CONFLICT IN T.M. ALUKO:
A STUDY OF T.M. ALUKO'S NOVELS

BY

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DEDICATION

For

Mr Christian Ikechukwu Anaso

and

Mrs Janet Chiebonam Anaso, my

father and mother respectively, and

for

all my brothers and sisters as follows:

Akachukwu, Uzochukwu, Dogwa, Nneka,

Ifeyinwa, Chinedu and Chinyere.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of references.

George Nwqrah Anaso

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ABSTRACT

The history of Nigeria from colonisation until independence depicts a number of struggles which are milestones in Nigeria's growth to nationhood. These struggles are religious, political and cultural and operate both at the individual and societal levels. The individual often finds himself at the crossroads of cultural conflict between tradition and Western culture. The same cultural struggle engulfs the society in general. Aluko's novels portray these conflicts in operation and in watching Aluko's characters and society react to this cultural conflict, we see the nature of these conflicts and the various landmarks recorded in the cultural struggles going on at each stage.

Aluko has often been seen as an uncommitted writer by critics because his early novels do not appear to bring out suggestions as to how the society can be developed or modernised. Again, they gee Aluko as an anti-traditionalist. This study highlights these various criticisms of Aluko, relates them to Aluko's works and then traces the progress made by the novelist.

Chapter One is a survey of existing critical studies on Aluko, showing the need for further investigation to make for a comprehensive understanding of Aluko. chapter two is a study of the Early-Aluko and it examines Aluko's early novels, One Man, One wife and One Man, One Matchet in terms of Aluko[1]s vision of conflict in the society. The argument in this chapter is that Aluko's depiction of traditional life is prejudiced by his preference for western ideas. Chapter three studies the middle Aluko as seen in the two novels: Kinsman and Foreman and Chief the Honourable Minister. The middle period shows that Aluko realises that Western education does not solve Africa's backwardness and that tradition is an indestructible force In society. Chapter four is the Later-Aluko and concerns His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. This chapter examines the writer's change in attitude which improves his portrayal of the cultural conflict in his society, as reflected in the last two novels. Chapter five is the conclusion and argues that Aluko has progressed and become an increasingly better critic and a more objective writer than he had been earlier in his career.

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Abbreviations

OMOW	One Man, One Wife
OMOM	One Man, One Matchet
KF	Kinsman and Foreman
CHM	Chief the Honourable Minister
HWM	His Worshipful Majesty
WOD	Wrong Ones in the Dock

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Critics who have studied T.M. Aluko's work have passed adverse comments on Aluko's presentation of Nigeria's socio-political problems, which were rooted in the incursion of Western culture upon traditional society. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in an article in Homecoming takes Aluko to task over the latter's vision of conflict, which to Ngugi is limited to culture: 'Unlike Achebe, Aluko does not imaginatively capture the complexity of the encounter between the new and the old. He sees the conflict too much on one plane, the cultural, and does not emphasise its social and economic basis enough.' Viewing Aluko as an uncommitted novelist, Ngugi continues:

> Aluko's satire is ponderous. It lacks the bite which can expose a social miasma mainly because he does not really know what he wants. Amid his cry "one man one matchet", and his delineation of the peasants as merely ignorant, incapable, half-savage, we perhaps hear more the voice of cynicism which can't see the way ahead for Nigeria.1

Considering Aluko's early novels, especially One Man One Matchet from which Ngugi's references are made, Ngugi's comments are quite correct. How-

ever, the later novels written by Aluko belie these charges.

Since Ngugi's comments in 1966, Aluko has published four additional novels. In these, Aluko's attitude to the past and his literary skill have improved, and his subject matter widened in scope. He treats traditional characters with increasing respect and adds economic and political conflicts as major themes in his work. Bernth Lindfors ignores such progress and remarks that Aluko has been writing for twenty-five years with little artistic progress:

> One searches his novel in vain for the high moral seriousness that pervades the earliest works of such committed artists as Achebe, Soyinka and Armah. Aluko seems content to laugh at his world, and because his laughter contains no undertones of anguish or outrage, it rings hollow. He is a critic without a troubled conscience, a tickling gadfly without a sting.2

Lindfors says that Aluko's lack of seriousness is caused by Aluko's anti-traditional attitude. This is a sweeping generalisation, applicable only to Aluko's early novels, and not to all the six novels. His fifth novel, His Worshipful Majesty, for example, cannot be said to lack respect for traditional institutions or to lack

in 'moral seriousness'. In this novel, Aluko portrays the personality of Oba Olayiwole Adegoke with pronounced majesty and shows the tragic possibilities of the conflict between the Old and the New ways.

Margaret Laurence does not think much of Aluko's early novels either. Commenting specifically on One Man, One Wife, she says emphatically that, 'The plot is too laden and too confused and the novel - all flesh and no skeleton - finally collapses.' She sees the second novel, One Man, One Matchet, as only moderately successful. Aluko, she says, 'manages to make comprehensible the genuinely held diametrically opposed views of the old chiefs and new young men of government'. Laurence does not think, however, that the ending of the novel is properly done: 'The ending, with Udo Akpan's resignation and his discussion of the country's problems with his successor, is flat and too theoretical.'[3] Contrary to these observations by Laurence, each new novel of Aluko's represents a considerable advancement over the preceding ones. For example his second novel, One Man, One Matchet, has a better organised plot, more

tightly knit, than the first novel. In the second novel, the only diversion from the main plot is the kidnapping of Reverend Josiah Olaiya. Laurence's accusation that Aluko's plots are defective is therefore limited to One Man, One Wife. Laurence admits that the second novel is 'more ambitious than the first novel'.

In the same vein, Palmer compares Aluko with Achebe and condemns Aluko's irreverent attitude to tradition. He says: 'Where Achebe's traditional elders like Akuebue, Ezeulu and Ezeudu are dignified repositories of traditional wisdom, Aluko's Obas and Chiefs seem for the most part to be a bunch of doddering idiots in their second childhood.'[4] Palmer sees the novel as a 'splendid comedy' and wonders if this is 'a fair picture of the traditional society'. Again, Palmer criticises the lack of linguistic innovation in Aluko, alleging that there is nothing distinctively African about Aluko's language. These comments are admissible only as far as Aluko's early novels are concerned. Even in One Man, One Matchet Aluko has started incorporating African speech

patterns and proverbs. Chief Momoh's argument against the tree-cutting proposal of the colonial administration exhibits traits of African speech:

> If therefore we cannot prevent a man from dying why should we worry so much because a tree is dying? If one dies, can we not plant a seed from which another will grow? And you, Chief, you, you Joseph Ajayi... you who are one of us, you who eat the oil from the palm fruits of our land, you who drink the water of Agbara stream like us - you Joseph Ajayi, son of our land, and a chief of our town, you join in this mad conspiracy against your own kin - you - you - you.[5]

Later, when Chief Momoh replies to his son's letter, he justifies his demand for a maintenance allowance from his son with a matching proverb: 'When the rodent grows old, does it not suck the milk from the breast of its offspring.'[6] In Kinsman and Foreman, Aluko is quite innovative linguistically. For example, Pa Joel's speech during the arrival of Titus from England is a well rendered Yoruba dialogue, which embodies a number of proverbs:

> And you, Titus, you must listen to the words of my mouth. Where Simeon tells you to go, you must go. Where he tells you there is no way, know there is no way; turn back. Associate with the men he tells you are safe. Avoid those he points out to you as

> dangerous. Let the eyes of Simeon be your eyes from this day on; let his hands be your hands. Does the thread not follow the path made by the needle? It is in spite of the snake that the bush rat nurtures its young to maturity. Regardless of the activities of human snakes, you, Simeon will pilot your child Titus to success in Government work.7

Aluko carries this innovation further in His Worshipful Majesty, where Yoruba religious chants and incantations are transliterated, in Achebe's fashion.

Palmer's charge that Aluko's African characters are unsympathetically drawn, while evident in the early novels, is not borne out in His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. In His Worshipful Majesty Oba Olayiwole exudes majesty and sees himself as an equal of the English king. Papa Ota in Wrong Ones in the Dock provides the link with tradition. He possesses an aspect of wisdom characteristic of the aged in traditional society, a fore-knowledge of the future which comes to him through dreams. Aluko's attitude to tradition changes from irreverence to growing respect for tradition. Also, Aluko's skill progresses when he starts incorporating African linguistic patterns.

Palmer says that both Achebe and Aluko are concerned with the issue of change. Palmer alleges, however, that while Achebe accepts change as inevitable, he also pays tribute to the majesty of tradition. By contrast Aluko sees change as both 'inevitable and necessary.' Achebe's vision of change is tragic. He does not think change is altogether desirable. At the end of his novel, Achebe gives the impression of a great society destroyed. Aluko's later novels still see change as desirable but only as far as it is necessary to make adjustments which will make the society more humane. In His Worshipful Majesty, Aluko advocates the retention of only those cultural practices that will not stand in the way of progress. An example is the traditional authority of Obas and Chiefs, which is autocratic. He does not agitate for the abolition of obaship, but argues that the position should be brought in line with modern constitutional roles, the actual power resting with an administrative system constituted along modern lines.

Obiechina's contribution to the debate is brief. He makes a passing reference to Aluko's characters, whom he describes as 'caricatures',

'comically grotesque' and 'Dickensian'. Further, Obiechina observes that by satirizing age and illness, Aluko disregards traditional sympathy for these disabilities: 'Aluko's use of age and disease for satirical comments inverts the traditional taste, which respects age and hardly ever regards illness as a laughing matter.'[8] Obiechina's comments on Aluko's characters, though true of the early novels, especially One Man, One Wife, lack justification in the later novels, a good example of which is His Worshipful Majesty. In this novel, traditional characters function as normal people, not as caricatures.

Gakwandi views Aluko as an anti-traditionalist. He also thinks that Aluko's attitude to tradition is colonialist. To drive home his claim, Gakwandi compares Aluko's African characters to Joyce Cary's characters in Mr Johnson. Both writers, according to Gakwandi, show lack of reverence for Africans. Gakwandi also observes that Aluko is elitist and possesses some dictatorial inclinations:

> Aluko's politics are reactionary and authoritative. He advocates some kind of dictatorship by the highly educated Africans. He

> hardly concerns himself with ideas and politics: his preoccupation is with civil service regulation and proceedings. He writes as a member of the establishment and suggests no radical transformation of the colonial establishment. All he wishes to see is a few men of integrity stepping into the shoes of the colonial administration.[9]

The validity of Gakwandi's charge is limited to the first three novels. In Chief the Honourable Minister, his fourth novel, Aluko shows the failure of western education, when the civilian government of Afromacoland is toppled in a military coup, as a result of indiscipline and misrule. Aluko cannot, therefore, be accused of advocating dictatorship by the educated class in all his works. In addition, His Worshipful Majesty, his fifth novel, comes up with radical suggestions to transform the colonial inspired local government system along modern lines. From this attempted transformation blows up the major conflict of this novel: the conflict between traditional rule and the newly introduced local government administration. This conflict affects the community because of the division between those who want to maintain the status quo and those who want to move along with time and so are in favour of the changes. Gakwandi's accu-

sations are discredited by his incomplete study of the novels of T.M. Aluko.

Other writers attempt to defend Aluko against some of the accusations levelled against him. One of such writers is Oladele Taiwo, who analyzes Aluko's satirical technique and attempts to defend Aluko against Ngugi's allegation that he lacks definite standards against which to measure his society. Taiwo accuses Ngugi of lack of proper investigation:

> For an investigation of the novelist's view of society to be fruitful, the critic must be willing to consider his method of presentation, illustrating the success or failure of these methods by close references to the text. This is what Ngugi has failed to do. It is therefore not altogether surprising that he has reached a conclusion which, to say the least, needs a great deal of qualification to bring it close to the truth... For example, while it is true that because of his interest in education Aluko portrays the villagers as "ignorant" there is no evidence in the book that they are generally "incapable and half-savage." Certainly Chief Momoh and Benjamin Benjamin, by their performances cannot be said to be incapable.[10]

Taiwo refutes Ngugi's allegation that Aluko lacks standards against which to measure the society and declares: 'Furthermore, contrary to what Ngugi thinks, Aluko passionately cares about certain standards. In fact it is the complete lack of

standards in many spheres of life that he passionately deplores.' Taiwo's defence, correct in many respects, is, in the final analysis, unconvincing, because he ignores obvious flaws in Aluko's early novels, whereas Aluko's success as a novelist is indubitably established in the later novels. These novels, especially His Worshipful Majesty and Chief the Honourable Minister, invalidate most of the accusations based only on the earlier novels.

In his unpublished thesis, Benjamin Ameh shows that if all Aluko's novels are considered, Aluko emerges as a substantial analyst of his society. While looking at various criticisms of Aluko, Ameh shows that it is the early novels that are open to such criticism. Further, Ameh shows that Aluko's skill develops and that his later novels take care of issues raised against him in the earlier ones. Ameh argues that T.M. Aluko is 'a more perceptive and complex commentator upon the Nigerian social scene than has often been thought, and above all, the present writer is convinced that Aluko has undergone an appreciable development in his social outlook during the course of a writing career that spanned a period of some

fifteen years'.[11] Ameh also argues that Aluko has standards for measuring his society. Ameh's thesis highlights Aluko's vision of his society and demonstrates his change of attitude to his society in the later novels, so as to establish the fact that Aluko is a committed writer. However, Ameh does not detail the conflicts that riddle the society as a result of Western incursion. In addition, when Ameh argues that Aluko is a committed writer with definite standards for measuring his society, this view is subject to the qualification that it is in the last three novels: Chief the Honourable Minister, His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock that his commitment and standards are manifested. In these novels, Aluko's assessment of the society is more realistic and not simply dichotomised into good and evil, with good representing Western influence and evil African traditions. For example, in Chief the Honourable Minister, when the civilian government in Afromacoland is toppled by the army, Aluko poses a question about the survival of democracy in this society. Evidently, Aluko refers to a tangible national incident in Nigeria, the January 1966 coup by the Armed Forces. This explanation is necessary to show that Aluko's commitment as

an artist is established in his last three novels. Otherwise Ameh makes the same general statements which he accuses Aluko's critics of making.

Aluko's works portray two levels of conflict: the conflict between African traditions and Western influences in Aluko's mind, and the conflict between tradition and the West within the society, depicted by the behaviour of the people towards traditional and Western ideas. These two levels of conflict are played out simultaneously and the pattern of the first conflict affects Aluko's portrayal of the second. When Ameh says that 'Aluko has undergone a change in his attitude to his society,' he implies that the two conflicting cultures in Aluko's mind have reached a state of near-balance. In Aluko's early novels, Western ideas have a preponderant influence on him. At this stage in his writing career, he acknowledged only the values of the West to the disadvantage of traditional culture as a socializing and educating influence in the life of an individual. After the pathetic failure of the Western system in his society, Aluko no longer saw the Western way of life as a panacea for all his society's ills. He looked back to tradi-

tional life for an answer in His Worshipful Majesty, where he finds some intrinsic values which must be preserved so that they may form the basis for the society's ethical re-orientation if the society is to survive the chaos resulting from the incursion of the West upon traditional African society. In His Worshipful Majesty, we read: 'Whatever happens to the rest of our customs... this communal labour system must be preserved.'[12] Here, Barrister Morrison is commenting on the communal labour compulsorily observed in preparation for the annual ancestral festival of the Aiye people. Later on, Mr Morrison confirms the beauty of this traditional system, pleading that it should be written down in books: 'Mr Roberts, this is wonderful... it is our custom, Mr. Roberts, and we must preserve it... And do we not have any book which describes these customs?'[13] Aluko's attitude to tradition has so changed over the years that he not only sees value in tradition but also realises that conflict between traditional values and Western ideas is not always a conflict in which tradition represents evil and Western culture good. In His Worshipful Majesty, Aluko's view is that Western values should modify those aspects of tradition that are not helpful to pro-

gress in Africa, such as the autocracy of traditional rulers. Otherwise, the two ways of life should co-exist on terms of mutual tolerance. This is the nature of the inevitability of change which Aluko advocates at the time, a change that will make his society belong to the twentieth century. However, Western values tend to destabilize tradition owing to the greater force wielded by Western values in affecting Africans who tend to regard their culture as inferior to that of the West.

