# Ideological Conflict within the Context of Multiculturalism and Globalization in Sammy Oke Akombi's *The Raped Amulet*
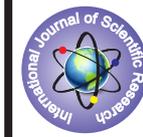
**Literature**

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**ABSTRACT**    This paper seeks to examine conflicts that sprout out of the contact between various cultures with differing perceptions on socio-cultural, traditional, political, and religious issues in *The Raped Amulet*. The paper looks at these ideological conflicts within the dynamics of multiculturalism and Postcolonial Marxistconception of ideology.Thepaper concludes that the binary operations that result from the contact and mixture of cultures in an era of globalization tend to place postcolonial subjectsin an inferior position so as to enhance a neocolonial enterprise.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The world is witnessing rapid social and cultural changes especially with migration which has taken center stage. Mass movements of people from the African and Asian continents have taken place within the last couple decades, and the usual destination is always the West. Noticeably, these movements have not been proportionate. Consequently, these migrations have dramatically altered the ethnic and social composition of cities and even countries. This alteration is what has given birth to multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is the phenomenon of multiple groups of cultures existing within one society, largely due to the arrival of immigrant or migrant communities. Multiculturalism is said to occur naturally when a society is willing to accept the culture of immigrants with the immigrants also willing to accept the culture of the land to which they have come. Despite this, there could be multiculturalism that occurs simply due to the absence of a single enforced culture, and multiculturalism which is endorsed and actively encouraged by a government.Some critics like Kenan Malik,Johann Hari and Bhikhu Parekhhave appeared to claim that multiculturalism promotes a tolerance of moral relativism and results in a loss of national identity. This, they seem to be saying may sometimes lead to the development of "souring subcultures" and new identities which in the case of the work under study becomes a sort of 'hybrid identity'. Worthy of consideration here also is the fact that Multicultural ideologies and policies vary widely, ranging from the advocacy of equal respect for the various cultures in a society, to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity. Paola Catenaccio in this regard contends that: "Diversity has become a dominating featureof modern life, whether it is valued for its contribution to a truly supranationalsociety, or opposed for its undermining effects on national identity."(59) She further submits that such globalizing turn of economies and commerce has instituted a new kind of colonization where the West as the dominant stakeholder imposes its way of life to the rest of the world.

Despite the supposed economic advantages brought forth by this amalgamation of economies, Catenaccio fears that this merger has not very much succeeded in softening "the tension between the opposing forces of multiculturalism and multiethnicity on the one hand, and globalization on the other."(60) This standpoint succinctly depicts the crisis inherent within this mixture of people, cultures and worldviews. It is therefore evident that ideological conflicts will abound in such settings, be them cultural, political or religious.  This view corroborates that of Alphonse Kasongo who goes ahead to add that the idea of a global culture would not hold within the wider context of an African understanding since the concept of state and nation represent different realities where each projects its own cultural specifities.

Against this backdrop, ideologies of various groups tend to overlap resulting into unavoidable conflicts since one group or the other holds steadfast to the authenticity of its own worldview with regards to culture, identity, political orientation and religious inclinations.To this, Anja Rudiger and Sarah Spencer corroborate the view of Catenaccio and add that:

In many European countries, the integration of migrants means their assimilation to a pre-existing, unified social order, with a homogeneous culture and set of values. Integration is perceived as a one-way process, placing the onus for change solely on migrants. They are expected to undergo a unilateral process of change, particularly in the public sphere, so that they can fit into a given order. (4)

In this regard, this paper seeks to examine the conflicts that sprout out of the contact between various cultures with differing perceptions on socio-cultural and traditional, political, as well as religious issues as reflected in Sammy Oke Akombi's *The Raped Amulet*.The paper further looks at these ideological conflicts within the dynamics of multiculturalism against the backdrop of Postcolonial Marxistdiscourse.

