

FEAR AS AN ENGINEER OF TRAGEDY IN OLA ROTIMI'S OVONRAMWEN NOGBAISI AND
AHMED YERIMA'S THE TRIAL OF OBA OVONRAMWEN

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God Almighty, for being my strength, guide, backbone and shield throughout my undergraduate program. I would also like to dedicate this research to my mother, Mrs Helen Ekogiawe Igbinoba of blessed memory, I simply hope you are proud of me; this project work is dedicated to my siblings whom I cherish so much.

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ABSTRACT

Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and Ahmed Yarima's *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* focus on fear and how its engineer tragic outcomes. This research explores themes like fear, colonialism and resistance in these plays. Using tenets of affect theory, it portrays how fear as an emotion can lead to negative impact. It investigate how the emotion of fear shape the tragic events in both historical plays, and the non-fictional personality; *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*. This essay highlights the consequences of fear, how it led to war between the British colonialists and the Benin warriors and eventually the exile of Oba Ovonramwen. Its employs qualitative research methods which focus on non-numerical data to have a full understanding of experiences, opinions and behaviours. This research concluded that fear is not a passive emotion but an active emotion.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the theme of fear and how it engineers tragedy in *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. The plays are historical presentations of the fall of a great king (Ovonramwen); they depict a clash of interest between two opposing forces (the Benin Empire and the British colonialists), it also shows the disregard and disrespect shown by the British authorities for the African cultural norms and traditions.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study focuses on *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* limited to exploring the theme of fear as an engineer of tragedy in the plays. The primary objective of this research is to analyse: How fear engineer tragedy in the plays, the reasons for fear, the consequences of fear, this study will analyse literary devices, particularly imagery, diction, and metaphor used in the plays and will limit its analysis to the sub topics mentioned above.

1.3 Methodology

The method adopted in this research is the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method provides in-depth insights into the characters and their experiences in *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. This method provides a detailed exploration and understanding of the theme of fear and how it engineers tragedy in the plays.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This study examines the Affect theory, which frames the study's exploration of the theme of fear as an engineer of tragedy in *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. Affect theory is equivalent to emotions or feelings. Affect theory categorize affect into distinct groups and describe their physical, social, relational, and internal expressions. The discussion on affect theory is present in various fields such as psychology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, medicine, interpersonal communication, literary theory, critical theory, media studies, and gender studies. This research focus on the literary theory. The definition of affect theory varies depending on the specific discipline.

Affect theory was propounded by The psychologist Silvan Tomkins, credited with developing affect theory, which was first introduced in the first two volumes of his 1962 and 1963 book *Affect Imagery Consciousness*. Tomkins defines affect as the "hard-wired, preprogrammed, genetically transmitted mechanisms that exist in each of us," which, when activated, induce a "known pattern of biological events". However, it is also acknowledged that, in adults, the affective experience is a result of interactions between the innate mechanism and a "complex matrix of nested and interacting ideo-affective formation". According to the psychologist Silvan Tomkins, there are nine primary affects, divided into the positive affects and the negative affects. Tomkins characterized affects by low/high intensity labels and by their physiological expression. Tomkins' nine named affects are: Joy/Enjoyment, Interest/Excitement, Surprise/Startle, Anger/Rage, Disgust, Dismissal, Distress/Anguish, Fear/Terror, Shame/Humiliation.

Joy/Enjoyment, this positive affect is characterized by a sense of pleasure and contentment. Physiological expression includes smiling, lips wide out.

interest/Excitement: this is a positive reactions to a new situation or an impulse to attend. Eyebrows down, eyes tracking, eyes looking, closer.

Surprise/Startle: a neutral affective reaction to an unexpected event. Eyebrows up, eyes blinking.

Anger/Rage: it is a negative reaction to threat or an impulse to attack. A red face, frowning, clenched jaw.

Disgust: Negative reaction to bad taste, impulse to discard. Head forward and down, lower lip raised and protruded.

Dissmell: is also a negative affect; it is a negative reaction to bad smell, impulse to avoid. Upper lip raised, head pulled back.

Distress/Anguish: negative reaction to loss, impulse to mourn. Rhythmic sobbing, arched eyebrows, crying mouth lowered.

Fear/Terror: negative reaction to danger, with impulse to run or hide. Erect hair, pale face, frozen stare, coldness, sweat.

Shame/Humiliation: negative reaction to failure, impulse to review behaviour. Blushing, eyes lowered, the head down and averted.

Affect theory can be applied to analyse the role of fear in these plays. Fear is a major emotion that drives the characters' actions and decisions eventually leading to tragic consequences.

1.5 Literature Review

Ifeanyi Ugwu explored “The Deconstructionist Interpretation of *Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* in *Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*”. Deconstructionist interpretation is a

literary and philosophical perspective that contends that a text's meaning is not stable or single, but is instead unstable and open to multiple, contradictory interpretations. Ifeanyi Ugwu in his research, proposes that a literary text has diverse levels of interpretation other than its seemingly specific or stable meaning. The plays portray the disposition of Oba Ovonramwen and his subjects towards the invasion of the British colonialists into their land in search for trade. The first reading of the text seems to propose a main theme of commercial conflict. Ola Rotimi and Ahmed Yerima's use of words and their portrayal of events in the plays, reveal equivocalities that invalidate the plays' claim, to a single specified interpretation.

Sam Ukala research sheds light on the Character of Ovonramwen Nogbaisi. Sam Ukala in his article said "Rotimi's characterisation of Ovonramwen is against the theory of characterisation done by four means: the appearance of the character; his utterances; his actions; and the utterances of other characters concerning him and also against the dramatic action of the play, since the character and the dramatic action inexorably impact each other" (4). The finding is that Oba Ovonramwen is depicted as too feeble to successfully participate as a protagonist, and his feebleness is track down to Rotimi's poor construction of the character of Oba Ovonramwen, contrary to *Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. Sam Ukala asked, "Why has Rotimi characterized Ovonramwen so weakly, knowing he is in a serious dramatic action that will humiliate him, ruin his ancestors' cherished tradition, and bring his royalty and empire to an ignominious end"? (22). Absolutely, if Rotimi had created, in his play, an Ovonramwen that is warm-hearted, and brave enough to reconstruct the dramatic action of the play, and perhaps win the battle against the British, then he would have falsify history and made it unidentifiable. The play would have been, not a historical play, but a re-creation of history.