The cultural conflict going on in the mind of Aluko affects his vision of society in _One Man, One Wife_ and _One Man, One Matchet_, where the author is violently anti-tradition. In _Kinsman and Foreman_, although Aluko is still anti-tradition, he begins to use traditional Yoruba dialogue. Secondly, Aluko discovers that the colonialist will always treat the African, no matter how educated, with contempt. The educated African is regarded as an upstart. The more charitable Europeans treat the educated African with patronage. In _One Man, One Matchet_, Henry Gregory is the contemptuous European while Stanfield is the patronizing and tolerant type. Again, in _Kinsman_

and Foreman, the Irish-born Director of the Government Department of Public Works is patronizing, while Richard McBain, the Provincial Engineer of the Department of Public Works in Ibadan is snobbish. In the main, the attitude of colonialists to Africans is rooted in the colonialists' belief in the superiority of the White race over the Black race.

In Chief the Honourable Minister, Aluko shows that he has learnt that the West will not, afterall, provide the solution to all the problems of development and progress in Africa. An example is the failure of the attempt to introduce Western democracy in Afromacoland. Also, in His Worshipful Majesty, the communal work system is lauded, and the worship of ancestral gods is given a dignified outlook, unlike in One Man, One Wife, where ancestral worship is denigrated. With this realisation, Aluko's attitude to tradition becomes more positive. Improved, too, is his portrayal of conflict between tradition and Western culture, reflected in various ways in Aluko's novels. One Man, One Wife treats the conflict between Christian monogamy and traditional polygamy. In One Man, One Matchet conflict is located in

Ipaja's objection to tree-cutting, and also in the refusal of the town's people to pay taxes. Kinsman and Foreman concentrates on the conflict between corruption and honesty. In this conflict, corruption is linked to tradition while honesty is inherent in the Western public service. Chief the Honourable Minister depicts the failure of Western education to effect social progress in Africa. This novel is the turning point in Aluko's attitude to Western education. He no longer buys the idea that the alien system of education is good in all respects for his society.

Aluko resolves the cultural conflict in His Worshipful Majesty. In the conflict between the Alaiye of Aiye and the Chairman of Aiye Local Government, Mr. Morrison; neither side has the upper hand. The novel no longer presents a formulated equation whereby tradition is associated with backwardness and the West with progress. The issues involved in the conflict are partly due to personality struggles and partly institutional. On the personality plane, the Alaiye sees himself as the owner of the land and, by virtue of this position, as being above the government of the land; while to Chairman Morrison no one is above

the law. On the institutional level, the Oba sees the circumscribing of his royal authority as a denigration of the institution of Obaship, an attack which he must use his royal might to repel. The Alaiye stresses this point with proverbial rhetoric: 'what rain falls from the skies that the ground cannot drink.'[14] As his reprisal, the Alaiye uses his traditional power to invoke the curse of Jelenke upon Mr Morrison, who later dies. The Oba's death takes the form of suicide. When he realises that he must accept to have his authority curtailed in accordance with government regulations, he dies. In His Worshipful Majesty, Aluko grants to the Alaiye sufficient royalty and dignity to regard himself as an equal and personal friend of the king of England, who must be written to in protest against the effrontery of His Majesty's representatives. Another pointer to Aluko's improved vision of his society is the great annual ancestral festival among the Aiye community, which Aluko describes with dignity and excitement. Aluko's attitude to African tradition in His Worshipful Majesty is for these reasons, a far cry from what it was in both One Man, One Wife and One Man, One Matchet.

C. Hugh Holman defines conflict as 'the struggle which grows out of the interplay of two opposing forces in a plot'. Holman identifies five levels of conflict which a protagonist may enter into:

1) the protagonist may struggle against the forces of nature;
2) he may struggle against another person, usually the antagonist;
3) he may struggle against society as a force;
4) two elements within him may struggle for mastery;
5) he may struggle against fate or destiny.15

With the exception of the first type of conflict, the other four kinds of conflict find expression in Aluko's novels. The second kind of conflict is found in One Man, One Matchet in the clash between Udo Akpan and 'Benja Benja', as he is called by the village people; in Kinsman and Foreman where Titus confronts Simeon; and in His Worshipful Majesty, in the struggle between Mr Morrison and King Olayiwole Adegoke. In the third type of conflict in which the protagonist struggles against the society, the protagonist is seen as a non-conformist. He, however, tries to convince the society that his ideas are correct, and that the accepted social norms are not very useful to the society. He is outlawed by the

society, but often, at the end of the story, his stand is vindicated by the imminent disaster that befalls the society. Aluko uses this technique in Kinsman and Foreman, where Titus Oti refuses to conform to the social norms of Ibala which he sees as a sure way to economic ruin and corruption. The fourth level of conflict, in which two elements struggle for ascendance in the protagonist's mind, is depicted in His Worshipful Majesty. The conflict is located, not in the mind of the hero, Mr Morrison, or his antagonist, Oba Olayiwole Adegoke, but in the narrator, Mr Robert. He is torn between the desire to identify himself with the work of the new local government, whose secretary he is, and the sympathy he feels for the Oba, to whom he owes traditional loyalty. The fifth kind of conflict, in which the protagonist struggles against fate or destiny, is portrayed in Aluko's last novel, Wrong Ones in the Dock. The hero, Jonathan Egbor, and his son, Paul Egbor are accused of the murder of one of their co-tenants, Mrs Marian Bassey. The narrator, Mr Banjo, describes the struggle between Jonathan and his fate as follows:

> Jonathan Egbor had in fact lost the battle for justice from the very day

> of the fight when cruel fate had placed responsibility for the determination of the truth in the hands of the national police and of his neighbours at 22 Fasanya street, who were too frightened to come forward to speak the truth.[15]

Owing to Jonathan Egbor's struggle with fate, he and his son, Paul, are imprisoned without trial, for almost two years for an offence they did not commit. Each of Aluko's novels portrays more than one level of conflict. For example, in Kinsman and Foreman Aluko portrays the struggle between Titus Oti, the hero, and the society; while the second level of conflict in the novel is the struggle between Titus Oti and Simeon Oke, his cousin and foreman of the government department headed by Titus. In Wrong Ones in the Dock, Jonathan Egbor struggles against fate and against other antagonists, especially, the Bassey family, who are bent on having Jonathan hanged for an offence which he has not committed. Holman's categories, thus provide a useful framework against which to view conflict in T.M. Aluko's novels.

Born in 1918 at Ilesha in what is now the Oyo State of Nigeria, Timothy Mofolorunso Aluko received his primary education in Ilesha. Although

Ilesha has assumed an urban status recently, it was only a village during Aluko's boyhood. Aluko was thus brought up under the rich cultural influence of Yoruba society. These influences account for the deep knowledge of Yoruba customs portrayed in his works.

Aluko proceeded to the Government College, Ibadan, for his secondary education. Next, he attended the Yaba Higher College, now known as Yaba College of Technology in Lagos. Here, he studied Civil Engineering and Town Planning. Later, he took a degree in Engineering at the University of London. Aluko returned to Nigeria and took up an appointment as an Engineer in the Public Works Department, Western Nigeria. In an attempt to project his personality and life experience in his novels, Aluko draws parallels between himself and Titus Oti, the hero of Kinsman and Foreman.

From 1956 to 1960 Aluko was the Town Engineer for the Lagos Town Council. In 1959 his first novel, One Man, One Wife was published in Nigeria. Bernth Lindfors suggests that the manuscript was perhaps not acceptable to British publishers on account of its low standard. In 1960

Aluko became the Director of the Public Works Department of Western Nigeria. His second novel, One Man, One Matchet, was published in 1964. Later, he travelled to Britain, where he obtained a Master's degree in Public Health Engineering from the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in 1969. Aluko published his third novel, Kinsman and Foreman, in 1966. His fourth novel, Chief the Honourable Minister, was published in 1970, followed by His Worshipful Majesty in 1973.

T. M. Aluko obtained a Ph.D. in Public Health Engineering from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, in 1976. After this, he remained as a lecturer at the University of Lagos, where he rose to the position of a Reader. He retired in 1979. While on retirement, Aluko continues his writing career. Ten years after His Worshipful Majesty, his sixth novel, Wrong Ones in the Dock was published in 1983. T. M. Aluko is one of the oldest practising novelists in Africa today, whose work has still to receive the attention it deserves.

The classification of Aluko's works into the Early novels: One Man, One Wife (1959) and One Man, One Matchet (1964); the middle period: Kins-

man and Foreman (1966) and Chief the Honourable Minister (1970); and the later novels: His Worshipful Majesty (1973) and Wrong Ones in the Dock (1983), is influenced by his handling of conflict in a progressively militant fashion and a technically accomplished manner. In his early novels, conflict is one-sided because Aluko's emphasis is on the affirmation of Western ideas, to the discredit of tradition. As a result of his bias against tradition, Aluko comes across at this stage in his career as an anti-traditionalist, to echo Gakwandi. In One Man, One Wife and One Man, One Matchet, Aluko derides the technological backwardness of his society. He denies his society any form of dignity. In his middle period Aluko is aware of the inadequacies of the Western system which Africans are expected to adopt; yet, Aluko still prefers this system to tradition and feels disappointed by the failure of his society to adopt that system to its own advantage. Aluko's disappointment is registered in the political chaos and the military coup that topple the corrupt civil regime in Chief the Honourable Minister. Afterwards Aluko starts to see more clearly that many African problems had been caused by colonialism while, in the same vein,

he is able to see some of the negative aspects of tradition. These negative aspects are portrayed in the later novels: His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. In these novels, Aluko satirizes the negative aspects of tradition which he wants to see corrected or expunged. He also thinks, however, that tradition should stay to enrich the life of the society. Thus a development can be discerned in Aluko from his early period, through his middle phase, to the later novels.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter One

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CHAPTER TWO

THE EARLY ALUKO:
ONE MAN, ONE WIFE AND ONE MAN, ONE MATCHET*

Two levels of conflict have been identified in Aluko's works. The first conflict is within Aluko's mind. The novelist writes about his personal experiences. He also writes about what he imagines to be the marked struggles going on in society. These struggles within the society form the second level of conflict. Aluko transfers his life experiences to some of his characters in the novels. In looking at these heroes in conflict situations, we are in effect looking at Aluko himself playing out the conflict situation in his mind. The reader only sees the conflict raging on in the outer society between Africa and the West through the eyes of the writer, who employs an omniscient narrator. Aluko's attitude to Africa and the West is, at this stage in his literary career, biased. He tends to see Western cultural influence as the new order which should replace African traditional culture or the old order.

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*T.M. Aluko, One Man, One Wife, London, Heinemann, 1959. T.M. Aluko, One Man, One Matchet, London, Heinemann, 1964. Hereafter referred to in abbreviated form as OMOW and OMOM respectively after quotation on the text.

One Man, One Wife and One Man, One Matchet, Aluko's first two novels, share some common features. In the two novels, Aluko is critical of traditional society in Yorubaland in the early 1920s and the late 1940s with its educational backwardness, negativism, social inhibitions, superstition and ignorance.

One Man, One Wife is influenced by Achebe's Things Fall Apart, published only a year earlier. Both novelists deal with change, which was ushered in by colonialism. Change manifests itself in the government, religion, social customs and education within society. They both see change as inevitable. However, they differ in their attitude to the past. Achebe sees the past as beautiful and rich, so that critics like Lindfors call Achebe a 'nostalgic novelist'. Achebe acknowledges the inevitability of change, but he also mourns the past that is fading away. The bonds of consanguinity in Africa are eroded by the infiltrating Western culture. Hence, an old man laments in Things Fall Apart, at Okonkwo's 'thank you' feast for his mother's kinsmen:

> When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. You may ask why I am saying all this. I say

> it because I fear for the younger generation, for you people... As for me I have only a short while to live and so have Uchendu and Unachukwu and Emefo. But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can curse the gods of his fathers and and his ancestors, like a **hunter's** dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan.1

Achebe sees dignity in the past. He is therefore gloomy that this dignifying past is passing away, giving way to the Western order. Aluko has a different view. There is nothing in tradition or the past that is dignifying; nothing to be proud of in this order. Change is not only inevitable but also welcome, for there is nothing majestic in tradition. The past, represented by the aged and the people's traditional beliefs, is ashamed of asserting itself in <u>One Man, One Wife</u>. For instance, Grandma Gbemi is ashamed to claim her 'Shonponna', the god of small-pox. But in Achebe, the old, as in the passage given above, berate the youth for abandoning their ancestors and the gods of their fathers in pursuit of an alien religion. In Aluko, the response of the audience to Pastor David's effrontery and the rude challenge of the

traditional gods is an inept silence. The audience mope as Pastor David kicks the base of the sacred 'odan' tree and victoriously informs the audience: 'you see, brethern it is only a tree, and therefore cannot hit back when kicked'. (OMOW, p.4) In Achebe's novel, a missionary defies the gods of the land by threatening to burn them down as a demonstration of their impotence. One of his hearers says to him: 'Go and burn your mother's genitals.'[2] Later in Things Fall Apart, Okoli eats a royal python, a sacred animal in Umuofia. This incident leads to the social ostracisation of the Christians from Umuofia. These textual cross-references reflect the attitude of the two writers to tradition, showing that while Achebe is a traditionalist Aluko is anti-tradition.

Aluko's attitude to tradition is reflected in the title of his first novel, one-man-one-wife, which suggests his preference for Christian monogamy as against traditional polygamy. One Man, One Wife like all Aluko's novels, emphasizes conflict. He takes up conflict between Christianity and traditional religion in a Yoruba community. Aluko treats this topic with bias and singleness of purpose. His treatment is decidedly anti-tradition;

the novel is therefore not balanced in depicting the two cultures.

The Christian faith lays emphasis on every man having one wife. To take more than one wife is a heathen practice. Elder Joshua, who hopes to marry the little girl, Toro, as his second wife, discovers in one of the Bible classes that he cannot take another wife. He has already incurred some expenses in bridal presents made to the family of his intended wife. Elder Joshua therefore, decides to marry Toro to his first son Jacob. Traditionally, it is his responsibility to get a wife for his first son, just as his own father had done for him. Unfortunately, Jacob wants a grown up woman for a wife, not just a child. He therefore turns down his father's arrangement. Joshua, however, succeeds in arranging for Jacob to marry Joke, who later moves to Joshua's house. Her arrival causes a stir among the Christians, among whom it is rumoured that Joshua has taken another wife, contrary to the Christian ordinance. This matter gets to the Reverend David and he hurriedly winds up his tour of the local churches under his district to attend to this delicate situation. At Isolo, the pastor delivers a fiery sermon on the Christian marriage ordinance.

To Aluko, the conflict between polygamy and monogamy represents a struggle between the desires of the flesh and the yearnings of the spirit. All desires of the flesh are evil while those of the spirit are good: 'The Christian, lest they forgot, was a soldier fighting a life-long battle against the desires of the flesh, which were invariably in conflict with the things of the spirit. On this side of Jordan, there could be no respite' (OMOW, p.37). In his conclusion, Pastor David declares for Christianity: 'one man, one wife. One Christ, one church' (OMOW, p.38).

Aluko's passionate defence of Christian marriage in the novel shows his partiality to Western religion. Such eloquence is not counter-balanced in his references to tradition. When Aluko turns to speak for tradition, he speaks to expose the frivolity of traditional culture. Aluko believes that his people must embrace Christianity, for therein lies salvation for mankind. He also criticises other practices which are associated with traditional marriages, such as the early marriage of girls and the treatment meted to girls who refuse to marry suitors their parents arrange for them. Aluko also condemns arranged

marriages such as the one between Jacob and Joke.

Aluko does not see the struggle between tradition and the Western system as a major one, because to him there is little to prefer in tradition. This mentality informs the raging struggle between the two cultures in the novel. The external struggle that takes place is illustrated by an allegorical incident with the lamp which Royasin's boy lights. As the boy pours oil into the lamp, the light flickers and gasps spasmodically, as if it is going out. Later, it becomes brighter, seems to regain strength and confidence. This incident parallels the problems encountered by the church at Isolo. The activities of Christian missionaries are initially stifled by the forces of tradition, until towards the end of the novel when much success is recorded in converting many more people at Isolo. Conflict appears to destroy Western religion since the 'unseen forces' of tradition are initially too strong for it (OMOW, p.10). Among the people of Isolo, only a handful of converts are won over initially, at the advent of Christianity.

