

Layers of Nationalism: The Dialectics of Nationhood and Ethnic Consciousness in Dul Johnson's *Deeper into the Night*

ROSEMARY AJONE AJIBOGWU

Abstract

This paper examines different perspectives on the phenomenon of nationalism, which has been a scarce commodity in Nigeria. The paper suggests that the pursuit of ethnic nationality interests may well be a means of fostering nationalism at the different and higher levels of social arrangements in the nation state. It argues that this can be achieved through the proper management of ethnic diversities and conflicts, which the novel identifies as arising from socio-political and economic marginalization. We do this through the analysis of the causes and nature of the conflicts and the consequences for the larger national interest, and conclude that only by recognizing and harnessing these units of consciousness will Nigeria become a true nation.

Introduction

The title of this paper derives from the topical concerns over the issue of loyalty in Nigeria: whether one's loyalty should be with the nation state or their ethnic nationality. It is common to hear a large portion of the population refer to a president as an Ijaw president or a Fulani president. This is borne out of the deepseated affinity to ethnic, local, or regional affinities and identities. Thus, to the average Nigerian, it is difficult to dissociate an individual from their ethnic group. There are, therefore, different perceptions of the concept of nationalism. Our concern here is with how these perceptions have been articulated in Nigerian literature, and in particular, in Dul Johnson's *Deeper into the Night*.

Deeper is a story of conflicts of the interethnic nature involving three communities: a suburb of the state capital, and two Tarok communities (Gwangtim and Taktim) of the same state. The plot is built round the families of Old Gwangtim of Fatim (later renamed Gwangtim) and Tyem Zhimak of Taktim,

symbols of the ethnic nationality on the one hand, and Alhaji Nisa and Alhaji Danmatsi, symbols of an ethno-religious nationality on the other. The two groups are brought into conflict as a result of economic interests, which are subordinated to religious sensibilities and sense of nationalism as will be expatiated later on.

The discovery of precious stones on Zhimak's farmland (of economic interest to Nisa and his mentor, Danmatsi) attracts Nisa, who relocates with his entire family and livestock to Taktim, without any notice to the people of the community. But he also uses this as a launching pad for his—and Danmatsi's—bigger quest: to systematically acquire land as well as spread their religion. This brings into conflict two kinds of consciousness, a conflict that spirals to reveal other levels of national consciousness, which is the concern of this essay. As the novel tactically reveals, Maiguguwa Nisa's activities, remotely controlled by Dampara Danmatsi, are at the root of the conflicts that engulf Taktim and Gwangtim, through which the author reveals how different levels of nationalist consciousness come to play, from the ethnic and local to the national.

Nationalism, in the general sense refers to the consciousness of belonging to a community, within which members recognise a set of symbols, beliefs, and way of life and the need to establish a common political destiny (Weymouth). It is important to further explain the different layers of nationalities at work in Nigeria, the relationship between them, how they have been institutionalized and what contradictions emanate from their interaction within the society.

Applying this perspective to aid our conceptualization of ethnic nationalism, we have isolated the most authoritative to our work, in the midst of myriad definitions, and one that fits the Nigerian reality that of Atia as given by Chiahemba Aunde, Igungu that reads:

The idea of ethnic nationalism occurs when people of a particular ethnic group or cultural group seek autonomy for their group or at least want their own group to be recognised and given its fair share in government or power sharing arrangements if a given nation state is composed of more than one ethnic group (6).

This observation is accurate and applicable to the Nigerian reality. Generating support along this line to tilt votes to one's advantage is the only easy means as the Nigerian political system is seldom predicated on ideology. In the absence of ideological sentiments are exploited based on loyalty to shared cultural traditions,

language or state of origin, which become manipulative tools of mobilization in the face of political division.

The interplay between ethnicity and nationalism in Nigeria is complex and have remarkable impact on the concept of nationhood. The Nigerian society for instance is embroiled in historic power play as a result of ethnic diversity. These power-relations are usually defined by recognition of identity, often marked by boundaries, languages, religion, and shared experiences. Dul Johnson's *Deeper into the Night* exploits these trends, leading us to the conclusion that these, in fact, form the different layers of nationalism.