Zandra Kambysellis in *Post-colonialism*: "The Unconscious Changing of a Culture"holds that Post-colonialism touches upon many issues: language, nationalism, culture and hybridism among many others. He contends that questions and theories concerning these issues have always occupied center stage position within postcolonial discourse. It is therefore right to concur that colonization goes beyond just the struggle of native people to adjust to a new culture. As a result, the suppression, and annihilation, of the native cultures that surfaces with the presence of a *self* who believes in the superiority of his culture is worth considering (Kambysellis).Just like Kambysellis but unlike her, Shadi Neimneh believes that "the other is a convenient myth", a creation of the west to institute the privileged existence of the *self*.

With the rise of European imperialism and the growth of Orientalism in the nineteenth century the Western conceptualization of 'race' was focused on establishing a scientific binary of 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups as confirmation of the authenticity and superiority of their race, culture and ideology since they had always viewed none whites as well as other races in Asia and the Americas as inferior and primitive. Therefore, the coming into contact of the colonizer and the colonized man's cultures presupposes cultural difference, diversity and conflict. Bill Ashcroft et al underscore the need to understand these differences in order to avoid "universal prescriptive cultural definitions"(60-1).

Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt in*Contemporary Cultural Theory* cite Raymond Williams(1780–1950) who described 'culture' as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language in *Culture and Society*. Milner and Browitt observe that:he (Williams) drew attention to four important kinds of meaning that attach to the word: an individual habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a

group or people (2).

Milner and Browitt underscore and recognise the complexity entwined in the term 'culture'. Still, they try to garner their understanding of the concept from their study of the works of Raymond Williams and Geoffrey Hartman to come up with their own definition of the term which they say is a 'non-definition' when they say that culture refers "...to that entire range of institutions, artefacts and practices that make up our symbolic universe. In one or another of its meanings, the term will thus embrace: art and religion, science and sport, education and leisure. By convention, however, it does not embrace the range of activities normally deemed either 'economic' or 'political' (5).

Though the definition of Milner and Browitt seem to offer an eclectic view of the concept of culture as embracing all the spheres of human existence, it is my fear that these two fine critics have advertently or inadvertently left out such crucial determining aspects of the colonized man's existence as economics and politics which to our view constitute part of the colonized man's identity from the colonial period to present. This is because the impact of colonization and neo colonization in the guise of globalization and multiculturalism have a bearing on the political and economic lives of postcolonials.

At this junction, it is worthy to note that an ideology is understood as a set of opinions or beliefs of a group or an individual. Consequently, ideology refers to a set of political beliefs or a set of ideas that characterize a particular culture while ideological rivalry is the mental, verbal or physical manifestation of rivalry and perpetual struggle among groups that share opposing world views. M. A. R. Habib holds that Marx saw the dominant class of every society as controlling the 'material force' or means of production as well as the 'intellectual force' of that society. This, in turn enabled this domineering class to propagate "...its ideas in the realms of law, morality, religion, and art, as possessing universal verity." Thus, these ideas become the dominant ideology of that society (Habib, 531). This Marxist conception of ideology is important because in a multicultural setup where the West owns the technology and means of production within a globalizing world, their worldview inevitably becomes the dominant ideology to which economically weak nations have to abide.

European racial discourse was aimed at categorizing humans as 'civilized and primitive' resulting in the racial binary of "self and other" as well as "superior and inferior" and the same holds for cultural discourse. In the light of such binary operations, colonial and postcolonial subjects are caught in the middle-most often estranged from their roots within the dynamics of multiculturalism and European superiority and authenticity. Here, hybridization comes into the picture and in this razzmatazz, critics seek to find a balance that will help deconstruct such prejudiced western notions through postcolonial discourse.

### Ideological Conflict in *The Raped Amulet*
Sammy Oke Akombi's *The Raped Amulet* tells the story of Dion who on the verge of his travel to England is handed an amulet that is to protect him during his stay overseas. Unfortunately, he loses this precious protector and fears the consequences of this loss both on him and his community of origin. He strongly believes in the potency of this object so much so that he is ready to risk his life by attempting to dive into a chilly lake to recuperate it. He wonders how he will explain his carelessness to his ancestors even if he succeeds to do so with the elders of his family.