The conflict between African and Western beliefs in <u>One Man, One Wife</u> takes the form of an

argument about whether 'Shonponna', the traditional god of small-pox, should be appeased in the traditional way or whether patients suffering from small-pox should be taken to government hospitals for treatment. Bible Jeremaih and Elder Joshua speak heatedly for Christianity and tradition respectively. In spite of the majority of traditionalists, no action is taken to appease the god of small-pox. This shows that Aluko does not want to yield any ground to the traditionalists, to the disadvantage of Western culture. Achebe's Things Fall Apart depicts open clashes between traditionalists and adherents of the new faith. Such clashes are recorded both at Umuofia and Mbanta, where Okonkwo spends his seven years in exile. The clashes show that Christianity does not prevent the clans from practising their cherished traditions. Hence, the Christians are ostracised at Umuofia when it is rumoured that one of the Christians has killed and eaten a sacred python. Also when another person unmasks a masquerade, the church is attacked and burnt down by an enraged group of masquerades. In Achebe, tradition sometimes emerges victorious, whereas in Aluko's early novels there are no such triumphs accorded to tradition.

Although Aluko prefers Western culture, another effect of his novel is to illustrate, as has also been done by other writers in Africa, that the incursion of Christianity in Africa resulted in chaos. In fact, Aluko's novel becomes more significant if it is seen as showing the impact of Western influences on Africans. Apart from political and economic control, the West also sought to conquer Africa spiritually through religious indoctrination, so as to perpetuate Western dominance in Africa. To convince Africans that they worshipped trees and other earthly objects, they referred to African religions as paganism, heathenism and idol worship. The missionaries worked on the African psychology and succeeded in confusing and convincing Africans that traditional religion was inferior to Christianity. From a Christian view point, polygamy was then condemned as an evil and African converts discouraged from practising it.

The same chaos brought about by missionary attempts to stop polygamy is dealt with by a number of other African novelists. For instance, Mongo Beti, in two of his novels, The Poor Christ of Bomba, and King Lazarus, shows the failure of

mission work in Cameroon owing to the fact that the colony is not prepared to accept Western values, symbolised by Christianity and monogamy. The missionaries, filled with the desire to take possession of the soul of Africa, fail to come to terms with the African situation. They fail to realise that the European system cannot be transplanted into Africa and be expected to thrive in the same way as in Europe. This view is expressed by Dorothy Blair when she says that the failure to 'realise that there is only one guiding principle - expediency' in their mission work in Africa is the major cause of the failure of missionaries there.[3] In King Lazarus (1958), Le Guen's demand for a total conversion of Chief Essomba to the Catholic faith causes tumult. The Chief has twenty-three wives. Conversion implies that he can retain only one wife and send the remaining twenty-two packing. In pursuing this course, Father Le Guen fails to see the chaos he is bringing upon the society. Chief Essomba marries from each ethnic group in his kingdom. Polygamy serves as a unifying factor, for all the people are represented in the Chief's household. On Le Guen's instigation, Chief Essomba orders his twenty-two wives to leave the palace,

leaving behind the youngest to be his only wife. This expulsion order causes all the sections of the kingdom represented by the expelled wives to besiege the capital. Each section is represented by its warriors, who are ready to attack if their kinswoman is ejected from the palace. Monsieur Lequeux, the colonial administrator-in-chief of the province, first disperses the troops and then proceeds to hold talks with the elders of the besieging clans. The elders advise Lequeux on what to do to restore peace in the kingdom:

> Tell your brother to leave our chief in peace... Why did he have to put it into the chief's head to become a convert, eh, tell me that? Our fathers got on well without all that rubbish. The women will stay where they are anyway. How could they go? Where would they go to? You tell him to leave the chief alone! He can have the children and initiate them into his practices to his heart's content. We don't mind turning the children over to him, but he's got to keep his hands off the chief. He breaks off our peaceful existence, he's disturbing our traditions.4

Aluko and Beti agree that the introduction of foreign elements in a people's culture may be disturbing and lead to chaos. However, the two writers differ, for while Aluko feels that, irrespective of the initial chaos, Africans must be monogamous; Beti feels that old Africa should

not be disturbed. Any innovations, if they must be made, should begin with the youth.

In his demonstration of the chaotic impact of Western religion in an African community, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in The River Between views Christianity as a dehumanising religion. This is indicated in Joshua's callous attitude to the death of his daughter, Muthoni. Ngugi uses the issue of female circumcision to draw the line between Africa and Europe. Christianity discourages female circumcision, a traditional requirement for a girl to become a fully accepted member of the community. Muthoni does not see any impediment in a circumcised girl becoming a good Christian. Against the disapproval of her parents, she joins her age-mates in the traditional rite. Joshua and his wife, though circumcised in their own time and still devout Christians, disown Muthoni for participating in this important traditional rite. Occasionally, doubts crop up in the mind of Muthoni's father, Joshua. For example, it always puzzles Joshua that in the Old Testament men who walked with God and angels had many wives. However, Joshua knows that the man at the mission says it is sinful for a Christian to have more than one wife, and so Joshua believes

it must be so. Joshua's wife accepts the religion half-heartedly: 'one could tell by her eyes that this was a religion learnt and accepted; inside, the true Gikuyu woman was asleep.'[5] Ngugi's point is that this religion has been imposed from without. All puzzling and unexplained facts about the new religion, like the insistence on monogamy, are never questioned. They are accepted as handed down from the missionaries, thereby creating information gaps in the minds of African converts like Joshua.

The main difference between Aluko and Ngugi with respect to their visions is that Ngugi believes that Christianity could be meaningfully related to the African society if it is made to fit into the life pattern of Africans; otherwise it creates emptiness which leads the society into chaos. The authenticity of Ngugi's vision is borne out by the chaos that follows aggressive missionary work in parts of Africa. To Aluko, however, traditional religious worship is inferior to Christianity, and should therefore be eradicated and replaced by Christianity.

Chaos arises in the society depicted in <u>One Man, One Wife</u> in a number of instances: Isolo

can no longer speak with one voice during the discussion summoned by the Asolo to resolve the small-pox issue; Joshua assaults Bible Jeremiah as a reprisal for Jeremiah's false report that Joshua has taken another wife; there is also the unsuccessful bid by Joshua and his son, Jacob, to secure Toro or the expenses that Joshua incurred on her$_0$ in addition, African employees at the mission do not clearly understand the religion they preach to the people„ They end up confusing their congregation Royasin's Christmas sermon fails to move the flock because it is shallow.

One Man, One Wife, therefore portrays Aluko as an anti-traditionalist, for he depicts traditional culture as undignified and retrogressive. Aluko agrees with other writers that chaos results from the conflict between tradition and western culture* However, while such other writers as Achebe, Ngugi and Beti see violence as an outcome of cultural conflict, Aluko thinks that violence is an aspect of the traditional character in Africa. While a writer like Ngugi believes that Christianity could function better in Africa if it is integrated into the people's life pattern, Aluko sees no reason for such an integration. He believes that Christianity should replace tradi-

tional religions. For this uncompromising stand, Gakwandi's reference to Aluko as an anti-traditionalist is appropriate, as far as _One Man, One Wife_ is concerned.

Aluko's second novel, _One Man, One Matchet_, brings out another conflict of an intensely chaotic nature. In the novel, the focus is on the Yoruba community of Ipaja in 1947-9 during the era of the cocoa disease and protests over taxes. Aluko uses these incidents to highlight the backwardness of the society and the need for intense Western education. In Aluko's view, the people's protests against tree cutting introduced by the government to arrest the spread of the cocoa disease and their opposition to the payment of taxes are elements of backwardness. The protests form part of the conflict between tradition and Western life. The protests reflect that chaos which is always the outcome of a reaction by traditionalists to European incursion. Aluko thinks that Africa has no choice but to embrace Western life if it must modernise.

One Man, One Matchet is similar to _One Man, One Wife_ in many respects. In both novels Aluko

does not appear to see the conflict situation and the chaos it engenders as tragic. He mimics European attitudes and laughs at his society. Aluko's lightheartedness has prompted critical comments from Ngugi and Lindfors, who feels that: 'It is hard to take such a light-hearted comedian seriously'.[6] In One Man, One Matchet, Aluko's sympathy lies with Udo Akpan. He sees in Udo Akpan a perfectly Westernised African, an example of what he wants Africans to be. His only worry is that Udo Akpan is an outcast, neither accepted by the White colonialists as one of them nor by the natives who, because of his position as the District Officer, a post hitherto occupied by the Whiteman, and his inability to speak their tongue, regard him as a Whiteman with a black skin. Conflict in One Man, One Matchet begins when the colonial administration wants to cut down the infected cocoa trees. In this period, the cocoa industry had become a major source of employment in Western Nigeria. The first meeting arranged for the District and Agricultural Officers, Mr Stanfield and Mr Gregory respectively, to meet the chiefs and people of Ipaja is a failure. The idea of cutting cocoa trees enrages the farmers who, instead, demand an immediate restoration of Igbodudu

land, which the neighbouring clan, Apeno, had previously won from Ipaja. From this conflicting beginning the novel introduces other conflicts: the rejection of tax assessments, continued resistance to tree-cutting and the launching of various anti-government funds. In all these activities, Benjamin Benjamin is the evil genius, animating and sustaining the people's efforts. Benjamin Benjamin, the only person capable of organizing effective resistance against the colonial administration, a person who should have been a hero of the nationalist struggle, is depicted as the villain of the piece. Further, Aluko uses the resistance of the people of Ipaja to tree-cutting to illustrate their backwardness. In Aluko's opinion, government has good intentions to alleviate the peoples' backwardness and provide basic social ammenities. To the embarassment of well-meaning European officials, the people demand something different, Igbodudu land. Chief Momoh is made to voice out the welling anger of villagers against government plans. Chief Ajayi, one of the farmers in the area, has toured parts of West Africa where cutting operations of diseased cocoa trees had been carried out. The colonial administration had sponsored this tour so that Chief Ajayi

could witness the operation going on in other places and help the government to convince his people of the good intentions of the government. Chief Ajayi has not concluded his speech when Chief Momoh interrupts to express his indignation at what he terms Chief Ajayi's conspiracy with aliens to destroy his people. Chief Momoh's rage arises from his disappointed expectations when he realises what the real motive of the meeting is:

> We thought that they would perhaps pay us more for our cocoa because they saw how very much we were suffering. We thought perhaps they would pity us and tell us not to pay taxes any more. Are these not the things we have been asking for all this time? But what do we get instead... We must cut down our cocoa trees (OMOM, p.4).

Chief Momoh walks out of the meeting hall after berating Chief Ajayi for what is to him a mad conspiracy against his people, but he wins the ovation of his admiring colleagues. The pandemonium which follows Chief Momoh's speech shows the people's approval of what Chief Momoh has said and their resistance to cutting diseased cocoa trees.

Benja Benja, in his gorgeous attire, comes late to the meeting, intending to attract the attention of everyone and then pose as the spokes-

man of the community so that future communication should be directed to him. The elaborate ritual through which Benjamin Benjamin goes before he speaks portrays him as a megalomaniac and prepares the reader's mind for his future exploits. Benjamin Benjamin is ill-educated, though he is educationally superior to most people in his community. He is therefore able to exploit the ignorance of his people to feather his own nest.

Benja Benja soon becomes Adviser to the Oba, the Chiefs' and Elders' council in Ipaja as well as the Secretary-General to the Ipaja Improvement Union. He wields much influence which he uses to force the townsmen to establish the anti-tax fund, the Igbodudu Land Appeal Fund and the Chief Momoh Memorial Fund. These three Funds are set up with apparently lofty ideals behind them, but soon prove only ideal ground for Benja Benja to mis-appropriate public funds. Benja Benja tells his people that they are poor people who should not be expected to pay taxes. Ipaja people do not think it is right for the government to take money from them to procure such facilities as good roads, good water supply and hospitals. To them, these things should come from the government for the

benefit of the people. And Ipaja people believe Benja Benja when he tells them that these amenities should be provided by the government free of charge. In this way, Aluko links tradition to ignorance and backwardness. He implies that if the people of Ipaja were properly educated in the system of modern government, they would not be led by the nose by demagogues like Benjamin Benjamin.

The actual instances of physical conflict in <u>One Man, One Matchet</u> are located in Chief Momoh's resistance to the cutting of diseased cocoa trees in his farm, the Reverend Olaiya's abduction by the traditionalists, and in the proceedings of the government commission of Inquiry into the fund raising activities in Ipaja. Chief Momoh is arrested for obstructing government officials in the discharge of their legitimate duty and sentenced to a three-month jail term. Chief Momoh, the mouthpiece of traditional society speaks abject ignorance, as in his argument against tree-cutting and about mosquitoes which he says cannot cause malaria fever. Aluko implies that old Africa is violent and ignorant. The magistrate's statement as he passes judgment against Chief Momoh reflects Aluko's view on traditional society

and all it stands for:

> We have come many generations since both life and limb were insecure in the dark days of inter-tribal wars. In this year of our Lord 1949, every citizen should be free to go about his duty without fear or molestation. Any individual or organisation that threatens to deprive the citizen of this fundamental right in a civilised society must be punished in accordance with the laws of the state. (OMOM, p.86)

Aluko tries to give the impression that old Africa was characterised by jungle justice while Western society is humane and civilized. Symbolically, tradition collapses and gives way to Western ways when Chief Momoh collapses and dies.

Using the Ipaja people's opposition to taxation to illustrate another conflict, Aluko sees the people's action as a rejection of their civic duties. Through prompt payment of taxes and other duties, the people should help the government to bring about development. Lack of awareness of these civic responsibilities provides Benja Benja the latitude to further his obnoxious plans. He has no problem in turning the minds of the people against Udo Akpan's administration, which he links to their enemies, the Apeno clan. Having made this connection, Benja Benja urges the people to assert their rights through litigation against the government; this calls for making huge financial

contributions for procuring the services of lawyers. A special fund is launched and a committee led by the Secretary-General of the Ipaja Improvement Union, Benja Benja, is selected to collect funds from Ipaja sons and daughters everywhere. In this activity, Aluko shows how a few educated elements exploit their communities for their personal benefit. Soon the people realise that they are paying, in contribution to the litigation fund, much more than what they are required to pay to the government as taxes; and that the realisation of the cause they are made to contribute for is not in sight. They begin to see that it is better for them to abandon the struggle against taxation and pay what they are assessed to pay.

The Reverend Olaiya's abduction by the agents of tradition is another source of conflict between tradition and Western culture in the novel. The immediate cause of the clash is the Reverend Olaiya's sermon at the launching of the Igbodudu Land Appeal fund. The poor people are required to pay large sums at the height of an economic depression. The sermon condemns false patriotism. Olaiya teaches that a true Christian should fight and die for his fatherland. However, the true

Christian must be warned against elevating patriotism to the status of another god. This sermon exposes the Reverend Olaiya to Benjamin Benjamin's scurillous commentary in the National Affairs, in which Olaiya's sermon is referred to as that of an 'imperialist dragon' hiding its head within the church (OMOM, p.69). Benja Benja's article attracts a few other comments in the newspaper, all of which view the Reverend Olaiya as unpatriotic and dangerous. As a sequel to this sermon, Olaiya is abducted by some unknown persons and kept in hiding for forty-three days. Apart from shaving his hair off, no harm is done to Olaiya, probably because his kidnappers know he is an agent of the West whose influence the traditionalists cannot withstand.

Every conflict in One Man, One Matchet ends with tradition losing out to Western influences. When confronted with the law, Chief Momoh collapses and dies. When the people refuse to pay taxes, a threat from Udo Akpan to withold the salaries of the Oba and Chiefs makes the taxes to flow in. Finally, Benja Benja, the arch-antagonist of the colonial administration, is shot dead by his former supporter.

The death of Benja Benja signals the final collapse of resistance to the colonial administration and the triumph of the Western system. Again, Aluko implies that as Benja Benja is shot by Chief Olowokere, another traditionalist, so will tradition destroy itself and give way to the superior culture of the West. In the light of the above, Eustace Palmer rightly points out that, 'Aluko sees change as both inevitable and necessary precisely because there is little that is dignifying about traditional life.'[7]

Apart from his inability to see majesty in traditional Yoruba society Aluko makes fun of nationalism, which he sees as being no more than nepotism. Nationalism to Benjamin Benjamin, and his associates means getting back the Igbodudu forest, which the Apeno people dispossessed them of during the days of inter-tribal wars. The people of Ipaja see it as their duty to regain the land at any cost. The Benjamin Benjamins use the opportunity to misappropriate some of the money raised for the purpose of regaining the land. Ironically, as Aluko sees it, the people of Ipaja are not patriotic enough to pay their taxes to enable the government to modernise their town for

their own benefit. Through these imputations and ironies, Aluko shows his dislike of tradition. He presents an essentially comic vision of his society, in spite of numerous deaths recorded in the two novels.