Factors that Influence these Layers

Numerous factors influence the formation of different forms of nationalism, and they are discussed here in no particular order. However, in the particular case of Nigeria, politics seems to take the lead. As mentioned earlier, the politicization of ethnic relations triggers agitations for ethnic nationalism and in a country like Nigeria where politics is not premised on ideology, ethnicity becomes a cardinal weapon for campaign. The electioneering process is marred by propaganda that institutes and propagates politics of marginalization. The political class stimulates the elements of ethnicity or religion as it deems fit to gain support. .

Social and economic boundary is another factor. Politicising ethnicity has resulted in inequality in Nigeria. This is to the extent that certain professions appear exclusive to certain groups. There is also the case of preferential treatment given to certain ethnic groups over and above others under the guise of labels like "disadvantaged", "less privileged" etc. This has entrenched the feeling of marginalization and has also largely undermined the federal system. The novel, *Verses of of Uncharted Heaven* by Ile Onyebuchi highlights this reality in its unfolding plot, where the protagonist is denied admission into a federal university in the northern part of the country, while „indigenes“ with scores below cut-off marks are favoured.

Similarly, the „scramble for the national cake“ has resulted in crises, as different regions continue to lay claim to natural deposits within their borders. The Niger Delta is a case study with the present agitations for privileged treatment because of the oil proceeds generated largely from the region. This entitlement-mentality is aided by the borders within borders that divide the country into regions.

Ethnicity and Nationhood

One needs to make it clear from the onset that, both in the context of this essay and Nigeria's unique ethnic demographic configurations, our definition of nationalism is bound to differ with bibliographical definitions in some particularities. For example, nationalism, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica Student and Home Edition, is "an ideology based on the premise that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpasses other individual or group interests". By our definition, however, ethnic groups that existed as nations in their own rights before the British brought them together as a country were, and still see themselves as nations. Hence, in the face of serious conflicts or civil strife, different ethnic groups become insecure and lose faith in institutions of state stemming out of allegiance created by the natural bond of kindred spirits. This seems to be the case in Dul Johnson's *Deeper into the Night*.

In this novel, a civil war veteran O.O., states that internal conflicts were the most difficult to handle because there was no dividing line (96), and goes on to mobilize regional militias to protect their territory from "invaders" because of the question of where the loyalty of the state's machinery such as the military or police rests in such a situation. This brings to the fore the complex understanding of nationhood. This becomes clear when the reader gets to know that the invaders that O.O. refers to are nationals of the same country, in fact, people living within the same locality. It gets even more complicated but gives a clearer understanding of the issues when the reader appreciates why O.O. and the internal militia have to "protect their territory" when the country has all the military and para-military institutions responsible for protecting its citizens.

As the novel would reveal to us, when soldiers are mobilized to protect the integrity of the nation state, factors of ethnicity come into play and affect their performance of duty. The belief in Nigeria is that these factors are brought in under the guise of the federal character system even at the recruitment level. This is a factor that remains a salient threat to national security.

Furthermore, ethnic identity is reinforced by social, economic and political constructs, and ethnicity has been accorded a very strong social and political status. It seems to have been sanctioned by the constitution, and it is the basis for major political considerations including appointments. This is done, supposedly,

in recognition of the need to balance, to give equal representation to its different ethnic groups. But in a country like Nigeria where states in the federation have numerous ethnic nationalities, this has succeeded in amplifying rather than ameliorating the sense of marginalization.

Nigeria's nationhood and ethnicity are diametrically opposed both in reality and in actualization. One's loyalty cannot be with both in equal measure. Although the State is superior to the ethnic unit, subordinating one to the other can be difficult and may result in confusion of identity. The contradictory relationship between the ideas of nationhood and ethnicity is given emphasis during crisis, as portrayed in many works of art, where the individual's loyalty rests with kindred rather than state. Writers have expressed these conflicts through narratives that emphasise equality, justice and fairness to every component of State. Ile Onyebuchi James, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Tanure Ojaide, amongst others, have espoused these ideas. However, in the face of crises and insecurity, the integrity of the Nigerian nationhood has often come under question.

