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Modernism and Islamic Marriage in Northern Nigeria in Mohammed Sule's *The Undesirable Element*

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ABSTRACT: Mohammed Sule's *The Undesirable Elements* offers a nuanced examination of the tensions between modernism and traditional Islamic marriage practices in Northern Nigeria. The novel follows women as they navigate evolving cultural norms that challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Sule's narrative highlights how modern ideals, such as individual autonomy and gender equality, intersect with and sometimes disrupt traditional marital frameworks. The novel also highlights the broader societal implications of these conflicts, affecting familial dynamics, social status, and community cohesion. By capturing the voices and experiences of those caught between tradition and modernity, Sule's work provides critical insight into the complexities of marriage in Northern Nigeria. The novel highlights the delicate balance between preserving cultural values and embracing change, making it a significant contribution to contemporary Nigerian literature and discussions on the intersections of modernism, religion, and social change in Islamic societies. This article aims to analyze the themes of modernism, Islamic tradition, marriage, and Western education in Nigerian literature, particularly *in The Undesirable Element* by Mohammed Sule. African literature during the colonial period, between World War I and independence, shifted towards Western themes and liberation. This period saw a significant increase in African literature, with many works appearing in Western academic curricula and on lists compiled at the end of the 20th century. The article focuses on modernism, marriage, Islamic tradition, and Western education in Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of education in every person's life. The novel represents the social trend of wealthy older men marrying young girls, often based on their wealth, as marriage was based on money.

KEYWORDS: Gender roles, Islamic marriage, Modernism, Northern Nigeria, Tradition, Social change, the Undesirable Element.

INTRODUCTION

Modernism has been defined in various ways, such as the differences in art trends that appeared in the 20th century. Modernism is defined by how prior violence of social life is reconstituted through a constructivist reframing of social practices about basic categories of existence common to all humans: time, space, embodiment, performance, and knowledge.

Western education is a group of institutions (ministries, local educational authorities, teacher training institutions, schools, universities, etc.) whose primary purpose is to provide education to children and young people. These institutions can vary according to different contexts. Muslims believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Jesus, Abraham, and Moses.

Islam is a verbal noun originating from the trilateral root S.L.M., which forms a large class of words mostly relating to concepts of wholeness, submission, sincerity, safety, and peace. In a religious context, it means voluntary submission to God. The term "Islam" has several components to its original meaning, including self-surrender or giving oneself up to someone and accepting their overlordship in the fullest sense of the term.

The word "Islam" has several components to its original meaning, including a whole way of life in which a person gives their submission and obedience to someone whom they regard as having the ultimate authority, shapes their conduct according to the bounds and laws prescribed by that being, looks to him for recognition, honor, and reward for loyal service, and fears the disgrace or punishment that could follow any lack on their part.

This article focuses on the topic of modernism, Islam, marriage, and Western education in *The Undesirable Element* by Mohammad Sule. Marriage is a culturally recognized union between people, known as spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, their children, and their laws. It is considered a cultural universal and can be recognized as sacramental marriage in some cultures, Catholicism, and Nikah in Islam.

Statement of the Research Problem and Research Questions

The author, a prominent Nigerian writer, explores the history of modernism, Islam, marriage, and Western education in the North of Nigeria. He highlights the influence of Western education and the role of Islam in the region. The author also discusses the significance of local marriage institutions and the balancing act between African Islam traditions and Western culture. The author challenges the way in which African Islamic traditions/customs and western culture coexist.

- How do African Islamic traditions and western culture coexist?
- How does Mohammed Sule's *The Undesirable Element* portray the tension between traditional Islamic marriage practices and modernist values in Northern Nigerian society?
- In what ways do the characters in *The Undesirable Element* navigate personal autonomy and societal expectations in the context of Islamic marriage?
- What role does gender play in shaping the narrative of Islamic marriage and modernism in Northern Nigeria, as depicted in *The Undesirable Element*?

Research Objectives

- This study explores the significance of modernism and Islamic traditions in Northern Nigeria, focusing on marriage and the impact of Western education.
- To analyze how *The Undesirable Element* depicts the conflict between traditional Islamic marriage practices and modernist influences in Northern Nigeria.
- To examine the representation of individual autonomy within the framework of Islamic marriage in the novel.
- To explore the impact of gender on the experience of modernism and Islamic marriage in the narrative
- It will provide critical insights into the influence of Western education on Islamic education and serve as a resource for further research.
- The study also explores the factors that have made Western education popular over Islamic education and the coexistence of Western culture with Africanized Islamic traditions.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The Review of Literature and Topic Choice Justification

Modernism, modernization, and modernity are related concepts but their senses and applications differ. Modernism responds to procedures and situations, while modernism is an aesthetic and philosophical-ideological reaction. Western education, originating from the West and influencing the world after Islam education in the 15th century, focuses on modernizing social life through science and technological advancement. This system is a completely secular system that differentiates life and religion, focusing on materialism and nationalism in its quest for knowledge.

Islam education, on the other hand, is translated as Muslim rules of perceiving life, derived from the Quran and Hadith. It signifies a whole-life approach and complete integration into man's life, taking man from ignorance and illiteracy to the light of knowledge and education. Islam education is an act of worship and a lifelong process, shaping relevance and advantages not only to Muslims but to the entire humanity.

In Islam, actual education requires the content of the Quran and Hadith, as these motivations drive the Muslim community to place due importance on advancing of knowledge. Islamic education is a process of nurturing and training the mind, physique, and spirit of humans based on Islamic values sourced from the Quran and Sunna. It is intended to bring forth humans who are God-conscious and subservient only to Allah.

In Nigeria, western education has greatly impacted the teaching of Islamic education, with most Islamic schools now adopting some Western approach to education. The secular system considers education as an engine for development, believing in education as a means of individual and national development. However, Islamic education is not synonymous with Islamic studies, which is just a subject in the Nigerian Western-orientated educational system. Marriage is defined differently in various cultures, with Edward Westermarck defining marriage as a durable connection between male and female. Duran Bell describes marriage as a relationship between one or more men (male or female) in severalty to one or more women that provides them with a demand-right of sexual access within a domestic group and identifies women who bear the demands of those specific men.

