RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY IMPULSE IN AFRICAN-ARABIC DRAMA. A STUDY OF TEWFIQ AL-HAKIM'S *THE SULTAN'S DILEMMA* AND *THE FATE OF A COCKROACH*.

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS,

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DECEMBER 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis entitled "RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY IMPULSE IN AFRICAN-ARABIC DRAMA. A STUDY OF TEWFIQ AL-HAKIM'S *THE SULTAN'S DILEMMA* AND *FATE OF A COCKROACH*" has been performed by me in the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Ahmad Bello University, Zaria, under the supervision of Professor Samuel Kafewo and Professor Emmy Idegu. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any university.

| --- | --- | --- |
| Name of student | Signature | Date |

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY IMPULSE IN AFRICAN-ARABIC DRAMA. A STUDY OF TEWFIQ AL-HAKIM'S *THE SULTAN'S DILEMMA* AND *FATE OF A COCKROACH*" by **IHIDERO VICTOR OSAE** meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts (Theatre and Performing Arts), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Mr. Gabriel E. Ihidero and to all struggling peoples of the world protesting against bad governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With the inelastic delight of a 20th century researcher at the completion of a major academic project neatly tied to the victory cry of dusk for a birth of a better tomorrow I pause to give glory to the Almighty God for seeing me through this work even when life smacked me from different fronts. It is not by my power that I was able to build bricks out of the stones that life threw at me during the period of my study but by the grace of God alone, and of course, the subterranean guidance of my transcendental supervisors that makes this work thick and ticks. I must index my bottomless gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Samuel Kafewo (the Head of Department) and Professor Emmy U. Idegu for their maniacal contributions and dedication to making this work a success. I have suddenly become Greek during the large space in-between the period of completing this thesis. Thank you, Sirs.

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ABSTRACT

The research entitled, "Religion, Politics and the Revolutionary Impulse in African-Arabic Drama. A Study of Tewfiq Al-Hakim's *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach*" explores the complexity of the mix of religion and politics from the Afro-Arabian experience and roots out the existential problems which the Afro-Arabian mind has been squashed, hence, stimulating the peoples to demand for change, self-determination and freedom from constituted potentates either by way of mass or popular protests or by revolution. The two dramas of Tewfiq Al-Hakim mentioned above feed the needs of this research and captures, to a large degree, issues concerning the popular protests in the Afro-Arabian world which *the* dramatist points out and resolves in his two dramas yet remains unexplored despite their lushness. One of the nucleuses of drama is to conscientize and this research observes that Tewfiq al-Hakim's theatre offers a way out of the issues and dilemma of the Arabian world by addressing key subjects such as religion, race, politics, gender, power imbalances, revolution; time and place. Apart from the Africanness or Arabness or context of which the research perceives these issues, *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* address these complexities as universal questions using the interpretative theory of understanding as a means of conceiving these issues.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Religion is a belief that strives to provide satisfactory answers to devotees about life, death and rebirth, about man, his fate and his place in the universe (Beier, 1979). The world-views of a people, community or individual are embedded on their religious thinking which most times interlace with indigenous cultures. Here, culture meets and mixes with religion to feed the social and spiritual needs of society or the forces that drive it. Society thrives on the Worldviews of people and their relation to other societies is dependent on how they use or relay power in their social engagements and interactions with people within and outside their religio-cultural brackets. Hence, religion and politics as well as culture cannot be estranged from each other in societal and social construction. People's beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature, and worship of a deity or deities, and divine involvement in the universe and human life plunge into the margin of the power relationships that exist in specific areas of the society. The interrelationships between people, groups, organizations or nations in a particular area of life or international accord especially insofar as they involve power and influence or conflict are affected by the culture and world-views that the social order subscribes towards.

Religions can be categorized in different ways according to the specific characteristics of faiths and how religious groups are organized. In different societies and among different religious groups, the forms religion take reflects differing belief systems, mirrors and supports other features of the society. Believing in one god or many, or worshipping in small or large groups and associating religious faith with politics all contribute to the social organization of religion and its relationship to the rest of society.

Religion, here fore, as power, is a belief-system that attempts to save, redeem, and liberate a people from what it deems to be profane in the society. Every religious belief-system needs a society and a people in order to actualize the essence of its existence. However, Rosati (2009), notes that religion is an experience that strives to connect a people to supernatural forces which when misapplied becomes a tool in the hands of its pedagogue in determining the social being of man, politics and the affairs of human community. It is the duty of dramatists therefore, to rise above the politics of the religio-cultural elements of society to brace up on the tendencies that seek to annihilate or destroy humanity while relying on the same culture or religion that may be ill-used by dangerous potentates, their apostles or agents against crushing the spiritual and social lives of the people. The dramatist, in the process of reinterpreting and digesting religion, culture or power must maintain his humanity. It is from this beacon that the redeemer-healer and revolutionary characters of Tewfiq Al-Hakim's *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* stand in semblance with the wave of protests that greet the governments of the Afro-Arabo countries in Africa.

Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion are religious belief-systems that play historical role in the discussion of Africa. The contact between these different worldviews in Africa is one that affects the way politics and power is conceived. The deference to supernatural conviction, as judged by the people, Ihejirika (2011) affirms, is core in the politics of Africa.

Religion, as a belief system is practiced differently in different cultures. Its practices by the peoples of Africa are one that has undergone series of cultural process albeit the warp and weft that distort culture for religion and religion for culture. Imported beliefs, as interpreted by priests, monarchs or religious heads to de-emphasize the cultures of people do not completely becloud indigenous African practices but evoke the true African spirit of denouncing leaders who use

religion or its agents to reduce the existence of the people. Africa is an elephant of history of men who strives to rule forcing alien interpretations of religion and culture or their own moral conviction and believe on a people who are sentenced by fear to perish under the governments or prophets of pseudo-states. And on many occasions, voices whether from the forest, as it is with guerilla warfare of Kimathi in *Trials of Dedan Kimathi*, or from the community square, have been heard giving loud cries to the deposition of the devilries that constitute a state. Traditional Africa is known to revolt against its leaders whenever their handshakes go beyond the elbow.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Religion is functional for society because it reaffirms the social bonds that people have with each other creating social cohesion and integration. Andersen and Taylor (1999) acknowledge that the cohesiveness of a society depends on the organization of its belief systems. Arguably, societies with unified belief systems are highly cohesive; those with a more diffuse or competing belief systems are less cohesive, and hence, religious expansionism becomes a means to securing power which will in turn legitimatized dominance in the political structure. The dominance of the conqueror over the conquered, the robber over the robbed and the vanquisher over the vanquished uses religion to defend or exculpate their actions. The mantra, "God is with us" and "God is great" are popular dictum that many good and evil has taken roots.

Whether in a unified, diffused or competing devotional playground religion is the oil that greases the machines of the state. This position does not necessarily disregard secularism as Tomes (2009) notes, but to state that most laws are pinned in morality and morality, to a very large extent, are influenced by the religious propinquity of a state.

Africa plays host to the diverse realities in and of religion. In some African societies the political turf is tensed that government do not open the windows for religious exhibition or proselytization; and in some others, the religious turf is race-ground for political and cultural

exertions. The off-shoot of this dilemma births an existential impasse. Here, the crisis of identity becomes the identity of crisis; and the crisis of religion becomes the religion of crisis. Since religion is a belief that enables individual or nations to transcend their individual identities to see themselves as part of a larger group on issues concerning the universe, life, death, power and existence, nations have been pressed to cocooned themselves in both religious and political unions and leagues. Religion binds individuals, as well as nations to the society in which they live by establishing collective consciousness; the body of beliefs that are common to a community or society and that give people a sense of belonging.

In many societies, religion establishes the collective consciousness and creates in people the feeling that they are part of a whole. This collective consciousness underpinned in spirituality may be hijacked by the machinery of the state by colouring the interpretation of religious precepts to suit their ends and to sooth open sores in the existence of the masses. The masses, in order to attain consciousness that would birth a revolution in a monarchical or religiously constituted state must rise above the smoke screen of malevolent religious interpretation of the state or its proxies. Anthropologists have dismissed the postulation of Andersen and Taylor on the grounds that religion, too, does not always bind a group of people; it may even be the cause of disintegration, as in the past-present in Europe and in modern African communities. This reality is not a far-cry in contemporary Africa as well as the world. The reality is here. The crises here are deep. The religio-cultural space is distorted with the African-Arabic north, who predominantly are Muslims and do not see themselves as Blacks and those within the same subset who see themselves as Blacks, Christians or pagans but Arabs.

Not all Arabs are Muslims and the majority of Muslims are not Arabs. However, Islam began in Arab lands. Its holy places and most prestigious venues are located there. Africa's representation

in the 22 member Arab league, according to the profiling of the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (2011) stands in 49.5 per cent with the recognition of Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Sudan, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia while Eritrea plays an observing role in the confederacy. Egypt's role in the league is paradigmatic as it cannot be bypassed in the discourses of power relation, the religion and the civilization therein. It submits itself as a model for inquiry into the politics and religion of the African-Arabic states. From the pre-Islamic Egypt to modern times, Egypt has maintained a strong avalanche of power in the religious and political arena in the world; firstly, as an aboriginal society with indigenous beliefs and views about the universe before it was conquered, and secondly, as a proselytized and colonized state.

Most of the human history in Afro-Arabo countries as well as the Arabic world have been affected by stories of ambitious men who were driven by cravings for wealth and power using the religious structure to constitute their government. Tyrants who conspired and murders their way into power leaving behind trails of death and destruction have been seen on different climes in Africa. Brutal dictators who enslave entire population and watch them starve while they spent fortunes on personal luxuries and military adventures.

History has shown, again, that even those who rose to power with good intentions soon became corrupt. They take advantage of their position either as religious or divinely ordained monarch or as political potentate to enrich themselves, their families and friends; whoever threatens their authority is silenced with the state machinery, perhaps by its mediator, as it is in Vizier in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. As one injustice leads to another, and as their friends become fewer, they grow increasingly paranoid and oppressive. The system, thus, drives the defeated population into a forced spiritual hallucination climaxing in a helpless state of self-induced spiritual poverty to own-up because, as they reasoned, the monarch and royal families are the spiritual

representatives of the divine on earth, or so it seems. This delusion awakes Karl Marx's estimation on religion as it subtly thrust power and wealth on royal families, their friends, and to be passed down from generation to generation. This means that there is no hope for the children of the middle and lower class as royal families claim the right to rule because they are the descendants of kings and conquerors. But in truth, the rights of these rulers depend entirely on their ability to maintain power by using armed force to crush opposition. The banalities that grips Egypt and Libya and how that they strive to put up a resistance against the seat-tight governments of Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gadhafi on imposing their children on the masses, as presidents, after decades of occupation of power is a cynosure to the latitude on which some dynasties has misapplied religion to suit their personal aggrandizement.

Authority is only meaningful as long as it can be enforced. Religious sentiments for tradition are only effective as long as it continue to persuade. The appeal to religion and the politics inherent in it sets limitation to actualizing the essence of being. Existence becomes meaningless. People are born hoping and they die still hoping. Hope seems near but too far and unattainable. And amidst this draconic condition arise a redeemer-healer who reinterprets religion and attain the power to do, through critical consciousness using the same religio-cultural platform to heal the lapses of both the religio-cultural tenets and to fill the gaps which potentates create in the society.

The Redeemer-healer damns the forces and machineries of the state and its proxies to embark on a curative or palliative mission of savaging the stifling system (Osofisan, 2001). He bears the burden and confronts whatever actions that results from his attempt to topple the *system*. The redeemer-healer may not be the very revolutionary icon himself, but his action(s) may drive it as in the case of Condemned Man in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. His live may be a base or a spring for

the revolution itself. The mission of the redeemer-healer does not necessarily lead to the collapse of law and order. The breakdown or inappropriateness of law and order leads to the mission of the redeemer-healer.

Anarchy, in a religiously political governed state is not the collapse of law and order but the collapse of lawlessness and disorder which is, mostly, unleashed by the reactionary forces that drive the state. Hegel's theory of 'Unhappy Consciousness' of the master-slave dialectics illustrates the vexation which both social structures serve each other. The master-slave dialectic or class struggle unto death is the fulcrum on which history evolves and human society evolves with religion oiling the movement of major events. Today, the monarch and royal families is still the master of many nations. They rule, they dominate the people. They reawaken the Hegelian dialectics of class struggle and reinforce it with religion. Now, an unhappy consciousness stalks Africa albeit the fact that secularization still remains a far cry. The movement of society is still directed away from *other* worldliness to *this* worldliness. Efforts by states to achieve the lofty ideas of secularization have failed to yield the desired results. Some social scientists, especially Karl Marx, Engels etc., have postulated that the era would come when man or states would not require religion. Paradoxically, years after, the forces of secularization have failed to erode societies from the hydra-headedness of religion. Claims of religious sects, international faiths and denominations and the misapplication of *their* tenets affect today's global security. Several effort is being made to separate the "sacred from the profane". The task has not been easy as religion is deeply rooted in human endeavours, including politics, economic and the social life of the people. It is against this background that this research work intends to throw insights into the phenomenon in the African-Arabic society and from the lens of Tewfiq al-Hakim.

Revolution, Van Acker (2004) submits, is a spark of critical awareness. Peasant rebellion and slave revolts Osofisan (2006) notes, usually only resulted in anarchy, looting and murder which does not necessarily define the concept of revolution. Those who rose to power on a wave of popular support sometimes claimed to have special knowledge or abilities which qualified them to govern in the best interest of the people. But even when revolutions are inspired on a noble ideal, it is never long before the old corrupt ruling class is simply replaced by a new one. The ensuing dialogue in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* (2006) is apt here. In the play, Woman ridicules thus,

> Bless the kindness
> Which has rescued us
> From tyranny in order to
> Plunge us into slavery
>
> (pg.8)

This excerpt lends credence to rulers who occupy power with the guile of freeing the populace from tyrannical governments only to deepen the woes of the people by leading them on to slavery. Examples of these governments abound in Africa. King Idris was overthrown by the young colonel, Muammar Gadhafi because his government was deemed tyrannical. Today, it is difficult to differentiate the panoplies Gadhafi's rule and that of King Idris.

Tewfiq al-Hakim's *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *The Fate of A Cockroach* provide us with a satisfactory avalanche of thoughts and questions to muse over, and more so, on this "dawn at midnight" [*Fate of a Cockroach and other plays: p:166]* that greets Arab Africa. Here, there are discussions about who is really in charge of one's destiny. The metaphors of King, Queen, Priest, Minister, Savant (of Cockroaches); and Adil and Samia, (Mortals) are drawn to lubricate how one class strive to attain power through religious politicking to control its destiny and that of the

other. Even within this worldliness and that worldliness there exist the struggles of King, in *Fate of a Cockroach*, trying to assert his authority on the people, albeit being unpopular among them, calling on the divine to back up his self-appointed messiahship. Priest is appointed to serve his spiritual and religious ego. Samia, on the other hand strive to control the mental psyche of Adil who has been fascinated by the Will of fallen cockroach on the tub to survive. The struggle reaches its high point when Samia refers to the struggling cockroach as *it*- a worthless creature that deserves not to exist. Whatever might have informed the objectification or *thingification* of the cockroach by the procession of Ants happen as a result of their worldviews over the existence of Ants. The Sultan in *The Sultan's Dilemma* is the archetypal revolutionary element that provides a curative credo to the legitimization of power. He possesses the power to objectify, destroy, and silence forever his oppositions with all religious and state backing but the subliminal finesse Sultan applies in filling the gaps in religious and civil laws by allowing the people to place him on auction proves how religion can be used effectively to bring change on itself and the people that practiced it. For him, the only way to own property is not to own any. His course raised the people above the limitations set by the laws thereby legating his authority and freeing the people from the constraints of the law.

This study tends to shore up on the revolutionary redeemer-healer in other dramas of Tewfiq al-Hakim which presents to the society that: what limits a man (religion-world views, culture, power etc.) could save or free a man. But again, a certain level of critical and hypercensorious awareness, that likable to Mohammed Bouazizi- but maintaining his humanity, must be reached by a dramatic character through the reinterpretation and digestion of religious, socio-cultural and political codes for the desired revolution to occur.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Ideally, religion and partisan politics are appositional but concretely they interact. While religion can be powerful instrument, it can also adapt to political ends and generates its own political structure. The image of religion in history as well as political history has two incompatible sides; piety and contemplation on the one hand, battle flags and weapons on the other. The problem arising therein is *existential* in that it subliminally sets one belief systems against others. As a result, the confrontation of *this* worldliness against the *other* threatens humanity. The '*it*' objectification of the Cockroaches in *Fate of a Cockroach* and the dramatic persona of The Executioner in *The Sultan's Dilemma* meet to further probe the existential problem of human race when religion meddle with politics in a pluralized system.

The contradiction between religious institutions, political institution and revolutionary change is cloaked in the robes of fundamentalist crusades. In the Middle East, differences between Muslims and Jews have caused decades of political instability. Conflicts between Protestant and Catholics in Northern Ireland have been the basis for years of social and political warfare. These conflicts are not solely religious, but religion plays an inextricable part. Religion is used as a justification for terrorist acts. Secular law has not been able to successfully address religious beliefs and practices and religious beliefs and practices have failed to birth secularity. As a result, this stalemate lives the society with void for fundamentalism to divulge. With references to certain religious totems embedded in the socio-political and national fabric of most states, series of complexities and ambiguities arise in keeping up with the spirits of piousness and secularism. This dualism tied to the misapplication of religious tenets establishes a *love-hate* relationship in the social and political structure of society.

The problem that arises in the transmutation of religious laws to civil law creates a complexity in multicultural society. Religion is the easiest and most prominently accessible tool for political armament, mass mobilization and identity differentiation rather than the intrinsic religious value it serves. The heights of nationalist thoughts are no longer rooted on socio-political institutions but more on religious institution. Since this shift occurs, the religious identities has become so salient that present interactions tend to be defined along religious lines, which in turn lends itself to intractability. The war on "terror" declared by the United States, as well other international governments suddenly became war on religion in the Middle East. Consequently, while many within the region may not have initially seen this conflict along religious lines, religion has provided the most prominent and convenient form for articulating their frustrations.

Religious beliefs have moral and social implications, and it is appropriate for people of faith to express these through their activities as citizens in the political order. The fact that ethical convictions are rooted in religious faith does not disqualify them from the political realm. Hence, the attempt to separate the one from the other is an attempt on severance of essence from social being.

Again, differences in religion and culture create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration, trade and commerce to the environment. This is particularly the case in a globalized world system which has drastically increased the interactions of previously isolated groups. Thus, the causal chain begins with differences over culture and religion, which in turn leads to disagreement over policy, and ultimately ends in conflict. On the long run there is a clash of nations, civilizations and statehood. The current tension between Europe and the Middle East is an almost perfect example of civilization clash that has religion on the centre. Moreover, the 9/11 attacks, the war in Iraq, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the fighting in

Lebanon, India/Pakistan tensions, and Chechnya can all be viewed along civilization lines. All told, there appears to be a growing tendency to see and understand international relations as being driven by civilization divides.