According to Amirikpa Oyigbenu, "indigeneship and citizenship are two contentious and emotional concepts and practises in Nigeria that impede the evolution of genuine nation state..." (1-2). He calls for "true federalism, the rule of law and the opening up of the constitutional and geographical spaces to accommodate every citizen regardless of ethnic nationality, religious persuasion, sex and creed". However, this is rather an oversimplification, as the issue of ethnicity is ingrained in the minds of individuals. This is so because there is an affiliation that exists beyond its physical articulation. Even if the issue of indigeneship were downplayed, the deep-rooted consciousness of kindred spirit would still exist. More so, the task of achieving a true federation becomes a difficult one with confederating units considering themselves as mere cohabiting nationalities.

Ethnicity, Military Intervention and Civil Crises

Johnson's novel takes up the contemporary issue of insecurity and unravels its catalysts. The dilemma of allegiance to the nation state as opposed to loyalty to ethnic nationality is brought sharply into focus during crises. Writers like Weymouth hold the opinion that,

Ethnicity is not automatically the antithesis of development and social progression [...]. For example; within Nigeria there are numerous

hometown associations, which perform many functions in the absence of a satisfactory state government (29).

State apparatuses like security agencies are grossly inadequate and inefficient in the face of crises and communities within Nigeria have come up with different forms of groups like the vigilante who work within the confines of the constitution to ensure the security of their communities. However, Dawood Omolumen Egbefo, and Hadiza Audu Salihu(113) give a different perspective, when they insist that the recognition of these groups, ,,, encourage and reinforce the emergence of separatist and regional militias to the extent that, that it has obliterated the sense of a common Nigerian nationality""", this they claim is tantamount to, ,,,providing a sustained recipe for disintegration, national tension, factionalism,.."""

The representation of ethnic militias as highlighted, is usually predicated on security needs and emancipation of regional interests. These groups are usually identified by slogans, flags and anthems, and usually operate within a given boundary. If they assume a status of legal recognition, they may become difficult to dismantle. Hence, the call by Egbefo and Salihu (113) to avoid their engagement. This is so because of the inevitable existing in-group sentiment. On the other hand, it would amount to serious problems of alienation if ethnic militia groups were faced out completely. The ethnical approach in *Deeper into the Night* for instance, has its parallel in the wave of ethnic violence that swept across Plateau State, which amplified the suspicion that existed among the people. For example, in the wake of the crisis in Gwangtim, Muslims are excluded from the community meetings. The war veteran, O.O reinforces this reality during the training session in the city.(96)

The representation of ethnic militias as highlighted, is usually predicated on security needs and emancipation of regional interests. These groups are usually identified by slogans, flags and anthems, and usually operate within a given boundary. If they assume a status of legal recognition, they may become difficult to dismantle. Hence, the call by Egbefo and Salihu (145), on the need to avoid the engagement of ethnic groups in the tasks of nation building. This is so because of the inevitable existing in-group sentiment. On the other hand, it would amount to serious problems of alienation if ethnic militia groups were faced out completely. The ethnical approach in *Deeper into the Night* for instance, has its parallel in the wave of ethnic violence that swept across Plateau State, which amplified the suspicion that existed among the people. For example, in the wake of the crisis in

Gwangtim, Muslims are excluded from the community meetings. The war veteran, O.O reinforces this reality during the training session in the city in the novel.

What Dul Johnson rejects is the politicization of ethnic identity to the detriment of nationhood. In the novel, we see Mamzhi wield the tool of ethnicity for his personal interest. He soars on his popularity with the villagers to put up structures he could exploit; first he set up training for the group (187). And as its leader, he introduced the „drinking of the urine“ as part of the drills. Secondly, he announced: „we are going to eat *shiiit*“ (189), literally forcing them to eat shit. When Iliya queries his methods and tries to dissociate himself from the excesses of the group, he accuses Iliya (Chirmam) of turning Nimfa away from the tradition of the people „...you sought to destroy Gwangtim“ (211). What in fact quickened Iliya’s execution was his relationship with Jolene; Mamzhi’s sweetheart. Similarly, he slams the offence of high treason on Ali. Dul, in pointing out those layers in his creative vision proffers imbibing national, rather than ethnic, consciousness in fighting threats of insecurity.