Modernism, modernization, and modernity are related concepts but have different meanings and applications. Understanding the differences between these systems can help us better understand the impact of Western education on the teaching of Islamic education and the role of religion in shaping modern society.

THEORETICAL METHOD

Sociocriticism, a theory developed by French theoretician Claude Duchet in 1971, is a perspective that focuses on the extra-textual elements of literary works rather than their aesthetic structures. This approach is instrumental in revealing what texts teach readers

about society, as noted by Ruth Amossy. Pierre Popovic (2011) asserts that Sociocriticism speaks about things happening in society. Pierre Zima's approach to Sociocriticism focuses on the linguistic dimension of literary texts to better understand society. His approach involves studying syntax, semantics, intertextuality, and sociolect in a text. Edmond Cross (1988) emphasizes how social structures are translated into literary text by insisting on socio-historical consideration of the signifier.

Claude Duchet posits that literary texts express the social, stating that only society is presented in literary works such as novels, poems, and plays. This approach aligns with the research paper's historical domain, as it decodes the social consideration in a literary work.

In the context of modernism, Islam, marriage, and Western education in *The Undesirable Element* by Mohammed Sule, Zima's sociology of the text shifts social problems (such as commercialization and ideological struggles) to the linguistic level. He believes that literary texts are located at the crossroads between literature and social languages, and that literature is an art that describes how ideology functions within modern societies' institutions, including the education system, media, and culture industry.

Pour une sociologie du texte littéraire is critical in examining the coexistence of Western culture and Africanized Islamic traditions in *The Undesirable Element* by Mohammad Sule in Africa, particularly in Northern Nigeria.

1. African Tradition and Modernity: A Definitional Approach to Modernism and Tradition

Modernism, a philosophical and art movement that emerged during the 19th and early 20th centuries, aimed to create new forms of art, philosophy, and social organization reflecting the emerging industrial world. It encouraged the re-examination of every aspect of existence, from commerce to philosophy, to find what was holding back progress and replace it with new ways of reaching the same end. Modernist concepts, especially aesthetic autonomy, were fundamental to the literature of decolonization in Anglophone Africa.

Modernity, a topic in the humanities and social sciences, is both a historical period and an ensemble of socio-cultural norms, attitudes, and practices that arose in the wake of the Renaissance in the "Age of Reason" of 17th Century thought and the 18th Century "Enlightenment." By the late 19th and 20th centuries, modernist art, politics, science, and culture had come to dominate not only Western Europe and North America but also almost every civilized area on the globe.

Modernity is closely associated with the development of individualism, capitalism, urbanization, and a belief in the possibilities of technological and political progress. Wars and other perceived problems of this era, many of which come from the effects of rapid change and the connected loss of strength of traditional religious and ethical norms, have led to many reactions against modern development.

Modernity spawned the establishment of many social sciences, particularly sociology, as a direct academic response to the challenges of modernity like industrialization. Modern society also meant capitalism, a new division of labor, and new mentalities of rational calculation. German sociologist Georg Simmel captured the perils of modern life in his essay The Metropolis and Modern Life from 1903, stating that the deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the impendence and individuality of their existence against the sovereign powers of society.

1.1. The Cultural Encounter

African culture is diverse and multifaceted, encompassing a mix of countries with various tribes and unique characteristics. It is expressed through art, crafts, folklore, religion, clothing, cuisine, music, and language. African nations have shown a willingness to adapt to the modern world, with governments encouraging national dance, music groups, museums, artists, and writers.

Africa is divided into numerous ethnic cultures, and cultural regeneration has been an integral aspect of post-independence nation-building. Europeans during colonialism held attitudes of superiority and a sense of mission, with the French allowing Africans to adopt French ways if they gave up their African culture. Kenyan social commentator Mwiti Mugambi argues that the future of Africa can be forged by accepting and mending the sociocultural present.

African folklore and religion are deeply intertwined, with flood myths circulating in different parts of Africa. Christianity and Islam form the critical aspects of Nigerian culture, dietary customs, and rituals. Nigeria remains a culturally rich and traditional country, with Western values creeping into society, particularly among youths. The country's constitution allows for freedom of worship and religion, and people expect their religious beliefs to be respected. In the northern part of the country, strict Islamic law (Sharia) has been introduced, promoting modesty and language.

1.2. Colonialism: Direct Rule and Indirect Rule

Direct colonial rule is a form of colonialism that establishes a centralized foreign authority within a territory run by colonial officials. In this system, the native population is excluded from all but the lowest level of the colonial government. European colonialism and colonization were the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over other societies and territories, founding a colony, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Research suggests that the current conditions of postcolonial countries have roots in colonial actions or policies.

Systems of colonial rule can be broken into binary classifications: direct and indirect. Direct rule involves the establishment of a centralized European authority within a territory run by colonial officials, while indirect rule integrates pre-established local elites and native institutions into the administration of the colonial government. The indirect rule maintains good pre-colonial institutions and ensures development within the local culture.

Direct rule deliberately removed traditional power structures to establish uniformity across a region, as seen in the French colonial doctrine of assimilation. This led to the enforcement of the French penal code, the right to send a representative to parliament, and the imposition of tariff laws as a form of economic assimilation. Indigenous people living in colonized societies were obliged to obey European laws and customs or be deemed "uncivilized" and denied access to any European rights.

Both direct and indirect rule have persistent, long-term impacts on the success of former colonies. In the modern postcolonial period, areas formerly ruled directly by the British performed worse economically and had significantly less access to various public goods, such as healthcare, public infrastructure, and education.

