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# Unmasking imperialism : a study of Ferdinand Oyono's "the old man and the medal"

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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

# UNMASKING IMPERIALISM: A STUDY OF FERDINAND OYONO'S *THE OLD MAN AND THE MEDAL*

By

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**Bujumbura, August 2011**

## DEDICATION

To my dear mother and grandmother;

To my sisters and brothers;

I dedicate this work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following people for the moral, intellectual and financial support they gave me in the course of my education.

First of all, I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Nganyu Dominic Nformi, who supervised this work despite his hectic schedule. His criticisms and corrections have been beneficial to the completion of this work. I sincerely express my heartfelt gratitude to him.

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## ABSTRACT

This work entitled "Unmasking imperialism: a study of Ferdinand Oyono's *The Old man and the Medal*" examines white imperialism through the activities and behavior of white characters in the novel. It examines the relationship that has existed between the whites and the blacks in the novel. Our study tries to expose the exploitation of the blacks by the whites. This study discusses the questionable civilizing and evangelization mission of the colonialists in Africa as presented by Ferdinand Oyono. It attempts to prove the hypothesis that colonization was not the desire to evangelize, push back frontiers of ignorance, diseases and tyranny. It was rather an indirect way of duping in good faith. Our study seeks to awaken Africans to be aware of the colonizers' exploitative intention. It opens their eyes to the fact that they have been dealing with a dangerous enemy veiled with the garment of friendship. This study is carried out in the New Historicism framework because it relates to history.

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The imperialists who colonized Africa were convinced of the barbarism of the areas that had come under their control. As far as the colonizers were concerned, foremost ingredients of civilization were technological advancement and literacy; any people who were deficient in these were immediately classified as primitive. Also, the whites considered their culture to be superior to any other culture throughout the world. The ideological argument that the white culture was above all cultures pushed them to give an altruistic halo to their colonizing mission. The colonization of Africa was basically materialistic and political. This is because, it would be discovered later that the interest of the colonial master was laid on African resources and not developing the minds of the people and their countries as it was claimed. Although this was materialistic or political, it was pioneered by missionary activities. The missionaries implanted churches in the colonized areas and started to inculcate in the colonized people their new religion and ways of life.

Some of the indigenous people left their ancestral religion and embraced the new religion. Through these new believers, the missionaries and colonizers found a way to exploit the people. The people who were being exploited had a firm conviction that the whites were good and trustworthy friends. That is why some of them followed the whites leaving their brothers and siding with the colonizers and the missionaries. The consequence of missionary-imperialist activity was that the existing hegemony of Africa was dismantled. African indigenous culture was devalued, traditional religion was equated with paganism and traditional education

through the tribal societies was regarded as the perpetuation of the barbarous, unhygienic and indecent practices. After all, the people who sided with the whites realized that they were neither Whites nor Blacks; they were simply used as tools of colonization.

African writers are concerned with colonialism and its effects on Africans. The writers are interested in the political and socio-cultural situation which was prevailing in Africa during the period of colonialism. The encounter between the African culture and the new religion accompanied with the civilizing mission brought by colonizers to Africa inspired Ferdinand Oyono, like other writers, to write about and question the clerical in the Catholic Church and real intention of and the activities of the colonialists on the ground. Ferdinand Oyono's *The Old Man and the Medal* falls within the context of this reaction against the imposition of western culture in Africa. That is, the attempt of the imperialist to dismantle African values and to replace them with western civilization and hypocritical Christianity. It denounces the imperialistic exploitation ushered by colonialism.

Many studies have been carried out to discuss colonialism and its impact on African people during colonization. Most of the studies expose white administrators and their deeds in the period of colonization. But also, a link between Christian religious missionaries and colonizers' activities is remarkable if we try to go deep in to the colonial system. The natives were not only exploited by religious men as did the colonizers, but also were brainwashed to negate their values which were termed "primitive" and were taught reject those of them who

did not accept the White man's teachings. The new converts of this new religion were blinded by this and did not see the fate that was hanging over them.

The imposition of colonial power was hidden behind the idea of civilization by infiltrating beliefs in Africans. The missionaries were disguised into good people who brought light to the benighted people but their mission was basically political and materialistic, they had the same mission as the colonizers. It is in reaction to this issue that this study is aimed at examining the imperialistic expansion in Africa and the devastating consequences of colonialism. This work aims at exposing how both the missionaries and the white administrators made up the system of imperialism.

This work is therefore based on the hypothesis that Christianity and the mission of civilization were mere pretexts by the colonial masters to exploit Africans. It tries to prove that colonization was not the desire to evangelize, push back frontiers of ignorance, diseases and tyranny. It further proves that it was rather an indirect way of duping in good faith. It intends to justify the fact that the White man had no positive agenda for the black people at the time of colonization.

For a better understanding of the study, it is imperative to give the definition of the key terms that will centre our study. These words are "unmask" and "imperialism". According to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, the term unmask is defined as to remove a mask from, to reveal the true nature or expose.

On the other hand, the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, defines the term unmask as to show the true character of somebody or the hidden truth about something synonym of "expose".

According to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, the term imperialism is defined as imperial government authority or system. It is also defined as the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and domination of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining indirect control over political or economic life of other areas. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, the term is defined as a system in which one country controls other countries after defeating them in a war or the fact that powerful country increases its influence over other countries through business, culture etc.

Ferdinand Oyono was born in Ebolowa in the South Province of Cameroon in 1929. After obtaining his high school diploma in Yaoundé, he studied in Paris. Following Cameroon's independence, he was a member of Cameroonian delegation at the United Nations in 1960, when the country was admitted to the United Nations. Oyono sewed as a Cameroon's ambassador to Liberia. In 1965, then sewed as ambassador to Benelux. And as ambassador to France with Additional responsibilities for Spain, Italy, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia from 1969 to 1974. From 1974 to 1982 he was Cameroon's permanent representative to the United Nations. He acted as president of the United Nations Security Council in place of United Kingdom's Ivor Richard at the 1,866$^{th}$ meeting of the Security Council on December 16, 1975.

From 1982 to 1985, he was again sewed as ambassador to various countries first ambassador to Algeria and Libya then as ambassador to the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries.

From 1985 to 1986, he was General Secretary of the President of Cameroon; he then served as Minister of the external relations, serving in that position until he was instead named Minister of state for culture on December 8, 1997. Oyono was a member of the National Commission for the coordination of president Paul Biya's election campaign in October 2004 presidential elections and was the president of the campaign's support and follow-up committee in the South Province.

After nearly ten years as Minister of state for culture, Oyono was excluded from the government that was appointed on September 1, 2007. Oyono was thought to be a close friend of President Paul Biya and his departure from government was considered by observers to be a result of his advanced age and poor health. After leaving the government, Oyono was still believed to be highly influential behind the scenes, Biya appointed him as a Roving ambassador on 30 June 2009 and he died on 10 June 2010.

Apart from *The Old Man and the Medal,* which was originally published in French in 1956 as *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*, Oyono published *Une Vie de Boy* in 1956 (in English translation *Houseboy*) and *Le Chemin pour l'Europe.*

For a better conduction of the work, we have chosen to apply New Historicism as the theoretical framework. The New Historicism theory was developed during the 1980's largely in reaction to the text-only approach pursued by Formalist critics in the 1970's. New Historicists like Formalists, acknowledge the importance of a literary text, but they also analyze the text with an eye to history. New Historicist critics also intend to define the discipline of History more broadly than did their predecessors. They view history as a social science like anthropology and sociology whereas Older Historicists intended to view history as literature's background and the social sciences as being properly historical.

New Historicists remind us that it is impossible to reconstruct the past as it really was rather than as we have been conditioned by our place and time to believe that it was. Many New Historicists have acknowledged a profound indebtedness to the writings of Michel Foucault, a French philosophical historian. Foucault brought put together incidents and phenomena from areas normally seen as unconnected, encouraging New Historicists and new cultural Historicists to redefine the boundaries of Historical inquiry. No Historical event, according to Foucault, has a single cause; rather, each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social and political factors.