Characters are drawn with bias. There are Westernised Africans, whom Aluko portrays with much sympathy. There are also characters with a traditional orientation, who are presented in an uncomplimentary fashion. This bias betrays Aluko's predilection for a life-style that is not traditional but Western. In One Man, One Wife, apart from a general unwholesome picture of African characters - Pastor David is one-eyed, Bible Jeremiah is a consumptive, Elder Joshua is irascible and Royasin's mother has a mountainous bosom - the more Westernised the characters are the more sympathetically Aluko draws them. This is because Aluko repudiates anything African unless it is mitigated by Western influences. Hence, in spite of Pastor David's repulsive appearance, he is patient and laborious in the discharge of his duties. The half-literate Jacob Joshua is Aluko's hope for an effective Christianisation of Isolo. Toro, though only a child, poses

a serious challenge to the anachronistic custom of arranged marriages. Traditional characters remain grubby and represent arrant ignorance. Margaret Laurence comments that 'The old Africa is not spared either with its chiefs who voice both well-tried wisdom and inflexible ignorance - small-pox patients ought not to be treated with modern medicine lest the ancestors be offended.'[8]

Aluko's bias against traditional Africa becomes even more pronounced when compared with Achebe's presentation of traditional life. This is stressed by Palmer when he writes: 'Where Achebe's traditional elders like Akuebue, Ezeulu and Ezeudu are dignified intelligent repositories of traditional wisdom, Aluko's Obas and Chiefs seem for the most part to be a bunch of doddering idiots in their second childhood.'[9] Apart from their ignorance and idiocy, Aluko's traditional characters reflect the Whiteman's assessment of the mature African mind. According to this view, no traditional African is capable of mental development beyond the level of a White adolescent child. The meetings of the Oba and his elders and Chiefs, severally summoned to discuss various problems in Isolo, never succeed in resolving anything. Rather

the dignitaries of the village are portrayed as improvident clowns whose gratification is to feast at the expense of defaulting members.

Aluko's characterisation in One Man, One Wife and One Man, One Matchet is similar. The characters are identical and even mouth similar passages. For example, Elder Joshua and Chief Momoh are both irascible and ready to draw their matchets at the slightest provocation. They are outspoken and have sons living in other places with whom they communicate through letter-writing. After reading Jacob's letter, Joshua reacts to the 'magic' of letter-writing in the following terms:

> My son Jacob, sat at one end, many days' march away. He wrote something on these papers... Then someone came along and delivered this to me, saying that it is a message from my son, Jacob. Now, you were not there when he wrote this letter. You were not there, were you, Teacher? (MOMOW, p.24)

A corresponding passage from One Man, One Matchet, spoken by Chief Momoh, expresses the same wonder in the following way:

> My son wrote on a piece of paper a long long way away. The paper is brought here. You were not there when the paper was written by my son. Yet you here read the words of my son from the paper. That is wisdom. It is magic, White man's magic (OMOM, p.53)

Aluko uses his characters to show that Africa's backwardness is the effect of a traditional system that suffers from many inadequacies: illiteracy, superstition, disease and poor living conditions. Aluko's bias is so intense against tradition that he tends to see even the educated Yoruba traditionalists, such as Royasin and Benjamin Benjamin, as incapable of any positive or constructive contribution to the upliftment of their society. To Aluko, the only way out is to embrace Western civilization in its totality. The end to all forces of negativism and backwardness will come when people abandon their traditional ways. The role of educated Africans is to drag their tradition based societies forward into modern life.

Aluko's Westernised Africans are good and committed to advancement in their societies while traditional representatives are interested in putting back the hands of the clock. But as in One Man, One Wife, Western ideas overcome traditional resistance. Grandma Gbemi, a former votary of Shonponna, with her daughter, Ma Sheyi, are converted to the Christian faith. Even traditional gods are satirised. Aluko shows these gods as unpredictable. He uses irony to illustrate their unpredictability. For instance, the small-pox god,

Shonponna, is angry at the exploits of an alien religion in its area of sway. However, rather than deal with the converts to this alien faith, Shonponna turns to slay its own devotees, an indication that in all respects tradition shies away from Western influence. Sango also does the same when Elder Joshua is struck by a thunder-bolt, and the very chief priest of Shonponna, Bada, is slain by his own liege god. Again, after wandering in the maze of an alien religion, Royasin returns to tradition but is later afflicted with madness until his death. Aluko's use of irony illuminates the contradictions among the agents of traditional life. In <u>One Man, One Matchet</u>, it is ironical that the militancy which Benjamin Benjamin marshals against modernism backfires against him and his supporters like Chief Olowokere. Like shakespeare's 'even-handed justice'[10], the murderous intents of the forces of destruction embodied in tradition and expressed in the words of Benjamin Benjamin: 'one man, one matchet, one woman, one stick, one child, one stone' return to plague and destroy the inventors (OMOM, p. 108).

Just as Aluko uses his characters to show his

preference for Western ideas, so does he use language. Aluko does not use appropriate language to portray African thoughts and speech patterns. Critics have often commented on his inappropriate use of language to portray African life. On this, Lindfors comments: 'Nor does he share Achebe's sensitivity to language. Instead of attempting to simulate African vernacular in dialogue and narration, Aluko writes in a very anglicised style. At times the African milieu is totally obliterated.'[11] This use of anglicised diction is an indication of his predilection for Western culture. This is confirmed by Palmer's observation about One Man One Wife: 'Aluko's novel does not show much indication that he was aware of the linguistic modifications Achebe had made in Things Fall Apart. There is nothing distinctively African about his language. This style, he does not seem to have realised, will not be suitable to record the conversation of native Yoruba speakers.'[12] A glaring example of inappropriate language in Aluko can be gleaned from the following passage, which sounds quite unAfrican: 'Nikun was the most beautiful damsel on earth. Her hair was of black silk; her teeth were as white as snow and looked like pearls' (OMOW, p.15). The images in

this short passage are 'damsel', 'snow', 'silk' and 'pearls', all of which have no local flavour. Even proverbs, of which Yoruba has a very rich stock, are not reflected in the first novel. Aluko so distances himself from tradition as to ignore its literary values and peculiarities. However, Aluko's language even in his first two novels is not altogether a failure. There are certain aspects of language that enliven his novels. Aluko's Christian sermons, especially those delivered by Pastor David during his castigation of polygamy, and Vicar Josiah Olaiya's chastisement of false patriotism, are eloquently rendered. In fact, Aluko's forte is in simulation. When he imitates the Pastor or the journalist or the administrator he is convincing. He captures the language forms and mannerisms of each character.

Aluko is too enthralled by Western culture to notice its limitations. Sarah Milbury Steen correctly points out that for the colonised, the coloniser serves as a model. However, she also points out that the colonised people see the coloniser as an oppressor: 'The mixture of admiration and resentment in the African view of

the European results from colonialism, for the colonised the coloniser served as a model as well as an oppressor.'[13] Aluko's two novels show that to Aluko, the coloniser is a model, not necessarily an oppressor. At the time, it did not occur to Aluko that the White Man's culture did not offer Africa all the solutions to the problems of life peculiar to African society.

The chaos that arises from the use of Western culture as a model is a logical sequence of a destructive trend set in motion by the advent of Europeans in Africa. If chaos or violence results from conflict between tradition and intrusive Western culture, it is not because traditional Africa is primitive or violent by nature, as Aluko tends to suggest. It is rather that an attempt to destroy an existing order leaves behind emptiness and chaos.

Aluko demonstrates in One Man, One Wife and One Man, One Matchet that African societies need to modernise along European lines because traditional life does not offer progress. Aluko's model is Europe, but he fails to see that the model he prescribes for Africa cannot thrive

without modifications in Africa. It cannot stand the test of time, for the environments are not similar. Aluko turns round to chastise the products of that model, Royanson and Benjamin Benjamin. If these characters are not good, the system that produced them cannot be good. This implies that if the European system is forced upon Africans, chaos results. This chaos is not an outcome of the savagery of the people. Rather, conflict and chaos in <u>One Man, One Wife</u> and <u>One Man, One Matchet</u> arise as natural sequences to the incursion of external forces in Africa. Chaos is therefore not a mark of backwardness but a natural struggle by tradition to preserve itself in the face of possible extermination by Western culture. Chaos becomes a means to end social conflict between two opposing cultures that are struggling for mastery.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Two

1. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, London, Heinemann, 1958, p.118.
2. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p.110.
3. Dorothy Blair, African Literature in French, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1976, p.213.
4. Mongo Beti, King Lazarus, London, Heinemann 1960, pp. 167-8.
5. James Ngugi, The River Between, London, Heinemann, 1965, p.39.
6. Bernth Lindfors, 'T.M. Aluko: Nigerian Satirist' African Literature Today, No.5, London, Heinemann, 1971, p.52.
7. Eustace Palmer, The Growth of African Novel, London, Heinemann, 1976, p.108.
8. Margaret Laurence, Long Drums and Cannons, London, MacMillan, 1968, p.170.
9. Eustace Palmer, p. 109.
10. William Shakespeare, Macbeth, New Swan, p.43.
11. Bernth Lindfors, p.44.
12. Eustace Palmer, p. 102.
13. Sarah Milbury-Steen, European and African Stereotypes in Twentieth Century Fiction, London, MacMillan, 1980, p. 97.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MIDDLE-ALUKO: KINSMAN AND FOREMAN AND CHIEF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER*

Aluko's middle period is represented by the two novels, Kinsman and Foreman and Chief the Honourable Minister. Conflict is once again depicted at two levels. The first is seen in the attitude of Aluko's society to both tradition and Western values, two cultures struggling for supremacy. The second level of conflict is in the mind of the writer, in his vision of society reflected in his portrayal of cultural conflict between tradition and Western values. In Kinsman and Foreman, Aluko still believes in the superiority of Western over traditional values. He believes that the way to overcome backwardness in his society is to accept Western values, particularly Western education. However, in Chief the Honourable Minister, Aluko is disappointed with the products of Western education in Afromacoland. In spite of his call for Western education and

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* T. M. Aluko, Kinsman & Foreman, London, Heinemann, 1966.
T.M. Aluko, Chief the Honourable Minister, London, Heinemann, 1970. Hereafter referred to in abbreviated form as KF and CHM respectively after quotations on the text.

values in his previous novels he learns that these will not solve all the problems of his society. To register his disappointment in the educated leaders who turn corrupt and incompetent, Aluko brings down a holocaust upon the politicians.

In Kinsman and Foreman, the hero stands for Western values and his antagonist represents tradition. Aluko who shares certain similarities with his hero, Titus Oti, holds the view that the Western educated African is in a better position to induce change in his society. He sees this change as necessary for progress. He identifies traditional values as the major stumbling block to progress. Tradition compels Titus to shoulder some extended family responsibilities such as catering for an old uncle, Pa Joel, and an old aunt for whose elaborate funeral rites he is expected to save in advance. Other responsibilities placed upon Titus include making regular and generous financial donations towards the completion of the new church building of Ibala and chairing the Harvest sales of the church. It becomes clear that to meet these expectations, Titus will have to resort to other supplementary means to generate more income. This opens up a fertile field for

official corruption, which Titus identifies as the bane of his society.

On the traditional side of the cultural conflict is Simeon Oke, Titus's kinsman and the foreman of the Public Works Department, Ibala. Simeon has been in the public service for many years before Titus returns from England as an Engineer. He has therefore internalised the civil service system operated in the Western region of Nigeria, and has also mastered the loopholes which dishonest civil servants use for dishonestly enriching themselves. Simeon has, for a long time, exploited these avenues to enrich himself, the result is that he has much money to throw around and satisfy his base desires for vain-glory. With the money he gets through fraudulent practices, Simeon makes generous donations to the church fund and promotes Harvest sales, gives financial support to the members of his extended family, and can still afford to live flamboyantly. By his extravagant living, Simeon sets himself on a high pedestal in the eyes of his townsfolk. By so doing, he creates high expectations for Titus, which Titus can only measure up to by resorting to corruption.

When Titus sees the lifestyle of his kinsman,

he decides to find out how Simeon gets his money. Simeon's salary as a foreman cannot be sufficient for him to spend so extravagantly. Titus soon makes startling discoveries about his cousin's dishonesty, and vows to stop him from stealing public funds. Aluko's depiction of conflict here complies with Holman's definition of conflict as a struggle between the protagonist and an antagonist. Titus, who is bent on exposing his corrupt relation, swears in these words: 'It is my duty as District Engineer to see that no one steals any money. It is my duty as District Engineer to see that no one collects money from contractors and from workmen. It is therefore my duty to fight my kinsman Simeon and stop him from his evil practices.' (KF, p.50) Titus is embittered by Simeon's activities because he is not prepared to soil his hands with fraudulent practices in order to get money to throw around like Simeon. Since Titus has been to England and is an Engineer, his people expect him to be very rich. This expectation is partly because going to England is to the people of Ibala a status symbol. Also, since Simeon, who has not gone to England and is only a foreman, has so much money and influence, it is logical for the people of Ibala to assume that Titus has access to much more money and influ-

ence than Simeon. These are the reasons why the society places so much responsibility upon Titus and sees no reason for his failure to live up to its expectations. Titus is not just an Engineer, he is also occupying the position of the Whiteman, being the first African to take up such a position in the civil service of the country. However, Titus cannot fulfil these responsibilities the society thrusts upon him on his basic salary, which is barely enough for him to keep himself on a moderately comfortable level.

Simeon's dishonesty is known to members of his society but the society does not care about how he gets his money provided he uses it for the benefit of the family and displays it for public admiration. As Simeon makes immense financial contributions to both his family and his society, the family is very happy with him, as Pa Joel, the head of the extended family, declares: 'But do we all not now see the work of God? Have you not become the most important man in Government work here in Ibala? Are we not very happy about this?' (KF, p.5) Pa Joel's rhetoric shows that members of the extended family are happy in Simeon's position since they have their share of the loot. Apart from his relatives, the society is also

happy that Simeon throws money around. The praise-singer chants to Simeon's glory during the Harvest Sales in All Saints Church, Ibala:

> Simeon the foreman, Simeon the foreman.
> The man that is money from head to toe
> Simeon the foreman, Simeon the foreman
> The handsome man beloved of beautiful women
> The lion of the P.W.D.
> Master of all men that work on the road
> The god that contractors worship.
> Simeon the foreman, Simeon the generous man
> The one and only elephant
> That makes the whole forest tremble
> When he passes (KF, p.45).

The power and the glory echoed in the praise-singer's words are beyond the grasp of a mere departmental foreman. This manifestation of vain-glory is one of those negative elements that plague society and against which Titus must fight. Fighting against this element implies fighting not only Simeon but also the society which accepts corruption as a pattern of official conduct. Titus wants to see probity in the official conduct of public servants. Aluko castigates his society for encouraging corruption, which is why Oladele Taiwo feels that Ngugi is too hard on Aluko when Ngugi fails to see that Aluko cares about 'certain standards' in the society. Titus shows moral courage in his official conduct. Apart from refusing to indulge in fraudulent practices, he

does not allow his relationship with Auntie Bimpe to wheedle him into giving her any contract. He knows that Auntie Bimpe is not competent to execute any building contract successfully. In this, Titus differs from Simeon, his kinsman, who gives contracts to people who are close to him, like Bimpe, as well as those who offer bribes to him, irrespective of their competence.

In Kinsman and Foreman therefore, Aluko represents Western influence as a positive factor in building a modern and progressive society and the influence of tradition as negative. Aluko shows in the novel that there is need for change from a decadent old system to a progressive new order inspired by Western values. Aluko uses characterisation and irony to present the need for this change. He sees very little dignity in both tradition and those who subscribe to it; for this reason, the society regards Titus as anti-social and a non-conformist. At this stage, Aluko is still 'anti-tradition', to use Gakwandi's phrase. His depiction of traditional characters is still prejudiced as in the earlier novels. The advancement which characters in Kinsman and Foreman have over those of the two earlier novels is that they are not as diseased as those in One Man, One Wife,

nor are they as murderous as those in One Man, One Matchet. Although Simeon is corrupt, he is not as selfish as Benja Benja; he uses his loot to cater for the whole family and donates to the church. The Ibala community is more humane than either Isolo or Ipaja. Aluko's major quarrel with Ibala is that it places too much responsibility on its sons and thereby inveigles them into corrupt practices. He blames the society more in this novel, and for this reason he does not kill Simeon at the end but allows him to go into exile where he will be detached from society and probably change for the better.