In his book Citizen and Subject: *Contemporary Africa and the Legacy Of Colonialism*, Mandeni claims that both types of rule were sides of the same coin, with colonialists dividing regions along urban and rural lines and instituting separate systems of government in each area. Modern states have only accomplished "deracialization" and not democratization following their independence from colonial rule. To achieve autonomy, successful, democratization, and good governance, states must overcome their substantial schisms: urban versus rural modern, and participation versus representation.

1.3. Assimilation /Alienation (Aimé Césaire) Western Humanist Ideology

In his 1950 essay Discourse on Colonialism, Aimé Césaire accuses the European civilization of being indefensible and must be overthrown by a popular revolution of the global proletariat. He argues that Europe's moral values and actions throughout history have led to genocides and enslavement of native peoples on four continents. Césaire calls for the end of the European-dominated global order, arguing that capitalism, the economic system of private ownership and profit maximization, drove Europe to colonize the world.

Césaire also criticizes journalists and academics who are responsible for the brutal violence of colonization, as they are watchdogs of colonialism and have invented the myth of European civilization based on the self-serving idea that only whites are capable of legitimate scientific knowledge. He points out that Egyptians invented mathematics and Arab philosophers invented rationalism, which are false arguments that justify European rule.

Césaire calls for a global revolution, suggesting that Western Europe is reaching a breaking point due to its own excesses. The people Europe colonized are now seeking independence and imagining a more equal future. While the United States appears poised to perpetuate the evils of colonialism, it is still possible for Latin American, African, and Asian nations to create a classless society that would truly provide them with the sovereignty, independence, freedom, and abundance that the West falsely promised them for centuries.

Césaire calls for people to fight and support anti-colonial, anti-capitalist revolutions, but their success is far from guaranteed. While Europe in its present state is indefensible, it could always decide to support movements for independence and popular sovereignty in its former colonies, even though this way is unlikely.

L.S. Senghor's aphorism about colonialism, Negritude, is considered a sufficient description of what Senghor did and stood for. Senghor's political philosophy was premised on an embrace of the nation of the exceptionalism of French colonial rule in Africa, which presented itself as keen to extend an altruistic guiding hand throughout the struggle of the people.

Aimé Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism presents a powerful critique of the European civilization and its hypocrisy. He calls for a global revolution against capitalism and the oppressive nature of European colonialism.

1.1.1. The Gray Spaces

Gray space refers to developments, enclaves, populations, and transactions between the lightness of legality and the darkenings of eviction, destruction, and death. These spaces are neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of urban regions that exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans. Gray spacing is a ceaseless process of producing social relations, bypassing the false modernist dichotomy between "legal" and "criminal," "oppressed" and "subordinated," "fixed" and "temporary." This article focuses on the most common expression of gray spacing, the creation of peripheral, weakened, and marginalized spaces. Communities subject to gray spacing are not powerless recipients of urban policies, as they generate new mobilizations and insurgent identities, employ innovative survival tactics, and use gray spaces as empowerment. Gray spacing is a power-laden process, with the concrete emergence of "stubborn" informalities typically handled by delegitimizing and criminalizing discourses, regulations, and violence. This creates boundaries that divide groups according to their status, separating urban incorporation and "creeping apartheid," where the meaning of urban citizenship depends on arbitrary features such as ethnicity, place of birth, or class.

1.2.2. Colonial Encounter as Necessary Evil

Colonialism in Africa involved a complex encounter between the continent and Europe, involving multiple spheres, spatial scales, and inscriptions. The nature of this encounter has been analyzed by various disciplinary or theoretical orientations, with some viewing it as antagonistic, while others see it as ambivalent or accommodating. Before the rise of postcolonial theory, colonialism was often viewed as a series of encounters between colonizers and colonized, western and non-western, domination and resistance, modernity and tradition, destruction and presentation, and universal and local. Post-colonialists emphasize the ambivalent nature of colonialism, its contingency and decenteredness, and the hybridities and pluralities of identities it produced. Colonial encounters form part of the broader phenomenon of cultural contact or inter-regional interaction, as the expansion of the colonial empire led

to the abandonment of the universalistic idea of assimilation and the concept of association derived from the idea of evolution. This association is expressed in the flexibility and autonomy of colonial administrations, largely exercised through indigenous populations' existing institutions.

1.2.3. Decolonization (Struggle for independence, Reacculturation)

The decolonization of Africa occurred between the mid-to-late 1950s and 1975, marked by sudden regime changes and political turmoil. British and American-educated independence leader Kwame Nkrumah emphasized the rights of all peoples to govern themselves and declared independence in the 1945 Pan African Congress. In 1949, British troops opened fire on African protesters, leading to riots and the imprisonment of other leaders. Nkrumah founded the Convention People's Party (CPP), which gained political power in 1951 and requested independence within the commonwealth in 1957.

Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's "Wind of Change" speech in South Africa in 1960 accelerated decolonization under his premiership. Britain's remaining colonies in Africa, except for southern Rhodesia, were granted independence by 1968. However, the process was not peaceful, with Kenyan independence preceded by the Mau Mau uprising and Rhodesia's 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence resulting in a civil war.

By the 1940s, Africans in both French and British colonies emerged from traditional society through opportunities for economic advancement and education. Colonial governments often aided and developed education initiated by Christian missionaries and provided higher education for the upper classes. The British educational system developed into a pyramid with a broader base than the French one. By the mid-1950s, Nigeria had over two million schoolchildren, accounting for around 6% of the total population. Decolonization in Nigeria occurred within three years (1957-1960) during which British colonial officers and Nigerian leaders tried to make sense of the loss of authority and responsibilities.

2. Modernism and Islamic Marriage

Modernism is a global movement that shifted away from traditional approaches to arts, architecture, literature, religion, social organization, and life itself. It emerged during the 19th and early 20th centuries, with artists and thinkers rejecting traditional methods to discover new ways of making art. The early modern period was marked by advancements in science, transportation, communication, technology, secularized civic politics, and authoritarian nation-states. Modernist literature addressed aesthetic problems similar to non-literary forms of contemporary Modernist art, such as painting, but often featured pessimism, rejecting the optimism of Victorian literature.