Some New Historicists like Stephen Greenblatt have been heavily influenced by British cultural critic Raymond Williams, and others like Brook Thomas have been more influenced by the German Marxist critic Walter Benjamin.

New Historicists argue that the best framework for interpreting literature is to place it in its historical context. For example the novel under study, Ferdinand Oyono's *The Old Man the Medal,* is a writing of the twentieth century. The best way to understand and interpret it, is to associate it with its contextual, cultural and historical realities. However, complaints are sometimes made that New Historicism tends to reduce literature to history and neglects literary qualities of the work in question. But it would be impossible to get the full message of the work without placing it in its historical context.

The novel under study deserves New Historicism as critical approach because it relates to the Cameroonian history in particular and that of the whole Africa in general. Here, it is the Cameroon under colonial domination. So, it would be impossible to treat it in historical vaccum since it is strongly tied to the history and has great relationship with the historical context.

Many writers have written on colonialism in different ways; the cruelty and injustice of the colonial system and the lack of African political and cultural sovereignty are themes that are recurrent in works of African writers. Ferdinand Oyono attracted the attention of scholars because his writings are interested in the issues above.

In his novel *The Old Man and the Medal* he discusses in a simple way how Africans have been exploited. He uses imagery and humour in portraying deceiving colonial realities. The main character, Meka, appears to be filled with religious

enthusiasm at the beginning of the novel, but as the events evolve in time his pride in himself, his zeal and confidence in the colonial administration get degraded for finally attain a complete disillusionment at the end. Eustace Palmer in *The Growth of African Novel* contends that:

> when Meka gives his piece of land to the church, we are meant to see this not just as a manifestation of religious zeal but also as an index of his simple mindedness in religious matters. (161)

According to Palmer, Meka is absorbed in the pleasure that being called a Christian is the best of the idea. He is illusioned by the fact that he is accepted as a Black Christian, approved by the whites to be a good example in his area. He goes on to say that Meka's donation of his land to the catholic mission is not exposed by Ferdinand Oyono as a religious devotion as one may think. Rather it is interpreted by Palmer as an index of Meka's insufficient capacity to make judgment about religious issues.

In *African Literature in French*, Dorothy S. Blair asserts that Ferdinand Oyono's novels reflect autobiographical elements. She opines that Ferdinand Oyono uses his experiences and observation of his milieu where he lives:

> Ferdinand Oyono's novels reflect autobiographical elements almost completely and after the reflection of a period without being a factual, objective documentary. Naturally the author calls on his own experiences, as he does his own observations of the rural and small-town life of Cameroon that he knew, but

> these are transposed and fused into fictional situation and characters to denounce the brutality, and inhumanity of colonial authorities, with violent bitterness and cynicism unknown since R. Maran's *Batouala*. (222)

According to Dorothy S. Blair, Ferdinand Oyono does not grope for ideas and arguments in his writings. Contrary, he reflects his own autobiographical elements, he writes about his own experiences, his own critical observation of his Cameroonian milieu. Through a fictional situation and characters, Oyono succeeds to expose the evil doings of the colonial masters.

In *Whispers from a Continent*, Wilfred Cartey asserts that Ferdinand Oyono gave a very simple plot to his novel, but in a very deep and full way of passing a message. According to him

> The plot of novel is relatively simple, but Oyono gives depth and fullness to it through the structural symbolism of many situations. Meka's position between the native and the white worlds is sketched rapidly through small incidents in the first page (65)

According to Carty, Oyono has given a very simple plot to his novels. But through this plot, he conveys a very deep message as far as colonialism is concerned. Alienation and racial discrimination are seriously tackled in his novels. He goes on to say that the colonial unrealistic promises and sadisms are sharply exposed. To him, the use of symbolism comes to reveal Oyono's wit and genius.

About Oyono's work, Jeanette Kamra quoted in *The Growth of African Novel* suggests that Oyono's main aim in his work is to entertain. But contrary to this, Mukatoni Rugyendo asserts that Oyono's chief aim has always been to expose the evils of colonial situation in independent Africa. He says that Oyono's attention is not only paid to the exploitative objectives of the colonial administration but also to the naivety and illusions that have characterized some Africans during colonization.

In *Black Africa*, Vladimir Klima comments on Meka's way of life before colonization as we can see it in the passage below:

> Meka lives with his family in a poor hut, as his lands have been taken by Roman Catholic Mission. He still maintains some illusions concerning the possibility of better relations between Black and Whites in the future. Misled by sweet-sounding phrases pronounced during the ceremony, he wrongly thinks that he can treat the French Officials of the colonial administration as equals. (83)

According to Klima, Meka, the protagonist is blinded by the white promises. He contends that Meka has illusions of consolidating friendship between Blacks and Whites, for he willingly accepts to give his land to the mission and two children to the colonial administration. The fact that Meka and his family accept to live on small portion of land and leave a big part to the mission is a sign of naivety, lack of maturity and experience.

This shows that Meka has less knowledge of the hidden agenda of both Christian mission and colonial motives.

This work differs from these critical views mentioned above in the perspective that it discusses the impact of colonialism in different domains of African life. It does not leave out the black sacrifices caused by the devastating effects due to the exploitation and wars in which Africans were victims under the pressure of the colonizers. It ends with the analysis of the reward given to the Africans in general and to Meka in particular after the sacrifices. It shows that the scene of the reward comes as the last nail on the exposure of the hidden face of colonial enterprise in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general.

This work will be divided into five parts: The general introduction, three chapters and the general conclusion. The general introduction includes the research hypothesis, the aim of the study, scope of the study, the definitions of key terms, the approach or theoretical framework, the review of literature and the structure of the work.

The first chapter is entitled "Colonialism and black sacrifice". This chapter will give the description of colonialism under certain aspects such as civilization, religion and economy. It will also tackle the issue of black sacrifice. The black sacrifice is presented under many forms such as economic sacrifice because Mammy Titi is forbidden to sell the traditional alcohol, arki, Meka gives his land to the mission. There is also Spiritual sacrifice, because the people have to give up their traditional religion.

Political sacrifice deal with wars that took numberless of African people, even Meka gives his two sons who die in war which is none of their business.

The second chapter is entitled "Reward: unveiling imperialism". It tackles and makes an analysis of the white men's imperialism through the reward given to the old man, Meka, after he has handed his land and his two sons as a support to the colonial enterprise. In fact Meka is seduced by the friendship with the whites that he naively accepts to hand out his properties. Yet, the reward assigned to him reveals exploitation, the reason why he is finally disappointed.

The third chapter is entitled "Disillusionment". It is accepted to be the core of the whole work as it comes to reveal the result of the study in which after all incidents and events, Meka and the whole black community understand the real character of the whites. We eventually discover the mystery of colonialism. At the very end, we accept that friendship between Blacks and Whites is not something to believe in.

The general conclusion summarizes the main arguments that have been discussed throughout the work and proves that the hypothesis has been proved true. It states our findings and suggests possible areas for future researchers.

# CHAPTER ONE:

# COLONIALISM AND BLACK SACRIFICE

In the 17th century the African continent was invaded by the white men, who came from Europe and settled in different African countries. They came to Africa, some as explorers, others as traders, merchants and missionaries. They found Africa, a land inhabited by people who had their own manners, ways of administration and organization. In fact, the whites found some kingdoms ruled by kings and the African people obeyed their authority. African people had their own ways and means of exchanging different products got from the agrarian and artistic activities; they had culture, religion, values system, and customs and more than that they had a great sense of unity. In *African Historical Studies*, E.A. Ayandele states:

> The African had feelings, emotions and prejudices, he could be vain or meek, he loved to be respected and honored, he had I great measure of self-dignity, he evolved his own moral laws, values systems and ideas which he believed were best for himself and which he would not change for alien ones, except at the point of the bayonet. (17)

In this quotation above, we can see that an African had complete sense of life. He is a human being with all the attributes that make him a social being. Ayandele firmly confirms that an African loves to be respected and honored. By this, we can see that the black man, like the rest of the human beings, had a sense of dignity and honour which needed to be maintained. He means that each person around the world has to be respected and be free to live and abide by his or her own ways and

norms. Everyone has a conception of life that nobody else is allowed to despise for racial motives. It is obvious that an African cannot easily and totally accept to leave his life ways. Instead, he holds strongly on the values that he inherited from his ancestors because he is sure that they are good. However, when the white men came with their system and new order, they despised and condemned the African cultures sometimes claiming that they were barbaric. African religions and values were not recognized. Consequently, everything about African ancient lifestyle was judged to be primitive, not valid or out-dated and even barbaric. As already said, the African continent started to interest the European Traders and explorers who came to investigate, in order to know the resources the African continent possessed, then after the exploration of the continent, Africa was subject of the colonial invasion. Some of kings and indigenous rulers tried to fight against the whites, they tried to defend their territories but their efforts were reduced to nothing. Even though there are some who succeeded, many of them failed.

