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**The Private and the Public Selves in Atkinson Wokoma's
Diaries: Constructing Self-Identity in African Colonial
Modernity**

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2021

Declaration of Original Work

I, Ezechi Onyerionwu, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Ezechi Onyerionwu _____

Abstract

The main contention of this thesis is that Atkinson Wokoma (1894-1968)—a Church Missionary Society (CMS) priest and teacher who contributed immensely to the Protestant Christianizing project of Southern Nigeria in the first half of the 20th century—constructs an identity of African modernity in his diaries through the production of multiple selves of the private and public categories. It argues that Wokoma, an ardent diarist whose work spans the fifty years between 1915 and 1965, succeeds in foregrounding—within the context of 20th century colonial Africa—the diary’s acclaimed role in the articulation of the modern self. I restrict my reading of Wokoma diaries to three domains of modern life—Puritanism, history and the culture of taste—through which I investigate the significance of the public and the private spheres of existence to the construction of the modern African persona. Adopting a methodology that underscores the role of the autobiographic in the production of modern selves, I read Wokoma’s diaries as texts of self-representation and self-construction that document the emergence of 20th century African modernity. This posture finds expression in my interpretation of Wokoma’s engagement with the three stipulated domains of modernity. For instance, regarding Puritanism, I analyse how Wokoma’s diary-narrative represents a medium for the assessment of the Christian spiritual dimensions of the emergence of African modernity through a documentation of his private and public experiences as a priest and missionary. About the modern site of history, I examine how his presentation of private history and public history articulates an identity of African modernity. And concerning the domain of the culture of taste, I locate Wokoma’s construction of modern African selfhood in the private and public aspects of refinement, consumption and performance of high culture.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Overview

This thesis examines the extent to which Atkinson Wokoma's construction of his private and public selves in his diaries establishes an identity of African colonial modernity. It argues that Wokoma—a priest and teacher in the Church Missionary Society's ambitious evangelical project in the Southern Nigeria of the early 20th century—entrenches his modern self by presenting the modernity of the private and the public, as separate spheres of existence and as interconnected provinces of identity. My central research question is: How does Wokoma's construction of his private and public selves in his diaries articulate a modern identity? I also address the following sub-research questions: How does Wokoma's construction of the private and the public of his 'Puritanic' self establish his African modernity? How does Wokoma's presentation of the private and public of history articulate a modern African identity? How does Wokoma's presentation of the private and public aspects of a culture of taste in his diaries establish his modern African identity?

The introductory chapter of this thesis defines the topic, amplifies the main question and the sub-questions, develops the conceptual framework, introduces the thesis and presents my main argument. It also summarizes the sub-arguments as developed in subsequent chapters. Chapter Two addresses the first sub-question by examining how Wokoma's 20th century diaries express many of the foundational theoretical postulations about the Puritanical self, particularly as it concerns the private and public identities of African Christian modernity. Thus, against the background of the prominence of the Puritanic self as a veritable model of the modern identity, particularly as illustrated and illuminated by such developmental sociologists of modernity as Max Weber,¹ I view Wokoma's Christian enterprise as both an 'inward' and an 'outward' journey of the modern spiritual self. In Chapter Three, which

¹See, for instance, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2001).

responds to the second sub-question, I interrogate Wokoma's presentation of the African modernity of both private and public history, along the lines of insights from scholars of the intersection of life-writing and history such as Jeremy Popkin and R.G. Collingwood. Chapter Four addresses the third sub-question by analyzing the private and public elements of the culture of taste as presented in Wokoma's diaries and how they construct an identity of African modernity for him with frameworks provided by Simon Gikandi and John Brewer, among other scholars and theorists of taste. Chapter Five, which is the conclusion, summarizes the main argument of the entire thesis, namely that Wokoma's presentation of the private and public selves across all three sites or aspects of modernity constructs a modern African identity. It also briefly reviews how the chapters responded to the main research question and the sub-research questions.

Wokoma demonstrates such cultural and aesthetic sensitivity to the diary form that he could be ranked among the most committed practitioners of the genre on the African continent. A product of the African colonial experience, Wokoma lived with an English merchant as a boy growing up in Southern Nigeria, and trained as an Anglican priest in the early 20th century. He kept diaries from the age of 20 in 1915, to the age of 70 in 1965—three years to his death in June 1968.

Wokoma's diaries contain elements of both the 'conventional' and the 'radical', in the sense that they are at once a 'routine' record of his day-to-day activities and experiences, and also a narrative of his personal reflections on these and other experiences. These diaries also exhibit the most fundamental feature of the genre—as the most confidential of all autobiographical forms, especially in terms of providing the platform for the diarist to 'converse' with himself.² However, Wokoma's diaries are also sufficiently 'public', considering the degree of attention they give to the social, the political, the historical and the cultural contexts of his colonial Southern Nigeria. As Wokoma's work shows, it is fundamentally for its emphasis on the individual self, principally in the depiction of the private and the public spheres of existence, that the

² See, for instance, Bruce Merry's 'The Literary Diary as a Genre', *The Maynooth Review*, 5.1 (1979), 3-19 (p.3).

diary's role in the emergence of both the modern age and the modern man has been well remarked. For instance, Philippe Lejeune,³ an important scholar of the diary, has argued about 'how the most overlooked and devalued form of writing in the fields of literary studies and history—diary writing—is an opportunity to explore the development of modern selfhood in the western world'.⁴ The diary, as we will see in this thesis, also provides an opportunity for Wokoma to inscribe the individual self in colonial modern Africa.

Wokoma's work also demonstrates how the art of self-representation, through diaries, among other forms of life-writing, became one of the indicators of the new African educated elite in colonial Nigeria, at the apogee of the African modernity project driven by the imperial experience. The diary was thus at the centre of Wokoma's presentation of the private and the public selves in the construction of an identity of African modernity.

However, the diary, like the other genres of life-writing—the autobiography, the biography, the memoir, etc—is originally a western form of literature, especially considering its role in the establishment of modern selfhood, located in such markers of European modernity as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation. However, as modernity spread from the West to other parts of the world, including Africa, modern forms of writing like the diary were also domesticated in new locations. The diary thus became one of the features of modernity 'transmitted' to Africa in the process of the European invasion of the continent, beginning from the second half of the 19th century. As Olufemi Taiwo notes, this invasion was a three-pronged phenomenon that included 'missionaries, administrators and traders'.⁵ It was through the impact of the missionary components of the Church and the school that Africans like Wokoma acquired the literacy that

³Lejeune's *On Diary* (2009) is considered one of the most important and authoritative theoretical works on the diary genre.

⁴Julie Rak, 'Dialogue with the Future: Philippe Lejeune's Method and Theory of Diary' in *On Diary* by Philippe Lejeune, ed. by Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak, trans. Katherin Durnin (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), pp. 16-28 (p.16).

⁵Olufemi Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. 49.

not only transformed them into ‘modern African gentlemen’ but also enabled them produce such literary texts as diaries.

1.1 Wokoma: The Portrait of a Modern African

Atkinson Mbrenagogo Wokoma can best be described as an African of deep sensitivity towards modernity. He did not just live through the dawn of 20th century modern Africa highlighted by massive social and cultural shifts—including the ambitious missionary/Christianizing project and the colonial political invasion—but he also demonstrated the capacity to construct a significant identity for himself through that experience. Wokoma’s personality, for instance, centralizes the charter of Renaissance humanism⁶ and its emphasis on far-reaching cultural and intellectual efflorescence. He was similarly a ‘protégé’ of the Reformation,⁷ having spent his entire adult life practising and propagating the ideals of protestant Christianity. He was also an embodiment of the Enlightenment⁸ particularly in the sense of a definitive subversion of the Kantian view of ‘man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity’,⁹ in which the African is characterized as grossly incapable of constructive reasoning. To briefly elaborate on the last point, if Kant’s idea of enlightenment emphasizes the ‘courage’ and the ‘freedom’ to ‘use

⁶There is a sense in which it could be said that Wokoma’s personality in the context of colonial Nigeria illustrates Stephen Greenblatt’s assertion about the impact of the 14th Century Italian Renaissance on the individual consciousness, so that people ‘were cut off from established forms of identity and forced by their relation to power to fashion a new sense of themselves and their world’ (Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005], p.162.)

⁷Wokoma’s Christian philosophy could be described in terms of what Jacob Ade Ajayi calls ‘the new Puritanism of the Evangelical Revival’ in line with the Protestant leanings of the 19th century Christianization of Africa (*Christian Missions in Nigeria: The Making of a New Elite* [Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1965], pp. 108-109.)

⁸It is only understandable that such a remarkable man of ideas and reason would in both thought and action seek to replicate the defining tenets of European Enlightenment (1685-1815) in his 20th century African world.

⁹According to Kant, ‘The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that arises above trifling’. (Emmanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. by John I. Goldthwaite. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, pp. 110-111).

understanding' without 'the guidance of another',¹⁰ then, from the evidence of his life-writing, Wokoma, not only debunks the racist portraiture of Africans by Kant and other biased philosophers of modernity,¹¹ he also sufficiently represents the phenomenon of the intelligent and *intellectual* African of the 20th century. Again, if the widely-held assumption¹² that colonialism historically marked the inception of modern Africa is to be viewed as authoritative, then Wokoma represents an interesting personification of that assertion.

Born in 1894 on the brink of colonial Nigeria, Wokoma became associated with the Church early in life, and accordingly benefitted from the education component of the European incursion into Africa.¹³ His formal education may have started around 1910, for his first references to his status as a pupil were linked to that year. For instance, he had, according to his retrospective reflections, identified October 30, 1910 as when he received some assistance from his elder brother, Benjamin, for the purpose of his education: 'Benji £10 for my schooling or learning'. Another school-oriented reference is for December 6, 1910: 'Tommy £3 for Arithmetic'.¹⁴ His career as a scholar, which he combined with work as a missionary 'agent',¹⁵ would continue for nearly the next two decades.

Wokoma attended mission schools throughout, painstakingly training to become a teacher and a priest simultaneously, and receiving sufficient

¹⁰Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' in *Kant: Political Writings*, 2nd ed. by Hans Reiss, translated by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991). p. 55.

¹¹There have also been such resilient refutations of Kant's apparently racist view in the form of, for instance, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997).

¹²For instance, such historians as Ashley Jackson would assert that 'the Empire shaped the modern world, from place names and geographical boundaries to racial demographics, economic networks, and international norms and laws'. (Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], pp. 3-4.).

¹³For the interconnection of the Church, the State and education in Nigeria from the 1840s, see David B. Abernathy, in *Church, State and Education in Africa*, ed. by David G. Scanlon [New York: Teachers College Press, 1966] p.199.

¹⁴Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box 1, 1915-1930.

¹⁵These are Church officials placed in charge of missionary outposts, albeit, on a temporary, informal basis, particularly in the Niger Delta interiors, whose job description also includes taking charge of missionary schools.

transformational cultural orientation in the process. However, formal schooling does not appear to fully account for the degree of enlightenment that is associated with him. A full picture of his modernizing education must therefore include such supplementary westernizing experiences as his informal apprenticeship in the hands of British traders who operated in the area near the southern banks of the Nigerian Atlantic during the first decade of the 1900s.¹⁶ His subsequent association with Europeans and Europeanized-Africans in the evangelical and education work-fields of colonial Nigeria must also have been fundamental. As his surviving descendants—particularly his only surviving son, Charles, and his grandchild, Odein, for whom he represented the model of the African colonized mind—corroborate, these interactions were vital in shaping his character of modernity. Yet, as various oral and written sources affirm,¹⁷ the intellectual capacity, and the degree of exposure, Wokoma demonstrated were well beyond his modest western education, and his ‘informal’ cultural socializations.¹⁸

Evidence from his diaries and his other life-writing provide some insight into Wokoma’s intellectual character. For instance, the quality of his sermons—available through drafts as he thought through them on the pages of his diaries—is, to say the least, impressive. His consistent approach is a combination of extensive research, brilliant deployment of allusions and

¹⁶According to a biographical tribute by his daughter Florence Diasy Ajumogobia (Nee Wokoma), Wokoma’s father sent him to a trading station in 1906 to live with Mr Hartly. Wokoma provides another version of this experience when he writes in a June 10, 1965 diary entry: ‘Mrs Wokoma gave me an old photograph taken about 1907 or 1908 when I was serving at African Association, Fort Bellamy, Buguma as a pantry boy’.

¹⁷According to Mr Ajumogobia in his unpublished manuscript of ‘Soldiers in Parsonage’, Wokoma’s colleagues and associates often thought he had attended some higher education institution in the United Kingdom. The venerable clergy’s son, Dr Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma also corroborates this standpoint in an interview where he stated that Wokoma often humorously responded to these high ratings by telling people that the closest that he had gone to any England university was the Lagos Bar-Beach (Wokoma, Charles Inko Tariah. Personal Interview. 17 May 2016).

¹⁸Mr Ajumogobia writes in ‘Soldiers in the Parsonage’, ‘Grandpa had a sharp and robust intellect and a prodigious memory that would have matched the most formidable intellectual standards of the time. He was an avid reader of history and literature especially. He also had interest in developments in the sciences. My own introduction to science fiction (which fascinated him) was some of Isaac Asimov’s distinctive novels’. (Ajumogobia, Odein. ‘Soldiers in the Parsonage’, N.D.).

metaphors and a logical structure, in conformity with the finest rhetorical traditions. His reflections as he prepared his sermon for Sunday April 26, 1944, for example, illustrates his capacity to forge profound connections between diverse fields including theology, philosophy, classics, history, psychology among others. In this presentation, he draws from Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave' to project a radical theological perspective to the Christian notion of sin. Wokoma argues that 'the place of sin in Plato's picture [is represented] by the shadow cast by the disobedient and selfish and self-centered activities of man at the entrance to the cave and not the shadow of any object outside the cave'.¹⁹ Wokoma's 'theorization' of the identity of 'sin' against the backdrop of philosophical framework provided by Plato does not just represent original thought but also a refreshingly insightful intellectual interpretation of spiritual reality. Moreover, that the intended setting for this proclamation is a routine Sunday service says much about Wokoma's self as a modern African scholar-priest. This is, therefore, one uniqueness about Wokoma that compels attention: the unusual capacity for rationality and intellectual questioning.

Wokoma's intellectual personality is also evident in the fact that he was often relied upon by the Church, the educational establishment and even his traditional Kalabari society to produce and deliver well-worded speeches and addresses on occasions of importance. For instance, when 'the clergy and the laity of the Niger Delta Archdeaconry' received 'Right Rev Bishop C.J. Patterson, M.A., Assistant Bishop of the Diocese on the Niger' in February 1942;²⁰ when the CMS in Southern Nigeria needed a speech-sermon to pay tribute to 'the officers and men of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy' during World War II on Sunday the 9th of July 1944;²¹ and when the Nigerian Union of Teachers paid tribute to Late 'Mr E. G. Morris, O.B.E., Director of Education, Nigeria', in May 1943, it was to Wokoma they all turned. In the latter instance, while profiling Mr Morris, the British colonial education officer, Wokoma demonstrates an impressive awareness of trends in

¹⁹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, April 26, 1944.

²⁰ Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, February 8, 1942.

²¹ Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, July 9, 1944.

the development of African intellectual modernity, and in the simple but dense fluidity of prose.

Mr Morris was a man of very broad sympathies. His admiration for the very generous policy of some of the American universities which enabled African students to obtain university education at a reasonably low cost in America, his expressed opinion that he felt the time had come when Britain might similarly assist Empire students to obtain university education in English universities, the removal through his instrumentality of the foreign examination ban which existed at the Yaba Higher College were but some of the practical demonstration of the greatness of the man whom we have so unexpectedly lost and whose memory we honour today.²²

That Wokoma's intellectual profile could receive such attention in an era when the missionary establishment and the colonial civil service still had many brilliant Englishmen, even as members of the Nigerian teachers' union is testimonial to the real worth of his talent.

Odein Ajumogobia²³ sketches an interesting portrait of Wokoma's 'intellectual modernity' when he writes in a semi-biographical piece: 'Grandpa cut the mould of a man of ideas and knowledge who had read the world like a book, and had been tranquilized by the weight of incongruities that he had unearthed [...] His perspective was now a somber, reflective and detached poise of wonderment at what else the unpredictable universe would conjure'.²⁴ This description is surely that of an intellectually-stimulated African who read and thought extensively. The sheer breadth and range of Wokoma's capacity for knowledge production, as we see in the above-cited reference to Plato, transcended the Bible and other Christian literature, and included, at least, much of the humanities. It is common, for instance, to find him profile a book of interest—that he has read or intends to read—in his diaries, like he does on Thursday the 11th of March 1920: '*A Detailed and Accurate Account of the Most Awful Marine Disaster in History Constructed From the Real Facts*

²²Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, May 11, 1943.

²³Henry Odein Ajumogobia (born June 29, 1956) is Wokoma's grandchild from his only surviving daughter, Florence Diasy Inetubo Ajumogobia (31 December 1922-28 January 2002). A leading Nigerian lawyer and politician, Ajumogobia has been Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Petroleum at various times. Mr Ajumogobia, literarily and intellectually-minded, has been at the heart of the biographical project of mobilizing an intellectual assessment of Wokoma's legacy, in terms of its national and sub-national legacies.

²⁴Ajumogobia, 'Soldiers in the Parsonage'.

Obtained from the Survivors. Sinking of Titanic, and the Great Sea Disaster. Edited by Logan Marshall, author of the *Life of Theodore Roosevelt*, etc. Illustrated with memorial buttons, photographs & drawing'.²⁵ It is also common for him to order books from far and near, and subscribe as a regular reader to newspapers—as he did with the *Eastern Nigerian Defender* in Warri on the 23rd of February 1944.

The impression one gets from Ajumogobia and others²⁶ who knew Wokoma closely thus tallies with the evidence provided by his writing. He keenly pursued intellectual stimulation and obtained deep satisfaction from knowledge generation and propagation, even though he never seemed to brag about it. Ajumogobia also stresses:

He loved and yearned to contribute to the social, political and cultural ambience of his time and was in his own right a consummate analyst. However, he laboriously avoided life in the sparkling spotlight, preferring to make his contributions in quiet and dignified decorum. His political sensitivity, more or less served as a catalyst to reinforce the agitated state of his mind about how the world's reality had been so dismally distorted from God's perfect creation. A scholar-historian with highly developed investigative instincts, he seemed concerned with the endless transformation in the world that conformed with or deviated from tightly-held theological truths and ecclesiastical principles that he had mastered.²⁷

Wokoma could in many senses be characterized as a reflective witness to a world in turmoil; he understood that it had not always been like this, and sought to come to terms with a universe of many contradictions—a universe in epochal flux. The philosophical content of his ministerial education seemed to endow him with interpretative parameters, but like every other mind of such extraordinary levels of curiosity, these never really appeared to be enough. Ajumogobia's analysis of Wokoma's modern character fits somewhat into Simon Gikandi's description of the iconic man of Enlightenment in the Western purview:

²⁵Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box 1, May 11, 1920.

²⁶For instance, for additional information on Wokoma, I have interviewed a handful of people, including surviving family and friends, including Dr Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma (son) Mr Isaac Udoh (servant, between 1961-1968), Bekinbo Inko Tariah (brother-in-law), Benoni Wokoma (Grandchild), Bridget Inko Tariah (niece-in-law), Mr Howard Tom West (family friend), among others.

²⁷Ajumogobia, 'Soldiers in the Parsonage', N.P.

Within the European continental tradition, the production of a unique and self-reflective human subject was closely aligned with the project of rationality and the autonomy of aesthetic judgment. Modern subjects were those individuals who were capable of using their faculties of reason and judgment in the conduct of human affairs; the individual was the sole arbiter of meaning and identity, not a cog in a system of institutional and institutionalized rules and behaviours.²⁸

Wokoma was a man of reason, a fertile mind for whom the social and political agitations of the time demanded the attention of the rational self, particularly in terms of the 'interiorization' of the exterior spheres. For Gikandi, as for Wokoma, social progress, in the modern sense, in other words, required a great dose of acute introspection by the stimulated consciousness of the society.

Modernity was always a product of massive social and political disruptions, and historical evidence from Europe is ample in this regard. African colonial modernity which produced Wokoma was not any different. As Wokoma's diaries bear witness, the multi-dimensional European 'invasion', culminating in the formal administrative control of Africa by foreign powers, changed the structure and complexion of its people forever, while introducing an unprecedented cultural and political revolution. It is indeed remarkable that Wokoma documents, and in some elaborate manner, the struggles of the colonial subjects to adapt to the new modes of existence, particularly in the missionary fields of Southern Nigeria from the 1920s to roughly the 1960s. Respected Nigerian historian, E.A. Ayandele, while articulating the implication of the enormous 'confusion' caused by 'external influence on African society', wrote in 1966:

The disintegration caused by external influences in African society reveals a dilemma for Africans. They are becoming more and more hybridized. The rapidity with which the traditional is being lost or severely modified, and with which the new is being apparently adopted, leave very little time for Africans to fully understand the new forms of European customs and institutions they are adopting. They do not have the time, or do not take the trouble, to make judicious selection of what is best in the European for a grafting upon what is best in the old Africa.²⁹

²⁸Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the culture of Taste* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), p.5.

²⁹E.A. Ayandele, 'External Influence on African', in *Africa in the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by Joseph C. Anene and Godfrey Brown (Ibadan and Surrey: University Press and Nelson and Sons, 1966), pp. 133-158 (p.147).

Colonial modernity, or civilization, came at a huge price for the African who had little or no option than to attend to the unprecedented waves of change transforming his life forever. Thus, Wokoma was born and raised at a highly critical and epochal time in African and Nigerian history. For instance, by the last decade of the 19th century, the project of colonizing the southern parts of Nigeria had assumed an apogee, with staggering political dimensions.

Wokoma's political and cultural reality was therefore charted for him by the colonial encounter. The 'informal' colonization of the area that would become Nigeria could be said to have started with the British invasion and annexation of Lagos in 1851 and 1861 respectively. However, 'formal' colonization of the country would begin in 1901, following the full transformation of the economic influence of the Royal Niger Company, to a political one,³⁰ and consequent upon the outcome of the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-1885. Meanwhile, Wokoma's Southern Delta homeland, an Atlantic shoreline trading post for several centuries, had by virtue of increasing British colonial presence, and the Berlin Conference, been designated as the 'Oil Rivers Protectorate'.³¹ The Oil Rivers Protectorate would then become part of the 'Southern Nigerian Protectorate in January 1900'.³² The country Nigeria came into being with the merging of the 'Southern' and 'Northern' protectorates in 1914.³³

Apart from the sometimes violent colonial politics, the other marker of the times for Wokoma's generation of Southern Nigerians was the far-reaching influence of the dual European legacies of Christianity and education. The project of 'educating' while 'evangelizing' the natives was taken very seriously

³⁰Colonialism first came to the area known today as Nigeria in the form of economic and mercantile imperialism of a British business organization, the Royal Niger Company (1879-1900), led by Sir George Taubman Goldie. The Royal Niger Company's style was a combination of aggressive military economic expansionism and administrative territory-grabbing. ('The Royal Niger Company led by Sir George Goldie, sold Nigeria to Britain for £865,000', (<http://oblongmedia.net/2017/04/22>) [Accessed 10 April 2019]).

³¹See, for instance, A. F. Mockler-Ferryman, 'British Nigeria', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 1, 2 (Jan., 1902),

³²Mockler-Ferryman, 'British Nigeria', pp. 160-173.

³³A.E. Afigbo, 'The Consolidation of British Imperial Administration in Nigeria: 1900-1918'. *Civilizations*, 21. 4(1971), 436-459 (p. 436).

by the Church in Southern Nigeria, as in several other parts of Africa and the Empire. For instance, Nicholas Anim, writing about the close links between the early missionary activity and education in Ghana, has declared: ‘nowhere else does the dialogue among the church, the government, and the people become apparent than in the field of education’.³⁴ By design therefore, formal learning was an indispensable instrument of evangelization. In this regard, the Church of England, through the agency of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), had been among the most accomplished evangelical outfits in Africa and Asia, and from the late 1860s, had a commanding presence in the area known today as the Niger Delta. The Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther,³⁵ who would serve as the first Bishop ‘on the Niger’, and indeed Africa’s first black Bishop, had been very instrumental in the extensive Christianizing and evangelical ventures in the area at the time.³⁶

Wokoma’s modern character was certainly constructed by the wide-ranging cultural rumbles of the time. These ‘rumbles’ were strongly associated with the European advent in Africa in all its ramifications—trade, evangelical Christianity, western learning and administrative politics—which transformed the collective public and cultivated the individual private, in terms of a predilection towards the modern. European education, for instance, had, by the early decades of the 20th century, become a very desirable developmental pursuit for the average Niger Deltan, even if not thoroughly subservient to the Christian religion.³⁷ Wokoma’s father, although not a Christian, had sent him to school, and by 1912—the year in which the senior Wokoma died—he had obtained his Standard Six Certificate with which he would commence his

³⁴ Nicholas Anim, ‘Ghana’, in *Church, State and Education in Africa*, p. 175.

³⁵ Andrew F. Walls describes Bishop Crowther as ‘probably the most widely known Christian of the nineteenth century’. (Crowther Samuel Adjai [or Ajayi], in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. by Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), pp. 160-161.

³⁶ Crowther’s activities in the evangelization of the area today known as the Niger Delta is captured in some detail in F. Deaville Walker’s *The Romance of the Black River: The Story of the C.M.S. Niger Mission* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1930).

³⁷ Even though the people of the Niger Delta cherished and desired the transformational capacity of European education, they were highly reluctant to fully embrace the Christian agency through which it came. See, for instance, E.A. Ayandele’s acclaimed *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1966, P. 81).

teaching and pastoral career in 1913.³⁸ He would subsequently attend Crowther Training Institute, Bonny,³⁹ obtaining a 3rd Class Teachers' Certificate in 1919, a 2nd Class Teacher's Certificate in 1920 and a 1st Class Teachers' Certificate in 1921. Next, he completed the Senior Catechist Training Course at the Awka Theological College in 1923; finished his Divinity Course for the Deaconite in 1927 and was ordained a full priest in 1928.

Like a sort of an African John Milton,⁴⁰ Wokoma's modernity features an interplay of radical theological intellectualism and fanatical sacrificial faith. This, of course, derives as much from his 'ministerial' education as from the intense convictions of private spiritual experiences and transactions of unusual effervescence with the Supreme Divine Being. His daughter, the late Florence Inetubo Daisy Ajumogobia (1922-2001), had written about one such life-defining encounter: 'In 1915 while on his knees at St Augustine's Church, Abonnema, during the Jubilee celebration, he received the call to give his life to the Church. He now knew the True God'.⁴¹ This 'knowledge', as he practically lived it, shaped evaluations of his life as a 20th century African 'Puritan'. Odein Ajumogobia, Florence's son, comes up with another interesting description of his grandfather:

The general picture of him is that of a near-puritanic, disciplined and uncompromising deep-thinking intellectual-introvert who saw and lived life as a dutiful enterprise that ran on many demanding Biblical principles. To some, he was a saintly man of high spirituality who viewed the world with piteous contempt from his high pedestal of unstained righteousness [...] If he was any or all of these things, it did not prevent him from radiating the positive shine, warm humanity and deep understanding of the fallible nature of man, and the

³⁸Florence Diasy Ajumogobia, 'A Brief Sketch of the Life and the Work of the Late Rev. Canon Atkinson Wokoma, J.P. N.D.

³⁹Founded by Crowther himself in 1888 in response to 'the necessity of raising native-born youths of the Delta in the ministry of the church', (G.O.M. Tasié, *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta 1864-1918* [Leiden E.J. Brill, 1978], p. 171)

⁴⁰In highlighting Milton's brand of revolutionary theological and intellectual individualism, Benjamin Myers writes in *Milton's Theology of Freedom* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006, p. ix) 'Milton's work is thus a monument to the freedom of the individual and to the irreducible singularity of the creative impulse'.

⁴¹Ajumogobia, 'A Brief Sketch', p.1.

life-long mandate to strive for perfection while focusing on Christ, the Redeemer, and ultimate example.⁴²

Herein lies the kernel of Wokoma's similarity with Milton, whose Puritanic profile was also highly mediated by the rational practicality of his intellect, and who has been described as 'the most theologically learned' of men, who possessed 'a great independence of mind' and 'developed his talents within a society where the problem of divine justice was debated with particular intensity'.⁴³ There are, I contend, several senses in which Wokoma fits into R. Scott Stevenson's characterization of Milton, 'who, in the midst of grave reverses, poured forth the convictions and the music of his soul in the paeans of conflict and in the anthems of victory'.⁴⁴ And as expected, like Milton, the extensive breadth of Wokoma's thought and consciousness can be ascertained through his life-writing. According to Linda Tredennick, even though Milton left no autobiography or diary, 'he did write a number of self-representations that reveal, if not a completely accurate description of his experiences of his own interiority and individuality, at least a presentable and representable version of that experience'.⁴⁵ Part of my assignment in this thesis will be to examine Wokoma's Puritanist interiority—through his diaries—in an effort to situate the modernity of his private self.

Wokoma's modern character seems to have also been activated by the deep 'romances' of his life, in terms of the Wordsworthian 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' and 'emotions recollected in tranquility'.⁴⁶ Wokoma's 'Romanticism', therefore, especially as engendered by the 'interiorizing' of the many personal tragedies of his life, authorized a greater belief in the strength of the human spirit and provided an authentic identity of his 'self'. In traditional 18th and 19th century western categorization,

⁴²Odein Ajumogobia, 'Soldiers in the Parsonage', N.P.

⁴³Tobias Gregory, *From Many Gods to One Divine Action in Renaissance Epic*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 253.

⁴⁴R. Scott Stevenson, 'Milton and the Puritans', *The North American Review*, 214.793 (December 1921), 825-832 (p. 32).

⁴⁵Linda Tredennick, 'Exteriority in Milton and Puritan Life Writing', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 51.1 (Winter 2011), 159-179 (p. 160).

⁴⁶See, for instance, John W. Stevenson ('Seeing is Believing: Wordsworth's Modern Vision', *VQR*, 53.1 [December 2003], <https://www.vqronline.org> [accessed 10 April 2019]).

Romanticism, as a historical moment and as an intellectual and philosophical wave, was not just a part of modernity, it was also a manifestation of the modern attitude.⁴⁷ Reading modernity through the lens of Romanticism highlights the critical status of the notion of ‘self’ as an emotional construct. It is in this vein that Wokoma has strong bonds with Edgar Allan Poe, ‘a leading figure in American Romanticism’,⁴⁷ who has been acknowledged as ‘the genius who mines his own troubled life and pours his inner self into his work, creating as he himself is consumed’.⁴⁸

Wokoma may not have been ‘the archetype of the dysfunctional artist’,⁴⁹ the identity Poe bore like a burden all through his ill-fated life, but the 20th century Nigerian was also, in many senses, as much a tragic character as the 19th century American. For most of his life, Wokoma had to endure phases of mental and physical agony and this reflected copiously in his writings. There is little doubt that like Poe, Wokoma’s life-writings, particularly his diaries and his letters, were instruments of emotional stabilization, as he tried to come to terms with the many searing pains of his life.⁵⁰

This is where Wokoma also shares something significant with perhaps one of his most influential African role models, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, whose own autobiographical enterprises derived from the need to maintain emotional stability in the midst of troubling times during his illustrious missionary career. While articulating the private-public undercurrents to Crowther’s life-writing, Stephen Ney declares that they ‘emerge from his greatest struggle against antagonistic Europeans within the CMS who resented his authority’.⁵¹ For Ney, ‘Crowther’s correspondence and reports were his comfort in his isolation and his main defenders against his

⁴⁷*Romanticism and Modernity*, ed. by Thomas Pfau and Robert Mitchell (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

⁴⁸Loiuse McReynolds, *Murder Most Russian: True Crime and Punishment in Late Imperial Russia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), p.116.

⁴⁹See ‘Edgar Allan Poe’s Works as Autobiography’, <https://www.eapoe.org/geninfo/poeautob.htm> [accessed 11 April 2019].

⁵⁰‘Edgar Allan Poe’s Works as Autobiography’.

⁵¹Stephen Ney, ‘Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the Age of Literature’, *Research in African Literatures*, 46. 1 (2015), 37-52 (p. 39).

detractors'.⁵² It could also be argued, as we will see in Chapter Two, that in several senses Wokoma's diaries served as a psycho-spiritual cushion against the many challenges he encountered while evangelizing the Niger-Delta interior.

Apart from the mental toll of missionary life in difficult terrains, his personal life proved a real source of tension and challenged the very essence of Wokoma's being, his spiritual and mental self. He lost both parents at a very young age, and had to depend on a few inspired benefactors for his upbringing and personal development. Then, he would lose five of his own children, either as infants or as toddlers,⁵³ even as he struggled against teething marital challenges. Perhaps most crucially, his health was also a huge challenge throughout his adult life. He spent long spells in hospitals and suffered immense stress leading the life of a missionary while carrying the massive weight of illness. It has in fact been strongly suggested that that he lived up to the fairly 'ripe' age of 74 is a huge miracle in itself.⁵⁴ There is also a convincing indication that his illness, then at its very terminal stages, prevented him from the otherwise consistent life-long routine of writing his diaries in the last three years of his life, 1966-1968, depriving us of presumably a wealth of prestigious first-hand material on the Nigerian crisis of that period.

