nigeria today, technological advancement in the agricultural sector has remained a mirage. Of late, it was widely reported in most Nigerian newspapers that about five hundred billion naira (N500b) realised from SURE-P (Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme) had suddenly disappeared (*The Nation*, 2013a). This is a programme Nigerians were coerced to accept, despite their resistance which culminated in protests and strikes in January 2012. It was also reported that Excess Crude Funds of five billion dollars (\$5b) was missing from the nation's Excess Crude Account (*The Nation*, 2013b). These scenarios are just a few out of many atrocities being committed by Nigerian leaders. In most states of the country, delay in the payment of teachers' salary has been a recurring phenomenon. Teachers are treated as outcasts or non-entities, even when other civil servants are paid, teachers' salaries could be delayed to whenever it is convenient for the leaders.

Moreover, the writer does not seem to exempt religious leaders from the conspiracy against the suffering masses. At the remembrance ceremony of the governor's grandfather, prominent people in the society are in attendance, including Reverend Qbádáyà Mobọlọrundúró Owóníkókó, King Adékúnlé Báyẹwùmí Afowóşefújà, General Àlábí Alápamọpamọ, Dr. Babalejẹ Àjojẹ (bank manager), commissioners, etc. Their names portray them as oppressors and those at the upper class in a capitalist society like Nigeria. Earlier, governor Kòrólári had instructed his aides to arrange school girls for his important guests. Each of the guests is assigned a girl in the governor's guest house. In their conversation, the Reverend narrates his experience with the girl assigned to him saying:

Àlúfàà: Nìgbà tí àwá şì wá ní ọdọ ní nnkan bí ọgbọn ọdún ẹyin, ominú yóò máa kọ wa ni láti súnmọ ọmọbinrin ọdún méjìdínlógún, torí a ó máa şiyèméjì bóyá ó ti bálágà tàbí kò tii bálágà. Ayé igbà yẹn niyẹn. Àmọ lode òní, Qba oníşẹ iyanu tí gbé titun dé, àwọn ọmọ ọdún méjìlá sókè díẹ̀ tí a fọjú sí pé wọn kéré ni işekúşẹ wọn pojù.

Reverend: 'When we were younger some thirty

years back, we used to be scared of having sexual intercourse with a girl of about eighteen years, because the thought was whether she was matured or not. That was then. But today, a wonderful God has brought a new thing. Girls of twelve years and a little bit above are more promiscuous.' (Àkàngbé, 2007: 104–105).

One wonders if this type of cleric (pastor or imam) could be called a man of God. Reverend Owónikókó exemplifies some clerics who wine and dine with corrupt politicians. This makes it difficult for them to preach the truth in their sermons on issues relating to politics or other social vices in the country. Most of them are 'settled' by these corrupt politicians by being awarded contracts or being given cash. As a result, their preaching is not focused on the excesses of the political class, rather it is always admonishing the congregation that is comprised of the poor to continue to persevere, endure and be tolerant.

As the play progresses, two young students, Ṣolá and Lọlá are depressed and confused about the situation of things in their state, Ayégún, thus resigning themselves to fate:

Ṣolá: *Ìgbàgbò mi ni pé ojú ọlẹ n bọ wá dára. Bí òní tilẹ korò, adùn n bọ lónà pẹlú orin iṣẹgun.*

'My belief is that tomorrow will be better. Even if there is bitterness today, sweetness is on the way with a victory song.'

Lọlá: *O kò parẹ. Ìgbàgbó tẹmi nàà ni pé kí á dúró de Olúwa, kí á sì tujúká, yóò sì mú wa ní àyà le, mo ní dúró de Olúwa.*

'You are correct. My own belief too is for us to wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, He shall strengthen our hearts, I say, wait on the Lord.' (Àkàngbé, 2007: 68).

The choice of the biblical allusion (Psalm 27: 14) in the excerpt 'wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, He shall strengthen our hearts, I say, wait on the Lord' (Àkàngbé, 2007: 68), is deliberate. It is pointing to the havoc religion might cause if excesses of corrupt leaders are not checked. For Marx, the masses should not see religion or science as a means of freedom from exploitation, rather they should rise to fight for their freedom. Abrahamson (1990: 58), cited in Adéṣun (2007: 504), notes that

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

This assertion is justified when the play ends with the aggrieved people, comprising students, women, artisans, farmers and various groups, appearing at the venue of the governor's grandfather's remembrance ceremony and singing revolutionary songs. With them are guns, machetes, charms, and other dangerous weapons. The oppressors are over-powered and killed. Karl Marx and his followers do not subscribe to resigning to fate when confronted with oppression, rather steps to address oppression are imperative. In our opinion, such resignation to fate is counterproductive. Youths are believed to be the future of any nation, thus if mismanagement of any nation's resources by the present leaders is not challenged today by

the youth, then the future of such nation is not guaranteed. However, the writer is not telling the youth to be docile on issues that affect their future, rather he is charging them not to keep mute on matters that concern them. This is evident on the last page of the play where the oppressed people of Ayégún invade the place where politicians and their cohorts have gathered for merry-making. They are attacked and killed. The writer says:

Láipe ni a tún gbọ ariwo kikan kikan... Oníkòndò yọ kòndó, oníkùmọ yọ kùmọ, àwọn àgbẹ sì gbé ibọn lẹwọ, wọ da ojú agbo rú, wọ sì pa gbogbo àwọn ikọ olówó pátápátá.