The colonial strategies varied or changed from one country to another, in some countries colonial invaders used seduction and others weapons. By using seduction, the colonizers succeeded to convince some African rulers to cooperate with them. They increased their influence basing themselves on African auxiliaries and alliances with the local powers. Africa was thought to contain enormous potential wealth and the resources of its land enticed the Europeans to come and tap from these economic opportunities. If the local power or the ruler did not favor the colonial influence to have its way and place, then that kingdom or tribe was attacked by means of militarism, weapons (guns) were used to make the king or the

ruler accept the presence of the colonial administration. In some countries the whites imposed themselves by guns and canons and many kingdoms, kings and rulers submitted no matters how strong these rulers could be. As we said, few succeeded to defy and resist against this unjust colonial occupation. After the penetration and occupation of the African continent, Africa was divided by the European powers. This is known as "partition". Britain, France, Belgium, Germany etc… had to see their shares from the African land.

We have to know that, mainly colonialism aimed at two objectives: civilization and Christianity. Concerning civilization, it was said by the Europeans that black people or Africans had no culture, no civilization then it was up to the whites to civilize Africans who were considered as primitive since they were looked at by the west as people with no history, ignoring every sense of modernity. Yet, this supposed civilization brought by the west was not as good as one may think of it. What kind of civilization that brings the destruction of people's fundamental principles and values, promoting violence, atrocity and the ill-treatment of the so-called savage Africans?

Christianity was said to come as a solution for the African paganism because Europeans viewed Africa as a land of evil, a dark continent as Joseph Conrad describes it in his book *Heart of Darkness*. Even the missionaries had the belief that blacks were not endowed with human attributes. In the *History and Politics of Colonialism 1870-1914*, K. Asere the author mentions that: "Evangelism in all its forms commonly rested on the assumption that the African stood at the bottom of

the evolutionary ladder and has to be lifted out of their sorry state". (7) In this quotation, evangelism is not set to save the soul of the Africans. But if we try to analyze, it is likened to an organization of Whites who seem to feel pity for African conditions and consequently come to take them out of this situation. The missionaries were believed not only to carry salvation to Africans bound in sins for centuries but they also had a mission of preparing the way to the colonizers. It is clear that the missionaries played a very important role in the colonization mission; their role was that of playing with the African psychology by using the Holy Scriptures. K. Asere goes on in the same book saying that "before the outsets of colonial rule, the missionaries were the torch-bearers of the western culture until about the beginning of the 1890" (513). Missionaries were bent not only on converting Africans to the Christian religion but also to the western culture. Therefore Christianity was fraught with western culture thus spreading Christianity and its tenets. Moreover Christianity was believed to hold more powers than any other religion in the world. In *The Old Man and the Medal*, the collaboration between Gullet and Father Vandermayer reveals the relationship between the colonial administrators and Christian missionaries.

Furthermore, the colonizers developed theoretical arguments, trying to demonstrate that blacks and whites are not equal. According to these arguments, the blacks are not able to think, to organize themselves, simply we can say that they do not have a capacity to go beyond the primitive stage of human evolution. Race distinction is seen when the commandant says: "Meka, you are now somebody among men. Since, I came in this country I have never seen cocoa as

well dried as yours" (19). In this extract, it is clear that Meka was not somebody before. This passage reveals how much the commandant despises the natives. Meka becomes somebody among men because he has cocoa, for this we can see that racial and material distinction are ones of imperialism and colonialism pillars.

The Darwinian theory of the struggle of the species has contributed too much in the creation of "race distinction". The so-called "masters" turned to oppress the low classes. According to Darwin, only better species survive at the end of the day because nature is a competitive milieu where species have to struggle, it is a matter of power and strength. The Whites have flair for innovating and introducing ingenious ideas. The white capacity for new innovation creates white pride. We read:

> It is a creation pride! The Whites have invented a bomb that just one of them was to fall here. There would be no more trees, no more land, no more of any of the things you see and hear … we would be turned into smoke. (22)

The European technological advancement, the ability to conceive and construct new engines, the military and scientific progression made the Europeans feel a great desire to impose themselves and dominate the world. The African continent was subjected to the colonial domination. The belief in natural white superiority marked a form of racism based on so called "scientific principles" and it gave impetus to the movement of colonialism in Europe.

In fact, Africans were not considered by the colonizers as human beings at the same level as the whites. This is clear when Howlands, a white settler in *Weep Not Child*, belittles the natives as much as possible. He says:

> Who were blackmen and Mau Mau anyway he asked for the thousandth Time? Mere savages! A nice word-savages. Previously he had thought of them as savages or otherwise, simply because he had not thought of them at all, except as part of form the way one thought of donkeys or horses ... (87)

"Black inferiority is inherent" said the colonizers and they spread this ideology and many natives came to believe it. Consequently, many Africans accepted their inaptitude to achieve something important. As a consequence, they opened the door to an oppressor who pretended to be a friend, a trainer, and a helper bringing humanitarian assistance to them. Unfortunately, they did not know that they had given their liberty, freedom, power and independence to people who were going to rule over them with pitiless laws, force, cruelty and brutality.

During the period of colonization, the question of culture was alarming since the colonized had to conform themselves to the whims and caprices of the colonizers. They had to imitate the colonizers' manners, the way of behaving, dressing etc. African people had no option of keeping with African ancient ways of doing things because a new era had come and all the African manners were not considered or given attention any more. When Meka is to be given the medal, he goes to a tailor for a good outfit for the ceremonies, a zazou jacket is necessary for the celebration. However, Meka looks very funny in his new dress.

Kelara says: "I have never seen a jacket like it. You are swimming in it like a little fish in the sea". (74) Kelara's view point about the jacket is critical. It is obvious that Meka is adventuring in an unknown culture. Conforming himself to the colonizers by taking a zazou jacket makes him look ridiculous. To be likened to a small fish swimming in the sea has deep meaning as far as culture unfitness concerned. Meka has no idea about the west culture therefore, he embraces a domain that he is not sure to cope with as we can see it in this passage:

> Meka's feet not been made to go into the white man's shoes. He had knocked his toes against so many things that he has no toenails anymore and the yaws he had suffered from in his youth had twisted his toes up so that they pointed to the sky. (76)

The description above shows that Meka's feet are not made to fit the white shoes. Meka is a mere African whose feet are naturally adapted to African milieu. Bare feet are one characteristic of African culture. The fact of putting his feet in the leather shoes symbolizes Meka's step in the white culture. He says: "I shall never be able to get far in these shoes. I shall never be able to get far..." (77). This passage shows Meka's inadequacy in white culture. He cannot cope whit this new concept for which he has little knowledge. Meka's worry of not getting far means he has little understanding of what the western culture means.

Young people were brainwashed by the colonial power, which promised them to be assimilated to the Whites. French system of education intended to make African youth to be "French", schoolchildren were taught to recite that their

ancestors were Gaula just like French children. This system was erroneous, creating illusions in Africans who thought they were "frenchified". Yet, when African students went to further studies in France, they were not totally accepted as Frenchmen. Instead they were caught into dilemma and struggled to rediscover their initial identity.