When one examines the work of a writer like Dul Johnson, one begins to understand the depth of crises in Nigeria and how they could affect the spirit of nationhood. Writers have, time and again, explored and given insight into ethnic and civil conflicts, which often assume religious and political colorations. The relationship between ethnicity and nationhood cannot be underrated. Literary works like Chinua Achebe’s *There was A Country*, Ile Onyebuchi James’ *Verses of Uncharted Heaven: the Second Coming of Biafra* derive their plots from this deep-seated ethnic consciousness and the problem it constitutes for the idea of nationhood if not properly managed. These writers have explored the adverse effects of fostering the ties of ethnicity over and above nationhood. Similarly, themes of loyalty and a sense of duty to state have been explored through poetry to foster unity. As Femi Osofisan avers,

Our nation is divided but art can create the sense of a common identity by assembling, and building upon, our common cultural trait[....] art being a vital catalyst in the creation of a euphonious identity, and of one collective sense of nationhood out of our disparate and still mutually distrusting cultures,...(30)

What Dul Johnson has done with *Deeper into the Night* is to capture the responses of the Tarok people in the wake of the outbreak of civil crises along the lines of ethnicity. As Joseph Alagbe observes, “Most literary artistes explore their

sociocultural background and use the elements therein to promote worthwhile values, preserve their culture, canvas for change (where applicable) and effect developments in their societies” (51).

This is particularly true, as it has stimulated responses, especially when it dwells on the ability of a writer to rise above his ethnic affinity. While writers like Chinua Achebe, Tanure Ojaide and the likes have been accused of being limited to their ethnic background for literary materials, a comparative study of their works with other writers of different regions such as Ahmed Yerima, would reveal why their works have not been easily dismissed as bias narratives: they reveal the historic interplay between ethnicity and nationality. The onus is therefore on the literary artiste to transcend a limited creative vision by keeping in perspective his duty to the whole of humanity. This is what endears Idris Amali (104) to Tanure Ojaide’s earlier collections of poetry,

Our concern here is not with whether Ojaide has masked his literary expression or with his obsession for the Delta people, his immediate kinsmen, but with his vaunting voice in „„My Heart””, which shows great concern for nationhood...

It is not enough to term a work of literature bias simply because of its writer’s thematic, narrative and ideological orientations, or the social or historical background, its physical setting or other markers that point to an ethnic group. What should be interrogated is the writer’s ability to invoke a critical vision of nationalism.

Identifying the different layers of nationalism does not make Dul Johnson an ethnic champion. His aim is higher; to use his fiction is to create a balance in his representation and fusion of different cultures and perspectives that can engender the greater sense of nationhood. From his collection of short stories *Shadows and Ashes* to *Across the Gulf* he creates a balance, which he achieves by telling the story of ordinary people through whose eyes we view the true nature and reality of ethnic relations within and across Nigeria.

Layers of Nationalism in Deeper Into The Night

The social theory that in most societies ethnicity is given ground to fertilize in the face of economic crises is particularly true. In *Deeper into the Night* for example, the liberal Tyem Zhimak would not have been so sceptical

about Nisa's „visit“ if it did not coincide with the discovery and mining of the precious stones. This is a threat to Tyem's territorial and traditional (cultural) power as he is the natural leader of Taktim.

This small settlement, if studied in isolation, bears semblance to a multiethnic society like Nigeria. What we are given to understand here is that Taktim exhibited the spirit of nationhood even as an ethnic community until a nationalism of a different kind came to upset the peace. But the point is clearly made; that the first layer of nationalism is that of the ethnic Tarok. They are a people with loyalty to their land (defined by boundaries), to their local ethnic and traditional authority, and with a language that binds them together. Thus, the other ethnic groups listed are “strangers” as far of that level of nationality is concerned. But they have been accepted and are not treated as “other”, because they have subjected themselves to the authority of the Tarok nation. No trouble befell them, and when trouble came to the land, they fought it alongside everyone else. The point here is that for the spirit of nationhood to subsist, all citizens must subject themselves to the authority of the nation. Taking the case of Gwangtim on the other hand, we see a set of settlers refusing to cooperate with the people and the local authority, and thus they are treated as enemies.