Thus far, critical works on the dramas of Tewfiq al-Hakim exist but none has able to critically examine the dialectics of religion and politics from the lens of Tewfiq al-Hakim and the revolutionary outcry of his dramatic characters especially in the wake of the revolutionary protests in the Afro-Arabian region.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at providing in-depth analysis on the meddling of religion and politics in African-Arabic societies and examines how religion can effectively be used by *the* people (not pedagogue) to mobilize themselves into a strong indivisible force capable of resisting brutish power; establishing strong social relationships in pluralist society and to fill every gaps that may occur in the revolutionization of the mode of religion and politics in Afro-Arabo sub-region.

The study seeks to pursue the following objectives;

- To examine the interference of religion and politics in *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* and their manifestations in contemporary African and Arabic societies.
- To show the interwoven web between religion and politics, and the complexities it creates in terms of its image of impression, inefficiencies of the law, immodest execution of the law, the impropriety of the religio-political laws and the revolutionary intents of Tewfiq al-Hakims dramatic characters.
- To focus on the levels of critical consciousness and mass mobilization with regards to the Afro-Arabian conception of time and place.

- To suggest a roadmap for the social and group longing for which contemporary African societies are rooted; in terms of its identity, socio-political issues and how religiosity rather than the pursuit of humanity pervades the region.

Finally, the research is intended to provoke further works by researchers in this area of study.

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The conclusion reached by a group of researchers commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation at the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University in the United Kingdom on the role of faith in ensuing peace or protest is evident on the functions religion play in society. In a published report, the researchers note, "After reviewing historical analyses by diverse array of specialists that there have been few genuinely religious wars in the last 100 years". The investigative team explained that some uprisings "often painted in the media and other places as protests over religion or protests arising from religious differences, have in fact been protests of nationalism, liberation of territory or self-defense but with religion providing a platform for mobilization." Religion is a forte which man over time has used to provide answers for his social and political issues. History has shown that most of the contractions of the two in a state have been destructive rather than liberating the people. The hoary cry that "the gods are on our side" was among the earliest and most potent of incitements of battle, oppression and governance.

Ironically, nations with fervent religion often have the worst social evils. The saturation of religio-political has failed to prevent the severe crime level. The evidence seems clear: to find living conditions that are safe, decent, orderly, and 'civilized', intense religious societies interlocked with hydra-head politics are readily configured playground for social and spiritual disorder.

The potently religio-political states need to reflect more critically on their own failure to provide more effective leadership and witness to the true fundamental values of the respective faiths. It is true that all religions mixed with political systems aspire for peace but it is questionable whether religion and politics have ever fulfilled that role. Some school of thoughts might still argue that religion cannot be blamed for warfare. But the question is, has the fusion of religion and politics succeeded in any of its efforts to unite mankind?

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As already noted, the essay will focus on religion and politics in African-Arabic states using *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* to parallel the uprising in African-Arabic sub-region. The attempts by the various African and Arabic governments to hold on to power regardless of the wishes of the people will be examined. The scenarios in African-Arabic region with supports from other Arab nations and other African societies will be used to feed the commitment of the essay. Amidst the spectacles of the protests and religio-political exhibitions in this region, the issue of humanity will be examined with other influential revolutionary dramas of African extraction feeding the critical needs of this study.

However, as a result of the language barrier and minuscule amount of literature and dramatic essays concerning this discourse, only important issues relating to the subjects will be addressed. Also significant, is the limited number of translated essays on African-Arabic drama; language is a decelerating factor and it is not easy to travel to important libraries or archives in Egypt for a thorough research materials. Be that as it may, this study shall make effort to explore all the contemporary and relevant issues that have occurred in the Afro-Arabo sub-region digging out its complexities and using Tewfiq al-Hakim's dramas both as a mirror and as an example of the interplay of politics and religion.

This study approaches religion from an academic and sociological point of view and does not recognize religious sects as religious institution because it is both tempered out of the urge to directly meet some urgent religious and political needs which do not conform to standards of sociological perspectives of religion, in that the interest it serves do not provide satisfactory answers on universal questions which religious beliefs constantly throw.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

This study shall depend largely on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will include oral interviews and the use of structured and thought provoking debate on whither the existence of African-Arabic drama, and the manifestation of religion and politics. For the secondary sources, this study shall depend on textbooks, Journals and essays on the subject. Materials from the internet will also be used in this study since only few studies have been carried out on the research topic under discourse.

The theoretical approach for the study is the historical and interpretative perspectives which will climax at the analyses of Tewfiq al-Hakim's dramas. This will enable this research to track the roles that religion and politics have played in the society and then give critical analyses of the issues raised in *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach*.

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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Religion and Politics

Introduction

'Religion' is a sensitive topic to handle. Whether one considers its root-meaning, its connotation, its origin or its definition, this view subsists. There is a wide variety of definitions in existence for religion and politics. But for the purpose of this discourse, the best way to proceed is not to assume that religion has the same meaning in all times and places, nor to use whatever definition different writers and thinkers have found most pleasing. A better approach is to study the range of social phenomena observable in African drama since the subject under study can be appraised from the beliefs of the people that are largely diversified, and then to formulate a definition of religion that incorporates features relevant to this specific context. This then will constitute a working definition – not an attempt to classify religion in general, but a tool adapted for the purpose at hand. A working definition has the advantage of being provisional in nature, meaning that it can be adapted in future as new observations become available. A substantial amount of literatures in the area of politics and religion are available for review in this study but their relationship to drama have not been given too much attention due to constraints language placed on the dramas from the African-Arabic region. In order to understand the relation between religion and politics in African-Arabic drama, it is more productive to take Africans' own views of reality as a starting point. Generally speaking, these include both material and immaterial realms.

Soyinka (2006) defines religion as an 'experience' that endeavors to supply satisfactory answer to believers about life, death and rebirth, about man, his fate and his place in the universe. All the

evidence in this definition points to the fact that most Africans – like most people on the planet, for that matter – understand and interpret the world partly through the prism of religion. In other words, religion, whatever else it may be, is a mode of apprehending reality (Mbiti, 1991). Ilesanmi (1995) notes that acquiring knowledge about the world in Africa is characterized by a holistic approach in which the sacred and the secular can be said to constitute one organic reality. These positions is a conviction that the material and immaterial aspects of life cannot be separated, although they can be distinguished from each other, much as the two sides of a coin can be discerned but not parted. To judge from the available evidence, religion in Africa is best considered as a belief in the existence of an invisible world, distinct but not separate from the visible one that is home to spiritual beings with effective powers over the material world. Though this definition best describes Africa's relation to the material world and pursuits for power (politics), Soyinka understanding of religion as an experience symbolizes man's relationship with the Supreme Being. Soyinka (1976) recognizes Ogun, his cementer of the universe, as the suffering deity that connects man to the cosmic forces of the universe. What Soyinka means is that it is not man that went to connect with the gods but the gods that strives to connect with man. This experience and the ruination of other deities in Soyinka's transitional gulf, Nasidi (2002) suggest, is political in the power relationships between the divinities. Ogun's sacrifices transform to meet the social demands of man. In J.P Clark-Bekederemo's *Song of a Goat* (1961), the religious chasm in Zifa's impotence limits his social interactions with other members of his community. Religion from this standpoint can be view as a belief system that strives to connect the immaterial world to the material world.

Berger and Luckmann in Gilligan's "Phenomenology" (2010) differed on other definitions of religion. While Berger views religious phenomenon as similar but not identical to the general

human activity of meaning and construction, Luckmann argues that religion is but one aspect of the ordinary human enterprise of transcending biological nature through cultural systems. Berger uses the sacred as different from other systems of meaning. The sacred, according to him, is "a quality of mysterious and awesome power other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects or experience." In *The Social Reality of Religion*, Berger presented further explanation of his conception of religion. The core of the argument is that in the observable human propensity to order reality, there is an intrinsic impulse to give cosmic scope to *this* order, an impulse which implies not only that human order in some way corresponds to an order that transcends it, but that this order is of such a character that man can trust himself and his destiny to it. What is lacking in this argument is both the African perception of religion and the submergence of African indigenous beliefs into world religion.

Hamilton (1995) summarized Max Weber's view of religion as a fundamental response to the difficulties and injustices of life which attempts to make sense of them and thereby enables people to cope with them and feel more confident when faced by them. Religious conceptions arise as a result of the fact that life is fundamentally precarious and uncertain. Uncertainty implies that human beings desire certain things but find their desires are not always fulfilled. There is always a discrepancy between what man thinks ought to be and what actually is. It is the tension generated by this discrepancy which is the source of the religious outlook (Mbiti, 1975). Religion, Hamilton submits, is an attempt to cope with such (discrepancies), and by its mediation with the supernatural world it is believed that material desires can be satisfied. Through its doctrine the apparent injustices of the world can be made to seem only apparent." Though more schools of thought sympathize with these two elements of society as being distinct, and as a result have been given distinctive definitions and conceptualizations to back their claims, Ellis

and Ter Haar (2007) postulate that such schools are rooted on the basic believes and foundation of philosophy, a field that has been developed over generations on the assumption of a separation between the secular and the religious realms.

Ellis and Ter Haar hold that taking African religious ideas seriously requires thinking about religion in terms different from those with which they are most familiar. According to them, what is termed 'religion' has always existed in every part of Africa, and that it has been changing continuously. They do not believe that there exists an authentic Africa that stands outside *time* and that incorporates a primal view of the cosmos. Simply, Africa, like other parts of the world, has a history. It is possible to reconstruct, at least partially, what people in Africa have thought about the world in the past and how their ideas have changed over time (Collingwood, 1993). Any analysis that places distinct phenomena in historical context implies a greater or lesser degree of continuity. In the present case, the historically grounded theory that they propose tends to emphasize continuities rather than ruptures. Hence, they see current charismatic and neo-religious beliefs, for example, as a recent development in a long-existing mode of thinking about the spirit world rather than as a major historical rupture. This is in spite of the fact that 'zealots' often make extravagant rhetorical claims to have made a complete break with the past (Peel, 2006). In other words, the claim of new religious converts to have broken with the past is to be understood as an emic statement, as distinct from the etic position adopted by an academic analyst. Thus, the neo-Pentecostal movement in Africa reflects the times we live in, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, it can also be situated in historical context.

Religion, Ellis and Ter Haar present, is a symbolic language, whose evolution may be compared to that of other languages. Like them, it reflects and communicates people's ideas about the world they live in. All languages change over time. Individual items of vocabulary disappear and

new ones appear, invented on the spot or borrowed from abroad. Languages, however, also have a grammar, a structure that changes only slowly. Religion, too, has a vocabulary and a grammar, both of which change over time and at different speeds. Other writers like Deepak Lal (1998) have pointed that this separation reflects the historical experience of Europe, but not necessarily that of the rest of the world. The proper awareness, as Chakrabarty (2000) notes, is not to reject social science as irredeemably Eurocentric, but to adapt its techniques in such a way as to encompass worldviews that are a product of histories different from those of European experience.

With regard to Africa, taking religious ideas seriously seems particularly to challenge the disciplines of anthropology, development economics and political science. If we deal with the latter first, we may observe that political science has no difficulty in accepting the proposal to understand politics as a field of activity that is not associated only with state power, but that can be found in a wide variety of social settings, in the form of politics 'from below'. If this is a rather uncontroversial observation, it is no doubt because it is a theme that has been quite widely studied in the literature on politics in Africa for over 20 years (Bayart et al. 1992). Far more striking is the problem caused to political scientists by the subject of religion, which, at least until the post-9/11 period, they often omitted from their scope entirely. When political scientists have focused on religion, with some notable exceptions, it has tended to be on its institutional aspects rather than the ideas and social practices that permeate the institutions (Haynes: 1996). This is rather odd, since there is overwhelming evidence that institutions borrowed from elsewhere or imposed on a particular society by outsiders rapidly gain a distinctive flavour through assimilation into local repertoires of ideas, to the extent that states are individually formed through a multiplicity of procedures (Bayart 1991).

Development economists, too, largely ignore religion, although there are signs that a number of research-funding institutions are beginning to reflect on the importance of religion in African societies, and this may lead to new angles of vision in due course (Ter Haar & Ellis 2006). Anthropology, on the other hand, has a long record of considering African religions, but has tended to do so as cultural artefacts rather than as 'real' religions. Furthermore, anthropology has often considered African societies in an ethnographic present rather than in historical terms. Although many anthropologists nowadays would claim that these problems have been rectified, and that they do now place the phenomena they analyze in historical context, such an assertion remains open to question. It has become quite fashionable for anthropologists to take as objects of study topics related to religion. Prominent examples include the study of Pentecostal movements and of witchcraft. Both of these are expressions of religious thought and practice. Pentecostalism, for example, is universally acknowledged as a brand of Christian religion, but is often treated by anthropologists with only scant regard for its global history and theological content. Witchcraft is usually studied without reference to religion at all – although, being concerned with a belief in mystical forces, witchcraft falls within the scope of religion (Ter Haar 2007) according to the definition adopted for this study.

Some influential anthropological studies emphasize the role of these phenomena as modes of negotiating modernity (e.g. J. Comaroff & J.L Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1997; Meyer 1999), despite the fact that modernity is not a concept of great analytical value (Ashforth: 2005). Moreover, analyzing religious phenomena in terms of negotiating modernity overlooks the fact that, in Africa, religion has historically been a language for interpreting the world. Any project of taking African epistemologies seriously, and attempting to incorporate them into a formal theory with the power to explain a range of social and political phenomena, is not an enterprise that

concerns Africa alone. It is for this reason that the Worlds of Power is interspersed with comparative material from other parts of the world. Given the extent and depth of new alignments or realignments of religion and politics throughout the world, it is possible that a theory developed on the basis of data from Africa could also provide new insights for analyzing developments in other parts of the world, including notably Asia and the Middle East. Scholars therefore have a rare opportunity to show that Africa is not disconnected from world affairs and that the study of Africa can help in developing a better understanding of these. Religion and politics are undoubtedly forming new patterns in many parts of the world.

Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and worldviews that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, totems, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or the 'universe'. They tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws or preferred lifestyle from their ideas about cosmos and human nature. The word, religion, is sometimes used interchangeably with faith or belief system, but it differs from private belief in that it has a public aspect. Most religions have organized behaviours, including clerical hierarchies, regular meetings or services for the purposes of veneration or for prayer, holy places (either natural or architectural), and/or scriptures.

Idowu (1991) acknowledged that religion has always been with humanity and has wide influence on the terrain of politics. He noted the aching void in politics when the people are deprived of their religion in power relations and are not provided with reasonable and acceptable substitutes. Religion, he notes, is an inescapable involvement of every member of the human race. Smith (1994) observes that:

> Social scientists have discerned that in order to understand man, *the politics of his society, his religion* should be taken into account. Inevitably, however, they have had to study religion as one element in the masses of material which they have to collect, sort out, and collate, in order to reach their conclusions. One cannot blame them, therefore, if they had themselves unable to accord it (religion) the cultural place which is its due. At least, they have the virtue of recognizing that one cannot ignore religion if one is to understand man *and the politics of his society* at all.

From Smith's assertion, one can see the shortcomings resulting from the approach of this category of scholars to the study of religion. Just as the alienation that follows when culture leaves its frame or the Onwuejeogwu's (1987) observation that: a genius becomes ordinary when it steps out from his proper frame, religion, its tenets, or the elemental roles it play becomes secular rather than sacred when it steps out from its original frame. Idebe (2011) re-emphasizes that when religion leaves its core to serve a political ends it does not only cease from becoming ordinary but extends to serve some political interests or offshoots of certain political movements as it is seen in the dramas of Tewfiq al-Hakim. Hence, Kognet's (2011) criticism on the legitimization of power *qua* politics summarizes that religion; whilst ordinary condenses the fundamentalist tendencies of one worldliness against the other. This according to him, is essential for human existence in maintaining its humanity, that is, when view from the material world. However, Parrinder (1976) concedes that there is no sharp dividing-line between the sacred and secular such as is usually assumed in western world.

Material and spiritual are intertwined, the former as a vehicle for the latter. These belief-systems are inherent in the dramas of J.P Clark-Bekederemo's *Ozidi* (1966), Soyinka's *Death and the King's* Horseman (1975), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1968), Osofisan's *Many Colours Make the Thunder-King*

(1997), and the criticisms of E.U Idegu's "Beyond the Yoruba Cosmology: A Contestation of the Africanness of Wole Soyinka's Submission in *Myth, Literature, and the African World*" (2007). This life and the next are scarcely divided by "the narrow stream of death". Those who have crossed to the further shore are still in the material, in dreams, in offerings, and rites performed and oracles consulted.

The whole organization of society is maintained by the spiritual forces which suffuse it. This is brought out clearly by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard in *African Political Systems* (n.d). Fortes and Evans-Pritchard stress the importance of religious symbols, rites, dogmas, sacred places and persons in unifying African political systems and giving it cohesion and persistence. These sacred symbols, they noted, endow the socio-political system "with mystical values which evoke acceptance of the social order that goes far beyond the obedience exacted by the secular sanction of force. According to Parrinder, religion provides the sanctions that society and its politics cannot fully supply of themselves, their "moral and legal norms which could not be kept in being as a body, by secular sanctions. Parrinder affirms that: this world is a spiritual arena, in which is seen the interplay of psychic forces. This is the African belief, and while its application may not always appear correct, the religious man of any race will agree with the principle. Rosati (2009) puts it differently in his assertion that: ritual is essential to moral development and the practice of morality. His assertion implies that most rituals are carried out to harmonize the social and political society which man belongs, and more, cohere the religious patterns of political education with non-ritual aspects of education with one sanctioning the other. Seligman (2008), illustrated with the African prototype of telling a child to say, 'please and thank you' whenever she asks for corn as a way of getting her to say it in other contexts, a way of establishing 'a web

of meaning' connecting disparate situations. Actions become ritualistic, even in non-ritual settings, and this is how humans come to respond well.

Rosati moves further to shake up secular views noting that secular ideals are not the basis of politics in most of the world. Utilizing the concept of 'Cybernetics of the Sacred' introduced by Rappaport (1999), politics becomes one mechanism among many for the regulation of social life, and has no special status by itself.

The manifestations of the medieval period show the interrelatedness, if not the seamless fusion, of religion and politics; its effects on the social and moral institution- theatre.

2.2 The Influence of Religion on Politics and the Politics of Religion in Medieval Era

Religion and politics from the period beginning from the classical mind had been a compact whole to power relation. Religion in the Classical and Roman era were a tool that the emperors and the aristocrat used to seek political acceptance and legitimacy. Alford (1995) and Wekpe (2005) note that the Medieval Era was the most intense era of religious and political mixture in the blend of religion and politics. The Church and monasteries rose to challenge the social and cultural institutions of the state. Theatre was the most affected institution of this religious contraption with politics. As Coulson-Grigsby (2005) notes, the Church and monasteries were the most organized place to get knowledge during the disorderliness of the era and as a result, it influences the decisions of emperors and the aristocrats.