Wokoma finally succumbed to his long spell of poor health in June 1968, at the peak of the Nigerian civil war, only weeks before his wife, nicknamed 'Mama Biafra', was executed by the Nigeria Federal Forces for her role in the secessionist rebellion.⁵⁵ He may have died from 'natural causes',⁵⁶ given his

⁵² Ney, p.39.

⁵³Wokoma mentions two of these children in the diary entry of April 8, 1947 as 'Probyn' and 'Alabo'.

⁵⁴Wokoma was, for two-thirds of his life, a very sickly man, who battled a range of illnesses—including digestive, urinary and prostrate complications—throughout his adulthood. But as both his son, Charles, and his grandson, Odein Ajumogobia have stated in clear terms, the volatile political atmospheres of the time quickened the process of his demise.

⁵⁵Wokoma's Niger Delta 'minority' population was caught up in 'The Biafran Revolution', as their South-eastern Igbo neighbours, pitted unevenly against the combined force of the other ethnicities, fought an unsuccessful but costly war of

long illness which became critical from as early as the late 1930s, but the devastating war situation must have sped up the process of his demise, in both psychological and spiritual terms. It has to be emphasized that the personal and collective tragedies of the Nigerian war for Wokoma and the rest of the riverine peoples of Southern Nigeria, lie in the fact that as a minority ethnicity⁵⁷ in the Nigerian political configuration, they were caught up in the far-reaching contentions between the major tribal sub-nationalities of the (Eastern) Igbos and the (Northern) Hausa-Fulanis. It is instructive to note, however, that that divisive, volatile conversation still rages, and in all its notorious volatility.⁵⁸

Wokoma inevitably became a part of Nigerian postcolonial politics, not only because his wife, Mercy, was a leading ‘card-carrying’ member of one of the major political parties, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), but also because of his own attempt at forging strong political alliances both at the community, regional and national levels. His stake in and attitude to this nationalist venture were illustrated by his close friendship with several of the leading politicians of the era, including the Nigerian president himself, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe.⁵⁹ Although he made an otherwise successful

secession. Wokoma and his wife chose to support the embattled Igbos out of personal conviction, unlike most of their Niger Delta kinsmen, and paid dearly for it.

⁵⁶In the context of intensifying violence of the Nigerian civil war in which both his wife (‘Mama Biafra’) and his son Charles—who now served as a war-time doctor for the Biafrans, were heavily involved—Wokoma’s health, which he had managed quite successfully in the preceding years and decades, declined rapidly. Isaac Udoh, his servant of many years who was by his death-bed in Degema (in today’s River State), tells about ‘a devastating failure of the urinary tract which became uncontrollable’ in a June 7, 2018 interview.

⁵⁷Because the Niger Delta was home to Nigeria’s vast oil wealth and also a major international window and trade route, control of the area meant a gargantuan advantage in the war. A detailed account can be found in Max Siollun’s *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria’s Military Coup Culture, 1966-1976* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2009).

⁵⁸In the years—particularly the last decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st—in which the Niger Delta has come to full global attention for its massive oil wealth, the political dynamics have grown even more complicated and has so severely shaped the outlook of power and socio-economics. See for instance, Takena N. Tamuno’s *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1849-2009* (Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers, 2011).

⁵⁹Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, arguably Africa’s foremost nationalist, was the most important reason for Wokoma’s family’s sympathy for the Igbo-dominated political party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Azikiwe was Igbo, the

attempt at creating a space of political neutrality for himself, knowing the likes of Azikiwe personally—and his wife being a very resourceful and visible member of Azikiwe’s NCNC—clearly indicated where his sympathies lay. This suggestion of partisanship was to become significant in the devastating political conflict which led to one of Africa’s first major postcolonial wars, as Wokoma and his family suffered great tragic repercussions, from which they have, even today, not fully recovered.⁶⁰

It is only a fitting tribute to Wokoma’s personality that a life of such remarkable inclination to African modernity could find expression in the autobiographical genre of the diary, largely considered as an agency of the modern, ‘western’ mind. As Kay Sibald correctly observes, ‘if not a uniquely western form, life-writing or self-narrative is certainly an undeniable part of western culture’.⁶¹ Thus, it can convincingly be argued that Wokoma’s diaries bear the weight of his 20th century African modernity, especially as informed by his exposure and aspiration to ‘western’ modes of existence. If, according to Sibald, autobiographical compositions like the diary were relied upon to reflect ‘the spirit of the times as well as the personalities of their authors’⁶² during the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment, Wokoma’s construction of his modern self within the setting of colonial Nigeria validates that statement from an African point of view.

leading ‘Biafran’ tribe, but more crucially, he was a professing Anglican Christian, and Wokoma must have found this, and the fact that Azikiwe was a grand model of the educated African elite, very appealing.

⁶⁰By identifying with the Igbos, Wokoma and his family were technically Biafrans, the ‘rebel’ group seeking secession from the Nigerian federation. Wokoma’s wife, ‘Mama Biafra’ was assassinated by federal soldiers detailed to end the Igbo occupation of the Niger Delta in June 1968, days after Wokoma’s own death from what surviving family describes as ‘heartbreak’. For details of the tragic fate of the people of the Niger Delta in the Nigerian war, see, for instance, Arua Oko Omaka’s ‘The Forgotten Victims: Ethnic Minorities in the Nigeria-Biafran War, 1967-1970’ (*Journal of Retracing Africa*, 1. 1 (2014), p. 25-40 (p. 27).

⁶¹Kay Sibald, ‘Salvaging the Self: A Foreword’, *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 30, 1 (2005), 3-8 (p.4).

⁶²Sibald, p.4.

1.2 Wokoma as an African Colonial Diarist: Context and Sources of Motivation

From the personal account of his life—diligently kept for 50 years between 1915 and 1965—it becomes probable that Wokoma should rank among the most committed African diarists of colonial 20th century. Among the African diarists who lived and worked in that era—including his fellow Nigerian CMS priest-intellectual, Alexander Babatunde Akinyele (1875-1968); the Ibadan nationalist and political activist, Ladipo Solanke (1886-1958); and the Ghanaian teacher-catechist, Akaseasa Kofi Boakye Yiadom (1901-2011)—it is perhaps the Yoruba businessman, farmer and trade unionist, Akinpelu Obisesan (1889-1963), that comes close to Wokoma’s level of devotion to, and consciousness of the convention of diary-writing. About Obisesan’s achievements as an African colonial diarist, critic and scholar, Ruth Watson has written:

In 1914, at the age of 25, Akinpelu Obisesan bought himself a diary. For the next six years he wrote sporadically. He recorded births and deaths in his extended family and within his circle of friends [...] Obisesan bought his second diary in 1920. It is unclear what specifically motivated his increased diligence from February of that year, but we must appreciate the length of time it was sustained. For the next forty years, Akinpelu Obisesan kept a daily account of his life [...] By 1922, he had so much to write in his diary entries that he reduced his handwriting to a minuscule size [...] He kept this up until the end of 1960, leaving us with a legacy of forty diary volumes, each with an entry for nearly every single day. The final diary recorded that he was in poor health [...] it seems that this was the reason he stopped his diary-keeping, a few years before he died in 1963.⁶³

The above reads very much like an outline of Wokoma’s own engagement with diary-writing. Born in late 19th century and following an exposure to mission education, Wokoma began to write his diaries in 1915 at the age of twenty one. He wrote about family and community life, and then his early career as a missionary serving simultaneously as a CMS teacher in both the school and the Church in the Nigerian Niger Delta. From the 1920s, as he developed intellectually and professionally, he invested more time and energy in his diary-

⁶³Ruth Watson, “What is Our Intelligence, Our School Going and Our Reading of Books without Getting Money?” Akinpelu Obisesan and His Diary’, *Africa’s Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. by Karin Barber (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 52-77 (pp. 52-53).

writing vocation, exhibiting a robust sensitivity to the social and political developments of his time. He produced at least a book of diaries each year until 1965, when his deteriorating health meant he could no longer keep up with this life-long vocation.

Among Wokoma's contemporary African diarists of the first half of the 1900s, Wokoma understandably shares much more with his Nigerian countrymen. One strong basis for their similarity is the background of Anglicanism, particularly through the agency of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). For instance, just as Wokoma became a member of the Nigerian educated elite through the instrumentality of the CMS educational infrastructure, so did Alexander Babatunde Akinyele, Ladipo Solanke and Akinpelu Obesisan, who became known as some of colonial Nigeria's most ardent diarists. Akinyele, who would, much like Wokoma, become a notable CMS missionary in South-west Nigeria in the early part of the 20th century, passed through the CMS educational ranks, eventually obtaining a Bachelor of Arts from Fourah Bay College in Freetown.⁶⁴ Just as Wokoma who served as General Manager of CMS schools in Southern Nigeria in the 1940s and 50s, Akinyele rose to the zenith of his career as a mission education administrator, becoming the pioneer principal of CMS Grammar School, Ibadan. On his own part, Ladipo Solanke attended the famous St Peter's (Anglican) Primary School, Ake,⁶⁵ then proceeding to Fourah Bay College for teacher training, before also taking a B.A. from there. The intellectual development of Akinpelu took the same CMS path, for he attended the famous CMS Training Institution at Oyo, the Western Nigerian equivalent of Wokoma's Crowther's Memorial Training Institute, Bonny.

As in the case of Wokoma, the diaries of these men reflected both the private and the public of the African colonial modernity of their time. This included their engagement with both the Church and the school, and the

⁶⁴A. Adedoye Olufunke, 'Diaries as Cultural and Intellectual Histories', *Yoruba Identity and Power Politics*, ed. by Toyin Falola and Ann Genova (Rochester, New York: Boydell and Brewer, 2006), pp. 74-95 (p.78).

⁶⁵Such important figures of African intellectual modernity as Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka were trained at the school. Ake duly significantly influenced the title of Soyinka's first autobiographical work, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (London: Rex Collins, 1981).

representation of the sensibilities and the sense of enlightenment of the era. Writing about the diary-keeping culture which developed in Western Nigeria, beginning from the late 19th century, Olufunke A. Adeboye observes that ‘this was made possible by the introduction of Western education, which produced an educated elite, and, indirectly by the influence of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) agents in Yorubaland who kept quarterly and biannual personal journals that were sent to their missionary headquarters periodically’.⁶⁶ With the example of Wokoma, it is clear that the CMS influence in diary-keeping also obtained in other parts of Nigeria, outside Yorubaland, where the powerful evangelical agency had its operational headquarters in the country. However, as we see in Wokoma and his colonial Nigerian contemporaries, even though the central motivation for diary-keeping came from the Church-school connection, the scope of the diarist’s attention is a wide spectrum covering nearly every facet of a society in political and cultural change. The African colonial diarist apparently accepted the opportunity provided by the form to construct a modern Africa out of these political and cultural systems.

Wokoma, for instance, engaged the development of the Kalabari society against the backdrop of the diverse impacts of the modern, colonial culture, and his own inscribed place in the scheme of things. His contemporary Nigerian diarists did pretty much the same. For instance, about Akinpelu Obisesan, who wrote diaries consistently between 1920 and 1960, Ruth Watson has argued: ‘Obisesan’s diary enabled him to assert his literacy skills in a much wider sense’ and to ‘constitute his respectability and confirm his status as a Christian gentleman in colonial Ibadan’.⁶⁷ Wokoma’s diaries accomplish a similar objective of modern African self-fashioning.

Wokoma also compares well with diarists from other parts of 20th century colonial Africa especially in terms of motivation and direction. The Ghanaian teacher-catechist, Akasease Kofi Boakye Yiadom (1910-2011) cultivated his diary-writing habits through his connections with the Presbyterian Church, for which, according to Stephan F. Miescher, ‘keeping a diary was part of an

⁶⁶Olufunke, ‘Diaries as Cultural and Intellectual History’, p. 74.

⁶⁷Ruth Watson, ‘What is our Intelligence’, p. 55.

educated pietist lifestyle'.⁶⁸ Thus, the CMS background to Wokoma's intellectualism and life-writing culture finds a trans-national parallel in Yiadom's Presbyterian (Basel Mission) context. Additionally, Yiadom's construction of his modernity within the timeframe of colonial Ghana tallies with Wokoma's representation of a modern Nigerian self in the imperial era. Just as in Wokoma, Yiadom's Christian backgrounds meant that his diaries presented the reflections of the spiritual self *within* the private self. Thus, such elements of Wokoma's diaries as what Miescher describes as 'introspection in the form of daily prayers and establishing a personal relationship with the Christian God'⁶⁹ are also found in Yiadom's writing.

As obtainable in the different phases of African life-writing, Wokoma's diaries demonstrate the location of African colonial modernity within the provinces of the private and the public, as distinct spheres of existence, or as interconnected realms. For Wokoma, the construction of modern African selfhood in his African 'colonial' diaries emphasizes the interior aspects of colonial personhood, what Hegel identifies within the categories of 'love, romanticism, the quest for the eternal salvation of the individual[...], moral convictions and conscience'.⁷⁰ Yet, Wokoma also centralizes the 'exterior' dimensions, which Hegel refers to as 'the principle of civil society and as moments in the constitution of the state'.⁷¹

As Wokoma also demonstrates, if the diary as an autobiographical genre was critical to the development of modern selfhood in the western world over the course of previous centuries, the form occupies a similar pivotal place in the construction of modern African subjectivity. In capturing certain unprecedented experiences as the undisputed foundations of African modernity—particularly the colonial invasion in its varying dimensions of trade, the missionary venture and political administration—Wokoma also

⁶⁸Miescher, Stephan, 'My Own Life: A.K. Boakye Yiadom's Autobiography—The Writing and Subjectivity of a Ghanain Teacher-Catechist', *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. by Karin Barber, pp. 27-51 (p.31).

⁶⁹Miescher, 'My Own Life,' p.32.

⁷⁰G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 84.

⁷¹Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 84.

accounts for how the modern African individuality emerges from such colossal scenarios.

So, where does the uniqueness of Wokoma's work lie, given that the autobiographical tradition has a huge intellectual and scholarly profile in the African cultural space? It lies in the affirmation—through its intellectual and cultural connections with earlier generations—that the African diary and indeed, African life-writing, is actually both a mediator and projector of African modernity. It lies in the rarity of an early twentieth century African dedicating three quarters of his life to a closely-guarded documentation of the world around him. It lies in the originality of motivations and representation of the reality of the time, particularly from the subject's point of view. It lies in the invaluable raw material it provides in the political, historical and cultural evaluation of colonial Nigeria, which is largely first-hand.

Thus, even though he ran a very rigorous schedule as a missionary, evangelist, pastor, teacher and school administrator in the very challenging early phases of African modernity, and struggled with excruciating health conditions for three-quarters of his adult life, Wokoma found the composure and the stability, the intellectual strength and the social and historical consciousness to recreate his world in the form of a continuous narrative of five decades. The devotion to documenting the multifaceted life around him, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, is simply astonishing. The sheer zeal of it alone, particularly when viewed through the lenses of today's writing and publishing socio-economics, grants insight into the degree of Wokoma's motivation.

There are clear and understandable influences to Wokoma's extraordinary life-writing inclination. First of all, his attitude to record-keeping could be thought of as the outcome of his delight at being able to take full advantage of the educational privileges provided by the Church, and to become 'literate' in the process. The implication here, therefore, is that for the African, the development of the diary-writing consciousness as a feature of modernity is directly linked to the development of western literacy, particularly its writing component, as sponsored by the missionary project. This is why John Cooke



Picture 1: A 1903 photo showing an eight-year-old Wokoma with his biological parents. At this stage, he does not exactly look like the potential formidable agent of western modernity that he would become in a couple of decades. Things would be set in motion when his father, Charlse 'Charse' Wokoma, took him to a European trading home as servant to a British merchant, Mr Hartly.

argues that 'the diary, as a written form, had no place in African society before the coming of the Europeans'.⁷² Therefore, there is always a sense in which Wokoma's intellect can be regarded as a peculiar gifting beyond what his 'basic' education, which ultimately did not include a university degree, could entitle. But his exposure to western thought and intellectual character not only shaped his talents in reading, speaking and writing, it also informed his perspective about life as one long, fascinating experience that should not just be allowed to drift away unaccounted for. His vocation as a diarist is even more interesting when it is considered that by 1915, when his series began, there were not very many of his countrymen who had attained such high competences in the academic use of the English language. There were even fewer who thought that medium could be organized into an instrument of detailing day-to-day activities and painting consistent, compelling images of their world.

One offshoot of Wokoma's insatiable penchant for knowledge and self improvement, a driving tendency of his life as a writer, was his predilection for role models. He was probably inducted into this culture by his father who took him to live with European merchants on the Atlantic shorelines of his hometown in Buguma around 1907 or 1908.⁷³ From these British gentlemen, he imbibed certain attributes that would inform the manner of the cultural progress of his life. Diaries, and indeed life-writing of any kind, may have been a strong component of this early westernizing orientation.⁷⁴ There is no evidence to the effect that Sir J. A. Hartly, Wokoma's English-merchant benefactor of 1907-08, kept diaries. However, the culture of literacy, which was a critical aspect of European civilization, within the British community in colonial Nigeria, as in all of the Empire, was such that individuals kept what they considered invaluable personal records of their African experience. Among the most famous British figures whose life-writings have become

⁷²John Cooke, 'African Diaries', *World Literature Today*, 61. 2 (Spring 1987), 211-213 (p. 211).

⁷³Mr Hartley of Fort Bellamy, Buguma, where Wokoma spent about four years.

⁷⁴Cooke, 'African Diaries', p.211.



Picture 2: The protégé of colonial modernity: a 1906/1907 picture of Wokoma (sitting on the floor) while in service as a pantry boy at the British trading post of Mr Hartly and his African Association colleagues in Buguma.

reference points to the expatriate perspective on the colonial African world are David Livingstone, Frederick Lugard and Joyce Cary.⁷⁵

As Wokoma developed as a person, his circumference of constructive human influences grew. For instance, there is evidence that as a young man he read about Rev Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African Bishop of West Africa, and followed his career in other ways, particularly through his close working relationship with the Bishop's last son, the equally illustrious Dandeson Coates Crowther.⁷⁶ He probably not just admired Bishop Crowther's evangelical audacity,⁷⁷ but was also endeared to the latter's intellectual exploits, for which he is considered a significant African literary progenitor. Much of what Crowther left behind as his legacy in letters fell within the provinces of life-writing, including detailed accounts and analyses of his missionary adventures, a form of self-narrative that Wokoma himself heavily patronized in the 20th century. Among Crowther's most famous works are *Experiences with Pagans and Mohammedans in West Africa* (London: Seely, Jackson and Halliday, 1866) and *Niger Mission: Bishop Crowther's Report of the Overland Journey from Lokoja to Bida, on the River Niger: and Thence to Lagos, on the Seacoast, from November 10th, 1871 to February 8th, 1872* (London: Church Missionary House, 1872).

Prominent on the fairly long list of Christian role models that Wokoma accumulated during the impressionable stages of his ministerial career was Archdeacon Dandeson Coates Crowther, who would finish up the work of establishing Anglican Christianity in the Nigerian Niger Delta, and with whom Wokoma worked very closely in the 1920s. There was also Bishop James

⁷⁵Cary is the author of the novel *Mister Johnson* (1939) in response to whose portrayal of Nigeria, and indeed Africa as barbaric and cultureless Chinua Achebe conceived the iconic *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

⁷⁶(1844-1938). Dandeson (better known as 'Archdeacon Crowther') built a very strong working relationship with Wokoma. He officiated at Wokoma's wedding to Mercy in April 1921.

⁷⁷Important literature has been produced on Crowther's unusual missionary courage in the project of evangelizing the 'pagan' peoples of what has become Nigeria today. These include Kenneth Onwuka Dike's *Origins of the Niger Mission 1941-1891* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1962) and F. Deaville Walker's *The Romance of the Black River: The Story of the C.M.S. Nigeria Mission* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1930).

'Holy' Johnson,⁷⁸ of Sierra Leonean descent, who was the assistant bishop of the Niger Delta between 1890 and his death in 1917.⁷⁹ It was Bishop Johnson who 'Confirmed' Wokoma at the Crowther Training Institute in Bonny (diary entry of May 16, 1917). These and others were individuals who had attained a respectable reputation as clergy-intellectuals, who not only wrote and spoke the English Language well but also commanded considerable public influence.

Among other attributes which may have helped Wokoma attain the profile of one of modern Africa's successful early diarists is his voracious appetite for all kinds of knowledge, especially in the form of the written word. He energetically pursued variegated lines of enquiry with incredible researching vigour until an acceptable conclusion is reached. In fact, Wokoma was one huge student of life who was never tired of exploring many dimensions of everything. He bought and read books on several subjects, particularly in the humanities, and literally devoured any printed or written material he could find. Evidence of his wide reading can be seen all through the pages of his diaries,⁸⁰ and it is arguable that his writing provided a veritable outlet for the expending of the stupendous amounts of information that he accumulated and internalized.⁸¹ He simply was way beyond his generation of Nigerians in many intellectual respects, for he saw in very practical ways how modern Africa was to be an information-driven one, and then sought to become some sort of an information 'fanatic'.

⁷⁸(1836-1917). Foremost West African clergyman of the Anglican denomination. Norbert C. Brockman describes him as 'a West African proto-nationalist [who] became the second African to be ordained an Anglican bishop and was a critical figure in preserving his church in the face of separation led by Independent Churchmen'. ('Johnson, James Holy', *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* <<https://dacb.org/stories>> [accessed 8 April 2019]).

⁷⁹Wokoma's diary entries of from 15th to 20th May 1917 contain information about Bishop's Johnson's last earthly assignment, in which Wokoma himself was a participant.

⁸⁰As the diary entry of October 27, 1915 shows, Wokoma had already made it a habit to order books from the CMS Bookshop in Lagos at the age of 20.

⁸¹Wokoma's intellectual activities remind one of Gilbert Garrashan's concept of 'internal synthesis', which is 'the grouping of data according to inner relationships, chiefly those of cause, which is to achieve, as far as practicable, a living picture of the past in which the true significance of it emerges from the retrospect'. (*A Guide to Historical Method* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1946], p. 338.

As is evident in his diaries, Wokoma would not be found wanting in situations that demanded oratorical prowess, and as has been highlighted in an earlier segment, he was well sought after on occasions of public speaking, including in receptions organized on behalf of august visitors, funeral orations for important personalities and even special speeches for events of national and international significance. There were also such occasions as the visit of the 'Deputy British High Commissioner to Eastern Nigeria resident at Enugu' to Kalabariland on February 18, 1963, where 'Rev. Canon Wokoma was suddenly called up by the Amanyabo [king] to introduce the chiefs [and] welcome the visitors'.⁸²

However, Wokoma was essentially a man of few words; more of a deep-thinking scholar than a dramatic entertainer who thrilled audiences with the forcefulness of words and action. This intense interiority, a certain kind of introverted character which easily gave an impression of him as a withdrawn individual, appears to have propelled Wokoma's diary-writing vocation. The depth of reflection one finds in Wokoma's diaries affirms this stance. This attitude perhaps came to a zenith in the 1940s during a marital crisis which adversely affected his entire family life. For instance, he pours out the pain of his soul in the entry of April 1, 1947:

This morning at 6:30a.m. my wife declared a final break between us. From the 14th March I began a reconciliatory move at Burutu being greatly disturbed by my daughter's importunities with weeping to forgive my wife. Moreover I was forced to yield to my daughter's request to relieve her suffering already intensified by the sudden disaffection of Mr Doomalby, her intended, who suddenly broke their engagement without previous notice.

If my reconciliation with my wife would relieve her burdened heart, I should do so and bear my suffering and aching heart. So I began on the 14th to plead with my wife [...] From that day I pleaded with her day & night, but in vain. At last today she made a clear and definite pronouncement.⁸³

For a soul so tormented emotionally, as much by a troubled marriage as by the pain of protracted illness, the private, personal platforms of the diary can be indispensable. Significantly, most people who commented on Wokoma's introverted character in interview submissions did so from a perspective of

⁸²Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, February 18, 1963.

⁸³Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box II, 1931-1950, April 1, 1947.

comparison with his wife, Mercy. Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma (1929-2020), his only surviving son, was no different. According to Charles Wokoma: 'My mother was a firebrand; if she wanted something, she got it; My father was the quiet one. Taciturn. He did not talk much'.⁸⁴ Miss Bridget Inko Tariah (1940-), another relative who lived with the Wokomas from the late 1940s to their deaths in June 1968, also affirms: 'Rev Wokoma was a quiet person. I don't know whether his discipline as a trained teacher who became ordained as a priest was responsible for that. But I knew him as a quiet reverend gentleman. He never got into trouble with anybody at all, not his parishioners, not even his relations at home. If there was anything to argue about, he approached it in a quiet manner'. On Mrs Wokoma, Miss Inko Tariah says: '[she] was a no-nonsense woman [...] and she was very strong-willed. If she believed in something she will drive it to the last step. She was not the type that would blow hot and cold'.⁸⁵ There is therefore a strong sense in which his spouse's considerably extroverted and 'public' character highlights the significance of Wokoma's image of a restrained, almost introverted, character who *said* and *did* only the things that were necessary, and of course, *wrote* the rest.

The other dimension of Wokoma's interiority as expressed in his diaries is the intellectual, and this finds illuminating parallels in other cultures. For instance, Martin Schutze, in highlighting the leading features of Romantic intellectualism, writes about 'the glorification of the withdrawal into self-centered states of mind' which 'implies freedom from external, objective, mediate motives or standards of truth and conduct'.⁸⁶ This 'detachment' from the 'boisterous public' is meant to stimulate a greater understanding of the individual's role in the scheme of the social universe. This much is perhaps illustrated in Kenneth P. Kramer's identification of 'contemplative withdrawal' as a key ingredient of T. S. Eliot's spirito-intellectual constitution 'which has

⁸⁴Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma, Personal Interview, May 17, 2016.

⁸⁵Bridget Inko Tariah, Personal Interview, May 25, 2016.

⁸⁶Martin Schutze, 'Romantic Motives of Conduct in Concrete Development: The Letter of Heinrich von Kleist to Wilhelmine von Zenge', *Modern Philology*, 16.6 (October 1918), 281-296 (p.283).

yet to be given sufficient attention'.⁸⁷ For Kramer, this attribute of introspective detachment was what the great modernist poet needed in order to give the 'maximum potency to his action'.⁸⁸ Wokoma (1894-1968), who lived within almost the same timeframe as Eliot (1888-1965), exhibited, as we will see in Chapter Four, nearly the same scope of intellectual interiority and subjectivity as the famous poet and critic, with whom he incidentally shared the spiritual sensibility of a high Churchman.⁸⁹ Thus, despite his expansive intellect, sophisticated personality and elevated position in the society as a representative of the Church of England, he cut the frame of the extreme reflective introvert. It is therefore quite understandable that a man who said so little thought so extensively.

What did Wokoma, a deeply private diarist with a huge social vision, write about in these diaries over the span of 50 years? The most remarkable feature of his enterprise is that there is always a sense in which what unravels around him strongly connects his *universe* to his *self*. The narrative is, as expected, essentially about him: what he did, what he thought, what he said, what happened to him, what he made happen, where he went, his relations, his ambitions, his fears, his pessimisms, his motivations, his influences. Beyond all of this, however, the most striking feature of Wokoma's enterprise was that he was conscious of the imperative of situating his personal story within the political and cultural space of the time he lived. In other words, he views himself as an integral part of the society, especially within the emerging modernity of colonial and immediate postcolonial Nigeria. His society as a community of human beings is nothing without *him*, and he is nothing without

⁸⁷See Kenneth P. Kramer's 'A New Type of Intellectual: Contemplative Withdrawal and "Four Quartets"', in *Religion and Literature*, 31.3 (Autumn, 1999), 43-75 (pp.45-46).

⁸⁸Kramer, p.46.

⁸⁹Carl Sundell, summarizing Eliot's religious peregrinations writes: 'In his earlier years, Eliot abandoned the liberal Unitarian faith of his grandfather in which he had been baptized. In his college years he flirted with Buddhism, but by 1927, at the age of 39 and a well established literary figure, he was baptized into the Church of England' ('T.S. Eliot on Society and Religion', <https://catholicinsight.com/t.s.chiot-on-society-andreligion> [accessed 26th July 2019]). This was incidentally the same time Wokoma was completing his emergence as an Anglican priest in Southern Nigeria.

it. As a writer, chronicler and documentarist whose material issues essentially from his interactions with his human community, there are ways in which Wokoma fits into Emmanuel Obiechina's portrait of the 'responsible' intellectual-artist who assumes 'for himself the responsibility of teacher of his people in some contexts, of their statesman in other contexts, of prophet and moral legislator in yet other contexts'.⁹⁰ It is therefore not totally unexpected that Wokoma would produce an invaluable cache of material which provides great multi-disciplinary insights into colonial Nigeria—Imperial politics, Church history, Southern Nigerian culture, Anglican theology, world affairs, local anthropology, among others, and through the unadulterated evidence of a personal witness.

1.3 Wokoma, Autobiographical Truth and the Imperative of Self-construction in African Modernity

In line with the modern emphasis on the supremacy of the individual self, one of the strategies through which Wokoma inscribes his modern identity is the construction of his private and public selves in his diaries. This exercise in self-construction does not just serve him the purpose of self-definition and attainment of personal meaning, but also that of the fashioning of an acceptable public self image. For Wokoma, as for most other autobiographic writers, the portrayal of the 'authentic self' is the most important motivation of his diary-keeping vocation. Wokoma's predilection for self-construction may be part of the general aspiration of the average modern person to arrive at, or obtain a satisfactory understanding of the self, attempting to realize that 'self' in terms of an acceptable personal identity. The diary, as a modern autobiographic form, provides an effective platform for this engagement. Writing about the ambience of self-construction offered Wokoma's class of African educated elite to carve out a self of colonial modernity for themselves, Karin Barber argues: 'Diaries [...] present the self to the self, as if one were looking into one's eyes. This makes possible new forms of self-examination—

⁹⁰Emmanuel Obiechina, 'The Writer and His Commitment in Contemporary Nigerian Society', *Okike*, 27/28 (March, 1988), pp. 1-9.

but also new styles of self-projection and self-dramatization'.⁹¹ It is therefore the attempt at 'self-examination', 'self-projection' and 'self-dramatization' that summarizes Wokoma's motivation and even entire enterprise in diary-writing.

One implication of Wokoma's self-representation in his diaries, as convincingly 'truthful' and as persuasive as it appears about his self of African colonial modernity, is in the final analysis, a work of construction in which there is a deliberate attempt at 'crafting' or 'fashioning' a persona; an effort to deploy narrative strategies to project a certain persona or self. In other words, in conformity with theoretical recommendations about the notion of autobiographical truth, what Wokoma presents in his diaries is merely his own perspective, his own version of the truth, which can be questioned under close scrutiny of factual objectivity or in the light of other versions and perspectives. His version of the 'narrative' is therefore structured to achieve his desired self or persona of African modernity. As Lorna Martens instructively puts it, 'the autobiographer conventionally justifies his undertaking by claiming a particular privileged insight into the self that is the protagonist of the biography [...] But the autobiographer's authority is open to challenge. On what basis can he claim to be a privileged spectator of himself?'⁹² In other words, how does Wokoma convince us that his own subjective presentation of the scenarios is the authentic version?

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson similarly contend that 'when one is both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative, as in self-writing, the truth of the narrative becomes undecidable; it can be neither fully verified nor fully discredited'.⁹³ As both narrator and protagonist of his diaries, Wokoma's perspective cannot be said to be the absolute truth. It is at best 'selective' truth—consisting of the elements and features of a life which he chooses for dissemination, and which both represents his interests and his aspirations, and even what David Parker calls the 'moral space' of the self. According to

⁹¹Karin Barber, 'Introduction', p.8.

⁹²Lorna Martens, 'Autobiographical Narrative and the Use of Metaphor: Rilke's Techniques in Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge', *Studies in 20th Century Literature*, 9. 2 (1985), pp. 229-249.

⁹³Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), p.15-16.

Parker, 'behind any autobiographical act is a self for whom certain things matter and are given priority over others [...] These are the key "goods" the writer lives by [...] these goods orient her morally, or [...] constitutes her as a self in moral space'.⁹⁴ Thus, the truth which Wokoma presents to us about his autobiographical subject or protagonist has been created within his own 'moral space'.

One instance of the 'subjectivity' or/and 'selectivity' of truth in Wokoma's self-construction can be found in the challenging episode in July 1942 where he is suspended from ministerial duty following a petition over an alleged illicit affair with a lady that leads to pregnancy. He provides very little information about the experience in his 1942 diary apart from the basics: 'Bishop Patterson gave me a copy of the report against me by Magnus Ockiya. Advised by Bishop Onyeabo and Chancellor Rhodes. Reporter to prove'.⁹⁵ He neither affirms nor denies the charge. It is however in September 1963 that he returns to the 1942 issue:

Mingi X, Amanyanabo of Nembe came to see me at about 2pm with Mr Miller Tom West who came with him from Port Harcourt and escorted him to Chief Fred Princewill's (Amanyanabo of Kalabari) house and then to my house with a boy. Mr M.T. West left him with the boy and went home.