As we know, colonialism was about domination, imposition of a nation over another. We have to underline that colonization started when European industry was flourishing so it needed raw material and a market for the products. In addition, the colonizers had to take advantage from the human, environmental and mineral resources of African countries in order to feed their starving industrialism and also to enrich themselves. We cannot forget that Blacks worked for the colonizers without being paid; labor was one of the characteristics that revealed the colonizers' exploitative spirit. Blacks were forced and mercilessly treated during labors. Africans had to work in the plantations from morning till evening. These plantations were established by the whites for their own profits. Local chiefs were told to provide a certain number of their able-bodied people, women as well as men and they were punished if they refused. When necessary, the colonial police forces intervened rounding the people. Most of the early colonial roads were built by forced labor as well as few railways. The colonizers were more interested in profits than the safety of the workers. *In The Colonial Rule in Africa,* Bruce Fetter, the author mentions: "The natives, yellow or black are less a man than a tool, who is worth only as much as can be got out of him, and who is thrown away when broken"... (109). The natives were considered as tools of production.

The colonial administrators did not care the native lives rather; the colonial masters were obsessed by the idea of accumulating much wealth produced by the natives.

The colonizers instituted an economic system based on the domination and exploitation of Africans. Africans produced a wide range of products from mines, agriculture, etc but for any African community only little quantity might come back to contribute in the economy of Africans. Taxation took many forms: head-tax, tax on the production, tax on the domestic animal. Each family had to provide the colonizers with eggs, milk, etc. As it is mentioned in this quotation:

> They said Whites were very fond of eggs and was why they had come to Africa. He was going to wake Kelara up and tell her to get basketful of eggs ready for tomorrow. (81)

This passage shows that Africans had a duty to provide Whites with different things among which eggs were very preponderant.

Colonialism was also characterized by exploitation of Africans and robbery as in this passage: "Well I went off to sell cocoa beans to the Greeks who are always robbing us" (33). The poor Africans were exploited. Many of them suffered from the robbery during the colonization, their possessions were take away from them while they were unable to resist or to do something in the objective of stopping that injustice.

Colonialism extended its limits and it was marked by the sacrifices of the Africans. The black sacrifice is manifested in different domains of African life. We can discuss about the economic sacrifice, Mammy Titi is forbidden to sell the Arki, but the Arki is important in the society. That is seen in the quotation bellow:

> The natives had been forbidden to distil their own cheap alcohol from maize and bananas to drive them on the European spirit and the red wine that flooded into the commercial centre. (9)

It is clear that the Whites are animated with a spirit of discouraging Blacks to continue drinking the local alcohol, but this local alcohol plays an imminent role of fortifying the African people whenever they feel weak. Moreover, the Whites forbid the local beer in order to give a privilege to their red wine which is more expensive than the local one.

We can also speak about the spiritual sacrifice since the Africans had to give up their religion in order to embrace Christianity. As earlier said, the Africans had a religion that fitted their lifestyle and customs.

However, Christianity invaded the African local religion; the polygamous marriages had no place. The God of Whites overpowers the gods of African ancestors. Meka through his religious conviction gives out his forefather's land to the Roman Catholic to build a church in the honor of the Almighty. Meka is sure that according to the Holy Writings, he who gives to the Lord gains more from him. We can see it in the passage below:

> He had given his lands to the priest and now lived in a small wretched hut in the village which had given its name to the mission and lay at the foot of Christianity cemetery. (9)

His contribution does not stop in religious domain, he also contributes in politics, he sends his two sons to go to fight in the war for the side of France, and unfortunately these sons die in the war. This quotation illustrates it:

> You have done much to forward the work of France in this country. You have give you lands to the missionaries, you have give your sons in the war when then found a glorious death. (19)

This quotation reveals that Meka played a very important role in the colonial enterprise. The fact of giving his lands to the missionaries and the sons to the colonial administration to die in war conveys a deep meaning as far as black sacrifice is concerned. In fact, many African people perished in wars and we can ask ourselves why the Whites included the Blacks in wars that were none of their concern, wars that had nothing to do with them.

If Whites were to fight, they fought for a cause which was not African. Still, the Blacks were scapegoats and many became victims of wars they were not supposed to be victims of. Very sad scenes and tragedies took place, numerous African children, mothers, fathers died in deplorable and precarious conditions, old people cried bitterly for the doom and the tragedy of the war.

A very dangerous thing we can mention is that the war did not take place on the European soil only but it was set even on the African land and elsewhere. War should take place on the conflict land, Europe, not in Africa. Anyway, Africans were not intelligent or strong enough to fend off themselves; they had no capacity to resist, defy the influence of the west, no ability to oppose the colonizer's decision, and so they had no choice that is why they found themselves dying for unclear cause.

Through this chapter, we have seen different aspects of colonialism. The colonial invasion caused many changes in the Africans' lives. The economic, religious and social domains have been affected by the colonial movement. Africans have been victimized and have succumbed to the colonial desire of exploiting African continent resources. Colonialism was also accompanied by black sacrifices. Even though the black sacrifice is undeniable in the colonial enterprise, the colonial invaders did not recognize the importance of some black active participation or contribution, this is revealed in the reward given to the Africans in general and to Meka in particular.

# CHAPTER TWO

## REWARD: UNVEILING IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is the policy, practice or advocacy of extending the power and domination of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas. As said in the previous chapter, many Africans sacrificed their land to the missionaries and children who fought and died in the first and second world wars. In a disguised reward ceremony meant to compensate these Africans, the white man further displayed his contempt for the African race. This chapter therefore is aimed at discussing this and thus, examining the author's exposure of colonial and religious hypocrisy.

This is the nature of the relations between the whites and the colonized African countries. In order to veil their exploitation, the colonial masters at times flattered the blacks with what they termed rewards. However, this would later be discovered to be a means of veiling the eyes of the exploited Africans. It is in this spirit that the medal that is awarded to Meka would be judged as an attempt to make him more vulnerable to exploitation. This reward is exclusively described in the novel as something fraternalizing Blacks and Whites; Meka is the Black representative and he is supposed to be a distinguished honored person appreciated by both the colonial administration and the church.

In Doum, Meka is known and admired to be a good Christian and a sure bet for the kingdom of heaven. He has given his contribution to the Catholic Church and the colonial administration in expecting the consolidation of friendship that links Whites and Blacks. Meka expects a good reward that will come after his contribution. This is normal for human beings. Everyone, when they are working or deploying their efforts wish to have a good reward. Therefore, we can say that the reward is the compensation given for a work done or service rendered.

Nevertheless, the reception of the medal will make the old Meka, understand some bitter realities about this relationship. The events that follow the reception of the Medal will open his eyes to the face of racial injustice and the corrupt nature of colonization. The medal award, the dubious behavior of the Whites will create a sense of awareness among Africans.

Meka, the main character of Oyono's *The Old Man and the Medal*, is the subject whom the story and imperialistic game turns around. Oyono uses satire while discussing the colonial realities, he exposes the Roman Catholic Church deceit and Meka's naivety. The donation of Meka's land to the church is not seen by some of his neighbors as an act of his Christian devotion and religious zeal. Rather it is seen as an act of stupidity and ignorance and excessive trust-in the white man's friendship. Moreover, the fact that Meka sends his two sons in the war, who unfortunately, die in it, is interpreted as a sign of Meka's deep belief that the Whites are more than friends but something than friendship. His ignorance in religious matters and colonial politics combine to make him act in a way that

everybody openly criticizes. Meka is among the people who got a chance to be owners of a piece of land but one morning, he decides to give it to the church for the construction of the house of the Lord. In *Growth of the African Novel* Eustace Palmer states:

> Meka is surely simpleminded in his acceptance of the white man's values white man's religion. The white man's government and the inferior role to which the white man has relegated to him. Even his countrymen see his gift of his ancestral land to the church as an act of folly ... (162)

This is not only found in Meka is character but also Ferdinand Oyono's *The House Boy* portrays another character, Toundi, who is a house boy to a white Priest. We hismay say that some Africans have eyes but they do not see, they have ears but do not hear. Toundi is proud to be in the service of White man even though he profits nothing from him whereas he makes him work day and night like a machine and reward him nothing but an old shirt and an old pair of trousers as we see it in this passage in which Toundi says:

> He presents me to the Whites who visit the mission as his master piece. I am his boy, a boy who can read and write serve the mass, lay a table, sweep out his room and make his bed. I don't earn any Money. Now and then he gives me an old shirt or an old pair of trousers. Father Gilbert knew me when I was stark naked he taught me to read and white nothing can be more precious than that, even if I have to go badly dressed. (15)

The reward given to Toundi reveals a very sharp sense of imperialism but Toundi as well as Meka, both do not have a ripe sense of analysis to criticize their situation in order to draw a conclusion or a lesson from the circumstances or events. Both lack ability to foresee the future, their blindness and confidence make them believe in the persons they do not have sufficient knowledge of.