As the Church grew in power by the side of the Empire the theory developed that God had ordained two viceroys on earth, one of the Pope, the ruler of the Church, who was God's representative to look after the souls of men, the other the Emperor, whose duty it was to have charge of the bodies of men and protect the Church by his power (Brockett and Hildy, 2003). All mankind must be subject to these two. At first Pope and Emperor were considered equal, both

being representatives of God on earth, each with a special task to carry out but politics over power relations surfaced. Thus, the religion and politics across Medieval Europe became heightened that religion and religious institutions began to divert from spirituality to active politicking. The Church took over the affairs of the State. Emperors became known as 'Holy Emperors'. Orthodox teachings spread in the Eastern Church and became more superstitious as it relied on relics and icons in religious worship. Happold (1970) noted that the Western church under the Holy Roman Empire also departed from Biblical Christianity and developed a theology of saints, rituals, and traditions that became increasingly politicized. The belief in Apostolic Succession gave the Roman pope ultimate authority in things not only pertaining to faith, but the state as well. The lines between the Church and the state diminished. The two Churches of the East and West clashed over theological issues like clerical celibacy, the iconoclastic controversy and Papal authority.

The state of the church in both Eastern and Western forms became superstitious and political while the threat if Islam continued to trouble the Church. Clerics and political leaders rallied the masses to join in the effort to confront the existential threats to Christendom of which drama, Judaism and Islam constituted. Several crusades were launched against other beliefs and anti-Christian institutions and the theatre was the most affected because of its educative tendencies. This era birthed the destruction of many public theatres by the church on what they, that is the church, described as citadel of sin, debauchery and evil. While the theatre institution faced an existential threat from the church-state; actors were regarded as heathens and pagans (Knight, 1983). Though the medieval mind was uncritical the Medieval Church, Ihejirika (2010) note, must not be seen as cruel and grasping, intent on keeping men ignorant for her own ends. The

Church believed absolutely in *the* faith she taught. She believed that she had a real divine mission for the salvation of men and the theatre constituted a threat to its mission.

As the religious institutions solidified its political authority in the Medieval period, monasticism saw the movements of monks back to what they believe was a purer version of religiosity in the face of what they saw as the Temple, at large, which had been corrupted by politics and superstitions (Miroljub, 2009). With the medieval church, for example, efforts were made to proselytized people back to the Church and drama and dramatic performances offered the Church a platform.

2.3 Religious and Political Elements in Drama through the Medieval Period

Medieval drama refers to the drama of Europe between the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D. and the beginning of the Renaissance in approximately the 15th century A.D. (Cambridge Dillon 2006). Medieval theatre covers all drama produced in Europe over that thousand year period and refers to variety of genres, including liturgical drama (dramatized version of biblical events on specific days of the year and the dramatization of lessons learnt in mass), mystery and miracle plays (the representation of Bible stories in churches as tableaux with accompanying antiphonal song), morality plays (a type of story in which the protagonist is met by personifications of various moral attributes who try to prompt him to choose a Godly life over one of evil), farces and masques (a courtly entertainment that involved music and dancing, singing and acting within elaborate stage design). Medieval drama, as it has been established, was religious and moral in its themes, staging and traditions. Though other dissenting drama with differing thematic preoccupation was written, most of them could not withstand the spirit of the time because the period was depressing as it was only the churches, cathedrals and monasteries that had an organized system of practice. During this period, drama and dramatic performances

were enslaved and converted to a proselytization machine. It was used for converting pagans, inviting unbelievers to experience God, strengthening the weak in faith, warning heathens on the destruction that awaits every unbeliever and more, to emphasize the position of the church as the only place where salvation can be gotten. Alan (1983) describes this period as a time of heavy dramatic loss because of the monoteity of the thematic occupation of the different genres and loses of the works of other dissenting dramas with differing themes.

Coulson-Grigsby (ibid) traces the birth of medieval dramatic performance to the fall of Western Roman Empire and the shift of power to the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine) where mimes, pantomime, scenes or recitations from tragedies, comedies, dances, and other entertainments were very popular. As Wainscott and Fletcher (2007) hold, Constantinople had two theatres that were used as late as 5th century A.D. which served as a preserve and archive of many classical Greek works and compilation of a massive encyclopedia called the *suda*, from which is derived a large amount of contemporary information on theatre and drama. But from the 6th century, Emperor Justinian finally closed down all theatres for good. According to the binary thinking of the church's early followers, everything that did not belong to God belong to the Devil; thus all non-Christian gods, religions and institutions were satanic. Influential works of Greek and Roman literature were burnt, the thousand year-old-Platonic Academy was closed, the Olympic Games were banned and all theatres were shut down. Church fathers such as Tatian, Tertulian and Augustine characterized the stage as instrument in the devil's fiendish plot to corrupt men's souls, while acting was considered sinful because of its cruel mockery of God's creation. As theatrical event disappeared in Western Europe, nomadic bands traveled throughout this period performing wherever they could find an audience, there is no evidence that they produced anything but crude scenes.

Faced with the problem of explaining a new religion to a large uninformed population, churches in the early Middle Ages began staging dramatized versions of biblical event. This dramatization, which took the form of a *Corpus Christi* (mystery plays), was included in order to vivify annual celebrations. Symbolic objects and actions- vestments, altars, censers, and pantomime performed by priests- recalled the events which Christian ritual celebrates. As Brockett and Hildy (2003) note, performance of religious plays outside of the church began in the 12th century through a traditionally accepted process of merging shorter liturgical dramas into longer plays which were then translated to *vernacular* and performed by laymen and thus accessible to a wider segment of society inclusive of the working class. The use of vernacular enabled drama to be understood and enjoyed by a larger audience.

As the various invasions which the era experienced climaxed and ceased in the High and late medieval period of 11th century A.D., liturgical drama had spread from Russia to Scandinavia to Italy. Only in Muslim occupied Spain were liturgical drama not presented at all. Despite the large number of liturgical dramas that have survived from the period, many churches would have performed one or two per year and a larger number never performed at all. The importance of the High Middle Ages in the development of the theatre, as John (1995) comments, was the economic and political changes that led to the formation of guilds and the growth of towns. This led to the significant changes in Late Middle Ages. In the British Isles, Alford John observed that plays were produced in some 127 different towns during the Middle Ages. These Vernacular Mystery plays were written in cycles of a large number of plays: Yorkshire (48 plays), Winchester (24 plays), Wakefield (32 plays) and Unknown (42 Plays). A larger number of plays survive from France and Germany in this period and some type of religious dramas were performed in nearly every European country in the Late Middle Ages. Many of these plays

contained comedy, devils, villains and clowns. At the end of Late Middle Ages, professional actors began to appear in England and Europe.

Rahman (1995) argues that the deliberate attempt to remove Islam from the core during the Middle Ages by many Western schools of thought has limited the study of the intertwining temperament of religion and politics in history. According to Rahman, the rise of Islam has had a great impact on the political map of the world. Since it was a religious obligation to fight the infidel, caliphs began to expand their Arab Empire through religious obligation. As a result the Islamic faith spread from the African Continent to Asia (Persia, India, and China) and Southern Europe (Spain). Throughout the Middle Ages, the Byzantine Empire was a target of Mohammed's followers until it was finally conquered by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century. Dabashi (2008) acknowledged the political undertone of the expansionist tendencies of the religious institutions in the medieval era. Classifying the intentions of all religious institutions as one, Dabashi noted that though liberation was at the centre of major religious crusades, the political over-current they carried were relegated because of the ignorance of the minds of the medieval man.

From both end of the religious and state binary, theatre institutions witnessed the most of destructions for its roles in educating the medieval man. The theatre institutions were quickly seized by the Church and state and condemned in that it was a place where minds were corrupted. Meri (2006) noted that whilst Islam permitted performances, it did not allow for any performance to depict Allah, the prophet Muhammad, his companions, the angels or matters detailed in the religion that are unseen and this affected the dramatic art as it were. Poetry was given prominence in the stead of drama. The depiction of animate beings was prohibited. One possible reason, Meri explains, is that it removes the risk of idol worship. Both way dramas were

sanctioned and the strictures placed on it from religious institutions were targeted to keep *the* man away from the affairs of the state since it was the sole concern of the political theology.

Despite the contribution of Islam to poesy in the Medieval era, Singh (2008) dates that the collapse of Islam in the West back to its defeat in the 15th century. Illustrating with the several successive crusades carried out by religious institutions in the Middle Ages and the bombing of the Twin Tower on 9/11, Dabashi and Singh noted the roles that religion has played in international relations, politics and globalization.

2.4 Religion and the Revolutionary Elements in Modern African-Arabic Drama

Parrinder (1995) conceded that one of the greatest forces that drive the continent of Africa has been the power of religion. "This incurably religious people" was a phrase often on the lips of many old African administrators. Religion still wields great power in modern world, whether be it an international faith, or the over one thousand and one odd beliefs of Africa. Not only gods but spiritual forces of many kinds are very potent: witness the lucky charms which most babies and many adults wear, the libations made to the spirits at the crises of life, the oaths supported by spiritual sanctions, the witch-hunts that are still so frequent and distressing.

Of course, Ludwig's phrase "the untutored African" is out of date, if it was ever applicable, for all peoples have some traditions and still if not book-learning. Today very many Africans are reaching a high level of education, millions have become Christian or Muslim, and religious loyalties change with other customs. But not only do the majority of Africans still hold to the traditional religion of their fathers but also behind the veneer of the new beliefs of most educated people lie older ideas that will not disappear for a long time yet. Modernity has been contrasted with that attitude of the past when respect and admiration for great founders, for a golden age, for the ancestors and for the precedence developed into a belief in the superiority relative to the

present and subsequently into a belief in the need to revive and imitate the superior achievements of a former age. Our modern traditions, on the other hand, place its faith in the present and the future relative to the past.

African religions are numerous, and these numerous religions are part of a universal phenomenon. African religions are thus parts of world religions. The effects of modernism and postmodernism on the world religions, however, differ from one religion to the other. Oshitelu (2006) notes that one particular effect is obvious and common: modernism and postmodernism have brought the religions together. He asserts that religions now have to compete with each other like political parties and various economic ideologies in democratic modern society. Africa is not behind in experiencing the by-products of modernism and postmodernism. However, in experiencing the by-products of modernism and postmodernism, such as historical criticism, the adoption of a scientific worldview and the enthronement of reason generally, are not equally felt by the religions, as well as the regions of the world. European and American Christianity have been deeply affected from the time of Renes Descartes when modernism could be said to begin, to the modern times. Islam in the Middle East and Asia is at presently going through this trauma, as can be seen in Islamic fundamentalism manifesting in different parts of the world. African traditional religion, African Christianity and African Islam are not unaffected by these encroaching and crushing world phenomena. However, the rate and the effect differ from group to group, from country to country and from one level of a society to the other.

African traditional religion pervades Christianity and Islam in the practices of their religions in Africa. It must be stated here that religion cannot be cocooned into Christianity and Islam alone since religions such as Judaism and African traditional religions precedes them. In modern time, almost all the known religions and religious ideologies are represented in Africa, from major

living religions such as Islam and Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism to apparently non-religious ideologies, such as humanism, communism, Africanism etc. New religious movements such as the Baha'i are also represented. But it is also a known fact, Oshitelu postulated, that the major religions of Africa could be classified into three. These, if listed according to their ages in Africa, include: African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. As potent as these religions cults, sects and other small groups *qua* religion exists within the operatives of the three mentioned above.

2.4.1 African Traditional Religion

It is often queried whether or not one could speak of African traditional religion as a precise term. Can one speak of one indigenous religion for the whole of Africa in considering the complexity of her cultures and systems of beliefs? Careful observation will show that there are common factors such as specific cultural and religious elements, which are common over wide areas, which approximate to one another. With regards to the concept of God, *qua* religions, there is a common thread. There is, for example, one name which appears in various forms in several places according to the indigenous tongue of each locality. Mbiti (1972) noted that "the Kulung, Piya, Pero, Tagale and Waja of Nigeria call it *Yamba* and it appears in the Cameroon and the Congo in the form of *Yambe* or *Yembe* while the Akan of Ghana's name for God is *Onyame* or *Nyame*.

The reason why most other religions have always had difficulty in understanding African religion, Mazrui (2008) notes, is the predisposition towards indigenous religion as heathen. Indigenous religion has not been given the same space with imported religions to explain itself to unbelievers (Idowu, 2005). It is this that has made them to declare it to be primitive. Oshitelu (2002) alludes three reasons to this misconception. Firstly, African traditional religion reaches

far beyond the rational intellectual sphere, as against the western derived religions. The western soul gets jittery whenever magic is mention whereas magic is an aspect of any religion, whether 'primitive' or 'sophisticated'. Secondly, African religion is not connected with a historical prophet or messiah such as with Buddhism Christianity, and Islam. Messiahship only exists within cultural contexts as it can be seen in Wole Soyinka's Yoruba Ogunian archetype. Thirdly, African traditional religion does not possess, at least from the point of view of the Western person, clear and definite dogmas in areas such as social interaction and relationship. But in this precisely lies its strength such as its dynamism, pragmatism and, above all, its attitude of tolerance towards other religions.

In the past ill-intentioned assumptions have been submitted to subjugate African religion and sciences by making over-simplified and over-generalized suppositions but African scholars such as Bolaji Idowu, John S. Mbiti and Omosade Awolalu have exposed the false assumptions, their un-historicity, ignorance about and bias against African traditional religion and culture. One of such bogus attacks on African religion has been the absence of any written corpus on the religious practice of indigenous religion and thus opening itself to distortion occasion by several interpretations of its priests or devotees. However, the nuance between written religious corpus and practice must be clearly defined. Though arguable, it must be stated that what is written does not control what is practiced. It is from practice that all religious corpuses surfaced. Hence, the bogus indictment of African religion should not carry any substance since *its* practice could easily adapt with time rather than slave the mind to the thoughts inherent in religious corpuses.

African traditional religion is indigenous. This means that both Christianity and Islam met traditional religion on the ground. It is not unusual nowadays to talk of 'African Christianity and 'African Islam', but it is an incontrovertible fact, that these latter religions met the traditional

religion on the ground when they arrived. More so, it has been observed that modern African Christianity and Islam are so markedly different from the ones in other parts of the world. It may be true that both Christianity and Islam are spreading very rapidly in Africa, more than their very homelands but they have not succeeded in annihilating traditional religions.

African traditional religion is an essential part of African heritage. It belongs to the people. It was founded by a particular individual, although individuals contribute to its richness. Although it has no written sacred scriptures, which historical criticism, a product of modernism, could be applied to, the religion is found in ritual ceremonies, festivals, shrines, sacred places, religious objects, arts, symbols, music, dance, proverbs, riddles, wise sayings, names of people and places, myths, legends, beliefs, customs in all aspects of life and *Dramatic Performances*. Belief in a personal Supreme Being of almost the same attributes as those in Christianity and Islam is a vital part of African religion. Although it is still a debate whether the pluralities in divinities in African religion implies polytheism, the difference of the Supreme Being, in kind, from the divinities are is indisputable. The spirits and ancestors are also real, even to the African Christians and Muslims (Mbiti, 1976). Though most religions have been taught to regard these as demons, they are real as ever.

Modern African dramas and intellectual rationalization of mid 20th centuries and beyond lend credence to the functioning of religion and revolutionary impulses in Africa's political, social and cultural institutions. Classical African dramatists and critics such as Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark-Bekederemo, Ola Rotimi, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Joel Adedeji, Ali Mazrui, D.O Fagunwa, Duro Ladipo, Dapo Adelugba; and other *trans*-African dramatists and critics such as Ulli Beier, Michael Etherton have proven how religious beliefs feed the dramas of the African continent. The revolutionary ends to which the tragedies of modern African dramas serve is religious more

than it is cultural. The dramas and essays of Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark-Bekederemo, Zulu Sofuola, Ola Rotimi, Dan Izevbaye, and that of contemporary playwright-dramatists such as Femi Osofisan, Don Pedro Obaseki, Emmy Unuja Idegu has given the new voice to the subsumation of African traditional drama to African metaphysics. One of the firebrands of the discourse of revolutionary element in African drama is the Ogunian postulation of Wole Soyinka. According to Nasidi (2002), Soyinka selects three paradigms in the ritual drama of the hero gods: Sango, Obatala, and Ogun. He noted that the gods are not in equal importance in hierarchy in the attempt to explaining the matrix of the society's conception of 'becoming'. Soyinka (1976) distinguishes between primary and secondary paradigms of origin—the primal becoming of man and his racial or social origination. The common recognized grounds in Soyinka's African beliefs are the Three Worlds: the world of the Dead, Living and the Unborn. Less understood is the fourth stage, the dark continuum of essence-ideal and materiality occurs. This houses the ultimate expression of the cosmic will and the Ogun figure, as a result from his passage from this continuum becomes a model for Soyinka's conception of tragedy. Ogun is Soyinka's revolutionary character, the first suffering deity, first creative energy, the first art and the cementer of earth wombs. The Yoruba metaphysics of accommodation and resolution could only come after the passage of the gods through the transitional gulf, after the daemonic test of will of Ogun, the explorer-god, in the creative cauldron of cosmic powers, only after such testing could the harmonious Yoruba world be born, a harmonious will which accommodates every alien material or abstract phenomenon within its infinitely stresses spirituality. The artifact of Ogun's conquest of separation, the "fetish" was iron ore, symbol of earth's womb-energies, cleaver and welder of life. Ogun through his revolutionary action became the first symbol of the

alliance of disparities when, from earth's itself, he extracted element for the subjugation of chthonic chaos.

However, Idegu (2010) defy the position of Soyinka's 'three worlds' drawing allusions from *the* Igala traditional belief-system; a belief-system that is overarching and covers the religious pulse within the Benue-Congo group. Though acknowledging Soyinka, Idegu argues that African cosmology goes beyond the conception and explanation of Soyinka. Drawing from rich and robust cultural tradition of the Igala people of Nigeria as well as those ethnics that has shared cultural ancestry with Igala such as the Idomoid (subgroups of Idoma people), Idegu submits that the world of the dead, the living, and the unborn; as Soyinka paints it, is not applicable holistically to African worldviews. Adedeji (1987) acknowledged that Soyinka's concept and theatrical essence are the most misconstrued and openly denounced especially with reference to the comments and alienation from other cultural credo which needs re-affirmation. What Idegu tries to correct is the appraisal of dramatic works within the cultural base with regards from the point of view and dynamics of the source culture itself. For Idegu, the Igala worldview as well as those that bear the same ancestry with the Igala people does not conform to Soyinka's Yoruba world. As Idegu notes, the Igala worldview is divided into two cosmic worlds: *Efeoj' egwu*; the land of the Dead, and *Ef'ile*; the land of the Living (Idegu, 2007). These worldviews, however different they seem to appear, recognize the reality of life as a journey, or, better, as transitional. This continuum or belief differs from the reality in other parts of African-Arabic descent.