'Not long, there was an uproar from outside...Some held clubs in their hands, the farmers held their guns, they disorganised the place, and killed all the oppressors' (Àkàngbé, 2007: 121).

Remarks and conclusion

This study has examined Marxist ideology and revolution in Adéníyí Àkàngbé's play text, *Ayégún*. It investigated roles of political leaders in the act of governance in Nigeria as depicted in the text, using Karl Marx's theory as a framework. The study delved into the persistent dichotomy between the rulers and the ruled; between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. It established that the ulterior motive of these leaders is to enrich themselves with the common wealth of the people, thereby leaving the people they are governing in perpetual agony and suffering. The reason corruption has become pervasive and endemic in Nigeria is because no serious actions are taken against it. No country can attain greatness or perhaps even survive if corruption and criminality have become the order of the day in state polity. Also, it should be the responsibility of the people to checkmate the excesses of the insensitive leaders rather than resorting to silence on the issues that affect their well-being. It has been established in the text that both the political, traditional and religious leaders are enemies of the masses. They collaborate in sharing the wealth that belongs to the generality of the people, thereby leaving the poor in perpetual suffering. Going by the Marxist ideology, these oppressors will never think of a better life for the oppressed. Karl Marx realised that there is a tendency for oppression from the ruling class that possesses both economic and political power over the masses, hence, he suggested that the only appropriate strategy for development is revolution. It is the responsibility of the people to liberate themselves from the oppressors. They should not look up to religion for a solution. In this study, therefore, the playwright concluded the story on the note that the masses in the State of Ayégún take their destiny into their own hands by confronting and killing their tormentors.

References

- Abrahamson M. 1990. *Sociological theory: An introduction to concepts, issues and research*. Trenton, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Adéṣun HO. 2007. Features of capitalism in the novels of Fagunwa. A Marxist approach. In: Ndimele O (ed.), *Convergence: English and Nigerian languages. A Festschrift for Munzali A. Jibril*. Port Harcourt: Linguistic Association of Nigeria. pp. 499–517.

- Adéqşun HO. 2015. Indigenous knowledge systems and dispute resolutions: The Yorùbá example. In: Mawere M, Awuah-Nyamere S (eds), *Between rhetoric and reality: The state and use of indigenous knowledge in post-colonial Africa*. Bamanga: Langaa RPCIG. pp. 241–259.
- Adéyemí O. 2003. Political consciousness and the Yorùbá novels. A study of works of Owólabí, Yémiitán, Qlábímtán and Abíódún (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Àkàngbè A. 2007. *Ayégún*. Ibadan: Straight-Gate Publishers.
- Àlàbá IO. 1985. A socio-stylistic analysis of 'orin agbè': A multimodal genre of Yoruba oral poetry (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Alamu AG. 2010. Poverty in Nigeria and Marxian class theory: Moral re-appraisal as a paradigm. *African Renaissance* 7(2): 55–70.
- Anyam EA, Adegá AP. 2007. The implications of thuggery and hooliganism on democratic governance in Nigeria. A paper presented at the annual National Conference of the National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED), held at Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, 27–30 March.
- Apenda AZ. 2007. Biblical models of leadership and followership: Implications for sustainable democratic values in Nigeria. Paper presented at maiden annual Northern Zonal Conference of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS), held at LCCN, Dogon – Dutse, Jos, 27 February.
- Balogun J. 2007. Approaches to modern literary theories. In: Qbáfèmi O, Ajadi GA, Alabi VA (eds), *Critical perspectives on English language & literature*. Ilorin: University of Ilorin. pp 197–206.
- Coser L. 1971. *Masters of sociological thought: Ideas in historical and social context*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Dike BO. 1988. *Man with man: Political psychology*. Owerri: Ihem Davies Press Ltd.
- Dzurgba A. 2000. *Principles of ethics*. Ibadan: Agape Publications.
- Eagleton T. 1988. *Literary theory: An introduction*. London: Basil Blackwell.
- Falola T. 2012. *Atlantic Yoruba and the expanding frontiers of Yoruba culture and politics*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan.
- Finnegan R. 1977. *Oral poetry: Its nature, significance and social context*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Haralambos M, Holborn M. 1980. *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. Slough: University Tutorial Press.
- Hawkes D. 1996. *Ideology*. London and New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203426302>.
- Holy Bible. 2004. King James Version. Lagos: Bible Society of Nigeria.
- Johnson S. 1976. *The history of the Yorubas*. Lagos: CSS Bookshops.
- Joseph AA. 2007. Ideological issues in literature and criticism. In: Qbáfèmi O, Ajadi GA, Alabi VA (eds), *Critical perspectives on English language & literature*. Ilorin: University of Ilorin. pp. 186–196.
- Marx K, Engels F. 1932. *Manifesto of the communist party*. New York: International Publisher.
- Mayhead R. 1981. *Understanding literature*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Ngara E. 1990. *Ideology and form in African poetry*. London: James Currey.
- Otite O, Ogionwo W. 1979. *An introduction of sociological studies*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Scharf BR. 1970. *The sociological study of religion*. London: Hutchinson Company Ltd.
- The Nation*. 2013a. N500b SURE-P funds missing. 5 November.
- The Nation*. 2013b. New PDP to Jonathan: account for missing \$5b. 18 November.
- Wilmot PF. 1980. *Ideology and national consciousness*. Lagos: Lantern Books.