Wale Adegbite's analysis of "Pragmatic Tactics in Diplomatic Communication: A Case Study of *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*" point out that characters use different pragmatic

tactics, such as correctly constructed dialogue and non-verbal cues, for effective diplomatic communication. However, the play's tragic outcome is mainly because of the communication breakdown, caused by a failure to use these tactics effectively, especially among key characters. The research uses linguistic and literary pragmatics to represent characteristics that promote effective diplomacy and those that lead to its failure. Characteristics of successful diplomatic communication are: Calculated use of language: Characters use specific language choices to achieve their goals in communication. The use of clear speech to communicate an idea. Effective use of non-verbal cues: This involves body language, gestures, facial expressions and posture. This can improve or obstruct a message. Characteristics that lead to communication break down: Poor listening habits: Characters do not pay attention to other characters during communication which leads to misunderstanding. Misinterpretation of intention: When a character understand a message differently from the specific meaning. This can lead to conflict between characters. This study shows how pragmatic principles are important for understanding the complexities of human interaction in literature and in real life.

Mubarak Ibrahim Lawal explored "Theatre and Postcolonial Resistance: An Examination of *Ahmed Yerima's Attahiru and Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*". He study how both plays portray African leaders opposing British colonialism. Lawal analyzes the plays as a form of postcolonial criticism, using past resistance of the Sokoto Caliphate, Attahiru and the Oba of Benin, Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, to portray how African monarch opposed colonial forces. Ahmed Yerima's play, *Attahiru*, is a dramatization of the defiance of the Sokoto Caliphate, Attahiru, against British colonial rule. The play uses Attahiru's past fight to examine the theme of resistance. *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* reveals the resistance of Oba Ovonramwen against British colonial domination. The play portray Oba Ovonramwen's refusal of the British request, which led to the punitive expedition of 1897. Lawal's work

analyzes both plays as post colonial texts, that uses historical figures and events to condemn the influence of colonialism in Africa community.

Japhet Mokani examines “The Role of Fate in Tragedy Using Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* as a Case Study.” *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is a Nigerian Yoruba play written by Ola Rotimi. It is the Yoruba adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is similar to *Oedipus Rex*, except for the portrayal of the cause(s) of tragedy. It reveals the supernatural beliefs of the Yoruba people on destiny. As stated earlier, both empire are similar in their supernatural beliefs. Odewale, in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, represent the tragic hero, his fate and flaws led to his downfall. He execute this ill-fate before finding out. The tragic hero (Odewale) seek to avoid his tragic fate (destiny) but turns out to fulfill it. Both *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *The Gods Are Not to Blame* focus on the theme of fate and the tragic downfall of their protagonist Oba Ovonramwen and king Odewale. Japhet Mokani study reveal that Odewale's actions are controlled by fate; same as Oba Ovonramwen actions.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen reflect different forms of fear, their consequences and therapeutic benefits.

**CHAPTER TWO: SIGNS OF FEAR IN OLA ROTIMI'S OVONRAMWEN
NOGBAISI AND AHMED YERIMA'S THE TRIAL OF OBA OVONRAMWEN**

The play *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* are historical depiction of the fall of a great king. They illustrate a clash of interests between two opposing forces: the Benin Empire and the British Empire. The plays depict how fear engineers tragedy in the plays. Oba Ovonramwen, the protagonist, fears the intentions of the British colonialists. Oba Ovonramwen subdue internal rebellion like the rebel of Chief Obaruduagbon and Chief Esasoyen and the uprisings in smaller towns under his rule, can he suppress attacks from external forces? (Ola 4-6, 8-12).

Several signs of fear are evident in the play. The words and actions of the characters reveal their internal emotions of fear. The fear of the British colonialists is a driving theme from the beginning to the end of the play, Oba Ovonramwen refused to sign the trade treaty because he does not trust the British colonialist whose love only shows on the face but not in the heart. His refusal to sign the trade treaty becomes a catalyst for the play's events. Fear plays a significant role in the characters' decision-making, leading to tragic consequences.

2.1 Fear of Economic Exploitation

The British colonialists arrive, with the intention to trade in rubber, but Ovonramwen is not impressed by their disposition, they impose a different price for palm oil, after Oba Ovonramwen selects a certain price for the same commodity. The British colonialists claim to be his friends, yet they encourage his people to rebel against his authority by selling commodities for different prices? As a result of this, Ovonramwen refused to sign the trade treaty, neither will he receive the gifts of the British colonialists whose love only shows on the face but not in the heart (Ola 16-20).

Oba Ovonramwen refused to sign the trade treaty because he fears the intentions of the British colonialists. He perceived that their intention is to take over Benin and its natural resources. The dialogue between Oba Ovonramwen and Gallwey reveals that Oba Ovonramwen does not trust the British colonialists:

GALLWEY: Your Majesty did not sign the treaty

OVONRAMWEN: Gallwey.

(Gallwey is too perplexed to answer.)

Show me your hand.

(Gallwey extends a hand.)

Give me the hand.

(Gallwey reaches for Ovonramwen's hand.)

White one, your face shows love, but does your heart?

HUTTON: I don't think there is reason for doubts as to

OVONRAMWEN (firmly): There is a reason! I do not like the way your people go over my head and trade direct with Sobo and Ijekiri. Benin traders set one price for palm oil your people impose another, higher. You will show me proof that the whiteman's love for me and my people is deep. We cannot love someone who does not really love us in return. To love someone who does not love you in return is like shaking the huge iroko tree to make tiny dew-drops fall. (Ola 19-20)

This opening line "Your Majesty did not sign the treaty!" reveals Gallwey's frustration and accusation. It sets an aggressive tone, positioning Gallwey as the aggressor in the negotiation. Oba Ovonramwen respond "Gallwey, show me your hand". Here, Oba Ovonramwen demands a symbolic gesture. Hands represent trust, Gallwey's acceptance shows his eagerness to pacify Oba Ovonramwen. Then he says "give me the hand" this line shifts from showing to giving, suggesting a deeper commitment. Gallwey reaches for Oba Ovonramwen's hand. His action suggest compliance, but Oba Ovonramwen's next sentence reveals it is a scheme to measure sincerity. "White one, your face shows love, but does your heart?" Addressing Gallwey as "White one" emphasizes racial and cultural difference. "Face shows love, but does your heart?" This reveal the British colonialists outward civility masking inner exploitation.

Hutton says "I don't think there is reason for doubts as to" This represents the colonial voice of reassurance, attempting to ease conflict but his speech is interrupted by Oba Ovonramwen. Firmly he responded "There is a reason! I do not like the way your people go over my head and trade direct with Sobo and Ijekiri. Benin traders set one price for palm oil your people impose another, higher."