The operational belief-systems in Africa, south of the Sahara, do not fall within the same religious or cultural metaphysics of that obtainable in Afro-Arabian worldviews. The Horn of Africa has a differing outlook rooted in traditional religion before *the* Islamization of the belief-system. The Afro-Arabian worldview has influential roots on the belief-systems of Ancient

Egypt (Guisepi, n.d). Egypt possesses strong central authority to the world views of Afro-Arabians. The pillar of Egyptian cultural belief-system was not science, however, but religion, which was firmly established as the basis of a whole worldview. The religion promoted the worship of many gods. It mixed magical ceremonies and beliefs with worship, in a fashion common to early religions almost everywhere. A more distinctive focus involved the concern with death and preparation for life in another world, where in contrast to the belief-systems in sub-Saharan Africa the Egyptian held that a happy, changeless well-being could be achieved. The care shown in preparing tombs and mummifying bodies, along with elaborate funeral rituals was designed to assure a satisfactory afterlife.

Traditional and modern African dramas and dramatizations have potent roots on the worldviews. The Greeks have been credited with the birth of the theatre; early history proves that Ancient Egypt precedes them in public performances, which were mostly pageant-like, religious in character, ritualistic and to a large extent devoid of drama (Csapo and Miller, 2007). What cannot be removed from these performances are the fact that these performances and rituals carried elements of drama and to a very large extent was dramatic too. The Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus, a script of the ritual in which the king took part. It contains among other things, illustrations of the scenes, the words spoken by the actors representing the various gods and explanatory remarks. The text contains what has been interpreted as staging instructions concerning the actors for a grandiose play where a great number of performers including supernumeraries, props such as statues, and backdrops were used. Symbolic dances which may have been holy rituals and ballet scenes formed part of the performance.

Local myths supplied story lines for many plays which often had satirical overtones: The pharaoh received five hundred lashes, his wives deceived him, he couldn't make up his mind and

became a slave to his advisors; and his architects robbed his wealth. Such revolutionary myths formed the basis of most Egyptian performances. During the Mamluks reign, myths that took a sharp and dissenting cultural base evolved. Stories of how slaves became king surfaced and people began to question the premium and value placed on property, wealth, power, laws, gender and roles such as that of viziers, cadis and sultanates were reinterpreted. Tewfiq al-Hakim's revolutionary works give voice to the changes that took place during this period. Though most of his dramas, as Johnson-Davies (2008) notes were highly texualized, his "theatre of the mind" propels many revolutionary changes that are shapening the Arab world.

2.5 Religion and the Legitimization of Power in African-Arabic drama

Written drama is a latest development in African-Arabic traditions but a rich theatrical tradition had existed in the forms of storytelling, folklore and poesy (Cachia 2002). The legend of the *Arabian Nights* owes its success to such theatre tradition. Johnson-Davies (2008) notes that literary dramas were given much thought rather than dramatic performances because of the establishment and purity of Arabic language often mixed with regional vernacular. Conventional drama was believed to be prone to idol worship and polytheism because of its external influences and was treated as *haram*. However, Tewfiq al-Hakim (1981) stated that the moving homeland separated the Arab from the theatre. As he noted, the first thing that the theatre requires is stability. The Arabs lacked a settled feeling. Thus, Tewfiq al-Hakim observed that the true reason for their neglect of dramatic poetry which requires a theatre is the upward movement towards the north. Renowned as one of the foremost Egyptian and Arabic writers of this century, al-Hakim is credited with developing an Egyptian theatrical identity through the content, regional colour and language of his drama.

For the most part of the dramas of African societies in the 20th century, religion functioned as a tool to check on the excesses of government and the social codes of the society. Ebrahim Hussein in *Kinjeketile*, Ngug wa Thiong'O in *Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Wole Soyinka in *Kongi's Harvest, A Dance of the Forest,* and *Death and the King's Horseman* demonstrate the use of religion in the resistance of power; and in the case of *The Trials of Brother Jero*, the use of religion to withhold power.

Hammuda (1979) dated the first production of Arabic play to 1847 or 1848. The works of the first Arab playwright, Ahmad Shawqi (1870- 1932) was performed before a few audience in attendance. The audience members were mostly non-Arabs and vast majority of Arabs saw them as renegade. Omotoso (1981), notes that the works of Shawqi were largely hinged on materials drawn from Arab Islamic history and myth. The thematic commitments of Shawqi's works were essentially religious and they were pinned down in Arabism. The societies that Shawqi mirrored were monarchical; and since religion was the belief that most monarchies validated their rule and extended their power, religion became an authentic instrument in bestowing legitimacy. The idea that kings and royal families were descendants of gods legitimized the power of political heads. This believe continued into the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Whilst meddle of religion and politics were at the epicentre of the medieval age, Arabic Africa was experiencing its own form of religious interaction and exchange with the state. In Egypt as of the same period with the Holy Emperor in Rome, traces of religious intrusiveness in politics governed the affairs of the state in Egypt. The issue of legitimization became confronted with two belief-systems: indigenous Egyptian beliefs and the rise of Islam (Allen, 2000). Though the North Africans had already established the politics and power structures based on native beliefs prior to the Arabicization of the region, a disjuncture between Arabic worldview in Egypt and

indigenous cultural traditions became a source problem for the people. The legitimacy to power once gotten from native beliefs was Arabicized (Jayyusi, 1995).

The dramas of Yusuf Idris (1927-1991) explore Arab roots, Arab identity and the new face for Egyptian (Arab) drama. The analysis of Idris's eight plays in the light of Egyptian (Arab) post-1952 social, political, and cultural realities enabled critics of African-Arabic drama to clarify the playwright's ideas and understand why his literary works have occasioned so much discussions and so many polemics. Significant to most Egyptian (Arab) political dramas are the elemental presence of Mameluke fiefdom in political and power distribution (Cohen, 2001). Amin (2009) owes the profound influence of drama to the reign of Mamelukes in the 19th century.

Mamelukes were the members of military caste, originally comprising enslaved Turks, that ruled Egypt between 13th and the 16th centuries, and remaining powerful until the 19th century. The mameluke sovereignty, Kognet (2011) notes, was the creation of a specific warrior class of great political importance that was extraordinarily long-lived. The consolidation of the mameluke class, particularly in Egypt, birthed the acceptance of dramatic performance on courts. Some mamelukes attained the status of sultan whilst others who held regional power as Amirs (Emirs) or Beys (governors) allowed drama to flourish on their domain. The religious beliefs that they were descendants of warriors and ordained rulers of the earth likened them to medieval era's Holy Emperor. Just as it were with the religion and politics of the Middle Ages, mameluke sultanates were as well the spiritual and political figure of the state.

The first playwright who attempted to write drama within the belief-system of Islam was Ali Ahmad Ba-Kathir.

Ba- Kathirs first play, *In the City of Ahqaf* (1934) is an attempt to Islamized Arab drama and the dramatic elements of pagan worships in the courts of indigenous Egypt. *The Tragedy of Oedipus*, another attempt of Ba-Kathir to displace pagan beliefs and gods, points out that the curse of the gods was not on Oedipus. Rather, his ill luck was attributed to the result of the demoniacal plans set in motion from the beginning by the Priest of Delphi, who misused his office and made a false prediction; he then went out of his way to make it come to be. Omotoso (1981) points out that the interest of Ba-kathir's *The Tragedy of Oedipus* comes when the Priest is brought to deserve punishment and Oedipus leaves his palace. The roles that indigenous religion play in the Greek version of *Oedipus Rex* and the roles it play in other versions as Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, Tewfiq's *Oedipus Rex*, amongst many other, challenge Ba-Kathir's effort to enslave drama within the confine of monotheistic religion.

Most dramatists of Arab origin have always been committed to drama within tenets of religion and have related the themes of power based on hands of the man that possess deepest insight into religious knowledge. Alfred Faraq, one of Egypt's playwrights, was among the first to use his works to shape Arabic drama with the preoccupation of buttressing Egyptian cultural politics since the mamelukes without losing touch on the role that religion plays in the Egyptian social and political life. Farag's dramatic themes, his tireless campaign to democratize the theatre, his commitment to cultural awareness in the remote and rural regions of Egypt, and in addition, to the cities led to his imprisonment, censorship, and exile from the powers of the state.

The framed stories in *Thousand and One Nights* or what has been referred to as *the Arabian Nights* introduced the theme of power, gender, justice, forgiveness and the ability of drama to transform beliefs and vanquish death. Although *Arabian Nights* covers a vast array of themes and subjects, the concept of power is particularly prominent throughout the tales.

> The frame story of The Arabian Nights describes the vindictive fury of King Shahryar who, upon executing his adulterous wife, vows to marry a different virgin every night, only to have them killed the following morning. Scheherazade, the daughter of the King's Vizier takes it upon herself to save the women of the kingdom from Shahryar's wrath and offers herself as a bride to the king. The vizier, her father, tells Scheherazade stories to stop her but she remains unconvinced and marries the King. With the help of her younger sister, Dunyazade, she obtains the King's permission to tell him a story just as their wedding nights is about to end. The story remains unfinished at daybreak, when the king must rise to attend to the affairs to the state; his curiosity piqued, Shahryar resolves to postpone Scheherazade execution so he can hear the end of the story. But the following night only brings another novel fragment, and the King postpones his wife's execution yet again. What follows is a series of interlocking stories that cover a vast array of subjects. The tales have a deeply nested structure, with stories within stories within stories. The hundreds of fairytales, legends, romances, fables, anecdotes, and other fictions include, among other tales, the discovery of the City of Brass, Abu Hassan's waking dreams, the bizarre peregrinations of Sinbad, the sailor, Ali Baba's dangerous and tempting encounter with the forty thieves, Alladin's entry into the world of magic, the insomniac caliph Harun al- Rashid's wanderings throughout Baghdad, and many others. The stories and their connective narrative threads constitute an entire universe of human experience. The King eventually fall under the spell of Scheherazade storytelling magic and fascinated by her seemingly inexhaustible fun of tales abounding in fantastic events and breathtaking denouements, willingly spares her life and accepts her as his queen.

The depiction of the awesome might of rulers who hold absolute power, to give life or take it as please, one that divine authority bestows is brought to fore. Shahryar strikes a man-god posture of naked and brutal state force that only Sherazade could tame. His intention to kill all the virgins of the kingdom on the first night of marriage because of his adulterous wife, that he killed, shows the degree of his brutality.

In *The Song of Death*, Tewfiq al-Hakim uses religion conversely to challenge the primeval status quo. Alwan, Tewfiq's hero, reinterprets religion and stem to use the power inherent in it for

humanity. Unlike the religious propaganda Ba-Kathir's dramas carry, Tewfiq stepped out of the belief-systems of Arabism to attain a self criticism.

Modern Egypt is preoccupied by political theatre with religion playing revolutionary roles (Hamdan, 2011). The 'bitter cup' of religious misapplication in the past has been replaced by the 'holy rain' of a better future brought about by radical religious interpretation. This is one of the commitments of Tewfiq al-Hakim's dramas. Women have suddenly become aware of their position and are struggling to be allowed to live, determine their own future and to acquire property like Tewfiq notes with Lady in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. The works of Tewfiq, more than any other in pan-Arabic Africa, rise above the inhibitions that religion posed to politics, power distribution and the civil systems in Arabic Africa.

2.6 Methodology

There are more than a few research methods accessible to the researcher in bringing hypotheses to fore. Nonetheless, due to the aptness to the purpose of research, the researcher is conditioned to select from the arrays of methods the one or ones, as the case may be, that best serve the area of the research study. This inclination is not a far-cry from this researcher. Research methodologies are mainly categorized into; qualitative research and quantitative research methodologies.

Quantitative research methods are used to generate hypothesis and empirical truths (Ifatimehin, 2011). Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena through statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. The objective of a quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories, and (or) hypotheses pertaining to the research (*Quantitaive Research*, 2009). The process of measurement is central to this type of research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and

mathematical expression of quantitative relationships. It is mostly used in the social sciences and does not fit into this research. This research is interpretative. It is expository. It asks broad questions and collects word data from observers and participants. It intends to understand human experience by interpreting the constructs of that experience. The research method that better serve these intents in a study in the humanities of this degree is the Qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research stems to explore new phenomena and to capture individual's 'thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process (Given, 2008). These thoughts, feelings and interpretations according to Adogbo (2009) could be captured through qualitative research tools which Ifatimehin affirms, include the review of bibliotheca tools, that is, written materials such as books, journals, magazines, e-books; observation and interview. This study consequently shall utilize these tools in its research as methodology.

The written material available for the intertwining of religion and politics is substantial but do not extend to the criticism of African-Arabic drama. Hence, the use of interviews, both structured and unstructured, notes, discussions and some accessible written materials will be relevant to find out the opinions and ideas of scholars and researchers which are significant to the area under study.

Though the information gathered from this method may not be exhaustive, the study stems to open the doors for researchers to appreciate the dramas of Africa holistically.

Because religion is sensitive and acidic societal issue, this researcher will appraise the transaction of religion and politics of *the* Afro-Arabo states from a safe distance and stem to evoke revolutionary impulses which such transactions bring. The dramas of Tewfiq al-Hakim as well as other African playwrights will nourish the soul of this study but focal spot will be on *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach.*

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The concept of religion wither its influence on politics have been an essential debate among atheist, pantheist and even theonomy. Whilst some schools of thought have remained indifferent to the authority of the 'divine element' from the affairs of the state other schools still recognize the influence of religion in the affairs of the state. Idowu (1973) notes that;

> Religion, qua religion, needs no apologetics to establish the fact of its existence on the formulation of moral laws and that it is concomitant with almost every sphere of human activity from time immemorial. That it has always been a sphere of human activity is not debatable, even though there are those who argue whether it is a *proper* sphere of human activity or not. (*African Traditional Religion*: *A Definition*: 1)

Idowu went further to state that

> Religion is an inescapable involvement of every member of the human race. Societies are all religious in the sense that they believe in the 'sacred' and are committed to one faith or another; in the sense of those who seek and try to establish a 'reasonable and acceptable substitute' religion; or in the sense of those who think that they are only interested in 'religion' without being involved religion, except insofar as they seek to fill up life's aching void with spiritualism, astrology, magic or some other forms of occultism. (*African Traditional Religion*: *A Definition*: 2).

The void inherent on the influence of religion in politics is the one between which religious belief and religious practice forms the moral laws of the state; and the facade of secularity. This work will adopt the Liberation Perspectives as theoretical framework. The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1973) is among the well known proponents of liberation pedagogy. These perspectives derive largely from liberation theology, which prioritizes personal and social liberation from every form of oppression. Liberation theology assumes that people want to be free, self-reliant and fully achieve the essence of being but certain forms of oppression restrict their ability to do so. Therefore, the purpose of human development is the liberation from all

internal and external inhibitions which priestcraft and certain religious practice have placed on humanity.

There have been in 'religion' certain things against which the best instincts in man rebel, especially as man learns to bring his emotions under control and apply his critical judgment (as in *The Sultan's Dilemma*) even to the experiences of life. In every case of man's revolution against 'religion', as the Sultan shows in *The Sultan's Dilemma*, the revolt is invariably not against religion *qua* religion, but against a scheme of religion or a religious institution which is a prostitution of essential religion, or something in religion that contradicts its basic spiritual and moral claims. Priestcraft and ordained political leaders with all their insult and disgusting sins against humanity, abuse of the authority recognized by the people because it is religious, 'holy' cruelty, immorality, and other gruesome forms of inhumanity carried out in the name of God—these have been a constant embarrassment to religion and have raised serious questions as to its value for humanity.

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CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Introduction to the Life and Works of Tawfiq Al-Hakim

Tawfiq al-Hakim was born in Alexandria in 1898. His father was from the wealthy peasant class and had married a Turkish lady. His parents' comparative wealth and bourgeois pride led them to scorn the Egyptian peasantry and to isolate the young Tawfiq from any companionship among the poorer boys who lived near their country estate. Perhaps this lack of companionship led him to enter an inner world of thought at an early age, since the doors to the outer world were closed on him. His mother introduced him to art, giving him books to read and letting him participate in the back-stage activities of a local troupe of dancers and musicians. He went to secondary school in Damanhour, a market town near the family estate in the Delta, and then was sent to the Muhammed Ali School in Cairo for his secondary education. In Cairo he lived with his father's cousins, who were poor, but whom he liked because of their natural gaiety and openness. In 1919, he and his cousins participated in the revolution in favour of Saad Zaghloul against the British.

When he was twenty-one years old, he was put in prison for a time because of his distribution of revolutionary tracts and poems. In 1921 he began studying law at the Sultaniya Law School, which had become the principal training ground for Egypt's intellectual leaders of the new generation, as the Azhar had been for the generation before. Al-Hakim graduated in 1924 in a class with Yahya Haqqi, who later became an ambassador and a renowned novelist.

While in law school he associated with the directors and actors of the active Cairo theaters. He was totally enchanted by the theater, as one can see by reading some of his autobiographical short stories written about his student days. He wrote some plays during this time that were performed even though they have not been published.

He finished law school in 1924 and persuaded his father to send him to Paris to study for his doctorate in Law. There he stayed about four years studying not only law but French and Western culture in general. He read French novels, went to plays and concerts and discussed literature with the artists of Paris. With his father's wealth, he was able to live the life of a devoted student of the arts in Paris. While there he decided to prepare himself to become one of the national writers of his country in the field of the novel and the theater. He began writing his famous novel about pre-revolution Egypt, 'Audet al-Ruh (*Return of the Spirit*), while he was in Paris. In fact he wrote it in French and later transposed to Arabic and published it in 1933. He wrote some of his first short stories in Paris and later published them in Ahl al-Fann (*The Arty People*) in 1934. "Al-Sha'ir" (*The Poet*) from these early stories has been translated into French it is reminiscent of the Parisian impressions of many other expatriate artists have had in Montmartre. He also wrote his first well-known plays in Paris. His humorous "Devant le Guichet" was first performed in Paris and later translated into Arabic as Amam shubbak al-Tathakir.

In 1928 he returned to Egypt and got a job as attorney to the Public Prosecutor, working in the district courts of the Delta. These six years in the country gave him the opportunity of meeting many people who would later become characters in his social plays and novels, such as Yomiyat Na'ib fil-Aryaf (*Diary of a Deputy Prosecutor in the Country*). The short stories in al-'Adaleh wa al-Fann are more incidents like those related in Yomiyat which take place in the country. Yomiyat Na'ib fil Aryaf has been translated into many languages, including English.

In 1933, he became Inspector General for the Ministry of Education and stayed in this post until 1939 when he moved to the Ministry of Social Affairs as Director of Social Guidance. He retired from government service in 1943. During this second period in his life, a period of easy desk

jobs, he refined and published the works he had been working on before. Thus his famous *Ahl al-Kahf* (*The Men of the Cave*) which appeared in 1933 is a significant event in Egyptian drama, as well as *Audet al- Ruh* (1933), and *Shahrazad* in 1934, assured his reputation as one of Egypt's greatest writers. Since his only contact with the world was his desk job in the ministry, he became known as the writer in the Ivory Tower.

The story of *The Men of the Cave* is to be found on the eighteenth Surah of the Quran as well as in other sources. It concerns the tale of seven sleepers of Ephesus who, in order to escape the Roman persecution of Christians, take refuge in a cave. They sleep for three hundred years, and wake up in a completely different era – without realizing it, of course. In its use of overarching themes – rebirth into a new world and a predilection for returning to the past – Tewfiq al-Hakim's play touches upon some of the broad cultural topics that were of major concern to intellectuals at the time, and, because of the play's obvious seriousness of purpose, most critics have chosen to emphasize such features. He wrote many essays and short stories on society, politics, and art, which played a formative role on the thoughts of many Egyptians of his day, and even today they are often quoted. He turned increasingly to plays, many of which were about society, and politics.