In Islamic marriage, Muhammad reformed the laws and procedures of common practices, transforming them into a contract. The Quran banned "marriage by inheritance" and emphasized the importance of marriage as a means to satisfy sexual desires. Marriage is considered a legitimate way to fulfil one's faith, and it is considered half of one's faith.

Modernism has had a significant impact on African people, particularly African Muslim people, particularly Northern Muslims. This study will focus on Western education in Kano people's lives in Northern Nigeria, Western education and characters, and African customs and traditions. The focus will be on Western education and its impact on African culture and society.

2.1. Western Education in Kano People's Life in Northern Nigeria

Since the colonial period, Northern Nigeria's elite education has been a debate on combining Islam with modernity. Postcolonial Northern Nigerians often experienced discomfort with their own education, especially those trained in colonial schools. Kano, the capital city of the Kano State, is considered an ancient center of Islamic learning and is a center of Nigeria's Islamic culture. Kano operates under Islamic law, with blasphemy punishable by death. Most women wear the hijab and have "Hisbah" or Sharia police who enforce immoral acts. Christians are exempt from these laws.

The introduction of colonialism and Western world supremacy has not negatively impacted the economy and polity of the Muslim world. However, it has also polluted the social system, with human scale diminishing and individualism replacing collectivism. Islamic social values are being crushed by moral relativity, leading some to assume that Islam has a negligible role in modern city formation. Kano, a predominantly Muslim state in North Western Nigeria, inherited a thousand-year-old Islamic building architecture, which is now being pushed to the brink of extinction by modern architecture.

2.2. Western Education and the Characters

Social prestige refers to the significance or appeal that social consciousness ascribes to human activity, which can result from various sources such as occupation, socio-political or leisure activities, psychological qualities, physical attributes, property, consumer goods, cultural values, social groups, institutions, and organizations. It is based on authority, respect, and influence. The importance of social prestige stems from the human desire to gain respect within one's social milieu and the individual's need for self-affirmation. Efforts to acquire or maintain a high level of social prestige play an important role in individual motivation and organizational activity.

In The Undesirable Element by Muhammad Sule, El-Haji Ibrahim's social prestige resources are discussed, with Ibrahim disobeying Bintu's family's purpose and using his well-being to turn Bintu's mind from her family's purpose. This goes against Islamic values, as promises are crucial in Islam, and people who do not respect their promises are reflected as hypocrites.

The social prestige brought by Westerners actually decreases Islamic education and values, particularly for African Muslims, particularly Northern Nigerian Muslims. The advent of modernism and Western education has impacted African Muslims,

particularly Northern Nigerian Muslims.

Beyond this, Ibrahim disheartens Bintu, as the novel illustrates:

Look, Bintu, if you want the facts, I have never loved any woman. My feelings are never permanent. I am a man who admires beauty and youth, and what I want, I have. A man with my money must live in style and that's what I am doing? Bintu nearly collapsed when she heard AL haji say this (Sule, p.59).

From this quotation, Ibrahim relies on his wealth and social status to manipulate Bintu, deceiving her and betraying her family's promise, which goes against Islamic education and norms, as he boasts and uses his social resources.

2.3. African Customs/Traditions (values decreasing because of Western education) African customs and traditions emphasize humility, community, and unity. Africans show humility to the elderly, parents, and God, demonstrating their dependence on Him. They remove their hands when greeting those of age, kneel and thank parents, and offer seats to elderly individuals on buses. Unity is a fundamental aspect of African culture, as it makes individuals who they are and their purpose of existence.

Africans are admired for their respect for elders, as they are considered the custodians of customs and tradition. Elders are cared for within the family, with no nursing homes like in Europe and America. Parents and the elderly are respected and cherished, and young people are encouraged to care for them. Africans use poems to teach good behavior and promote Islamic values and religious norms. However, since the advent of Western education, African values have become more influenced by Western values. Many Africans have adopted Western lifestyles, believing that Western values are more important than their own. This is illustrated in Alhaji Ibrahim's account of relying on Western material to minimize his social standard.

3. Arranged Marriage and Agency

Arranged marriage is a type of marital union where the bride and groom are selected by the partners themselves, with the involvement of families and social circles. It has been prevalent in many cultures, with some exceptions, such as courtship and betrothal rituals during the Renaissance Period of Italy. The practice of arranged marriages has been enabled by factors such as child marriage, late marriage, tradition, culture, religion, poverty, limited choice, disabilities, wealth and inheritance issues, politics, and social and ethnic conflicts.

Islam forbids the marriage of Muslim girls to non-Muslim men, which is one of the motivations for arranged marriages in Islamic minority populations in Europe. Marriage has been a social institution throughout human history, producing children and organizing the inheritance of property from one generation to the next. In many cultures, particularly in parts of Africa and the Middle East, daughters are valuable in marriages, as the groom and family often pay cash and property for the right to marry the daughter.

Arranged marriages are actively debated by scholars, with questions including whether they abuse the international immigration system and violate human rights, particularly women's rights. Agency, defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices, has existed since the Enlightenment.

3.1. Lack of Agency in Bintu (Women, Orphans, Poor) (Hauwa and Bintu: Compare and Contrast)

Bintu is a critical character in *The Undesirable Element*. Her character reveals many concepts of thought in this critical novel. The novel brings to light so many critical ideas in terms of both Hauwa and Bintu:

Bintu was not being changed by her schooling; her character and her behavior remained the same and Hauwa felt proud of her adopted daughter. Unlike some girls of her age, Bintu always helped in the house during her holidays from school. And Hauwa was impressed to see that as though Bintu maintained her values, she never interfered in matters that had nothing to do with her. Bintu was unlike many of the girls in her school, and there was only one girl in whom she had complete confidence, and with whom she shared mutual understanding Bintu was polite, diligent, and obedient in school, and came to be a favorite of the principal ,who, like the young girl, was orphan (Sule, 6).

