

**Drama, History, and Postcolonial Résistance in Northern Nigeria:
A Review of Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru***

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Abstract

The relationship between history proper and African historical plays drew much attention of researchers in recent years. Many theatre scholars and playwrights argue that the value of these plays, which were primarily regarded as fiction or imaginative reconstruction of the past, may prevail over history. Theatre, which is considered the most symbolic form of art, can be historically educative and evocatively accurate. Based on the aforesaid arguments, this study aims to explore the dramaturgicals, theatricals or thespians used in Yerima's *Attahiru* (1999) in order to repudiate and resist the distorted versions of the colonial history of Sokoto Caliphate in an effective and affective way. To achieve this aim, textual analysis is used by combining its important approaches: author-oriented approach and context-oriented approach. This analysis is significant because the researchers investigated the colonial resistance captured in the play through postcolonial theory. In addition, this paper explores the attitudes of the colonialist and the colonised reproduced in the play and how the play helps in the decolonisation process, as well as how the images of the damaged heroes are reconstructed in the play in order to restore national pride and integrity. The play reconstructs and corrects a seriously damaged and awfully misrepresented African spiritual leader, Caliph Attahiru of the old Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Attahiru, drama, Nigeria, postcolonial resistance, Sokoto Caliphate

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Introduction

Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* (1999) is a historical drama that recreates a long-gone past in theatre to protest and resist historical misrepresentation. Historical drama is defined by Etherton (1979) as "a shift from the re-creation of oral traditions in dramatic terms to the re-creation of a past contained in written histories" (p. 65). According to Etherton, drama is concerned with the colonial and immediate pre-colonial periods as well as the powerful African empires such as Benin empire which has an indigenous chronology of rulers giving some access to a more remote past.

Attahiru, which reveals the pre-colonial encounter between colonial masters and indigenous Africans, can undoubtedly be classified as a historical play. In this regard, Akoh (2007) states that over time, history has remained a dynamic source material for play creation and writings. From the first to the present generations of playwrights in Nigeria, the trend remains the same. Whether the focus is on distinguished figures or events, the historical material is adapted, recreated or subverted to serve a purpose, depending on the social vision or ideological persuasion of the individual writer (Adeoti, 2007).

The above description is true to Ahmed Yerima's plays such as *Attahiru*, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* (1998.) and *Ameh Oboni the Great* (2006). These three historical plays have a nationalistic theme as evinced by the subject matter of colonialism which connects them together. Therefore, the Nigerian colonial history serves as a dramatic material to Yerima. His plays do not aspire to literal representations of the past in the way historical texts do. They are imaginative recreations of the past based on the author's interpretation of the historical events. Therefore, drama and history may appear to be inextricable, but they are not the same. They are two different but mutually related disciplines, as both complement each other. Scrubber (2001) notes that the value of drama will prevail over history to the audience if there is a clash with history.

Moreover, while dramatists may adhere strictly to historical facts, they are often at liberty to add or deduct or even refract the facts in order to suit the purpose of their writing. Therefore, dramatists have a creative license that allows them to distil their opinions, thoughts, and wishes in the text. Therefore, there is possibility of recreating history in a significant way. However, this does not mean that the creative license permits the dramatists to extend their input to fabrication of facts. Rotimi (1978) suggests that "the dramatist's input does not forget historical truth" (p. 10). Similarly, Yerima (2013) notes that the use of historical materials in the work of art is an attempt to further explain the significance of the historical event in a less serious story-telling version or style even while using the facts of the historical event.

In addition, dramatists are free to select the aspect of history which they feel could enhance their creativity and offer a new interpretation for the satisfaction of their audience. According to Soyinka (1988), "the artist or the ideologue is quite free to reconstruct history on the current ideological premises and, thereby prescribe for the future through lessons thus provoked" (p. 126). Incidentally, for African writers, whose history was disputed, damaged and misrepresented, dramatizing the historical materials can be a process of imaginative recovery and an affirmation of existence, culture and tradition. This is because colonialism undermined and misrepresented

African people and their cultural practices (Umar-Buratai, 2007). There is a need to project the people's precolonial and colonial histories in an imaginative form, in order to correct the colonial misrepresentation. Accordingly, the historical play presents and re-asserts what it adjudges as the authentic history of the people in order to achieve a kind of self-appreciation (Adeoti, 2007).