3.2 Drama and the Commitments in Tewfiq al-Hakim's Theatre

Dramatic criticisms of sub-Saharan Africa have a preconceived notion that works of Tewfiq al-Hakim are literary more than they are dramatic. For the most, these sets of dramatic critic have drawn conclusions from what Tewfiq al-Hakim termed the "theatre of the mind". They hold that the dramas of Tewfiq are not meant to be performed and that his exposure to Western forms of drama in France from the beginning of 19th century down to 20th century delimits his dramaturgy in dramatic craft. Citing his exposure to Luigi Pirandello, these critics have drawn from *Masra al-Mujtama*, that is, "theatre of society", that the most effective way society could relate to

drama because of the widely held religious belief towards it was to appeal to the artistic vision of the audience. Sublime as the extrapolation of the theatre of the mind appears, drama is a universal medium of expression that cannot be confined or reduced to being read for the purpose of it. Dramatic works are tested on stage and are verified by the audience before they can be appraised on public domain (Yerima, 2006). Thus, one can beacon on the dramas of Tewfiq al-Hakim in the same weight that African drama can be assessed. This inclusiveness is valued in the same *modus* with which other dramatic works are appraised.

Tewfiq al-Hakim turned increasingly to dramas, many of which were about society, and politics. He treats the problems of Africa (Arab) with a humorous touch. Many of these plays which have been translated into French and English are preoccupied with the complications and complexities which Africans (Arab) still exhibits. His other serious full-length dramas deal with the mystical search for a higher world here on earth, elaborating on the themes and conflicts brought out in *Ahl al-Kahf*, that is, *The Men of the Cave* (1933) and *Shahrazad* (1934). He used subjects drawn from the Bible, the Koran, "Song of Songs," and *Arabian Nights* to pursue the interface of religion on governance. Jeyifo (2002) in *Modern African Drama* called these serious plays his *masrah dhihiny,* or "intellectual theater."

The most refined evocation of the East was in his plays, which were dramatizations of famous Arab stories and dealt with the peculiar ways the Arab (Egyptian in particular) faced his universe. Hakim has definite views on the particular qualities of the Egyptian (and Arab) experience. The conventional conception of classical Greek tragedy is converse with the worldview of Egyptians. Hoppe (1969) observes that whilst Greek tragedy is concerned with Fate versus Justice, Egyptian tragedy is preoccupied with Time versus Place. According to Hakim, Egyptian drama "is the victory of the spirit over Time and Place: that victory is the

resurrection (ba'th) not to another world without time and place, but to this same world with its time and place." This victory is evident in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. The Muezzin call to prayer (time) will follow the death of Condemned Man at the square (space). The maneuvering of Muezzin by Lady and the subsequent delay of the call to prayer (time) sets Condemned Man free from Executioner. This triumph over time and space by Condemned Man propels the action of the play. Tewfiq al-Hakim does not, holistically, see this philosophy as a consolation because of its emphasis on afterlife; he views it from its tragic angle with inquiries: is it worth being reborn to a new time and place which is the same as this? And secondly, can man be worthy of being reborn? These are the questions he treats in *The Men of the Cave* (1933) where he represents Man's struggle with Time, as the sleepers of the cave come back to life and find all they had lived for in the past does not apply to the present. They seek in vain for a bridge between their souls and their fleeting surroundings. *Shahrazad* (1934) is the struggle between man and Place: King Shahrayar struggles to project his thoughts above sensuous reality in order to reach a truth which lets him live at peace with the world.

Haqqi criticized Hakim's idealistic and mystical writings like the plays *Audet al-Ruh* (1933) and *The Men of the Cave*. He argued that mysticism and symbolism were of no use to Egypt. Though Haqqi did not periodize the Egypt he had in mind, other Arabian critics and dramatists have acknowledged the mystic and symbolist elements in Tewfiq's dramas as one of Tewfiq's even-handedness in handling religious materials and power. His philosophical blend of interacting power with religion can be seen in *Pygmalion* (1942), an interesting mix of the legends of Pygmalion and Narcissus; *Sulayman el-Hakim* (*Solomon the Wise*, 1943), and *El-Malik Udib* (*King Oedipus*, 1949).

Apart from the “Theatre of Society” and “Theatre of Ideas” that Tewfiq al-Hakim is known for, his *Masrah el-Munawwa* (Theatre Miscellany, 1956) is noted for Tewfiq’s revolutionary interpretation of religion and power. The most memorable of these plays is *Ughneyyet el-Mawt* (*The Song of Death*), a one-act play that with masterly economy depicts the fraught atmosphere in Upper Egypt as a family awaits the return of the eldest son, Alwan, a student in Cairo, in order that he may carry out a murder in response to the expectations of a blood feud.

Tewfiq al-Hakim's response to the social transformations brought about by the 1952 revolution, which he later criticized, was the play, *El Aydi El Na'mah* (*Soft Hands*, 1954). The 'soft hands' of the title refer to those of a prince of the former royal family who finds himself without a meaningful role in the new society, a position in which he is joined by a young academic who has just finished writing a doctoral thesis on the uses of the Arabic preposition *hatta*. The play explores in an amusing, yet rather obviously didactic, fashion the ways in which these two apparently useless individuals set about identifying roles for themselves in the new socialist context. While this play may be somewhat lacking in subtlety, it clearly illustrates in the context of al-Hakim's development as a playwright the way in which he had developed his technique in order to broach topics of contemporary interest, not least through a closer linkage between the pacing of dialogue and actions on stage (Jayyusi and Allen, 1995).

In 1960 Tewfiq al-Hakim provided further illustration of this development in technique with another drama set in an earlier period of Egyptian history, *El Sultan El-Ha'er* (*The Sultan’s Dilemma*). The drama explores in a most effective manner the issue of the legitimization of power. A Mameluke sultan at the height of his power is suddenly faced with the fact that he has never been manumitted and that he is thus ineligible to be ruler. By 1960 when this play was published, some of the initial euphoria and hope engendered by the Nasserist regime itself, given

expression in El Aydi El Na'mah, had begun to fade. The Egyptian people found themselves confronting some unsavoury realities: the use of the secret police to squelch the public expression of opinion, for example, and the personality cult surrounding the figure of Gama Abdel Nasser. In such a historical context, tied to the recent realities confronting the Arabic region Tewfiq al-Hakim's play can be seen as a courageous statement of the need for even the mightiest to adhere to the laws of the land and specifically a plea to the ruling military regime to eschew the use of violence and instead seek legitimacy through application of the law.

Tewfiq al-Hakim's works have been categorized into three types; biographical theatre; the group of plays he wrote in his early life in which he expressed his personal experience and attitudes towards life were more than 400 plays among which were "al-Arees", (The Groom) and "Amam Shebak al-Tazaker", (Before the Ticket Office). These plays were more artistic because they were based on Al Hakim's personal opinion in criticizing social life. Intellectual Theatre; this dramatic style produced plays to be read not acted. Thus, he refused to call them plays even where they were performed in other parts of Africa. Objective Theatre; another category of his drama aims to contribute to the Egyptian society by fixing some values of the society, exposing the realities of Egyptian life.

Tewfiq al-Hakim touched on many aspects of country life—the preoccupation of the government officials with politics, the trickery and deceit of the so-called religious leaders, the false pride of the peasants, and the inability of the overworked officials to cope with the daily crimes, feuds and complaints. Critics in the past who have accused the commitments of Tewfiq have turned to appraise his works based on the human values it pursues. According to Hoppe, Tewfiq looks at people from their spiritual side and raises them above material things. His characters are always

trying to bridge the gap between reality and the spiritual. Al-Hakim does not lose opportunities for some humorous observations on society, religion and the new politics.

Tewfiq al-Hakim was able to understand nature and depict it in a style which combines symbolism, reality and imagination. He mastered narration, dialogue and selecting settings. While al-Hakim's early plays were all composed in the literary language, he was to conduct a number of experiments with different levels of dramatic language. In the play, *El-Safqah* (*The Deal*, 1956), for example – with its themes of land ownership and the exploitation of poor peasant farmers – he couched the dialogue in something he termed 'a third language', one that could be read as a text in the standard written language of literature, but that could also be performed on stage in a way which, while not exactly the idiom of Egyptian Arabic, was certainly comprehensible to a larger population than the literate elite of the city.

That modern Arabic drama is diffused in many lands, as Chinese and Japanese literature have, the translations of the works of Tawfiq al-Hakim to English and other languages lead the way for other parts of the world to appreciate Arabic drama. Al-Hakim, more than any other Arab writer, sees the Arab world through the optimistic glasses of the West. His view of the Arab world is tinted by the enchantment expected of the East, but which many Easterners themselves do not feel. This is not to say that there is anything artificial about his writing. He gratifies the Westerner's delight in witnessing the Eastern soul, but he also shows the difficulties of living with such a soul. This tragic aspect in Hakim's Easternism makes him more solid than innumerable romantics who have written about the exotic Middle East, without recognizing the contradictions in the very Eastern soul which seems so mysterious. One of the most striking characteristics of al-Hakim is his sensitivity to the Arab past. Like the great playwright, Ahmed Shawqi, he took subjects for his writing from the ancient works, Arab folk tales, *The Thousand*

and One Nights, the Bible, and the Koran. All his works reflect a deep respect for the East and its unique heritage. As an artist, he tried to incorporate into his work what he felt was the essence of past Arab genius.

Tewfiq al-Hakim transcribed many Egyptian myths into drama but one of his shortfalls as a playwright remains the fact that he could not explore the story of Egyptian resistance against the British or attempt to neatly delineate the nuances between the Cairene worldview and the Arabian worldviews.

3.3 The Interaction of Religion and Politics in *The Sultan's Dilemma* and the Revolutionary Impulse in *Fate of a Cockroach*

The period spanning from High Medieval period to Late Medieval period witnessed many changes in the interaction between religion and politics both in Europe, Asia and in the Middle East. In Africa, the rise of alien belief-systems on the pretext of civilization affected the prevailing conditions of politics. These manifested in the thematic occupations of the dramas of this era. Among the many works that evolve during the modern Arabic era, the dramas of Tewfiq al-Hakim is noted for its revolutionary impulse to shake up the *status quo* by exposing the gaps that exist in the social and religious order. These impulses are evoked by deep philosophical thoughts arising from the point of consciousness and are used to resolve dramatic conflicts. *The Sultan's Dilemma* is an archetype of the mindfulness of the *collusion* between belief-system and politics. Whilst, more often, religious institutions confront themselves in manners that threatens to disintegrate society; they both, again, depend on each other for survival and sustenance (Adeniyi, 2006).

3.3.1 Summary of *The Sultan's Dilemma*

The Sultan's Dilemma explores the question of the legitimization of power, justice and morality and the inefficacies that result from religious and moral codes. In *The Sultan's Dilemma*, a mameluke sultan who has acceded to the throne is found not to have been properly manumitted. As it is with the belief of the people, the sultan becomes unaccepted, and hence, ineligible to rule. To suppress the voice of the people, Vizier, an agent of the state, applies the might of the sword (without court trial) to quench every agitation arising from the sultan's unacceptability. The first victim of the state military force is Condemned Man, who has been sentenced to death at the call to *dawn prayer* by Muezzin. The dialogue between Executioner and Condemned Man beacons on the complex interplay of religious institutions and politics.

> **Executioner**: At dawn I'll carry out the sentence on you…
> **Condemned Man**: Dawn? It's still far off, isn't it, Executioner?
> **Executioner**: I don't know.
> **Condemned Man**: You don't know?
> **Executioner**: *It's the Muezzin who knows. When he goes up to the minaret of this mosque and gives the call to the dawn prayer, I'll raise my sword and swipe off your head*- those are the *orders*. (Emphases is mine).
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 96).

The death of Condemned Man lies on the voice of the Muezzin; in a call to dawn's prayer, not on the sword of Executioner. The sword is a metaphor which Vizier and the sultanate represent. The interconnectedness of religious institution and politics is further made manifest by Condemned Man;

> Without a trial? I haven't yet be put on trial, I haven't yet appeared before a judge.
> **Executioner**: That's nothing to do me.
> **Condemned Man**: For sure, you have nothing to do with anything except my execution.
> **Executioner**: At dawn, in furtherance of the Sultan's orders.
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays,* 96).

The decision of Vizier to use military force to quell the protests and dissents that arise from the failure of the past potentate to manumit Sultan falls short of the cultural and religious standard that the people sets for themselves. To remedy the situation as required by *the* law, Sultan has himself sold by auction, certain in knowledge that his new owner will set him free and forfeits its money. Lady buys Sultan at auction by proxy and refused to set him free. After much dialogue, Lady agrees to free Sultan at dawn after spending a night with him. Fear that Lady may not release Sultan leads Cadi to manipulate Muezzin in order to subvert the time to dawn's prayer. Lady signs the manumission agreement despite the trickery of Cadi and frees Sultan.

3.3.2 Language, Dialogue and Interface of Religion and Politics in *The Sultan's Dilemma*

The relationship between *The Sultan's Dilemma and* the interface of time, religion and politics deals with language among other forms of communication. Explained as " the expression and communication of emotions, or ideas between human beings by means of speech and hearing, the sounds being spoken or heard being systemized and confirmed among a given people over a period of time", language also has to do with the conveyance of information and thought" (Funk and Wagnall, 1978). Umar-Buratai (2009), asserted that theatre itself is a communication medium, given its deployment of images, symbols and metaphor and a whole array of verbal and non-verbal devices in order to signify meaning to the audience. Dialogue is one of the devices in drama that brings out meaning and shows the commitment of the playwright. Tewfiq al-Hakim employs colloquial Arabic mixed with Egyptian idiolects to set the tone of *The Sultan's Diilemma*.

Dialogue in Tewfiq al-Hakim's *The Sultan's Dilemma* is an index of social class, religious temperament and ethical signifier; it is also a vehicle for characterization (Adelugba, 2011). The characterization of Vizier and Muezzin plays a persuasive role in the manipulation of religion in order to attain political ends and vice versa. Chief Cadi, represents the stringent temperament of

religious law which Vizier and Muezzin manipulates. The light-headedness of the Muezzin to give the call to dawn's prayer that will follow the death of Condemned Man raise up serious questions about the Arab (African) perception of time. The crisis of time- what constitutes dawn- is a major issue which surmounts the understanding of the Muezzin. He complains thus;

> I'm at a loss about this dawn- sometimes I'm asked to put it back and sometimes I'm asked to put it forward.
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays,* 166).

The latitude to which religion opens itself to be interpreted to serve both social and political causes is deepened by the mystification of time. Religious activities, like the *call to prayer* in *The Sultan's Dilemma* are removed from the religious end it serves to be manipulated by the state machineries. The roles that religion and religious institution play in the manumitting process of Sultan are both sentient and unconscious. These constituents set the motion of the plot of *The Sultan's Dilemma*. The first is the pretence and indifference with which contemporary religious thoughts perceive politics; and the other is the rational templates that religion consciously offers to redeem mankind. These elements play themselves out in the first Act of the text;

> **Executioner**: Hurry, O Muezzin- we're waiting for you.
> **Muezzin**: Waiting for me? Why?
> **Executioner**: To give the call to the dawn prayer.
> **Muezzin**: Do you want to pray?
> **Executioner**: I want to carry out my work.
> **Muezzin**: What have I to do with your work?
> **Executioner**: When your voice rises up to the sky the soul of this man will rise with it.
> **Muezzin**: God forbid!
> **Executioner**: Those are the orders.
> **Muezzin**: The life of this man hangs on my vocal chords?
> **Executioner**: Yes.
> **Muezzin**: There is no power and no strength save in God!

(*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 108).

The duty of Executioner rests on the exertion of a clergy- the voice of Muezzin. Though the muezzin's call to prayer has nothing to do with any political activity, Tewfiq al-Hakim neatly ties them together. He thrusts the death of Condemned Man on Muezzin. Salvation is now transferred to the muezzin who is faced with his own dilemma between giving the call to dawn's prayer that will cause the beheading of Condemned Man or refraining from performing his religious rites. The involvement of Cadi, the custodian and representative of canonical law, in bending the law to rescue Sultan from the enchantment of Lady is the mindful extent to which religious totems can go in influencing matters of the state. Chief Cadi is a representation of the fluidity of canonical law in politics. Whilst his posture as the custodian of religious law in the political arrangement of the society is known for its rigid and fundamental adherence, the interpretation of canonical law in *The Sultan's Dilemma* transcends the understanding of Cadi. The conversation between Sultan, Vizier and Cadi captures the sturdiness of the law but on the ground of interpretation, they are faced with the dilemma of applying the sword of the law to quiet every opposition or to abide by the uncertainties of the principles of it. Chief Cadi says;

> The sword certainly does away with heads and tongues; it does not; however, do away with difficulties and problems.
>
> **Sultan**: What do you mean?
>
> **Cadi**: I mean that the problem will still nevertheless remain, namely that the sultan is ruling without having been manumitted, and that a slave is at the head of a free people.
>
> **Vizier**: Who dares to say this? Whoever does so will have his head cut off.
>
> **Cadi**: That is another question.
>
> **Vizier**: It is not necessary for a person ruling to be carrying around documents and proofs. We have the strongest and most striking example of this in the Fatimid dynasty. Everyone of us remembers what Al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah Al-Fatimi did. One day he came along claiming he was descendant from the Prophet (the prayers of God be upon him), and when the people

did not believe him, he went at them with drawn sword and opened up his coffers of gold, saying 'These are my forebears, these my ancestors'…

Sultan: What do you say about this, Cadi?

Cadi: Then, O illustrious Sultan, you would like to solve your problem through this method?

Vizier: Truly, why not... It is sufficient for us to announce publicly that Our Majesty the Sultan has been legally manumitted, that he was manumitted by the late Sultan before his death, and that the documents and proofs are recorded and kept with the Chief Cadi- and death to anyone who dares deny it!

Cadi: There is a person who will so deny.

Vizier: who's that?

Cadi: I.

Sultan: You?

Cadi: Yes, Your Majesty. I cannot take part in this conspiracy.

Vizier: It is not a conspiracy- it's a *plan* for saving the situation.

Cadi: It is a *conspiracy* against the law I represent.

(*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays. 118).*

Here, the tension between canonical law and the state is established. The *love-hate* relationship between religion and politics shoots out when religious institutions deem political *plans* as *conspiracy* against moral codes. Religion checks the excesses of the state when power transcend its frame to tamper and temper with canonical law. Cadi goes further to dare Sultan;

Yes, Sultan- the law. In the eyes of the civil and religious codes you are only a slave, and a slave- by civil and religious law- is regarded as a thing, a chattel. As the late Sultan, who had power of life and death over you, did not manumit you before his death, you are thus still a thing, a chattel, owned by someone else, and so you have forfeited the qualification for entering into the normal transactions exercised by the rest of free people.

Sultan: Is this the law?

Cadi: Yes.