Aluko finds traditional societal norms irksome. Titus resents the impingement which society exerts on its members. The short ritual which Pa Joel performs on Titus's return from England is an example of traditional customs which Titus resents. The ritual is intended to cement a covenant between Titus and Simeon by which the two kinsmen are expected to be each other's keeper. There is an eerie feeling on Titus, who passes into temporary amnesia as he drinks the ritual water:

> Titus noticed that Simeon handed down the calabash back to old Joel. He noticed old Joel hand it to him, saying something which was inaudible and incomprehensible to him. He saw himself

> drinking - drinking, drinking. Then for a long time afterwards, Titus Oti Bachelor of Science (Engineering), graduate of the University of London, remembered nothing (KF, p.8).

Aluko does not see the possibility of reconciling Western values with traditional customs. To Titus the ritual is a strange affair to which he would never have subjected himself voluntarily. Even the atmosphere of the room seems subdued by the presence of ancestral spirits. Titus feels like running out of the room into the free and fresh air outside the hut. He is the only person in the gathering who is uncomfortable. Apart from his inpatience, Titus is occasionally rude to his relations when he defends his stand against tradition and the society which regards him as a deviant. On one occasion, Pa Joel has to chase him around with a walking stick for irreverence. In spite of what his views are, tradition requires Titus to give much respect to Pa Joel, who is the younger brother of Titus's grand-father, and so insists that Titus should address him like a real father. To Titus, Pa Joel is 'Old Joel'. Titus finds the traditional lineage connections, which involve all members of an extended relationship, cumbersome. He believes that family relationships

should be trimmed down to a more tolerable proportion. Titus is seen as a deviant who has been spoilt by Western ideas he acquired in England.

Simeon, on the other hand, is the darling of the whole extended family because he conforms to the norms of the society. He tries to attend to the financial needs of every member of the family and tries to uplift the reputation of the family through church donations, both on behalf of Pa Joel and in his own right as a well-placed civil servant. The community loves Simeon and even rallies round to help him when he is being probed by a commission of inquiry on charges of corrupt enrichment at the expense of the department.

Titus experiences a serious dilemma in his efforts to expose his corrupt kinsman. He must choose either to expose Simeon's fraudulent activities and displease the entire family or leave Simeon to his own designs and displease his conscience. Titus does not want to leave Simeon unexposed because Simeon will continue to steal public funds. Moreover, the society does not understand that the money Simeon is squandering is the money that would be otherwise spent on develop-

ment projects.

The position of the 'been-to' in society, after he returns from overseas to take up a job, has also been treated by Achebe in No Longer at Ease. Obi Okonkwo in Achebe's novel comes home to Nigeria to take up a job as the Secretary of the Scholarship Board. His townsmen who contributed money to send him abroad for further studies fail to realise that Obi needs some time to settle down before he can begin to pay back the cost of his sponsorship in monthly instalments. Moreover, there are other pressing family and personal problems demanding his attention. Obi, who abhors corruption, is tempted to accept a bribe to aid a candidate secure a government scholarship for university education abroad. Obi is caught with the marked notes, convicted and jailed. The society raises Obi and then destroys him. In Aluko's novel, the case is different. Obi and Titus share a common economic background. However, Titus shows a stronger conscience than Obi and a more uncompromising attitude toward society. Obi and Titus struggle against their society, but Titus's struggle is made more interesting by the fact that he has to fight his corrupt cousin who is inciden-

tally his benefactor. Simeon financed Titus's education in the last year of his studies overseas. This obligation to Simeon and the family bond notwithstanding, Titus does not intend to spare Simeon.

Titus does not reasonably see himself as belonging to his society; he protests over his posting to Ibala as the District Engineer. He does not think that he will fit into that society. In Ibala he lives in his furnished flat away from the society. He even frowns if his mother visits without forewarning him. Titus manifests an irreverent attitude to society. One can visualise Titus standing aloof, a 'been-to' and an outcast in the society.

Titus's struggle with Simeon does not end with Simeon's victory in the court. The anti-climax to the court victory comes at the gathering of the Alasotele church group, who are expecting the end of the world. The Alasotele group of worshippers have publicised Bandele's vision of the judgement day, so much that anxiety mounts as the proclaimed date draws near. The group warns the public to assemble in church to confess their sins in preparation for the Second Coming. Out of

delirium, people who believe that the Lord will actually come to judge the world, gather in groups to sing, pray and confess their sins. In this way, Simeon Oke, who has been discharged and acquitted both by the court and the tribunal of all the charges against him confesses to those charges and prays for forgiveness. This confession, however, cannot be used as evidence to open the case against Simeon anew. Simeon's confession soon becomes widely known. The tribunal recommends that Simeon be transferred. He therefore goes to Cameroon. The transfer is a form of exile Aluko uses to purge Simeon of evil influences. Unlike Benjamin Benjamin, Simeon can still be salvaged if he is detached from the society that corrupted him. In spite of attempts by the society to stop Simeon's transfer, Aluko still has him separated from the society.

Titus emerges victorious over Simeon, his family and the society in general when Simeon is transferred to Cameroon. Titus's victory is presented in an ironical manner. Earlier in the novel, Titus refuses an invitation to serve as Chairman to the Harvest Sales of the All Saints Church, Ibala. He is regarded as an outlaw and

reported to his family by the Reverend Morakinyo. Pa Joel feels outraged by the behaviour of Titus. Still, Titus refuses to obey his family and respect the norms of his society. But once Simeon's case comes up, the same Reverend Morakinyo and Pa Joel, representing the church and the family respectively call on Titus to beg him to exert his influence to get Simeon's transfer withdrawn. His transfer to Cameroon will surely affect the church's finances because Simeon's generous donations will not be forthcoming. Aluko implies in Kinsman and Foreman that when a society built on the fragile foundations of corruption collapses, only Western values based on the solid rock of honesty can rescue it. Simeon represents the fallen traditional society which only Titus has the power to rescue. The society will be saved if it is purged of negative influences that bring about its backwardness. This role of purging the society is assigned to Titus and other Westernised heroes. This is the role that Palmer refers to when he says that Aluko's Westernised characters are expected to 'drag their traditional societies into the twentieth century whether they take it screaming and kicking'.[1] Through Simeon's exile in the Cameroon, Aluko makes way for Titus to continue his modernisation work in the society.

Aluko's middle period shows both a peak in

the writer's anti-traditional attitude and a turning point in this attitude. While in Kinsman and Foreman Aluko sees western influence as the panacea for Africa's backwardness, Chief the Honourable Minister, his other novel from this period, shows the failure of western education and the attendant chaos.

Aluko incorporates Yoruba dialogue and proverbs in Kinsman and Foreman not to show that he now fully appreciates the literary value of the Yoruba language but rather to distinguish his westernised from his traditional characters. Between these two kinds of characters, there are the semi-educated ones such as Auntie Bimpe and Simeon who often use standard English when talking to the Europeanised characters. The point here is that Aluko's increasing use of Yoruba language patterns is not, at this period, a reflection of his appreciation of their literary value. The 'been-tos' do not speak the same way as Pa Joel. Aluko does not seek to synthesise the two cultural influences but to emphasize their differences and to show that the West should be given the chance to modernise old traditional ways. Aluko tends towards cultural synthesis in his later novels.

Pa Joel is as authoritative in speech and manners as old Chief Momoh in One Man, One Matchet. His speech during Titus's return from England confirms this:

> And you, Titus, you must listen to the words of my mouth. Where Simeon tells you to go , you must go. Where he tells you there is no way, know there is no way; turn back. Associate with the men he tells you are safe. Avoid those he points out to you as dangerous. Let his hands be your hands. Does the thread not follow the path made by the needle? It is in spite of the snake that the bush rat nurtures its young to maturity. Regardless of the activities of human snakes, you Simeon will pilot your child Titus to success in government work (KF, p.6).

This speech from old Joel contains traditional Yoruba proverbs and the traditional authoritative tone of a family patriarch. In spite of Titus Oti's academic qualifications and exposure to western culture, old Joel still sees him as a small child who must be taken in hand and led back to tradition. Aluko believes though, that Titus is the one to lead his society to the twentieth century away from a life that he sees as unprogressive and negative.

In addition, Aluko occasionally uses vernacular expressions to remind the reader that the setting of the novel is Yoruba society. The

Reverend Morakinyo addresses his congregation during the thanksgiving service to mark Titus's return from England. Arguing about the limits of the human mind to question the will of God, the Reverend Morakinyo asks: 'And I ask you: who are we mortals to seek to know the whys and wherefores of the doings of the Lord our God, Oba a sere ma se ka?' (KF, p.27). Thus Kinsman and Foreman is more of an African novel than the novels of the Early period. This constitutes an advancement over the Early period. However, there is no similar progress in his attitude to tradition. Aluko wants his society to take to alien ways for the sake of moving along with time. To him, all tradition can boast of is extended family relations and strict adherence to social norms which do not provide for individual freedom. Aluko, therefore, thinks that the traditional system is the root of corruption and backwardness in society. Aluko thinks that it is necessary to de-emphasize family relationships in order to allow more freedom for the individual.

The desire to be free from society is common to both Titus Oti and Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease. In these two novels, the protagonists want

to be free from their societies, to live the way they want. The society tries to force them to live in accordance with its accepted norms. The been-tos are at antagonistic positions with their societies. The major difference between Achebe and Aluko lies in their respective attitudes to the past. Aluko thinks that the past is not only 'unedifying' but should also be forgotten 'in double quick time' (CHM, p.131). To Achebe, there is much value in traditional culture and change is not altogether desirable; the society does not actually get better with change.

Conflict in Kinsman and Foreman is better depicted than it is in the two early novels. Aluko portrays the internal conflict in his mind more vividly by super-imposing his life and experiences on Titus. By watching Titus react to his traditional customs, we watch Aluko himself at this period in his career as a writer. Aluko's internal conflict affects his vision of the external conflict between European and traditional customs. The external conflict ends in favour of the West. This implies that Aluko sees change as both inevitable and desirable. This conclusion brings in another difference between Aluko and Achebe. Achebe believes that the society is stronger than

the individual, while to Aluko the individual is always stronger than his society.

Aluko's fourth novel, Chief the Honourable Minister, centres on the indiscipline and ineptitude which characterise the political leadership of the new independent Republic of Afromacoland. This republic mirrors the decadence and collapse of the first Republic of Nigeria, which became independent in 1960 and fell to military rule in 1966. Aluko expresses disappointment in the indiscipline of Western educated politicians in post-independence Nigeria. The failure of the politicians is no longer funny to Aluko, who had advocated in his earlier novels that these educated professionals should salvage their societies and bring changes into the lives of their people. Aluko believed then that as the old order gives place to the new, human nature will improve and the inherently corrupt nature of man give way to a better character. For this reason, in the early novels, Aluko advocates leadership by the highly educated professionals - doctors, civil servants, engineers and lawyers. Thus Gakwandi accuses Aluko of 'advocating a kind of dictatorship'.[2] At this stage, too, Aluko believed that only the

highly educated Africans could provide the needed leadership and innovation in their society. In Chief the Honourable Minister, Aluko realises that elitist rule is not in the best interests of his society, and that exposure to Western influence alone does not necessarily make one a good leader. Following the failure of educated leaders, Aluko sees their weaknesses and misdeeds in a generalised sense of the fallibility of mankind. This idea is asserted by Lindfors when he says of Aluko that his 'view of mankind appears to be a rather pessimistic one. He seems to feel that although human institutions and manners change as the old order gives way to the new, man remains the imperfect, foolish, corrupt creature he has always been'.[3] Education does not, afterall, prove to be a panacea to the problem of backwardness. This failure of the highly educated class lands the society in chaos in the form of a military coup. The misdeeds of the politicians of the new nation, both government and opposition, are ridiculed in the novel.

Although the opposition party concerns itself with harassing and trying to discredit the government party in the eyes of the nation, there is not much evidence that if in power it would provide

better leadership. To all politicians, political power is seen in the light of the influence it brings, the riches amassed and the glory attached to political office. The politicians lose sight of the immense responsibilities which political leadership carries along. The conflict in Chief the Honourable Minister can be identified as political, though it has strong cultural dimensions. In his early novels, Aluko opposes the political system in which the traditional ruler or Oba reigns supreme over the community with the assistance of some Chiefs. Aluko condemns this autocratic system in One Man, One Wife and One Man, One Matchet. In his middle period, Aluko advocates leadership by the educated class under a political system that is western. The system fails because the leaders are corrupt and inept. The failure of the western system operated by the educated elite parallels the failure of Western education in solving the leadership problem in Africa. Aluko begins to feel disappointed that his prescription for his society has failed. The system he wants is not perfect, afterall, and does not appear to be capable of bringing change and progress for the majority of the people. Only a privileged few who control power are materially advanced. Aluko

does not feel remorseful to invoke a military coup to sweep away the political mess and set up military rule.

In Chief the Honourable Minister there is conflict between traditional customs and Western ideas in which tradition is seen as intrusive and negative leading to the collapse of Western democracy in Africa. Chief the Honourable Minister is unique in that instead of Western influences intruding upon tradition, as in the early novels, tradition intrudes upon Western ideas. We find Alade Moses being dragged into traditional customs by his society. In the first place, he takes a second wife, whom he expects to fit into his exalted position in the society as a Minister of Works. Secondly, Alade Moses takes the traditional Chieftaincy title of Asiwaju of Newtown. Again, he consents to enter into a traditional covenant with a cabinet colleague as a way of settling their misunderstanding.

Chief the Honourable Minister portrays the struggle between tradition and western values in which the West is represented by Alade Moses and tradition by the society. This struggle ends in the destruction of the Western ideas by intrusive

traditional cultural practices. Alade Moses embodies Western education; he holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Diploma in Education and occupies the post of principal of Newtown Grammar School. Moses likes his position as principal of this school, as it gives him the chance to educate his people. As Lindfors points out: 'Though Moses would much rather spend his life leading his people out of a wilderness of ignorance than into a promised land of milk and money, he consents to be guided by their desires and to run for office.'[4] Moses consents to be led by the very people he is expected to lead. Aluko tries to underscore his belief that his educated elite should not allow society to distract them from their work of modernisation. They should, like Titus Oti, steadfastly pursue their task. To allow themselves to be distracted by the views of people, like Alade Moses does, will lead them to destruction, as happens to Moses and his colleagues at the end of the novel.

Alade Moses feels obliged to the Newtown Improvement Union for the Welcome party it organised on his behalf to mark his return from overseas, and the union's support for his candidacy in

both the elections and in his appointment as a Minister. For these contributions to his personal advancement, Moses feels committed to the interests of the union and its leaders. Rather than remain principal of Newtown Grammar School, Moses is persuaded to contest a parliamentary seat to fight for his people's share of the 'national cake', In political office, Alade Moses swiftly degenerates. He can be described as a morally upright man at the beginning of his ministerial appointment. Later he manifests gross inability to curb the excesses of his subordinates. An example of this moral weakness is when, in spite of his initial opposition, Moses is bull-dozed by the officials of the Newtown Improvement Union into supporting the appointment of a half-literate businessman, Geo Abbysinia, as the principal of Newtown Grammar School:

> Oncemore, he was worried about the propriety of what he was going to ask his cabinet colleague to do. He thought he knew what was right and what was wrong. But he also knew that since he became a minister of state, a good many things that had been done by his colleagues were not right. Sometimes done by the cabinet collectively, most often done by individual ministers (CHM, pp.60-1).

Apart from giving reasons to justify his inability

to stand for the truth, Moses always puts off taking any positive steps to redeem his name, only to discover later that actions are belated:

> Long after Gorgeous Gregory had gone, Moses sat in his chair in the lounge thoroughly displeased with himself. Again the thought came to him for the umpteenth time that he must take a stand somewhere. There must be a limit to the dishonourable acts that he would allow his name to be associated with. But again for the umpteenth time the realisation came to him that his action was now ill-timed and belated (CHM, p.181)

As a cabinet minister, Alade Moses discovers that his colleagues and the political system they espouse are corrupt. He would have liked to resign his portfolio but finds the glamour of a ministerial office too tempting for him to resign. Again, such a resignation, to Moses, is not in the interests of his people who want their most educated son to represent them. Moses finds himself tied to the ministerial post to appease some vested interests in the town's improvement union.