The British colonialists decision to bypass Oba Ovonramwen to trade directly with Sobo and Ijekri reflect a challenge to his Sovereignty (Sobo is present day Urhobo while Ijekiri is present day Itsekiri). The British colonialists undermine Oba Ovonramwen's authority by trading directly with Sobo and Ijekri, eroding the king's control over trade. The imposition of higher prices for palm oil by the British colonialists indicates unfair trade practices, such as inflating costs or undermining local pricing structures. The British colonialists often claimed benevolent intentions while pursuing economic and political dominance. Oba Ovonramwen says "will show me proof that the whiteman's love for me and my people is deep. we cannot love someone who does not really love us in return. To love someone who does not love you

in return is like shaking the huge iroko tree to make tiny dew-drops fall". Ovonramwen's demand for evidence of genuine goodwill emphasizes his awareness of potential exploitation which leads him to refuse to sign the trade treaty.

2.2 Fear of Cultural Change

Despite Ovonramwen's rejection of the trade treaty, the British colonialists' greed for the unexplored resources in Benin, persuades them to make another attempt to see Oba Ovonramwen but, they arrive in Benin at an inconvenient time. It is Ague ceremony and culture and tradition forbids strangers or visitors from making an Intrusion into Benin during the duration of this ceremony, neither is the king allowed to entertain visitors (Ahmed 36-38). The dialogue between Chief Ologbose and Chief Obaradesagbon reveal the Chiefs fear of cultural change:

OLOGBOSE: My fellow chiefs, I greet you. We have all heard the command of the Oba. We should go to the bush near ughoton and bring the whitemen to him. I fear what impression the Bini people would have of us if we allow the Oba to see strangers at this time. I even fear more for the Oba who, at the period of Ague when he should be with his forefathers, is ready to meet the whitemen.

OBARADESAGBON: My problem is this. If we go and carry out the wish of the Oba, at the next meeting of the chiefs, word will go out through Bini that we, all of us here, destroyed the age-long Ague tradition. (Ahmed 39-40)

The Ague festival is referenced as a significant cultural and spiritual event, a period of ritual seclusion for the Oba, during which he is expected to commune with his ancestors ("be with his forefathers"). This is a time when the Oba is not allowed to receive visitors such as

foreigners, it is a taboo that will lead to spiritual destruction. Ologbose says "I fear what impression the Bini people would have of us if we allow the Oba to see strangers at this time." Ologbose feared that allowing the Oba to meet foreigners during the sacred Ague period would damage the chiefs' reputation and the kingdom's cultural integrity. Ologbose prioritizes social unity, fearing reply that could weaken the chiefs' authority among the people. Obaradesagbon is worried about the long-term consequences of obeying the Oba's command. He says "If we go and carry out the wish of the Oba, at the next meeting of the chiefs, word will go out through Bini that we, all of us here, destroyed the age-long Ague tradition." He fears that complying would lead to accusations that the chiefs collectively diminish the Ague tradition. The chiefs feared that the Oba's meeting with foreigners during The Ague ceremony could disrupt the spiritual connection between the Oba and his forefathers, because of this the chiefs resist the British colonialists for invading Benin, the resistance lead to war. The chiefs and warriors of Benin kill and take the heads of the whitemen as spoils of war.

2.3 The Fear of European Domination

The reason Oba Ovonramwen feared the British colonialists is their threat to sovereignty and how they exiled King Jaja of Opobo and Chief Nana of Jekiri, because they refused an unjust trade agreement. Oba Ovonramwen knows that the British colonialists' love for Benin is on their faces, not in their hearts, they are in Benin to exploit the rubber plantations and other natural resources. The dialogue between Moor and Oba Ovonramwen reveal Oba Ovonramwen fear of European domination:

MOOR: Before I tell you that, I want to hear what Overami has to say to all this. (To Ovonramwen) You may speak.

OVONRAMWEN: As the Whiteman himself knows well, I have been a friend to White people. In the same manner as Adolo my father was their

friend. I had opened my mind to the Whiteman. But minds do not meet like roads. So, I could not know whether the Whiteman's mind also opened on to my own. For six years now Benin has been gripped in fear. One time we heard that a big chief like Nana had been seized by the Whiteman and carried away from the Ijekiri land of his fathers. Next time word reached us of King Jaja of Opobo people... him also the Whiteman had overwhelmed and carried to be killed in some strange far-place they call West Indies. Some time later we heard that the Whiteman had done the same thing again to one big king in the Gold coast they called emm... Prempeh son-of-Ashanti. Our fear became heavy when Whitemen began to come to Benin the way they have been coming recently. They came, they wanted to be our friends, they said sign treaty, sign contract for trade, sign this, then sign that. But their friendship went more to palm oil and to the teeth of grown elephants. Then suddenly word came that the Whitemen was at last bringing war: the father of all fears. I sent my soldiers to find out. General Moor, our elders say: 'if you must blame the hawk for wickedness, first scold Mother Hen for exposing her children to danger'. Indeed, my chiefs did wrong in killing your people. But if the Whitemen had gone back as my chiefs warned them, there would have been no killing. That is all Ovonramwen has to say. (Ola 59-60)

Consul-General Moor gives Oba Ovonramwen the medium to express himself during the trial. Oba Ovonramwen responded I have always being a friend to the European as my father Adolo. I have opened my mind to the European. But connection between people are not automatic but require effort, empathy and shared experiences. I do not know if the European mind are transparent or receptive.

Oba Ovonramwen articulates a pervasive fear in Benin for six years, driven by reports of other African leaders being exiled (Nana, Jaja, Prempeh). This fear is compounded by the British colonialists' selfish intentions, as their friendship is driven by exploitative trade demands. The simile "minds do not meet like roads" captures the cultural and ideological disconnection between Benin and the British. Ovonramwen's speech highlights the pattern of British colonial tactics: establishing trade agreements, signing treaties, and eventually using military force to subjugate African kingdoms.

The phrase "the father of all fears", emphasize the threat posed by British colonialists' intentions. War, unlike a trade dispute, this represents the ultimate danger to Benin. The proverb "if you must blame the hawk for wickedness, first scold Mother Hen for exposing her children to danger", shifts responsibility to the British colonialists. It implies that their refusal to heed Benin's warnings (to turn back) provoked the violence. Oba Ovonramwen acknowledges the wrongness of the killings ("my chiefs did wrong"), demonstrating accountability while contextualizing the act as a consequence of British provocation.