Chief D.C. Wokoma was present when he came. The Amanyanabo, Mingi X produced a letter addressed to him by one Daniel I. Daniel who claimed to be my son and said he came to see me on account of the letter.

In this letter, the boy threatened to take all sort of action if I refused to send him to a Grammar School and pay his fees. I asked for a copy of the letter, but the Amanyanabo provided to send me a typewritten copy.

I informed the Amanyanabo that in 1942, I was the Pastor of Nembe and some dissatisfied fellows placarded an anonymous letter against me that I was responsible for the pregnancy of one Reginah. I was transferred to Port Harcourt about the same time and one Ockiya reported the matter to Bishop Patterson who suspended me from taking up duties till the matter was settled. Ockiya was asked to prove his case in court. As no action was taken, I was instructed to assume duties as Pastor of St Cyprian's Church and Parish, Port Harcourt. I have heard nothing of this matter till today.⁹⁶

⁹⁴David Parker's *The Self in Moral Space: Life Narrative and the Good* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2007), p. 1.

⁹⁵Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, September 4, 1961.

⁹⁶Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1930-1945, July 7, 1942.

Even though he does not still appear to comment sincerely about the true nature of his involvement with the charge in the private, introspective space of his diary as he would in other matters and other contexts, but only reports his dealings with individuals interested in the matter, the persona he constructs is more of one that has been wrongly accused. This persona fits the general picture of the modern ‘Puritanic’ self he strives to construct in his diaries. Wokoma’s position of apparent innocence in this episode is however contradicted by oral information provided by his surviving family to the effect that he actually had a son—by a Nembe woman in 1942—who became well-known to other members of the family.⁹⁷

Wokoma’s self-representation in the Nembe episode is therefore in conformity with Ann Hunsaker Hawkins’ position that the necessity of ‘identity construction’ in life-writing places a demand of ‘selectivity’ on the narrator. This demand is to the effect that descriptions are:

both less and more than the actual experience: less, in that remembering and writing are selective processes—certain facts are dropped because they are forgotten or because they do not fit the author’s narrative design; and more, in that the act of committing experience to narrative form inevitably confers upon it a particular sequence of events and endows it with a significance that was probably only latent in the original experience.⁹⁸

To tell the ‘story’ that he wants to tell in his diaries, and to ‘construct’ the kind of self that fits his ‘narrative design’ Wokoma could need more or less of the facts available to him. In telling his story therefore, Wokoma attempts to give himself an identity. He takes advantage of his status as narrator to erect a credible portrait for himself, even if that portrait can be questionable in some quarters and under certain circumstances. This is where Paul Ricoeur’s notion of narrative identity becomes relevant, for it provides yet another interpretative framework for the understanding of Wokoma’s attempt at self-construction in his diaries. In putting the idea of narrative identity in proper perspective, Ricoeur pays attention to the supremacy of the idea of the self, and selfhood in the personal narrative: ‘Our own existence cannot be separated from the

⁹⁷In a February 14 2018 interview with Odein Ajumogobia, he explicitly states: ‘This was the reason why his [Wokoma’s] canonization was delayed’.

⁹⁸Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1998) p. 14.

account we can give to ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell about ourselves'.⁹⁹ Adrian Remodo's interpretation of the above leading statement of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the 'self' is also key: 'As the text is a symbol that provides avenue for self reflection, so is our capacity of seeing ourselves in front of it and our capacity of telling a story that give us narrative identity'.¹⁰⁰ In other words, Wokoma engages the privilege of 'self reflection' provided by his diaries with the understanding of his capacity as both narrator and protagonist to construct an acceptable self for himself. Furthermore, as Patrick Crowley correctly observed in his own study of Ricoeur, 'this key concept of narrative identity, with its emphasis on the configuration of an identity that persists over time, seems apposite to the theory and practice of autobiography'.¹⁰¹ Therefore, to accomplish the act and process of 'configuring' an identity, from Wokoma's perspective, involves the selection of the appropriate materials of fact and experience.

In writing his diaries, therefore, Wokoma is not just conscious of who he is, but also who he wants to be, and he makes this presentation on the platform of the life-writing form that he controls. He is not just satisfied with the identity that he gives himself, but also satisfies his 'imaginary audience'—given the fact that the diaries are essentially conceived as private documents. Bonnie Braendlin and Shari Benstock respectively provide additional theoretical basis for the understanding and interpretation of Wokoma's self-construction in his diaries. Braendlin, for instance, declares: 'The autobiographical impulse is toward preserving the self'.¹⁰² It could be inferred therefore, that the major motivation for Wokoma's self narrative is the urge to present a well-thought out self identity and to make substantial effort at convincing the audience about its authenticity, particularly within the context

⁹⁹Adrian Remodo, 'The Narrative Identity in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Self', <<https://www.academia.edu>> [accessed 10 April 2019)], p. 16.

¹⁰⁰Remodo, 'The Narrative Identity in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Self', p. 16.

¹⁰¹Patrick Crowley, 'Paul Ricoeur: The Concept of Narrative Identity: The Trace of Autobiography', *Paragraph*, 26. 3 (November 2003), 1-12 (p. 1).

¹⁰²Bonnie Braendlin, 'Who Speaks (for) Autobiography?' *CEA Critic* 57.1 (Fall 1994), 9-19 (p.9).

of an African modernity, where new modes of existence were shaping new kinds of the African *self*. Shari Benstock also talks about this impulse as that inclined towards the realization of ‘the individual’s special, peculiar psychic configuration’.¹⁰³ In other words, Wokoma’s presentation of a valid personal identity is done with an understanding that he possesses unique attributes which erect for him a distinct personality. Wokoma’s unique personality—comprising such elements as his outstanding intellectualism and his remarkable Christian spirituality—and his status as a conscious witness to and an interpreter of the landmark events of his age contributes to the decision to affirm his self within the context of the passing times. This is why Irina Paperno, while suggesting that the prompt for writing diaries derives ‘from the fear of watching life grow shorter with each passing day’, stresses that ‘as it turns life into text, the diary represents a lasting trace of one’s being—an effective defense against annihilation’.¹⁰⁴

My central argument in this thesis is that Wokoma’s construction of his ‘private’ and his ‘public’ selves in his diaries articulates a modern African identity, particularly through his conscious adoption of certain strategies of self-representation. I rely on William B. Swann, Jr. and Jennifer K. Bosson’s distinction between ‘personal self-views’ and ‘social self-views’ in their theorization of what they call ‘identity negotiation’.¹⁰⁵ For Swann, Jr. and Bosson, identity negotiation refers to the conscious effort by an individual to entrench a satisfactory image of himself, whether in the private or public dimension, or in terms of the intersection of the two. The implication for Wokoma, and indeed for any other diarist or autobiographical writer, is that the process of life-writing places a demand on the idea of ‘negotiation’ which can be viewed as an exercise in the ‘construction’ of the self, of an acceptable picture or image for themselves in the process of creating a written piece. As

¹⁰³Shari Benstock, ‘Authorizing the Autobiographical’, in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writings*, ed. By Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 29.

¹⁰⁴Irina Paperno, ‘What Can Be Done With Dairies?’ *The Russian Review*, 63. 4 (October 2004), 561-573.

¹⁰⁵W.B. Swann, Jr, and J.K. Bossom, ‘Identity Negotiation: A Theory of Self and Social Interaction’, in *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*, ed. by O.P. John, R.W. Robins, and L.A. Pervin (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 448-471. (p. 448)

Swann, Jr and Bosson put it, ‘the survival of people’s identity’ remains an important task which they must invest in: ‘whereas people who enjoy a steady supply of nourishment for their identities will retain those identities, those who repeatedly fail to receive such nourishment will ultimately relinquish their identities’.¹⁰⁶

As evident in Wokoma’s diaries, even though the central identity that he bears and that he sets out to ‘nourish’ is that of African modernity, there is a multiplicity of constitutive ‘sub-identities’ within that self of the modern African that he seeks to construct: a product, mediator and propagator of the ‘Puritanic’ gospel; a protégé of western knowledge and enlightenment; a modern gentleman in the colonial Nigerian social space; an individual with keen historical sensibilities, among others. All of these identities can be classified and analyzed according to their private and public aspects and qualities. Thus, I am interested in the qualities and experiences of Wokoma’s personality that belong to the private, personal self and those that belong to the public, social self, and how these two classes of self demonstrate the diarist’s modernity.

There are of course ways in which the social, political and cultural intensity of the Southern Nigeria of the early 20th century—in terms of the dawn of African colonial modernity—contributed to the framing of Wokoma’s sense of identity and self-construction in his diaries. Living at an epochal time in the history of Africa’s relationship with the outside world, particularly Europe, and becoming a subject of a ‘dual heritage’—in the sense of the ‘native’ and the ‘foreign’—Wokoma understandably had to contend with the imperative of defining his ‘self’ and constructing an acceptable personal self-identity. Gratefully, he could afford to do that through the agency of the diary, as part of the western legacy of enlightenment bestowed on Africa through the forces of modernity. The disruptions occasioned by the European invasion, in which individuals—particularly, physically and psychologically destabilized Africans—were forced to re-analyze their place in the scheme of things, also meant that the likes of Wokoma, who had managed to acquire an education

¹⁰⁶Swann, Jr, and Bossom, ‘Identity Negotiation’, p. 448.

and a life-writing consciousness, were in the forefront of this crucial re-examination.

With evidence from Wokoma's diaries, I argue that unprecedented socio-political shifts had far-reaching implications for and impacts on the individual self; and that the public circumstances of the period forced the individual to turn inwards. A glowing example can be found in Wokoma's construction of his political and religious selves against the backdrop of World War II, adjudged the most devastating event in the history of mankind.¹⁰⁷ A sermon he hears on the 24th of August 1941, in the middle of the destructive war, provides a context for the construction of the 'self' of a patriotic imperial subject and humble supplicant to the God introduced to him by the colonial powers. Reflecting on the sermon, he captures the symbolism of power evoked by the British royal authorities within the framework established by the Almighty God, 'the Lord of Lord's and King of Kings'.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, his representation of the 'Coronation of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey, London' (diary entries of May 26, 1953 and July 9, 1953) conveys his reflective acceptance of his status of a colonial subject as endorsed by God. The self that Wokoma constructs and projects is that which not only clearly expresses his identity as an African who has substantial admiration for the elements of colonial modernity—including Christianity and imperial political power—but is also aware of the implications of such massive landmarks of the modern, 20th century world, as the unprecedented World War II, particularly for the African.

The above interpretation of the social undercurrents of Wokoma's self-construction is somewhat illuminated by Bridgette Glaser's detailed investigation of the origins of the capitalization of the *self* and the impact of the subjective in the autobiographical writings of the 17th century. Glaser's attempt at linking the public social textures of a highly explosive historical period in the Europe of the 1800s as they relate to the tendency of the

¹⁰⁷As Francis Trevelyan Miller puts it in his *History of World War II* (Philadelphia, p.a.: Universal Book and Bible House, 1945 [p.4]), 'the cost of World War II in human lives on all fronts, civilian and military is estimated as high as fifty million'.

¹⁰⁸Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box II, 1981-1950, August 24, 1941.

individual to find succour and existential meaning through a recourse to the self, especially on the platform of the diary—a form of writing whose structures are built on confidentiality and secrecy—somewhat speaks to Wokoma’s enterprise as a diarist attempting to construct the self of African modernity. Glaser highlights such developments as the ‘crisis of religion’, the emergence of avant garde philosophical and political theory, ‘social changes and civil disorder’, among others, as predicating ‘the turn towards the self in writing’.¹⁰⁹ According to her, ‘the experience of civil strife, of familial and domestic upheaval, possibly of exile and the threat of poverty and undoubtedly of great uncertainty and fear surely amount to ample reasons for a preoccupation with the self’.¹¹⁰ Glaser contends that ‘there can be [...] no doubt about the fact that the political turbulences of the time deeply influenced the lives of the [...] writers and compelled them to re-evaluate their existence’.¹¹¹ Such features of African modernity in the first half of the 20th century, including the religious, political, social, cultural and economic revolutions to which Wokoma bore witness, deeply informed his life and his sense of self. Thus the modern identity which we attribute to him is a product of the space of relevance which he carved out for himself in an African society in colossal transition, and which manifests in both the private and the public domains.

1.4 Methodology and Conceptual Framework

In examining Wokoma’s construction of African modernity in his diaries, I analyse his presentation of the private and public selves by adopting a methodology which centralizes the critical place of the individual self in the general notion of modernity. This framework may have been formulated largely on the strength of western traditions of modernity, but I extend it to my reading of Wokoma’s presentation of African modernity in his diaries. In other words, I build my argument around the premise that Wokoma’s representation of modernity proceeds directly from his successful construction

¹⁰⁹Brigitte Glaser, *The Creation of the Self in Autobiographical Forms of Writing in Seventeenth-Century England: Subjectivity and Self-Fashioning in Memoirs, Diaries and Letters*, (Heidelberg: Winter, 2001), p. 26.

¹¹⁰Glaser, p. 27.

¹¹¹Glaser, pp. 27-28.

of the modern self, bearing in mind that the idea of the individual self or the 'individual' is one of the core ethos of modernity.

I set out to demonstrate with the evidence of Wokoma's diaries that it is the consciousness of the central place of the self that provides the undercurrent for 20th century African modernity. Linda Tredennick, in her highlighting of the critical place of selfhood in modernity, insists that 'there is still no single issue more central to modern studies today than the definition and history of identity'.¹¹² Similarly, Olufemi Taiwo contends that in the discourse of modernity, 'the preferred principle of social ordering is that almost everything else is understood in terms of how well or ill it serves the interest of the individual'.¹¹³ Taiwo further inscribes the primacy of the self on the historical concept of modernity: 'although it is true that there was some recognition of the individual in pre-modern epochs, it is in the modern epoch that the individual is not merely supreme. Whatever detracts from the rights of the individual is—precisely for that reason—to be rejected'.¹¹⁴ It is the sense of the supremacy of the 'self' that drove the various constitutive movements of 'Western' modernity—the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Puritanism, Romanticism, among others. I argue that it is in the same vein that the premium on the individual self legitimizes the constitutive sites of African colonial modernity.

This thesis therefore argues that in the construction of the African modern in his diaries, Wokoma presents a distinction between the private self and the public self. To read Wokoma's presentation of these selves as separate domains of modernity, I rely on such social psychology-based interpretations as William B. Swan, Jr and Jennifer Bosson's distinction between 'personal self-views' and 'social self-views' as respective frameworks for discussing the 'private self' and the 'public self'. There is also Constantine Sekides, Lowell Gaertner and Erin M. O'Mara's *individual self* which 'highlights one's unique

¹¹²Tredennick, 'Exteriority in Milton and Puritan Life Writing', p. 159.

¹¹³Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 101.

¹¹⁴Taiwo, p. 101.

side’, and *Collective Self* which ‘highlights one’s intergroup side’.¹¹⁵ Examining Wokoma’s presentation of the private and the public as opposite spheres provides the platform to analyze the modern quality of the separate selves against the background of the discursive modes of Puritanism, history and the culture of taste. Even though these discursive modes or modern identities individually seem to tilt to either the private, for instance in Puritanism; or the public, for instance, history and the culture of taste, it becomes critical to also appraise their other sides.

In adopting these theorizations of the separateness of the private and the public selves in my reading of Wokoma’s African modernity, I establish their respective individual connections to modernity. For instance, in inscribing the modernity of the private self, Peter Heehs states that ‘one of the main components of the modern idea of the self is interiority or inwardness, the feeling that there is a personal inner space that we alone can have access to’.¹¹⁶ I therefore examine the ‘interiority’ of Wokoma’s African modern self across the above-listed discursive modes. I do the same with his presentation of the public self, especially in the consciousness that theorists of modernity like Jurgen Habermas have highlighted the ‘public sphere’ as the supreme domain of the modern society,¹¹⁷ and literary scholars like Stephen Greenblatt have talked about fashioning ‘a characteristic address to the world’.¹¹⁸ These landmark submissions of the critical place of the ‘exterior’ domains provide me with a framework with which to establish the modernity of Wokoma’s public, or social self, across the three discursive modes.

Even though examining Wokoma’s presentation of the private and the public selves as distinct compartments of the modern African identity is a productive enterprise for me, I argue that my investigation of the modernity of

¹¹⁵Constantine Sekidis, Lowell Gaertner and Erin M O’ Mara, ‘Individual Self, Collective Self: Hierarchical Ordering of the Tripartite Self’, *Psychological Studies*, 56. 1 (2011) 98-107 (p.98).

¹¹⁶Peter Heehs, *Writing the Self: Diaries, Memoirs, and the History of the Self* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.3.

¹¹⁷See for instance, Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Square: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: MIT & Polity, 1992), p. 3.

¹¹⁸Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.2.

the private-public intersections provide a fuller picture of African modernity. I take the position that in Wokoma's presentation of the modern African identity in his diaries, there is no rigid, absolute demarcating line between the private and the public selves, but a platform of possibilities of complementarity and complementarity, what Paula R. Backscheider describes as 'boundaries' that 'are infinitely permeable'.¹¹⁹ As highlighted earlier in this chapter, I consider Wokoma's public-exterior a veritable material for reflection within his private-interior, just as I consider his 'social' as product of his 'personal'.

In my reading of the interplay of the interior and exterior of Wokoma's African modernity in his diaries, I rely on frameworks provided by the literature on the interconnectedness of the private and the public identities. For instance, I invoke Jacob Burckhardt's landmark 1897 submission about modernity emerging from the 'mel[ting] into air' of the 'veil' separating the 'subjective' and the 'objective' during the Renaissance¹²⁰ in my analysis of Wokoma's diaries. I also subscribe to a number of the varying interpretations Burckhardt's viewpoint seemed to have spurned, including that of Jurgen Habermas, who writes about the ways in which the 'public sphere' remains a part of the 'private realm'.¹²¹ For instance, my essential definition of Wokoma's modern self is that of a deeply introverted, intellectual and emotional persona leaning heavily towards the private. However, as evident in the diaries, such robust interiority also serves his profile as a modern preacher—and as a public figure—well. As Backscheider also puts it, 'in the solitariness of the creative act and in the expression of deep, private feelings, often about the 'private' sphere, epistles to the public are composed'.¹²² I will therefore analyze the modernity of the intersection of Wokoma's private and public selves in each of three themes—Puritanism, history and the culture of taste.

¹¹⁹Paula R. Backscheider, 'Introduction', *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Timothy Dystal (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp.1-21 (p.1).

¹²⁰Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York: Modern Library, 1954), p.100.

¹²¹Peter Hohendahl and Patricia Russian, 'Jurgen Habermas: The Public Sphere', in *New German Critique*, 3 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 45-48.

¹²²Backscheider, 'Introduction', p. 17.

By far the most important materials for this research are Wokoma's diaries, written almost without break from 1915 to 1965. These diaries are of course, the foundational texts in the investigation of the character of Wokoma's modern self. Particularly, the diary genre, as an essentially private document—arguably the most personal of all the life-writing forms—remains one of the most accurate instruments for gauging the phenomena of self and identity, two of the most important themes in the study of modernity, and scholars have used them as such over time. For instance, Andrew Cambers notes their use in Christian religious scholarship: 'Spiritual diaries and autobiographies are the foundations upon which the historiographical edifices of early modern religious practice and selfhood have been built'.¹²³ Such scholars as Max Weber and Peter Lake have used diaristic materials as evidence of internalization and interiority, in particular, in the history of Calvinism and Puritanism'.¹²⁴ Apart from the concept of the Christian or the Puritan self, which Wokoma's diaries fully explore, there are rich possibilities of their engagement with other private 'selves' such as the 'Romantic', and 'the intellectual'.

As I will show in the subsequent ones, Wokoma's diaries are a mine of invaluable evidence on the development of many aspects of the Niger Delta, Southern Nigerian, Nigerian and African modern self and society. The diaries bear eloquent testimony to Wokoma's remarkable sensitivity to the passing times in terms of the wealth of material they provide for far-reaching 'public' research in the cultural, historical, sociological and political domains. I will adopt Jochen Hellbeck's 'cultural historical approach' in the interpretation of the significance of Wokoma's diaries as a document that provides valid information on an important socio-historical epoch, and insight into how a people's individual and collective existence was constructed. According to Hellbeck, this approach demonstrates 'how categories such as history, self, and privacy, often accepted as an unquestioned syntax of the diary across time

¹²³Andrew Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720', *Journal of British Studies*, 46.4 (October 2007), 796-825. (p. 789).

¹²⁴For instance, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2001).

and space, are constructions of an age, highly malleable in meaning and identifiable only through careful contextualized analysis'.¹²⁵

The idea of 'contextualized analysis' surely suggests the imperative of several other kinds of materials for this thesis, as supporting material to the central text of Wokoma's diaries. Thus, equally important to me, especially as categories of life-writing, are his correspondences, several of which he made duplicates of, which I have gratefully found. Apart from their profoundly informative quality, they are an abiding indication of his outstanding inclination towards enlightened documentation of any kind, in general, and towards his own perception of 'life-writing' in particular. Among his surviving letters are a specifically highly revealing collection of between 1919 and 1924. I have also found a delightful assortment of other personal documents—his notebooks, his sermons, his speeches and addresses, his account books, even a stack of pictures. Because I consider these as all forms of Wokoma's life-writing, complimentary and supplementary to the diary, I will use them as primary texts where necessary.

The secondary materials available for this research are also significant. Among them is a rough manuscript of a semi-biography of Wokoma and his wife, Mercy Adayin, with the title 'Soldiers in the Parsonage: A True Story of Faith, Sacrifice and Courage in Southern Nigeria, 1849-1968' written by their grandson Odein Ajumogobia.¹²⁶ The driving idea behind Mr Ajumogobia's biographical project, begun in 2016, is to determine the extent to which they contributed to the development of the Anglican Church in not just their native Niger Delta, but also the entire Southern Nigeria. Ajumogobia's effort is probably a book-length extension of a previous piece written by his mother, Mrs Florence Inetubo Ajumogobia, Wokoma and Mercy's only surviving daughter until her death in 2001, with the title 'A Brief Sketch of the Life and Work of the Late Rev. Canon Atkinson Mbrenagogo Wokoma, J.P.'. This short but important source of firsthand information about the couple was probably produced in the early 1970s as a posthumous tribute

¹²⁵Jochen Hellbeck, 'The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response', *The Russian Review*, 66. 4 (October, 2014), 621-629, (p.621).

¹²⁶Expected from Farafina (Lagos, Nigeria) in 2022.

to them following their respective deaths in June 1968.¹²⁷ Even though not extensive, this piece by arguably Wokoma's closest earthly relative, serves as a reliable validation of some of the major facts of his life that would otherwise have been contested.

Only two of the very important secondary materials are now in print. One of them is a rough book of Church history that was published in 2008 to mark the 100th Anniversary of St Michael's (Anglican) Church, Buguma, Wokoma's home church. This book is entitled *The Century of St Michael's (Anglican) Church Buguma City, 1908-2008, and the Saints Triumphant (The Odyssey of a Church and its Patrons): 100 Years of Successful Evangelism and Missions Work in Kalabari Kingdom*.¹²⁸ Among the individuals profiled in this book for their contributions to the Church are Wokoma and, his wife, Mercy. The other published piece is the very recent one-page 50th anniversary memorial tribute of his death that appeared in two Nigerian national newspapers, *Guardian* and *Vanguard*, on June 19, 2018.

The other secondary resources include interviews and conversations with descendants and others who actually knew Wokoma. Among these is his only surviving child, Dr Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma, who trained as a surgeon at Queen's University, Belfast in the 1950s and 1960s, who died at 90 in January 2020. Others are Mr Odein Ajumogobia himself; Mr Isaac Udoh, who lived with the Wokomas as a servant between 1962 and 1968, who retains a strong emotional connection to the events he witnessed in the parsonage, especially in the last few years of the sage's life, and who maintains a very close relationship with the family; Bridget Inko Tariah, a cousin to Wokoma's wife, Mercy Adayin; and Benoni Wokoma, Wokoma's grandson from a youthful affair that produced a daughter in 1915.¹²⁹ I would use these secondary sources as supporting materials in the interpretation of Wokoma's

¹²⁷According to family sources, Wokoma died on June 2, 1968 at the Degema General Hospital after weeks in coma, and Mercy, 'Mama Biafra', was assassinated on June 19, 1968 by Nigerian federal troops on a mission to 'liberate' Kalabari land from Biafran occupation, on whose list of targets she was prominent.

¹²⁸The contributions of Wokoma and his wife are profiled between pages 64 and 68.

¹²⁹As captured in Wokoma's diaries, the lady in question, Mary Calabar Horsefall, gave birth to a baby girl on October 22, 1915.

construction of the private-public in his diaries and other life-writings. They would serve to corroborate or to contest Wokoma's assertions and statements—it is interesting to note that none of the people spoken to had read Wokoma's diaries at the time of interview, including his closest relatives.

Of immense importance too would be cultural, historical, political and socio-anthropological researches in the form of articles and books, which would help situate Wokoma's construction of his public self in the frame of African colonial modernity. These would serve as 'public' evidence to draw out the social and political relevance of Wokoma's life-writing, and tie up the loose ends of Wokoma's narrative, particularly as an autobiographical portrait.

This thesis on Wokoma's work is my own response to Irina Paperno's simple but thought-provoking question, 'What can be done with diaries?'¹³⁰ Other critics, before and after Paperno, duly situating the genre within the context of the construction of modern selfhood across cultures, have seemingly responded to this question from diverse points of view that however converge in two main streams—diaries are documents with which the author converses with his 'private' self; and diaries are agencies through which the author addresses his 'public' self. It is within these two contexts of the private and the public that diaries have been deployed in far-reaching multi-disciplinary research projects—in religion, social sciences, business, technology, medicine, geography, among others. Following from the above, my own submission, with specific reference to the life-writing of Atkinson Mbrenagogo Wokoma, is to consider them as documents of both private and public sensitivities, which demand analyses according to what they say concerning their author's place in African colonial modernity.

An important part of my methodology is to establish that Wokoma's diaries, in the extended series of the fifty-year stretch between 1915 and 1965, during which time he produced at least one 'diary book' per year, constitutes one single, continuous narrative of development and should be

¹³⁰Paperna, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries'? p.561

considered as ‘one piece’ of text. I will therefore adopt the same strategy as Jerome Boyd Maunsell in his reading of Susan Sontag’s diaries where ‘the diaries form a prolonged and ongoing narrative of self creation’.¹³¹ One implication of this is that if the construction of Wokoma’s modern self is a product of a protracted character-building process, the diaries—in which this continuous process is recorded—would have to read as a single autobiographical text. To what extent is Wokoma able to establish a narrative identity for himself by maintaining narrative coherence in his diary series? In other words, how do these diaries form a meaningful ‘extended’ story of his developing self across *several* books? How can these diaries be read as a *single* book with a coherent structure?

Gratefully, scholars have been able to establish the undisputed ‘narrative’ quality and integrity of the diary, and Wokoma’s life writing is quite illustrative of these theorizations. For instance, in characterizing the diary as some form of a ‘serial narrative’, Catherine Delafield argues that ‘the diary and the letter represent fragments building into a life or narrative of the self’.¹³² For Delafield, the ‘fragmented’ nature of the diary does not constrict its narrative capabilities, because there is an ‘intersection between the serialized novel and the serialized life characterized by the diary’,¹³³ and ‘the distinctive tropes of the diary model can be compared with the serialized novel’.¹³⁴ These tropes include the first person narrator which provides ‘unmediated [...] and therefore validated experience’; the dramatized ‘occasion and location for writing’; and ‘the physical shape and preservation of the diary [which] become part of the diarist’s evaluation of her life’.¹³⁵ A ‘cognitive’ appraisal of Wokoma’s diaries would also affirm their own possibilities as ‘serial narratives’.

¹³¹Jerome Boyd Maunsell, ‘The Writer’s Diary as Device: The Making of Susan’ in *Reborn: Early Diaries 1947-1963*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 35.1 (Fall 2011), p.1-20 (p.2).

¹³²Catherine Delafield, *Women’s Diaries as Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Survey: Ashgate, 2019) p. 101.

¹³³Delafield, p. 105.

¹³⁴Delafield, p. 101.

¹³⁵Delafield, p. 105.

On the whole, this thesis interrogates Wokoma's presentation of the private and public elements of 'the developing self' in the articulation of a modern African identity for himself. Deploying the central analytical instrument of the *bildungsroman*—a term denoting the modern coming-of-age story—I examine how Wokoma's presentation of psychological and physical development and maturity can be read as an illustration of Franco Moretti's notion of 'interiority' and 'mobility' as symbolic manifestations of human development and maturity.¹³⁶ By framing Wokoma's entire diary-series as a *single* extended narrative of the developing modern self across the domains or sites of 'Puritanism', 'history' and a 'culture of taste', I attempt to entrench the sub-metaphor of 'life journey' which provides a connecting structure for the chapters of this thesis in the analysis of Wokoma's construction of the 'developing' self of African modernity.

1.5 Summary of Chapters

Chapter One introduces the topic of the thesis. It also introduces the diarist, who is the subject of the thesis, Atkinson Wokoma, a Niger Delta priest of the Anglican Church, who served in the evangelization programme of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Southern Nigeria in the first half of the 20th century. It also gives the historical, political, cultural and intellectual contexts which predicated Wokoma's engagement with the diary. The Chapter also provides the thesis statement and the main research and sub-research questions. It also provides the theoretical framework/literature review, which adopts seminal statements on the relationship between modernity, self-identity and life-writing forms such as the diary. It also serves to define my overall argument in the thesis and my theoretical and methodological approach to it.

Chapter Two analyses Wokoma's modern developing self and emphasizes the Christian/spiritual aspect of the metaphor of his 'life journey'. It examines the extent to which Wokoma's presentation of the private and the public spheres of his 'Puritanic self' constructs an identity of African modernity. It establishes a historical and spiritual connection between the Puritan movement

¹³⁶Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), p.5

of 16th and 17th centuries Europe and Wokoma's 20th century Church of England-sponsored missionary Christianity, both of which affirm the place of the spiritual self in the construction of modernity, in the western and in the colonial African sense, respectively. I analyze how Wokoma's interiority establishes an identity of African colonial modernity. I also investigate how Wokoma's presentation of the social aspects of the Puritanic self, manifesting, for instance, in the public settings of sermons, evangelical journeys and Church administrative roles constructs an image of spiritual modernity. Finally, I examine what the intersection of the private and the public in Wokoma's construction of the Puritanic self says about his modernity.

Chapter Three interrogates Wokoma's 'developing' character in terms of his increasing social, political, and 'historical' awareness. It examines his presentation of 'private history' and 'public history' in his diaries and how he constructs an identity of African modernity in the process. It establishes the character of private history, not just as what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson call a private 'history of the writing/speaking object',¹³⁷ but also as what John Moran describes as the 'history of everyday domestic private life'.¹³⁸ The chapter also establishes the element of 'public history' that I adopt in reading Wokoma's diaries in Karin Barber's description of 'highly educated and publicly visible figures that dominate political histories of Africa'.¹³⁹ I explore how Wokoma entrenches a modern African identity by presenting the modernity of both private and public history, as separate spheres, and as an interplay of realms.

Chapter Four extends Wokoma's presentation of social and cultural history in his diaries, by examining his 'developing' modern identity of high culture and social refinement. It argues that Wokoma's construction of the private and public selves of a culture of taste inscribes a modern identity for him. Here I foreground the fact that taste, sensibility and refinement are an integral part of African colonial modernity. I also contend that the self of the culture of

¹³⁷Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.13

¹³⁸John Moran, 'Private Lives, Public Histories: The Diary in Twentieth- Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 54.1 (2015): 1-20 (p.1).

¹³⁹Barber, 'Introduction', (p.1).

taste consists of the private self of ‘interiority’—or the psychological structures of sensibility—and the public aspects of the demonstration, or the ‘performance’ of high culture. I also examine how Wokoma’s portrayal of his private and public selves constructs a modern African identity, both as independent realms of existence, and as an intersection of both spheres.

Chapter Five, the concluding chapter, summarizes the main argument of the entire thesis, namely that Atkinson Wokoma’s construction of the private and public selves in his diaries articulate a modern identity for him. It also summarizes the degree to which the sub-arguments—presented through a detailed analysis of the modern sites and domains of ‘Puritanism’, ‘history’ and ‘the culture of taste’—convincingly answers the sub-research questions. The chapter reviews the effectiveness of my approach to reading the modernity of Wokoma’s private and public selves, first as independent spheres of existence, then as intersecting and or interdependent realms. It briefly reviews the success of my application of theoretical frameworks centralizing the modern identity and its constituent private and public categories. It also affirms the extent to which the thesis benefitted from theoretical and scholarly statements on each of the three discursive modes forming the three analytical chapters, all of which have clear implications for the modern private and public selves. The chapter concludes by inscribing the significance of the thesis in life-writing scholarship and research of the archival kind in Nigeria and Africa.