Through the visual and auditory advantages of theatre, historical plays have the tendency to change, recreate and resist the distorted history of Africa in a more revealing and descriptive way. Therefore, African playwrights, like Yerima, choose to use historical materials to create their scripts. Yerima is widely recognised as a playwright of repute whose plays treat historical, political, social, economic, religious and cultural issues. Using the medium of theatre, Yerima calls on the general public to revolutionize or bring a change to their regretful status quo, re-enact the distant past in a resistive method and style, and finally contrast the African culture with that of the colonialist. Therefore, Yerima's plays can generally be divided into religious, political and historical plays. Adeoti (2007) states that Yerima's historical plays seek to dramatize, redefine, and interrogate the African history. They draw a connection overtly or covertly between the past and the present with a view to shaping the course of future actions. Sometimes, the stage presentation tries to redress the perceived gaps and omission in a particular strand of extant history, while paying attention to the artistic and entertainment goals of drama (p. 34).

The above quotation corroborates the fact that through historical reconstruction, Yerima probes and protests the European imperial discourse that controls the means of representation. In this way, Yerima substitutes the hegemonic versions of the history of Attahiru, the twelfth caliph of Sokoto Caliphate. Therefore, the veracity of hegemonic or euro-centric history is woefully reproduced in Yerima's play. This paper focuses on the resistive techniques and mechanisms that make Yerima's *Attahiru* successful in "re-making" the counteracts of European historians in their hegemonic and perverted representations of Africa. Hence, this paper aims to explore the dramaturgicals, theatricals or thespians used in Yerima's *Attahiru* in order to repudiate and resist the distorted versions of the colonial history of Sokoto Caliphate in an effective and affective way.

Biography of Yerima (1957)

Although an Edo man by origin, speaking his native Auchi dialect, Yerima is fluent in Hausa and Yoruba languages. This is because he was born in Lagos in May 1957 to Alhaji T. Musa Yerima, a police officer who moved everywhere with his family where ever transferred. Ahmed Parker Yerima attended St. Bernadette's Primary School in Abeokuta and later moved to University of Ife where he obtained a certificate in Dramatic Arts and later a Bachelor of Arts in 1981. In 1982, Yerima moved to University College Cardiff, where he pursued a postgraduate diploma in Theatre Arts, specializing in playwriting and acting. Yerima attended the prestigious Royal Holloway College, University of London where obtained a Doctorate degree in Theatre Studies and Dramatic Criticism.

Yerima is one of the most prominent Nigerian dramatists who emerged in the last decade of the twentieth century. Apart from being a playwright, Yerima is an artistic director, a theatre manager, a teacher and a researcher. Yerima's dramaturgy combines the practical orientation of a

theatre practitioner with the aesthetic consciousness of a critic. He draws broadly from generic elements of tragedy, comedy, tragic-comedy and satire (Adeoti, 2007). This description encapsulates the basic profile of Yerima's successful career and provides a fascinating insight into his world of theatre. In addition, if ideological commitment and dramatic style are anything to go by, Yerima belongs to both the second and the third generations of Nigerian playwrights.

On account of the thematic pre-occupation of Yerima's historical plays, the playwright fits in the generation of those who opt for the recreation of history to protest, confront and nullify some historical misrepresentations. On the other hand, Yerima is a third-generation playwright who is dissatisfied with the Nigerian status quo, and therefore becomes committed to promoting a revolutionary change through his plays. Yerima himself says:

In some of my plays, sometimes I find out that I have to make a social comment. I look at contemporary Nigeria and I find that, for instance, the tragedy that exists is no longer that of Aristotle or even Soyinka (Inegbe & Uwemedimo, 2007, p. 6).