Fear is a central theme in *Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yerima's The Trial of Oba Ovonramwen*. There are several signs of fear in the plays. Fear is the reason Oba Ovonramwen refused to sign the trade treaty, fear is also the reason the Chiefs killed seven of the British colonialists which leads to war (the Benin massacre) that claim many families and lives. The study of the signs of fear in *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* highlight fear as a part of the decision making of characters in the plays. This study make me to understand that Cruelty is often a result of fear.

**CHAPTER THREE: CONSEQUENCES OF FEAR IN OLA ROTIMI'S
OVONRAMWEN NOGBAISI AND AHMED YERIMA'S THE TRIALS OF OBA
OVONRAMWEN**

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, consequence is a result or effect of something that has happened, especially an unpleasant result. The consequences of fear lead to the death of seven British colonialists, war and the ultimate exile of Oba Ovonramwen. These consequences lead to social and emotional impact on the people of Benin. The following provides a detailed analysis of this consequences.

3.1 The Death of Seven British Colonialists

The Chiefs of Benin are vexed as a result of the invasion of the British colonialists during the Ague ceremony. Custom forbids the Oba to see strangers during this ceremony. The Chiefs decided to break the British colonialists' pride with resistance to his coming. The Oba of Benin give an order to the Chiefs that they should take caution concerning the invasion of the British colonialists. But the Chiefs misinterpreted it; they think the Oba is testing their loyalty to the throne. They killed seven of the British colonialists because they fear their impending domination, and to also prove their loyalty to the throne and Benin. The dialogue between Oba Ovonramwen and his chiefs reveals the Chiefs anger toward the British colonialists:

OBAYUWANA: Look at Otutu look at Otutu, as our wives say to frighten the children, Otutu is coming, Otutu is coming! Ever since the whiteman forced chief Nana out of the Ijekiri land of his father: 'The whiteman is coming to Benin, the man is coming to catch our Oba, the whiteman is bringing war today -no, it is tomorrow, no, the war is now -no, it is the day after!' My brothers-at-arms, is this how we must dangle the rest of our lives, on fear?

USO: We say one thing to our bush traders, the whiteman get up and command another thing. who owns Benin? Who owns Ijekiri land? who must fix prices for goods? The whiteman or we?

IYASE: your majesty, our teeth have touched a bone. which end must we crack? To break customs and do anger the gods of our fathers, or to break the whiteman's pride with resistance to his coming, and thereby rouse his wrath? Your majesty, our teeth have touched a bone. (Ola 33)

The chiefs of Benin are angry toward the British colonialists. Chief Obayuwana says, our wives frighten the children by saying look at Otutu, Otutu is coming. Ever since the British colonialists forced Chief Nana out of Ijekiri, land of his fathers. People also frighten, the people of Benin by saying: the British colonialists are coming to Benin, they are coming to catch our Oba, they are bringing war today, no, it is tomorrow, no, it is the day after. My brothers, We have faced battles together, will fear define the rest of our days. Chief Uso says, we give an instruction to our bush traders and the British colonialists give another instruction. Our instructions should be respected. Chief Iyase declare "your majesty, Our teeth have touched a bone. Which end must we crack"? We have encounter an unyielding problem, how can we resolve the issue? by compromising our custom and anger the gods or resist the British colonialists and cause conflict. Oba Ovonramwen answered:

OVONRAMWEN: My people, the word is caution.

OBAKHAVBAYE: Must we welcome the whiteman, and offend the gods?

OVONRAMWEN: The gods are a part of our existence. They feel with us our dangers; they share with us the peace. The blood of slaves spilled upon their alters in prayers for wrong done them, is enough to calm their anger and win them back into our existence again. Our gods do understand. But the whiteman is a whiteman. My people the word is caution. (Displeasure, disbelief, wounded pride confound the chiefs)

OBAYUWANA: Gods! what is Benin coming to? (Ola 34)

Oba Ovonramwen listening to the Chiefs for a while, says, "My people, the word is caution". My Chiefs should use wisdom. Chief Obakhavbaye replied, should we welcome the British colonialists and offend the gods. Oba Ovonramwen respond, the gods are a part of us, they

share with us our dangers and peace. Blood sacrifices is enough to appease the gods and restore harmony. Our gods do understand but the British colonialists is driven by conquest. My chiefs use wisdom. Chief Obayuwana lamented, gods! is Benin headed for destruction? Ologbosere continue the conversation:

OLOGBOSERE: A fierce snake sleeping.

OVONRAMWEN: That may be so.

(His voice rising with emotion, himself unconvinced of the wisdom of his very stand.)

But because a fierce snake sleeps, does not mean it lost the power to kill if rudely vexed! Caution is our word, my people. Let the whiteman rudely prod us further, in spite of caution, then he will know that the way a cat walks is not the way it catches a rat!

(Oba retires into privacy, leaving the chiefs to deliberate among themselves. from the quarters of the royal harem the voices of the Iloi (royal wives) waft in, in solemn chorus.)

OBAKHAVBAYE: The words of the Oba are not pleasing.

OSODIN: Fragile situation, say I.

OBAYUWANA: what is fragile about it? You are a fighter. I am a fighter. we are all fighters. Ours is the task to protect the empire, my brothers.

OLOGBOSERE: The Oba is testing us! Take my word, brothers. The python, seeking assurance of adulthood, measures his length with the palm tree. We are the palm tree; the Oba, the python. He is only testing

the height of our loyalty to the empire, my brothers. When our own chiefs murdered his personal adviser, Uwangue Egiebo, did the Oba himself not reply the murderers with the ruthlessness of swift vengeance? We did nothing then. In shock, we found company in silence, and the Oba thought we meant ill toward him. Now a foreign enemy threatens the whole empire, and the Oba says to us Defenders of the land: caution! You think he truly expects Obedience? (Ola 34-36)

Ologbosere says, "A fierce snake sleeping" Oba Ovonramwen responded, that may be true, but because a dreaded king sleep does not mean it has lost the capacity to retaliate if rudely vexed. My Chiefs Caution is our word, but if the British continue to disregard our custom, then we will not hesitate to retaliate. Chief Obakhavbaye says, "The words of the Oba are not pleasing" Chief Osodin says "Fragile situation, say I". Chief Obayuwana reply "What is fragile about it", "we are all fighters" and we are to protect the Benin empire. Chief Ologbosere responded "the Oba is testing us". A Python measure itself with a palm tree in order to know its height; same way Oba Ovonramwen is testing the height of our loyalty to the Benin empire. When our Chiefs (Obaruduagbon and Esasoyen) murdered his personal adviser (Uwangue Egiebo) the Oba dealt with them ruthlessly. We did nothing then, in shock, we remain silent. And the Oba thought we have bad feelings towards him. Now the British colonialists threaten Benin empire and the Oba says to us Chiefs and warriors of the land "caution". "You think he truly expects Obedience"?. The Oba is testing the height of our loyalty.