Vizier: Take it easy, Chief Cadi! *We are not now discussing the view of the law but are looking for a way by which to be free of this law*, and the way to be free of it is to assume that manumission has in fact taken place…

Cadi: In relation to me it's different, *for I cannot fool myself and I cannot free myself from the law*, being as I am the person who represents it; I cannot break an oath

by which I took upon myself to be the trusted servant of the civil and religious law.

Sultan: *You took this upon yourself before me.* (Emphases are mine).

(*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 1818-119).

From the foregoing, it can be drawn that the attempts of the state or its agents to free itself from canonical law meets strong resistance posed by the sanctions of religious institutions. The same thing passes for religious institution when it attempts to free itself from civil law. This is evident in Act three of *The Sultan's dilemma* where Cadi bends the principles of the canonical law he represents in attempt of release Sultan from the enchantment of Lady. Cadi orders Muezzin to climb the minaret and give the call to dawn prayer even before dawn. He defends Muezzin's misdemeanor and reinterprets the canonical law to suit his case. Sultan censures Cadi. He criticizes Cadi for reinterpreting the call to dawn prayer to serve political purpose thus;

Sultan (Shouting): Shame! Enough! Enough! Stop this nonsense! Cease this pettiness! She shall not sign. I absolutely refuse that she should sign this way. And you, Chief Cadi, aren't you ashamed of yourself for fooling around with the law like this?

Cadi; Milord Sultan…

Sultan: I am disappointed. I am disappointed in you Chief Cadi. Is this, in your opinion, the law? The expenditure of effort and skill in trickery and fraud!

Cadi: Your Majesty, I merely wanted…

Sultan: To rescue me, I know that, but did you think I'd accept being rescued by such methods?

Cadi: With such a woman, Your Majesty, we have the right…

Sultan: No, you have no right at all to do this. You have no such right. Maybe it was the right of this woman to indulge in trickery- she cannot be blamed if she did so; maybe she should be the object of indulgence because of her intelligence and skill. As for the Chief Cadi, the representative of justice, the defender of the sanctity of the law, the upright servant of the canonical law, it is one of his most bounden duties to preserve the law's purity, integrity, and majesty, whatever the price. *It was you yourself who first showed me the virtue of the law and the respect it must be shown, who told me that it was the supreme power before which I myself must bow.*

> *And I have bowed down right to the end in all humility. But did it ever occur to me that I would see you yourself eventually regarding the law in this manner; stripping it of its robe of sanctity so that it becomes in your hands no more than wiles, clauses, words- a mere play thing* (Emphases are mine).
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 169-170).

From the dialogue above, it is evident canonical laws influence the moral compass of politics. It gives critical consciousness to the people and prepares them to resist any intrusion or alien element into the moral, political or religious codes. As of the point Muezzin gives the call to dawn prayer (at midnight) the people rise against him. The voice of Muezzin rings out;

> **Muezzin** (from afar): God is great! God is great! Come to prayers! Come to prayers! Come to salvation! Come to salvation!
>
> ***The crowd make their appearance in a state of agitation, astonishment, protest, and anger.***
>
> **The People (*shouting)*:** The dawn? Now? It's still night– we're still in the middle of the night. He's mad! This madman– arrest him! Bring him down; bring him down from on top of the minaret! Bring him down!
>
> **(*Fate of a* *Cockroach and other Play*, 167-168).

As Hamdan (2011) implies, the tampering of religious codes for political reason or the political interpretation of religious systems to fit political conclusion raises the temper of both religious and political institutions. Between these two rests the revolutionary inclination of a people who rise above the control, standard and limitation set by these two institutions. As it is seen in the persona of Sultan in *The Sultan's Dilemma*, the collusion of canonical and civil law can be use as a veritable tool to demand for a change from the status quo.

3.3.3 Scenery and Imagery

Scenery and general setting constitute important dimensions of language and communication in *The Sulltan's Dilemma*. The opening scene is of extreme significance, because the scenery lays bare the grounds upon which the whole action of the play is established and from which it develops. For example, the opening scene captures in vivid terms the resonance of contemporary

Egypt in the eighteenth day mass protest that unseats Hosni Mubarak. The scene describes what the audience is to expect from this point onward. The opening reads:

> *An open space in the city during the time of the Mameluke Sultans. On one side there is a mosque with a minaret; on the other, a tavern. In the centre is a house with a balcony. Dawn is about to break and silence reigns. A stake has been set up to which a man, condemned to death, has been tied. His Executioner is nearby trying to fight off sleep.*
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 96)

What is striking about this scene is the fact 'death sentence' has been placed on Condemned man. His sin, we are later told, is speaking the truth about the illegitimacy of Sultan to rule. The vigilance of His Executioner symbolizes the watchfulness of state's proxies to carry out any command to exterminate any opposition. But this time, religious institution is subconsciously involved in the process of extermination.

The predicament of Condemned Man does not end on the fact that he has been sentenced to die on the stake by the sword of Executioner. His death does not bother him. What bothers him is the fact that he was not given a trial at the court and more, not allowed to speak to anyone about his crime. He seeks the listening ears of Executioner thus:

> **Condemned Man**: For what crime?
> **Executioner**: That's not my affair.
> **Condemned Man**: Because I said …
> **Executioner**: Quiet! Quiet! Shut your mouth – I have been ordered to cut off your head right away if you utter a word about your crime.
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 96)

The Executioner paints an image of the fate that awaits Condemned Man with a song which he specially composed to soothe his pains whilst beheading him and sung at his pleasure. The lyrics of the song read:

> O flower whose life is but a night,
> Greetings from your admirers!

Plucked at dawn of day tomorrow,
The robe of dew from you will fall.
In a firewood basket you will lie
And all around my tunes will die.
In the air the deadly blade will flash
Shining bright in gardener's hand.
O flower, whose life is but a night!
On you be peace, on you be peace!

(*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 104).

The song is an allegory that pictures the lethal end of Condemned Man. The metaphors of plucking a flower, that is, beheading Condemned Man, is further revealed in the dialogue between Executioner and Condemned Man.

Condemned Man: Is this your tender Song, you ill-omened Executioner?
Executioner: Please – I'm no Executioner.
Condemned Man: What do you think you are then?
Executioner: I'm a *gardener*.
Condemned Man: A gardener?
Executioner: Yes, a gardener. Do you understand? A gardener. I'm a gar - den - er.

(*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 104-105).

Executioner relates its role to that of gardener who tenders flowers awaiting the time they will be plucked. The flower to be plucked here is Condemned Man, and the gardener to carry out the duty of plucking – for his master – is Executioner.

Another significant scene of note that is relevant to contemporary Egyptian politics is the popular gathering at the auction sale of Sultan in Act two. The Mass gathering evokes image of democracy in Athenian Greece. But this time, the gathering is a Cairene method of self-determination and of determining who leads them. The sale of Sultan throws to the people the decision to choose from either to accept his rule or to reject it. Hence, whoever buys him must forfeit him. This reinforces the old socialist believe that the best way to own property is not to own any. The dialogue between Lady and Cadi reveals thus:

Lady: Then, O Cadi, you make manumission a condition of possession, that is to say that in order to validly possess the thing sold, the purchaser must yield up that very thing.

Cadi: What? What?

Lady: You're saying, in order words, in order to possess something you must yield it up… or, if you like, in order to possess you must not possess.

(*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 141-142).

This type of purchase goes beyond the ordinary buying and selling of *the* chattel. The auction sale of Sultan is a simile of democratic process where the people is allowed to express their acceptance and support for who rules them or better, for determining who rules them. The social status of Sultan as slave alienates him from the rest of the people. To gain the support of the masses he is compelled to choose, as Vizier or Cadi proffers, between "the sword that imposes but exposes" or the law that threatens but protects!" wa Thiong'O (1981) comments on the slavish background of the sultan with the recognition that a slave is not a slave until he accepts that he is a slave. This reflects in the persona of Sultan. For him, rather than accept the status that the system of the society throws at him, he rise to correct the system itself.

More significant, however, from the exchange of the above excerpt is the fact that the dialectics of property ownership ascribe to Lady, who, as an entertainer, is symbolically representative of the economic exploitation of the female gender. The extensive use of verse to express with great accuracy the economic and religious disadvantage of the masses is shown in the characterization of Muezzin on one hand and that of Executioner on the other. The deployment of religious totems such as mosques, muezzin, sultan, minaret and their relatedness to images such as, square, court signifies the connection between religious practice and political institution and how they are used to gain popular support.

3.3.4 Characterization

The use of representative of characters also enhances communication in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. The identity of the characters reflects the belief-system and type of people that drama portrays. The names of the major characters are Islamic and carries with them responsibility of public offices. Sultan, for example, is a Muslim sovereign ruler of an Islamic country. Vizier is a Muslim government officer of high ranking in an Islamic state. Cadi is an Islamic magistrate and of course, muezzin is a mosque official who calls prayer for Muslims. These characters underscore the religious elements in secular politics. Despite the fact that religious characters forms Sultan's cabinet and that majority of the masses, as the play suggests, are Muslims the pursuance of the tenets of the law is largely secular. Herein lies the intrinsic contradiction of the secular law that is inefficient, as Cadi and Sultan later realizes; and the canonical law that disadvantaged Lady from participating directly at the public auction of Sultan. The play depicts the vile perception of majority of the people towards Lady who they see as prostitute. The 'society' even in its attempt to maintain secularity or religiosity reviles Lady and classed her activities with depravity despite its purity. The exchange between Lady and Sultan reveals the outside-in public opinion the society hold of women. Even Sultan falls within this public misconception. He says thus:

> **Sultan** (*after listening for a while*)**:** A delightful performance!
>
> **Lady:** And I myself shall dance for you (*She rises and dances*.)
>
> **Sultan** (*after she has finishedher dance*)**:** Delightful! It's all delightful! Do you do this every night?
>
> **Lady:** No, Your Majesty. This is an exception. It's just for you, for I myself have not danced since being manumitted and married. On other nights it is the slave-girls who do the dancing and singing.
>
> **Sultan:** To your ***clients?***
>
> **Lady:** My ***guests***, rather.

She goes further:

Lady: I shall elucidate. When I was a young slave-girl of the same age as the slave-girls I have with me now, my master brought me up to love poetry and singing and playing on musical instruments. He used to make me attend his banquets and converse with his guests, who were poets and singers; they also included intellectuals and men of wit and charm. We would spend the night reciting poetry, singing and playing music and conversing quoting and capping quotations from masterpieces of literature, and laughing from the depth of our hearts. But they were also innocent and chaste…. And when I later became his wife he did not wish to deprive me of the pleasure of those nights which used so to enchant me; he therefore allowed me to continue to attend, though from behind silken curtains…

Sultan: And after his death?

Lady: After his death I was unable to give up this practice, so I continued to invite my husband's guests. At first I would receive them screened behind the silken curtains, but when the people of the district began spreading gossip at seeing men nightly entering the house of a woman with no husband I found it pointless to continue to be screened behind the curtains. I said to myself: seeing that the *people's verdict* has pronounced me guilty, let me make myself the judge of my own behavior. (Emphases are mine).

(*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 156-157).

Apart from the dialectics between 'client' and 'guest', and the profession that determines the district's perception of Lady, it can be drawn from her narration that it is the people's verdict that determines legitimacy even though one has its own reservations.

The utilization of representative characters also augments communication in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. For instance, the characters Sultan, Vizier, Chief Cadi, Lady, Maid, Slave trader, Condemned Man, Executioner, Muezzin, Shoemaker, Wine Merchant, Unknown Man, Mother, Child, Guards, Townspeople etc should not be seen as individuals. Instead they should be seen as constituting the classes which they represent. This is with special reference to Mother and Child, who are characteristically the disadvantaged of the society. The characters Lady and Mother,

though economically disadvantaged, is symbolic of the role of women and motherhood, as composite elements of society's endeavours, like the auction in this case. This is demonstrated when Lady undertakes in the buying of Sultan as chattel and taking him to her house as a goods. The 'illustrativeness' of these characters is part of the strategy of making it clear that the revolt against Sultan and his acceptance is popular and of mass appeal. The masses in the drama, obvious of the destructive sword of Sultan, defies it and demands for a legitimate ruler. Sultan and Vizier try to chart their cause along the line of violence but meet a very strong resistance mounted by the Masses and Chief Cadi. The revolutionary element in *The Sultan's Dilemma* reaches its climax when Sultan appears as a chattel and submits himself to the people for acceptance or rejection.

3.4 The Revolutionary Impulses in *Fate of a Cockroach*

Fate of a Cockroach juxtaposes two sets of characters; one human and one allegorical. They both work out their respective dramas, almost unaware of one another until each drama reaches its climax, in a Cairo apartment. At the centre of these two is the pursuit for freedom through a revolutionary agency brought about by the awareness of 'self'. The introduction by Johnson-Davies (1973) brings out dodgy issues such as justice and truth, good and evil and, above all, freedom.

3.5 Summary of *Fate of a Cockroach*

Fate of a Cockroach is a Three Act play. The first Act describes the effort of Cockroaches to liberate themselves from the existential threat pose to their being by Ants. However hard Cockroach King and his *cabinet members*, who were cockroaches as well, try to come together to solve the Ant's problem, they disagree and argues endlessly with their attempt yielding no result. The cockroach Minister's son slipped and falls on its back; as it struggles to turn over, Ants come in column to drag him away into their village. The sight angers Cockroach King,

Queen, Minister, Savant and they resolve to put an end to the threats of Ant. They contemplate on forming an army to resist and attack Ants, Savant, the cockroach scientist and philosopher unravels that it is not in the personality of Cockroaches to assemble in one place over what, as he said, science have not been able prove or some natural disaster that destroys cockroaches when they assemble. As they watch Ants sing and pull Minster's son away, they muse over what action to take. They attempt to mobilize other cockroaches but fails. The Cockroach King foot slipped – he falls into the lake, as Minister's son did, and the best effort Cockroaches could put to salvage the King is to pray to their gods.

In the second and third *Acts*, the Cockroach King appears on the slippery bathtub (that is, the lake) of *Mortals*, Samia and Adil. He struggles to climb up severally but fails. Samia notices Cockroach King and calls for Adil. As Samia goes to bring insecticide to destroy Cockroach King, Adil, who has been awed by the relentless effort of Cockroach King to escape his fate, locks her out. The personality of Cockroach overwhelms Adil. Samia, disgusted over the sudden affection for cockroach by her husband calls Doctor to examine Adil's sudden change. Doctor, after series of attempts to understand the situation, falls for Cockroach King's untiring persistence to escape his fate, despite his failures. He joins Adil in the quest of understanding himself critical of Cockroach King's experience. Cook, Umm Atiya enters and unawares of the existence of Cockroach King or the topic it has generated, kills it brutishly and throws it away. Procession of Ants came and drags Cockroach King into the cracks on the wall.

3.6 Dialogue and Revolutionary Inclination in *Fate of a Cockroach*

In *Fate of a Cockroach,* man's refusal to despair in the face of adversity, are exemplified in the cockroach's struggles to climb out of the bath into which the cockroach King has fallen.

Ironically the humans in the play demonstrate no such survival instinct. While the husband, who identifies with the hopeless plight of the cockroach, simply watches the creature struggle, the wife demands *its* death. Neither seems capable of compassion or love to salvage the dilemma of either the cockroach or one another. Ultimately, the Cook draws a bath for the wife and drowns the Cockroach, removing 'it' from the water with a flick of her fingers. It immediately becomes a prize of the ants that inhabit the apartment although the Cockroach is too large to fit through the crack they use for egress and exit. Again, the humans watch without intervening, Samia undermines the angst of Adil and mutters;

> Having finished with the heroism of cockroaches we've now started on the genius of ants!
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 73).

Again, the Cook takes matters into her own hands, mopping up the stream of ants.

The drama forcefully sets out a revolutionary template by the conclusive remarks of Adil, who having risen to self-apprehension of his essence of being, becomes strong-willed to revolutionize his existence. Adil's last line in *Fate of a Cockroach* is memorable and it impulses revolution thus;

> Bring the bucket and rag and wipe me out of existence.
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 76).

The drama, *Fate of a Cockroach* displays two important dynamic elements in the society; power (political and religious), its interpretation and demystification. Another important factor is nurture versus nature. The beginning of *Fate of a Cockroach* displays power in the King and Queen's marriage. The discourse of power is further deepened in the relationship between cockroaches and ants. The imbalances of power relations between Cockroaches and Procession Ants are rooted on their worldviews, belief and religious institutions. As a solution to defeat the

ants, Minister (cockroach) suggests that they brainstorm on what ants do and do not do. He unravels;

> Ants have discipline, they sacrifice and cockroaches do not.
>
> (*Cooper*, 596).

Whilst the cockroaches argue over how to resist the ants that are so organized and dependent on one another, the undoing of the cockroaches rest on their inherent self-reliant nature. The dialogue among the cockroaches shows the reactionary elements that de-cogs the wheel of revolution. They converse;

> **Minister**: You know the ants attack us with their armies. If we also were able to mobilize an army of twenty, or even ten, cockroaches with which to attack them, we would be able to destroy their towns and villages.
>
> **Savant**: Then mobilize ten cockroaches!
>
> **Minister**: The problem is how to gather these cockroaches together.
>
> **Queen**: Inform us, Savant has it ever happened that you have seen ten cockroaches gathered together in one spot?
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 11).

wa Thiong'O (1981) notes that there are two very important struggles in the life of man and animal kind: the struggle with nature; and the struggle with other men for the control of power or other material produced from the struggle of nature. These credos are exhibited in *Fate of a Cockroach* by the Cockroaches, Procession of Ants and Mortals. Between these creatures are the pursuit of power to dominate; either for food, as it is with Ants or for resistance as it is with the cockroaches. Savant continues thus;

> Yes, I once saw – a very long time ago, in the early years of my youth – several cockroaches gathered together at night in the kitchen round a piece of tomato.
>
> **Queen**: Tomato?
>
> **Savant**: Yes.
>
> **King**: An extraordinary idea – this matter of tomato!
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 11).

The tomato example refers to the revolutionary spark that brings people together to struggle for what Ngugi describes in "Postscript to Part I: On Civilization."

Armah (1985) and Parry (1994) blame the proscription of African revolutionary theory and praxis in the late 20th century on the indifference of Africans to brazen out with military gunboat policy. Armah draws allegories from the nature of the cockroaches to explain the perpetuation harsh regimes in Africa. Cooper (2011) refers to the 'tomato' symbol as capitalism; each one for themselves. He pins down the dilemmas of Africans to the indifference of the economic system subtly forced on them with the promise of a better world in heaven. Using the self-appointed cockroach King as a study, Cooper conclude that operating within an economic system that recognizes 'one' rather than 'many' shrinks the force of revolution or any impact it will have in society. The idea of 'everyone for the self' is set in motion by the attitude of the cockroaches in the first Act.

> **Savant**: I mean, Your Majesty, from the practical point of view it's all neither here nor there, because the cockroaches assembling round the food won't make a bit of difference – they'll just eat and fill their stomachs, then each will take himself off.
>
> **King**: That's true. It has happened before. Remember how after I was *installed* as King a number of cockroaches happened to assemble round a piece of sugar we found – it was sheer good luck – and I seized the opportunity of this gathering to deliver the speech from the throne. I rose to my feet to speak, with them having eating their fill, and hardly had I uttered two words than I found each one of them waving his whiskers and going off on his own. They left me shouting into thin air.
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 12).