This indicates that Yerima uses the medium of drama to comment on the Nigerian socio-economic and political situations. His central focus is Nigeria, and indeed, life in post-independence Nigeria as well as the history, culture and traditions of the people constitute the 'muse' that inspires Yerima's 'mimesis'. Yerima treats history with freedom and imagination (Adeoti, 2007). This is exactly the root of argument in this paper; Yerima's theatre recreates the African history in order to respond to the biased imperial presentation.

Yerima authored more than twenty plays and various scholarly publications. He is described by some scholars as a "historical realist" who documents the relationship between powerful rulers of Nigerian kingdoms and their colonial masters. Yerima uses theatre to remind us of the long lost glory and the richness of our culture and tradition. His historical plays include *Attahiru*, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *Ameh Oboni the Great*, and *The Angel*. He also authored and edited several other works, such as *Theatre and Democracy in Nigeria* (with Ayo Akinwale) in 2002, *Fragmented Thoughts and Specifics: Essays in Dramatic Literature* (2003), *Basic Techniques in Playwriting* (2004), *Ideology and Stagecraft in the Nigerian Theatre* (with Olu Obafemi) in 2004, and *Modern Nigeria Theatre: The Geoffrey Axworthy Years (1956-1967)* in 2005.

Research on Yerima's *Attahiru*

Studies on Yerima's *Attahiru* are mostly limited to issues such as the historicity and historiography of the play, cultural identity, and the contribution of historical drama towards nation building. For instance, in an essay entitled "Towards a Historiography of the Text: The Plays of Ahmed Yerima", Akoh (2007) discovers that "the playwright is not wholly faithful to the full text of the history, but to the specific events surrounding it" (p. 121). Akoh is certainly right that the playwright's reproduction is not truthful to the history proper. Yet, the play resists and corrects hegemonic histories of pre-colonial Nigeria. Akoh states that nothing about the level of this postcolonial resistance is put up by the plays. Therefore, this paper explores this resistance and arguably equates the dramatic text with the historical account in credibility or faithfulness.

Uwatt (2007) explores Yerima's justifications on resorting to history in his play. Uwatt found that Yerima's resort to history is for "a specific dramatic purpose of either absolving the Nigerian monarchs from alleged guilt of complicity, or celebrating their heroism in resistance of imperialism" (p. 142). But how can Yerima exonerate these monarchs if historical drama is not equated with history proper. How can we honestly celebrate the heroic deeds of the "make-believe historical hero" if somewhere in the corners of our hearts we know of their otherwise adventure? May be the answer is, as Linderberger (1975) puts it, "reality or plausibility exists essentially within the consciousness of the audience" (p. 2). Therefore, it can be argued that as drama creates and gives pictures of make-believe reality in theatrical performance, historical drama can be more truthful, and hence a substitution of history proper.

Moreover, in his effort to re-create the past on stage, Yerima comes up with *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, a play that dramatizes the British invasion of Benin Kingdom at the dawn of colonial rule in Nigeria. This is another attempt by the playwright to counteract both the European colonial history and a previous play by Ola Rotimi based on the same historical figure, Ovonramwen Nogbaisi. Adeoti (2007) summarises that the play "pays particular attention to the gaps, omissions, silences and absences in Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*" (p. 85). Yerima portrays the Oba as a courageous character, like Attahiru, who stands against all odds. However, both playwrights are successful in changing the course of history to the favourable direction.

Idegu (2007) sees *Attahiru* as a play that politically promotes the identity, honour, glory and pride of Caliph Attahiru in the face of colonial domination. Because of the religious fervour shown by the Caliph and his followers in the play, Idegu concludes that "the war recorded is not only a resistance against political domination but also a defence of the Islamic faith by the Sokoto Caliphate" (p. 165). As Idegu studied the religious elements of the play, the efforts made by Luggard to avoid religious conflict and the Sultan's faulty interpretation of the situation as such, this paper looks at resistance contours that lie in the language and theatricals used by the playwright.