This quotation sheds light on Bintu's obedience, politeness, and determination to keep critically her paramount values. It also enlightens Hauwa's surprise about Bintu's values conversation. In addition, another illustration examines the comparison and contrast between Hauwa and Bintu:

In the months that followed, Hauwa set herself to provide Bintu with everything she needed. She was able to use the rent money to keep Bintu well clothed and fed and did all she could see that the young girl's life was as happy as it had previously been. Between the two, there developed the love of mother and daughter and Hauwa tried never to refuse the girl anything. (Sule, 5)

The passage brings to light Hauwa's consideration towards Bintu. Clearly, she seeks some money to take after Bintu in her dressing style. Hauwa does her possible to put Bintu in every possible living condition. Besides, Hauwa perceives ''the rich as heartless in the context that they seemed to think of nothing but their wealth, had no respect for others , and took any life but their own to be valueless'' (Sule, 24). But at the beginning, Bintu did not know the rich's perception of the poor. Seeing Ibrahim's conception of her, Bintu was degraded; her life and character have physically and morally changed.

3.2. Western Education: Change in Bintu

Western education has critically impacted Bintu's life in the sense that she has decided to continue her studies.

Accordingly, this has broken her family's oath and promise. This can be reflected in the following terms:

You are growing up quickly, and according to the plans made, you will be finishing school next year". "Yes I will leave the college next year; Bintu replied mildly, her head down, but then I will do H.S.C, or I will attend the school of Basic Studies in Zaria".
*"I mean that I will continue my education to the University level". Hauwa's mood and expression changed abruptly; her eyes glinting as she exclaimed in rays: "No! You will never do that! ... I will tell you. It is a long story, but I will make it short for you. It was your father's wish that you should marry his friend's son. He had promised his friend, and he wanted the promise kept. (*Sule, 7*).*

Based on the above illustration, one can assert that Western education has affected Bintu's life in the way that she has decided to keep on with her studies. When she makes the decision, Hauwa is in a hill of disagreement with her. Hauwa tells her that the fact of keeping to studies might break the rule of their customs and the pledge granted by Bintu's father. This also might break Bintu's family dignity and honor.

It should be known that Western education has monumentally affected the lives of many girls in Northern Nigeria, particularly among Muslim girls. The presence of this modernism or education makes many girls not obey their parent's pledge and decision in terms of marriage by the fact that it has declined Islamic rules in the area. All these elements, in terms of Western education, transform the life of Bintu.

3.3. Bintu and Agency (Voice and Responsibility)

Bintu detours her mind from her family's pledge because of social prestige. She followed a Nigerian rich man. To make this argument clear, the author mentions the following passage:

*Bintu now visited Alhaji Ibrahim frequently and asked him for whatever she wanted; he was entirely at her disposal. Bintu knew how sad and hurt Hauwa was because he had refused to explain where she went so often. Hauwa felt that Bintu was dotting out of her control and that she must present this because it could lead to disaste*r (Sule, 21-22).

The above illustration demonstrates Bintu's agency by the fact that she has decided to meet Alhaji Ibrahim because of his social status. She makes her own choice and assumes her responsibility to be with a rich man that her family does not love anymore.

Accordingly, she is away from her father's promise and tries to follow her own decision. Beyond this, the author Mohammad Sule in *The Undesirable Element,* wants to hand a critical message over to African young girls who have accepted to attend Western education. It is observed that African school young girls make their own decisions when they reach a substantial age at school. At a certain time, many of them make their own lives. Their parents have no longer power over them because those African Muslim girls think that the Western lifestyle is paramount and the best across the globe. Those girls have been given a critical privilege to Western education, for their beliefs, it is essential everywhere. Many of their traditions /customs, because they stress that their customs and traditions are underestimated and Western education is overestimated worldwide , they drop out of their ancestor's lifestyle, and customs lifestyles. The bulk of them no longer adopt traditional marriage: Islamic marriage is significant in their social surrounding. As a consequence, many of those girls regret adopting Western cultures for the sake of bettering their living situation. In other terms, their agency and responsibility do not attain the critical level. In Islam, it is recommended that children must obey their parents in the right way. One's own decision, voice, and responsibility can lead to a feeling of deception, anger, humiliation, and remand. And this is the case of Bintu, a Nigerian Muslim girl, who broke her father's oath and promise.

"She is pregnant!
Excuse me, doctor; I beg your pardon! Mrs. Alex was puzzled and confused. "She is pregnant; he repeated. I hope you're happy about it"
"Pregnant! She exclaimed inker bulbously. "That's is right; you seem to be in some doubt"
"No nothing, I am just surprised. I am sorry doctor"
"Take it easy; I will bring some pills for her"
Bintu appeared from the room; she looked at… was Bintu Pregnant?
These questions she had asked herself persistently… Bintu throughout the journey" (Sule, 41-42)

Ibrahim's love relationship makes Bintu experience pregnancy. Surprise is around some characters such as Bintu, Mrs. Alex, and Ibrahim. Alhaji Ibrahim, seeing his social well-being, tries to pregnant Bintu, a Muslim Westernized girl in Northern Nigeria. In most cultures, pregnant women have a special status in society and receive particularly gentle care. At the same time, they are subject to expectations that many extent great psychological pressure, such as having to produce a son and Ibrahim being pregnant with Bintu and not taking care of her anymore. As a Muslim, is it allowed to act like this?

Indeed, Ibrahim is the Arabic name of the prophet and patriarch Abraham and one of Allah's messengers in the Quran. As the name suggests, Ibrahim is reflected as the father of nations and is of Arabic origin. In this respect, this name is a name of wisdom. Ibrahim should adopt a good attitude towards Bintu in the sense of enabling her to respect her pregnancy barriers. He should not do that, what a social prejudice in the Islamic religion!