In colonial discourse, western cultural ideology is believed to be superior to that of any other race. Consequently, any other cultures and their practice are considered as inexistent or inferior as is the case with the culture in which the amulet is venerated or considered sacred. Additionally, any cultural practice that is not understood to the West is useless. This is enough justification for Tom Jones who finds Dion's amulet and all he can think of is to toast it into the lake

despite his knowledge of the cultural beliefs and practices of African people. Jones had spent a long time in the Cameroons after the Second World War and had interacted with the people and understood their adherence to such traditional objects. His justification for his act is that seeing a "bloated form of leather" in the UK did not quite ring a bell. He adds that: "I did not even have the slightest inkling that the object could be useful property for someone."(*Amulet*, 24) This is probably why he can afford to derogatorily refer to the amulet as a "bloated form of leather". The discussions between Dion and Jones show cultural difference, disagreement and consequently their ideologies about culture tend to conflict. The rape of Dion's amulet and his encounter with Tom Jones, Tennu Mbuh intimates shows "...the coercive characteristics of multicultural contact..." (Mbuh, 17) since Dion immediately self criticizes his people's cultural believes and sees the need for him and his people to change and adapt. This is justification to the view of Anja Rudiger and Sarah Spencer that: "...the integration of migrants means their assimilation to a pre-existing, unified social order, with a homogeneous culture and set of values. Integration is perceived as a one-way process, placing the onus for change solely on migrants." (4) Consequently, Dion becomes a cultural hybrid thereby confirming European cultural superiority.

Just like in Priscilia Manjoh's *Snare*, all the traditional processes of libation pouring and incantations within the novel end with Christian religious prayers. Here, Tennu Mbuh explains that the loss of potency of African traditional rituals and other practices within this multicultural dispensation "...is because its transmission was and is still processed as a dispensable alternative to its [superior] western variant..." (15) In this regard, Sammy Akombi seems to have cheaply bought this superiority of European culture and religion through the novel's central character. The novelist fails to project the originality of African cultural and traditional practices. One would have expected him to introduce episodes within the novel that showcase the potency of the amulet to justify African cultural authenticity. Dion's comment that: "A scientific world was too scientific to give credence to primitive beliefs, especially when such beliefs come from a no-so-scientific Africa." (37) only consolidates the idea that Africans do not consider their own cultural and traditional practices on the same pedestal as the West considers its own. Within a multicultural setup as that in the novel, the African has relegated his own culture to the position of primitivism and inferiority.

Socially speaking, the exploits of Cameroon during the 1990 football World Cup presented in the novel justifies the agenda of multiculturalism. This is so because it is only through the game of football that most of the other characters in the novel tend to recognise the protagonist's origins. Dion is celebrated because of Cameroon's success. Before then, his country, culture, identity and even products from his country like tea are seemingly unknown to the English community. Multiculturalism in this respect could be considered as a ploy to project the worldview, culture and products of the recipient nation and the west. For how does one explain the fact that in a global and multicultural setting where individual nations come together in equity, one culture and its economic productions are unknown to another nation? One sees a deliberate refusal to admit the existence of a Cameroon identity in favour of propagating that of England. Here, the Marxist view of the dominant ideology holds water.

Dion is considered to come from some remote part of black Africa because of his race and accent. Jones is surprised to see such talent in the game of football coming from Africans despite his long acquaintance with Africa through his stay there. He is even shocked to hear Dion singing the national anthem of his country. This is a demonstration of how Africa remains deliberately unknown and misunderstood by the West.