The main problem with Alade Moses is that his education is incomplete. He has not learnt to feel free, to take independent decisions and stick to them. Alade Moses is neither intellectually nor morally equipped to lead his people. He fails because he allows his people to corrupt

him. The Newtown people fail to appreciate the duties of a Minister of State and their civic duties as citizens of the country. They are contented to have their son in the exalted position of a cabinet minister and expect all development efforts to come from government because their son is in it: 'In the last few months the people appear to have stopped doing anything for themselves. They now say that as their own son is Minister of Works, Government must look after all the work of construction in their community' (CHM, p.151). Rather than develop in the direction of proper awareness of their rights and responsibilities to their community and country in general, the people of Newtown are lapsing into a state of inaction, expecting government to provide everything they need for them.

The failure of democratically elected leaders to modernise society is partially attributed to their unwillingness to examine their conscience in their exercise of public duties. Alade Moses fails to give his conscience full control of his actions and so he leads his society to chaos. Robert Bolt observes the importance of a public officer allowing his conscience to control his actions: 'I believe

when statesmen forsake their own private conscience for the sake of their public duties, they lead their country by short route to chaos.'[5] If Alade acted in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, he would have lived like a deviant in a society that is predominantly corrupt. Like Titus Oti, he would, however, be vindicated in the end. Aluko allows Moses, like Titus, to agonise over the choice between loyalty to his conscience and loyalty to the society. Moses chooses the latter. Moses, like most of Aluko's heroes, suffers from an inherent weakness of being incapable of dealing with an opposing force. In One Man, One Matchet, Udo Akpan does not deal effectively with Benja Benja owing to the nature of the civil service system he operates. Titus Oti in Kinsman and Foreman is unaccountably unable to initiate legal proceedings against Simeon Oke, so that another character has to be brought in to do this. Alade Moses in Chief the Honourable Minister is completely unable to control the excesses and dishonest activities of his subordinates, who use his name to extort government funds and bully the village people into voting for Moses in the elections. Rather than lead his people out of ignorance, they cajole him to decisions that can

only lead to chaos.

The conflict between tradition and European influences, as seen in the relationship between Alade Moses and his people, reflects Aluko's disappointment with the Western educated elite. Aluko does not get what he expects from this privileged class of people who should modernise society. Rather than work toward progress they drag society backward and make a mockery of the democratic process which the Western world cherishes. In his novels, Aluko depicts traditional society as parochial. In addition, traditional life is replete with local wars like the one between Apeno and Ipaja in One Man, One Matchet. The same parochialism is transferred to politics: no politician thinks of the nation first. True nationalism does not, therefore, exist in Afromaco-land. The educated elite are a failure because they cannot assert their freedom from their society. In a country where political leaders are nepotic democracy cannot thrive. Alade Moses is nepotic because his allegiance is primarily to his people. He dances to the tune of the people of Newtown, in general, and the town's union, in particular. Moses therefore sacrifices his personal freedom

of action in order to appease his people.

Aluko's novels from his middle period reveal his disappointment in the educated elite in Nigeria. His heroes are caught in a struggle against their society, and through chaotic climaxes, are vindicated. As in Chief the Honourable Minister, he tends to agree with Achebe that where the individual fails to rise to his responsibilities, to the challenge of leading by personal example, he leads his 'country by the short route to chaos'. A reviewer quotes Achebe as saying that:

> The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmark of true leadership.6

Aluko agrees with Achebe in blaming the leaders for failing to accept the challenge of leading by personal example. Alade Moses is guilty of this. He is also guilty of abdicating his responsibility. Unlike Achebe, though, Aluko does not exonerate the Nigerian character from corruption. Aluko feels

that a lot is wrong with the society. The problem calls for responsible leadership that will not abdicate its responsibility. Hence, Lindfors' observation that to Aluko, 'man remains the imperfect, foolish, corrupt creature he has always been' confirms Aluko's irreverence for society and his call for true leadership. Aluko thinks that in spite of changes brought about by the West, the corrupt and foolish nature of Africans will never change. Political corruption and foolishness which characterise political life in Afromacoland are proofs to Aluko's lack of faith in his society. For instance, cabinet ministers spend much time on making telephone calls and in gossips about girl friends during cabinet meetings. Also, it is foolish of any government, like that of Afromacoland, to award contracts on the basis of party patronage rather than competence.

Aluko wants to see progress in his society which will only come with good leadership. He thinks that the Western educated elite are in a position to give the leadership required. To Aluko's disappointment, the educated elite betray the confidence reposed upon them. They are corrupt, greedy and undisciplined. Aluko, therefore, invokes the military coup to remove the

corrupt politicians from power. The coup is evidence of Aluko's disappointment with this group as leaders in Africa. Aluko's hope that the educated elite will save society is also misplaced. Aluko is gradually persuaded that Western education is not, afterall, the solution to backwardness in his society. Further, Aluko tends to feel that, although he does not really like traditional customs at this stage, tradition is a powerful force that cannot be easily displaced in the lives of a people. Chief the Honourable Minister is concerned mostly with politics in Afromacoland but one sees tradition at the background of the struggles going on at both the individual and national levels. Traditional life operates within small groups who have certain things in common. This nepotic tendency is carried over to political activities in Afromacoland. Covenants are executed between political colleagues in the traditional way for the purpose of allaying their mutual fears and suspicions. In these and other ways, tradition intrudes into Western influence and causes its failure in Africa. Aluko's novels tend to build up an argument for change from old ways to the new. Rather than advance his argument to its logical conclusion in Chief the Honourable Minister, the

reader who has been following the argument comes to an anti-climax in Chief the Honourable Minister as Aluko turns round to say that his prescribed remedy for backwardness is no longer flawless. Rather than demonstrate the ultimate triumph of Western influences over traditional customs, he says that Western ideas cannot solve all the problems of the African society, because it has failed to produce responsible leadership. At this point, Aluko shows that since tradition can intrude and upset Western ideas, tradition is still a strong force to reckon with. This is the first time in his debate in favour of Western ideas that Aluko concedes any strength to tradition in its struggle against Western culture. From this point, Aluko tends to see cultural conflict as tragic and stops to laugh at his society.

Although in his middle period Aluko has still not started to see tradition in proper perspective, Kinsman and Foreman and Chief the Honourable Minister show that traditional characters reason better and could become progressive in outlook if they are detached from the bad influences of their society. For this reason, rather than murder Simeon Oke, Aluko decides to exile him, to give him a chance to mend his life. In the two

novels also, Aluko sees the shortcomings of the Western way of life and its failure in African society. Aluko had hoped that Western influence would bring about improvements in his society. The educated leaders, however, fail partly because of their corrupt practices and partly because of their incompetence and lack of direction. There are civil disturbances, culminating in a military government being set up to clean the augean stable. This shows the failure of Western democracy, which Aluko feels cannot be transplanted to Africa from Europe and be expected to adapt easily. Peculiarities of the Nigerian environment make this adaptation an uneasy process.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Three

1. Eustace Palmer, The Growth of African Novel, London, Heinemann, 1976, pp. 108-9.

2. S.A. Gakwandi, The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa, London, Heinemann, 1977, p.58.

3. Bernth Lindfors, 'T.M. Aluko: Nigerian Satirist' African Literature Today, No. 5, London, Heinemann, 1971, p.44.

4. Bernth Lindfors, p. 49.

5. Robert Bolt, A Man for all Seasons, London, Heinemann, 1960, p. 12.

6. 'Biola Olagbami, 'Tribune Reviews' Nigerian Tribune, January 18, 1984, p.7.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LATER ALUKO: HIS WORSHIPFUL MAJESTY AND WRONG ONES IN THE DOCK*

Aluko's attitude to tradition changes considerably in His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. The first noticeable sign of this change is in the enthusiasm with which cultural incidents and characters are depicted. The opening sentence of His Worshipful Majesty testifies to Aluko's change of attitude: 'Where does one begin the story of Aiye, our beloved kingdom, or of the Alaiye, Oba Olayiwole Adegoke, our renowned ruler?' (HWM, p.1). Secondly, Aluko uses transliteration to depict traditional concepts and expressions. These changes lead to a balanced portrayal of the struggle between Westernised and traditional characters for authority. The struggle is not just between good and evil in which evil loses to good at the end, as in One Man, One Matchet and Kinsman and Foreman. The struggle in His

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* T.M. Aluko, His Worshipful Majesty, London, Heinemann, 1973.
T.M. Aluko, Wrong Ones in the Dock, London, Heinemann, 1983. Hereafter represented as HWM and WOD in the text respectively.

Worshipful Majesty is between two highly respectable personages, the Western oriented administrator and the traditional ruler, both of them wielding considerable powers as leaders of their respective community. The balancing effect in the struggle between the Alaiye and Mr. Morrison is shown in Aluko's realisation that such a conflict is fraught with tragic consequences.

Conflict in His Worshipful Majesty is in the form of a struggle between western ideas and traditional practices, in which Mr. Morrison represents Western ideas while Oba Olayiwole Adegoke stands for tradition. Morrison tries to modernise the society by introducing local government reforms. He feels that the autocracy of traditional rulers does not augur well for the society. On the other hand, Oba Olayiwole is bent on keeping his traditional authority as handed down to him by his predecessors. The conflict that ensues between these opposing camps affects the society; the common people are divided into those who want modernisation and those who prefer the status quo. There is another group, like Mr. Robert, who want to support both sides, aware of their traditional loyalty to the Alaiye as well as their commitment to the modernisation

of their community. Aluko would like to see the traditional role of the Oba give way to a modern system, where power rests on the chairman and his subordinates, with checks and balances circumscribing their exercise of duty. In the system envisaged by Aluko, the institution of Obaship would remain to perform purely ceremonial, not administrative, roles. To Aluko, the concentration of absolute power in the hands of one man in the community is not a progressive idea, such powers tend to breed tyranny in the ruler. Mr. Morrison's scheme for modernisation reflects Aluko's prescription for his society. However, he does not hate the traditional life of his society as he did in his early novels. Mr. Robert, the narrator in the novel, cannot decide which side he belongs to. Aluko's change in narrative pattern from the third person omniscient voice to the first person omniscient narrator is in consonance with his change of attitude to traditional life. Aluko shows his abhorrence for traditional life in <u>One Man, One Wife, One Man, One Matchet</u> and <u>Kinsman and Foreman</u>. In <u>Chief the Honourable Minister</u>, he shows that it is tragic to allow traditional life to influence the course of modernisation in society. In his later work, Aluko looks for a first person narrator

in order to make change less surprising to his reader. The inherent conflict between the old and the new in His Worshipful Majesty makes the narrator, Mr. Robert, uneasy as he tells us in the following words:

> I was far from being at peace with myself. I had no doubt in my mind where my duty lay. It lay on the side where my bread was buttered. I had sworn an oath to serve faithfully in the office of secretary to the Aiye local Authority, and to carry out such lawful orders of the Authority as are passed to me from time to time. As a key member of the Aiyeland Improvement league, I was under moral and patriotic obligations to use my office for the promotion of peace and progress in Aiye. In spite of the warning of my uncle and my mother, I could not desert Morrison. As long as he remained the chairman of the council, I felt duty bound to carry out his orders, so long as such orders were constitutional, and derived from the power conferred upon the chairman of council under the new local Government law. But in spite of the hint from Morrison, the Alaiye was still President of the council and king of our people, and I was duty bound to serve him (HMW, p.114).

Up till the end of the novel, Mr Robert remains a servant to two masters: Mr Morrison and the Alaiye. This posture shows that Aluko has undergone change in his attitude which makes his narration of the struggle balanced.

Aluko shows that neither the new nor the old order is perfect. The two major characters who

represent these opposing orders have their merits and shortcomings. They are respectable figures and have immense energies and grace. His Worshipful Majesty is the first novel in which Aluko presents a traditional character with dignity. The Alaiye is more respectable and imperious than either the Asolo of Isolo in One Man, One Wife or the Apaja of Ipaja in One Man, One Matchet. The king of Aiye is conscious of his noble birth and of his high social position, hence he sees himself as a peer to the king of England. The colonial officers do not have power over him, since they appear to the Alaiye merely as servants to his friend, the king, and he can report them to him if he is displeased with their behaviour. The Alaiye characteristically employs the royal 'we' in reference to himself. In his imposing physique and gorgeous dressing, Oba Olayiwole Adegoke exudes royalty and commands immense respect and authority among his people. If he is cross with any of his subjects, the offender comes along on his knees and prostrates before him to beg for leniency or pardon. The Alaiye is intelligent and has the ability to understand clearly the issues of his office. As the relationship between the Alaiye and the local Government authority deteriorates,

the Alaiye maintains his imperious manner and refuses to take an oath administered by the secretary to the commission investigating the affairs of the king's palace. He sees himself as above the commission. He appears at the sitting of the commission not to give evidence but to address it. When at the end of the novel every hope of regaining his despotic powers seems lost to the Alaiye, he shows no signs of panic but of royal rage. He calmly addresses his council, tracing the history of colonial incursion in Aiye and describing the terms of the agreement between the White colonial officers and his predecessors. He then urges Mr Robert to write down the details of his narration so that posterity will have the privilege of reading and knowing the history of Aiye kingdom. Soon after the charge to Mr Robert to write down his narrations, the royal master of Aiye kingdom dies. At the same time, the king's head messenger, Bada, dies, thereby completing his professional role which is to die with the king. It is unthinkable to the Alaiye to be sent in exile or to sit in a throne that has lost its traditional authority. The honourable path to take is to die gallantly than to live a coward. The Alaiye therefore dies promptly, but

leaves behind him enough majesty to justify Aluko's reference to him in the first page of the novel as 'renowned' (HWM, p.1).

In spite of this dignifying image of the Alaiye, Aluko shows that the Alaiye's rule is characterised by crude self-interest. The Alaiye's relationship with his subjects is like that between a master and his slaves. He deals ruthlessly with any of his subjects who offends him, using both his temporal and mystical powers. Through his arbitrary use of power, the Alaiye is able to subjugate his subjects and keep his kingdom in order. Oba Olayiwole considers himself the owner of the kingdom, including everything within it. He inherited these despotic powers from his predecessors. His despotic exercise of authority is a negative factor in an attempt to modernise the society. Again, since the Alaiye is also the owner of his people, he promptly makes Mr Morrison the offer of a young virgin to sleep with if Mr Morrison would like to spend the night at Aiye. The occasion is after the launching of the Aiye local government with Morrison as the chairman. The Alaiye in reaction to Morrison's refusal of his offer, mocks the Western idea of One-Man-One-Wife ar

Morrison that he will find the black girl a more desirable bed-mate than her White counterpart. Aluko's inclusion of these sexual details in the novel is to show the Oba's power over his subjects, the power that includes giving out an innocent girl to be defiled at will. This is negative factor in the Oba's despotic powers. In a modernised community, such a thing will not happen. A person, whoever he may be, cannot defile another person's daughter with impunity as such an act would be liable to litigation. In the traditional Aiye society, the Oba or Chief in the community has these unlimited powers. Aluko condemns this system of rule in the society and calls for modernisation. In the system that Aluko envisages, executive powers are vested in the civil servants. These public officers administer the area in accordance with laid down regulations. They are therefore liable to disciplinary measures if they overstep the law guiding their actions. There is a provision for a local government council, headed by the Oba as its President and a number of selected Chiefs who deliberate over traditional matters. They are all placed on salaries and the Oba has the privilege of appointing a certain number of chiefs as members of the council. The aim is not to de-

grade the institution of the Oba and traditional chiefs, but to streamline the administration of communities along modern lines. This will in turn make way for progress and development in the land, because monies and materials accruing from the various local government areas are properly accounted for and judiciously used for the benefit of all.

The colonial administration which introduces this system is already on its way out. In formulating and implementing this otherwise laudable modernisation programme, the colonialists fail to stipulate roles for the traditional leaders. These traditional rulers are made to understand that educated civil servants are recruited to help them govern their people because modern leadership requires cooperation with educated sons and daughters of the soil. The Alaiye, therefore, rightly expects that Morrison and his staff will be mere helpers not challenge his absolute rule. The Alaiye continues to issue orders for materials he needs in his palace,without thinking that he is contravening the regulations which circumscribe his powers. He still sees himself as the owner of everything and entitled to whatever he wants. To

make the Oba realise that he has no such powers any longer, the chairman, Morrison, tells the Alaiye that there are now limits to his entitlements, and that the Alaiye cannot commandeer government property as if it belongs to him. This move by Morrison draws the conflict between him and the Alaiye to a head. The Alaiye is not prepared to relinquish his claim to everything in the Aiye kingdom, for in the traditional concept, he is the owner of everything within his kingdom.