1.6 Conclusion for Chapter One

In this introductory chapter, I have defined my topic, in terms of the diary form’s role as a mediator and projector of modern selfhood and Atkinson Wokoma’s construction of African colonial modernity through it. I have established, with the evidence of Wokoma’s diaries, the genre’s important connections with the development of African literacy and literature, particularly through the instrumentality of the missionary enterprise. I have also amplified the main research question—How does Wokoma’s construction of his private and public selves in his diaries articulate a modern African identity? I developed the sub-questions, in line with the sites of African modern selfhood which Wokoma addresses—the ‘Puntanic self’, the ‘historical self’ and the self of a culture of taste. I established the cultural and intellectual contexts for the thesis by engaging the development of African

modernity, through the three dimensions of colonialism in Africa—trade, evangelical Christianity, and imperial political administration—and how they combined to produce Wokoma’s modern African self and also afforded him the intellectual and literary capacity to write diaries. I located Wokoma within the African colonial diary writing tradition and also examined the degree of his philosophical and ideological connections with other practitioners of the genre in Imperial Anglophone Africa. I problematized the subjectivity of the diarist as well as the notion of biographical truth. Finally, I developed the methodology and the conceptual framework of the thesis.

Chapter Two

The Private and the Public 'Puritanic' Selves in Wokoma's Diaries: Constructing Spiritual Identity in African Colonial Modernity

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the extent to which Wokoma's presentation of the private and the public spheres of his Puritanic self in his diaries constructs an identity of African modernity. It argues that Wokoma's work provides a platform for gauging the Christian/spiritual aspects of the emergence of African modernity, particularly through his diligent account of personal and public experiences as a 20th century CMS missionary. First, it analyzes how Wokoma's private journey of faith, as expressed in his spiritual interiority and his domestic spirituality, establishes an identity of African colonial modernity. Secondly, it investigates how Wokoma's presentation of the exterior aspects of the Puritanic self, evident, for instance, in the public impact of the Christianizing project, constructs an image of modernity. Finally, it interrogates Wokoma's presentation of the interconnection between the private and the public in his construction of a spiritual identity of African modernity.

Consistent with the already established conceptual framework for this thesis, I rely on theoretical material concerning the private and the public dimensions of the modern self in my reading of the modernity of Wokoma's Puritanic or spiritual identity. I find particularly useful in this regard, G.W.F. Hegel's distinction between such private, 'interior' categories as 'love, romanticism, the quest for the eternal salvation of the individual [...] moral convictions and conscience', on the one hand, and the social, public dimensions of 'the principles of civil society', on the other.¹ Similarly relevant will be William B. Swann, Jr and Jennifer K. Bosson's distinction between 'personal self-views' and 'social self-views' as classes of identity,² and Constantine Sekides, Lowel Gaertner and Erin M. O' Mara's dichotomizing

¹Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 84.

²Swann Jr, and Bosson, 'Identity Negotiation: A Theory of Self and Social Interaction', p. 448.

of the 'individual self' and the 'collective self'.³ In foregrounding the modernity of Wokoma's presentation of the intersections between the private and the public spiritual selves, I draw upon Jürgen Habermas' conception of the 'public sphere' as a product of the 'private realm',⁴ and Richard Sennett's idea of the 'public domain' and 'the fall of the public man', in which the 'private realm' gives 'a new focus for emotional energies' to the 'public sphere'.⁵ There is still Paula R. Backscheider's theorization of the interconnection between the public and the private, in which the 'boundaries' separating both spheres are 'infinitely permeable'.⁶

I adopt the term 'Puritan'—and its variants of 'Puritanism', 'Puritanic' and 'Puritanist'—as a guiding metaphor for my discussion in this chapter for three reasons. First, it vividly characterizes Wokoma's kind of Christian spirituality, especially as ideologically conditioned by the European Reformation and the Protestant ethic. Second, it connects Wokoma to the history of the diary-writing traditions of Europe, especially as initiated by the Puritans for whom the genre served as a 'pietist mirror',⁷ and as Andrew Cambers puts it, 'as a key component of Puritan divinity'.⁸ I therefore attempt to establish a strong similarity between how Wokoma utilizes the diary in 20th century missionary Africa and how the Puritans before him deployed the form, in terms of what Max Weber describes as helping the faithful to 'feel' the 'pulse' of his faith.⁹ Thirdly, just as the Puritan spirit was central to the formal emergence of western modernity, Wokoma's type of Christian spirituality—especially as it emphasizes the supremacy of the salvation of the individual self—also becomes crucial in the emergence of African colonial modernity.

Even though the foregoing may suggest that I use 'Puritanism' as merely a symbolic referent, I intend to operationalize the expression in the full awareness that there is a concrete historical link between the Puritan

³Sekides, Gaertner and O' Mara, 'Individual Self,' p. 98.

⁴Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, p. 3.

⁵Richard Sennet, *Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1977), p. 4.

⁶Backscheider, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁷Paperno, 'What Can be Done with Dairies?', p. 562.

⁸Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly', p. 789.

⁹Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 84.

movement of the 16th and 17th centuries Europe and the missionary enterprise of the African colonial era, which has implication for Wokoma's framing of his spiritual modernity. The type of Christianity which Wokoma received and eventually propagated in 20th century Africa—through the agency of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the evangelical arm of the Church of England—had its backgrounds in the Protestant movements which followed Martin Luther's Reformation.¹⁰ As John de Gruchy has argued, the Protestant missionaries who brought the Christian faith to Africa 'were the heirs to Evangelical Revival, an event which transformed Christianity in Britain in the eighteenth century and led to the formation of the missionary societies'.¹¹ The advent of Protestant Christianity, particularly of the Anglican creed, was therefore, a direct offshoot of the spiritual ferment and sustained the evangelical attitude of the Puritans. This accounts for why Jacob Ade Ajayi describes the Christianization of Africa, spear-headed by the CMS from about the 1850s, as 'the new Puritanism of the Evangelical Revival'.¹²

I set out in this chapter to examine the extent to which Wokoma constructs his modern spiritual identity by engaging the fundamental ethos of Puritanism, chief of which was personal salvation, in which the individual is responsible for his own cosmological fate, and has every opportunity to make the crucial choice between spiritual liberation and eternal damnation.¹³ The Puritan link to the modern self therefore places its theological emphasis on individual piety as opposed to the pre-Reformation communal belief. As Nathaniel Warne puts it, the Puritans were 'the impetus behind a massive shift in history' which set up modernity by 'highlighting the individualistic nature of the spiritual life they promoted'.¹⁴ For Warne, by effecting a radical break from the pre-

¹⁰(1517-1555) The major intellectual and spiritual event that engendered Christian modernity by breaking Roman Catholic authority and underscoring the priesthood of the individual self.

¹¹John de Gruchy, *Christianity and the Modernization of South Africa: A Documentary History*, Vol. II (Pretoria: South Africa, 2009), pp. 2-3.

¹²J.F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite* (London: Longmans, 1965), p.75

¹³Nathaniel Warne, 'Emotions and the Development of Virtue in Puritan Thought: An Investigation of Puritan Friendship', in *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (London & New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), pp. 193-212 (p.193).

¹⁴Warne, p.193.

Reformation communal spirituality vested in Papal authority, which entrenched ‘the penitential system of Roman Catholicism’, the Puritans made a decisive contribution to the emergence of the modern self.¹⁵ As we will see in Wokoma’s self-representation in his diaries, these ethos of individual spirituality were preeminent in the CMS missionary endeavor in Africa—considered the most important influence in the modernization of the continent¹⁶—in the 19th and 20th centuries. According to Olufemi Taiwo, the missionaries ‘canvassed a Protestant-inflected Christianity in which, thanks to Martin Luther, salvation was not a product of communal striving nor could it be obtained vicariously through the good deeds or faith of any collective entity’.¹⁷

I am also concerned in this chapter with how Wokoma’s modern spiritual portrait is illustrated in his diligent patronage of the diary genre, in the manner of the Puritans of other cultures and climes. I set out to investigate how in presenting the 20th century African Puritanist creed in his diaries, he establishes a platform for the construction of his modern selfhood by harmonizing the fundamental principles of his Protestant spirituality, summarized in his belief in the salvation of the individual self, and his total allegiance to the cardinal Lutheran Reformation mantra of ‘*Sola fide, Sola gratia, Sola scriptura*—faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone.¹⁸ As Rebecca Steinitz observes about the British tradition, ‘the diary served as a site not just to record spiritual and moral activity, but to enact it, in particular via prayer and self-improvement’.¹⁹ The dramatization of the spirituality and morality of the Puritan, as we see clearly in Wokoma’s diaries, provides reflective parameters of self-judgment, and continuous self-assessment.²⁰ It is this idea of the diary’s significance that Patrick Collinson contextualizes when he

¹⁵Warne, p.193.

¹⁶See for instance Olufemi Taiwo’s *How Colonialism*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁷Olufemi Taiwo’s *How Colonialism*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁸John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* ed. by John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 1-16 (p.2)

¹⁹Rebecca Steinitz, ‘Time, Space, and Gender in the Nineteenth-Century British Diary (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.29.

²⁰ Patrick Collinson, *English Puritanism* (London: Historical Association, 1983), p. 36

argues that ‘there is no better way to encounter the mentality of Puritanism than to read the diaries in which Rogers of Wethersfield and Ralph Josselin of Earls Colne, both Essex ministers, though of different generations; kept their “heart and ways” under constant review’.²¹ In much the same vein, Wokoma’s diaries present a veritable medium of encountering ‘the mentality’ of 20th century African Puritanism, particularly as it concerns the construction of African colonial modernity.

In examining how Wokoma articulates his identity of African modernity, I read his diaries—as my conceptual framework stipulates—as one long, extended narrative of the developing self.²² Thus, as most spiritual autobiographies, Wokoma’s diary narrative is structured as a self-representation of spiritual progress and maturity of the Christian faithful. It is in the sense of the emphasis on the development of the modern African self along the lines of ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ spirituality, that Wokoma establishes his place, first as a ‘subject’, and then as an ‘agent’ of missionary modernity in Africa—in the private and the public domains. Furthermore, Wokoma’s inscription of his spiritual development in the construction of his African colonial modernity also centralizes ‘the journey motif’, a foundational element of the genre of spiritual autobiography, where his diary-narrative could be read in terms of the ways in which the ‘inward’ and the ‘outward’ journeys of Christian spirituality influenced African colonial modernity, especially in the first half of the 20th century.

In his presentation of the private and the public dimensions of the spiritual self, therefore, Wokoma’s diary-narrative encapsulates the notion of pilgrimage, which Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe identifies as ‘the principal metaphor running through Puritan spirituality and devotional practice’, which denotes not just a physical ‘geographical’ journey ‘but also, on a deeper level,

²¹Collinson, *English Puritanism*, p. 36.

²²This is in view of Jerome Boyd Maunsell’s contention that ‘diaries form a prolonged and ongoing narrative of self creation’ (‘The Writer’s Diary as Device: The Making of Susan Sontag in *Reborn*. Early Diaries 1947-1963’ p.2).

the journey of the soul to God'.²³ My interpretation of Wokoma's construction of his spiritual self will, in some sense, take the form of private/public journey of development on the high road of African modernity. Kerstin W. Shand, in her *Journeys Within: The Contemporary Spiritual Autobiography* (2016), highlights the 'inward' and the 'outward' dimensions of the Christian 'journey' as follows:

In pilgrimages, definite points of departure are given and definite points of arrival are visualized, points that are often as concrete and material as they are symbolic and spiritual. In pilgrim narratives, inter-personal and intra-personal aspects are important. A pilgrimage narrative, then, may be an account of a journey towards a real or a utopian future point. Although it is an outward, physical pilgrimage, it is always and primarily also an inner voyage.²⁴

Even though Wokoma's diaries present the inward and the outward narrative of his progress as a pilgrim,²⁵ emphasizing his maturity as a Christian across the different phases of his life, they also underscore the progressive journey of the African continent to Christianity-inspired modernity. The journey symbolism, in the case of Wokoma and his construction of the African modern identity, therefore addresses the 'spiritual journey' or 'pilgrimage' of an African, *and Africa*, from the darkness of 'godless heathenism' to the emancipating light of the Christian gospel, especially along the lines of Ade Ajayi's contention that missionaries 'tended to regard practically everything in the old society as somehow tainted by heathenism'.²⁶

In the three main sections that follow, I undertake a three-pronged examination of how Wokoma constructs an identity of Puritanic modernity for himself in his diaries. First, I argue that his presentation of his private Puritanic self establishes an identity of African modernity. I do this by foregrounding the strategies he employs in his presentation of his private spirituality as expressed in the interiority of the confessional imagination, in

²³Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p.54.

²⁴Kerstin W. Shand, *Journeys Within: The Contemporary Spiritual Autobiography* (Huddinge: Sodertorn University Library, 2016), pp. 89-90.

²⁵Especially in symbolic terms, where his life can be described as a 'pilgrimage' of sorts.

²⁶Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, p. 77.

the articulation of the spiritual domesticity of the modern Christian home and in the sacralisation of the ordinary, the immediate and the mundane. Second, I analyze the manner in which Wokoma's presentation of his public spiritual self erects a portrait of African modernity. I achieve this by examining his production of the political self, the educational self and the cultural self—public selves which emerge from the missionary encounter as a civilizing project. Thirdly, I investigate the ways in which Wokoma's presentation of the intersections of the private and the public in his diaries articulate an identity of modernity. I set about this by investigating the ways in which the private domain serves as the source of the material for public performance or expression on the one hand, and how the public provides material for the introspective interior, on the other.

2.1 Wokoma's Diaries and the Private Modernity of the African Spiritual Self

In this section, I examine how Wokoma constructs an identity of spiritual modernity through his self-representation of the private domains of his Puritanic selfhood. In centralizing the link between the private dimensions of Wokoma's Christian experience and African colonial modernity, I highlight the fact that the 'personal' and the 'subjective' are key elements of the modern self, in illustration of Hegel's view that 'the principle of the modern world is freedom of subjectivity'.²⁷ I therefore investigate how Wokoma articulates a modern identity by entrenching the private dimensions of his spiritual selfhood. I aim to underscore the strategies through which Wokoma depicts his diary-narrative as one extensive, private history of his spiritual self, given the diary's essential character as, according to William Matthews, the product of 'private historians writing for their own private and future reading'.²⁸

I am therefore interested in how Wokoma 'privatizes' the spiritual in the process of constructing a modern Puritanic identity—where, as Louise Kretzchmer puts it, 'privatization means the limitation of the Christian gospel

²⁷Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 286.

²⁸William Matthews, 'The Diary: A Neglected Genre', *The Sewanee Review*, 85.2 (Spring 1977), 286-300, (p. 296).

to the private, spiritual concerns of the individual'.²⁹ Wokoma may indeed not totally subscribe to what Habermas theorizes as 'the institutional separation of the Church and the state',³⁰ or 'of religion and politics',³¹ which can be interpreted in this context as the distinction between the personal and the public significance of the modern spiritual self—for Wokoma himself is, in several senses, a symbol of the intertwining of the personal and the public domains of evangelical Christianity. He, nevertheless, sufficiently demonstrates the authenticity of the modernity of his private selfhood in his self-representation through the 'privatization' of the Faith. Wokoma's attempt to fashion a spiritual modernity by privatizing the modes of supplication and worship in his diaries illustrates Stephen Hart's exploration of the patterns of the manifestation of the notion of 'privatization' in modern American religious life. For Hart, these patterns include: 'the act of experiencing worship [and] enjoying a vital spiritual life [...] without the benefit of normal churches and without having to deal directly with other people'; 'the idea that religion is concerned only with the inner life of each individual'; and the tendency to restrict religious transactions to 'our person-to-person dealings with each other in private settings such as family and friends'.³²

For instance, in the articulation of his modern Puritanic selfhood, Wokoma exemplifies Hart's theorization of the concept of privatization of faith as concerned 'with the inner life of each individual'³³ by foregrounding the Puritan theology of reflective inwardness as a central theme of his diaries, where the charter of belief must be legitimized by 'private experience' of the spiritual. For example, he asserts as follows in a diary draft of a sermon meant to be delivered on Sunday 30th August, 1942: 'It is only the personal touch, the actual spiritual contact that can bring the full blessings and impress the image of the Saviour and satisfy the soul's craving'. For him, 'it is not

²⁹Louise Kretzschmar, 'The Privatization of the Christian Faith: The South African Perspective', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 38.3(1999),128-133, (p.128).

³⁰Jurgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.1 (2006),1-25 (p.3).

³¹Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', p. 4.

³²Stephen Hart, 'Privatization in American Religion and Society', *Sociological Analysis*, 47.4 (Winter 1987), 319-334 (p.320).

³³Hart, 'Privatization in American Religion and Society', p. 320.

enough to hear Jesus only through others no matter how vividly and beautifully He may be portrayed to us by them [...] Spiritual experience can never be conveyed to others. They must be experienced'.³⁴ Wokoma's attitude to the privatization of the gospel as demonstrated through the centralizing of the individual's engagement with the 'spiritual experience', as outlined above, is akin to what Stephen Hart describes in terms of 'each person [making] a religious framework of his or her own'.³⁵ This can also be read in the sense in which Wokoma frames his private spiritual sensibilities in what M.H. Abrams, describing St Augustine's *Confessions* as one extensive dramatization of the intensity of inward piety, calls 'the transfer [of] the locus of the primary concern with evil from the providential history of mankind to the providential history of the individual self'.³⁶

I also investigate the manner in which Wokoma constructs an identity of Puritanic modernity in his diaries by erecting a convincing portrait of private domestic spirituality within locations that enable what Hart refers to as 'our person to person dealings with each other in private settings such as with family and friends [that] is not concerned with the issues that arise in the public domain'.³⁷ Wokoma's articulation of his identity of Puritanic modernity through the privatization or 'domestication' of the Christian faith across his diary-narrative centralizes the presence of Christ within the modern Christian home and the structuring of the codes of Puritanic morality and spirituality in family, household, friendship and neighbourhood settings. According to Susan Starr Sered, domestication of religion is 'a process in which people who profess their allegiance to a wider religious tradition personalize the rituals, institutions and perhaps, even the theology of that wider system in order to safeguard the health, happiness and security of particular people with whom they are linked in relationships of caring and interdependence'.³⁸ Wokoma's

³⁴Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, August 30, 1942.

³⁵Hart, 'Privatization in American Religion and Society', p. 321.

³⁶M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1971), p.84.

³⁷Hart, 'Privatization in American Religion and Society', p. 320.

³⁸Susan Starr Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.10.

notion of private spirituality illustrates Sered's conceptualization above, for as we will see in the corresponding subsection, his depiction of the Puritanism of his domestic sphere is convincing.

2.1.1 The Interiority of Wokoma's Spiritual Modernity

In this subsection, I examine the extent to which Wokoma is able to construct his spiritual modernity in his diary-narrative by privatizing the tenets of Reformist faith in the provinces of his inner being, in terms of what I call the 'interiorizing' of his Puritanic self—the deep, direct spiritual communication between him and the Divine Being. I contend that in the African colonial/missionary context, Wokoma's spiritual interiority, as given expression to on the private platform of his diary, provides convincing evidence of his modern African selfhood, given modernity's emphasis on the construction and expression of the individuality of the self.³⁹ I argue that if the 17th century British diary, as a 'pietist mirror',⁴⁰ situated the modernity of the English Puritan self, then the 20th century African diary does the same for the modern African spiritual persona. I contend that in mediating the interiority of spiritual transactions between the African faithful and his God, the African diary, with the clear example of Wokoma, constructs an identity of African colonial modernity. Stephan F. Miescher provides an example of the famous Ghanain diarist and Presbyterian teacher-catechist, Akasease Kofi Boakye Yiadom (1910-2011), who maintained 'an educated pietist lifestyle' by patronizing his diaries as vehicles of 'introspection in the form of daily prayers and establishing a personal relationship with the Christian God'.⁴¹ I aim to establish that like Yiadom, Wokoma's diaries provide him the space to practice 'an educated pietist lifestyle'.⁴²

In many ways, therefore, Wokoma asserts the genuineness of his modern African self by foregrounding the authenticity of the spiritual interior. I read Wokoma's interiority in the light of what Ewert Cousins calls the 'inner

³⁹Warne, 'Emotions', p. 193.

⁴⁰Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, Circa 1580-1720', p. 789.

⁴¹Miescher, 'My Own Life: A.K. Boakye Yiadom's Autobiography', p.31.

⁴²Miescher, p.31.

dimension of a person called by certain traditions of “the spirit” [which] is the deepest centre of a person’.⁴³ In his presentation of the deep interiority of his direct transactions with God, Wokoma not only constructs the Puritanic identity of the African on a pilgrimage to modernity, he also tends to affirm the supremacy of the inward journey in matters of the Faith, where, according to Michael Downey, ‘Spirituality is primarily concerned with the life of the soul, the inner life, one’s prayer life’.⁴⁴ Again, as Thomas Merton puts it: ‘our real journey is interior; it is a matter of growth, and even greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts’.⁴⁵ Beyond the above, however, Wokoma’s attitude to Puritanist spiritual interiority illustrates his close connection to western traditions affirming not just the modernity of the diary, but also the modernity of interiority—including Rene Descartes centralization of ‘inwardness’ as a defining temper of the modern period through his distinction between thought and extension, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*,⁴⁶ and John Locke’s dichotomizing of *consciousness* and embodiment.⁴⁷

One strategy that Wokoma employs in the construction of the modernity of his Puritanic interiority is his engagement of the confessional mode, a significant genre of modern spiritual life-writing that thrived in the England of the 17th and the 18th centuries. Wokoma articulates an identity of African modernity in his diary-narrative by subscribing to the general aesthetics of modern confessional life-writing, inaugurated by the Romantic autobiographer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Confessions* (1782). Wokoma's presentation of a penitent, all-surrendering self engenders what Frank D. McConnel calls the 'confessional imagination', a category of the expression of modern selfhood

⁴³Ewert Cousins, ‘Preface to the Series’, in *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, 25 Vols* ed. by Ewert Cousins (New York: Cross Road, 1985), p. xiii.

⁴⁴Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1992), p. 105.

⁴⁵See William A Shannon, *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (New York: Cross Road, 1992), p.2

⁴⁶See for instance, Jean-Marc Laporte’s ‘Husserl’s Critique of Descartes’, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 23.3 (March 1963), 335-352 (p.353).

⁴⁷Jessic Leatham Wirkus, ‘John Locke’s Hands: The Tools of Embodiment’ in *An Essay Concerning Embodiment*, Proceedings of a Body of Knowledge: Embodied Cognition and the Arts Conference, CTSA UCI 8-10 Dec 2016.

that centralizes 'a metaphysics of the individual personality, a philosophy whose central methods are introspection and self-examination, along with an acute sense of the interchange between abstract structures of the self'.⁴⁸ In line with the demands of the 'confessional imagination', Wokoma engages the metaphysical, largely through the instruments of introspection and self-examination. His confessional imagination, thus, thrives without inhibition on the pages of his diary, the platform for his conversation with himself, where, as MacConnel puts it, 'the theoretical content of assertion comes to rely more on the imaginative, self-conscious act of assertion itself'.⁴⁹ For instance, on the occasion of July 4, 1947, when he wakes up from a nightmarish dream in which his wife and her imaginary lover plot to kill him by placing 'a pot of medicine in front of his door', his diary provides the sacred ground for his desperate invocation of God's protective powers: 'Lord save me from this man & this woman'. Wokoma's fundamental strategy of foregrounding his private spiritual modernity therefore is to integrate the confessional element of the Puritanist ideal, as evident in the self-evaluatory commitments of many Puritan-diarists of the 16th and 17th centuries Europe—what Effie Botonaki describes as 'the mechanism [of] self surveillance' enabled by 'a union between the individual and God'⁵⁰—into the philosophical and metaphysical aesthetics of the modern self-narrative.

In inscribing the African modernity of his Puritanic selfhood, Wokoma confesses the limitations of his mortality, especially as manifesting in his 'sinfulness', his character flaws and unrighteousness, his inability to save himself, or provide the crucial and even basic securities of his life; his feeble health and his marital challenges. He also admits his desperate need for forgiveness, mercy and grace. There are many occasions—usually at the peak of emotional stimulation—where, in affirming the African modernity of his Puritanic self, Wokoma engages the confessional element by invoking the deep interiority of spiritual introspection, either to reassess his faith, or to

⁴⁸Frank D. McConnel, *The Confessional Imagination: A Reading of Worthworth's Prelude* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.2.

⁴⁹McConnel, *The Confessional Imagination*, p.2.

⁵⁰Effie Botonaki, 'Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting and Account Keeping', *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 30.1 (1999), 3-21(p. 4.).

reactivate the charter of his personal salvation, or even to reassert his dependence and total surrender to the will and grace of the Almighty. The following instances illustrate:

May 23, 1926: I was sick and could not attend services.

May 26, 1926: Lord have mercy upon me.

May 27, 1926: Lord have mercy upon me.

June 9, 1926: Lord have mercy upon me and forgive, defend and protect me.

November 13, 1926: Lord have mercy upon me a sinner. Give me the grace to stand.

October 5, 1947: My wife continued to insult me openly as loudly as she could in Kalabari [...] Good Lord forgive and deliver me from such a terrible worry and annoyance.

As demonstrated in the examples above, Wokoma's entrenchment of his modern Puritanic interiority in his diaries benefits from what McConnel describes as the 'three acts that characterize all protestant piety [which] are indistinguishable from each other'.⁵¹ These three acts involve the 'heart, will and intellect',⁵² the 'movement' of which is, 'for the true Protestant confessant, a single act of speech'.⁵³ For McConnel, if these three elements fail to 'unite' as 'a single act of speech in the confessional experience, and rather fragment into "head-knowledge" as opposed to "heart knowledge," then the confessant knows that something is wrong, that his election is not yet complete'.⁵⁴ Wokoma, therefore, attempts to merge the 'head' and the 'heart' in his confessional imagination, so that his deep proclamation about his sinful nature and the very many weaknesses of his mortal self become, all at once, the expression of the emotions of a penitent, broken *heart*; the demonstration of the *will* to accept help by way of the divine intervention of grace and mercy; and the foregrounding of his *intellect*, not just to comprehend the Puritan theology, but also to exercise it in the literary—as well as intellectual—medium of the diary. Wokoma's construction of his modern spiritual identity through the metaphysics of the confessional activity is perhaps a colonial

⁵¹McConnel, p.4.

⁵²McConnel, p.4.

⁵³McConnel, p.4.

⁵⁴McConnel, p.4

African's questioning of the popular notion of 'the death of metaphysics'⁵⁵ in the modern era, where modernity attempts to separate what Peter Heehs calls 'the worlds of revelation and reason'.⁵⁶ Wokoma also deploys the confessional performance as a mediating element in framing his modern spiritual selfhood within the defining tenets of Protestant Christianity in the intimate space of the diary. One of these creeds of Puritan practice is the acknowledgment of the individual priesthood of everyone, where, contrary to dominant Catholic traditions, the elect no longer needed a priest to mediate between them and God in the absolution of their sins. In the entries cited above, Wokoma demonstrates an awareness of the priesthood of his individual person—one of the cardinal indicators of modernity as enabled by the Reformist faith—by presenting his confessional event as a private, direct conversation with God himself. Therefore, in his self-representation as a 20th century, colonial African version of the modern Puritan confessor, who dramatizes his direct access to the redeeming grace and mercy of God, he establishes his African spiritual modernity. According to Peter Heehs: 'In the private pages of their diaries, Puritans could confess their sins directly to God. The very act of writing granted a sort of absolution. They also could enter into covenants—solemn agreements—with their creator' and 'solemnize private vows in a spirit of great seriousness'.⁵⁷ Wokoma's diaries serve these exact purposes for him, providing a platform of purification, where he can express himself to the Supreme Divinity in an unhindered manner, especially in the dimension of what McConnell calls 'a self-ratifying statement of election [...] where the confessant leaves himself nowhere to look for his proof of salvation except within his own heart or—most crucially—within the language of his own heart'.⁵⁸ Consistent with its role in helping the elect 'feel' the 'pulse' of his faith, as Max Weber puts it, Wokoma locates 'his own heart' and the 'language of his own heart' within the pages of his diary.⁵⁹

⁵⁵McConnel, *The Confessional Imagination*, p.4

⁵⁶Heehs, *Writing the Self*, p. 80.

⁵⁷Heehs, *Writing the Self*, p. 49.

⁵⁸McConnel, *The Confessional Imagination*, p. 4.

⁵⁹Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 84.

Wokoma's diaries mediate and embody this 'power relationship' between him and God, and also mediate and embody the 'presence' or the 'virtual presence of God' as the purifying and stabilizing authority in the intimacy of narrative. In emphasizing the power of the confessional activity, Michel Foucault argues that it 'unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply an interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile'.⁶⁰ The power element in Wokoma's diary derives largely from its function in the construction of his modern selfhood, particularly in the dimension of situating his individual priesthood as the confessant, by providing not just a platform of connectivity, but of the performance of power. In his conviction about the potency of his confessions, given their psychotherapeutic effect⁶¹ on him, Wokoma also underscores what Joseph Sterrett interprets as a 'performative conception to personal prayer',⁶² where the act of confession on the pages of his diary becomes a demonstration of the redemptive powers of God. In entrenching what he describes as 'the power of performance in prayer', Sterrett emphasizes 'the immediacy of the believer's appeal with direct access to God', arguing that 'through direct and dramatic voice' the diary endows the confessant with 'confidence and assertiveness'.⁶³ As the illustration above shows, there is a sense in which direct access to God, as enabled by the private space of his diaries, empowers and emboldens Wokoma, especially through the affirmation of his status as an elect, where he could, in popular biblical parlance, 'come boldly unto the throne of grace [to] obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Panteon Books, 1976), pp. 61-62.

⁶¹See, for instance, Carl Jung's *Psychotherapists or the Clergy*, (New York: Pantheon Book, 1958), p. 334.

⁶²Joseph William Sterrett, 'Introduction', in *Prayer and Performance in Early Modern Literature: Gesture, Word and Devotion*, Ed by Joseph Sterrett (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018), pp. 1-15 (p.10).

⁶³Sterrett, 'Introduction', p.11.

⁶⁴Hebrews Chapter 4, verse 16.

2.1.2 The Domestic Spirituality of Wokoma's Modern Self

In this subsection, I examine how Wokoma's presentation of domestic spirituality—in terms of the Christianity of the private household—projects his image as a Puritan and constructs an identity of African modernity for him. My conceptual interpretation of and use of 'domestic' here is as an important component of the private domain. Krishan Kumar and Ekaterina Makarova have argued that within the 19th and 20th centuries' modern European social configuration, 'home was the central site of private life' in such a manner that 'the home and private life came to be almost synonymous'.⁶⁵

In situating his spiritual modernity within the private domain of his household, Wokoma does not just grant insight into the formation and development of the modern African domestic sphere, modelled on what Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti identify as the English 'urban, middle-class families in the early part of the nineteenth century',⁶⁶ but also foregrounds the contribution of Protestant Christianity to the shaping of the modern African household. Wokoma's presentation of the domestic in the construction of his Puritanic modernity underscores his conviction that the experience of the spiritual—in spite of the Reformist emphasis on individual salvation—is more beneficial, and perhaps, more representative of the project of modernizing Africa when shared with other people. Thus, in constructing his spiritual modernity, Wokoma renders the home or the household as a kind of a 'domestic community', which transcends the singularity or the interiority of the individual self, part of which Simon Carey Holt calls 'a spirituality of withdrawal',⁶⁷ but which is still far from the Habermasian 'society engaged in critical public debate'.⁶⁸ Thus, while Wokoma's notion of the domestic community is one step above the interior—in terms of the absoluteness of the private, psychic life—it is also a step next to the full public sphere.

⁶⁵Krishan Kumar and Ekaterina Makarova, 'The Portable Home: The Domestication of Public Space', *Sociology Theory*, 26.4 (Dec., 2008), 324-343 (p.325).

⁶⁶ Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti, 'Reading the House: A Literary Perspective', *Signs*, 27.3 (Spring 2002), 837-846 (p. 838).

⁶⁷Simon Carey Holt, 'Domestic Spirituality: Finding God in the Ordinary, the Mundane and the Immediate', *Theology, News and Notes*, 46.1 (1999), pp. 13-15, (p.13).

⁶⁸Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, p.52.