In another development, Dorcas (2013) studied Yerima's *Attahiru* and its reasons for the zero use of women in representing history. This attracts the attention of feminist writers and other women activists in academia. Although Yerima responded to the criticism, some readers are still unsatisfied. Therefore, more comments and interpretations on the issue are surfacing. In addition, Odebunmi (2007) conducted a study entitled "Pragmatic Reading of Proverbs in Yerima's Drama". According to the study, Yerima's proverbs in *Attahiru* "explore the flora and fauna resources of the environment (p. 211)". Therefore, Yerima's style of handling proverbs shows that his plays are accessible to both local and foreign readers who desire to come to terms with Nigerian culture and tradition (Adeoti, 2007). Because postcolonial playwrights hybridize the language, theatricals and setting of their plays, proverb is a good way of showing cultural resistance. This paper extends the exploration to include the techniques deliberately used by the playwright as a way of cultural resistance in theatre.

Plot Summary of *Attahiru*

Attahiru is a play that re-enacts the controversial history of the last Caliph of Sokoto Caliphate in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria. In the play, Ahmed Yerima dramatizes the clash between the imperial, colonialists' ideology under Lugard, and the patriotically Islamic fervour that reigns the Caliphate, which results in the heroic death of the Caliph and hundreds of his followers at the battle of Burmi. This is at the height of the scramble of Africa when the Great Britain was eager to take control of the Caliphate before France as they were fast approaching through Niger. Therefore, Lugard started to speed up and extend his encroachment to Sokoto by sending a "so-called" friendship letter that asked the Caliph to either consciously or unconsciously befriend the European "infidel". After consulting the Sokoto warriors, the Caliph refused and chose to go to war with Lugard. However, this history is much repudiated by some prejudiced historians (Balogun, 2000) who eclipsed this exceptional and fearless resistance to colonialism by the Northerners in Pre-colonial Nigeria. Therefore, this paper argues that *Attahiru* is a piece that resists such a hegemonic and biased presentation of history. Its theatrical performance is a corrective attempt to straighten the crooked and distorted history. The paper also argues that the play reconstructs the historically damaged hero of the event by arguably assuming the same veracity or credibility as history.

Analysis of the Play

The following description is captured in Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* (Jibiya, 2000:1-2).

*You said Attahiru died when
You were only ten.
At Burmi you said
A heroic death indeed
After him, many came.
Hardly any the like of him
Many that came very unlikely him
Few indeed a facsimile of his former self*

The historic death captured above is vividly brought back to life in Ahmed Yarima's *Attahiru*. In a simple and down-to earth style, Yerima "gives life to the past and to the dead", or rather takes history from the written word into the visual images on stage. In effect, the play portrays the conflict between the colonial past and the post-colonial present, between the pre-colonial identity and the colonial legacy, and finally reveals the "hybrid" situation of the playwright himself who is now searching for his cultural identity prior to colonization. Thus, Yerima attempts to rediscover a cultural identity obliterated by the hegemonic power structures of colonization.

Although Yerima selects and organizes the facts, as every work of art imposes an order, an organization, and a unity on its materials (Wellek & Warren, 1978), the facticity is not marred but arguably corrected by the imaginative construction in the work. Therefore, the work is successful, to a greater extent, in portraying a historical colonial resistance in Northern Nigeria. The play is opened with the information of the death of Caliph Abdurrahman who is to be succeeded by a prince. Muhammad Attahiru I, being one of the princes, emerges as the new caliph. He ascends

the throne during a hard time of colonial domination as he himself confirms this threatening, gloomy and uncertain time: “I am becoming the Caliph at a time when the history of our lives is at a delicate balance. At a time when the white man is determined to upset the peace of our lives” (Wellek & Warren, 1978, p. 21). However, the degree of this tension is dramatically reduced in the opening discussion of the play by Ahmad, Abbas, and Yakubu:

Yakubu: “We got over Kano, but when we heard about what the Whiteman did to the people of Zaria, we started to worry about the safety of Sokoto and the Caiph’s untimely death” (p. 17).

Ahmad: “A thousand curses on his white evil soul. Did you hear what they said he did to Kontagora, Bida and Yola?” (p. 17).

Abbas: “We cannot waste much time my friends. The first gun shooting of the Whiteman spits bullets of death. It talks to soldiers from far. The princes should not squabble over who should be caliph, there is no time” (p. 17).