Another level of nationalism espoused in the novel is religion. In Nigeria, there have been claims of Islamic nationalism attempting to hold on to political power in a bid to islamise the country. This has culminated into tension, and the entrenchment of Sharia law in some northern states has further called into question the federal system in Nigeria. Social and political commentaries exist on the contradiction inherent in its introduction. Johnson in *Deeper Into the Night* recreates this suspicion theory to expose the reality on the ground. Religion has assumed a prominent role in the social, political and economic life of Nigeria. Elections are carried out on this factor, especially where the „stakes are high“. Politicians employ it as a tool in campaigns and the masses fall for it easily because allegiance to religion is ingrained in the mind of most individuals. Religion as the opium of the masses is entrenched on the premise that individuals of the same religion would be more sympathetic to the social, economic and political condition of their „brothers“.

In the novel, Alhaji Nisa settles in Taktim under the guise of religion with the task of „civilizing“ the Muslims just like the colonialists did with Nigeria (and other countries in Africa and the world). He does not respect the local authority,

but rather tries to establish another strand of authority. This distorts the existing unity, introducing the concepts of „us“ and „them“. This is a different level of nationalism—the religious kind—that he seeks to institute. His action infuses a high sense of suspicion in the community, culminating in a sense of insecurity and the climax of the outbreak of the war in the novel, though left somewhat unresolved, is traced to him by the conclusion of the people of Taktim as well as the militia group from Gwangtim: the soldiers of the Tarok nation.

A larger perspective is given in the novel with affiliations and segregations at the higher level of the state or region, in Jos, the capital city Plateau State, where the Tarok nation is found. This is where Mamzhi, the [anti]hero of the novel gets his ideology and the concept of “us versus them”. Mamzhi is caught in-between the warring groups in the wake of the crisis:

„I am a stranger here,” he pleaded.
 „What do you mean, stranger? Are you one of them,
 then?” „Them? Who do you mean?” Mamzhi was puzzled.
 „The enemies who are killing us.”
 „I don’t know them,” he declared.
 „Are you Muslim or Christian?” (86)

As the narration goes further we get to understand that “there was no neutral ground, no other religion. One has to be a Christian, or a Muslim!” (86). The religious level of nationalism, one of Nigeria’s biggest problems is clearly and graphically illustrated here. Dul Johnson does not endorse any of the levels of national, as long as they seek to stand on their own, over and above the larger interest of the nation state. The concept of „us“ and „them“ creates division and vulnerability in the society.

This brings us to the discussion of the intersection between religion and ethnicity. Karl Maier, in his study of insurgency in Nigeria confirms the theory that, „Nigerian religious rivalry is a facade disguising the real competition among ethnic groups” (217). Although this does not authoritatively give a clear distinction, Dul Johnson in *Deeper* explores the confusion surrounding the issue of religion and ethnicity/culture; bases of loyalty which are further interpreted as nationalism. In the novel, Danmatsi states, „All our titles have links with our religion” (64) in response to Nimfa’s acceptance of the turban while rejecting Islam. We also see the outburst from Danmatsi in reaction to Nimfa’s constant reference to the turban as “mosquito net” (64). Nimfa’s continuous rejection of

Islam stems not out of love for his traditional roots but from the fear of losing territorial control to Danmatsi who is said to be ambitious. Although we were presented with a Taktim with no modern religion, Christianity and Islam were gradually taking root. This in itself was a threat to the traditional order and a ready tool for the likes of Damantsi.

This exposes the breeds of elites or capitalists that manipulate people under the pretext of religion or ethnic nationalities for selfish interests. The energies of groups are best harnessed under loyalty to a single goal, thus religion provides the strong front for mobilization of any society by a few. Individuals who exploit breeds of fanatics that emerge from deep-seated allegiance to these identities often employ this line of brainwashing. But this can also be explored for the greater vision of promoting nationalistic ideas, which is what the novel seems to suggest.