The innate inability of cockroaches to stick together to take a curative actions, against the powers that oppress the essence of their being, is largely dependent on their will to struggle apart. Revolutionary struggle, as the cockroach King shows in striving to climb out of the bath, roots out from the willpower to revolutionize the condition that confines *it*. Adil says;

I think it's better to leave it as it is so that it can solve the problem by itself.

Samia: Until when?

Adil: We cannot – either you or I – decide when. That depends on its willpower – and up until now it has shown no intention of discontinuing its attempts. Look! So far it is showing no sign of being tired.

(*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 37).

More so, the household of Adil and Samia; and that of cockroaches provide the archetype for ensuing revolution. A line to note here is the lyrics of the music;

'***The attainment of desires is not by hoping;***
Things of this world are gained by striving.'

(*Fate of a Cockroach and other Plays*, 30).

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Politics, Humanity and the Archetype of Religion in *Fate of a Cockroach.*

Introduction

A totalitarian state is easy to define, easy to identify, and thus offers a recognizable target at which the archers of human freedom directs its dart. The politics inherent in the machination of this state is direct, formal and backed by constituted force in its dictatorial or belligerent mutation. But again, Soyinka (2004) explains another type of state that operates within state. It is the pseudo-state; that elusive entity that covers the full gamut of ideologies and religions, contends for power but is not defined by physical boundaries that identify the sovereign state. The pseudo-state develop from a position whose basic aim— a challenge to an unjust status quo— makes it difficult to separate from progressive movements of dissent, with which, too, it sometimes forms alliances of common purpose. At the same time, however, there lurks within its social intent an equally deep contempt for those virtues that constitute the goals of freedom. Thus, to grasp fully the essence of power and its politics, it is pertinent to look beyond the open "show of force" as Vizier in *The Sultan's Dilemma* demands. In-between the politics of centralized state and pseudo-state is the encroachment of *humanity*, the infraction of human dignity and the 'thingification' of humane values. The religious beliefs of actors in this power play cannot be deemphasized in examining the core political ideology that shapes its politics.

As it has been seen from the exhibition of Nazism, the atheistic order of Mariam Megistu in Ethiopia, the carnage of Algerian 1992 elections resulting from the intents of the Islamic Party of Algeria and currently the theocratic bastion of Iran, *Fate of a Cockroach* digs up memories and religious idiolects which beams on the nothingness of humanity, as seen from the perspectives of Tewfiq al-Hakim. In all its influence Tewfiq al-Hakim's *Fate of Cockroach* proves that: once

righteousness replaces rights in the exercise of power, the way is paved for permanent contest based on the primacy of the *holier-than-thou*. Hence, the reference to Cockroach as an *it* by other creed shows the total objectification of the entire cockroach race and makes them worthless beings and ready food for Ants or . The dilemma of the cockroach is one which transcends 'it', that that science cannot prove as Savant believe. It is neither material nor their inability to move in column but on the external forces— the racial and religious conviction of the *other worldliness* that objectifies its being.

W.E.B. Dubois and other scholars of nineteenth-century predicted that the issue of the twentieth century would be that of race. Whilst Nazism and Solipsism, as predicted, plagued that century and continuously seething in most parts of this century; it is clear that the social issue, race has been replaced internationally by religion and it is an issue that is yet to be addressed with the same global concern as race once was. The fate of the Cockroach King shows the fatalistic end of humanity in a religiously tensed social order. The question of the twenty-first century politics is clearly that of religion, whose cynical manipulations contribute to the current climate of fear. The debate among *Cockroaches*; King, Queen, Minister, Savant and Priest, on one hand, is one of fear. Fears pose on their humanity by the attack of Ants and *Mortals*. The religious conviction of Priest and the indifference of Savant verify the alienation and the fate of the cockroach race. For *Ants* and *Mortals*, the fatal termination of the spirited Cockroach King becomes habitual as its destructive agent draws its pretext from certain religious conviction. Doctor says;

> Let the matter rest, Mr Adil. *What's happened has happened.* In any case you wanted to leave *it* to its fate, and this is its fate. (Emphases are mine).
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach*: 72)

Adil, Samia and Doctor belong to one class of racial and religious empathy. The only voice of dissent whither the existence of the struggling Cockroach King in the tub, Adil, is not strong enough to resist the threat poise by the destructive force of religion and race.

Though many schools of thought hold religion responsible, Soyinka (2004) notes that the core issue is fanaticism, but this does not exonerate the mother—secular ideology and religious indoctrination—from the lapses of the child. Soyinka goes further to validate thus,

> Under the theocratic sibling, however, one that derives its authority not from theories that are elicited from the material conditions of society but from the secret spaces of revelation, this disposition of the mind towards concepts or variants is next to impossible. Curiosity succumbs to fear, often masquerading as pious submission. The theocratic order derives its mandate from the unknown. Only a chosen few are privileged to have penetrated the workings of the mind of the unknown, whose constitution – known as the Scriptures – they and they alone can interpret. The fanatic that is born of this dogmatic structure of the ineffable, religion, is the most dangerous being on earth.
>
> (*Climate of Fear*: 120)

To be drawn from the above excerpt is the fact that the existence of *other worldliness*, and the global space at large depends on the religious affinity a state subscribes towards. Since religion could hardly operate within the domain of the spiritual without permeating through the pores of politics, humankind has found *it* as a tool to serve various earthly ends. Major terrorist attacks on humanity have strong undercurrent and connection to religion. The incursion of religion into the secular domain, appropriating the provinces of ethics, mores and social conduct— and even the science— guarantees the clerical dominance of the total field of play. The intrusion of political opportunism into the workings of religious zealotry gives birth to monstrosities. The incidence at Uttar Pradesh where arsonist razed down ancient mosque on the ground that Rama, the Hindu deity first made its appearance on earth there resulted into political carnage. The reverberation of

that act has continued to haunt the Indian nation and the diplomatic relationship between India and Pakistan.

Fate of a Cockroach shows the fear inherent on the relationship between animal to animal and the disturbing binaries operating within human beings. The play fables the destructive engine on the human heart and strives to develop dialogue, firstly, from within, and inter-relates this conversation with the *other* to verify its claims. The dialogue between Adil and Samia in Act Two embodies the introspection that is needed to restrain the brutal tendencies of human existence.

> **Samia:** Don't annoy me – define your attitude!
>
> **Adil:** You define yours!
>
> **Samia:** Mine's clear – very clear.
>
> **Adil:** In relation to whom?
>
> **Samia:** To you of course.
>
> **Adil:** I'm not asking about your attitude in relation to myself,
> I'm asking about your attitude in relation to it.
>
> **Samia:** What's it?
>
> **Adil:** The cockroach.
>
> **Samia:** No, you've really gone mad!....
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach*: 39).

This exchange establishes the relationship between the material and existential world, self-examination and personal conviction; and cross-examination between the rhetoric that binds and separates *one* from the *other* without losing the grip of divinity. Halkon (2008) relates the dark spaces under the bath, the realm of the cockroaches as the dark area that governs the gray area of human temperament. The realm of the cockroaches beset by tyranny, marital trouble and the ever present threat of an invasion is thought provoking; exploring through insects the problems of

communication, self determination and the fate of a man. The *Cockroaches* evoke the surreal insect ruled by the conflicting forces of religion, rationalism and politics. Queen — and Samia — is the quietly controlling wives of Cockroach King and of Adil, a rational force as, faced with the ant problem; the cockroaches discuss the merit of socialism, freewill and the existence of God. Queen proposes intercession for the fallen Cockroach King accordingly;

Then let us all pray.

> **Priest:** Pray! Lift up your hands with me! Oh gods!
>
> **All** (*lifting up their hands and calling out*)**:** Oh gods! Oh gods!

Samia goes further to ask thus;

> What's to be done?
>
> **Cook**: Leave it in the hands of the Almighty. We'll let him be for a while until he gets fed up of his own accord.
>
> (*Fate of a Cockroach*: 41-42).

The divine-man dialectic plays out here. The dialogue identifies between human will and the influence that the supernatural has over it. This standpoint evokes the debate between Allen (1984) and Cronin (1992). Allen and Cronin respond to the rights-based argument that liberal democratic societies lack a moral foundation. Allen claims that all of humanity is to be understood as one covenant community and Cronin shares the sentiment of Samia and Cook that *covenant relationship* is the best resource for thinking about the idea of human dignity rather than seeing that dignity as rooted in man's special endowment as rational animals. What this implies is that the 'worlds' outside covenant relationship is not capable of possessing human dignity and could be destroyed because of its *nothingness* or done away with. This is the threat that confronts the Cockroach King and the people outside the bracket of covenant relationship. The refrain of Adil lends credence to the destructive forces that stare the Cockroach King. Adil asks;

You're going to destroy the cockroach?
Samia: Right away.
(*Fate of a Cockroach*: 38).

The term, destroy, transcends the use of the word, death. The fate of the Cockroach King is set against the covenant relationship of which Tewfiq al-Hakim sets for Samia and Cook and its fate is destruction, harsh and stripped of all forms of dignity.

The brightening light lights is an effective transition between the cockroach and the human world, the human world paralleling the insect one where Adil, mesmerized by the Cockroach King's repeated yet vain struggles to escape the bathtub, tries to find inspiration in the heroic insect to continue his own Kafkaesque struggles with life. Like Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1992), a man, Gregor Samsa awakes one morning to find himself transformed into a monstrous cockroach. Initially shocked by the change Gregor abandons his job and decide to live the rest of his life with his family who later got uncomfortable with *this* monstrous cockroach and destroys *it* with the body disposed. The symbolic portrayal of alienation achieved through the literalized metaphor of man as insect resembles the alienation the Cockroach King suffers from in *Fate of a Cockroach*.

Hastings (2008) notes that *Fate of a Cockroach*, while distinctly Egyptian, is a savage satire of the shallowness of government and organized religion and a meditation on man's existential isolation. The sudden nothingness, worthlessness and existence of man hinged on religion rather than the value of human existence. Hence, the use of the rhetoric, "wipe out", "destroy", runs through the pages of *Fate of a Cockroach*. Adil embarks on a voyage of self-examination and having juxtaposed the will and self-determination of the Cockroach King with his own personal conviction he reaches a revolutionary conclusion with a tone of finality;

(*shouting.)*Umm Attiya, bring the bucket and rag and wipe me out of existence!

(*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*: 76).

4.2 The Metaphor of Cairo in *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* and the Struggle for Revolution.

Modern Egypt is the product of a historically rooted political culture and of the state-building efforts of its founding leaders, Gamal Abdul Nasser and Anwar as Sadat. Egypt has been governed by powerful centralized rule since ancient times, when the management of irrigated agriculture gave rise to the pharaohs, absolute god-kings. This experience produced a propensity toward authoritarian government that persisted into modern times. Although the contemporary Egyptian state remained in essence authoritarian, such rule was not accepted unconditionally. Its legitimacy depended on adherence to certain public expectations. Egypt's centuries of subordination to foreign rule, its long struggle for independence, and its continuing dependency on other countries generated a powerful nationalism that made national legitimacy crucial to the acceptance of the authoritarian state. Moreover, after the Arab invasion in the seventh century A.D., many expected the state to rule on behalf of the true faith and community and according to Islamic norms of justice; as a result, the state sought to legitimize itself in Islamic terms. The Muslim Brotherhood, formed in 1928 by a schoolteacher, Hassan al-Bannah evolved as an agency in keeping the core values of Islam. In more recent years, the spread of political consciousness put rulers under growing pressure to accommodate demands for participation.

The 1952 Revolution against the traditional monarchy, led by Gamal Abdul Nasser's group of nationalist-reformist Free Officers, gave birth to the contemporary republic. Nasser forged the new state, suppressing the rudiments of pluralism and creating a president-dominated, military-led authoritarian-bureaucratic regime with a single party and a subordinated parliament, press, and judiciary. Nasser's charismatic leadership and the populist achievements of the 1952 Revolution--particularly land reform, social welfare, and a nationalist foreign policy--legitimized

the new regime. Nasser gave the state a broader base of support than it had hitherto enjoyed, a base that embraced a populist coalition of the army, the bureaucracy, the middle class, and the masses.

Nasser's successor, Anwar as Sadat, adapted the state to a "post-populist" era. The major vulnerabilities of the Nasser regime were its lack of strong support among the Egyptian landed and business classes and, after the 1967 defeat by Israel, its alienation from the United States, the superpower whose support was needed to resolve the conflict with Israel. Although Sadat assumed power as Nasser's vice president and was a veteran of the revolution, he soon reoriented the policies of the state to reconcile it with the need for support from the Egyptian middle class and for a good relationship with the United States. While retaining the essential structures of the Nasserist state, he carried out a limited political liberalization and an economic and diplomatic *infitah* (opening or open door) to the West. This shifted the state's base of support from reliance on Nasser's populist coalition to a reliance on the landed and business classes internally and an American alliance externally. The political system remained essentially authoritarian but with a greater tolerance of political pluralism than under Nasser; thus, parliament, opposition parties, interest groups, and the press all enjoyed greater, though still limited, freedom.

As revolutionary legitimacy was eclipsed by the passage of time, the legal powers enshrined in the Constitution of 1971 became a more important source of legitimacy. The Constitution, a descendant of the 1956 constitution drafted under Nasser, largely reinforced authoritarian traditions. It established a mixed presidential-parliamentary-cabinet system, but the president is constitutionally the center of power. The president is supreme commander, declares war, concludes treaties, proposes and vetoes legislation, and may rule through decree under

emergency powers that have been regularly delegated by parliament. He appoints the prime minister and the cabinet, which may issue "decisions" having the force of law. Under the Constitution, the People's Assembly has the power to legislate and to nominate the president, and other branches of government are responsible to the assembly. But it has never effectively exercised these constitutional checks on the executive. All these reflect on the dramas under study and make the drama relevant in viewing Cairo alongside the Afro-Arabian region.

The scenery and general setting in *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* constitute important dimensions and images of present day Cairo. To begin with, the description of the opening scene in *The Sultan's Dilemma* is a picturesque of modern day Tahrir square, the centre and beginning of the African (Arab) Spring before its diffusion to parts of the Middle East. The district square in the play is a cynosure of major political activities. The square represents the melting pot of the people and a place for mass mobilization. The square, though inorganic, breathes out the frustration on the Egyptian mind and its social confinement inherent in *Fate of a Cockroach*. It may apply to state that the use of allegorical characters like cockroaches substitute for the being and strivings of the ordinary Egyptian masses who *Mortals*, with the temper of Samia and Cook, or better, the ruling class treats with nothingness despite the efforts to determine their own fate.

The question of the Ant's problem and the military arrangement of Ants in attacking Cockroaches graphically illustrate the nature of the existential relationships between Arab-Israeli ethnics. Tewfiq al-Hakim used the innate nature of Cockroaches to represent the Arabian disposition to struggle not minding the predicament the Arabian mind finds itself. *Fate of a Cockroach* clinically shows the probable fatal end of this struggle. The thoughts of the play

resonates the Arab-Israel War of 1973 where Egypt suffered a fatal defeat alongside its Arabian allies. The several ethno-religious armed conflicts between Cairo and Jerusalem, as it were, reflects the tension in the allegorical use of Cockroaches and Ants in *Fate of a Cockroach*; and the collective will of the Egyptian masses to upstage internal forces is given light in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. However, a salient contradiction exists between the characters of both plays. In *Fate of a Cockroach*, we are told that the Cockroach race goes about their own business, think for themselves and does not assemble over a 'natural disaster' they fear may destroy their being. The figurative natural disaster throws up different image of threats ranging from the attacks of *Mortals* or the physical intrusion of alien elements that would destroy their race. The climate of fear is further accentuated by the exchange between Queen, Minister and Cockroach:

> **Queen:** Who is that singing?
>
> **Minister** (*looking*)**:** He is a subject cockroach
>
> **Queen:** One of our subjects? Singing while we're thinking, thinking from early morning about his problem! Bring him here.
>
> **Minister** (*calling to him*)**:** Hey you, come here!
>
> **Cockroach** (*approaching*)**:** Yes.
>
> **Minister:** Who are you?
>
> **Cockroach:** *Someone who sings and strives after his daily bread*.
>
> **Minister:** You are singing when we are thinking for you?
>
> **Cockroach:** *And who asked you to think for me? I think for myself*.
>
> **Minister:** I'm the Minister.
> **Cockroach** (*sarcastically*)**:** It's an honour I'm sure.
> **Minister:** *we are thinking about an important problem that threatens your life – the problem of the ants. You've come along at the right time. We'd like you and others to co-operate with us. What do you think?*
> **Cockroach:** *I think you should let me be*. (Emphases are mine).

(*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, 24).

The extract above, specifically the reaction of Cockroach, diverges from the mass gathering and the success achieved in *The Sultan's Dilemma*. Both plays project different attitude of resistance towards internal and external threats. Cockroach treats the Ants problem with indifference because it is an external threat that could be avoided if one does not foot-slipped or fall on its back whereas the characters in *Fate of a Cockroach* recognize that internal threat that supersedes the worst of all other dangers – illegitimacy, and strives to mobilize themselves to correct the unforeseen danger that lay on the path. This, Freire (1972) writes, is necessary for putting up a firm resistance against the oppressor. According to Freire, the enemies within envies the aggressors and muse over their change of roles. Sultan, despite his much conquest at wars, was deemed not fit enough to rule because he has not been manumitted. Like Doctor in Ibsen's *Public Enemy*, Sultan becomes the internal threat to the masses until he sought for legitimacy through the law and will of the people. The office of Cockroach King in *Fate of a Cockroach* operates with the same temperament with office of Sultan in *Sultan's Dilemma*. One thing ties them together. They both come to power through unpopular methods. Whilst Sultan negotiated his acceptance with the masses Cockroach King and members of his *cabinet* imposes themselves on the people either because of the length of their whiskers or because of their special talents. Adelugba (2011) attributes the defiance of Cockroach King, Queen, Ministers, Savant and Priest by *other cockroaches* because of their self-imposition as state's official. Cockroach reinforces his insubordination thus:

> And who asked you to think for me? I think for myself.
>
> **Minister:** I'm the Minister.
>
> **Cockroach** (*sarcastically*)**:** It's an honour I'm sure.

As Basa (2011) suggests, the fate of the cockroaches, firstly, lies on their inability to agree or get a popular or acceptable leader. The individuality and divergence of the allegorical cockroaches could be inferred to the panoply during the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar al-Sadat where, for example, they relate differently in their dealings with the western world in terms of internal and foreign policy. Whilst Nasser was popular from within, as it is with the manumitted Sultan, Anwar Sadat was abhorred, like the Cockroach King, for thinking for the people. Basa and Kognet (2011) liken the scenario with the Cockroach King on the bathtub and the auction of Sultan to Cairo. According to Basa, Adil's dialogue, in *Fate of a Cockroach* is revolutionary in the sense that it stands out from the uncritical masses. The scenario on the bathtub focuses on the failure of humans not only to understand the language of insects, but even to communicate with one another. Al-Hakim also strikes a universal chord in his treatment of the battle between the sexes - one that can be understood by Cairene or African audiences alike.