The characters, two beggars and a soldier, although minor, are important and they provoke laughter or comic relief that eases tension as the events in the play rise to climax. They also represent the major cultural attitudes and impressions of the general public in the North. Although, as Balogun (2000) points out, some historians in the Southern part of the country deny the resistance in the North, Yerima, in the above quotation, disproves this assertion. He showers curses on the white colonialists and shows, in a sort of alarming cum rhetorical question, the people’s disapproval of the colonialists’ wantons physical domination. Yakubu’s words established the same resistant attitude.

Because language is a political medium and an index of the ideology and social class of dramatists, some syntactic structures should be studied. To begin with, looking at the structure of the English used by Yerima to curse the Whitemen, there is a tinge of contamination of Standard English, or rather, there is a hybrid mix of Western and African/Hausa syntax. In Hausa Language, people use the expression “Thousand curses” to damn an extremely abominable or condemnable deed or person. Here, Yerima indigenizes words, phrases, and local idioms of Hausa language in order to give English language an indigenous flavour. By using native language as well as appropriating the colonial one, Yerima makes a fitting linguistic medium to express his postcolonial experiences. Yerima, a hybrid African, uses a hybrid narrative language, a programmatic strategy to reach the common people by appealing to their sensibility and to subvert the power of the Colonial superincumbent language. Moreover, even if English was used as a means of imperial oppression, its transformation can potentially turn it into a tool of resistance.

Furthermore, this fusion of native and western conventions reflects the playwright’s desire to express his own postcolonial identity and heritage. In effect, this is viewed as part of cultural resistance by the colonized people who try to naturalize the western forms. In this context, Ashcroft (2001) observes that the most sustained, far-reaching and effective interpretation of postcolonial resistance has been the ‘resistance to absorption’, the appropriation and transformation of

dominant technologies for the purpose of re-inscribing and representing post-colonial cultural identity (p. 143).

Subsequently, the play moves to the Court where the new caliph, seated in the courtroom, invites his warriors to deliberate on the situation. A letter from Lugard, of the so-called friendship, and which shows how the British erode the power of the Emirates under the Caliphate, is read by Waziri, thus:

Since the Emirs of Kontagora and Bida have been oppressing the people, engaging in slave trade, attacking traders, organising stealing parties, I have because of these evils of theirs, taken their crowns from them and banished them (Clears his voice), signed, Sir Frederick D. Lugard (p. 27).

This letter portrays the British's false and baseless claims for perpetrating their colonial activities in the Caliphate. Nevertheless, the quiet murmur that goes round among the court officials is a sign of disapproval of the reactions and deep distrust of the friendship.

Furthermore, the letter, instead of generating diplomatic relationship between the two opposing powers, spoils that which lingers, because the caliph and his court officials interpret it as usurpation of the caliph's power. As it appears, the caliph has to either succumb and become just an advisor to the British officials or go to war. Yet, the caliph seeks an advice from his court officials. In this regard, different opinions are offered. Some of them (Marafa) opt for peace while others (Waziri, Madawaki, Sarkin Kwanni) opt for war. Nevertheless, majority of them (including Galadima and Dan-Magaji) choose emigration from Sokoto before the arrival of the British. Madawaki, being one of those who subscribe to the idea of war asserts that "No matter how well one glorifies a donkey with beautiful apparels of a horse at a durbar, a donkey is still a donkey, and a horse is still a horse. I beg his royal highness to ignore the Whiteman" (p. 28). He further states "The Whiteman is an uninvited guest to our land, he must observe not dictate, he must appreciate not criticize. Allah picks the caliph not man!" (p. 29).

Madawaki, in his pointblank statement, expresses the view of the majority that insists upon going to war, to resist the white political and cultural domination. They refuse to be 'stooges' of the Whites for they fully understand the corrosive nature of such political and cultural domination. This is another combative scene that counteracts many historians. This daring resolution is more vivid in Madawaki's angry reply to Ubandoma. The reply shows their valor which, if hands were put together, would usher them into victory. Madawaki asserts that: The black race makes me want to cry. The Whitemen are only a handful, then how come they are such a big bully, that we all shiver because we all are to blame...(30).