After the meeting, the Chiefs prepared for war. Ologbosere himself appears, accompanied by us, Obayuwana, Obadesagbon, Obakhavbaye, Obaruduagbon and Ugiagbe. They ambush seven of the British colonialists and killed them. They display the heads of the British colonialists as trophies impaled on poles which they flaunt about in frenzied excitement. The

chiefs assemble the human heads in front of Oba Ovonramwen. He stands, surveying the scene with lethargic horror. He says "children of our fathers, Benin, I fear, has this day swallowed a pestle; now we shall have to sleep standing upright". Oba Ovonramwen knows that this act will provoke the wrath of the British colonialists.

3.2 The War Between the British Colonialists and the Benin Chief Warriors

The British colonialists find out that the Benin Chief warriors killed seven of their officers. They started planning an attack against the Benin empire. General Moor and four other British officers planned a detailed attack against the Benin Chief warriors. On the other hand the Benin Chief warriors are preparing for the attack of the British colonialists because they know that they will retaliate with swift vengeance. The Benin Chief warriors map out their strategies and defences against the British colonialists attack. The dialogue below shows the British military officers and the Chief warriors of Benin mapping out their respective strategies and defences:

MOOR: It has to be a three- pronged attack, gentlemen Colonel Hamilton (col. Hamilton comes forward.) You will lead an advance column comprising men of the Niger coast protectorate marines. Two hundred and sixty strong.

HAMILTON: (at attention)Noted, your Excellency.

MOOR: The immediate destination is Warrigi, moving on to Ceri.

(Indicate on the map with his swagger - stick.)

Your major assignment is to prepare the way for the arrival of her majesty's royal naval columns. I intend to make Ologbosere town the base for the final assault on Benin. It will therefore be necessary to cut

out an access route to Ologbosere town. You might find it imperative to build a suspension bridge across the Ologbosere creek ... (Ola 39)

The British officers are planning a three fold attack against the Benin warriors. It is a plan that attacks a target from multiple directions or uses several approaches simultaneously, making it more effective than a single-vector approach. According to Moor colonel Hamilton will lead Two hundred and sixty men, comprising men of the Niger coast protectorate marines. Moor says " Your major assignment is to prepare, the way for the arrival of her Majesty's royal naval columns." Moor tells his officers that they are" to build a suspension bridge across the Ologbo creek" as an access route to Ologbo town which is the base for the final assault on Benin. (Fade out, simultaneously with war drums. Lights on another section of the stage where we find Ologbosere addressing the warriors of Benin.)

OLOGBOSERE: Obayuwana, Obakhavbaye and you, Uso - it falls on you to lead the defence of Ologbosere town, my brothers. The whiteman might want to attack it first, through the creek.

(Uso, Obakhavbaye and Obayuwana exit to take command.)

The gods of our fathers go with you! (Ola 39)

On the other hand the Benin Chief warriors plan attack against the British officers. Ologbosere says to Obayuwana, Obakhavbaye and Uso that they are to lead the defence of Ologbo town because he knows the British officers will attack it first. Uso, Obakhavbaye and Obayuwana exit to take command and he declares that the gods go with them. The British officers second strategy is to attack Benin from the Gwatto division, approaching Benin from the Gwatto river to the west. Meanwhile Ologbosere called Ebeikinmwin, the defence of Ughoton is in your hands. You will station your men inland at the shrine of Olokun in order

to allow the Whitemen to come deeper into the land then you attack them. Asoro insisted he should be given the defence of Sapoba. Ologbosere thanked him and he leaves with two warriors. (Fadeout on Benin warriors. Light on British officers.)

RAWSON: HMS Phoebe, HMS Alecto and HMS Magpie under the command of captain McGill...(Capt.McGill acknowledges) Will lead the second division in the attack on Sapoba. You approach the town through the Jamieson river to the East. captain Turner, Lieutenant colonel Gallwey... (They come forward.) Yours is the final ground assault on the city of Benin itself. You will deploy men of the advance guard to reinforce the navel columns approaching Benin from the East through Sapoba, and from the west through Gwatto.

(Fadeout on officers. Focus on Benin warriors.)

OLOGBOSERE: My brothers - the defence of Benin itself is in our hands!

(Hold light on warriors. Light come on the British again.)

MOOR: Gentlemen the city of Benin must fall within eight days!(Ola 40).

Consul-General Moor appears bearing the British flag flown from a medium-pole. He advanced towards Ologbosere who step forward also, the two approaching centre stage. For a brief while, Ologbosere and Moor stand glaring at each other. Then, they begin to stalk each other. Suddenly the stems of their national symbols strike together and lock. pressure is applied on both sides. Ologbosere begins to give ground sinking lower and lower under the oppressive muscles of his opponent. Moor's soldiers predominantly blacks pour on stage from all directions defending the British officers. Ologbosere takes to his heels, Moor in hot

pursuit, his soldiers following victoriously. The British officers killed Asoro in Sapoba, burning everything in sight. consul Moor , accompanied by other British officers, Roupell and Rawson, rush in, heading directly for Ovonramwen's throne.They ransack the general area, greedily removing elephant tusks, carvings and bronze-work from the palace shrine.

3.3The Ultimate Exile of Oba Ovonramwen

One of the major consequences of fear in the play, is the exile of Oba Ovonramwen. The fear of the British colonialists and their intention lead to the trial and exile of Oba Ovonramwen. Oba Ovonramwen is banished from his ancestral land and the British colonialists take over rulership in Benin. The British colonialists have always being interested in the rubber plantation in Benin that they went to the extent off invading Benin, killing the people of Benin and banished the Oba, in order to get the rubber plantation. The dialogue below reveals the trial and exile of Oba Ovonramwen:

MOOR: I mean as at today, most of your vassal state are gone .Your empire,or whatever you call it, is crumbled.You are now under a new empire. The British empire. Am I right?

OVONRAMWEN: There will never, I repeat, never, ever be two supreme kings in Bini at the same time.

MOOR: But we know, your Excellency, we know. Oba Ovonrami, you are here by deposed as Oba of the Bini country. This land from this day belong to the British Empire and therefore, all it's citizens, and properties belong to her Majesty Queen Victoria, Queen of England, Scotland and Wales,and Empress of India who,by sheer superiority,has conquered the Bini country.