When Meka receives the news that he is going to be awarded the medal, he rejoices and this information makes him be proud and he feels an internal motivation of conforming himself to the Whites because he thinks that this is not only a medal which is going to be given to him, but more than that he accepts to partake in the French society as a "Frenchman". His mind is filled with illusion that prompts him to feel similar to the Whites. He accepted to be a Christian by renouncing his ancient ways of traditional life and embrace baptism to change his name, now he waits to have more proof of his incorporation in the white population.

Meka's relatives are proud of the Medal; Meka receives compliments and congratulations from different people. Engamba himself rejoices to be a brother-in-law of Meka, the recipient of the Medal as it is in the quotation "It is my brother-in-law Meka! I am his brother-in-law. I am the brother-in-law of a man with a medal" (39). Many people, men and women, like Engamba, have come to the place where Meka is to be given a medal. Meka shakes the interminable series of hands offered to him in the darkness.

Meka and his family become famous at Doum, nothing is spoken in that area except Meka and the medal he is going to receive and the privileges he and his family are going to enjoy ever after. Meka is going to be not only a friend of the Whites, but a White himself and his wife a white woman. In *The growth of the African Novel* Eustace argues:

> Meka's neighbors and relations completely misunderstand the political implication of the presentation of the Medal. They feel that Meka is to become not only a friend of the white man, but a White man himself, his wife will be a white woman and they will be privileged people. (163)

In this extract above, it is obvious that Meka is naively happy and overjoyed about the decoration. He remembers the reputation of his clan and then feels a very profound emotion of pride.

The ceremonies of the 14th July are special and it is not something to hide. It is exceptional, not common, and not usual to see or hear an African whose devotion and commitment to the white service have made his name so famous, spoken of everywhere. We are even told that Meka's reputation has spread beyond the Cameroon and African boundaries. That it has gone oversea and reached the chief of the Whites' ear who has consequently decided to come and give him a medal of honor and good collaboration here, we can see how serious this reception is. An event that makes the chief of the Whites move from his very place and come to Doum just to give a medal to a man, who has been a friend, who has been

too much to the colonial enterprise. Still, what is surprising is that this reception is going to reveal certain horrible and frightful colonial realities.

At the beginning of the ceremonies Meka is on a platform in an open place under a French flag that is waving at the top of a pole. He is standing up-straight, his arms fixed on his body, he is the circle of chalk he belongs neither to his African origin nor to the White folk, he is between the two worlds. This shows an imperialistic game that is being played by the French colonizers over Meka. The fact of planting the French flag in Doum, putting Meka in sun whereas it is his day to rejoice dissimilates a very deep imperialistic meaning which is going to reveal later on the whites' lack of consideration and respect towards the African dignitaries. Here, an obvious contradiction is remarkable: Meka is the man of the day, he is supposed to rest in a comfortable shelter for he is honored to receive a medal, but he is put in the sun to bake.

In the sun Meka experiences unspeakable pains, he undergoes torture, but he stands there, he accepts to suffer in silence. His acceptance to bear sufferings and his stoic determination show how he values the medal. It also shows how he is obsessed by the prestige of that medal. His conscience has been taken by the privilege of being a brother to the whites that he accepts to suffer. He says:

> I was circumcised with knife and the doctor spat out pimento onto the wound. I did not cry out ... He clenched his teeth a little harder. I did not cry out, he thought "In all my life I have never cried ... A man never cries" ... (87)

Although Meka has accepted to suffer stoically, his body needs a solace since the heat is consuming his feet as if he has stepped into boiling water. He is sweating, his forehead burns from the sun heat. His heart is full of regrets and he longs for a place from where he can feel at ease. He thinks bitterly: "They are lucky not to suffer with their shoes. They are wearing pith helmets and they are young ... I am a poor old man but I have to leave my head baking in the sun like a lizard." (89) In this extract we can see that even Meka accepts to suffer in silence. His heart is filled with regrets and sorrow.

As the events continue to evolve, the celebration involves images beautifully applied to fit the scenario but in any case these cannot obscure the commitment of the author to reveal the racial discrimination directed towards Meka which we cannot miss to signal throughout this work. Indeed, Meka is to receive the medal but also there is someone else, Pipiniakis, a Greek owner of the white club. While Meka is left to cut ridiculous figure outside, Pipiniakis waits for the chief of whites with other whites in the cosy comfort of the commandant's office. When the time comes for the chief to decorate Meka with the medal, Fouconi indicates him with the point of his chin and turns around to his chief. This is a sign of disrespect, even though Meka considers himself as a honored person of the celebration, the most admired by the Whites and the church, he is not considerably as honored as he thinks.

Meka is decorated with Saint Christopher Medal, and then Pipiniakis moves from his chair and comes to stand beside Meka. Here we can see the ongoing of the racial discrimination since Pipiniakis is given a medal with additional kiss

whereas Meka receives a polite handshake. A very heartbreaking and paramount information that we should take into consideration is that Meka notices the difference between his medal and the one of Pipiniakis. Meka's medal is fake compared to that of Pipiniakis'. This is a sad thing for a man like Meka who has concentrated his efforts and devotion to the white man's ambition, achievements but who finds himself in such a situation of being awarded rubbish.

Meka lost his two sons in the white war; his donation of the land to the church was considered as an act of folly by his neighbours, and then sees what the end result is. Kelara, Meka's wife, is the first person to object to the reward when she realizes that her husband has been duped and consequently awarded with a useless medal. Kelara is deceived, disappointed by the reward given to her husband, her heart is full of regret and desolation. She says:

> Is any wife or mother more wretched than I am? I thought I had married a real man ... Instead I married a arse-full of shit. My poor children sold like the Lord who was sold by Judas ... (99)

She thought her husband was intelligent enough to cope with the tricks of the Whites, but now she concludes that her husband was like a blind person who groped for his way, who needed another person to guide him. She laments the outcome. In Kelara's view, the medal award given to Meka is far different from the service rendered. Engamba tries to comfort his sister and make her sorrows get vanished but in vain. Kelara cries and cries for the loss of his two sons and the land donated to the mission. The more the events of the celebration evolve, the

more the secret of the white plan and the colonial realities are near to be uncovered to let Meka know and judge what is his share in the whites. Even the other Africans who have come to support him are going to know and eventually witness.

After collecting the medal from the chief, Meka does not know where the community centre is located. He thus goes to ask Father Vandermayer for information but Vandermayer's reaction is wild and it bewilders Meka when he goes and taps Vandermayer on the shoulder. As we see it in the following quotation "The Priest shot an angry glance at him and waved him away sharply with the back of his hand. Meka quite the bewildered brought his hand up his chin opened his month like a fish" (97). What kind of priest is he, Father Vandermayer whose main mission is to preach love, brotherhood between people regardless of their background, their ethnic group or regardless of their racial legacy. Father Vandermayer was supposed to carry the blaze of Christ to the nations however; he is infected with a discriminative virus. A servant of Christ partaking in segregating people, according to their skin color. Meka cannot understand, what he sees, he is completely surprised by Father Vandermayer's reaction. Indeed, Vandermayer can no longer hide his position, his view, and his hypocrisy.