Ubandoma, on the other hand, disapproves of the war. He goes against the war when he asks:

But my concern is how prepared are we? How safe is it to dare the Whiteman? We heard how Zaria walls fell and how quickly the Whiteman filled the Kano moat with the bodies and bones of Kano warriors. Sad, we must ponder deeply great one (p. 30).

Similarly, Marafa, another court official at a later meeting, has the same idea in his remark: Your highness, if reason can prevail on an issue, why rush to spoil blood? Right now, Sokoto is not ready for war. Being a dedicated, honest and patriotic leader, who prefers to die defending his honour, people and political integrity, Attahiru, gallantly and bravely orders Waziri to reply the Whiteman that “We did not invite him to interfere with our problems. He has his religion and we have ours” (33). The caliph once again at another occasion declares that “You spoke well Sarkin Kwanni. I now decree, as with my earlier letter to the Whiteman, war is our only answer to his threats (47).

According to Yerima (2003), “this daring resistance reflects the first spirit of nationalism in Nigeria” (p. 187). However, the caliph’s choice of action, at this tragic moment, can be interpreted as his hamartia, error, mistake of judgement or tragic flaw which makes him a tragic hero like Oedipus in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* or King Odewale in Rotimi’s *The Gods are Not to Blame*. The caliph’s action moves readers to pity and tear for the catastrophic turn of the events. Heedless of all the observations of some court officials regarding their unpreparedness, lack of sophisticated weapons compared to the Whiteman’s, and the futility of bloodshed, the caliph goes on with the preparation for the war.

The powerful character of Attahiru is infused with the maximum level of human traits, although at a time, he moves to a higher level. This occurs when Attahiru accepts and embraces death in place of dishonor. He sacrifices his life for what he believes to be just. Therefore, Yerima dramatizes the tragic mental set-up of Attahiru, which is indubitably an accurate portrayal of the hero’s praiseworthy hubris and legendary guts to defend the honor and cultural institutions of the caliphate. The surrender to this fatalistic death is captured in the caliph’s words “If indeed, there is a prophecy that must end in Shehu’s empire in my reign as a caliph, then this is no time to mourn, but a time of gratitude, a time of prayers and great thanks to Allah that I am the chosen one (43).

Subsequently, Lord Lugard, the high commissioner, decides to attack Sokoto since the caliphate refuses his invitation of friendship. Lugard is eager to take Sokoto of course when Willcocks, an important officer observes “My major worry is the French. They are moving closer to Sokoto through the north of Katsina” (35). Lugard, in whose office the discussion takes place, replies “I have studied the situation myself. It means that we either fight and take Sokoto now, or the French would cross Niger and join Sokoto, and thereby cutting us off totally (35). All these are overt political statements that are translated in Lugard’s long speech delivered on 15th March, 1903, after the departure of the caliph.

The real motive of colonization is to exploit or siphon off the wealth of the colonized countries, not that what they claim with regard to Fulani rule. This explains their rush to take over

the caliphate before their rival France does so. The most unfortunate thing is the betrayal act of prince Muhammad al-Tahiru Aliyu who allies with Lugard at this delicate moment. Muhammad al-Tahiru Aliyu Babba dan Caliph Muhammad Bello is the popular choice of most Sokoto king-makers to succeed Caliph Abdurrahman in October 1902, but he was “forced to step down in favor of Muhammad Attahiru dan Ahmad Atiku dan Caliph Abubakar Atiku who is his closest rival, to avoid civil strife” (Last, 1967, p. 175).

By the same token, the suppressed sentiments of the sons of Ali Muhammad Bello means that the caliphate is internally divided at such a crucial moment. The British takes advantage of the succession matter, and thus makes the most of it by appointing Muhammad Al-Tahir Aliyu as caliph, to intentionally aggravate the fugitive caliph. Furthermore, Muhammad Al-Tahir is not alone in accepting and collaborating with the British. Marafa and Muhammad Mai Turare also join him. Incidentally, the pre-existing division in the caliphate also fans the flames. This has to do with an indifferent attitude of the caliphate toward the invasion of the weak emirates by the strong ones. When the caliphate refuses to intervene, the weak emirates are forced to invite the British to interfere. Ubandoma confirms this when he says “When Zaria fell, I ran to the house of some of you here. And, what did they say?.. Sokoto and Zaria have not been friends” (pp. 31-32).