The thin line between ethnicity and religion compounds the problems that becloud the perception of state nationalism. The response of Tyem Zhimak in the exchange that followed Chirmam's conversion to Christianity and subsequent change of name exemplifies this interplay:

„I changed it to Elijah. But the pastor suggested I use Iliya, the Hausa translation because...because...“

„Why didn't he ask you to use the Tarok translation?“

[...] „Because there's none, Father.“

You see! We are outside his God. We are living in a world of ours...(23)

Chirmam's (Iliya) response, that there was no Tarok equivalent of his new name, exposes the divide and enmity the alien religion represents to the likes of Zhimak rather than a strange culture meeting another. Similarly, during crises, the confusion of brotherhood with religion escalates into senseless bloodbaths. Mamzhi's visit to the city reveals these confusions and the confrontations therefrom. (79-80).

This revelation by the *Going* operator gives Mamzhi an insight into the institutionalized enmity in the city. The infiltration of settlements with intent to commit mass killing is also aided by this segregation. One would wonder what the motivation is for the different groups during the crises as attacks are recklessly carried out. What provides the ground for either ethnic or religious groups to engage in mindless onslaughts without the fear of a "brother" falling victim on the

other side? Maier (11) gives an insight into the operations and classification of settlements: „they fanned ethnic prejudice by housing southern immigrants to the north in segregated living areas commonly known as *sabon gari*, or “strangers” quarters”. This arrangement aids genocide.

This exposition gives background to the discrimination that exists in some parts of Nigeria. It is common to hear such labels as „northern Kaduna” or „southern Kaduna” with undertones of „Muslim” area and „Christian” area respectively. Also, labels like Anguwan Kaje, Anguwan Igala, Anguwan Hausa, Koro, Tarok, exist to identify a group that resides in a given location. This sort of arrangement in itself, is a time bomb waiting to explode. The disparity aids access to groups of defined identities. The vulnerability of the Nigerian state lies therein; where the proclamation of nationhood is contradicted by geographical and constitutional arrangements that favour particular groups over and above others. This sets groups against each other and pitch identities against one another, stemming out of the feeling of marginalization. This also calls into question the instruments of state control and institutions established with the sole responsibility of protecting the citizenry.

This situation seems not to be the case when the country was founded. The writer in his narrative on the crises gives the history of ethnic relations prior to the suspicion that was introduced in the face of different 'advancements' in the society. The writer recaptures these cultural and religious differences. This is to be seen in the confusion of the people of Taktim, who mistook Nisa for Fulani instead of Hausa. Fulanis are nomads who would come and go with the seasons. But Nisa is one of the Hausas who are traders and sedentary, and therefore, in their opinion, not the kind of person to be welcomed easily. This cultural twist forms the basis for the conflict that blossomed into the Taktim crises. Alh. Nisa’s desire to settle and own land, and his taking over leadership of the Muslim community in Taktim, constitute a threat to Tyem Zhimak, a threat deeply grounded in the knowledge that religion is a force that can be harnessed to undermine existing ethnic institutions.

This is the crux of the matter: loyalty to religion and ethnicity on the one hand, and loyalty to constituted authority in a particular area on the other. If this is further extended to loyalty to state, it compounds the contradiction, thus introducing even more layers of nationalism.

Literature and Nationhood

Art can traverse institutionalized boundaries by stimulating a consciousness that promotes nationhood. This can be done by reclaiming our past through recalling our history of unity. Literature can provide an alternative hegemony to dethrone the conspiracy theories of the ruling class. This begins with a detribalised artiste with a vision of nationhood. Writers and critics must emerge to demystify beliefs and social theories that treat ethnicity as evil by highlighting Nigeria's shared culture and history. Literature can promote a national consciousness among ethnic groups that would seek to dethrone the ideologies of the political class by interrogating the actualization of those components centred on ethnic representation.