4. Love Affair and Court

Love is reflected as a feeling of affection. It has affected so many people around the globe. Love affairs can conduct girls to be pregnant, and lead many people to court. Court is a place where trials and other legal cases happen or the people present in such a place, especially the officials and those deciding if someone is quilting: protectors gathered outside the court to await the verdict. This is the case between both Alhaji Ibrahim and Bintu, two critical characters in *The Undesirable Element* by Mohammed Sule. At the

beginning, Alhaji Ibrahim was in full love with Bintu. And in their love relationships, Ibrahim made Bintu a pregnant girl. Later both key characters went to court for their love relationship. Consequently, Bintu faces setbacks she experiences injustice and imprisonment.

4.1. Bintu's Pregnancy

Pregnancy, also known as gestation, is the time during which one or more offspring develops inside a woman. Love relationship is one of the causes of pregnancy. At the outset, Alhaji Ibrahim falls in full affection with Bintu.

To be pregnant, this can be seen in the following terms: Ibrahim refuses to give a lift to Bintu and gives her some changes. From this, Bintu has understood that Ibrahim has changed his behavior towards her. Bintu regretted how she had treated Hauwa before, especially since she had found now that the old man's lecture made sense.

4.2. Ibrahim and Bintu at the Court of Law

The love relationship generates pregnancy. Accordingly, Bintu and Ibrahim appear before the court of law. The issue of court is one of the critical issues at the center of *The Undesirable Element*. In this respect, in the novel, we can illustrate this: "*You think that nobody can touch or harm you, that you are above everyone else. But what if I take you to court and sue you. Justice will be on my side; she said sternly*" (Sule, 60).

This above citation demonstrates that Ibrahim and Bintu are in critical disagreement with each other. The love relationship is the key driver of their prosecution by the Court of Law. In the book, Ibrahim thinks he is over the law, and believes that nobody can send him to court or prison. His social prestige makes him believe that he is out of law. Bintu expects that if she prosecutes Ibrahim, justice will be on her side.

Another issue of the Court of Justice is:

Miss, your statement is false, don't think yourself smart enough to deceive the court. He paused for a moment. Your honor, this girl wanted a name and wealth for her unfortunate child and that is why she put her evil finger on a man like Alhaji Ibrahim, thinking that the court would insist he take responsibility for the child…No your honor; Bintu said, weeping in the witness box. 'It is Alhaji who is falsely accusing me' (Sule, 64).

The illustration argues that Bintu's accusation of Ibrahim is false, as some court members believe she is claiming Ibrahim's social resources for her own well-being and tarnishing her identity. The court does not blame Ibrahim or the court members, and they do not recognize Ibrahim as the author of Bintu's pregnancy. The court recommends severe punishment for Bintu, claiming she plans to gain Ibrahim's social prestige.

4.3. Injustice and Bintu's Imprisonment

The novel explores imprisonment and prejudice towards Bintu, a Westernized Northern Nigerian Muslim. The judge accuses Bintu of claiming Ibrahim is the author of her pregnancy, leading to some court members appointing her without evidence:

I will have them here for the next sitting of the court. Meanwhile, because of your lack of evidence, the court finds you guilty of wrongfully bringing a change against Alhaji Ibrahim Datti. You will be detained until the court reconvenes. Bintu was led away by the police constable after the court session. (Sule, 65)

This illustration demonstrates that Bintu in the novel has accused Ibrahim without any proof. For that reason, Bintu has been imprisoned. What an injustice!

Beyond this, it can be said that this situation is the reflection of social injustice, which is the way unjust occurs in a situation where the equals are treated unequally and the unequal is treated equally. It is the case of Bintu and Ibrahim and the Court. As it is viewed that Bintu experiences lower social class, she has been allocated to blame Ibrahim. Critically, because of her social class, she is treated unequally. Ibrahim belongs to the upper social class, he is treated equally and is the one who is right. Besides this critical analysis, one can also assert the feeling of deception and distress, Hauwa faces. What a social injustice!

It was now four days since Bintu had been detained by the police, and since Abdul had broken the terrible news to Hauwa. For Hauwa, this had been the final blow; she had immediately collapsed and was rushed to the hospital. Abdul phoned Faruk, who had come at once. When he saw how badly Hauwa had been affected, he had become frightened and blamed himself for letting Abdul tell her the news. He had known that the old man couldn't take such a story and yet pull herself together again. (Sule, 68)

This quotation examines that when Bintu's detention is said to Hauwa, she has suddenly fallen. This pressure is caused by the injustice inflicted by the Court on Bintu. Deception is a major relational transgression that often leads to feelings of betrayal and distress between relational patterns. It violates rational rules and is considered to be a negative violation.

Bintu's imprisonment causes Hauwa's death. She is facing a feeling of discouragement and has been sidelined. "The court should beware of making the difference in the social level of people involved" (Sule, 97). In this regard, because of Alhaji's honor, Bintu has been punished. The Court is covered with a critical injustice.

Beyond, the message that Muhammad wants to hand over to the Northern Nigeria community is to reveal the social injustice that covers the globe. This injustice towards Bintu should make all the Westernized girls pay attention to the people of the upper class. Those people, seeing their social prestige, think that they are better than those of the lower class. This should be a critical lesson for all of us in social surroundings.

But the so-called Westernized girls are too materialistic. And because of social well-being, many of them do not listen to pieces of

advice from their parents. As a consequence, those girls fall into the trap of men of the upper class. Many of the capitalists are used to telling those girls. Ultimately, those girls no longer attain their goals in life, because they are most of the time confronted with capitalists' and petty, and blasphematory attitudes, which is their prejudice.

5. Characterization and Impact of Western Culture

Characterization is a crucial literary device used to introduce and explain characters in a story. It is essential in writing good literature and is used to enlighten and explain the details about a character. In The Undesirable Element, the characters Alhaji Ibrahim, Bintu, and Faruk are analyzed to understand their distinctive nature and features. Africans have imbibed western culture, leading to social problems such as one-crop economies, corruption, inflation, unemployment, and destitute villages. However, mismanagement, greed, embezzlement, bribery, and tribalism have negatively impacted the social system. Western culture refers to the knowledge, beliefs, morals, and way of life of the western world. Colonialism across Africa, particularly among former British protectorates, has eroded or destroyed the civilizations of peoples, their religions, political, philosophies, and institutions. African people have a total dependency on Western political philosophies and ideas, and their shifts and movements have been influenced by Western civilization and culture.