Both the colonizers and the missionaries had one mission; to control, subdue the poor Africans who have no sense of evolution. Meka asks for a ride to take him to the community centre and Father Vendermayer puts him at the back of the van whereas there is no person in the cabin, Vandermayer foreshadows what is going to happen in near the future. The fact of changing in fraction of time, and putting a

person like Meka in the back of the van, both combine to provide proof to convey a very deep meaning of racial discrimination and imperialistic expression. It is not understandable for Vandermayer to reject a faithful Christian as they say who has shown his sympathy and commitment to the church and the colonial administration than any other person in Doum.

Once at the community centre, Meka as well as other Africans have to enjoy, eat and drink to celebrate the medal given to Meka as a sign of friendship between Africans and Europeans. But the French colonial masters are sitting on the dais with Greeks while Africans are given a different place to sit as it mentioned bellow:

> How could they say they were more than brothers to the natives? The high commissioner and all the Frenchmen in Doum had had seats up on the dais along the Greeks, who were the people who kept Africans from getting rich. (111)

The French colonizers sitting with the Greeks means that they have the same aim, that is controlling, dominating and exploiting the poor Africans. Imperialism is evident in the fact that French colonizers and Greeks work in coalition.
Moreover, the fact that Africans are sitting apart from this group of Whites is also another evidence of contempt.

When Meka gets drunk at the community centre because of an overdose of liquor and then falls asleep, this is seen in the novel as a way used to unveil the imperialists' wickedness. A White quarter in the African country is a more proof of

imperialism. When Meka gropes for a way leading to the location he passes in that quarter; the way he is treated by the policemen demonstrates something that everyone cannot refuse to be a lack of consideration and respect which are the ones of the imperialism characteristics: Where yours papers?/ Where have you come from?/ What are you doing fucking here?/ Who is with you eh? Where are the others? (122)

Meka is asked questions in a very harsh and impolite way; respect is no longer the code of the conversation. It is clear that Meka has a hard time. He is the distinguished person, honored to receive a medal from the chief of the Whites. However, what he experiences has nothing to do with the privilege of being honorable. Meka is arrested; he tries to convince the policemen that he is a Christian. "I am officer! The mouth that receives the savior is forbidden to lie office" (123). Meka thinks that being Christian will help him to get rid of his plight. Unfortunately, the officer refuses categorically to receive his explanation. This shows that Meka's arrestation is not an accident rather an event that comes to make him understand that the imperialists are not either his friends or his brothers. "Your mouth will receive cat shit if you are not careful you old tortoise ..." (123). Being a friend to the governor or being a Christian, none of these arguments is valid. Now Meka has already come to realize the hidden side of the Whites. Regretfully, Meka is arrested by black policemen. This gives an evidence that imperialism extended its limits until it came to over control some African's conscience who accept to oppress their own fellow countryman.

In the prison cell Meka's conscience and revolting spirit are activated by the experience and the plight in which he has ventured. At the same time he remembers how his family used to be renowned, how his forefathers used to be great and reputable, how himself used to be a good fighter in his youth as this passage: The great Mekas. The stock-unshakable beneath. The storm the

> River. Without-fear- of the forest. "The pythons". "Rocks" "cottons trees" "Elephants". "Lions" "the son of men" who had never bowed to another man's strength. (130)

Hence, he trains himself how he is going to knock down the first policeman to enter the cell. Yet, when the constable arrives, he is overwhelmed by fear but along the path to Gullet's office, he challenges the policemen even though he is subdued by a number of officers. The fact that Meka decides to fight the policemen shows the loss of confidence in them. He has already remarked the bad intention of the colonial administration; he has already discovered the imperialistic game which is being played on him. Even though he does not succeed to defeat them, he has at least given the officer a little sample of his power.

Meka expects that Gullet will punish the policemen who arrested him or make them regret their crime. Contrarily, Gullet himself brazenly acts in a very despising and disgraceful way towards Meka, he spits in his face. This is the sign of the colonizers' power over the colonized through imperialistic domination. This scene also can be seen as the colonial administration abuse of power. It can even manifest the colonizers' view point towards the African low status compared to colonial administrators.

We can have a judgment about who would have the good medal between Meka and Pipiniakis. It is true, Meka and Pipiniakis both have relationship with the colonial administration. On the one hand there is Pipiniakis, we do not see anything special he has done to deserve such a good medal except that he is the owner of the white club and seller of the red liquor liked by the whites. Moreover, remember that the Blacks have been forbidden from selling their traditional liquor-Mammy Titi-Arki. On the other hand, we see Meka, a black old man who has accepted to receive the gospel, whose commitment and devotion to the colonial administration and the church have pushed him to give his best contribution. The church has taken his lands and the colonial administration his two sons. However, he is awarded a fake medal as compensation.

Comparing Meka's contribution to the medal he is awarded as compensation and the humiliating incidents around the reception, we can surely confirm that the reward unveils a pure imperialistic exploitation. Indeed, Meka has fallen in a trap without knowing it. Nevertheless, through experience, his eyes and conscience are now set into action, he realizes the consequences of his error of accepting to venture in relationship with the people that he has little knowledge of.

# CHAPITRE THREE

# DISILLUSIONMENT

During the colonial period, Africans who sympathized with colonial plans, who accepted to participate either directly or indirectly to the achievements of colonial ambitions, finally found themselves plunged into desolation, deception and regret. This was because what they expected from the colonial administration was not met at the end of the day. Eventually, they came to realize the true character of the whites, the motives that pushed them to come to Africa.

In fact, Africans who were said to be friends to whites were finally disappointed and deceived at the end because the result of the so-called "friendship" is diametrically opposed to the realities of the relationship. For some Blacks, this end or result is tragic and bitter, consequently many of these Africans who were at the beginning sympathizing with the colonialists become conscious of the evil and awful realities hidden behind the issues of civilization and Christianity which came during the colonial era.

Disillusionment is a common theme of a number of African writers who try to create stories and characters in order to pass a message or to give a caution to the poor Africans of how they are being exploited. The sweet promises and the heavenly expectations have been transformed into bitter, awkward situations in which, Africans suffered and finally prompted to open their eyes to colonial hypocrisy and duplicity.

In truth, colonial authorities took advantage of their power and seized the opportunity to make their dreams a reality. However, Africans after sufferings and the desolating experience in the colonial period; they become conscious of who the white man really is. The people who one day came with compassion, love and philanthropic plan, have been transformed into ferocious animals.

Meka starts to realize some colonial realities when he is left out in the sun to bake while waiting for the chief of the Whites to come to pin the medal on his chest. The fact of baking his head in the sun; being given a handshake while Pipiniakis is given a kiss as additional to the medal are the main index to the racial discrimination of which he is victim. Moreover, the way Father Vandermayer reacts to Meka's friendly pat by waving sharply his hand away as if they do not know each other is also another exclusive indicator that Meka has to take into consideration. Furthermore, the fact that he asks Vandermayer for a ride and the latter puts him in the back of the van while there is no other person in the cabin is utterly a sign of discriminative expression. A very big gap exists between the whites and Meka in particular and the whole African community in general so it is impossible for a simple story of a medal to fill it and so unify the people of different identities from different racial and socio-cultural background.

A dramatic scene comes in after the terrible storm when Meka, the old man, gropes his way through the path leading to the location; mistakenly he enters the white quarter where he is confronted with black policemen who have been brainwashed.

Meka has already known the white duplicity. That is why he begs the policemen to come to an agreement, not to take him to the whites. We read:

> Can't we possibly come to some agreement, my son? Asked Meka without turning round "why are you so determined to hand me over to those foreigners?" O my son, why are you so determined to hand me over to them? ... (124)

The quotation above shows clearly that Meka has no confidence in the whites any more. He is begging the policemen not to take him to the whites. He has been deceived by what he has experienced; the fact of using the word "foreigners" is a sure sign that he is now convinced that the Whites are not there to guarantee his welfare.

Meka, an old man who receives a medal of honour and good collaboration with the white administration and the church, unfortunately finds himself being beaten and tortured by the same person who is supposed to be his friend.. All this is happening to him because he has not been able to discern white hypocrisy at the very beginning. What shame and disgrace for a man of ripe judgment, a man of a great sense of respectability whose place in his tribe is considerable; a man who is known and respected by everyone in his community!