This can be achieved through multi-ethnic representation in plot, characterization and language. In *Deeper into the Night*, we are presented with a war situation in Taktim, we are presented with a settlement composed and divided along ethnic, religious, traditional and cultural lines. We see clear lines of divisions and the reality of enmity is reinforced in demarcation in settlements, classification of people into "them" and "us". The settler becomes an outsider and so alienated. Migrants assume status of aliens/foreigners whose motives and intentions come under scrutiny. Dul Johnson is however careful to create a balance. He traces the history of the settlement and recalls the cordial relation that existed within the communities before the war.

Putting the country into perspective, it becomes important for Nigerian literature to create a balance through narratives that represent different perspectives on the Nigerian situation, rather than a dogmatic or streamlined view of its problems.

Conclusion

The solution lies in managing ethnic diversity and conflicts. The trend in Nigeria is such that ideologies emanate from the grievances against the Nigerian political system. The federal character system, fear of marginalization and economic independence that form issues of contention, should be reviewed. Similarly, policies that foster discrimination, i.e, State of Origin, which emphasise ethnic differences should be removed as pre-requisite for political, social or economic

consideration. Consolidating Nigeria's democracy to open up its spaces to wider participation instead of ethnic groups providing hegemony to social and economic issues would debunk or neutralize the claims that the notion of the Nigeria nation state is a mirage. The state should take it upon itself to provide alternative hegemony to its citizenry,

Similarly, if the path towards cohesive coexistence must be carved, it is necessary to return to the grassroots. Harnessing ethnicity is necessary in mobilization of forces towards change. The traditional institution still possesses the greatest access to the people. As such, the possibility of ethnic recognition and its role should be utilized if core values of peaceful coexistence and neighbourliness are entrenched. In Dul Johnson's *Deeper into the Night*, town hall meetings were always used in the advent of problems. Also, important to note is the fact that, the writer's choice of the village square as venue for the trial of Ali and the planned strike at Mamzhi is not a fluke as cultural festivals, important decisions and tasks are carried out in the village square, which usually provides and sets the stage towards the reaffirmation, reconciliation and reinforcement of core values of a people. When the state apparatus—the Police—failed to nip in the bud the problem in Gwangtim due to corruption, it took the foresight of the people to mobilize forces towards combating Mamzhi.

In the light of recent ethnic crises in Nigeria, from the Fulani-settlers clash to the resuscitation of the Biafra cause, it is important that the federal government plays its proper role in the task of equal representation by taking into consideration the fears and aspirations of all people irrespective of ethnic affiliation.

Works Cited

Amali, Idris. *The Poetry of Awareness*. Okome, Onookome. (ed.) *Writing the Homeland: The Poetry and Politics of Tanure Ojaide*. Germany: Eckhard Bayreuth. 2002. Print.

Aunde, Igungu Chiahemba. The Menace of Ethnicity and ethnic Violence to A Sustainable Nigerian Democracy and Politics. *Nasara Journal of Humanities*. Vol. 4, No. 2, December, 2011; pp 55-65. Print.

“Dialectics.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Student and Home Edition*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2010.

Egbefo, Dawood Omolume & Hadizat Audu Salihu. *Ethnicity, Economic Injustice and problems of Massive Corruption: Correlates in Explaining Why Good Governance Eludes Nigeria*. ASUU Journal of Humanities. Vol. 3. No. 1. (July 2013): pp 111-133. Print.

Genova, Weymouth Ann. *Oil and Nationalism in Nigeria, 1970-1980*: Texas. ProQuest Information and Learning, 2007. Print.

Johnson, Dul. *Deeper into the Night*. Zaria: ABU UP, 2014. Print.

Joseph, Alagbe. *Yoruba Cultural Indices in Daniel O. Fagunwa's The Forest of God*: Lapai Journal of Languages, Literatures and Communication Studies (JOLLACS). Vol. 2, Number 1, 2014. Print.

Maier, Karl. *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*. London: Penguin, 2002. Print.

“Nationalism.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Student and Home Edition*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010. Print.

Osofison, Femi. *Literature and the Pressures of Freedom*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa, 2001. Print.

Oyigbenu, Amirikpa. *Constitutionality and Interpretative Ingigeneship Praxis in Nigeria, and the United States of America: Textual Appreciation of Wole Soyinka's The Strong Breed and Le Roi Jones The Slave*. n.p. Rossen, 2012. Print.