The advent of money by westerners has influenced many African ways of living, affecting Alhaji Ibrahim, who has adopted an amoral attitude and broken Islamic values in his social surroundings. Faruk, as a westernized man, has adopted western culture as well. This analysis will focus on Alhaji Ibrahim, his amoral behavior, and the African Moors, as well as Faruk's embodied character, Oumar Ibn-al-Khattab.

5.1. Alhaji Ibrahim, Hideous Face of Capitalist Exploitation

Capitalism is a belief that the wickedest individuals will do the wickedest for the greatest good of everyone. Ibrahim, based on his upper class, contributes to inequality and social division, creating resentment and social separation. In *The Undesirable Element*, Alhaji Ibrahim violently pushed Bintu, causing her to crash into the door. This demonstrates his arrogance and unfairness. Capitalists use their social prestige to exploit the poor and deceive them, leading to blasphematic attitudes and acts. The rich often feel superior to the poor. In this respect, the novel, we can illustrate this quotation:

Money is deceiver, she thought, but people did not realize that. They considered money to be a source of power, and necessary for a happy life. But money, Bintu realized, is a devil that can make a man forget his God?

Money changes people and makes their lives as hard as stone. In the pursuit of money, men forget how to have understanding. They forget that it is no use having riches unless one can make life better for the poor. (pp. 61-62)

The quotation highlights the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy and the deception of the poor in society. Alhaji, angered by the power of his wealth, rejects Bintu, revealing a disregard for human life and women. Bintu becomes disappointed with the man of capitalism, feeling betrayal on her side. Muhammad Sule aims to warn North Nigerian Muslims about the impact of Western social well-being and the bourgeoisie on their lifestyles. He urges girls seeking social prestige to be cautious with capitalists and be careful with their relationships. This breaking of Islamic values and African tradition breaks Islamic norms and breaks Islamic values.

5.2. Ibrahim's Amoral Behavior and African Moors

This concept of Moors has been used to describe alternatively the reign of Muslims in Spain, Europeans of African descent, and others for centuries. Ibrahim has got a bad attitude towards Bintu. As a Muslim, this is presumptuous behavior in other terms, Islamic values do not keep pace with this dismal condition

Respecting women in Islam is imperative. The Holy Quran urges all Muslims to look after their wives in the right way:

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) for their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property). As to those women on whose part you see ill conduct, admonish them(first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful), but if they return to obedience, see not against them (of annoyance). Surely, Allah is ever Most High, Most Great. (Quran 4:34)

The possible interpretations of Quran 4:34 serve to highlight the role of man,s (and therefore fallible) intellect in comprehending scriptures. There is a sharp divide between traditional interpretations of this verse, which stress female obedience and male authority, and contemplator interpretations, which center on the financial component of men's mantel duties and the limits on a husband's power over his wife.

Many Muslims have gravitated towards the latter views, as they are more in keeping not only with modern sensibilities in general but also the Quranic portrayal of women in other verses as full human beings and partners in the relationship of marriage. Yet, however, convincing, one finds the progressive arguments that a man's striking his wife is not permitted by Quran 4:34, it is impossible to remove all differences or hierarchy from this verse without doing violence the Quranic text itself. This is not a problem unique to marriage or to the relations between men and women as well: The tension between equality in spiritual matter applies to many social situations addressed by the Quran (such as wealth/poverty or freedom/slavery). Nor is it unique to the Quran or Islam; such tensions exist in other scriptures and other religions.

These considerations do not help determine the meaning of Quran 4:34 or to resolve the difficulties it presents for those Muslims

committed to women's equality with men. However, they serve as a reminder that no matter how one interprets this verse, one must not do so in isolation, but rather with careful attention to its full scriptural and social contexts. As the Quran asserts, in Islam, women's rights must be under consideration. Their rights must be given to them clearly.

Ibrahim, in *The Undesirable Element*, does not obey this Islamic value towards Bintu. In other terms, her right is not taken into consideration. All these petty histories occurred because of the advent of Western education. Ibrahim's amoral attitude is brought about by the presence of modernity. Do Islamic values keep pace with western education?

5.3. Faruk as Oumar Ibn-al-Khattab

Oumar, a leading companion and adviser to the Islamic prophet Muhammad, became the second Muslim ruler after Muhammad's death. He ruled for ten years and played a significant role in Islam, expanding the Islamic empire rapidly. His legislative abilities, political and administrative control, and coordinated multi-peong attacks against the Sassanid Persian Empire marked his reputation as a great political and military leader. He was killed by a Persian Captive.

Sunni Muslims view him as Farooq (Faruk) the Great, while Shia Muslims view him as the second rashidun and responsible for Fatim's death. Omar was an expert Muslim jurist known for his peons and just nature, earning him the epithet Al-Faruk (the one who distinguishes between right and wrong). He was a gifted orator and used his ability to improve his reputation among the people.

In *The Undesirable Element*, Muhammad Sule introduces the story of Faruk, the chief imam of the village, who interferes with defending Bintu against prison. Faruk uses a strategic plan to meet Alhaji before the trial, seeing his photos with Bintu, which allows him to defeat or convince Bintu and protect her from her enemies. Islamic values recommend forgiveness, and Faruk is represented as Omar Ibn-al-Khattab, a critical Muslim in Islam.