Sokoto is captured by Lugard, but Caliph Attahiru flees to Burmi, where he gathers brave warriors from Kano, Gombe, Kontagora, Nupe, Bauchi, Misau, and Katagun. He gives a morale boosting speech before the war begins. The war scene is clearly explained in stage direction: In darkness, noises of fighting men, cannons booming, metal clapping, swords cutting into swords. Noises of wounded and dying, etc. coming from all around the stage and backstage, auditorium and wings (p. 61). Through this description, the detail of the war comes to mind. But the gory picture of the battle field and the courage of Attahiru are captured more vividly in the account of a survivor, Yakubu: Yet, the greatest moment was when the caliph fell. As the bullet struck him, he raised up his sword and screamed. With the bullet he still cut down two more soldiers, then his Rawani loosened, and his cap fell (p. 63).

Of course, Caliph Attahiru I and his warriors are venturesome and courageous. They show a sheer resistance against the British political, religious and cultural domination. However, more gallant and venturesome patriotism is seen through the action of the blind beggar Abbas and his friend Ahmad who decide to join the fighters. Despite their helpless situation, when captured sneaking out of Sokoto in disguise, they refuse to divulge the hideout of the caliph. Abbas tells Lugard to his face that “It will be better for me to die on the side of my caliph than to die a coward” (p. 55). This admiring act shows how common people of the pre-colonial Northern Nigeria, represented by these characters, stood for the cause and resisted colonialism. In the play, the people's determination to fight alongside the caliph is first captured in Abbas' proclamation: The caliph. I must get to him. I must fight by his side. I must give up my life for him. I must be somebody for once in my life, eyes or no eyes I must be somebody (48).

In a nutshell, the ideology of Yerima manifests itself in the content, techniques, and devices he uses to present the content. The colonial resistance dramatized by in the racy and urgent work

of Attahiru is also seen in characters and action. The structure of the play itself seems to be signaling such a resistance, as it lacks all the conventional arrangement of Western Theatre. There are no scenes, acts or any form of division. The end of each segment and the beginning of another is illustrated through the use of stage lighting. Therefore, Yerima's theatre can be seen as a visual presentation of the resistance to Colonialist discourses of theatre. In a hybrid style, the playwright develops a syncretic or interfusional Postcolonial Theatre, indigenizing each of the western dramatic elements in the play.

Conclusion

This paper analysed Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* in relation to post-colonial resistance in Northern Nigeria. In effect, the play portrays the conflict between a colonial past and the post-colonial present, between the pre-colonial identity and colonial legacy, and finally reveals the "hybrid" situation of the playwright himself. Therefore, the work is successful, to a greater extent, in portraying the colonial resistance in Northern Nigeria. Because language is a political medium and an index of the ideology and social class of dramatists, some syntactic structures should be studied. In addition, Yerima, a hybrid African, uses a hybrid narrative language and a programmatic strategy to reach the common people by appealing to their sensibility to subvert the power of the colonial superincumbent language. Furthermore, this fusion of native and Western conventions reflects the playwright's desire to express his own postcolonial identity and heritage. This is viewed as part of cultural resistance by the colonized people.

The play shows how common people of the pre-colonial Northern Nigeria, represented by the characters, stood for the cause and resisted colonialism. The play shows how literature counteracts historical records of such a historical pandemonium, which indelibly remains part of the history of Northern Nigeria. Today, this play is remembered and discussed more than the crooked history in schools, colleges, and universities. Any time the play is read, studied or watched, it touches and enlivens the patriotism in the audience, which consequently promotes a particular social agenda. Yerima focuses immensely on the events leading to the war, which makes the play very moving and compelling. This way, Yerima corrects the erroneous teachings in schools for several years, especially in the southern part of Nigeria, regarding the relationship between the North and the colonial government. It was baselessly taught that there was not any form of indigenous resistance to foreign rule in Northern Nigeria.

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