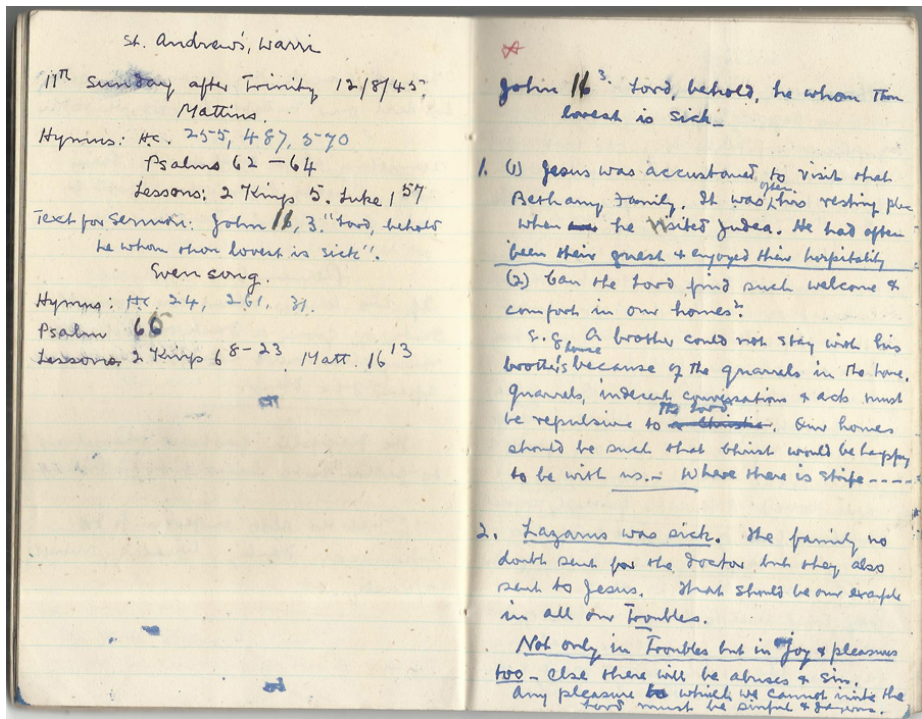
In framing the modernity of his spiritual selfhood within the ‘domestic community’ Wokoma underlines a category of the communal mandate of the Puritan creed, where the spiritual event becomes more significant as a shared process or event. This mandate has been expressed by Puritans from other cultures. As the 16th century English preacher and founding leader of the Colony of Connecticut, Thomas Hooker, puts it, the Christian’s ‘Chief Lesson’ was ‘Self Denial’.⁶⁹ John Winthrop, another early American Puritan leader had urged: ‘We must knit together in this work as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection; we must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others’ necessities’.⁷⁰ Wokoma’s self-representation not only endorses this sense of brotherhood, community, connectivity and selfless sharing of the spiritual experience, but also firmly locates it in the private domesticity of the family. Wokoma illustrates his theological attitude towards the spirituality of family and friends across his diary narrative, and would, in one persuasive instance, frame his domestic selfhood in Jesus’ sensitivity to the notion of home. For example, in the diary draft of his sermon of August 12, 1945, Wokoma foregrounds the significance of Jesus’ domestic spirituality through the popular Bethany narrative of Lazarus’ illness, death and resurrection:

Jesus was accustomed to [visiting] that Bethany family. It was often his resting place when he visited Judea. He had often been their guest and enjoyed their hospitality. Can the Lord find such welcome and comfort in our home? [...] Quarrels, indecent conversations and acts must be repulsive to the Lord. Our homes should be such that Christ would be happy with us.⁷¹

⁶⁹See Thomas Hooker’s *The Christians Two Chief Lessons: Self-Denial & Self-Trial* (Iowa: International Outreach, Inc, 1997).

⁷⁰Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology* (Cambridge: Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 91.

⁷¹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, August 12, 1945.



Diary Scan 1: Wokoma's sermon of August 12, 1945 in preparation. He highlights aspects of his theological attitude towards domestic spirituality, or 'the spirituality of the home'.

Wokoma's supreme suggestion above is that the household, as a crucial unit of socialization, is an important site of the development and performance of spiritual enlightenment, particularly in the context of the emerging modernity of 20th century Africa.

For Wokoma, particularly in his status as an agent of African modernity through the Church, 'the spirituality of the home', as Holt calls it, has the capacity to influence the texture of the wider African society. There is therefore a sense in which Wokoma's conception of the spirituality of the modern African home foreshadows what Adriaan van Klinken explains as 'a key to a wider political project through which the nation as a whole is to be transformed'.⁷² This is line with Eric J. Campbell and Olivier Vallerand's contention that 'the home [...] is always located in a specific time and place, and therefore subject to social, political and cultural forces that are deeply historical'.⁷³ An evidence of this in Wokoma's self-representation is the eventual contribution of members of Wokoma's family—particularly his direct children—raised in the finest traditions of Protestant Christianity, to the formation and development of the postcolonial Nigerian nation, in the manner of Thomas Hooker of Connecticut, and John Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay. Part of Wokoma's prompting in building a domestic community is found in the following argument by Sargent Bush Jr.: 'an excess of self was the enemy, both for the individual yearning for redemption and for the covenanted community seeking to build its strength. For the Puritans, no issue was more central in Church and commonwealth than finding the proper relationship between self and community'.⁷⁴

Wokoma sets out to create a portrait of a modern African family by inscribing its features of shared spirituality. Thus, even though Puritan Christianity emphasizes individual salvation and personal piety, Wokoma's

⁷²Adriaan Van Klinken, 'Pentecostalism, Political Masculinity and Citizenship: The Born-Again Male Subject as Key to Zambia's National Redemption', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 46.2/3 (2016), 129-157 (p.130).

⁷³Erin J. Campbell and Olivier Vallerand, 'Introduction: Approaching Home: New Perspectives on the Domestic Interior', *Canadian Art Review*, 45.2 (2020), 7-14, (p. 7).

⁷⁴Sargent Bush, Jr. 'America's Origin Myth: Remembering Plymouth Rock', *American Literary History*, 12.4 (Winter, 2000), 745-756 (p.745).

suggestion is simply that there are ways in which collective spirituality, at least within the private domestic provinces of the family, enhances the personal faith of members, in the manner of the biblical admonition of ‘iron’ sharpening ‘iron’.⁷⁵ Thus, throughout his diary-narrative, Wokoma’s image of his domestic sphere is that of a solid, church-inclined entity where individual members contribute their ‘spiritual quota’ to the construction of the Christian modernity of the family, in both the colonial and the immediate post-colonial contexts. This image is, of course, enhanced by the clergy-status of the family. The following excerpts illustrate Wokoma’s fundamental conception of the modern Christian family in protestant-influenced colonial Nigeria and the dynamics of its representation:

November 30, 1924: Immediately after dinner, Messrs Ebenezer (Wokoma) Horsfall, G. Nathan Basil Alamebo of Oproama, and Mr Donald came with Dokubo as their servant[...]. Immediately they came in, my daughter Daisy who was asleep awoke suddenly and started to cry and tremble as if something was coming to harm her. It was very terrifying to see her tremble and run to her mother and to me and to any other of the house in sight but those with Mr Donald in the parlour for safety & protection in vain. She was removed to my room & made to sleep. She woke up again immediately they left and started again. We prayed with her & commended her & ourselves to God & went to bed. She pointed to the parlour as she shouted & sometimes to other spots. The fear continued till next morning.

December 1, 1924: Daisy had a very high fever. Fear continued. No shouting. We were all sick for fear & sleeplessness.

As the above narrative shows, one dimension of Wokoma’s presentation of the performance of the modernity of the African domestic space is through a demonstration of how the spirituality of Protestant Christianity, and the ways in which it has influenced modern culture and society, frame the identity of the African home of the early colonial 20th century. There is a visible element of how Christian enlightenment—especially as manifesting through the instrumentality of the missionary project in the context of colonial Africa—structures the Wokoma family. For instance, the monogamous character is consistent with his protestant spirituality, and also consistent with the predilections of European missionaries, who Ade Ajayi identifies as coming

⁷⁵See Proverbs Chapter 27, Verse 17.

'from an individualistic society'.⁷⁶ It is in dramatizing the reenactment of a component of that individualistic tendency of the western society that Wokoma constructs the modern portrait of his domestic sphere. The father-mother-child structure that Wokoma depicts in the above passage illustrates John Lukacs' contention that 'domesticity, privacy, comfort, the concept of home and the family' were the 'principal achievements of the bourgeois age'.⁷⁷ In the sudden, mysterious indisposition of Daisy (Florence), and her frantic yearning for protection and comfort, where she runs 'to her mother and to me and to any other of the house in sight', and where she exhibits her apparent fear of Mr Donald and his cohorts 'in the parlour', according to the passage, Wokoma subtly marks the distinction between the domesticity of family and what Graig Calhoun identifies as the 'publicness' of 'strangers'.⁷⁸

Wokoma therefore constructs a modern spiritual identity of home in the form of what Tamara Hareven has called 'a private retreat' where members turn inwards for comfort and protection. Wokoma also meets other 'characteristics of the modern family' as prescribed by Hareven: 'a family that was child-centred, private and in which the husband and wife were segregated into public and domestic spheres'.⁷⁹ First, Wokoma locates his two-year old daughter, Daisy (Florence), at the centre of the family narrative, and the plot of the episode revolves around her. Second—and as evident from the passage—Wokoma's 'public' status is underlined by his transaction with the strangers 'in the parlour', while his wife is relegated nearly to a level of domestic invisibility. This apparently illustrates Gillian Swanson's argument concerning the 18th century domestic sphere that 'the boundaries between public and private, civil and personal life, masculine and feminine, were

⁷⁶Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, pp. 108-109.

⁷⁷John Lukacs, 'The Bourgeois Interior: Why the Most Maligned Characteristic of the Modern Age May Yet Be Seen As Its Most Precious Asset', *The American Scholar*, 39.4 (Autumn, 1970), 616-630 (p. 624).

⁷⁸Craig Calhoun, 'Facets of the Public Sphere: Dewey, Arendt, Habermas', in *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere*, ed. by Fredrik Engelstad, et.al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 23-45. (p.24).

⁷⁹Tamara K. Hareven, 'The Home and the Family in Historical Perspective', *Social Research*, 58. 1 (Spring 1991), 253-285 (p.258).

evident within the domestic sphere'.⁸⁰ As Wokoma shows in the passage, there is a distinction between what Swanson calls zones dedicated to 'functions concerning family and physical concerns—eating, cooking, washing, sleeping' and 'areas where entertainment and social intercourse would occur'.⁸¹

Wokoma's depiction of the modernity of his domestic selfhood can be read in terms of the home as the site of the performance of spiritual rituals of the Puritanic inclination. In the November 30, 1924 diary passage above, the act of praying together and 'commending' themselves 'to God', is in compliance with the injunction of Protestant Christianity to always invoke the protective grace and salvific power of the Almighty. In this instance, as he does throughout his diary-narrative, Wokoma inscribes the modernity of his spiritual selfhood by achieving what Sabrina Corbellini has called the 'sacralisation of the domestic space', which involves 'the domestication of religious content'⁸² within the space of the private household. The ghostly atmosphere created by Daisy's strange and sudden illness, and the stimulating ambience of what Angela Anderson and Can Gunduz describe as 'the enclosed, protected environment of the dwelling [which] lends itself to the enactment of religious and spiritual practices'⁸³ duly prompt the production of the spiritual ritual of protective prayer in the modern tradition of Protestant Christianity by Wokoma's 'domestic community'.⁸⁴

Yet another dimension of Wokoma's construction of the spiritual modernity of his domestic sphere is located in his dramatization of the creative capacity of the modern family, which enables the imaginative energy required to create

⁸⁰Gillian Swanson, 'Subjectivity, the Individual and the Gendering of the Modern Self', *Deciphering Culture: Ordinary Curiosities and Subjective Narratives*, ed. by Jane Crisp, Kay Ferres and Gillian Swanson (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 77.

⁸¹Swanson, 'Subjectivity', p. 77.

⁸²Sabrina Corbellini, 'Creating Domestic Sacred Space: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern', in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy Book*, by Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp.295-309 (p.304).

⁸³Angela Andersen and Can Gunduz, 'Sweeping the Meydan: Home and Religious Ceremony Amongst the Alevi', *Canadian Art Review*, 45.2 (2020), 47-63 (p.47).

⁸⁴I use this term to suggest that 'a community' can be private and domestic.

episodes of deep spiritual implication as the one cited in the November 30, 1924 passage. In his demonstration of the modernity of his imaginative and literary instincts, Wokoma exploits the manner in which the creative elements of the modern home—the dramatic spectacle of action, the neat delineation of roles and the interiority of space—activate the modern creative imagination, by inserting features of spiritual imagery. He thus gives expression to his spiritual consciousness of home in the process of self-construction, for as Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling contend, ‘home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging’.⁸⁵ This process, according to Blunt and Dowling, ‘has both material and imaginative elements’, where ‘people create home through social and emotional relationships’.⁸⁶ There are, therefore, ways in which Wokoma’s self-construction of the domestic sphere of the home becomes an imaginative exercise, particularly in the sense of what Samantha Vice calls the intertwining of the ‘narrative conception of the self’ and the ‘narrative conception of experience’.⁸⁷ Wokoma’s portraiture of his domestic household in the illustrative passage, particularly in his engagement of the general metaphor of the spirituality of the home expresses his narrative conception of self and experience, and also exemplifies what Kathy Mezei and Chiara Biganti call ‘the stuff of fiction’.⁸⁸

Wokoma therefore articulates the full creative potential of the modern household, especially in its representation in the literary form of the spiritual diary by a conscious deployment of strategic narrative material. This consists of the horrifying, sudden indisposition—complete with psychic torment and physical pain—of his two-year old daughter, the surreal confusion of actions and spectacle, the profundity of coincidences, the invocation of divine intervention, and the enduring atmosphere of tension and fear. He thus foregrounds the contribution of the spiritual atmosphere to the imaginative quality of modern spiritual life-writing, perhaps in a similar dimension to John Bunyan, whose visionary deployment of Puritan imagery in the second part of

⁸⁵Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 23.

⁸⁶Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, p. 23.

⁸⁷Samantha Vice, ‘Literature and the Narrative Self’, *Philosophy*, 78.303 [Jan 2003], 93-108 (p.93).

⁸⁸Mezei and Biganti, ‘Reading the House’, p. 838.

The Pilgrim's Progress (1678), James Forest describes as a 'testament to the truth and beauty of that divinely-ordered world of the imagination'.⁸⁹ For Wokoma, therefore, beyond the ambience of the home serving as a proper setting for the enactment of rituals of spiritual affirmation of his modern domestic sphere, it provides the platform for the mobilizing of a certain productive and imaginative intersection between the privacy of the modern household and the intimacy of the diary genre. In underscoring the contribution of the notion of the modern home in the evolution of the literary imagination of such modern English novelists as Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, Mezei and Briganti argue that the home presents 'a spatial construct' which 'invites the exploration and expression of private and intimate relations and thought'.⁹⁰ The creative depth that Wokoma achieves in the passage emerges from his recognition of the home as what Gaston Bachelard calls 'the topography of our intimate being',⁹¹ where the home is associated 'with childhood, dreaming and memory'.⁹²

As evident in his diary-narrative, there are situations in which Wokoma constructs the modernity of his Puritanic selfhood by deploying the Bunyanian strategy of 'framing [the] Christian's journey as a dream',⁹³ as David Boscaljon puts it. For instance, in the June 4, 1947 episode where he records his dream about his wife's diabolic plot to kill him with the connivance of her 'lover', Wokoma entrenches the imaginative connection between the fantasy of dreams and the narrative spectacle of the domestic sphere, particularly in terms of the intertwining of the terrifying landscape of nightmares of deep prophetic foreboding and the domestic spirituality of the Protestant home:

Last night, I dreamt the following dream. In my dream I was working in my office and my wife and her sister Patricia were chatting at the veranda. I overheard them sympathizing with Albert Odibo for his joblessness. Then I

⁸⁹James F. Forest, 'Vision, Form, and the Imagination in the Second Part of "The Pilgrim's Progress" (1684)', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 13.2 (Spring 1983), 109-116 (p.115)

⁹⁰Mezei and Biganti, 'Reading the House', p. 838.

⁹¹Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. xxxvi.

⁹² Bachelard, p. xxxvi

⁹³Daniel Boscaljon, 'Secularization and the Loss of Love in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*', *Religions* 4.4 (2013), 669-686 (p. 674).

came out of the office very sad and irritated by their conversation. I passed them into the house.

When I entered I found by my door a pot of medicine placed there by Albert Odibo. In my dream, I observed that it was a pot of medicine intended to harm me.

Then I gave an alarm denouncing Albert Odibo and asking my wife why she and her lover should place such a dangerous medicine by my room [...] Then my wife rushed in and snatched the pot of medicine and I awoke.

Lord, save me from this man & this woman.

The first strategic use Wokoma makes of this dream motif in the framing of his private Puritanic modernity is to highlight, as in the case of Daisy's strange illness in the November 30, 1924 episode, the threat of the 'stranger'—as symbolic of the public—to the spiritual and otherwise security of the modern family, especially in the mould of the deceptive antagonism of the Serpent, as a 'intruder' breaking the privacy of Adam's 'home' in the Biblical myth of the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden. A. Hoyle Lester, in interpreting Eve's transaction with the tempting Serpent, writes about the woman's 'innocent and unsuspecting [meeting with] a stranger' and how she gives an 'attentive ear [in the] enchanting conversation [with this] son of perdition'.⁹⁴ In the context of his domestic setting, Wokoma inscribes 'Albert Odibo' as the tempting 'stranger' who emerges to defile the private, spiritual sanctity of his home—what Timothy Stanley calls 'the conjugal space of the family or pure humanity'.⁹⁵ Thus, the sense in which Wokoma presents the image of the stranger is, like Hoyle's above, not just that of an interfering public in the manner of Lyn Lofland's description of the public sphere as the 'world of strangers',⁹⁶ but that of a destructive exterior force.

Wokoma's second strategy of articulating a domestic Puritanic modernity through the mode of the spiritual dream is to bring together two cosmologies—the traditional African and the western Protestant—that engage

⁹⁴Mason Stokes analyzed Lester's account (originally contained in his 'The Pre-Adamite, or Who Tempted Eve? Scripture and Science in Unison as Regards the Antiquity of Man'[1875]) in his article 'Someone's in the Garden with Eve: Race Religion, and the American Fall', *American Quarterly*, 50.4 (December, 1998), 718-744 (p.725).

⁹⁵Timothy Stanley, 'From Habermas to Barth and Back Again', *Journal of the Church and State*, 48.1 (Winter 2006), 101-126 (p.104).

⁹⁶Lyn Lofland, *A World of Strangers* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

the creative resources of the supernatural. He does this, not only to inscribe the modern superiority of the latter in its supreme capacity to save and protect its elect, but also to underscore the linkage of the former, in its ‘heathenish’ outlook, with the violation of the sacredness of the modern marriage, especially in terms of what Olufemi Taiwo describes as ‘the moral aspect’ of ‘having multiple sexual partners’.⁹⁷ However, it also foregrounds the metaphysical, supernatural element of modernity, what Jerrold E. Hogle calls the ‘gothic [of] modernity’,⁹⁸ in which the productive force of the spiritual imagination, as Christine Valters Paintner puts it, entails ‘cultivating a relationship with mystery’, which demands that ‘we suspend our judgments and embrace intuitive and image-centred ways of knowing’.⁹⁹ Wokoma’s depiction of his genuine horror at the fearful implication of the dream for his material reality, especially given his marital problems, and his spontaneous invocation of the alternative power of Protestant spirituality—‘God save me from this man & this woman’—is an indication of the ways in which modernity, as expressed within the private space of the household, can be described in mystical terms.

Wokoma’s third strategy of establishing his modern Puritanic selfhood through the combined creative potential of the domestic space and the dream mode in the Protestant ambience is to underscore the spiritual patterning of the hierarchy of imaginative power. For Wokoma the dream device engenders a higher level of imaginative force than that which mere compositional literacy can afford, even when, as Isabel Hofmeyr puts it, ‘literacy is a source of spiritual authority’.¹⁰⁰ The category of literacy or creative ability inherent in Wokoma’s dream dramatization of family issues in the illustration above is legitimized by the modernity of the Protestant spirituality within the African domestic space. In describing the superior sphere of imaginative expression

⁹⁷Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 74.

⁹⁸Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘Introduction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3-39 (p.3.).

⁹⁹ Christine Valters Paintner, ‘The Relationship between spirituality and Artistic Expression: Cultivating the Capacity for Imaging’, *Spirituality in Higher Education*, 3.2 (January 2007), 1-6 (p.4).

¹⁰⁰Isabed Hofmeyr, ‘Dreams, Documents and “Fetishes”’: African Christian Interpretation of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 32.4 (Jan 2002)], 440-456 (p.440).

which the dream narrative predicates, especially in spiritual circumstance, Hofmeyr—while characterizing the Bunyanian dream aesthetics—contends:

Literacy is defined as a kind of sacred energy which is retrieved whole [...] The prophet's creativity lies neither in laboriously mastering the component skills of the technology nor in the slow craft of composition. Rather it resides in the gift and ability to 'fetch' the power of literacy from another realm where it seems platonically already in existence.¹⁰¹

Therefore, the degree of supernatural imaginative empowerment required by Wokoma to construct his domestic modernity varies from one situation to the other. For instance, in the November 30, 1924 record, the creative competence needed to depict the real-life episode of Daisy's strange illness consists of his basic talents of literacy, what Hofmeyr refers to as the 'component skills of the technology' and the 'slow craft of composition'. However, in the July 4, 1947 dream scenario, little demand is placed on his natural imaginative ability, for the narrative is handed down to him already completed, and relevant to the temporal and spiritual challenges of his family life, through a powerful supernatural experience of the dream event. Thus, like a John Bunyan whose story 'comes to him whole, as a pictorial vision' and whose 'creativity resides in his ability to "cross over" and redeem the story from the dream world',¹⁰² Wokoma constructs an identity of Puritanic modernity within the context of 20th century missionary Africa by engaging the imaginative capabilities of the dream world. Wokoma, thus, inscribes the capability of the modern Christian domestic sphere to generate levels of creativity far beyond the natural, in fidelity to its dominant Protestant structures.

Another strategy Wokoma adopts to construct his domestic modernity is his 'demasculinization' of his spiritual self. I argue that Wokoma's inclination to the domestic domains in his self-representation, particularly in terms of the spiritualization of the modern African home, could be read in terms of a subversion of the dominant masculinist configuration and identity of Protestant Christianity. This configuration has emerged from a number of sources, chief of which is the apparent masculinization of God, and of course, the Christian

¹⁰¹Hofmeyr, p. 449.

¹⁰²Hofmeyr, p. 450.

Scriptures itself,¹⁰³ especially in its seemingly patriarchal order of apportioning heroism to the leaders of faith. Norman Vance, in identifying St Paul as the inaugurator of 'the tradition of moral manliness' centralizes the leading apostle's employment of such 'athletic and military imagery' as 'race' and 'contest' to enliven 'his account of the Christian life'.¹⁰⁴ Vance's contention is somewhat corroborated by Lyn Holness' observation of 'a partial eclipse of feminine imagery both in scripture and the history of spirituality'.¹⁰⁵ In his location of the ritual of spiritual affirmation within the confines of his domestic sphere, especially by making the women characters of his narrative relevant to and visible in spiritual discourse, Wokoma not only expresses his intention to radicalize the home, but also foregrounds his project of restoring the domestic to the centre of national record.¹⁰⁶

The spiritual modernity of the home that Wokoma attempts to construct does not just emerge from the Puritanic selves that he produces on the pages of his diary, but also from the manner of his domestication of those selves. As evident in the November 30, 1924 record, Wokoma plays the crucial role of a spiritual guide and mediator in the frightening situation of Daisy's sudden and strange illness within the space of his domestic community. He, thus, even if for a moment, dismantles his 'statutory' masculinist spiritual identity to identify with the 'feminine' domestic arena. This is better understood against the backdrop that the central basis for the dichotomizing of the spiritual domain into the masculine and the feminine is the historical allocation of the woman to the intimate, domestic arena and the men to social, exterior domains. Vivian Jones explains this in terms of 'the natural association between women and the private sphere, domesticity and leisure' and the men

¹⁰³Kathryn Pogin, 'God is Not Male', in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Michael L. Peterson and Raymond J. Van Arragon (Oxford: John Wiley and sons, 2020), pp. 302-309.

¹⁰⁴ Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideals of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.26.

¹⁰⁵Lyn Holness, 'Motherhood and Spirituality: Faith and Reflections from the Inside', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 61 (2004), 66-71 (p. 67).

¹⁰⁶See for instance, Grace Musila's idea of restoration of 'fragments of national histories' to 'public record', in 'Archives of the Present in Parselelo Kantai's Writing in *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday*, ed. by Stephanie Newell and Onookome Okome (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 244-205 (p.247).

with the ‘spaces outside the home’ and ‘the political public sphere’.¹⁰⁷ This is so even in Wokoma’s highly patriarchal African culture—perhaps most symbolized in Chinua Achebe’s representation in the ground-breaking novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958)¹⁰⁸—the integrity of whose masculinity Wokoma apparently simultaneously violates in the construction of his modern selfhood through the domestication of his spirituality. Another illustration of Wokoma’s questioning of what Holness has described as ‘the historic masculinizing of the spiritual experience’ is found in the entries of July 1949, capturing Wokoma’s daughter’s preparation to depart colonial Nigeria for higher education in England:

July 15, 1949: My daughter arrived from Warri this evening to prepare for [the UK] on Government scholarship.

July 22, 1949: I had a brief talk with Sisi [Florence], bidding her farewell with a father’s blessing and committing her to the care of God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

July 23, 1949: My daughter, Florence, left [...] for Port Harcourt. She is to proceed to Lagos [...] It is expected that she might leave Lagos for the United Kingdom (Manchester College of Domestic Economy, Manchester) by the 16th of August.

Wokoma’s engagement with the spiritual ritual of sending forth his daughter, Florence, represents the domestication of spiritual masculinity. His emphasis on the spiritual significance of ‘a father’s blessing’ is a foregrounding of his awareness of his unimpeachable priesthood, not just for his own individual self, but on behalf of his family, and his bold assertion that the domesticity of fatherhood is also a scriptural injunction¹⁰⁹ which empowers fathers to initiate and lead the spiritual development and progress of the home. He thus employs a biblical instrument to complicate the biblical outlook of masculinity. The invocation of the ‘care of God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ’—Puritanic in itself by virtue of the emphasis on Jesus Christ as the access-path to his

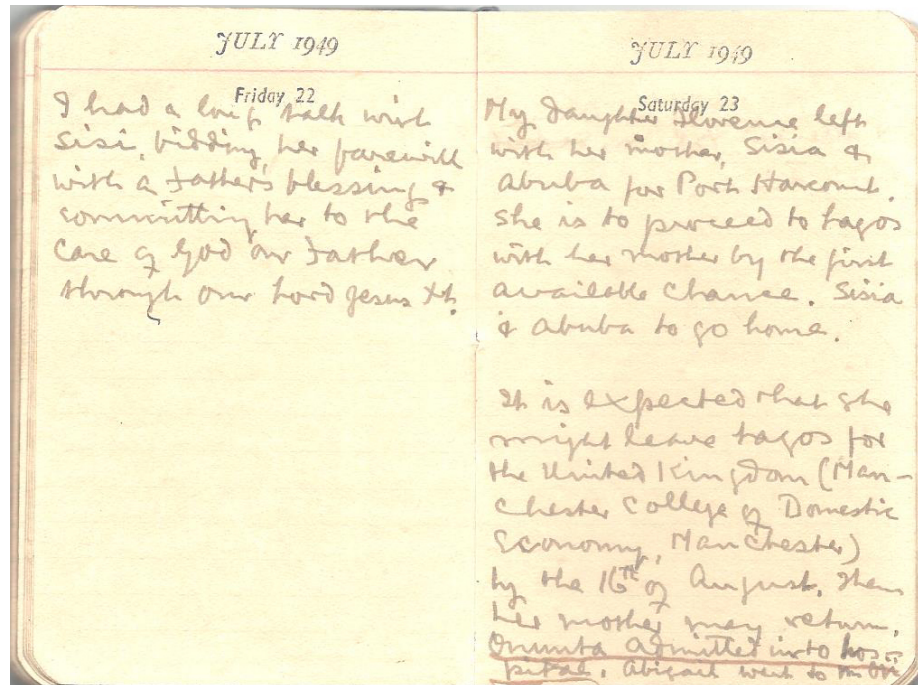
¹⁰⁷Vivien Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 5-6.

¹⁰⁸The Character of Okonkwo in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. (London: Heinemann, 1958) epitomizes the patriarchal, masculinist leanings of African social-cultural stratification.

¹⁰⁹An illustration can be taken from the biblical narrative of Isaac and his two sons, Esau and Jacob, in Genesis Chapter 49: Verses 22-28.



Picture 3: Wokoma's immediate family at Warri in 1949. From left: Mercy, Charles (Mbee), Florence and Wokoma himself. Charles was on the verge of departure to the University of Ibadan for preliminary medical studies, and Daisy would, in the next six months, leave colonial Nigeria for the University of Manchester where she would study Domestic Science.



Diary Scan 2: Wokoma's diary entries of July 22 and 23 1949 illustrating his domestic spiritual modernity where he 'commits' his daughter, Florence (Daisy, Sisi) 'to the care of our father'.

father—is one way of endorsing the emergence of the domestic from the sidelines of social history,¹¹⁰ and also a manner of sanctioning the leading role that the domestic would play, especially in the course of Nigeria's postcolonial nation formation.¹¹¹ This ecclesiastical approval of the highest levels of training in 'Domestic Science'¹¹² for his daughter therefore entrenches Wokoma's inscription of the place of the domestic in the construction of the modern African identity.

Wokoma also constructs an identity of spiritual modernity for himself by introducing a spiritual perspective to the questioning of the 'cult of domesticity',¹¹³ a socio-philosophical concept which prescribes different spheres of social interaction for the man and the woman. As Thomas Winter puts it, 'the cult of domesticity identified womanhood with the private, domestic sphere of the home and manhood with the public sphere of economic competition and politics'.¹¹⁴ In his sacralization or 'sanctification' of his parting meeting with 'Sisi' (Florence), Wokoma performs a ritual of liberation, marking her break from the constriction of the cult of domesticity, and her spiritual authorization to feature in the public domain of 'economic competition and politics', hitherto monopolized by men. By this same spiritual gesture, Wokoma ushers 'Sisi' into her role in the radicalization of African domestic modernity, where the woman, as the guardian of the domestic sphere, contributes her quota to the political public as an agent of social change, without losing

¹¹⁰See once again, Grace Musila's 'Archives of the present in Parselelo Kantai's Writing', p. 247.

¹¹¹As we will see in subsequent chapters, Florence (with her Husband 'Mac') would form the core of the inaugural postcolonial Nigerian political class in the early 1960s.

¹¹²Wokoma portrays Florence (Daisy) as a bastion of the professionalism of 'Domestic Science' in many entries in his diaries, including in the entry of February 13, 1962, where she 'began work at the Domestic Science centre, Lagos as a relieving officer.'

¹¹³Thomas Winter, "The Cult of Domesticity', in *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. by Bret E. Carroll (California: Sage Books, 2007), pp. 120-122 (p. 120).

¹¹⁴Thomas Winter, 'Masculine Domesticity' in *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, pp. 292-294 (p. 292).

her dignity and responsibility as what Andersen and Gunduz call ‘family matriarchs and nurturers’.¹¹⁵

Wokoma’s overall attitude in the construction of his domestic modernity can thus be understood in terms of what Winter refers to ‘masculine domesticity’,¹¹⁶ where he seeks to domesticate his spiritual masculinity for the well-being of his home—his ‘domestic community’. The two examples from his diary-narrative cited in the foregoing—his representation of the November 30, 1924 gothic-style illness of his daughter, in all its terrifying suddenness, and his farewell fellowship with the same daughter twenty-five years later in July 1949—depict him as playing crucial domestic roles of the Christian spiritual kind, in the vein of what Winter describes as ‘cultivating the domestic components of masculine identity’.¹¹⁷ However, it is perhaps in his deployment of his spirituality to intervene in his troubled marriage that he provides a most vivid illustration of the domestication of his masculinity. In his attempt to settle the many problems of his marriage, Wokoma discards the traditional notions of masculinist supremacy and ‘muscular spirituality’¹¹⁸ and adopts a domestic approach to spirituality—which Adriaan van Klinken has described in terms of ‘how Pentecostal masculinities contribute to equality in marital relationships’.¹¹⁹ The following entries illustrate:

October 9, 1947: She was wild with rage [...] But the Lord will not give me up [...] I left for Egboride totally upset and disgusted, but the Lord sustained me.

October 18, 1947: This morning I went over to my wife to plead with her again to reconsider her plans. I told her that our marriage, I believed, was ordained by God otherwise we should have broken it and there could have been no hope of reconciliation. But the fact that in spite of the horrible and terrible things which happened between us from time to time to the present

¹¹⁵Anderson and Gunduz, ‘Sweeping the Meydan’, p. 47.

¹¹⁶Winter, ‘Masculine Domesticity’, p. 292.

¹¹⁷Winter, ‘The Cult of Domesticity’, p.120.

¹¹⁸According to Donald E. Hall, the central-characteristic of muscular Christianity is an ‘association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself’ (‘Introduction’, in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp 3-13 (p.7).

¹¹⁹Klinken, ‘Pentecostalism’, p.129.

moment we still lived in the same house and could have the chance of meeting and pleading as we did now [...] is a convincing proof that God still wanted us to live together.