6. Islamic Culture and Western Humanism

Balancing act refers to the attempt to manage multiple obligations simultaneously, often combining traditional beliefs with Islamic practices. Africa's diverse population is predominantly Muslim, accounting for ¼ of the world's Muslim population. The faith's roots can be traced back to the time of Prophet Muhammad, who migrated to Abyssinia in fear of persecution from the Pagan Arabs. Islam spread in West Africa through Islamic traders and sailors, leading to several Muslim empires, including the Songhai Empire. Most Muslims in Africa are either non-denominational Muslims or Sunni, belonging to Maliki or Shafi schools of jurisprudence. However, the Hanafi School of jurisprudence is also represented in Egypt.

Islam in Africa is complex and constantly reshaped by social, economic, and political conditions. It often adopts African cultural contexts and belief systems, forming Africa's own orthodoxies. The history of Islam and its spread, particularly in the North and Horn of Africa, has been a topic of contention. Islam in Africa has both local and global dimensions, with local Muslims operating with autonomy and no international organization regulating their practices. Globalization and new initiatives in information technology have helped Muslims maintain close connections with the wider Muslim world.

Western humanism, a rational and empirical tradition, has significantly impacted African ways of living and Islamic religion. This part will focus on Bintu's change, Faruk's westernized and Muslim perspective, and the ways marriage is reflected as a celebration of Islamic identity.

6.1. Bintu's Change

Before explaining Bintu's change, I will first center on the semiotic study of the name "BINTU". Semiotics is the study of sign process (semiotic), which is any form of activity, concoct, or any process that involves signs, including the production of meaning. Persons with the name BINTU are co-operative, courteous and, very considerate individuals. They tend to be able to sense the feelings of others, with the knack to be able to demonstrate certain mediation skills when handling complicated situations. They know how to organize and handle people with care and ease. People and harmony are of the utmost importance to them. They are sensitive and do not like to show-off their intimate quality. Name Letter Analysis of **BINTU**: **B**: Persons are sensitive and a bit of an introvert, but still manage to be personable and compassionate.

I: Persons are a compassionate person who feels things deeply.

N: Persons are a 'think outside the box'-Kind of person creative and original.

T: Persons like life in the fast lane.

U: Persons have a gift-and- take kind of life.

In Mohammed Sule's novel, Bintu breaks his father's pledge and deceives his family's honor and dignity. Her semiotic name, which represents wisdom, contradicts her behavior. Bintu's deception goes against Islamic norms and leads her to adopt a good way of life and critical behavior. After facing betrayal and deception, she becomes a conscious girl and an open-minded individual. This message is intended to guide the Islamic community in Northern Nigeria, encouraging girls to change their thinking and pursue the right path for success in life.

6.2. Faruk's Westernized and Muslim

Muslim compatibility with Western cultural values is influenced by their historical adoption of conditions in host nations. The Islamic world, with diverse ethnic, cultural, and geographic populations, faces challenges in uniting national cultures. Faruk, a reflection of westernized Northern Nigerian Muslims, embraces westerners' ways of life while studying Western culture. Traditionalists argue for

the severance of Islamic nations with institutions or the globalization of Islamic values. To maintain identity, Muslim individuals and groups create dual cultural citizenship, reinvigorating their religions, cultural, and social heritage with Islam. However, Muslim adherents find much in Western social values and practices anti-theatrical to their tradition. Many Africans have embraced western education due to contact with westerners, questioning if it keeps pace with Islam. Faruk, a critical fighter in Islam, may not respect all the greatest points of Islam due to his Western upbringing.

6.3. Marriage as Celebration of Islamic Identity

In Islam, marriage is a legal contract between a man and a woman, with both parties consenting freely. A formal, binding agreement is considered essential for a religiously valid marriage. Muhammad reformed the laws and procedures of common marriage practices, introducing strict rules and regulations. The practice of "marriage by inheritance" was forbidden, and men were limited to four wives in one line. The institution of marriage was refined, with the down becoming a nuptial gift for the wife. Marriage was viewed as a contract, with the essential elements of the contract being an offer by the man, acceptance by the woman, and the performance of conditions like payment. The woman's consent was required, and the offer and acceptance had to be made in the presence of at least two witnesses. Marriage is highly valued and considered half of one's faith, with both men and women having rights over each other. In *The Undesirable Element*, Muhammad Sule reveals the issue of love between Bintu and Ibrahim, which turns into regret and deception, potentially breaking Islamic values and norms worldwide.

CONCLUSION

African literature is diverse and influenced by various factors, including the reclaiming of voice and subjectivity, the critique of abusive power and the arrival of western cultures. The continent's diverse cultural practices, political power, and Western education have contributed to the development of African literature.

Marriage is a significant issue in African literature, as girls in northern Nigeria were forced to drop out of school to marry wealthy men. Mohammed Sule's novel, The Undesirable Element, criticizes this issue and expands the message across all African countries. Modernism, which emphasizes freedom of expression, experimentation, radicalism, and primitivism, has been a significant part of the cultural encounter, colonialism, and decolonization.

Western education and colonization have impacted African people, with direct rule imposing European leaders, laws, and institutions on indigenous populations. Decolonization has been a challenge in Africa, with calls for reforms of French colonial policy to entice Africans black to French-ruled territories. It is important to be aware of local etiquette, cultural customs, and everyday social mores when in West Africa.

Islamic marriage is a practice in most modern Islamic societies, with the Quran allowing up to four wives, but only one if they cannot treat their wives equally. Modernism has affected African people, particularly Northern Nigerian Muslims, who have faced prejudice and imprisonment due to their contact with Western culture. Alhaji Ibrahim, the chief imam of the village, becomes a capitalist exploiter and amoral, disobedient, and arrogant due to his social prestige.

The emergence of western culture has allowed many African people to turn back from their traditional values, particularly those of Northern Nigerian Muslims. Some people have gone abroad to learn from western people, such as Faruk, who has adopted western education and norms. Marriage is also a critical issue in African literature, as Bintu's father breaks his promise to marry Faruk Abdu, leading to her death.

African literature is shaped by various factors, including the legacy of colonialism, the influence of modernism, and the challenges faced by African Muslim people. Understanding these factors is crucial for understanding the richness and diversity of African literature and its impact on global politics and society.

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