OVONRAMWEN:(chuckles) I congratulate the Queen.(Ahmed 67-68)

Before the trial begin in the palace of Oba Ovonramwen General Moor leader of the British officers address Oba Ovonramwen, your empire has collapse, you are now under a new empire; the British Empire. Oba Ovonramwen reply, there will never be two kings in Benin at the same time. Moor responded we know, you are hereby overthrow as Oba of Benin. All the land, citizen and properties belongs to her majesty Queen Victoria. who by absolute dominance have conquered Benin. Oba Ovonramwen laugh quietly and reply I congratulate the Queen. Moor command Oba Ovonramwen:

MOOR:I hereby command you,Ovonrami ,to pay obeisance to your new
Oba, Queen Victoria.

(After much resistance,Oba Ovonramwen succumb)

OVONRAMWEN: Obaseki!

OBASEKI:yes my lord

OVONRAMWEN:(The Oba removes his crown and slowly hands it to
him.)

Agho,son of Ogbeide,my trusted friend

And husband of my daughter,Etuohun

You the crown. Guard it with your life.

Do not sell the soul of the Benin people cheaply to the whiteman.
Here(he removes the bead from his wrists),the sacred beads that make
me the spirit that I am.And now I must cross the realm between Oba
Ovonramwen and prince Idugbowa.(Ahmed 68-70)

Moor to Oba Ovonramwen, you are to pay homage to your new Oba, Queen Victoria. After much resistance Oba Ovonramwen payed homage to Queen Victoria in order to avoid more blood share in Benin . Oba Ovonramwen called on Obaseki, he removes his crown and hand it over to Obaseki. He also removed his hand bead which signifies total surrender to the British colonialists. Moor begin the Trial:

MOOR:Gentle men, good evening. The time is four O'clock.Today is Wednesday the Ist of September, eighteen hundred and ninety seven. Our main aim is to ascertain the circumstance which led to the death of seven officers of the British Empire in there bid to establish friendly relations with the Bini people.

(After the death of the first witness)

MOOR:(visibly angry.) call in the other witness. In fact, bring in all three of them.

(The soldiers bring in three young slaves. As the Oba sees them, he rises.)

MOOR: please, be seated, Ovonrami. (The three boys, Aigbedion, Aganmwonyi and Uwubamwe,are put in the witness box.) please, introduce yourselves one after the other. And tell the court what you know now. Please, tell the truth.

The trial begins with Moor stating the aim of the trial. it is to make sure of the action that lead to the death of seven British officers in an attempt to establish friendly relations with the Benin people. Moor called three witnesses:, Aigbedion, Aganmwonyi and Uwubamwen and Moor urge them to tell the truth. The witnesses give their testimony:

UWUBAMWEN: My name is Uwubamwen. I am a slave of chief Obakhavbaye. My master killed the whiteman. I heard him tell the other chiefs that the Oba said that he should kill the whitemen, thank you.

MOOR: Thank you. Next.

ALGBEDION: My name is Algbedion. The Oba told my master to kill whitemen. I was there. And I can swear by anything.

MOOR: Thank you. Next.

AGANMWONYI: My name is Aganmwonyi, my master is chief Obaseki. But the day I followed Chief Obakhavbaye's boys to the bush, four Chiefs went to the bush to kill the whitemen that day.

MOOR: Please, name them for the court.

AGANMWONYI: They are Obakhavbaye, the master of the three boys, Ugiagbe, Obayuwana and Uso. But their leader was Ologbosere. He told them that Iyase said the Oba changed his mind and that they should kill the white men.

MOOR: Thank you, you may take them down. Bring in the four Chiefs. (Ahmed 71-74)

The first witness " My name is Uwubamwen. I am a slave of chief Obakhavbaye. My master killed the British officers. I heard him tell the other chiefs that the Oba said that he should kill the officers, thank you". The second witness Aigbedion says, "The Oba told my master to kill the British officers. I was there. And I can swear by anything". The third witness

Aganmwonyi step forward and says, " My master is chief Obaseki. But the day I followed chief Obakhavbaye's boys to the bush, four Chiefs went to the bush to kill the British officers that day". Moor respond "please name them for the court". Aganmwonyi reply they are Obakhavbaye, the master of these boys, Ugiagbe, Obaiuwana and Uso. Ologbose is there leader. After hearing this Moor order the Chiefs to come in. Roupell comes in and gives a tragic information:

ROUPELL: Permit me to report to the court, your Excellency, that Chief Obayuwana committed suicide after his arrest by captain Koe. He has since been buried. We have three Chiefs here.

MOOR: Have they all been investigated?

CARTER: Yes, my lord. I would also like to say that their testimonies are basically the same. They have all conspired to exonerate their Oba.

MOOR: Bring in only One. The master of these boys.

(Two soldiers come in with Chief Obakhavbaye. They put him in the witness box.)

MOOR: you have have being accused of killing the whitemen led by captain Phillips. What is your plea?

OBAKHAVBAYE: Guilty. Chief Ologbose and Iyase send message to me that we kill the whitemen.

Moor Don't you think that the message brought to you from Chief Ologbosheri came from the Oba?

OBAKHAVBAYE: No I was in the palace when the Oba said that no harm should come to the whitemen. (Ahmed 74-76)

Roupell announces that Chief Obaiuwana committed suicide. Moor give an instruction to Roupell to bring in Obakhavbaye. Moor to Obakhavbaye ": you have have being accused of killing the British officers led by captain Phillips. What is your plea?" Chief Obakhavbaye responded, guilty. Moor asked Obakhavbaye Do you think the instructions to kill the whitemen is from the Oba, Obakhavbaye answered No, I was in the palace when the Oba said no harm should come to the British officers. So you chiefs in panic killed the British officers on your own, Obakhavbaye answered yes. Moor declare the verdict:

MOOR: Yes. Let it be entered that the testimonies of the other prisoners agree with the fact that the Oba did not order the massacre. Let it also be entered that this court finds Ologboshi, Obaradesagbon, Uso, Obakhavbaye and Ugiagbe guilty and here by sentence them to death. As for the deposed Oba, the court recognizes the strength of the power he has over his people but Britain must be seen to occupy and enforce preponderant influence over the Bini territory.