We can see that Kelara foresaw Meka's failure from the time of the reception when she cried in grief of her two sons and the land donated to the mission. She stops sharing the joy and privileges coming with the medal. In *The Growth of African Novel* Eustace Palmer assists in making a comment:

> Kelara initially shared her husband's enthusiasm and pride at the prospect of presentation, but she is now plunged into disillusionment and despondency even greater than her husband's ... (164-165)

This passage reveals that Kelara has a keener understanding than her husband's; she comes to realize that her husband has been exploited. Thus her joy and good time are transformed into sorrow and grief when she discovers that her husband has been faked and given a rubbish medal comparing it to the loss of the land and the sacrifice of their sons. Kelara's disappointment is significant as far as African disillusionment is concerned. She has succeeded to penetrate the colonial system and remove something like a curtain hiding things characterising colonialism. She has come to the realisation that exploitation is the main objective of the colonization.

At the office Meka is interrogated, he is asked questions as if Gullet does not know him at all. But he has discovered the reality of the matter and that is why his answers are well precise to highlight his wrath when he says to the interpreter:

> I feel very tired, so tired that I have nothing to say to Gullet. They can do what they like to me ...Tell him I am a very great fool, who yesterday. Still believed in the white man's friendship ...I am very tired. They can do what like with me. (134-35)

Through this passage, we see that Meka is no longer afraid of the Whites. We can clearly affirm that Meka has already discovered the kind of individual he is dealing with. His eyes are now fully open not just to the oppression of political authorities

but also to the hypocrisy of the Christian church. The colonial administration in collaboration with its ally, the Christian church, have come to demonstrate to Meka that he is not appreciated or wanted.

For Meka, both the church and the colonial administration have the same objective: colonize the African mind and take away Africans' possessions. So what was pretended to appear like friendship and brotherhood is now changed into conflict and deception, Meka is no longer a friend of the whites. Even his fellows Africans are not either, since Meka is the representative of the whole African community. What remains is for Meka to go back home, to return to his hut, to his people, to his wife and live his old life again. On his way home, he meets a person who asks what has happened to him but Meka is not in good mood. He has been beaten to death; he has nothing to say; he is dumb-founded because he still has the flashback as the aftermath of the horrifying hardship he lived in the jail.

> What happened to you? Asked a passer-by / There was solicitude in his voice .../ "The Whites ... just the Whites" said Meka with an expressive gesture as he spoke (140)

Truthfully, Meka has a psychological trauma from his hard time in jail. The floggings, the torture, mistreatment in the prison have made him lose his psychological stability. He still has a bad memory of the events from the prison. The new image of the Whites is quite different from the image he had before.

> The stock unshakable-beneath-the-storm the river-without-fear-of-the forest the "Pythons" "Rock" "cotton-trees" "Elephants", "Lions" the son of men who had never bowed to another man

> strength, how could they treat him this as if he has been to face the realities of the moment, the colonial powers, he had been…he did not know what. (130)

It is clear that Meka's clan used to be reputable but he has to face the realities of the moment, the colonial powers, he has been reduced to nothing, undermined, humiliated and eventually disillusioned since the colonial administration has come with a new order.

As Meka heads to the village, he cannot speak nor explain what happened, he is deeply terrified by the mistreatment he has undergone. His heart is full of fear and maybe he thinks that the Whites are going to follow him. Now we can say that he has come to the point of understanding how tricky and cunning the Whites are as in this passage: Meka could think of nothing to say he went off, his hands behind his back bent over like the lever on a porcupinetrap chewing over his bitterness (140). This passage reveals how Meka is totally disappointed and deceived, seeing how he is fraternized by Whites but the latter have rewarded him nothing than jail term and, physical and psychological torture.

This situation appears as if Meka has been cooperating with people without having accurate knowledge of their character. So now the Whites have ceased to hide their view point and Meka has to see what he has to know about them. It is as if the Whites had a mask before and now they take it off. The Whites have shown the hidden side of their philosophy and ideology, now Meka has to make a clear choice of how to lead his life; whom to trust or not.

Once at the village, Meka has come to the real world, he is in his land among his people. When he is asked to give an account of his misfortune he says: "The Whites have very nearly killed me …Even if I died in another hundred years, I should know I died in Gullet's prison …" (45). The hard times Meka experiences in Gullet's prison leaves an indelible mark in his mind. The awful realities he has faced still come in his brain; he has to testify and tell his relations his friends and neighbors about the white men's scheme so that everyone should know the masked agenda of the imperialistic spirit.

Meka sees the Whites as killers, murderers, they nearly killed him. The Whites would not hesitate to kill him in order to protect their interests. They have demonstrated that there is not friendship between Blacks and Whites. These words also demonstrate his utter conviction that neither friendship nor other lasting relationship will connect him with the Whites anymore. Therefore he develops hatred against the colonial administration and the church later on.

The main character in Ferdinand Oyono's *The Houseboy*, Toundi, undergoes the same deception. In fact, Toundi believes he is a friend and conscientious worker loved by the Whites because he understands and speaks French. He is trained but the objective of training him is not to make him better. Rather just to enable him to communicate with his master. Toundi discovers some of colonial realities and learns to read the world of colonialists when he witnesses Ndajangoula beating prisoners under the supervision of M. Moreau. He does not know that is what is reserved for him during his very last days of life. He says:

> I couldn't hold myself from shaking as I watched it terrible I thought of all priest, all pastors, all White men who come to save our souls and preach love of our neighbours. Is the white man's neighbour only other White men? Who can go on believed the stuff we are served up in the churches when things happen like I saw today? (87)

From this quotation above we see Toundi's awakening. He is now questioning the relationship between Whites and Blacks. The Boy sees true the nature of the colonial system as violent, ruthless and racist.

When he is accused of stealing money and then put in jail, beaten, tortured etc, he gets to know what is going to happen to him, he reports:

> I opened my eyes just enough to see. M. Moreau was there. He was swaying backward and forwards on his feet. Hors happy he looked! "He must have his punishment". Take care of him and send him to me. He's a dangerous element. I shall make him talk I shall set to work on him tomorrow. (140)

In the prison, Toundi learns to differentiate true friendship and hypocritical relationship. Before, he thought he was admired but now he is set to discover by himself the reality of the inner side of a white man. The racial issue and discrimination are no longer a mystery for him. Eventually, Toundi is warned that he would be killed if he does not flee, one of the people tells him in this statement: You're only good for Spanish Guinea or the prison cemetery ... (140). This situation makes him understand that the friendship between Blacks and Whites

does not exist. It is a kind of illusion. As Toundi becomes disillusioned with colonial relationship, he begins to see the importance of his ancestral background and begins to appreciate the value of his traditional culture he rejected when he left home to take sanctuary in Dagan mission. Both Toundi and Meka have explored the White man's way of dehumanising the Africans and both have a full understanding of the tenets of imperialism.

Meka, after the awful plight and the humiliation he has undergone, becomes a great antagonist; he develops a strong opposition against the colonial administration and the Christian church. He gets a powerful expression in vehement outburst against Mvondô:

> Let praise the word. "You shut your month, shut your rotten month" roared Meka, raising himself onto his elbow. Look at me he went on all of you aren't men at all except that you're got a pair of balls. The Whites have just been taking it out of me and killing me, and what do you do? Turning to Mvondô. You start talking about the Lord. Since you started sprinkling yourself with holy water you wrinkles haven't disappeared and he comes talking to me about the Lord. (147)

This passage contains sharp words to silence whoever talks about the Christian religion. Here, Meka is fed up with the Christianity. His anger is not only directed towards the Christian church and Whites but it is also directed to his fellow Africans who did not help him to get rid of his hard time. Mvondô is silenced, he is

young according to Meka, Mvondô should be silent because he has little experience with the Whites.