Mr Morrison has commendable personal virtues. He is learned and possesses a clear vision of what he wants his community to be. Unlike Titus Oti in Kinsman and Foreman, Mr Morrison does not fear or favour anybody in lawfully executing his duty. He reprimands his subordinates who cannot follow his footsteps for fear of displeasing the Alaiye. In the new local government system, the traditionalists and modernists are expected to work together in their areas of influence in order to develop their communities. This leads to clashes between the two groups. The traditionalists are required to allow the educated boys to work with them and to show them modern administrative procedures. Power is no longer in the hands of

autocratic rulers. The assumption by the traditionalists that ultimate power is still in their hands and the failure of colonial administrators who introduced the new administrative system to specify functions for them compound the problem of the local government administrators. Afraid of the consequences of this sort of administrative re-organisation in the society, the colonialists simply launch the scheme and allow the major actors in the power tussle to sort it out themselves.

As the new system starts to function, it becomes clear to the Alaiye that his authority is diminishing. The actual clash starts when Mr Morrison decides that time has come for the Alaiye to be placed in his proper position, while the Alaiye insists on getting his despotic powers back. In this sort of clash, where the Alaiye and Mr Morrison, both have immense individual powers and capabilities, tragic possibilities abound. The crisis comes to a head when Morrison decides to put a stop to the Alaiye's flagrant flouting of local government regulations. He feels that the Alaiye should realise that he no longer lives in the past. The new order emphaises

accountability in the use of public funds. The Alaiye is not prepared to change his conservative way of thinking, as Morrison observes in this passage:

> I think we all have been making one big mistake in our relationship with the Alaiye, and have become somewhat confused about our objectives in the new administration. Our objectives are to bring modern development and progress to Aiye. There must be a change in the people and their way of thinking. Such a change must be as gradual and painless as possible, brought about by those of us chosen to guide them on the new route they have not trodden before. There must be a change in the attitude and thinking of the Alaiye, who has for generations been the sole ruler of the people. When we undertook this new assignment we all thought that he would understand the need for change and make some effort to change in the interest of the land and of his people (HMW, p.101).

Bringing modernisation and progress to the people requires Morrison to fight a relentless battle against the Alaiye's refusal to change his way of thinking and accept his new position as the ceremonial leader of the Aiye people. In his attempt to drag his community to modernity and progress, Mr Morrison foresees a division of the community in two: those who want progress and modernisation and those who want to remain with the Alaiye and so retain the old order. The second group is made up of the chiefs and other traditional

leaders in the community. Morrison makes it clear that even the civil servants working with him to modernise the society may have to choose between the new and the old ways and declare where their allegiance lies. In reacting to the erosion of his traditional power and privileges, the Alaiye sees Morrison as a thorn in his flesh and deploys the palace boys to invoke the curse of 'Jelenke' upon Morrison, who becomes mad and later dies, in spite of the medical attention given to him.

The new local government system relies greatly on taxes from the community to keep it running. Troubles arise as to whether members of the king's palace should pay taxes or not. A commission of inquiry is set up to investigate the composition of the members of the royal family. This inquiry reveals that a large number of able-bodied taxable adults, relatives of the Oba and his wives as well as employees of the palace and other loafers compose the royal family. The commission recommends that the number of people in the palace should be severely reduced and that except for a very few, all must pay taxes regularly. This report starts off a riot and Mr. Robert is injured severely. Law enforcement agents are brought in to quell the riot and the

Alaiye is exiled. The announcement of the Alaiye's exile makes him take his own life, rather than suffer the indignity of exile or occupy an undignified throne.

Through this plot, Aluko shows two things. The first is the tragic possibility in modernising a traditional society. Mr. Morrison loses his life in the struggle. Secondly Aluko depicts the Alaiye as an imperious, proud and dignified figure who rather than suffer the indignity of living in exile, prefers to take his life. This kind of dignified traditional figure is first depicted by Aluko in His Worshipful Majesty and points to Aluko's change of attitude to tradition.

His Worshipful Majesty is different from the four novels earlier treated. For instance, Aluko's attitude to tradition has changed from his demand for a total change from tradition to Western ways. Now, Aluko thinks that there should be adjustments, not change, adjustments in the aspects of traditional ideas that do not encourage progress, such as the despotic position of traditional rulers. Aluko thinks that traditional rulers should be placed in a respectable position, having a specific role determined by the laws of

the land. However, the actual executive functions of the government are placed on trained public officers whose duties are also circumscribed by the law. In this way, modern government that makes way for progress is brought home to the people of Aiye. Aluko thinks that tradition has a number of good aspects that society should retain. For instance, the community work and the ancestor festival are some of those good aspects of tradition that need to be kept. Aluko has come a long way to accept that Western ideas are not totally a good substitute for tradition; in offering Western culture for adoption in a tradition-based society, one may well be causing more confusion and problems. The best thing to do, Aluko thinks, is not to call for a total rejection of traditional culture but to call for adjustments that would make the society better. The Western system should be intelligently used to replace the traditional system that needs to be changed to make way for progress. Aluko also believes that these adjustments should be painlessly pursued to avoid jolting his society to a state of discomfort.

Aluko's increasing use of Yoruba chants, incantations, proverbs and other language patterns

is also an indication of the change of attitude to his tradition. Even Mr Morrison is able to cite an appropriate Yoruba proverb to back up his idea when he says: 'When you are charged with a combustible errand you should fear the person who charges you with the errand and not the person to whom the message is to be delivered' (HWM, p.100). Mr Morrison uses this proverb to show that the king often puts much pressure upon those who deal with him. In his attempt to render the Yoruba chants and incantations often used during the traditional festivals of the gods, Aluko literally translates these into English, retaining most of their literary qualities. This translation is Aluko's step in the direction of objectively portraying traditional life in Yorubaland.

Aluko's protagonists tend to triumph over their opponents, or at least, outlast them in One Man, One Wife, One Man, One Matchet and Kinsman and Foreman. Pastor David of One Man, One Wife returns to Isolo to finally convert more people, while Royanson dies. In One Man, One Matchet, Benja Benja is shot dead and Udo Akpan survives. Udo Akpan resigns from his job because he discovers that the system he is expected to work under has a number of weakness which he cannot ignore. In

Kinsman and Foreman, Simeon Oke is exiled to the Cameroons while Titus remains to continue his fight against corruption and to provide the much needed sense of direction in that society. Chief the Honourable Minister is different from the three early novels because Aluko's protagonist, Alade Moses, is killed in an election rampage that leads to the army coup. This novel can be seen as anti-heroic; Alade Moses succumbs both to pressure from his people and to official corruption which political power induces. Alade Moses is evidently a good person by nature, but when true heroism is demanded of him, he is found too weak to resist pressures.

Mr Morrison who is the agent of modernity in His Worshipful Majesty dies, not because he is corrupt, like Alade Moses, but because he is devoted to modernising his society. Here, Aluko returns once more to the conventional notion of the hero, though in a different way from his early works. Modernisation can be dangerous work. The protagonist is often vulnerable to the negative forces of tradition let loose as a reaction against Western incursion in its area of sway. Morrison dies in quest of trying to render selfless service to his society. From the point of view of the

traditionalists, Oba Olayiwole Adegoke is also a hero for fighting relentlessly against the erosion of his traditional authority and choosing to die rather than accept to live as the occupant of a powerless throne in Aiye. This is heroism. Aluko recognises that the institution of Obaship is an ancient one and so deeply established in the life of the community that it has become the seat of government and the core of the traditional life of the community. Great care must therefore be taken to modernise it, otherwise, permanent injury could be done to the society.

Ngugi's allegation based upon his study of <u>One Man, One Matchet</u> that Aluko is 'a cynic who cannot see the way ahead for Nigeria', while tenable in this early novel, is not applicable to <u>His Worshipful Majesty</u>. In this novel, Aluko is full of visiions on how to modernise his society to bring in progress and development. Part of the report of the commission of inquiry into the royal household reflects Aluko's vision of modernisation which portrays an attempt to excise those unhelpful customs of the people in their march to progress:

> It is a matter of regret that while the British colonial office in Whitehall is proclaiming to the world its intention

> to make this country independent, its local agents here are doing their best to thwart the genuine effort of a sovereign nation to remove or modernise such of its customs as have proved unhelpful in their march to true indepence. (HWM, pp. 132-3)

One of such unhelpful customs is the evasion of taxes by a privileged group of people and all those members of the royal household who are either relations of the ruler and his wives or employees in the palace. His Worshipful Majesty also contradicts Gakwandi's charge against Aluko that he has no ideas on how to improve the civil service. As to Palmer's allegation that Aluko 'mars everything with his characteristic melodrama to round off the story', chaos is a natural outcome of attempts by tradition to ward off the incursion of Western influences.[1] Melodrama is therefore a natural sequence from a concatenation of incidents following an introduction of a new order of things in the place of the old one.

Aluko is a maturer writer in His Worshipful Majesty than in the early novels; in that he realises that a people's traditional culture cannot be entirely bad. For meaningful modernisation to take root, change must not be radical but must be as gradual and painless as possible. In this novel, too, Aluko accepts that the traditional Yoruba

society maintains a certain kind of orderliness that makes it imperative for every member, up to a certain age group, to participate in communal duties. An example is the communal work to prepare the community for the Ancestor festival. Mr Morrison urges that this custom and a number of others must be retained to form the basis for social life in spite of the on-going modernisation.

The most recent of Aluko's novels is Wrong Ones in the Dock, in which his social criticism is most clearly illustrated. Modernisation has brought along some baffling problems to the society. Some of these problems are official corruption, hypocrisy and the dehumanisation of people. As in Chief the Honourable Minister, where Aluko uses the military intervention of 1966 to illustrate social decadence and its consequences, Wrong Ones in the Dock recalls the Black Maria disaster in which forty-three of the sixty-two suspects standing trial for varying offences in Lagos courts were asphyxiated inside the enclosed lorry. Aluko focuses his literary lens on two of the survivors of the disaster, a father and his son. Their suffering in prison for a period of over twenty

months, on a charge for which they were, afterall, proved innocent, reveals the incompetence and the insensitivity of the country's law enforcement agents. The impression then is that in Nigeria, the law does not offer security for the individual's freedom, life and property.

Conflict is most subtly presented in Wrong Ones in the Dock. Unlike in his early novels where conflict is between tradition and Western influence, conflict in Wrong Ones in the Dock arises from the inability of the society to operate an imported social system, invariably leading to consequences. Aluko thinks that modernisation based entirely on imported ideas runs into problems within a short time. The British judicial system as adapted by Nigeria becomes an organ of oppression owing to improper functioning. It therefore fails as an organ for speedy administration of justice and restituting individual rights and freedom. In the first place, the country's police force suffers from gross inadequacy in training personnel and equipment. Again the reputation of the police force does not encourage university graduates and other well-educated citizens to enlist. In addition, experienced legal practi-

tioners are not interested in serving in the judiciary where their knowledge would be needed. They prefer to remain in the bar as legal practitioners, owing to the amount of money they can acquire. The result of these inadequacies in the law enforcement organ is that many people awaiting trial suffer unnecessarily in the dock. At the end, justice eludes the innocent, as in the case of Jonathan and Paul Egbor.

The judicial system does not encourage witnesses to come forward and give evidence in court. The police force is seen as an organ of torture. Nobody ever wants to deal with the police because members of that organisation are either incompetent or unreliable. The officials who operate a system they do not properly understand become callous, corrupt and dehumanised. The scare about 'juju' which is common in Nigeria becomes a problem in getting witnesses to testify in a law court. For example, Mr. Ojerinde is an eye-witness to the trouble in No. 22 Fasanya Street; yet, he does not want to give evidence in court because the Bassey family is supposed to employ 'juju' to destroy anyone who testifies against it in the case between the Bassey family

and the Egbor family. The occupants of No.22 Fasanya believe that Ojerinde's accidental death on a motor-cycle resulted from his acceptance to testify in the case, and that his death may not be unconnected with the 'juju' prepared by the Bassey family. Another eye-witness, Mr Philip Nwanna, does not want to come forward, afraid that Ojerinde's fate may befall him. Another ailing arm of the judicial organ is the department of public prosecution. This arm wastes much time before it comes up with a charge. The department goes through much bureaucratic processes and bottle-necks which take a long time to resolve, while the accused languish in detention. In the case involving Jonathan and Paul, who are charged with the murder of Mrs Marian Bassey, a series of adjournments follow which delay judgement and perpetuate the sufferings of the accused in custody.

Wrong Ones in the Dock shows that the country's judicial system is inefficient. The operators of the system are indifferent to the sufferings of people in custody. The lawyers, too, do not appear to sympathise with those they are defending or pleading for, who are detained in police custody. The swearing in of witnesses in the box is a moc-

kery and an empty ritual. Witnesses and contestants tell blatant lies soon after they are sworn on oath to tell 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth', and calling on God to help them do so. Aluko notes that in the traditional system, the customary courts often permit contestants to verbally challenge each other for some time. Often, the truth of a case emerges out of such verbal encounters. In the Western system, judges do not permit this because it amounts to contempt of the court.

Aluko thinks that for the British judicial system to succeed in Nigeria, it needs to be subjected to various modifications. An example is the need to modify the robes worn by the members of the bench. They evidently feel uncomfortable in them, owing to the climatic factor. There is also the need to cut down judicial processes which prolong cases, subject the accused to terrible conditions and keep them in custody along with convicted criminals. Aluko also sees the need for proper restitution to be made to an accused who finally is discharged and acquitted. Aluko feels that to Jonathan and Paul justice is not done, although judgement is in their favour. Nothing is done about their suffering and their

deprived liberty for nearly two years they spent in prison custody:

> That judgement had come twenty months and twenty-four days too late to carry with it any viable seeds of justice. Jonathan Egbor had in fact lost the battle for justice from the very day of the fight when cruel fate had placed responsibility for the determination of the truth in the hands of the national police and of his neighbours at 22 Fasanya Street, who were too frightened to come forward to speak the truth. Real justice was impossible under a truth-inhibited judicial system which had been imported from a foreign clime and which in spite of over a century of nursing in the inhospitable soil of an indigenous society, has yet in that society to grow roots that will reach down to the ground water of true justice (WOD, p.185).

This passage is an unsparing indictment of the country's judiciary, which leaves many loop-holes unplugged. The guilty escape with their offences while the innocent suffer because justice is hard to come by in this legal system.

Conflict in Wrong Ones in the Dock is a moral struggle between truth and injustice. Aluko shows that, owing to the nature of his society, truth is never upheld. Gilbert Bassey actually kills his mother inadvertently. He does not want to own up to his offence; rather, he wants another person who is innocent of the deed to be penalised

for it. The neighbours are not ready either, to testify to the truth of the matter, although back home they refer to Gilbert as a murderer. Following the lies told by Gilbert Bassey and Elizabeth Akpan in order to frustrate the legal process, Barrister Davies, counsel for Jonathan and Paul, out of exasperation, cries:

> Those two are the Wrong Ones in the dock... I put it to you Gilbert Bassey, School certificate attempted, self-confessed professional applicant, you and not Jonathan Egbor and... Paul Egbor, should be there, there in the dock. You should be there in the dock on a charge of manslaughter, for the accidental killing of your own mother, Marian Bassey (WOD, p. 127).

The Bassey family identify the wrong people as responsible for the death of Marian Bassey. As no one wants to come forward to testify in favour of Jonathan and Paul, the defence council has a problem to establish the innocence of the two accused. Not even a church warden of St Nicholas who is a witness will tell the truth because this will expose him to his wife and the members of the congregation of St. Nicholas Church. The society is hypocritical.

Wrong Ones in the Dock shows that modernisation has brought serious social problems to the country. The governmental system adopted tends

to baffle the society. Urbanisation and the influx of people into the cities have brought about accomodation problems; large families squeeze into two room apartments and share the same conveniences with co-tenants. Joblessness in these cities leads to a number of social ills such as robbery, drug addiction and prostitution. These give rise to a demoralised society where truth has no place. In some cases, public officers expect to be bribed before they perform the duties for which they are paid. For example, Raliatu, Jonathan's wife, goes to a money-lender to borrow money in order to bribe the prison's warders so that they may not be too harsh on her husband and her son in their custody. Sissy Bintu wants to be registered as a contractor in the Housing Authority before she can accept to testify on behalf of Jonathan and Paul. In Wrong Ones in the Dock contemporary Nigerian society is plagued by many ills, the worst of which is that Nigerians are not ready to uphold the truth.