The Sultan's Dilemma and *Fate of a Cockroach*, though distinctly Egyptian, is a savage satire of the shallowness of government and organized religion and a meditation of man's existential isolation. The plays depict the psychological and moral struggles of the Cairene mind forced to accept its fate despite its struggle for survival. The frustration of the suffering masses, as the cockroach in the slipping tub of Adil represent, is a slipping political system that seeks to free itself not only by conscious self effort but with an appeal to the conscience of the tormenting demagogue. The 'lake' described by the demagogue Savant in *Fate of a Cockroach* and the slipping bathtub of Adil, on which Cockroach King fall, is the same passage that buttresses the type of social relationship and existential dilemma that exists between the.Afro-Arabo regions and their relationship to the larger world.

The position of Cairo in passage to the Arab world, politically, religiously or literary makes it a centrality for international interest. Cairo is marked by the traditions and influences of the East and the West, the ancient and the modern. This is the reason Twair (1993) describes the characters and settings of Tewfiq al-Hakim as highly centralized and reflective of Cairo in relation to the Arabian world; and the Arabian world in contact with the West as well as other parts of the world. The use of such figures as 'District' or 'Square' is banal in Tewfiq's drama. It shows the horizontal movement towards the centre, Cairo and stems to communicate with the outer world from there. *The Sultan's Dilemma*, *The Song of Death*, *The Tree Climber*, *Not a Thing out of Place*, *The Cave Dwellers* among many other works are examples of the centralize temperament of Cairo in Tewfiq al-Hakim's dramas. His dramas are still relevant to the current wave of protests and resistance everywhere in the world. Al-Hakim (1981) noted that "we all face very much the same problems and react to them in very similar ways". His dramas offer a revolutionary bastion of using new ideas to answer both old and new problems without losing the tinge of the Cairene temperament.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Negotiating Power, Resistance and Revolution in African-Arabic Dramatic Discourses

Introduction

The issues of power, resistance and revolution in contemporary African-Arabic research that concerns itself with details on how power relationships can be effectively altered between governments and citizens warrants closer scrutiny. The informing motif of this chapter is the understanding that revolution and resistance are phenomena and concepts of universal occurrence. The world's oldest literature speaks of power and revolutionary changes in social, economic and political structures in a language that is unambiguous unlike Marx's alliterative "expropriation of the expropriators" (Armah, 496). Power, resistance and revolution are both of ancient lineages and the thinking about them in the past was not always chaotic, primitive, primitive, unsystemic, and unscientific as they submits themselves in the 20th and 21st centuries.

There have been numerous revolutionary movements and countless insurrections in history, whether this be history of Africa, Asia or the Western continents. *Maji Maji, Hau Hau, Mau Mau* and recently, Arab Spring, are names uncomprehending observers have given to Africa's recent insurrectionary movements. Significantly, dramatists of African extraction have artistically preserved its several uprisings in its dramas. The Maji Maji uprising, for example, is captured figuratively in Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile*, Ngugi wa Thiong'O' and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and notably, Ngugi wa Thiong'O and Ngugi wa Mirii's work in *Kamirithu* give a closer examination of the soul of these uprisings. The South African protests against apartheid have been lushly depicted by the dramas of Athol Fugard, Lewis Nkosi, Zakes Mda, Percy Mtwa,Mbogeni Ngema and others. The voice of the dramas and dramatists mentioned above are potent in their commitments to confront naked power, to resist its agents

and to sue for mass mobilization against brutish system. Currently, focus on traditional understanding of oppression, revolution or resistance has taken another shape. As it were in the medieval era, religious ideologies have become a strong force for disarming and resisting political power in the world especially in the Arabia. However, the problem of this emerging trend in Arabian democracy is that the role of religion in government has never been democratically negotiated en masse in the Arab world. As Hashemi (2011) notes, to assume that the issue of politics and religion have been resolved and a broad consensus exists is to project a loose-knitted understanding of religion-state relations on the Arab-Islamic world. Doing so is both erroneous and analytically distorted because the battles over the role of religion in politics have yet to be settled.

The 2011 Arab revolutions are about power and resistance. They are best described as uprisings for democracy and dignity; a preoccupation which much of Africa's dramatist have pursue. They are democratic in the sense that they are driven by a deep-rooted hunger for political empowerment on a mass level, specifically the replacement of elite rule with popular sovereignty. They are also about dignity in that the protesters are rejecting the humiliation and degradation that has accompanied decades of authoritarian rule. The indignity brought on by massive corruption, nepotism, the absence of the rule of law and political transparency, and the rampant abuse of power. This is what has produced these protests. The increasingly educated, globalized and young segments of society – who are the driving force behind these revolts – are particularly motivated by the indignity of their political and economic context coupled with a demand to be respected by political leadership; a respect that can only be generated by democratic rule. The mass uprising in *The Sultan's Dilemma* is a corrective measure that answers the social disorganization both in *Not a Thing out of Place* and contemporary Egyptian society.

Not a Thing out of Place is another of al-Hakim's drama that seeks to show disorder in the Arab world. The play searches for freedom from anarchy which states in the Arabia are faced with.

Amid both the gloom of the season and recent uprisings in the Arab world, it is bracing to look back at the last thirty years or so and see how much has actually gone more or less well. The end of te Cold War, the demise of communism, and the emergence of new democratic states of varying quality all represent important historical change. Most of the radical political and economic transformations of the last quarter-century, moreover, have been brought about with little or no bloodshed. The "Velvet" revolution championed by the playwright dramatist, Vaclav Havel succeeded by civil resistance, organization, and negotiation

As it exhibits itself in *The Sultan's Dilemma* and seen in the Arab world, civil resistance often takes the form of mass rallies and demonstrations, as in Tehran in 2009 and Cairo in 2011. People also engage in strikes, boycotts, fasts, and refusals to obey the law. All these have been evident in negotiating power and resistance in the largely leaderless, but, but internet-coordinated, overthrow of the government in Tunis and the mass protests in Cairo, whose outcomes, despite the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, is not yet clear in relation to the rest of the world. Civil resistance usually cannot survive systematic and violent repression or a totalitarian police state, and it is still often suppressed by authoritarian governments and oligarchies. Hence, Ngugi (1981) and Booth (1981) concede that meeting reactionary violence with revolutionary violence is a forced end and only hope of a people's survival. The mass protests against the Authoritarian Libya ruler, Muammar Gadhafi and Syrian Bashar al-Assad that moved into armed protests and resistance are example of revolutionary violence.

Civil resistance is seldom, if ever, a force that acts entirely on its own. Roberts (2006) explains that there is a rich web of connections between civil resistance and other forms of power, sometimes including force, violence or the threat thereof. This is displayed in the persona of Cadi and Muezzin in *The Sultan's Dilemma*, and on the reverse, on the office of Vizier.

The basic rationale of civil resistance is that the power of rulers ultimately lies on the obedience and cooperation of the masses. The power given to the state is the one negotiated by the masses through consensus. The insubordination of vast population of the masses is a proof of the frustration or abuse of the use of power conferred on the state. In *Fate of a Cockroach*, the defiance of Cockroach King by other cockroaches is conditioned on the self-proclaimed authority of the Cockroach King. Again, the fate of Cockroach King was negotiated on a bathtub. The question about *its* allegorical existence was negotiated between Adil, Samia and Doctor. Whilst Adil resist the utter destructive attempts by Samia, Doctor appears as the mediator between the power that destroys and the power that ultimately resists destruction. Though neither of Samia, Cook nor Ants could hear the Cockroach King negotiating his existence, through his tirelessly struggle, Adil's sensitivity to the plight of the cockroach condenses the reductionist persona of Cockroach King and sets the motion of humankind to embark on journey of self-criticism.

5.2 Projection into the Future

Before the Egyptian revolution of 2011, many films and plays tried to criticize corruption, state violence, and poverty, but faced red lines. Some of the best examples were in theatre. The famous comedy, *Takharif* (Nonsense, 1989) depicts a dictator appearing on TV to announce that his reign will be democratic and promise that he will not rule more than thirty years. His first "democratic" decision is to throw his opposition in jail, in order, he says, to keep the cells

occupied. Though censorship forced Lenin al-Ramly to make *Takharif* a fantasy drama, set in a fictitious country called Antika, the play satirizes the high-handedness of Egypt's deposed strongman, Hosni Mubarak. In film— a much more commercial and popular medium in Egypt than theatre— many screenwriters have had to maneuvre similar regulations set by the censorship committee to prevent the writers from challenging the political system. In 2009, Ihab Lamei's comedy, *The Dictator* introduced themes similar to those of *Takhrif*. Hassan Hosny is a politician who, following the assassination of his predecessor climbs to power in another fictitious country called Bambozia. After decades of rule, he dreams of handing his throne to one of his two sons. Both dramas show how, in spite of strict rules against criticizing the government of pre-revolution Egypt, artist were able to play on iconic figure to satirize the past government.

The dethronement of the past government by mass protests has broken many barriers that stood against the development of art and the freedom of the Egyptian mind. The African (Arab) revolution has opened a wide playground for dramatist to experiment with the series of events leading to the diffusion of protests to the larger world. Though the revolution is yet to unravel itself completely, some Egyptian playwrights like Ibrahim El-Husseini have begun to use it to call the Egyptian masses caution. His *Comedy of Sorrow* warns of the future peril of the overwhelming optimism of the revolution. His drama looks into the hopefulness that the revolution brings to the suffering Egyptian masses both in art and other spheres of the Egyptian existence but warned as Soyinka, Ngugi as well as other African dramatists warned the newly independent African states in the wake of freedom in the 1960s on the dangers of post-independence and the agents of colonialism from within. As El-Husseini believes, many Egyptians are yet to measure the meaning and value of the revolution which is still in the process of attaining the goals of democracy, accountability and transparent Egypt – one grounded in

fairness, equality, and the rule of law, out from under the thumb of military rule and big power politics. The year that followed Mubarak's resignation - which marked the temporal, if not the substantive, end of the revolution – has been one permeated with uncertainty, frustration, and the occasional flickers of hope despite the ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood. As Khalil (2012) observes, the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has cracked down on a continually restive protest movement through increasingly draconian military diktats, while the remaining the remaining civic space has been monopolized by dueling Islamist groups vying for power with the support of the urban poor. Egypt is, in a number of ways, yet an irreversibly change society from a year ago, but the political drama being carried out on its streets and corridors of power is one presently without denouement. Not surprising then, it is an air of uncertainty- of the revolution unrealized that- that is most apparent in *Comedy of Sorrows*, and El-Husseini harnesses this uncertainty by treating the revolution not as an historical fact, but as an existential condition.

The play opens in Cairo's City of the Dead, a vast ancient labyrinth of mausoleums and crypts that were ago repurposed as informal housing for the poor. Uncle Hafiz, an old cemetery guard, opens with the admonishment:

> Hide your ideas and your dreams; behind every dreaming prophet lies a thief
>
> (*Comedy of Sorrows*, 2).

Confined to the slum, and speaking only in homilies grounded on his past, Hafiz acts as a kind of central intelligence of the story, bringing with it a point of view of authoritative weariness. Uncle Hafiz is soon joined by Yusuf and Niqrazan, two unemployed, university –educated men now living in squalor. Yusuf is without work, while Niqrazan has practically devolved into the

character of a dog, up to the point of preparing to defecate in public. Throughout the play, the familiar refrain of "The People Brought Down the Regime" is voiced is here not in celebration but in low-spirit, self-apprehension. Hafiz further gives a memorable warning on the overwhelming optimism of the revolution. He says:

> The walls of fear have fallen but scores of others remain. Hide the light… hide your dreams… hide your revolutions. We are still waiting for the dawn.
>
> (*Comedy of Sorrows*,).

Mohammed Albakry and Rebekah Maggor in an introduction to the play see *Comedy of Sorrows* as a work about resistance and hope, and how the nature of one can very often lead to the subversion of the other. If the major takeaway of the Afro-Arabo revolution is the power of the grassroots resistance in the face of even the most entrenched tyrannies, then they can be placed among the likes of countless protest movements throughout history. For whatever the ensuing complications, there is indeed something recognizably universal at work in the streets of Cairo in 2011, just as in Tunis, Benghazi, and into across Syria and Yemen.

Revolutions happen everywhere for broadly the same reasons, and the Arab world certainly does not have a monopoly over them. Rather than celebrating the Egyptian Revolution as historical moment – with a focus on why it happened, and what it was intended to accomplish – El-Husseini instead calls his readers to a less obvious and much more vexing inquiry: who was the revolution for? And whatever happened to them?

Rather than allow the enormous victory to becloud the deep reason for the revolution Egyptians should set an agenda to see that the reason for the revolt is not defeated or seized by heavy political and power influence.

Conclusion

The issues of religion and politics in the attainment of power have been a discourse for centuries. The discourse climaxed in the medieval era, a period well known for intense religious and political practices, where religious crusades were carried out at the cost of humanity. Religion determined the affairs of state. Religious leaders rose to become Holy Emperors and the church began to use drama, religious drama to proselytize and to manipulate the minds of the medieval man. This period was an era of ignorance. It was the time where science, arts, politics and everything where under the watch of religion. The Renaissance and the years that followed came with the berth of knowledge. The world experienced a massive shift from religion as a means of power to agriculture, economics, trade, arts, science, and later, science. Beginning from the 20th century, religion, a practice that has been a private affair, began to surreptitiously find its way into the affairs of politics.

Religious groups sprung up to ask basic questions about governance. Attempts to suppress it expanded its scope. In Europe, various religious movements and practices tied with hate politics were established. Religious mantras such as "Church and State" dominated public sphere as religion began to interfere in politics. In the Middle East, "Islamic Republic" rose to destroy the fabrics of secularism. The Muslim Brotherhood rose in Egypt and diffused towards the Middle East; the Lords Resistance Army in Uganda emerged. Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, Hizbollah (otherwise known as Party of God) of Lebanon, The National Religious Party of Israel and many parties with ethnic and religious undercurrent sprung up to dominate politics. Whilst dramas were used to pursue causes in Europe, written drama was still alien to the Middle East even though a tradition of rich dramatic performance existed.

Africa, of course, was not left in the discourses of religion and politics. Though the interfaces of religion and politics in Africa have always been there, it has always been, arguably, not properly understood because of its intermittent nature. At one time, the dramas and dramatic performances of Africans reflect the interlock between religion and politics; and at other times, it shows the divergence. However, one common belief that holds Africans bond is the thought that view power and wealth through the prism of religious beliefs. This reflects in the thematic preoccupation of the dramas of the first generation of African dramatists. Power, wealth and spiritual alienation from indigenous surfaced in the works of that period. *A Dance of Forest, Kongi's Harvest, Death and the King's Horseman, Kinjeketile, I Will Marry When I Want, Oda Oak Oracle, Man of Kafira, The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* among others are dramatic works of African origin that reflect the discourse of religion, politics and power. These dramas do not lose the touch of revolution at its end. At variant, religion appeared as a tool for resisting political force. In most cases, in the plot of these works, piousness gives the principal characters a forte for their cause.

However, in the African-Arabic region, the (ab)use of power affected the development of drama. The stiffness of the politics and the use of secret police inhibited the overt use of religion and drama to put up a strong resistance. Conversely, religious totems, symbols, fable and allegory were rather used to depict disharmony of the African-Arabic mind. One of the firebrands and finest dramatists of Arabian extraction that has been committed to producing drama of the desiderata of the world outside the Arabian worldview is Tewfiq al-Hakim. His dramas are a binocular of looking into the temper of contemporary African (Arab) revolution. *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* both depict the groundswell of events that lead to revolution. Though this revolution or protest occurs on the creative mind, both dramas explain the

frustration, alienation and existential threats thrown at the African (Arab) minds. One achieves its meaning from human characters whilst the other uses allegory to show the reductionist nature of power to undermine *other* existences. In *The Sultan's Dilemma*, a mameluke sultan who has acceded to the throne is found not to have been properly manumitted. As it is with the belief of the people, the sultan becomes unaccepted, and hence, ineligible to rule. To suppress the voice of the people, Vizier, an agent of the state, applies the might of the sword (without court trial) to quench every agitation arising from the sultan's unacceptability. The first victim of the state military force is Condemned Man, who has been sentenced to death at the call to *dawn prayer* by Muezzin. Condemned Man wriggles his way out of the stakes and sword of Executioner with the help of Lady. Sultan, accepts its fate as slave and allows himself to be sold at auction. Whoever buys him must release him at will. Lady buys him and sets him free. The play shovels up the intertwining of religion and politics on three levels; from the conscious, subconscious and the inefficacies of both religious and civil laws. It demonstrates the will of the people to determine their fate on who rules them, strict observance of the law and the potency of mass gathering in resisting power and the brutal force of the state.

Fate of a Cockroach describes the effort of Cockroaches to liberate themselves from the existential threat pose to their being by Ants. However hard Cockroach King and his *cabinet members*, who were cockroaches as well, try to come together to solve the Ant's problem, they disagree and argues endlessly with their attempt yielding no result. The cockroach Minister's son slipped and falls on its back; as it struggles to turn over, Ants come in column to drag him away into their village. The sight angers Cockroach King, Queen, Minister, Savant and they resolve to put an end to the threats of Ant. They contemplate on forming an army to resist and attack Ants, Savant, the cockroach scientist and philosopher unravels that it is not in the personality of

Cockroaches to assemble in one place over what, as he said, science have not been able prove or some natural disaster that destroys cockroaches when they assemble. As they watch Ants sing and pull Minster's son away, they muse over what action to take. They attempt to mobilize other cockroaches but fails. The Cockroach King foot slipped – he falls into the lake, as Minister's son did, and the best effort Cockroaches could put to salvage the King is to pray to their gods. The second part shows the Cockroach King on the bathtub Adil and Samia's apartment. As *it* endlessly struggles to climb up the bathtub to determine its fate it slipped back. Adil tries to allow the Cockroach King to determine its fate by itself until Umm Attiya, Cook comes to terminate its life. Both plays are revolutionary in the portrayal of characters, plots, actions and thoughts. They rise above the limits imposed by the agents of the state. They challenge the status quo and strive to topple a system that holds them bound. The system that cages the mind to see beyond the walls set by the strict observance of religious laws, rigid political system tied to secret policing, and the ban on mass gathering.

Tewfiq al-Hakim does not lose his disposition on religion in politics or the disorderliness of the African (Arab) mind on secular law but on the dehumanizing intents of the misinterpretation of religious laws to serve political courses or the manipulation of politics to serve religious causes. The use of religious totems and political metaphors richly effuse in both *The Sultan's Dilemma* and *Fate of a Cockroach* without losing its revolutionary dramatic intents.

It is important to conclude that religious modes of thinking about the world are widespread in Africa (Arab), and have a pervasive influence on politics in the broadest sense. The rise of brutish systems, terrorism, genocide, and currently, massive protests all over the world use religion as a tool for mobilization. This is not to holistically indict secularism or religion as the

problem or cause of terrorism or any other maladies confronting the African (Arab) state but it does not as well exonerate them from the mother, religion.

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