February 21, 1948: This night, my wife demanded that unless I gave her £3 she would leave me and never return [...] O Lord, save us from disgrace.

March 4, 1948: This evening, I gave her £4. She accepted it without a word of thanks. I thank God for his grace in enabling me to pay this price.

July 31, 1953: The wonderful grace of God denounced in bitter terms by my wife. *The landmark*. Lord have mercy on me a miserable sinner. Oh Lord give me the Holy Spirit and grant me thy peace which passeth all understanding. Amen.

In the above examples, Wokoma attempts to construct an identity of Puritanic modernity by ‘domesticating’ his masculinity through the ‘sanctification’¹²⁰ of the domains of his marital crisis. By bringing his Puritan ethos to the service of the domesticity of his home, particularly in the pacifying of a temperamental wife, Wokoma erects a unique portrait of African spiritual modernity that violates the governing ideal of masculine spirituality, which John Pennington describes in terms of ‘a virile, strong-armed Christianity, a man’s religion [...] that welded courage and faith, spirit and body’.¹²¹ Wokoma’s lamentational tone in his invocation of God’s exceeding and abounding grace and mercy in his traumatizing marriage to Mercy—itself a crucial phase in his challenging spiritual pilgrimage—seems a deflation of his masculinity. The evocative pictures of the ‘marital persecution’ he endures does not pay much compliment to his manliness either, and appears a violation of the masculinity of the Scriptures itself. Apart from the confessional statements and prayers underscoring his need for God’s mercy and grace, Wokoma also adopts the familiar method of sacralization—especially in terms of what Corbellini describes as ‘the transposition of religious oral and written materials to domestic space’¹²²—to deliver a ‘domestic’ sermon to his wife on the sacredness of the Christian marriage institution in the October 18, 1947 entry. Notable in the sermon is Wokoma’s centralization of the spiritual duty a

¹²⁰I use this expression in terms of bestowing a quality of spiritual importance on something, in this case, Wokoma’s home.

¹²¹John Pennington, ‘Muscular Spirituality in George MacDonald’s Curdie Books’, in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 133-143 (p.133).

¹²²Corbellini, ‘Creating Domestic Sacred Space’, p. 304.

Christian couple owes God—and modern humanity—to protect the union and his passionate admonition on Christian purity in his foregrounding of notions of pre-ordination and predestination. However, the sermon also becomes of little effect. The climax of this violation comes when Mercy denounces ‘the wonderful Grace of God in bitter terms’, an authentication of the fact that Mercy’s domestic insensitivity does not deserve the intervention of Wokoma’s spirituality, especially in its masculinist connotations. Thus, in her apparent indifference to and ridicule of the spiritual economy of the Wokoma home, Mercy Wokoma devalues Wokoma’s masculinity as her own biblically-sanctioned priest, and, of course, that of the entire family. From the foregoing, there is a sense in which it could be argued that Wokoma’s strategy for the construction of a spiritual modernity includes the masculinization of the domestic sphere. In the process of spiritualizing his domestic conflict with Mercy, Wokoma tends to masculinize the domains of femininity occupied by her. This is because he not only loses the dignity of gendered superiority as endorsed by the Scriptures, but he also loses the honour of the priesthood.

Wokoma also presents the modernity of his domestic spirituality by subverting and complicating the dominant ideas of home as a private retreat of domestic comfort, and as a haven of sorts. We see a bit of this questioning in the depiction of the horrifying insecurity of his daughter’s illness in the November 30, 1924 record, where the family struggles to protect its only daughter from danger of an ambiguous type, and of course in the frosty relationship with his wife. Wokoma’s presentation of the spiritual modernity of the home can thus be read in terms of alternative conceptualizations of the domestic sphere proposed by Erin J. Campbell and Olivier Vallerand. Developing their framework around the context of new meanings of the domestic experience generated by the global Covid-19-motivated stay-at-home orders, where ‘the pandemic has dramatically underscored that home is not haven for all’,¹²³ Campbell and Vallerand are able to dismantle deep-lying notions of the home as refuge and sanctuary. Home, Campbell and Vallerand argue, can assume the unpalatable identity of a ‘vulnerable, fraught and

¹²³Campbell and Vallerand, ‘Introduction’, p. 7.

contested space'.¹²⁴ As the entries above highlight, Wokoma's domestic space does not appear exactly as domains of pleasurable retreat in the physical or psychological sense, in spite of the spiritual investments of the Puritanic variety into it. Even though there are components of that same domestic sphere that offer him some kind of succour—like the emergence of his daughter, Florence, as an authentic symbol of the prominence of the domestic in postcolonial nation formation—the general picture of Wokoma's home and marital life is that of gloom and heartache. The philosophical proclamation on modernity that Wokoma inscribes is that home is filled with contradictions—in this case, how his Christianity and his Christian family do not guarantee fulfilment—and that those contradictions should be part of the modern selfhood he constructs in his diaries.

Wokoma's construction of his modern self through his domestic spirituality in his diary narrative also consists of what Holt calls 'the ordinary, the mundane and the immediate'.¹²⁵ According to Holt, the spirituality of 'the domestic settings' is distinguished from the spirituality of 'withdrawal', which 'centers upon solitude, isolation, quietness and retreat, and has so little to do with the constant and busy ebb and flow of everyday life'.¹²⁶ We have seen how Wokoma's 'spirituality of withdrawal', especially in the form of his interiority, articulates an identity of modernity for him. We have also seen how the *core* family, household aspects of his domestic faith has informed the emergence of his modern self. But Wokoma's diary-narrative depicts other categories of his domesticity—including 'the ordinary, the mundane and the immediate'—and these also create an image of spiritual modernity for him. Wokoma's tendency to construct a modern identity by 'sacralising' the ordinary is clearly explained by Todd M. Brenneman:

From the days of the Reformation, Protestants have sacralized the ordinary aspects of life. The concept of the *priesthood of all believers* and the importance of fulfilling one's calling theoretically leveled Protestants and made even the most mundane events possibilities for holiness. Although these ideas have long provenance in evangelicalism, they are emotionalized through modern evangelicals. The ordinary, the sentimental, and the anti-intellectual are

¹²⁴Campbell and Vallerand, p. 7.

¹²⁵Holt, 'Domestic Spirituality', p.13.

¹²⁶ Holt, p.13.

combined to remove authority from a life of the mind to the emotions evoked by everyday life.¹²⁷

It is through this spiritualizing of the everyday that Wokoma constructs a modern private, Puritanic selfhood for himself. He achieves this by endowing seemingly routine events of everyday life with the significance of Protestant spirituality. The following entries illustrate:

August 20, 1963: Ikoyi Lagos. Dr Mabayoje phoned to say that he got a bed for me. He said except the bed was taken by me today as early as possible it might be taken by someone else. O Lord, May thou decide for me, Amen.

June 11, 1965: Dr Mbee collected for me from B.W.A. the sum of £15 sent to me by my daughter Florence from Lagos for March, April & May. Praise be to the Lord & and thanks for all comfort and consolation.

December 31, 1965: My God, how wonderful thou art.
Thy Majesty how bright,
How beautiful thy mercy seat
In depths of burning light.

The above excerpts illustrate Wokoma's construction of his Puritanic modernity by investing spiritual value in virtually everything that happens around him. In the first entry above, he subjects the simple necessity of taking up a hospital bed as soon as possible to divine scrutiny and endorsement. In this example, as in many others, he sacralises the secular process of obtaining medical care for himself. In the second record above, he invokes the spiritual exercise of thanksgiving on the routine occasion of the receipt of his monthly stipend from his daughter. These are all normal, ordinary occurrences of his life, but in the process of the construction of his Puritanic modernity, he re-imagines and re-interprets them as sites of the performance of spiritual duty that are as important as any other. In the third example above, he breaks into a thanksgiving hymn, 'My God, How Wonderful Thou Art', written by Frederick William Faber in 1848—to endow a special ecclesiastical quality to the end of the year 1965. There are also, for instance, his heartfelt, nearly transcendental reinterpretation of the 1935 Silver Jubilee Anniversary

¹²⁷Todd M. Brenneman, *Homespun Gospel: The Triumph of Sentimentality in Contemporary American Evangelism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 65.

procession of King George V as an example of the 'beautiful and inspiring allegiance to the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings' in the August 26, 1941 entry; his response of 'the Lord's Name be praised' after his lost bicycle was found by a neighbour in a May 4, 1947 record; his organization of morning and evening prayers for close parsonage neighbours as recorded in the March 2, 1944 entry; his prayer for a calm, safe weather during a storm, while on a boat journey in the entry of May 11, 1959; his expression of profound thanks to God on the occasion of his 71st birthday on the 1st June, 1965; his response of 'Thank God for his work and life', after watching 'a most inspiring film' involving 'Martin Luther, the great Church Reformer' at Ibadan on January 28, 1962, and so on. The implication of the exhibition of Wokoma's spirituality of the ordinary, the mundane and the immediate is that the Puritanic sensibility has so overwhelmed his being that it has become a lifestyle which manifests itself with ease at every location and in every circumstance, and which deeply colours his construction of his modern African self. This is also the sense in which Jurgen Habermas describes religion as the 'seat of everyday life', in which 'a devout person pursues her daily rounds by drawing on belief'.¹²⁸ As Holt puts it, the abiding charter of domestic spirituality lies in the tendency to flesh 'out the nature of the Spiritual journey right at the centre of ordinary, daily life'.¹²⁹ Wokoma's framing of his African modernity is therefore substantially facilitated and mediated in the simple ordinariness of everyday life.

2.2 The Public Spirituality of Wokoma's Modern African Self

Wokoma constructs the exterior dimensions of his 'Puritanic' self by framing his role in the tangible, physical impact of missionary modernity in his part of colonial Africa. By inscribing the public domain of his modern spiritual selfhood, Wokoma presents a convincing portrait of the African agent of Christian enlightenment whose public identity is connected to the transformational impact of the Church in the project of western civilization. It is in response to the kinds of public spiritual selves which Wokoma and other colonial African life-writers produce that Olufemi Taiwo has argued 'that the

¹²⁸Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Space', p. 8.

¹²⁹ Holt, 'Domestic Spirituality', p.14.

principal agents for the introduction and implementation of modernity in Africa were missionaries and that many of them were themselves African'.¹³⁰ In his self-representation as both a *missionary* and an *African*, Wokoma frames himself, and in public terms, as subject and mediator in the discourse of the transformation of the continent through the agency of the post-Reformation, revivalist Christianity of the 19th and 20th centuries. Through his self-fashioning as a public agent of African Christian modernity, Wokoma seems to underscore that the major achievement of the missionary enterprise on the continent—which, according to Michael Echeruo, 'was very intimately associated with civilization'¹³¹— is located in the public domain.

Wokoma's public 'Puritanic' selfhood, and its implication for colonial and postcolonial modernity, provide sufficient material for the conceptual framing of the ideal situation of spirituality, in terms of whether the greater sphere of spiritual influence in Christian modernity is actually the private interior or the public exterior. We see a glimpse of this argument in Simon Carey Holt's contrast between the Christianity of 'withdrawal' or 'the desert' and that of 'neighbourhoods and market places'.¹³² Owen C. Thomas takes the argument further by declaring that 'the focus in Christian spirituality on the inner life has been a mistake ethically'.¹³³ For Owen, 'the focus of the reign of God is primarily on public, communal, political, economic, and historical life rather than on private interior life'.¹³⁴ Similarly, Linda Tredennick, writing about John Milton's evocative premium on the public aspects of the Puritanic self, contends that in Milton, 'the true location of individual identity lies not within but without, not in his interior but in the external persona'.¹³⁵ For Tredennick, the apparent devaluation of the interior self 'by Milton and his cohorts', represents 'an important step in the creation of modern identity'.¹³⁶ Even when Wokoma does not seem to 'devalue' his interior self, in the construction

¹³⁰Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 6.

¹³¹Michael Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 113.

¹³²Holt, 'Domestic Spirituality', p. 14.

¹³³Owen C. Thomas, 'Interiority and Christian Spirituality', *The Journal of Religion*, 80.1 (Jan. 2000), 41-60 (p.50).

¹³⁴Thomas, 'Interiority', p. 59.

¹³⁵Tredennick, p.161.

¹³⁶Tredennick, p.161.

of his modern African identity, he certainly places a lot of importance on his exterior self.

In my reading of the public dimensions of Wokoma's construction of the modern spiritual self, I am interested in the ways in which Wokoma frames himself as a contributor to the public sphere—a province of modern social interaction—through the agency of the Church. In Wokoma's articulation of the spiritual exterior space as part of the public sphere, he illustrates—both in general and specific terms—Habermas' seminal argument about the public sphere as a 'realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed'.¹³⁷ Wokoma's self-construction in his diary-narrative highlights the contribution of the Church in the formation of 'public opinion' in the emerging modernity of the Nigerian colonial society. He therefore inscribes the construction of the spiritual public sphere as the arena for the production of knowledge and ideas in the interest of public advancement. In highlighting the significance of the involvement of the Church in what he calls 'dialogue, debate and discussion' in the public sphere, Daniel O'Connell argues that 'without concern for the public dimension of the gospel', modern Christianity will 'become some sort of sectarian oddity restricted to the private sphere of life'.¹³⁸ Thus, in his entrenchment of the modes of his participation in the modern public sphere and in his articulation of the strategies of fashioning his public Puritanic self, Wokoma produces three kinds of selves—the *political* self, the *educational* self and the *cultural* self.

In what follows therefore, I interrogate Wokoma's construction of his public spirituality along three lines. First, I investigate how his presentation of his public Puritanic self underscores an identity of African political modernity. Second, I analyze the ways in which his self-portraiture as a representative of the education component of the Church articulates a modern identity for him. Thirdly, I explore how his engagement with the cultural public sphere constructs an identity of spiritual modernity for him.

¹³⁷Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article', p. 49.

¹³⁸ Daniel O'Connell, 'The Church and the Public Sphere', *Doctrine and Life*, 52.10 (2007), 2-12. (p. 2).

2.2.1 Wokoma, the Public Space of the Puritan and African Political Modernity

In the articulation of the public political aspects of the 20th century African spiritual revival to which he bears witness, Wokoma sufficiently illustrates Julien Freund's theorization of the public as 'political'.¹³⁹ Even though Wokoma does not subscribe to Freund's totalizing notion that spheres of social interaction can only be *public* or *private* with no intersecting categories, and that only the 'political' can truly be 'public', his diary-narrative tends to address many elements of Freund's ideas, particularly in relation to the public, exterior domains of Christian modernity. These include 'the constitution of a political unit and, hence, its organization in a regime' and the need for representation in the manner in which 'the government and parliament represent the public'.¹⁴⁰

Wokoma's interpretation of the political public in African Christian/spiritual modernity depicts the crucial connections between the Church and the State, a foundational principle of Puritan theology, and foregrounds the contributions of the Protestant faith in the shaping of the political space of the modern world. As his diary-narrative highlights, part of the implication here is that an integral aspect of the Puritan gospel, which, according to John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim, 'spilled out beyond the boundaries of England, overflowing into other lands',¹⁴¹ was a wide-ranging set of ethos and protocols engendering political modernity. Herbert Osgood, writing about the early political impact of the Puritans in the United States, describes the sect as a 'politically self-conscious people' who had 'brought with them the common law and the institutions of local government' and who 'made all interests, social and political, contribute to [the] maintenance and advancement' of their religious system'.¹⁴² Wokoma's diaries seem to

¹³⁹Julien Freund, *L'essence du politique*, (Paris: Editions Sirey, 1978), pp. 292-293.

¹⁴⁰Freund, p. 293.

¹⁴¹John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. by John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.1-14 (p.2).

¹⁴²Herbert L. Osgood, 'The Political Ideas of the Puritans', *Political Science Quarterly*, 6.1 (March 1891), 1-28 (p.2).

underscore this inclination concerning ‘the new Puritanism of evangelical revival’, to once again cite Ade Ajayi’s description of the modern missionary project in Africa, where the tenets of Christian spirituality played a key role in the formation of the modern political philosophy of colonial Southern Nigeria. He therefore portrays the Church-influenced political modernity of colonial and postcolonial Africa by his self-representation as a leading Christian who lived through the most politically definitive periods of African and Nigerian history. He does this by presenting the profound relationship between the Church—and of course, himself as a representative of the Church and an agent of the Christian God—with elements of the State, including formal and informal dealings with the political class, and the influence of the Church on the structures and patterns of state and government.

Wokoma, for instance, underscores the public, political aspects of his Christian modernity in his diaries by presenting the influence of the State over the Church. Wokoma’s interpretation of this influence ranges from the demonstration of allegiance to the British throne as Head of the Anglican Church in the colonial era to the portrayal of the cordial, respectful relationship between the Church and the State in the postcolonial dispensation. Wokoma’s foregrounding of these acts of recognition of political authority by the Church—and its representatives—represents an affirmation of what Freund calls ‘the constitution of a political unit and its organization in a regime’.¹⁴³ Thus, Wokoma’s portrayal of the ‘Church service’ to mark the Empire Day as ‘ordered by Bishop Tugwell, Diocesan, at the request of the Governor [General], Sir Hugh Clifford’ on May 24, 1920, his spotlighting of Bishop Dimieari’s invitation to attend ‘the Coronation of Her Majesty the Queen’ as recorded in the entry of May 26, 1953 and his depiction of the May 6, 1935 ‘Silver Jubilee Procession of King George V’ in the August 26, 1941 entry as a remarkable public demonstration of the power of the British Empire, are all examples of the inscription of the political authority of the British state over the Church.

¹⁴³Freund, p. 293

Wokoma's presentation of this relationship between the Church and the Imperial authority, in illustration of Freund's idea of 'a political unit and its organization in a regime', foregrounds the political dimensions of African colonial modernity of the first half of the 20th century. So also does his portrayal of the support and loyalty of the African colonies to the Imperial powers during World War II, through the agency of the Church. For instance, in one of his several public deliveries reiterating the Nigerian Church's support of the British war efforts, Wokoma praises the 'Great Empire with her allies' and 'the great structure of civilization' which was now severely threatened by the enemies of the British.¹⁴⁴ In another context, Wokoma writes about 'African pastors and catechists [that] have enlisted in the army as chaplains and spiritual workers who have been impressive in their behaviour and spiritual life' in the course of the war, in the entry of June 19, 1944. Wokoma's implication in the above records about the African interest in a World War is that the reality of African modernity, particularly for colonial Nigeria, is its subjecthood to Britain as 'a political unit', and the mediating role of the Church in this relationship.

Wokoma's illustration of Freund's concept of the acknowledgement of 'the constitution of the political unit and its organization in a regime'¹⁴⁵ also includes some sort of public allegiance to and recognition of the political figureheads within colonial Nigeria, in formal or informal contexts. For instance, the British representative to Colonial Districts, officially called 'the Resident', is always accorded recognition at Special Church programmes, as demonstrated in the processional order of 'the First Assize [Church] Service in Warri [which] was held in St Andrew's Church Warri' where a strategic place was reserved for 'His Honour the Resident, the District Officer, Lt Col, and Mrs Laws, the local authority'.¹⁴⁶ The strategy of inscribing the political public in the context of a church service aligns with Bridget Cherry's view that 'processions helped to mark the boundaries of power'.¹⁴⁷ By highlighting

¹⁴⁴Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, August 16, 1942.

¹⁴⁵Freund, p. 293.

¹⁴⁶Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box II, 1931-1950, March 3, 1947.

¹⁴⁷ Bridget Cherry, 'London's Public Events and Ceremonies: An Overview through Three Centuries', *Architectural History*, 36 (2013), 1-28 (p.2).

these relationships of power, which are part of the British/Church of England legacy, Wokoma underlines their significance to African colonial modernity.

Wokoma also affirms the public dimensions of his spiritual modernity by framing himself in less official contexts of the application of Freund's idea of the acknowledgment of 'a political unit and its organization as a regime' by invoking what Soile Ylivouri calls 'the venues of public sociability',¹⁴⁸ in which interaction with representatives of the political public occurs in recreational and semi-recreational contexts. An illustration of this is found in the entry of May 2, 1958, where the Mayor of Port Harcourt, Richard Okwuosha Nzimiro and his wife, 'invited the Synod [of the Anglican Church] to his house at Harbour Road for refreshment'. There is also Wokoma's unofficial visits to highly-placed political figures of immediate postcolonial Nigeria, including Mr Aja Nwachukwu, 'the Hon. Minister of Education' on February 23, 1962'; Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Governor-General of Nigeria, on March 9, 1962, and Mr Okotie-Eboh, the Finance Minister, also on March 9, 1962. These visits by Wokoma, by now a well-known agent of Christian modernity and a public face of the Church, to the highest ranking representatives of the Nigerian post-independence 'political unit' or 'regime' inscribes his—and the Church's—endorsement of the political transition from colonial modernity to postcolonial modernity.

Wokoma also articulates the public political aspects of his spiritual identity by engaging what Freund has described as 'the need for representation' as manifesting in the manner in which 'the government and parliament represent the public'.¹⁴⁹ Wokoma achieves this in two ways: by presenting the evangelical clergy as 'representative' politicians and potential 'representative' politicians themselves; and by entrenching their contribution as counselors and spiritual supporters of members of the political class. The following excerpts illustrate:

¹⁴⁸Soile Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p.107.

¹⁴⁹Freund, p. 293.

March 4, 1944: At Port Harcourt today the Hon Archdeacon Dimieari is accorded a reception by the Ijaw Tribe Union for his appointment to the Legislative Council of Nigeria.

January 17, 1951: A meeting of Kalabari elements assembled at my place to meet Mr Akanibo from Enugu. He discussed the subject of Kalabari representation at the Rivers Divisional Council and subsequently at the Eastern House of Assembly. He said possible candidates in the opinion of Kalabari Union Enugu were Chief Nelson Yellow and me. I expressed my unavailability and inability. My suggestion of my brother Donald as a possible candidate was rejected by all.

In centralizing the modernity of his political self, Wokoma engages Freund's idea of 'representation' within the political public by highlighting the potential of even the Christian clergy to venture into partisan politics as representatives of the people. In the first excerpt above, Wokoma constructs the ideal identity of the African colonial scholar-clergy with the representation of his good friend, Archdeacon Dimieari, who would become the inaugural Bishop of the Niger Delta.¹⁵⁰ Wokoma's portraiture of Dimieari can be read as an illustration of modern representative politics which Freund describes as the 'government or the parliament' representing 'the public'.¹⁵¹ In this context of Dimieari 'representing' his Ijaw people, Wokoma draws attention to both the advent of representative politics in Nigerian colonial modernity, and the Church's role in it. Wokoma also engages Freund's concept of representation in the second excerpt above involving himself, where he receives a call by his own Kalabari people to represent them in the divisional legislature with the possibility of upgrading that representation to the regional level. Even though Wokoma politely rejects this invitation, the point about his wide acceptance, even as a clergy, in terms of a potentially effective representation of his people in the emerging political modernity, has already been made. Wokoma's framing of Churchmen as 'representative' politicians becomes, therefore, a strong indication of the immense contribution of the Church to the development of African colonial and postcolonial political socialization and culture, in terms of the entrenchment of what Taiwo calls

¹⁵⁰He became the first diocesan bishop of the Niger Delta on January 1, 1952. Wokoma also records this in his diary.

¹⁵¹Freund, p. 293.

26 TUESDAY (146-219)

Mary, the Queen Mother, born, 1867

Bishop & Mrs Dimieari ~~fly~~ to England, ^{to}
~~witness the~~ ^{to} witness the Coronation of Her Majesty the
 Queen. The Bishop will be one of seven
 selected by the ^{Nigerian} Government to represent
 Nigeria. They will be the guest of Her
 Majesty's Government while in England.

Diary Scan 3: Diary entry of May 26, 1953 capturing Wokoma's framing of Bishop Dimieari's departure to Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in England as part of the allegiance to a properly constituted political authority.

MEMORANDA

Wednesday

30/12/53. Secondary Election to the Eastern House of Assembly at Bege me today.

Results: P. G. Waramate 94 votes
Kaliu P.H. 56 "
R. T. Wilcox P.H. 52 "
Anakev Maul 25 "
Abbey (Bony) 25 "
David Tom George
Mp. J. D. Marnel 9

I invited Mr. P. G. Waramate to my chapel for prayer & thanks giving by 4 p.m. but the letter missed him.

Thursday 31/12/53. Mr. P. G. Waramate went to P.H. this morning, so my letter missed him. He returned today late.

Diary Scan 4: Diary entry of December 30, 1953 showing Wokoma's spiritual support for representative politics and its agent

JANUARY 1951

Wednesday 17

£50 deposit in favour of ⁽¹⁷⁻³⁴⁸⁾ Unnede School
was received from the Regent of Unnede.

A meeting of Kalabari elements assembled at
my place to meet Mr. Akanibo from Enugu.
He discussed the subject of Kalabari repre-
sentation at the Rivers Divisional Council
& subsequently at the Eastern House of Assembly.
He said possible candidates in the opinion of
Kalabari Union Enugu were Chief Nelson Yellu
and me. I expressed my unsuitability and
inability. My suggestion that my brother Donald as a
possible candidate was rejected by all.
Mr. Akanibo was to sound Kalabari
opinions & report to us later. He would leave
for Owerri on Friday morning.

Diary Scan 5: Diary entry of January 17, 1951 showing the affirmation of Wokoma's eligibility for representative politics by Kalabari indigenes in Enugu.

‘the centrality of reason, autonomy of action, liberal democracy, [and] the rule of law’.¹⁵² Wokoma therefore underscores his modern identity of representational politics along the lines of Taiwo’s contention that ‘the central tenet of political theory in the modern age [is] that no one ought to acknowledge the authority of or owe an obligation to obey any government in the constitution of which he or she has played no part’.¹⁵³ In other words, Wokoma presents Dimieari as fulfilling the ‘representational’ mandate of modern African politics by representing his Ijaw Tribe, and also articulating his own nomination by the Kalabari people as their intention to participate in the unfolding representative democracy of colonial and postcolonial Africa.

Wokoma’s illustration of Freund’s notion of ‘representation’ as an important component of the political public also manifests in his framing of his modern African political self as a supporter of representative politics. He constructs an identity of a political adviser and spiritual guide for himself with the presentation of his political relationship with Mr P.G. Warmate, a notable figure in the Niger Delta politics of the 1950s and 1960s, who wins the ‘Secondary Election to the Eastern House of Assembly at Degema’ as a representative of Kalabari people. Mr Warmate, Wokoma’s Fellow Anglican, in appreciation of Wokoma’s political support comes ‘for prayer and thanksgiving’ ‘with a party of NCNC members—about 25’ at the latter’s private chapel.¹⁵⁴ Wokoma shows, all in all, that the contribution of the clergy of the evangelical calling to African modernity through representational politics transcends direct involvement as contestants. And this brings to mind in some way Herbert L. Osgood’s comment concerning the Puritan impact in the development of modern American politics, that the ‘Puritan clergy were more than practical politicians; they were in many cases political writers and thinkers as well’.¹⁵⁵ It is in this vein that Wokoma’s diaries can be read as a sort of political ‘history’ or ‘manifesto’ of colonial and postcolonial African politics by an African ‘Puritan’, or as an extended narrative of the modern political development of an African Protestant priest. Again, Wokoma

¹⁵²Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 78.

¹⁵³Taiwo, p. 103.

¹⁵⁴Atkinson Wokoma’s Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965.

¹⁵⁵Herbert L. Osgood, ‘The Political Ideas of the puritans’, p.2

demonstrates that there is something about the theological character of ‘the new Puritanism of the evangelical revival’¹⁵⁶ as it manifested in colonial Africa that is particularly compatible with the emergence of the modern political order of Freund’s ‘representation’ besides the Puritanic culture of literary and modern the political socialization. For Wokoma, this has more to do with the charter of trust and responsibility that the protestant faith had brought to modern Africa. Wokoma’s representation of the role of the evangelical church in political modernity of Africa therefore evokes Patrick F. Campbell’s analytical exploration of the Puritan’s contribution to the entrenchment of the ethos of representative politics in the American state of Massachusetts, in which he cites the element of ‘covenant’ as significant. According to Campbell, representation for the Puritan, was a three-way covenant knitting the representative, his people and the Almighty God in a divine bond which must not be broken. For the Puritan, ‘the idea of covenant [...] raises the stakes of failure not only in religious life, but in political life as well’.¹⁵⁷ The implication of this for Wokoma and his spiritual ‘brethren’ in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria is that, the demand of representation in political modernity means that failure in political life also translates to failure in religious duty, and an unacceptable violation of an important covenant with the people, and with God.

2.2.2 Wokoma’s Public Puritanic Self and the Construction of African Educational Modernity

Wokoma constructs a public spiritual identity of modernity by framing himself in the Church’s participation in what Habermas has called ‘the world of letters’, where ‘privatized individuals in their capacity as human beings communicated through critical debate’.¹⁵⁸ In justifying the status of education as a key subject in the conversations of the public sphere, Suresh Babu highlights its role in the process of ‘socioeconomic and cultural

¹⁵⁶Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891*, p. 75.

¹⁵⁷Patrick F. Campbell, ‘The Concept of Representation in American Political Development: Lessons of the Massachusetts Bay Puritans’, *Political Conception*, 47.1 (January 2015), pp. 33-60 (p.41)

¹⁵⁸Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, p. 55.

transformation’ and its ‘capacity to engage different levels in restructuring society by cultivating diverse cultural sensibilities’.¹⁵⁹ The sense in which Wokoma’s public selfhood as a promoter of western education through the agency of the Church is constructed indicates his understanding of its transformational functions in the project of African modernity.

One strategy he adopts in his self-representation as an agent of education-oriented transformation, particularly in the context of colonial Southern Nigeria, is the inscription of the public narrative of his development as pupil, teacher and administrator in the colonial education establishment. As captured in his diary-narrative, his formal public career spanned the 47 years between 1913 and 1960 and he spent those years attending to the exterior, public demands of colonial modernity in his part of Nigeria. Thus, the modern self which he creates is that which emphasizes his role as a leading figure in the entrenchment of the missionary mandate on education. Wokoma, therefore, erects a public exterior profile which affirms the place of education as what David G. Scanlon calls ‘the core of Christian activity in Africa’, especially in terms of ‘the building of modern Africa’.¹⁶⁰ As a product of the missionary school system himself—he attends, according to his diaries, St Michael’s Anglican Church Buguma Primary School, where he also commences his teaching career upon obtaining his Standard Six Certificate in 1912,¹⁶¹—he demonstrates substantial determination to consolidate the modernity or ‘civilization’ project of imperialism. Wokoma’s public self therefore brings to the fore his contribution to the project of transforming ‘African communities [to] societies of knowledge that were ruled by reason’.¹⁶² Wokoma, therefore, contributes to the public discourse by framing himself as evidence of the capabilities of western education in shaping what Babu refers to as ‘enlightened public opinion’.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹Suresh Babu G.S. ‘Introduction’, in *Education and the Public Sphere: Exploring the Structures of Mediation in Post-colonial India*, ed. by Suresh Babu G.S. (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 1-14 (p.1)

¹⁶⁰David G. Scanlon, ‘Introduction’, in *Church, State and Education in Africa*, ed. by David G. Scanlon (New York: Teachers College Press, 1966), pp.1-22 (p.22).

¹⁶¹Atkinson Wokoma’s Archives, Diaries, Box I, 1915-1930.

¹⁶²Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 78.

¹⁶³Babu, ‘Introduction’, p.1.

JULY 1941

Investigation of Dis. Friday 4

Incidence at School ~~for 200~~ by the action of Mr.

~~Mr.~~ Idunmanji this morning reported to me by Mr. Calabak, Mr. Briggs the H.M. being away to P.H. for School grants.

Mr. Calabak states that Mr. Idunmanji was in the habit of sitting down indifferently and impatiently during school prayers & worship. This morning the hymn for the opening prayer was announced and all the pupils and the staff ~~at~~ except Mr. Idunmanji stood up to attention. The hymn was started and sung to the 3rd line but Mr. Idunmanji continued to sit down writing. The hymn was stopped & he was asked to stand up & join in the prayer but he refused & said he was not going to stand. Hence ~~that~~ local Manager was sent for.

Mr. Idunmanji admitted but said he was writing his Receipts and did not take any notice of what was going on.

Mr. Adedaji & Mr. Olali also supported the statement of Mr. Calabak & added that the school hand bell was rung twice to call attention but he would not. Mr. Idunmanji was reprimanded very strongly. I reserved further action till the return of the H.M. Mr. J. Apolunial ~~&~~

Diary Scan 6: Diary entry of July 4, 1941 showing Wokoma's production of colonial public 'educational selves' as part of the spiritual legacy of the C.M.S. Missionary project.