He does not only rebuke Mvondô but he also repudiates Ignatus Obébé, the catechist when he says:

> Who is that talking like Ignatius Obébé asked Meka getting upon his elbow again. It is himself said Ignatus "praised be Yesoo christoos". "Fuck off out of here! Go on get out of my hut" exploded Meka getting up ... (147)

The way Meka rejects Ignatus greetings demonstrates mere antagonism against christian church. His reply contains a very deep anger and melancholy that everyone can discern. It is clear that Meka's confidence and trust in both the colonial masters and Christian church representative has got to the end. Meka does not want to hear the gospel any more. The way he was treated by Father Vandermayer and Gullet have made his confidence in the Whites get vanished. Now there is no need sympathizing with Whites; what is important is to go back to his ancestral roots and culture.

Meka is no longer the Christian of reputation who was taken as an example of good deeds and sure bet for heaven, well known in Doum. Now, things have changed, he stands against Christianity and thinks of going back to the traditional religion and way of life. Even Meka's people have come to realize that he has been exploited lamentably, robbed and that the friendship and good collaboration between Africans and Whites through Meka's medal reception was a nightmare. The Medal was nothing more than a story made by Whites just to veil their

exploitative intention and imperialistic intention. Hence, everyone in the village is exclusively aware that Meka has been trapped in the Whites' snares.

Everyone in the black community can say something about that sad story or give a full testimony. The conscience of the people in Doum is at work, all the people have thorough knowledge about the evil of the colonization, therefore the flawed slogan of brotherhood and friendship between Whites and Blacks is absolutely contested and banished. This can be seen in the question asked by Nti in the assembly when he says: "What" went on Nti / What is happening? Has the White man a brother here in this company? Nooooo! The whole company rejoined more loudly than ever "No!". (150)

In this passage we can remark how Africans are fed up with the Whites. They are all convinced and disillusioned that there is no possibility to have Whites as trustworthy brothers; Blacks have nothing to do with Whites. Now they have accepted that the Whites are not people who are there to guarantee the African's welfare.

The settlement of the white men in Meka's community has changed things. Not only Meka the representative of the African culture has been debased but also the African ancestral customs, African lifestyle and everything relating to traditional life has been devalued by the arrival of the colonizers.

> Essomba went on "Nothing which we respect has any importance at all in their eyes. Our customs, our stories our medicine our men of judgment, all that is just something to do with their houseboy and now they set traps for us like rats ... (151)

In fact, nothing can be valued as someone's culture and way of life. In Meka's area people are convinced now about the lies told by the whites through Christianity and civilization. They have penetrated the secret hidden for a long time. The fact of knowing the truth makes them do introspection of the self due to the events lived by Meka, the African community representative. Unachievable friendship and brotherhood between colonized and colonizers in the climate of racial discrimination are no longer a secret. Everything about the terrible realities under French colonial oppressors is unmasked. Therefore, the white men are not neighbours, relations or collaborators. This inspires Nti to make a statement:

> You seem surprised at what these Whites do to us, as if they are like us! Now he is talking. He is talking like a man of judgment. Everyone said in unison. "The chimpanzee is no brother to gorilla". (151)

In this passage we can see that people of the whole village have gathered. The wise people are having a say one after another questioning the relationship between Whites and Blacks. What is sure and clear is that all of them have one judgment about what has happened to Meka. The statement "The chimpanzee is no brother of the gorilla" highlights how Nti is totally convinced of the impossibility of friendship and brotherhood between Blacks and Whites. These two groups of people are totally different even though they live the same world. Chimpanzee and Gorilla are both mammals in the family of monkeys. However, the gorilla has away of life that is different from that of a chimpanzee; likewise the Africans are disillusioned about the idea of having friendship and brotherhood with the whites. The whole African community including Meka comes to a paramount breakthrough in discovering the strategies used by the colonizers in order to have

an easy access to the African possession. Now what is more important is to restore the ancestral way of life. Meka starts remembering the skull of a white man his grandfather gave him the first time he killed a panther that he threw in the river when he got baptized. When Meka became Christian there are certain things of his traditional culture he left. Now, he is disillusioned with the whites then he starts to realize how important they were. He regrets of not keeping with this ancestors' way of life. He regrets why he accepted the Christian way of life.

Finally, everyone thinks about what they do to retaliate against Meka's plight and humiliation of the whole African community that the white men have brazenly shown to the African community. Yet, they find nothing they can do about it. Hence, all the people accept the superiority of the Whites. Even Meka himself eventually makes a statement at the end: "W e can't do anything about what has happened .The Whites will always be the Whites ... said Meka looking around full of pity. One by one Meka's friends went off". (167) This statement reveals how Meka is persuaded of his inaptitude about what he can do to take revenge; even the people in his community are unable. They leave one after another, each one of them entering his hut. This scene also highlights the white superiority. The Blacks do not see what they can do to the whites in order to show them that even Africans also have power. The fact Meka's friends leave Meka's hut one by one has a considerable meaning as far as imperialism is concerned. The people of Doum are not in a position of doing in the objective of retaliation that why the only option is to leave Meka alone with his wife Kelara.

# GENERAL CONCLUSION

The aim of the present work was to expose the fact that Africa was a victim of colonial imperialism whose agenda was to exploit African people. Both the colonial administrators and religious people or the church worked in unison to exploit Africa. As seen through this study, colonialism was a force that has changed the way of life of the African people. It has transformed and destroyed the socio-cultural and economic organizations of the African society. In the eyes of the Whites, Africa is a society which is disorganized and its people are described as subhuman and savage, people who do not have the attributes that a human being is supposed to have to be complete.

In examining the chapter on "Colonialism and black sacrifice" we realized that colonialism was dissimilated in the course of civilization and Christianity. We saw that colonizers had a close collaboration with the missionaries who pretended to preach the good news while in reality they were preparing a way to the colonizers. We also saw that during colonization, African people were undermined, despised because of the invented theories to justify colonial movement. African culture and way of life were said not to be good, what made the colonizers introduce their own manners. We also saw that colonialism was marked by black sacrifice in different domains. On the base of these we come to the conclusion that neither civilization nor Christianity was the objective of colonization; rather, whites had exploitative and materialistic motives.

In examining the chapter on "Reward: unveil imperialism" we realized that the reward given to Meka revealed a mere imperialistic exploitation, not only the reward itself but also the events surrounding the donation of the medal. The fact Meka was put in the sun while he was supposed to rest in a comfortable place for it was his day to be happy and enjoy, that can be judged to reveal imperialism, the fact he was given a fake medal as a compensation for the donation of his lands to the mission and the sacrifice of his two sons who died in war unveils exploitation, all these combined with the desolating experience he lived when he passed in the white quarter that resulted in jail term. Therefore, on the base of these we concluded that all events were arranged to demonstrate, uncover the concealed white imperialism

In examining the chapter on "Disillusionment" we discussed about Meka's disillusionment. It was taken to be the result of the analysis made throughout the two preceding chapters. In this chapter we realized that after all events and incidents Meka had gone through, he became conscious of the racial discrimination, exploitation and disrespect which constituted the colonial realities. Finally Meka became conscious of the fact that he had been exploited. He also understands the impossibility of maintaining balanced and sincere friendship with whites. The slogan of brotherhood which is fulfilled by the medal was a dream far away from the reality. As the end result, we come to conclude that through all events, Meka as well as the whole black community came to realize that the medal was just a mean used by the whites to hide their imperialism.

As a way of contribution to scholarship, this work is a continuation of the debate on imperialism, colonialism and the role of literature in awakening the people with the emphasis on the colonial exploitation and imperial domination, in the hope of offering a contribution to the understanding of incredible behaviour of the colonizers.

Now colonialism is over, we think the African people should not isolate themselves because no country or continent can isolate itself and hope to achieve self development. Africans should be selective, see what can be gained from the cooperation and keep it, rejecting what is useless. The African leaders should be vigilant in order to develop African countries. It is true that colonialism left scars in Africa, but Africa has to stand firm, to learn from the past and pursue durable development. Africa has to accept and affirm itself. It has to give out the best of its contribution in the world of politics and affairs, be competitive and influential.

Finally, this research does not close up researches in this wide field of colonialism and imperialism. Many areas of the theme still have to be studied. In this perspective, we recommend other researchers interested in the domain to examine naivety of Africans and their contribution to their exploitation.

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