Furthermore, other social issues that generate ideological differences within a multicultural setup abound in the work under

study. Here, mention can be made of sexual deviance taking the form of sexual carnivals and homosexuality. The novel presents instances of such deviant practices that stun the protagonist because they don't tie with the worldview and morality inculcated in him from childhood though this may not be considered as justification for his ignorance. Such ignorance with regards to contemporary global concerns only further consummates his hybridization within the dynamics of globalization and multiculturalism. In this regard, Tennu Mbuh holds that: "Such ignorance imposes a silence on his culture's perception of, and reactions towards, contemporary debates." (16)It is only through Dion's encounter with friends (from the West)that he realizes these practices are norm within western societies.

Politically, Dion's refusal to discuss a pertinent topic as democracy with Jones for fear that it will be another issue of ridicule (105) reduces him to an inferior position since he seems to be ashamed of the kind of democracy practised in his country as opposed to the monarchy and parliamentary democracy in England. The reluctance of Cameroonians to change from the one political party system to a multiparty democracy as described by Dion (*Amulet*, 104-105) is justification of the Cameroonian unwillingness to change and adapt to world trends in an epoch of globalization.

From a traditional perspective,missionary activities and western imperialism in Africa saw nothing good in African tradition. The introduction of a western life style and education consequently had a devastating effect on African traditional practices. The African didn't only have to adapt to a foreign culture but had to completely abandon his traditional form of medicine as well. The west considered African herbal medicine as not adequately researched and lacking detailed documentation of traditional knowledge since it was/is essentially transferred orally.As a result, methods of traditional knowledge and medicine had been looked upon as primitive and backward. Under colonial rule, traditional diviner-healers were outlawed because they were considered by many colonialists to be practitioners of witchcraft and black magic.

Traditional medicine might have had and still has its weak points but to see nothing good in it or consider it as the practice of witchcraft is to denigrate it. It goes without saying here therefore that western conceptions of African traditional practices as in the field of medicine were prejudiced. Western medicine was considered as the authentic 'self' while that emanating from Africa was the primitive 'other'.This negative perception of African medicine is corroborated in the novel by Ndutu's illness. The inability ofAkwanka the traditional healer to properly diagnose and treat Ndutu is evidence according to western perception that only western medicine is genuine. Through the flashback that tells of the H.I.V case of the Bottomlesses contrasted with that of Ndutu concurs with western denigration of African traditional medicine. Given, African traditional medicine has its flaws but to present it as witchcraft and black magic is to qualify it for the dustbin. With the story of the Bottomlesses, Dion seems to have been brainwashed into thinking that western medicine is the only authentic form of healing.Here therefore, there is a succinct display of the 'self' that is superior and authentic. This is seen through western medicine and the attitude of westerners with regards to HIV and AIDS.In the same light, the 'other' that is inferior, primitive and irrelevant is portrayed through African medicine in relation to the story of Ndutu and the inability of Akwanka to properly diagnose and treat him.

At this juncture, Paola Catenaccio's view that the receiving culture or the recipient nation of other cultures within a multicultural setting holds steadfast to its own cultural superiority and authenticy and only see a need for the coming culture to adapt and change holds true here. Jones clearly refuses to allow himself to be tutored by his past knowledge of African cultural and traditional practice in order not to see the use of Dion's amulet.Also, he blames Akwanka's inability to treat Ndutu to an 'inauthentic' and 'unscientific' African traditional medicine. This is probably so because he sees the amulet and

traditional medicine as useless. It is clear here that within the dynamics of multiculturalism, migrant cultures and tradition have little or nothing to offer.

## Conclusion: Signposts of Conflict Resolution within a Multicultural Context in

### *The Raped Amulet*

The contact of people from divergent socio-cultural and political backgrounds within the context of multiculturalism and globalisation has exposed the inherent ideological differences that constitute the daily experiences of these people the world over. Despite these evident ideological differences as explored in Sammy Oke Akombi's novel through the experiences of Dion the protagonist in England, there is at least some hope that a compromise can be arrived at.Through subtle but not very evident means, the novelist explores ways through which different cultural orientations can undermine ideological controversies and coexist side by side.