OVONRAMWEN: Obiro had said that I should do nothing to stop the Whitemen. It is only now that his words make sense. In my leg chain, on the deck of the whiteman's boat. (Ahmed 77-79)

Moor says to Roupell let it be documented that the king did not order the massacre. He declares the verdict, Ologboshi, Obaradesagbon, Uso, Obakhavbaye and Ugiagbe are guilty and sentence to death. Oba Ovonramwen is banished from Benin and the British Empire controls the affairs of Benin. Oba Ovonramwen on the deck of the British colonialists boat he says Obiro said I should do nothing to stop the British colonialists, now his words make sense to me. The British colonialists domination is inevitable. The consequences of fear in *Ola*

Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Ahmed Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen I leads to several negative impact on the people of Benin. The fear of the British colonialists leads to one of the key incident, the death of seven of the British officers which leads to the British colonialists invasion. An act of vengeful attack on Benin rather than justified retaliation. The British colonialists bring a new government (The British empire) to Benin after the exile of Oba Ovonramwen. Oba Ovonramwen fear of the British colonialists dominance is a foreshadow of what will eventually take place in the play.

**CHAPTER FOUR: THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS FOR DRAMATISING FEAR IN
OLA ROTIMI'S OVONRAMWEN NOGBAISI AND AHMED YERIMA'S THE
TRIALS OF OBA OVONRAMWEN.**

The dramatization of fear in *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi and Ahmed Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, serves as a powerful therapeutic mechanism, drawing on Aristotelian catharsis to evoke pity, terror, and eventual emotional release for both characters and audiences. By demonstrating these fears through dramatic action, Rotimi and Yerima facilitate psychological processing, historical rectification, and communal healing. Dramatising fear offers three primary and therapeutic benefits: Cathartic Processing of Collective Trauma, Fostering Empathy and Cultural Understanding, Historical Validation and Reconciliation.

4.1 Cathartic Processing of Collective Trauma

The plays enable audiences, especially those connected to the historical context, to revisit the fear, anxiety, and powerlessness associated to the loss of sovereignty and colonial trauma. By dramatizing these emotions, the plays provide a safe space for audiences to confront and process these feelings, fostering cathartic relief and a shared sense of community that aids in healing collective wounds. The extract below shows the trauma Oba Ovonramwen experienced in the plays.

OVONRAMWEN: As the Whiteman himself knows well, I have been a friend to White people. In the same manner as Adolo my father was their friend. I had opened my mind to the Whiteman. But minds do not meet like roads. So, I could not know whether the Whiteman's mind also opened on to my own. For six years now Benin has been gripped in fear.

One time we heard that a big chief like Nana had been seized by the Whiteman and carried away from the Ijekiri land of his fathers. Next time word reached us of King Jaja of Opobo people ... him also the Whiteman had overwhelmed and carried to be killed in some strange far-place they call West Indies. Some time later we heard that the Whiteman had done the same thing again to one big king in the Gold coast they called emm... Prempeh son-of-Ashanti. Our fear became heavy when Whitemen began to come to Benin the way they have been coming recently. They came, they wanted to be our friends, they said sign treaty, sign contract for trade, sign this, then sign that. But

their friendship went more to palm oil and to the teeth of grown elephants.

Then suddenly word came that the Whitemen was at last bringing war:the father of all fears.I sent my soldiers to find out .(Ola 59).

The Oba, the chiefs and the people of Benin during the British invasion (1897) went through a lot of trauma, which was dramatised through writing in the plays *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. The plays allow audiences, particularly those with a connection to the historical events to relive the fear, anxiety and helplessness associated with the loss of sovereignty and the trauma of colonization Oba Ovonramwen and the people of Benin go through in the plays . It helps the reader or audience have a deep understanding of the history.

The plays serve as a means of catharsis, evoking pity, fear, and eventual emotional release for both characters and audiences.The dialogue above reveals the ordeal that Oba Ovonramwen goes through at the hands of the British colonialists. Oba Ovonramwen says, "For six years now Benin has been gripped in fear". Benin have been living in fear for six years, because of the rumour: "One time we heard that a big chief like Nana had been seized by the Whiteman and carried away from the Ijekiri land of his fathers.Next time, word reached us, of King Jaja of Opobo people ... him also the Whiteman had overwhelmed and carried to be killed in some strange far-place they call West Indies.Some time later we heard that the Whiteman had done the same thing again to one big king in the Gold coast they called emm... Prempeh son-of-Ashanti.Our fear became heavy when Whitemen began to come to Benin the way theyhave been coming recently"(59) Oba Ovonramwen refused to sign the trade treaty and resisted the British colonialists in order to avoid experience of other kings. The conversation between Oba Ovonramwwen and Roupell:

ROUPELL:Go on, Ovonrami run off.

OVONRAMWEN: Ovonramwen will not run

ROUPELL:Why not ?Are you too tired?

OVONRAMWEN: if the ground runs away, where will it go?
Nowhere except... except to pile up again as ground which make the
previous running useless. I run no more.

ROUPELL:Tie him up!

OVONRAMWEN: Don't worry.(Stepping out) I shall follow you
without struggle!

(After a couple of steps he stops.)

Like Death himself, you have seized me without warning.Are you
going to kill me now, or is it to Calabar that I must go?

ROUPELL:you will find out later, move on! (Ola76)

The subsequent dialogue reveals how Roupell a British officer disrespected and treated Oba Ovonramwen with no regard. Roupell says,"Go on, Ovonrami, run off". In a confrontation with British officer Roupell, Oba Ovonramwen says "Ovonramwen will not run". Roupell replies "Why not ? Are you too tired ? Tie him up"(79). This evoke pity in the mind of the characters and audiences.

4.2 Fostering Empathy and Cultural Understanding

The dramatization of the Oba's fear and the people's suffering creates an emotional bridge between the audience and the historical figures. This can foster empathy for the Benin

people's predicament and their struggle to preserve their independence and cultural identity against overwhelming odds. By dramatizing the lived experiences of the past, these plays educate a wider audience about the human cost of colonial invasion, connecting them to a critical period of Nigerian history and encouraging a deeper appreciation for the resilience of the people. The dialogue below show the invasion of the British colonialists. :

OKAVBIOGBE: Idiaghe! So you are the head- toad leading these drifters to Benin at this time? You, a Benin man! Deny it, deny you don't know that this is the period for the Ague ceremony. Deny it!

PHILLIPS: (extending a hand for a handshake), Good evening...

OKAVBIOGBE:(with hostility), salute yourself!

(Again to Idiaghe.)

I want to know the reason for this invasion.

PHILLIPS: Invasion?we aren't armed.

OKAVBIOGBE:It is invasion all the same, whiteman. I am Okavbiogbe, the chief policeman of the Benin Empire. I know what I am talking about.