Another strategy that Wokoma adopts in the construction of his public spiritual identity of modernity is to frame himself as an enforcer of the education project of the Church. By this self-portrayal, Wokoma complicates conventional notions of the public sphere, especially in the Habermasian tradition of 'democratic' and free debate and conversation aimed at the formation of progressive public opinion¹⁶⁴ by injecting the element of force. For Habermas, the ideal public sphere predicated 'a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether' and worked by 'a mutual willingness to accept the given roles and simultaneously to suspend their reality'.¹⁶⁵ The colonial backgrounds of Wokoma's portraiture subvert this condition of the neutrality of status by introducing a category of imperial authoritarianism. As Craig Calhoun asserts, the mode of the public as a discursive arena of responsible citizens 'is distinct from invocations of superior entitlement on the basis of inherited status'.¹⁶⁶ The reality of his 'inherited' colonial status gives Wokoma an unacceptable image as a participant in the conventional public sphere. In inscribing his public self as a modern Nigerian Church-educator, Wokoma's dramatization of the element of compulsion as an instrument of persuasion in the arena of public dialogue emerges from the colonial circumstances of the educational venture of the Church in Imperial Southern Nigeria, and seems to violate the public sphere principle of the freedom of expression. As Emma Hunter and Leslie James put it, 'with the addition of the qualifier "colonial", Habermas' 'bourgeois public sphere shifts to describe a different type of public'.¹⁶⁷ The following passages illustrate:

April 15, 1924: At Omelema I asked Mr Briggs how often they had school on Fridays. He deliberately lied, in spite of all my efforts to correct him, that they

¹⁶⁴See Craig Calhoun, 'The Public Sphere in the Field of Power', *Social Science History*, 34.3 (Fall 2010), 301-334 (p. 304).

¹⁶⁵See Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 125.

¹⁶⁶Calhoun, 'The Public Sphere in the Field of Power', p.312

¹⁶⁷Emma Hunter and Leslie James, 'Introduction: Colonial Public Spheres and the Worlds of Print' *Itinerario*, 44.2 (August 2020), 227-242. (p.228).

generally had school twice on Friday, two school boys were called and they said once. His boy Sunday also said twice and was suspended from school.

July 4, 1941: Mr Calabar stated that Mr Idumangi was in the habit of sitting down indifferently and impertinently during school prayers and worship. This morning, the hymn for the opening prayer was announced and all the pupils and the staff, except Mr Idumangi, stood to attention. The hymn was started and sung to the 3rd line but Mr Idumangi continued to sit down writing. The hymn was stopped and he was asked to stand up and join the prayers but he refused and said he was not going to stand. Hence the local manager was sent for. Mr Idumangi admitted but said he was writing his receipts and did not take any notice of what was going on [...] Mr Idumangi was reprimanded very strongly. I reserved further action till the return of the HM. Mr Idumangi apologized.

In the above passages, Wokoma constructs a modern colonial public image of the priest-educator who does not just aim to convince with the power of his logic concerning what Suresh Badu explains as 'how the education system, as a particular domain of intellectual and organized activity, has led to generate, shape and transform the public sphere'¹⁶⁸ but he also sets out to compliment and reinforce the status of education as 'a location of discursive space'¹⁶⁹ by the performance of his authorization by the colonial establishment. In the April 15, 1924 example above, Wokoma imposes the will of the missionary—and by extension, the imperial establishment—on the public sphere by 'enforcing public' opinion rather than allowing it to emerge from the free conscience of the people. He is disenchanted with the lack of seriousness on the part of the local agent overseeing the Omelema station of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) following his observation of a de-emphasis of the school component of the Church—an unacceptable act of negligence in the evangelical project of African modernity. The second illustration above follows the same pattern of condemning an indifferent attitude to the institution of the school—and its crucial link to the Church—as an agency of modernity. Mr Idumangi's act of disrespect, in its secular and spiritual connotations, is considered a symbolic slight on the epochal venture of establishing a modern Africa. In both examples, Wokoma inscribes his public self not just as a human conduit in the accomplishment of the education aspect of the 'new puritanism of the evangelical revival'¹⁷⁰ in Africa, but also a colonial agent determined to

¹⁶⁸Babu, p.3

¹⁶⁹Babu, p.3

¹⁷⁰Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, p.75'

‘impose’ the ethos of Western civilization, in their physical, exterior manifestations.

The persona Wokoma creates in the above excerpts is that of himself as the public face of the connection between the Church and the school, unarguably the two most influential components of African colonial modernity. He reiterates, by the force and conviction of his self-representation, the significance of the combination of Christianity and western education in the construction of the modern African self. In constructing this kind of modern selfhood, Wokoma subverts Habermas’ theorization of ‘the principle of separation of State and Church’¹⁷¹ by his foregrounding of the immense political connections of the Church of England-sponsored CMS education project. At the core of these links is the fact that the head of the Anglican Church, the British royal house, also doubles as the head of the British Empire. The implication therefore, as his self-construction in his diary-narrative demonstrates, is that state authority could dominate, and even overwhelm the spiritual platforms of the education public sphere. However, Wokoma’s suggestion—through the symbolism of his identity and status as mediator of sorts between the State, the school and the Church—is that as a responsible participant in the formation of ‘public opinion’ for social good, the school, as an agency of the Church, contributes its quota to the political public sphere. For instance, in rebuking Mr Briggs, ‘his boy’ and Mr Idumangi, in the public sphere of the school setting for unacceptable social and moral behaviour, Wokoma, and the establishment which he represents, participate in the provision of what Habermas calls the ‘ethics of citizenship’, which ‘is the core of civic solidarity’.¹⁷² This ‘civic’ contribution of the educational component of the Church to the political public which Wokoma highlights in his narrative centralizes what John Rawls describes as the ‘introduction’ of ‘reasonable comprehensive doctrines’ in ‘public political discussion’.¹⁷³ It is also in this sense that Wokoma could be said to frame himself in what Babu identifies as the role modern education plays in mediating ‘different systems

¹⁷¹Habermas, p.2.

¹⁷²Habermas, p.7.

¹⁷³John Rawls, ‘The Idea of Public Reason Revisited’, *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 64. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 765-807 (p.783).

and agencies as key constituencies of the public sphere to create the discursive spaces of democracy and social justice in education'.¹⁷⁴

2.2.3 Wokoma's Spiritual Self and the Construction of African Cultural Modernity

In his construction of his Puritanic identity, Wokoma presents the modernity of his cultural self by engaging a category of the public sphere, what Suresh Babu has called 'a discursive construct', where conversationists 'can articulate issues that are significant to many and formulate multiple options for collective action'.¹⁷⁵ This category or site of the public sphere through which Wokoma constructs his modern cultural identity as a missionary agent is the 'civil society', an institution dedicated to the formulation and mobilization of social thought and action outside the *political* public and the *economic* public.¹⁷⁶ The foundational objectives of the civil society, as a type of the public sphere, according to Craig Calhoun, is to address 'matters of concern important to all citizens and [in] the organization of their lives together' and to provide the arena for identifying 'good approaches to these matters of public concern'.¹⁷⁷ The civil society, according to Habermas, consists of such institutions as the Church, cultural associations, academies, occupational associations, leisure clubs, among others. I am interested in the ways in which Wokoma presents the Church in the context of the public sphere of the civil society in the construction of his cultural self.

Wokoma therefore articulates the public modernity of his cultural identity by demonstrating the extent to which the African Protestant Church, specifically the Church of England-sponsored Church Missionary Society, contributes to the conversations and debates happening in the public sphere of the colonial Southern Nigerian societies in the first half of the 20th century. It is in this way that Wokoma's construction of the cultural public sphere can be read as what Daniel O'Connell describes as 'the articulation and critical

¹⁷⁴Babu, p.1.

¹⁷⁵Babu, p.1-2.

¹⁷⁶Calhoun, 'The Public Sphere in the Field of Power', p.305.

¹⁷⁷Calhoun, p.305.

engagement with the ideas and thinking of civil society'.¹⁷⁸ Wokoma's self-representation in his diaries, particularly between the 1920s and 1950s depicts a missionary agent building a public profile of spiritual modernity for himself by supervising the Church's civic role in shaping the social and cultural structures of the emerging modern state. Thus, when he is 'enforcing' the education component of the Church's acculturation and civilization project as we saw in the last subsection, or condemning heathenism, attacking polygamy, or affirming the connection between Church and state by spiritualizing secular ceremonies, Wokoma is producing his modern, public cultural self by representing the Church in the public sphere of the civil society. The following passages about the Church's role in the abrogation of the tradition of the compulsory murder of twins in the Kalabari society illustrate:

April 25, 1924: Friday. I arrived at Ikiri this morning about 9am. A meeting was immediately held in the mission house. There was a father & mother and their twin children in the mission house in the persons of Mr Igila Okiba and Latty Okiba being rescued from Elegu by the Christians.

June 16, 1924: Being informed by Mr Enoch Eze that one of the twins rescued by them had died. I went to see the parents. The other was breathing badly. It was doubted she could live. The father was asked to go and give information to the Corporal & the D. O. Ahoada.

April 27, 1924: I had a short talk with the Xtians. I was informed that a baptized Xtian murdered his two twin children on the day after birth & the other Christians reported the matter to the [Parochial] Committee Ahoada, who ordered them to report the matter to the Corporal & they did so. A policeman was sent & the man and his wife, the murderers, were arrested after the bodies of the dead children had been examined & the Constable had satisfied himself that a murder had been committed, there being blood flowing out of their nostrils & their necks broken—evidence of violent death. After some talks, they were asked to come for Akpaka and his wife with his twin children who have been staying with me in Ahoada since January when I came for the examination of the teacher.

In the above passages, Wokoma constructs the modernity of his cultural selfhood by dramatizing the contribution of the Church—under his supervision—as part of the civil society in 'civilizing' the traditional African societies by seeking to end a culture considered to be anti-human. In inscribing the intervention of the Church, Wokoma foregrounds the original, 'native' cultural psychology of the people, and emphasizes the need for

¹⁷⁸O'Connell, p.4.

cultural transformation for the purpose of achieving a civil society. The Church's argument—backed by the relevant theology of the sacredness of life—on the debating floor of the public sphere is that in an enlightened civil society, the type that the Church represents, no individual reserves the right to take another's life merely because they are born a twin. There is evidence in the illustrative passages above of the Church's own functionality within its own internal public space as a critical agent of cultural advocacy and orientation, where baptized members show levels of awareness about 'the principles of rights and wrong' and 'social obligation'.¹⁷⁹ In the first episode above, captured in the April 25, and June 16, 1924 entries, the parents of the twin children are sensitive to their public, civic responsibility to save their children, making it easier for the Church to intervene and rescue the latter from agents of the indigenous culture duty-bound to execute them. In the second episode, however, as captured in the April 27, 1924 entry, even though the 'baptized' Christian breaches his civic responsibilities, and with the apparent support of his wife, murders his own twin children, other members of the Church demonstrate their cultural socialization by reporting the incident to the appropriate authorities thereby converting it to a matter of dialogue in the public sphere. This dialogue and its outcome would constitute instruments for further advocacy and publicity on civic responsibility.

Wokoma's construction of spiritual and cultural modernities with his portraiture of the African colonial Church's contribution to the attainment of a civil society illustrates Scott Walter's assertion that 'the Church is a pillar of civil society [...] because it supports good works like adoption, hospital care, schooling for the poor and so forth'.¹⁸⁰ Beyond the above, for Scott, the defining implication for the Church's participation in the public sphere of the civil society is that 'the central teachings of the Church—[particularly that] humans have a meaningful place and high responsibility within a loving

¹⁷⁹Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, 'Civil Society and the Church, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/civil-society-church> [Accessed February 13, 2021]

¹⁸⁰Scott Walter, 'The Church and Civil Society', *Philanthropy: The Quarterly National Magazine of the Philanthropy Roundtable* (Winter 2020), <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/philanthropy-magazine/article/the-church-and-the-civil-society> [Accessed February 13, 2021]

universe—are an essential component of individual dignity and freedom’.¹⁸¹ As shown in the above examples, Wokoma frames his participation in the public domain of the civil society within the collective selfhood of the Church’s responsibility to engage in the cultural transformation of the community by working to eradicate the ritual killing of twins. However, he also does this by entrenching his own personal contribution as a Church leader and spiritual guide to many in the attainment of ‘individual dignity and freedom’ in the overall project of African modernity. For instance, in the April 27, 1924 entry, where he keeps ‘Akpaka & his wife with his twin children’ in his own house for safe-keeping, away from the cultural mob of the traditional Kalabari society, he highlights a personal input to the civil society as a part of the public sphere.

Another strategy Wokoma employs in articulating his spiritual and cultural modernities through his representation of the Church’s involvement with the public sphere of the civil society is to foreground the contribution of the civil society to the political public domain of the state. For instance, in each of the two narratives involving the cultural antagonism of twin children in Wokoma’s Southern Nigeria—the rescued Okiba twins (April 25, 1924) and the baptized Christian’s murder of his own twin children (April 27, 1924)—there is the involvement of the Police, the publicly recognized law-enforcement agency of the State, in this case, the colonial State. In the first narrative about the Okiba twins, ‘the Corporal’ is notified about the development, and in the second episode about the baptized Christian who murdered his twins, the Church immediately approves the notification of ‘the Corporal’ who sent ‘a policeman’, ‘the constable’ to inspect and examine the murder scene. In the June 16, 1924 entry also about the Okibas, the D. O.—the District Officer—the political head of a district in colonial Nigerian political delineation, is also informed. It is in describing this kind of link between the Church as a civic culture-oriented civil society and the State as the political public that Mary L. Gautier underscores the Church’s recognition ‘as an important institution of civil society, significant to the regime for its support and promotion of the

¹⁸¹Scott Walter, ‘The Church and Civil Society’.

values important for the political culture'.¹⁸² It is also in this light that Wokoma illustrates James R. Wood and John P. Bloch's characterization of the Church as an institution that participates in 'the kind of public discourse essential for a civil society'.¹⁸³ Thus in championing the safety of twins, in condemning traditional rituals with unacceptable implications for the civil society, such as dancing over the dead—as we see in the case of his public rebuke of such Christians as Johnbull Nwabali Orike who 'was charged of eating, drinking and dancing over the dead' in the May 22, 1925 entry—Wokoma contributes to the shaping of the public sphere of the State. It is also in the sense of its civil society significance that Wokoma articulates the image of the public spirituality of the Church as what Wood and Block call 'private legislature',¹⁸⁴ in which the Church serves as an influencer of public policy. In the context of colonial Nigeria where, as Wokoma's diary-narrative shows, the Church functions as an 'arm' of government, this type of private legislative function becomes inevitable.

In the construction of his cultural selfhood as a component of the modern spiritual public sphere, Wokoma engages the idea of what Seteney Shami explains as the 'focus on the multiplicity of publics, on competing publics and on counter-publics'.¹⁸⁵ In interrogating the kinds of public cultural selves that Wokoma produces in his foregrounding of the Church's participation in the colonial public domain of Southern Nigeria, I argue that he deals with different levels and categories of publics. For instance, within his diary-narrative, there is the cultural 'public' of the school, as illustrated in the already-cited April 15, 1924 encounter with Mr Briggs at Omelema and the July 4, 1941 episode about Mr Idumangi. There is also the cultural 'public' of the Church as illustrated in the March 26, 1919 entry where the chiefs of Buguma who

¹⁸²Mary L. Gautier, 'Church Elites and the Restoration of Civil Society in the Communist Societies of Central Europe', *Journal of Church and State*, 40.2 (Spring 1998), 289-317 (p.292).

¹⁸³James R. Wood and John P. Bloch, 'The Role of Church Assemblies in Building a Civil Society: The Case of the United Methodist General Conference's Debate in Homosexuality', *Sociology of Religion*, 50.2 (Summer 1995), 121-136, (p.121).

¹⁸⁴Wood and Bloch, p.121.

¹⁸⁵Seteney Shami, 'Introduction', in *Publics, Politics and Participation: Locating the Public Sphere in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. by Seteney Shami (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2009), pp. 13-41, (p.32-33).

have converted to Christianity ‘all agreed to lead a monogamous life’ before being examined by the ‘Ven Archdeacon Crowther’: and the episode of Wokoma’s own confirmation on May 15, 1917 at the Cathedral Church in Bonny by the Rev James ‘Holy’ Johnson. Besides the cultural publics of the school and the Church, there is also the larger public sphere of the communal arena, exemplified in the diary by, for instance, the episode of June 1, 1924, where the District Officer stands in judgement of the case in which ‘the Christians were being compelled by the heathen to subscribe towards a heathen masquerade club’. Wokoma’s public cultural identity, produced through the public spiritual agency of the Church, is perhaps more convincing in the context of the existence of ‘competing publics’ and ‘counter publics’—a category Alex Fattal describes as ‘a subset of publics that stand in conscientious opposition to a dominant ideology and strategically subvert that ideology’s construction in public discourse’.¹⁸⁶ The ‘competing publics’ and ‘counter publics’ that Wokoma highlights are those provided by the cultural claim of traditional African society, which, as exemplified in the diary-narrative, not only existed alongside Wokoma’s Christian modernity, but also aggressively contended with the latter. The implication therefore becomes that the emergence of a convincing public identity from the several contending ‘publics’ is a hard-won accomplishment for Wokoma’s self-representation of his cultural and spiritual modernities.

Wokoma’s articulation of his cultural selfhood within the public sphere enabled by Christian modernity also problematizes the notion of ‘transnational publics’ which emerge in colonial contexts, particularly in situations underscoring the cultural process of nation formation. Shami characterizes this in what she calls ‘the ways in which discourses from within and outside societies and regions often collude to dichotomize forms of discourses and actions’.¹⁸⁷ Wokoma illustrates this in his self-representation of the cultural aspects of his spiritual identity by foregrounding the manner in which the missionary adventure, as part of the colonial project, engendered a cultural

¹⁸⁶Fattal, ‘Counterpublic’, *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. by Hilary Callan DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1306 [Accessed 2 December, 2020], p.1.

¹⁸⁷Shami, p. 34.

revolution in Africa and other formerly colonized regions of the world. When for instance Wokoma dramatizes, and in a multi-dimensional manner, the experiences of cultural ambivalence within the Southern Nigerian communities of the early 20th century, he is highlighting the kinds of cultural selves produced by ‘transnational actors’ in the process of constructing what Shami refers to as ‘the nation and its publics’.¹⁸⁸ Thus, when Wokoma frames his cultural self in the narrative of the Church’s rejection of traditional rites emphasizing the killing of twins as we see in the preceding sections, he is inscribing the cultural influence of ‘transnational actors’ in terms of the constitution of what Shami calls ‘the colonial public sphere’ which is formed ‘through parallel nationalisms’.¹⁸⁹ The following passages further illustrate:

June 1, 1924: After morning service at Ahoada, I went to Oduohan at the urgent invitation of the Christians who were compelled to subscribe to a heathen masquerade club. Some boys’ clothes have been seized by their parents.

May 22, 1925: Agnes Ochoba was reported of taking oath by juju to clear herself from an alleged adultery & witchcraft. This case was brought to me on Easter Day [...] & I promised to communicate with the Pastor about it. The lady was ordered to be removed from her seat meanwhile. She is a baptized woman.

May 25, 1925: It was found out that many baptized persons who call themselves members of Committee are Polygamists. They were strongly reprimanded & the agent was ordered not to allow any of them to fill any office in the Church.

Wokoma entrenches in the above passages, the complication of the public sphere by the ‘dichotomizing’ of competing national publics. These parallel publics emerge from ‘parallel nationalities’—the foreign and the ‘native’—in the struggle for ascendancy. As demonstrated in the above examples, Wokoma builds this conflict of publics into the fabric of the narrative to underscore the cultural reality engendered by the colonial situation in Southern Nigeria. In the first example above, the communal public sphere bifurcates into the ‘Christian’ and ‘heathen’, that is, western/European and traditional/native African within the public site of a masquerade culture. In the second, the performance of the complication of the public sphere happens through the agency of one individual, Agnes

¹⁸⁸Shami, p. 34.

¹⁸⁹Shami, p. 27.

Ochoba, who despite being baptized—a public declaration of her Christian, western cultural heritage—also swears to a heathen oath. In the third illustration above, the polygamous chiefs also exhibit the public dimensions of a dual cultural heritage, given the fact that Protestant Christianity is incompatible with a polygamous married status. Therefore, in centralizing this ‘transnational complication’ of the public sphere in the construction of the modernity of his cultural selfhood, Wokoma presents an implication of how what Shami calls ‘resisting publics’¹⁹⁰ contribute to the formation of a ‘national public’,¹⁹¹ especially in colonial circumstances, in terms of ‘how conflict and resistance can be generative forces in the production of national publics’.¹⁹² Wokoma perhaps expresses this in the way in which the cultural debates and conversations in the colonial public sphere eventually produce a postcolonial Nigerian cultural public that draws constitutive elements from both ‘nations’—Imperial Britain and indigenous Nigeria. This somewhat brings into the picture Homi Bhabha’s characterization of the ‘third space’, which is ‘a place of hybridity’ where the constructed ‘political object [...] is neither the one nor the other’.¹⁹³ This is profoundly exemplified in the public spectacle of Wokoma’s chieftaincy investiture on December 24, 1962, on the frontier of postcolonial Nigeria, in which a protestant priest of Puritanic inclinations becomes a traditional African chief in circumstances that foreground the notion of hybridity. As Wokoma shows in his diary-narrative, the cultural project of colonialism, which is mediated by the spiritual force of the Protestant Church, an aspect of what Shami calls ‘the public sphere cultivated in Europe’,¹⁹⁴ with its claims of civil enlightenment, ‘colludes’ with the public sphere of the traditional African community, with its own cultural concomitants.

¹⁹⁰Shami, p. 26.

¹⁹¹Shami, p. 26.

¹⁹²Shami, p. 26.

¹⁹³Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 37.

¹⁹⁴Shami, ‘Introduction’, p. 27.

2.3 Wokoma's Construction of African Spiritual Modernity through the Intersection of the Private and the Public Selves

In this section, I contend that Wokoma's presentation of the intersection between the private and the public Puritanic selves in his diaries constructs an identity of modernity. I am interested in how Wokoma articulates the overlaps between the private and the public, the interior and the exterior spheres of his Christian spirituality in his portraiture of a modern African colonial selfhood. In other words, how does Wokoma, in his overall intention to establish a modern Christian self, blur the boundaries between the private and the public in his diaries? I examine the extent to which Wokoma inscribes the interconnections between the diary's character as a chronicle of the spiritual interior, as what John Stachniewski calls the 'inward-looking autobiography',¹⁹⁵ and a document of the exterior, social element of the Christian faith—the platform for the merged production of modern private Puritanic self and the modern public spiritual self. Wokoma's creation of a space for the intertwining of the private and the public dimensions of African spiritual modernity calls to mind Jacob Burckhardt's conceptualization of the modern self as consisting of the 'objective' and the 'subjective' sides separated by 'a common veil' that could 'easily melt into air'.¹⁹⁶ Wokoma's foregrounding of Burckhardt's famous theorization about the indivisibility of 'both sides of the human consciousness'¹⁹⁷ in his self-representation is the conceptual interpenetrability of both selves. Linda Tredennick affirms the 'definition of modern individual identity as the combination of the objective and the subjective, the interior and the exterior'.¹⁹⁸ In the context of Wokoma's articulation of the private-public modernity of his spiritual selfhood in African colonial and postcolonial terms therefore, none of the two domains of the self is completely independent of the other.

¹⁹⁵John Stachniewski, 'Introduction', *Grace Abounding' With Other Spiritual Autobiographies by John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. ix-xiii, (p.xiii)

¹⁹⁶Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, p. 100.

¹⁹⁷Burckhardt, p. 100.

¹⁹⁸Tredennick, 'Exteriority in Milton and Puritan Life Writing', p. 160.

The interplay of the ‘interior’ and the ‘exterior’ in Wokoma’s presentation of the Puritanic identity is therefore crucial to the understanding of the African spiritual modernity that he constructs. Annie Devenish has contended that ‘the self is not constructed in isolation but through the perspective of the self in the society, inflecting the individual life through a wider network of relations and identities’.¹⁹⁹ It is therefore ‘the intersubjective or relational nature of identity construction’²⁰⁰ that assures a most profound portrait of the self. In agreement with Devenish’s treatise above, Jonathan Ritchie observes that ‘the individual lived life provides a convenient prism through which to view the larger patterns and processes of society’.²⁰¹ Against this backdrop, the connection between Wokoma’s spiritual private interior and public exterior, as we see in his diaries, is such that one compliments, sharpens and fine-tunes the other in the creation of the modern self: while the *outside* provides material for the development of his private modern self, the *inside* harmonizes and organizes the engagement of the social sphere by the public modern self.

In what follows, I analyze Wokoma’s presentation of the interconnection between the private and his public selves in the construction of his African spiritual modernity in his diaries in two main ways. First, I investigate how his private, interior self shapes the manner of his social, public engagements and performance; that is, how his subjective consciousness influences the patterning of his objective self, and the implication of this inside-outside flow on the African modernity of Wokoma’s Puritanic personality. Secondly, I examine the extent to which Wokoma’s modern public self affects the development of the private interior self, in other words, how the exterior performance of his modern Christian spirituality shapes the manner of his Puritanic interiority and introspection.

¹⁹⁹Annie Devenish, ‘Performing the Political: A Study of Identity Making and Self-representation in the Autobiographies of India’s First Generation of Parliamentary Women’, *Women’s History Review*, 22.2 (2013), 280-294, (p.283).

²⁰⁰Devenish, ‘Performing the Political’, p.283.

²⁰¹Jonathan Ritchie, ‘Political Life Writing in Papua New Guinea: What, Who, Why?’, In *Political Life Writing in the Pacific: Reflections on Practice*, ed. by Jack Corbett and Brij V.Lal (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2015), pp. 13-31, (p.13).

2.3.1 From the 'Inside' to the 'Outside': Wokoma's Construction of the Interior-Exterior Dimension of the Modern Puritanic Identity

In constructing the modernity of his Puritanic selfhood, Wokoma presents the private-public intersection in the manner of the exterior being a product of the interior, of external action being an aftermath of internal reflection. In terms of how his personal, subjective self contributes to the formation of his social objective self, Wokoma engages Jürgen Habermas' conception of 'the public sphere' as a site for the manifestation of the 'private realm'.²⁰² Furthermore, Wokoma's self-representation of his modern spiritual self provides an illustration for Joe Bailey's views about the private domain's increasing potential to 'determine the public in interesting ways'²⁰³ in the context of western modernity, over the centuries.

One strategy through which Wokoma constructs the inside-outside intersection of his modern selfhood is by presenting the public as necessarily emerging from the private. Here, Wokoma foregrounds the kind of creative and emotional interiority which produces an intellectual material intended to shape the public perception of Christian modernity among its audience or consumers, the category Mark S. Cladis characterizes as the 'private retreat for the benefit of public vision', where one periodically 'retreats from the public sphere for the sake of independent reflection'.²⁰⁴ As a member of the intellectual aristocracy—by virtue of his educational training and exposure—Wokoma engages in this kind of 'retreat', particularly when he prepares and reflects over his sermons for onward public delivery. Evidence from Wokoma's diaries indicates that the spiritual responsibility of the preparation and delivery of the sermon was usually a well-thought out, private process. Thus, because the sermon was a major tool for the construction of modern, civil selves out of Africans, particularly within the colonial project, preachers like Wokoma, as agents of modernity, devoted sufficient time and energy to create private space for its production. Edward H. Davidson's contention that

²⁰²Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Square*, p. 55.

²⁰³Joe Bailey, 'From Public to Private: The Development of the Concept of the 'Private'', *Social Research*, 69.1 (Spring 2002), 15-31, (p.20).

²⁰⁴Mark S. Cladis, 'Radical Romanticism', *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 97.1 (2014), 21-49 (p.31).

the Puritan sermon is 'a learned, literary tradition'²⁰⁵ has implication for the kind of intellectual interiority Wokoma engages in the preparation of his public deliveries. Wokoma's internal process of 'creating' his sermons affirms Paula R. Bakscheider's assertion that 'in the solitariness of the creative art and in the expression of deep private feelings [...] epistles to the public are composed'.²⁰⁶ I illustrate with the excerpts below from Wokoma's diaries of 1944, where he prepares a sermon to be delivered 'at the Service of Praise and Thanksgiving in Honour of Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy' on the 9th of July, 1944.

We are often tempted to demur when we are faced with arduous tasks. But let us remember our Lord's memorable walk to Jerusalem which led Him to Calvary, and to the glory which was revealed at the end.

The cross meant salvation and eternal blessedness to millions of lost souls; salvation, victory, life and peace for the world and glory for God the father in the Highest. The great Empire with her allies has been in a terrific struggle with a most formidable foe and powerful enemies for nearly five years now. It is a struggle for our faith and liberty and justice. We have confidence in the righteousness and justice of our course. It is a crusade.

There have been terrible and unspeakable sufferings and losses and sacrifices and devastation. There had been Dunkirk, Singapore, Sevastopol, Tobruk, Crete and many others. Thousands of tons of shipping and precious lives have gone down to the bottom of the sea; great national sacrifices. These days cannot be forgotten.

Wokoma's 'public vision' for which he takes a 'private retreat'²⁰⁷ is therefore a double-pronged argument about the African modernity with which he intends to persuade his audience about the saving grace of Christ on the one hand, and the emancipatory benevolence of the British Empire as sanctioned by the Almighty on the other. And in the context of the socio-political reality of World War II, one of the hallmarks of African colonial modernity, Wokoma exemplifies what William Wordsworth calls 'an inner/outer attunement',²⁰⁸ which means 'the cultivated connection between the inner self and the situational environment' and 'a tutored interiority [...] appropriately attentive

²⁰⁵Edward H. Davidson, 'God's Well-Trodden Foot-Paths': Puritan Preaching and Sermon Form', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 25.4 (Winter 1983) pp. 503-527 (p.503)

²⁰⁶Paula R. Bakscheider, 'Introduction', p.17

²⁰⁷Cladis, 'Radical Romanticism', p.31.

²⁰⁸Cladis, p.31.

and responsive to the situation at hand'.²⁰⁹ By the range of the intellectual, historical, spiritual and emotional resources invested in this sermon, Wokoma gives the indication of the depth of private interiority mobilized in its preparation. This private interiority is indispensable in the generation of the huge public, political significance he tries to articulate—that which involved convincing his African audience that the British participation in World War II was a divinely-endorsed intervention to save the world, in the manner of the sacrificial advent of Jesus Christ for the redemption of mankind.

Thus, the sermon serves as Wokoma's framing of his modern Puritanic self on two levels. First is the interiority of its intellectual and imaginative literariness as a carefully produced piece of spiritual material—which as Davidson would say of the model American Puritan sermon, contains 'a text, a message derived literally and directly from scripture; a movement towards an exposition; an enlargement of the message; and a resolution in Use and Application'.²¹⁰ Second is the public dimension of this intellectual and imaginative interiority, that is, the public function of the private, reflective retreat, in the Wordsworthian manner of the 'attunement' of the interior and the exterior, which foregrounds the public demand placed on the African agent of spiritual enlightenment by colonial modernity.

The second strategy through which Wokoma engages the private as the source of the public—or the exterior as a product of the interior—in the construction of his spiritual modernity is in the establishment of a firm symmetry between the personal conviction of the Puritan about the ethos of deep private spirituality, and a public outward demonstration of that conviction. In other words, in the presentation of the public performance of the internal, interior conviction about spiritual principles Wokoma produces a more profound identity of the modern African Christian leader. For Wokoma therefore, the private interior is a kind of internal storehouse of the guiding tenets which inform his social operation as an agent of spiritual modernity across the missionary field of colonial Nigeria. Wokoma's interior Puritanic self therefore consists of what George Lindbeck has likened to 'a set of

²⁰⁹Cladis, p.31.

²¹⁰Davidson, "God's Well-Trodden Foot-Paths", p.503.

acquired skills [...] like a culture or a language'²¹¹ or what William Temple describes as 'The Word'—an internal reservoir of the scriptures—which would be 'made flesh'²¹² in due course. Wokoma therefore illustrates how the Puritanic consciousness as private conviction—itsself an important condition for the production of African modern selfhood—is indispensable to what Patrick Collinson calls 'social control', which, in the context of Wokoma's African world, implies a set of actions that define his engagement as both a subject, an agent and a mediator of African modernity. According to Collinson, 'Puritanism as a social control was merely an outward expression of his aroused inner conscience'.²¹³ For Wokoma, the notion of 'inner conscience' is what separates the modern, civilized African from the rest of the traditional community who are yet to *see* and *comprehend* the light of reason. I illustrate with the following entries:

May 22, 1925: Johnbull Nwabali Orike was charged of eating, drinking and dancing over the dead. And when I was informed, he threatened to challenge the Manager to prove the sinfulness of his action by scripture. He [...] desired scriptural proof [so] I gave him Acts 15²⁹.

July 30, 1959: Chief D. Charles Wokoma gave me an invitation and a copy of the programme for the recognition of the Amanyanabo ceremony. It began with a cocktail party by the commissioners, followed by a dance on Sunday the 2nd of August, Monday the 3rd being the day for the ceremony. I suggested that it should commence with Divine Services at 4.pm [...] St Michaels' Church Buguma was chosen for the services.

December 24, 1962: (Buguma) This morning, I was installed Chief of Kalabari in Amachree Hall [...] Only Christian songs were sung in prayer, thanksgiving & praise to God.