Through Dion's discussions and interaction with Tom Jones, he is able to rethink and question his cultural heritage and the traditional beliefs of his people. He is able to negotiate a new worldview with regards to issues of traditional medicine and other cultural practices because he keeps an open mind. He is ready to compromise some of these beliefs in order that he might fully integrate himself within the English community where he now lives. He therefore recognizes the differences that are inherent within the cultures of people from different parts of the world. Thisis why he can afford to metaphorically tell Tom Jones towards the end of the novel that he: "…did realize that different places had their different climates and the life of the people is influenced by their [different] climates." (*Amulet*, 99) This shows that Dion has now begun to fathom why certain modes of behaviour are normal. For instance, he now understands why homosexuality is not a deviant practice in England, why Steve and Annie Bottomless can overcome the stigmatization associated with HIV and AIDS, and why Tom Jones can cherish his relationship with his dog-Jim, more than any other.

The protagonist in *The Raped Amulet*successfully negotiates his stay in England. He does so by continually adapting and changing in the face of the ideological differences he comes across as he experiences life in Britain. By integrating with the locals and creating resourceful friendship ties like the one with Tom Jones, Dion can quietly navigate his way around a community whose cultural inclination sharply contrasts with his own. As he negotiates his insertion into British daily life, he realizes that in a strong multicultural setup, there is need for all parties to come in as equal partners as they go about showcasing the positive aspects of their various cultures that should stand as hallmarks of their identity. Dion reminds Jones of the nice and beautiful things his country has to offer to the international community like tea and cocoa. Only then does his friend remember the pack of Cameroonian tea someone at the embassy had offered him sometime back. Also, Dion demonstrates what it means to be a Cameroonian through the game of football. He proudly sings the National Anthem of his country as they faced the current world football champion in the opening match of the 1990 World Cup. Despite popular opinion that Cameroon was to loose, Dion does not waver in proclaiming his identity and patriotism.This in a way is a call for migrant peoples to always believe in themselves and project their cultural heritage as well as identity in the face of all adversity and unlike cultures.

Unfortunately, unlike Dion, there is seemingly no character in the novel with the English heritage who is completely willing to sacrifice some of their socio-cultural inclinations on the altar of multiculturalism and globalisation. The novel ends without the reader seeing Tom Jones recognizing even remotely the cultural significance of Dion's amulet neither does he attempt to condone any traditional practices of Dion's people.This notwithstanding, the protagonist's open-mindeness towards certain British practices shows that the weaker stakeholder in the multicultural enterprise is

ready to understand and compromise for peaceful coexistence between cultures.

In general, by the end of the novel,there is hope sinceJones at some point recognizes the optimistic, warm and welcoming nature of Dion's people (*Amulet*, 96). He goes on to apologize for treating the protagonist's amulet with disregard. He says: "I'm awfully sorry, young man. I have inadvertently hurt you." (*Amulet*, 24) By realizing that he has hurt Dion, Jones indirectly admits that there is a need for people to keep an open mind with regards to the culture and traditional beliefs of other people. This should be so because there is a constant mélange of peoples and cultures in today's world under the canopy of Multiculturalism and Globalisation.

This paper sought to examine the conflicts that sprout out of the contact between various cultures with differing perceptions on socio-cultural and traditional, political, as well as religious issues. The paper further looked at these ideological conflicts within the dynamics of multiculturalism. The arguments advanced here werefocused on the center-margin/self-other binary within the postcolonial Marxist conception of ideology. Also, the paper examined how the protagonist in the novel under study tries to resolve issues of socio-cultural differences as he negotiates his stay within a global multicultural setting as that of England.

After a look at the various levels of ideological differences and conflict that arise in a multicultural setup as evidenced in *The Raped Amulet*, it may concluded here that the binary operations that result from the contact and mixture of cultures in an era of globalization only tends to place postcolonial subjects in an inferior position within the dynamics of multiculturalism, Western superiority and authenticity. It therefore seems that the concepts of multiculturalism and globalisation have as primordial mission to foster the colonial enterprise of the west or some sort of a neocolonial project.

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