There is invasion, and there is invasion. You can invade with arms; you can invade without arms, like now, unasked, without warning, you have come with all these good for nothing black goat and the whole land is in panic. Who get the blame? Me!

PHILLIPS:We are only coming to greet the Oba (Ola29-30).

The above dialogue from *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yerima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* reveals a critical period in Benin history. When the British colonialists invaded Benin (1897), despite the warning from the Oba and his chiefs that he is not allowed to see visitors during the Ague ceremony. The British officers disrespected this sacred tradition of the Benin people by invading Benin and demanding to see the Oba during this period. Eyebokan reports that the British colonialists approach Benin:

EYEBOKAN: plainly shall I speak, wise one. The whitemen approach Bini.

OVONRAMWEN: Despite my warning?

EYEBOKAN: Despite your warning, great one.

OVONRAMWEN: The whitemen provoke me.

OBAKHAVBAYE: The whiteman provokes the Bini people.

OBARADESAGBON: Eyebokan, did you tell the whitemen that the Oba cannot see anyone because of the Ague ceremony?

EYEBOKAN: I told him more than that, I even told him that it was instant death to anyone who dared see the Oba. I had even told them the Oba message that the white man wait for three months (Ahmed 36).

One of the therapeutic benefits for dramatising fear and the people's suffering in the plays is to foster empathy for the Benin people's predicament and their struggle to preserve their cultural identity against overwhelming colonial forces. The British colonialists' invasion led to loss of life, physical destruction, emotional and psychological trauma, cultural and spiritual devastation. The plays depict the human cost of colonial invasion and its effects, leaving the audience, especially those connected to the historical events, with a deeper appreciation.

4.3 Historical Validation and Reconciliation: Reclaiming a Narrative and promoting healing.

The plays validate the fears and suffering of the Benin people, offering a counter-narrative to dominant colonial perspectives. This act of reclaiming and retelling the past can be deeply therapeutic for communities that have experienced historical marginalization. By presenting an exact depiction of the conflict and its aftermath, the plays contribute to national healing and reconciliation. They provide a space to acknowledge past wrongs, understand their enduring impact, and work toward a more empathetic and just future. The dialogue below reveals the conflict between Oba Ovonramwen and the British officers:

GALLWEY: Your Majesty did not sign the treaty !

OVONRAMWEN: Gallwey.

(Gallwey is too perplexed to answer.)

Show me your hand.

(Gallwey extends a hand.)

Give me the hand.

(Gallwey reaches for Ovonramwen's hand.)

White one ,your face shows love, but does your heart?

HUTTON: I don't think there is reason for doubts as to

OVONRAMWEN (firmly): There is reason! I do not like the way your people go over my head and trade direct with Sobo and Ijekiri. Benin traders set one price for palm oil your people impose another, higher. You will show me proof that the whiteman's love for

me and my people is deep. we cannot love someone who does not really love us in return. To love someone who does not love you in return is like shaking the huge iroko tree to make tiny dew-drops fall. (Ola19-20)

The plays present a vivid depiction of the conflict between the Benin Empire and the British Empire. The British Empire is interested in Benin's rubber plantations. The British officers sought to establish a trade relationship with the Oba of Benin and his chiefs but Oba Ovonramwen refuses to sign the trade treaty because he knows the British officers would use it as a means to dominate Benin. Osodin persuade Oba Ovonramwen to leave the Palace :

OSODIN: Your greatness, you must now leave the palace. Ologbosere has fled to Okemue, and Ebeikinmwin has revolted in Ughoton.

EZOMO: Asoro has been killed in Sapoba, your Highness, the whitemen are rushing towards the city, burning everything in sight .

(Consul Moor, accompanied by other British officers, Roupell and Rawson, rush in, heading directly for Ovonramwen's throne. They ransack the general area, greedily removing elephant-tusks, carvings and bronze-work from the palace shrine.)

Officer: I beg to report, your Excellency.

MOOR: I said I want Ovonramwen dead or alive! (Ola43-45).

However, Oba Ovonramwen's decision leads to the British colonialists' invasion (1897). The Benin Empire in retaliation to the British colonialists invasion killed seven British officers; which leads to war between the British Empire and the Benin Empire. The dialogue above from *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, reveals Gallery's business proposal and Oba

Ovonramwen's rejection of the business idea, and the violent aftermath of the conflict. The British colonialists burned down properties in Benin and also looted Elephant tusks, carvings and expensive bronze works which explains why Benin Bronzes are held in the British Museum.

The invasion led to the dissolution of the Benin Kingdom as an independent entity and its annexation to the British Niger Coast Protectorate, marking a pivotal moment in the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria. The dramatization of the Oba Ovonramwen's fear and the people's suffering builds an emotional bridge between audiences and historical figures.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this study, We realize how the emotions of fear influenced Oba Ovonramwen and his chiefs to make poor decisions, leading to several consequences in the plays. Oba Ovonramwen and his chiefs feared the intentions of the British colonialists and refused to sign the trade treaty. The British colonialists retaliated with swift vengeance.

Chapter one of this study provides the background for the understanding of this research. It covers the major purpose of this study, which is to explore the theme of fear and how it engineers tragedy in *Ola Rotimi's Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Ahmed Yarima's The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. The plays are historical presentations of the fall of a great king(Ovonramwen). It explored the works of various Nigerian scholars and their contributions to the plays. This study examines the Affect theory, which is used interchangeably with emotions.

Chapter two reveals the signs of fear in the plays: fear of economic exploitation, fear of cultural change,fear of European domination.Oba Ovonramwen, his chiefs, and the people of Benin feared that the British colonialists will take over Benin's trade system and influence

their culture. The fear of the British colonialists is a driving theme from the beginning to the end of the plays, influencing the characters' decision-making.

Also chapter three reveals the consequences of fear in the plays. The Chiefs, out of fear, killed seven British colonialists, which leads to war between the British officers and the Benin warriors. It also leads to the ultimate exile of Oba Ovonramwen.

Chapter four explores the therapeutic benefits for dramatizing fear in the plays. The dramatization of fear serves as a powerful therapeutic mechanism, drawing on Aristotelian catharsis to evoke pity, terror, and eventual emotional release for both characters and audiences.

Affect theory offers a robust framework for understanding Fear and how it engineered tragedy in the plays. It shows how the emotion of fear influenced the decisions of characters. This study shows how fear can lead to destruction and why we should pay attention to this emotion and learn how to manage it. More support should be provided for strategy that protect and promote African historical narrative through literature and theater. Readers can learn strategic decision making and emotional resilience, using lessons from Oba Ovonramwen's fear - driven decisions.

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