In this stage of Aluko's development, conflict is keen between two balanced forces: tradition and Western culture. In His Worshipful

Majesty, the king of Aiye, Oba Adegoke, is an important and proud figure in the society. His opponent, Mr Morrison, is a highly educated man and a lawyer by profession. Tradition is no longer seen largely as an unprogressive element fit to be abandoned. Rather, the only hope of making the society better is through synthesizing tradition with modern ideas, taking only the good from each of them. The fact that tradition contributes in wrecking Western democracy in Afromacoland in Chief the Honourable Minister is an indication that it cannot be destroyed. The British judicial system which has operated in Nigeria for a century still suffers from many inadequacies. The administration of justice under this system does not inspire confidence in the society. Aluko would like to see a modification which will probably incorporate some customary elements to make it more meaningful and responsive to Nigeria.

In Wrong Ones in the Dock, Aluko writes about what happens around him. He performs the role of an African writer as prescribed by Eldred Jones:

> The writer today in Africa must see around him bad politics, bad religion, the misleading of ordinary people, and he is bound to write about all this if he writes about his environment. Of

> course he can decide to opt out of it altogether, to write space fiction or something like that. But I feel that the writer has to write about what happens around him.2

Aluko dedicates the novel to 'Jacob whose needless suffering inspired the writing of this book'. Wrong Ones in the Dock therefore based on fact, part of which was read over the pages of Nigerian dailies and watched over television screens recently.

Aluko's literary progress is also marked by sensitivity to the language used by the various segments of Nigerian society. The language used includes pidgin which is spoken by semi-literate people and school drop outs like Gilbert Bassey, his mother and Elizabeth Akpan. It is the language of city dwellers, both high and low. The educated class made up of lawyers, highly placed civil servants like Mr. Banjo who is the narrator of the story, his wife, Bola use standard English. The language of the men in the legal profession is appropriately technical. Intermediaries like Philip Nwanna, can speak both pidgin and standard English. In a general sense, Aluko uses language to identify various classes in the society.

Aluko's last novel shows that tradition will continue to play a role in our present modernised society. In the first place, old Papa Ota has the role of linking the past, represented by the village or country-side, and the present, represented by the city. Papa Ota comes to the city briefly and goes back to the village. He is the symbol of the past, the tradition of the people, intruding into the present. He has the first vision of the trouble involving Jonathan and Paul. The vision comes to Papa Ota in a dream which he narrates to Mr Banjo. At the critical point of the case, Papa Ota consults the traditional oracle and confirms that Jonathan and Paul will survive their terrible ordeal. Symbolically, he visits Ile-Ife, a town believed to be the place of origin of Yoruba, according to the Yoruba myth of creation. Papa Ota's pilgrimage to this holy city on behalf of Jonathan and Paul, effects the granting of survival to them.

Tradition can provide a place of sanctuary for the people when they are baffled by the problems of modernisation. Ojerinde obtains temporary relief when he runs back to his village after the death of Marian Bassey. He may have

lived longer if he had not returned to Lagos because of the attractions which modernity holds for him. These attractions are electricity, good roads, pipe-borne water and city life itself. Modernism uses these attractions to lure people away from villages and country-side, and to destroy them. When Aluko compares the customary courts' system of allowing the contestants for a while to challenge each other verbally to get the truth, he implies that by not allowing this in the modern judicial system, truth is often hidden and suppressed. Also, Aluko does not feel that Nigerian magistrates and judges need the cumbersome robes, the type their British counterparts wear, in our tropical climate. The customary courts do not use special robes. Aluko sees no harm for the country's judiciary **modifying** the robes worn by members of the bench to suit Nigerian climate.

Resolution to the cultural conflict between the West and African traditions, which Aluko finds in His Worshipful Majesty is sustained in Wrong Ones in the Dock. Aluko feels in his later novels that what is required is to accomodate the good from each culture to expedite development and progress in society.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Four

1. Eustace Palmer, The Growth of the African Novel, London, Heinemann, 1979, pp. 122-3.

2. Eldred Jones, The Writer in a Modern African State, Per Wastberg ed. 1968 pp. 34-5.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The study concentrates on one aspect of Aluko's works, his concern with the theme of conflict, which arose as a result of the incursion of Western influence in Africa. Aluko believes that a study of the society should necessarily take stock of the various conflicts arising from its development. These conflicts form the various milestones in what may well be called attempts at modernising the society from its traditional origin. The culture of a people is a strong force that moulds the life of the people. External influences have a chaotic effect on the society concerned. Aluko's novels therefore deal with conflict as a result of the interference of various cultural practices that are foreign to Aluko's society. These foreign interferences are ideas related to religion as in _One Man, One Wife_, politics as in _One Man, One Matchet_ and _Chief the Honourable Minister_, social factors as in _Kinsman and Foreman_ and _Wrong Ones in the Dock_, while the concerns of _His Worshipful Majesty_ can be classified as social or political. The modernisation of a tradition-based society is

a perilous task that needs a lot of time, patience and hardwork to accomplish. It is fraught with tragic possibilities and should be orderly pursued in order to avoid causing chaos in the society.

Chapter One concentrates on the review of literature and shows that enough studies have not yet been done on the levels of conflict in the novels of Aluko. Aluko has written six novels; he stands out as one of the most prolific and longest practising African novelists. His work needs to be studied in depth for better appreciation. Margaret Laurence attests to Aluko's neglect when she writes: 'T.M. Aluko has been widely read in his own country but has not yet received the recognition abroad which he deserves'[1], implying that Aluko's work is not yet fully appreciated in Africa. This study is carried out partly to accord Aluko that recognition and partly to highlight an area in Aluko's work that has not been sufficiently worked upon.

Chapter Two is concerned with Aluko's early work and seeks to study the conflicts in his first two novels. Aluko employs historical events and anecdotes which help to illuminate the various conflicts. These incidents date back to the early

1920s and late 1940s and portray the level of outside interference in the traditional life of the people. Aluko's early work is concerned with missionary attempts to Christianise the people of Isolo and make them change their custom of polygamy. One Man, One Wife shows a small number of Christian converts and some back-sliders who are not convinced by the new faith. However, the traditional gods are not predictable or consistent. Aluko shows this through the deaths of Elder Joshua, one of the devotees of the traditional god, Sango, who is killed through the agency of thunder, which emanates from Sango. At the end, the church establishes a stronger base at Isolo. One Man, One Matchet depicts the low level of exposure of the people of Ipaja to external influences. The people of Ipaja are so backward that the opportunistic Benjamin Benjamin becomes the local hero and rabble-rouser. The people's attitude to innovation is deplorable; their ignorance offers Benjamin Benjamin the opportunity to exploit and dupe them. Aluko exposes the illiteracy and ignorance of the people of Ipaja and calls for education and modernisation in the society.

In his early phase, the attitude of the nove-

list to his tradition is scornful. He sees any society that is tradition-bound as backward. Traditional characters are either diseased or incapacitated. They are savages who do not possess much wisdom. At this stage in his career, Aluko fails to use the language patterns of his society to express their thoughts. This failure is evidence that Aluko does not fully appreciate his traditional culture. Such criticism of Aluko has substance in the novels discussed under Early-Aluko. Although the novels have many technical flaws, they also contain deep analytical intelligence and witty use of irony.

The chapter on the Middle-Aluko covers Kinsman and Foreman and Chief the Honourable Minister. In this chapter, Aluko pursues his campaign to modernise society. He seems to believe, as in One Man, One Matchet, that only the highly educated Africans can modernise their society. In One Man, One Matchet, after the failure of Udo Akpan who is called the Black White man because he does not speak the language of the Ipaja people, Aluko tries to show that a son of the soil could succeed better. Aluko thinks that the best way to deal with the society is to enforce

discipline on the members. Titus Oti tries to do this in Kinsman and Foreman. He grows thick-skinned to the demands of his society. He sees that there is much corruption around and, if he must keep his head above water, he should not listen to their demands, or he will be forced to adopt corrupt practices, like his cousin, Simeon Oke. Aluko's attitude to the society is rude and sometimes harsh. As a been-to, Titus Oti occupies an uneasy position in the society. Like Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease, one of Achebe's novels, Titus no longer fits into his traditional way of life, nor can he live the life of the West. Titus, however, knows that his society needs to be modernised to fit into the century and the contemporary world. Aluko removes the corrupt Simeon Oke from the way, so that Titus can continue his modernisation pursuit. In Chief the Honourable Minister, the highly educated protagonist, Alade Moses, fails to provide leadership in his community. Rather, he allows the officials of the Newtown Improvement Union to influence his attitude, simply for the reason that the union officials have been instrumental in his appointment as a cabinet minister. As a minister in the new Republic of Afromacoland, Alade Moses falls

into the same vices that characterise the behaviour of his cabinet colleagues. At the end of the novel, Alade Moses is as corrupt as his colleagues, although he detests their behaviour at the beginning of the novel. Alade Moses, on account of his changed attitude, becomes a target of a political riot which precedes a military coup. In the chapter on Aluko's middle period, therefore, the attitude of the novelist to tradition is that tradition should be dragged along on the way to modernisation. To allow tradition, represented by the local poeple, to influence a leader's attitude to work is to destroy him, as Alade Moses is destroyed.

The Later-Aluko is represented by the two novels, His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. In this section of Aluko's work, the novelist's attitude to tradition has changed. What emerges from the novels is the view that tradition is not entirely bad, that only certain aspects of it need changing in order to enable the society to develop and progress. One particular aspect which Aluko sees that needs changing is the place of the traditional ruler in society. The traditional ruler has autocratic powers and this does not augur well for the future of the society. The power of the Oba needs to be curtailed to the

dimension of a ceremonial head of the community. Functional authority in the society should be well constituted along modern lines in the hands of civil servants whose functions are set down by the law of the land.

The conflict in His Worshipful Majesty arises as a result of a power tussle between the duly constituted local government authority and the king of Aiye Oba Olayiwole Adegoke, who has enjoyed absolute powers. Aluko's purged attitude to tradition is shown in the enhanced image of the traditional ruler in this novel, compared with the portrait of the Asolo of Isolo in One Man, One Wife or the Apaja of Ipaja in One Man, One Matchet. Oba Olayiwole Adegoke is an imposing character, proud, imperious but unduly stubborn in refusing to accept, like his colleagues, that the new order has come to stay and that the old traditional leadership system is giving way to the Western system of government. In the ensuing struggle, the chairman of the local government, Mr Morrison, is affected by a traditional curse issuing from the traditionalists and becomes insane and later he dies. Following an insurrection which arises from the report of a commission of inquiry in the Oba's palace, the Alaiye is exiled. Rather than live in exile, Oba Adegoke takes his

life because he prefers death to exile. Exile is the highest indignity a traditional ruler can suffer. In exile, he is detached from his society and his forebears with whom he is in constant communication in the palace. Death is preferred to exile because death opens the way for the ruler to join his noble ancestors who have gone beyond.

Wrong Ones in the Dock criticises the judicial system and the law enforcement agency in contemporary Nigeria. The judiciary, which is imported from Europe, is fraught with many disabilities such as delays in handling cases and loopholes which clever lawyers exploit to the advantage of criminals they plead for. Furthermore, the law enforcement, especially the police force which works with the judiciary is inadequately supplied with equipment and personnel to cater for the rising number of crimes and minor offences.

Apart from the judicial and law enforcement arms of the Public Service, Aluko decries the attitude of the public in general. For fear of being killed or haunted, the public is afraid to cooperate with the police or the law courts by

coming forward with the necessary information that would help the courts administer justice. Also, Aluko is critical of the lawyers who are fond of asking for adjournments to have more time to prepare their cases. These adjournments have the effect of perpetuating the suffering of the accused people in prison.

Aluko is not saying that the judicial system in Nigeria is bad. Rather, Aluko believes that the system needs to be tailored to suit the Nigerian situation for it to achieve a significant effect in the country. Wrong Ones in the Dock presents a moral conflict between what ought to be and what is. The reason why this situation arises is that Nigerians do not appear sufficiently responsible or disciplined to do what is right. Aluko thinks that until Nigerians are disciplined enough to perform their public functions without fear or favour many social ills will continue to plague the society. For example, a policeman does not need to belong to the traffic branch to arrest a driver for reckless driving or for driving a vehicle which has worn-out tyres. Aluko makes it clear that there is a need to modify Nigeria's judicial system in a way that will be most expedient for the country.

The Later Aluko is increasingly committed to analysing the problems of the modern and contemporary societies in His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. He offers suggestions on how to modernise society in the former novel while pointing out constructively what ills need to be corrected in the latter novel.

Aluko improves with each new novel, both in his handling of his theme and in his technique. The theme of each new novel is more expertly handled than that of the preceding one. The plot of each novel is more neatly handled than that of the preceding one. This implies that plot in the novels is more tightly organised than it is in the early novels. Aluko's technique of portraying conflict also improves and in the last two novels, he adopts a militant approach in his depiction of conflict. Aluko's language also shows a progression from the anglicised diction in One Man, One Wife to the transliteration of Yoruba thoughts and religious chants in His Worshipful Majesty. Also, Aluko's themes move from religious and cultural conflicts in his early novels to political and social criticism of society. In his later works, Aluko becomes more gravely concerned than in the early novels.

Aluko's notion of the relationship between the modernmiser and his society which starts in his middle period is further advanced in his later period. In his later work, Aluko accents that tradition is not altogether bad, but that only those aspects of it that are not inimical to progress should be retained. In other words, Aluko thinks that traditional customs should be adapted to fit into the modern world. In His Worshipful Majesty, he advocates that only traditional systems that will be helpful in the march towards progress should be accommodated.

Aluko's role as a social critic becomes clearly established in his last three novels: Chief the Honourable Minister, His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. Aluko comes to realise that foreign ideas alone cannot provide the remedy to the problems of backwardness in society. In this light, Aluko is saying that it is not enough to copy from other cultures but that society should adopt what will be advantageous to it, otherwise, it will be hurling itself into serious problems. This calls for the modification of those aspects of the system operating in society so as to remedy those that tend to defeat the goals for which the system is established.

Chief the Honourable Minister, His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock show that Aluko is no longer 'lighthearted', as Lindfors portrays him. He shows that misrule of society leads to tragic consequences; that modernisation is an arduous task and often perilous too; and lastly that modernisation creates other problems for society. Such problems include an increase in crime, unemployment, congestion in the cities and drug addiction. In these novels, Aluko's vision of society is much more objective than in the earlier novels. His details carry historical authenticity. Aluko advises that in the face of mounting social problems, care must be taken by society to identify its priorities to save society from imminent chaos.

The last three of Aluko's novels establish him as a committed writer who wants to see modernisation and progress in the right direction in Nigeria. If One Man, One Matchet, Kinsman and Foreman and His Worshipful Majesty tempt Gakwandi to suspect that Aluko wants to see a few educated men as dictators in power, Chief the Honourable Minister and Wrong Ones in the Dock should dispel such a suspicion. Aluko only wants to see things done right in the society so that progress and

development will be engendered. Aluko's commitment as a writer is further strengthened by his powerful criticism of contemporary society in Wrong Ones in the Dock. This novel is Aluko's most direct and most trenchant criticism of Nigerian society. It is more direct than Chief the Honourable Minister, in which Nigeria is disguised under the name of Afromacoland. Aluk has gained more courage in his social criticism. This is the reason why he presented the actual characters represented as Jonathan and Paul Egbor during the launching of the novel in December, 1983. These two characters were among the lucky survivors of the sensational Black Maria incident in Lagos in which forty-three suspects suffocated and died in the lorry conveying them back to custody.

Aluko's criticism of his society is both realistic and objective in the last three novels: Chief the Honourable Minister, His Worshipful Majesty and Wrong Ones in the Dock. His success as a writer is indubitably established in these novels rather than in the earlier ones.

This research has tried to investigate the nature and causes of conflict which are fundamental

in the novels of T.M. Aluko. These conflicts arise as a reaction to the encroachment of foreign culture into traditional African societies. The changing attitude of the writer in the novels portrays these conflicts.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Five

1. Margaret Laurence, Long Drums and Cannons, London, MacMillan, 1968, p. 169.

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