July 17, 1963: (Ikoyi-Lagos) This morning I felt convinced in answer to my prayer that I should not be admitted to hospital. I feel much better and the swelling has slightly gone down. I recalled the letter and decided not to go [for] God can cause me to be healed at home. I informed Mac & the arrangements were cancelled. Thanks be to the LORD.

In the above excerpts, Wokoma foregrounds the ways in which his spiritual conviction informs the patterns of his construction of the modernity of the African public space response. In the May 22, 1925, entry he has to reach

²¹¹George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), pp. 33-34 (p.33).

²¹²William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (London: Macmillan, 1934), p.478.

²¹³Patrick Collinson, 'Jacobean Puritanism: Gestation and Rebirth', *Historical Association General Series*, 99-107 (1981), p.34.

deep inside of him to activate his spiritual interior and to produce a faith-based reminder when Johnbull Nwabali, himself a Christian, challenges the validity of spiritual modernity for Africans in the public spectacle of a Christian gathering. The interiority of Wokoma's conviction, backed by a deep knowledge of the scriptures, in terms of what Temple calls 'the Word', imposes the dignity of Christianity-inflected western civilization, particularly in its clear condemnation of any form of heathenism on the public conscience of the people, and affirms in the process Wokoma's modern spiritual selfhood. Thus, in creating the public platform where the forces of indigenous African culture engage in open confrontation with Christian modernity—with himself as all of mediator, agent and propagator—Wokoma invokes the power of the spiritual interior to influence the exterior, public reception of western modernity in the African domain.

In both the July 30, 1959 and the December 24, 1962 entries, Wokoma also deploys the force of inner conviction about the supremacy of the Christian God to change the public complexion of fundamental traditional observances of political affirmation. His suggestion that the Amanyambo Recognition ceremony commences with 'divine services' is a community novelty, with the implication that where Christian modernity does not entirely abrogate a traditional African practice—just as it did with the killing of twin children—it certainly succeeds in changing its public outlook. The 'divine services' factor that Wokoma introduces therefore represents an attempt to modernize the traditional. The same is applicable to his presentation of his chieftaincy installation ceremony, where the familiar ritual process of libation and incantation are replaced by the singing of 'Christian songs [...] in prayers, thanksgiving and praise to God'. My interview with Wokoma's grandson, Odein Ajumogobia, provides some extra-textual information on this particular public cultural and political event which grants further insight into the degree of the modernizing influence of Wokoma's spirituality, along the lines of what Collinson characterizes as Puritanism's function of 'social control':

I remember when he took a chieftaincy title and the controversies that trailed it because in some ways, chieftaincy titles were considered not to be very compatible with Christianity. I remember that this was discussed at length,

and eventually his own case was the one which introduced the Bible into the ritual of chieftaincy ceremonies—the Bible provided a substitute for some of the deep traditional parts of the process, like pouring libation to the ancestors. Parts of the ceremony were adjusted for him.²¹⁴

The above submission corroborates Wokoma's diary-narrative in highlighting the manner in which he constructs the public dimensions of his modern selfhood by inscribing his internal conviction about the supremacy of Christian spirituality in important social and political rituals in the traditional African setting. He demonstrates the ways in which his private Puritanic self can 'control' his public cultural and political circumstances, and this public manifestation of Wokoma's inward internal self is mediated by his production of a space of compromise between a 'westernized interior' and the 'nativized exterior' in terms of what Homi Bhabha calls 'the third space', 'a place of hybridity'²¹⁵ in which, in the context of colonial and postcolonial Africa, what is European is not *completely* western and what is African is not *completely* 'native'. Wokoma's representation of the social manifestation of interior spirituality in this way also calls to mind Nilufer Gole's conceptualization of 'changing publics', in which the public sphere cannot be regarded as a 'pre-established, immutable arena'.²¹⁶ According to Gole, 'the inclusion of new social groups requires a redefinition of that sphere's frontiers and normative values'.²¹⁷ For Gole, 'newcomers reveal the limits of the public square as it is constituted and imagined by society and its legislators at a given time'.²¹⁸ In other words, and as the episodes of the Amanyano recognition and the Chieftaincy installation cited above demonstrate, there are ways in which Wokoma's embodiment of the Puritan spirit in terms of an interior consciousness affects the outlook of the public sphere of colonial Nigeria that he participates in, particularly by way of generating other kinds of public. For instance, the kind of public produced by the installation ceremony of December 24, 1962 would differ from the regular traditional ceremony by

²¹⁴Odein Ajumogobia, Personal Interview, 21 February 2016.

²¹⁵Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 37.

²¹⁶Nilufer Gole, 'The Voluntary Adaptation of Islamic Stigma Symbols', *Social Research*, 70.3 (Fall 2003), 809-828 (p.824).

²¹⁷Gole, 'The Voluntary Adaptation of Islamic Stigma Symbols', p.825

²¹⁸ Gole, p.825.

virtue of Wokoma's investment of the interiority of his spiritual self. The same applies to the recognition ceremony of July 30 1959.

In the fourth and last excerpt above—that of July 17, 1963—Wokoma engages the force of inner Puritanic conviction to change the course of a public event in the attempt to construct his modern selfhood. In the internal spiritual conviction that 'God can cause me to be healed at home', Wokoma invokes the Puritanic charter of personal faith which he exhibits through his conversation with his diary-narrative. However, this intense spiritual interiority of the private self is somehow imposed on the public space, where Wokoma has to direct that already concluded 'arrangements' for medical attention in a public hospital be cancelled. This profoundly illustrates Mark Cladis' notion of 'the cultivated connection between the inner self and the situational environment'.²¹⁹ An important implication of Wokoma's construction of this inner-outer space of spiritual modernity on the personal assurance of faith healing is that it somewhat highlights the contradictions and confusions of modernity, where two elements of the modern world—Christian spirituality and the modern biomedical institution—as transmitted to the continent of Africa through the colonial project, appear to confront each other. In opting for spiritual healing, activated by the power of his Puritanic interiority, Wokoma seems to be rejecting the medical option to good health—hyped as one of the greatest bequests of the modern world—and questioning its reliability. Therefore, in this particular case Wokoma constructs his modern identity by granting ascendancy to modern interior sentiments, and private subjectivity over modern secular public objectivity. This is perhaps Wokoma's illustration of the sense in which, according to Michael Balboni and Tracy Balboni, modern biomedicine appears to 'be losing its soul' to the 'spiritual dimensions of medicine and health',²²⁰ where especially the Christian faith tends to provide acceptable alternative therapy.

²¹⁹Cladis, 'Radical Romanticism', p. 31.

²²⁰Michael Balboni and Tracy Balboni, 'Do Spirituality and Medicine Go Together', <http://bioethics.hms.harvard.edu/journal/spirituality-medicine> [Accessed 3 April, 2021].

2.3.2 From the 'Outside' to the 'Inside': Wokoma's Construction of the Exterior –Interior Dimension of the Modern Puritanic Identity

In the construction of his modern spiritual identity, Wokoma also presents the ways in which the modern public sphere influences and shapes the modern private self. Wokoma demonstrates in his diary-narrative how public, objective phenomenon determines the patterns of the subjectivity of the modern individual self. In other words, Wokoma shows how the private interior is a response to the public exterior; how elements and material from the physical, social environment contribute to the development of the mental and psychological in the articulation of modern African spiritual selfhood. Wokoma's text therefore illuminates what Owen C. Thomas calls 'an emphasis on 'the outer life as the major source of the inner life',²²¹ and how, as George Lindbeck puts it, 'communal phenomenon [...] shapes the subjectivities of individuals'.²²² One of Wokoma's most effective strategies of constructing his modernity, as evident in his diaries, is to transform events and experiences from social life into a reflective interiority. The modernity of Wokoma's Christian journey can therefore be said to emerge from what Joe Bailey describes as 'the privatization and individualization of the public realm',²²³ which are the dominant themes of contemporary modernity. Wokoma therefore demonstrates what Sidney I. Dobrin calls 'the privatization of discourse' where discourse 'must first of all be experienced publicly' before it 'can be made private'.²²⁴ Thus, he does not just present the many profound social discourses of colonial and postcolonial African spiritual modernity, he also shows the link between these public experiences and the development, or affirmation, of his modern interior self.

The first dimension of Wokoma's construction of his Puritanic modernity through the presentation of the exterior-interior intersection of the spiritual

²²¹Thomas, 'Interiority', p. 44.

²²²George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p.33.

²²³Bailey, 'From Public to Private', p.22.

²²⁴Sidney I. Dobrin, 'Going Public: Locating Public/Private Discourse', in *The Private, the Public, and the Published: Reconciling Private Lives and Public Rhetoric*, ed. by Barbara Couture and Thomas Kent (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2004), pp. 216-229, (p.221).

self is the framing of public discourse or experience as a source of inner conviction about the status of his relationship with the Supreme Divinity. For Wokoma, this category of social discourse emerges in the form of rituals and ceremonies of affirmation where an event symbolically marks a shift in the spiritual status of the elect, and simultaneously foregrounds their Christian modernity. Wokoma creates this scenario in the episode of his 'Confirmation ceremony' of May 17, 1917, conducted by the eminent African missionary, Bishop James 'Holy' Johnson. The inner spiritual impact of this ceremony on Wokoma is that he has now been inducted into a special group of colonial subjecthood, those whom the gospel of light has separated from darkness and backwardness of their native tradition. For Wokoma, this Christian ritual of Confirmation, a public declaration of uncompromising allegiance to the true God as endorsed and introduced by the West, provides a better alternative to several rituals of human development and maturity in the indigenous African space. Wokoma's internal, inner fulfilment on this occasion is of course connected to Bishop Johnson's status as one of the foremost African missionaries, and the fact that, as Wokoma puts it in his diary of May 17, 1917, the revered Bishop 'said on the pulpit that this Confirmation was his last'. And it turns out, according to Wokoma, Bishop Johnson dies the following day, May 18, 1917. Wokoma's private response of 'Glory be to God' (May 18, 1917) in his diary reflections represents both an interior acknowledgement of the spiritual significance of the public experience of the Confirmation ceremony, and the fact that the formal commencement of his journey as what Olufemi Taiwo describes as the 'proselytizer' of his own people was commissioned by this African giant of colonial modernity. It also signifies his internalization of the conviction that he has become *who* he is in the landscape of African spiritual modernity by virtue of the performative act of Confirmation.

Wokoma also underscores the ritual of Holy Communion and its spiritual symbolism in his construction of the exterior-interior intersections of the African modern self. For Wokoma, the Holy Communion represents a most sacred reminder of his Puritanic modernity, where a public ritual is performed, according to Sam Storms, to 'signify, seal, and apply to believers

of all benefits of the new covenant’, to ‘indicate and to promote the communion of believers with Christ’ and to serve as ‘a badge of the Christian profession’.²²⁵ The exterior-interior interpretation of the Holy Communion is that of a rite that is publicly executed but privately felt and absorbed. As Ted Schroder puts it, in Holy Communion ‘the act of eating and drinking are outward signs of inward and spiritual faith’.²²⁶ In his portraiture of the public spiritual ritual of the Holy Communion across his diary-narrative, Wokoma always inscribes its impact on the interior being by either framing the momentousness of the occasion or highlighting the response of his inner self. For instance, he entrenches the significance of his first Holy Communion on June 3, 1917 by the commemorative manner of the record: ‘I received my first Lord’s Supper in St Clements Church, Bonny today [...] Given by Rev. F.M. Kemmer’. By referring to the spiritual exercise as the ‘Lord’s Supper’, and not as ‘Holy Communion’ Wokoma tends to emphasize a deep symbolism, particularly as it affects the development of his modern spiritual self, and also to highlight the depth of his conviction that participating in this ritual has an inner transformational effect on his personality as a subject of African modernity coming only days after his Confirmation as a member of the Christian body. The ritual of the ‘Lord’s Supper’ thus becomes a reinforcement of the spiritual import of the Confirmation, particularly in the construction of a modern African subjectivity for him. Wokoma’s representation of Holy Communion also comes in the form of a reaffirmation of his status in the faith, and by extension, his spiritual modernity—especially after extended periods of temptation. For instance, in 1951, after a particularly challenging spell of ill-health which involved a series of surgeries, Wokoma’s participation in the ritual of Holy Communion symbolizes his ‘reconnection’ to God in the public space of the Church, the physical, material emblem of Christian spiritual modernity, after a long absence. As recorded in

²²⁵Sam Storms, ‘10 Things You Should Know About the Lord’s Supper and Communion’, <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study> [Accessed 4 February, 2021].

²²⁶Ted Schroder, ‘How and Why Do We Celebrate the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion?’ www.tedschroder.com/how-and-why-do-we-celebrate-the-lords-supper-or-holy-communion, [Accessed 4 February, 2021].

the entry of July 1, 1951, his response to the refreshingly pleasant experience—‘I thank God for his infinite mercies towards me’—is an indication of an inner peace that comes with an understanding of the private significance of public ritual.

In foregrounding the exterior-interior dimensions of the modern African Christian self, Wokoma draws attention to the crucial role of rituals and ceremonies in the validation of the status of his Christian modernity. His self-representation in his diaries therefore illustrates Elizabeth A. Gassin and Timothy A. Sawchak’s view that ‘ritual participation and religious faith have been linked to a variety of positive outcomes for individuals’.²²⁷ For Wokoma, one of those outcomes is the reinforcing of the conviction of his standing in Christ. In underscoring the capacity of public ritual to mould private subjectivity, whether positively or negatively, Wokoma acknowledges in his diary-narrative the role of heathenistic rituals in inhibiting the construction of the modern African self as demonstrated by his stern condemnation of such cultural practices as swearing ‘by juju’ and ‘eating, drinking and dancing over the dead’ among his Kalabari people during his missionary journeys of 1925. He, however, endorses such Christian rituals as Confirmation and Holy Communion because of the ways in which they enhance the development of the modern self, particularly in the anticipation of what Olufemi Taiwo calls ‘the promise of self-realization [...] according to the light of reason guided by [the] Christian heritage’.²²⁸ Wokoma’s centralizing of the role of Christian ritual in the construction of his African modernity, therefore highlights its place in the inside-outside intersection of the modern self by showing the way in which the public engagement of ceremony affects what Torkom Saraydarian calls ‘the consciousness’.²²⁹ According to Saraydarian: ‘your higher consciousness and your emotions are affected through ritual [...] while you are doing certain movements, some different emotional state of consciousness

²²⁷Elizabeth A. Gassin and Timothy A. Sawchak, ‘Meaning Performance and Function of a Christian Forgiveness Ritual’, *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 22.1 (2008), 39-49 (p.39).

²²⁸Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, p.6.

²²⁹Torkom Saraydarian, ‘Holy Communion & Its meaning’, <https://www.tsgfoundation.org/images/outreach/OR08MarApr.pdf> [Accessed 4 February, 2021].

is awakening within your nature. This is because any action you do physically affects the emotions'.²³⁰ Both Confirmation and Holy Communion rituals are presented by Wokoma as public activities that drive a corresponding emotional and spiritual private response from an individual, particularly in the formation of modern subjectivity.

Wokoma also constructs the modernity of the exterior-interior intersection by presenting the manner in which public occasions provoke the transcendental experience, what Simon Gikandi regards as the 'transcendental claims of the aesthetic realm'.²³¹ For Wokoma in his self-representation, the idea of transcendence refers to an inner reaction to an occasion of high spiritual connotation as a spectator and not necessarily as a participant. For instance, Wokoma's recollection of King George V's 1935 Royal Silver Jubilee Celebration Procession in his August 26, 1941 record provokes intense emotions of the sublime and the transcendental category. Wokoma's interior response to the spectacular public display of 'power and might and glory and splendor' on the occasion is a full-ranging pledge of allegiance to the Empire and the divinity that endorsed the colonial project and the missionary adventure, therefore enabling the process of modernization for the African. Wokoma's conclusion of 'beautiful and inspiring allegiance to the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings' therefore represents a deep spiritualizing of a public process of the affirmation of political and religious authority. Wokoma's impression above can therefore be read in terms of what Sandra M. Schneider calls 'self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives'.²³² In Wokoma's case, this self-transcendence becomes crucial in the construction of modern African selfhood.

Another instance of Wokoma's presentation of this exterior-interior transcendence is found in the episode involving his patronage of the public setting of a cinema at the University College Hospital, Ibadan:

²³⁰Saraydarian, 'Holy Communion & Its meaning'.

²³¹Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p.12.

²³²Sandra M. Schneider, 'Religion vs Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum', *Siritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 3.2 (January 2003), pp.163-185 (p.166).

January 28, 1962: 8:30 p.m. U.C.H. For a film show about Martin Luther, the great Church Reformer, the fearless inspired father of the Reformation in Europe. A most inspiring film. Thank God for his work and life.

Wokoma's inner spiritual stimulation as expressed in the private space of his diary comes largely from his appreciation of Luther's contribution to the establishment of reformed Christianity in particular and modernity—especially in the sense in which Wokoma encountered and experienced it—in general. Such external discourses of the resilience of the protracted project of modernity are configured to provoke the interior, transcendental consciousness in agents of African modernity such as Wokoma, especially by way of reinvoking the internal energy and potency of their faith. Wokoma thus suggests that the visual narrative thematizing 'the work and life' of an individual as inspiring as Martin Luther, the progenitor of the Protestant creed, as Vivian Sobchack puts it, employs 'a variety of cinematic strategies meant not only to *represent* but also to *present* and *solicit* transcendent or "spiritual" states of being from the viewer'.²³³ For Wokoma, the modern public context of the cinematic occasion sufficiently drives the stimulation of his modern interior, in such a way that the *outer self* becomes a source of the *inner self* in the production of the African modern spiritual identity.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Wokoma constructs an identity of African modernity by foregrounding the private and public domains of his spiritual, 'Puritanic' self. In line with the research and sub-research questions for this chapter, I discussed Wokoma's articulation of his Puritanic modernity in three sections. In the first section, I argued that Wokoma's presentation of the private aspects of his spiritual selfhood establishes an identity of African modernity for him. The argument in this section proceeded in two subsections. In the first subsection, I interrogated how Wokoma invokes the private interiority of his Puritanic self—particularly as manifesting in the confessional imagination—to construct an identity of African modernity for

²³³Vivian Sobchack, 'Embodying Transcendence: On the Literal, the Material, and the Cinematic Sublime', *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, 4.2 (2008), 194-203, (p.194).

himself. In the second subsection, I examined how Wokoma framed his modern Puritanic selfhood within the domestic spirituality of his household.

In the second section, I examined how Wokoma's production of the public dimensions of his spiritual self entrenches his African modernity. My analysis here is presented in three subsections. In the first subsection, I argued that Wokoma's articulation of a public political self constructs an identity of modernity for him. In the second subsection, I argued that Wokoma's framing of his public Puritanic self within the education component of the Church establishes his spiritual modernity. In the third subsection, I investigated the extent to which Wokoma's presentation of his cultural selfhood constructs an identity of Puritanic modernity for him.

In the third section of the chapter, I analyzed Wokoma's presentation of the intersections between the private and the public spheres of his spiritual selfhood. This section is subdivided into two subsections. In the first subsection, I argued that Wokoma establishes an identity of African spiritual modernity by presenting the interior-exterior dimensions of his Puritanic self, in terms of the public exterior self being a product of the private interior self. In the second subsection, I read Wokoma's construction of his Puritanic modernity in terms of the public-private, and the exterior-interior, in the sense of the ways in which the modern public sphere influences the patterns of the inner self.

Chapter Three

The Private and the Public Selves in Wokoma's Presentation of History and the Construction of African Colonial Modernity

3.0 Introduction

In interrogating Wokoma's 'developing' modern character in terms of his increasing social, political, and 'historical' awareness, this chapter examines his presentation of 'private history' and 'public history' in his diaries and how he constructs an identity of African modernity in the process. With the evidence of Wokoma's work, it establishes the defining attributes of private history, not just as what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson call a private 'history of the writing/speaking object',¹ but also as what John Moran describes as the 'history of everyday domestic private life'.² The chapter also entrenches a notion of 'public history' where 'public' is interpreted as not just the 'political sphere' but also located within the 'civil society' and the 'community'.³ It also explores how Wokoma constructs a modern African identity by presenting the modernity of both private and public history, not only as separate spheres, but also as interconnected provinces of existence.

In the first instance, I look at both Wokoma's personal history and those of 'marginal' figures profiled in his diaries, with a view to analyzing how they have been influenced by elements of the modern world and what they say about African modernity. In the second instance, I pay attention to Wokoma's presentation of the public history of his time, in terms of a collective heritage—at the levels of his ethnic Kalabari, his Southern Nigeria, his Africa and his world, at large. Then I explore the ways in which Wokoma's 'private' history and 'public' history complement, connect to and intersect with each other in the overall project of establishing a modern African identity. In other words, I analyze Wokoma's historical consciousness in his diaries against the

¹Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.13.

²John Moran, 'Private Lives, Public Histories: The Diary in Twentieth-Century Britain', in *Journal of British Studies*, 54.1 (2015): 1-20 (p.1).

³Bailey, 'From Public to Private', p. 21.

background of the divergences and convergences of what R.G. Collingwood calls the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ of history.⁴

I set out to prove in this chapter that the historical value of Wokoma’s diaries is immense. Not only do they represent the ‘private’ history of Wokoma’s modern self, they also substantially contain aspects of the public history of modern Nigeria. Wokoma definitely wrote his diaries with a far-reaching historical sensitivity in terms of documenting the passage of time, given the manner in which he constructs his modern self around the major and minor issues of the emerging African modernity of the first half of the 20th century. For Wokoma in his diaries, the history of African modernity does not just imply history about Africa, but also global history,⁵ and how the latter informs African modernity. For instance, one of the global events around which Wokoma frames his developing self of African modernity is World War I, in which he records the contribution of his colonial Kalabariland/Southern Nigeria, in the form of fund-raising initiatives.⁶ Here, Wokoma connects the history of African modernity—which World War I remains an integral part of—to the history of 20th century world modernity. Wokoma’s historical scope is therefore a large circumference of the local and the international, ranging from the modern Kalabari kingdom, to the centre of the Imperial West, and even beyond.

There are two ways in which Wokoma’s historical tendency in his diaries can be appreciated: as a full-fledged *historical document* or *history* in itself and as a *source* or *evidence* to a historical document. In the first instance above, Wokoma’s presentation of the several aspects of modern African history—modern Kalabari history, Nigerian Church history, Nigerian colonial administration history, Nigerian nationalist history, Nigerian social and

⁴R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1946), p. 146.

⁵Wokoma’s identity as an imperial subject and as a part of the colonial project—itself a veritable international phenomenon—inscribes his profile as a global citizen who is authorized to serve as a witness to how the international forms the national and the local.

⁶For instance, in his October 21, 1915 diary entry, Wokoma notes, that a ‘play was held at Degema [and] collection was made in aid of the Red Cross Fund’. This is part of the World War I ‘win-the-war’ effort in Wokoma’s Kalabariland, and of course, in the rest of colonial Southern Nigeria.

cultural history, and of course, Nigerian postcolonial history—is considered as authentic, dependable and ‘true’. The diaries therefore can stand on their own as not just a work of ‘history’, but also the product of a ‘historian’. In other words, they can be taken seriously as important texts of Nigerian history and not merely as the subjective, private reflection of an individual life-writer. This perspective to the interpretation of the historical value of Wokoma’s diaries is championed by German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, who considers autobiographical writings as providing the more resourceful and original insight into human experience of the past. According to Dilthey, autobiographical reflection—such as Wokoma’s—‘makes historical insight possible [...] it alone enables us to give life back to the bloodless shadows of the past’.⁷ In the context of Dilthey’s submission, Wokoma’s diaries can be read in terms of the kind of first-person-witness insight they grant into modern Nigerian history of the first half of the 20th century. It is in this sense also that Wokoma tends to ‘give life back to the bloodless shadows of the past’ of the different experiences which he lived through and bore witness to. It is also within this context that Kenneth Barkin describes autobiographical writings as a manner of understanding the ‘lives of real people as interpreted by those people rather than by generalization deduced by the study of groups’.⁸ Wokoma’s diaries therefore represent the distinction between history as a real, living, ‘humanist’ undertaking and as a ‘bloodless’ academic exercise.

Wokoma’s diaries can also serve as veritable source material or evidence in the production of ‘academic’, ‘formal’ history. Much of the rationale for viewing autobiographical documents such as diaries as merely sources or evidence and not historical documents, derives from the distinction between life-writing as private, subjective historical production and the ‘proper’ discipline of history, in which according to Pierre Nora, it became the statutory responsibility of the ‘historians [...] to provide a definitive judgment

⁷Wilhelm Dilthey, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works, Vol III, The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, ed. by Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p.222.

⁸Kenneth D. Barkin, ‘Autobiography and History’, *Societies*, 6.2 (1976), 83-108.

of past events'.⁹ One implication of the above is that historians are suspicious of the personal perspectives of autobiographical writers, which are usually not taken as the ultimate truth of the particular historical experiences. For instance, the historian using Wokoma's diaries as archival material and 'source' in the production of academic or public history adopts certain investigative methods to determine their veracity or otherwise. As Jeremy D. Popkin puts it, 'the historian refuses to read an autobiography as a self-sufficient text; instead, he or she strives to bring personal narrative into the intertextual relationship with other evidence, to decentre it, and thus implicitly to question its truth claims'.¹⁰ In spite of the suspicion about the genre's 'truth' profile, Wokoma's diaries have the potential to serve as invaluable source material in the historical reconstruction of many aspects of 20th century Nigerian colonial history, particularly as it concerns the emergence of the modern Nigerian self. One reason for this is that even when Wokoma's diaries offer a private perspective to modern African history, their public significance is always far-reaching. As his diaries show, Wokoma is one diarist who constructs his modern identity by locating himself within an evolving society.

3.1 The Modernity of Wokoma's 'Private History' in His Diaries

In this section, I examine Wokoma's notion and presentation of 'private' history as closely linked with Swann Jr and Bosson's distinction between 'personal self views' and 'social self views'¹¹ and Sekides, Gaertner and O'Mara's division between the 'individual self' and the 'collective self'.¹² 'Private history' thus differs remarkably from 'public' history in terms of the difference between what is 'personal' and what is 'social'. I therefore read Wokoma's presentation of his private history as his 'historicizing' of his 'personal self view' or his 'individual self'. In this vein, Wokoma's idea of private history essentially captures the sense in which the diary as a literary and cultural form 'upholds' the charter of confidentiality, and how its contextualization within time and space, like in several other autobiographic forms, endows it with the 'historical' quality.

⁹See Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians and Autobiography* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.15.

¹⁰Popkin, *History*, p. 22.

¹¹Swann Jr, and Bosson, 'Identity Negotiation', p.448.

¹²Sekides and O'Mara, 'Individual Self', p. 98.

However, as tidy as this personal-social delineation appears, there is need for some modification, particularly in the light of evidence from Wokoma's diaries. Wokoma's notion of the 'private' in his construction of the modernity of his private history is located somewhere between what Inez Martinez refers to as 'access to the psyche' which calls for an 'an internalizing of experience'¹³ and Hegel's idea of 'civil society'.¹⁴ In other words, Wokoma's private realm transcends the provinces of what Richard Sennett describes as the 'psychic life' that 'arises by spontaneous generation, independent of social conditions and environmental influences' and which 'is seen as so precious and so delicate that it will wither if exposed to the harsh realities of the social world and will flower only to the extent that it is protected and isolated.'¹⁵ Wokoma's sense of private history therefore appropriates such intermediate categories as what Joe Bailey outlines as 'family', 'friendship', and private/domestic/personal identity matters'.¹⁶ In other words, Wokoma's sense of the private may commence from what Backscheider refers to as 'the interior life of the subject', but it also comprises 'the personal space' [where only a few, perhaps not even all members of the nuclear family are admitted]; the intimate space [in which all kinds of intimate thoughts, intellectual as well as emotional, are shared]'.¹⁷ This implies that, in Wokoma's 'narrativizing' of dealings with members of his nuclear and extended families and his close acquaintances, there is a 'shade' of the 'collective' and a tint of the 'social'.

Again, while Wokoma does not totally subscribe to Julien Freund's position that all categories of existence outside the 'political' are 'private', he constructs his idea of the private, particularly as it applies to his articulation of a modern identity in his diaries, almost in direct 'opposition' to the political.¹⁸ Therefore, in framing the public as political, as we will see in the next section,

¹³Inez Martinez, 'Interiority', *Art Journal*, 50.2(1992), 55-59 (p.57).

¹⁴Hegel's civil society is distinct from both the family and the State, in other words, not 'private' and not extremely 'public'; it actualizes 'the principle of the self-subsistent infinite personality of the individual, the principle of subjective freedom'. See Peter G. Stillman, Hegel's Civil Society: A Locus of Freedom', *Polity*, 12.4 (1990), 622-646 (p.623).

¹⁵Sennet, *Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1977), p 4.

¹⁶Bailey, 'From Public to Private', p. 23.

¹⁷Backscheider, 'Introduction', p.9.

¹⁸Freund, *L'essence du politique*, pp. 292-293.

he locates his idea of the private in *what is not political*. Thus, Wokoma's private history distinguishes the personal—as the unremarkable and insignificant within the socio-political space, particularly in the form of material for the 'official', national history—and the public, what Backscheider identifies as the 'national-history-social context.'¹⁹ Wokoma's general perspective of the 'private' in his inscribing of the modern identity in Africa is not about experiences or subjects that affirm and 're-affirm the status quo' but those outside the gaze of the status quo,²⁰ not those about 'real lives of achievement and leadership',²¹ but about 'ordinary people', the marginalized and the oppressed'.

In the three subsections that follow, I analyze three interpretations of Wokoma's 'private' history in line with the private space afforded him in his diaries. In the first subsection, I argue that there is a convincing sense in which his entire diary-narrative could be perceived as an 'extended history' of himself, irrespective of if the entries are private or public in outlook. If the diary genre is essentially 'private history', then Wokoma's diaries as a whole represent a private history of his modern self. In the second subsection, I engage Wokoma's presentation of the private as a history of marginal figures, in which he tries to recover the profiles of the ordinary, unremarkable individuals—as opposed to the highly visible figures, who dominate the socio-political space—as important elements in the 'official' 'national' narrative of 20th century colonial and postcolonial modernity. In the third subsection, I examine Wokoma's 'recovery' of the ordinary everyday experiences of the 'domestic', the 'intimate' and the 'trivial', which is consistent with the character of the diary in the construction of a proper, acceptable history of Nigerian colonial modernity.

¹⁹Backscheider, 'Introduction', p. 9.

²⁰Davood Gozli and Peter N. Limberg, 'The Marginal Figure: Communities, Conflict, and Change', *Intellectual Explorers* <https://medium.com/@intellectualexplorersclub> [Accessed 4 May 2020]

²¹Ciraj Shahid Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa' (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape, 2004), p.33.

3.1.1 Wokoma's Diary-Narrative as 'Generally' the Private History of His Modern Self

There is a sense in which Wokoma's diaries can be generally described as 'the private history of his modern self', irrespective of the 'personal' or 'social' character of his entries. The diary form's fundamental feature of 'secrecy' and 'confidentiality' makes a huge point about this. As Irina Paperno contends, 'writing the diary is an act of intimate communication the diarist is having with herself'.²² Bruce Merry calls this intimate conversation that the diary affords 'a personal dialogue between the writer and his private persona, in which anything can be described'.²³ The subject of this deeply private discussion can, of course, be history—history of a person, place or thing. Thus, this character of intimacy remains, even if the diarist—as we see in Wokoma—addresses the most public of issues. The history presented by the diarist in his diaries becomes 'private history'.

One dimension of Wokoma's 'private history' therefore emerges from his basic profile as an autobiographical writer and subject. It is within this context that Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson refer to autobiographical writings like the diary as 'a history of the writing/speaking subject'.²⁴ In the same vein, Jaime Aurell and Rocio G. Davis describe autobiographic history as a presentation of 'individual past'²⁵ and Irina Paperno writes about how 'diaries have been used within the context of the history of private life in recent research trends'.²⁶

Just as the diary form's inherent intimacy automatically defines Wokoma's 'private history', the genre's association with the emergence of modern man—beginning from the Puritan era of the 16th century—inscribes Wokoma's work as representative of the diary's place in the construction of the 20th century modern African self. Thus, as Georges Gusdorf recognizes the

²²Paperno, 'What Can be Done with Diaries', p.564.

²³Bruce Mary, 'The Literary Diary as a Genre', *The Maynooth Review*, 5.1 (1979), 3-19 (p.3).

²⁴Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.13.

²⁵Jaime Aurell and Rocio G. Davis, 'History and Autobiography: The Logistics of Convergence', *Life Writing*, 16.4 (2109), 503-511 (p.7)

²⁶ Paperno, 'What Can Be Done With Diaries?' p.565.

autobiographic as one of ‘the landmark characteristics of the culture of the European Enlightenment’,²⁷ forms of self-writing such as Wokoma’s diaries can be considered as veritable markers of African colonial modernity. Wokoma’s diaries in this respect, therefore represent a resourceful private history of the modern African self.

Wokoma’s diaries present elaborate ‘chronicles’ of the development of his modern African self across categories of life endeavours. For instance, as an extended narrative of Wokoma’s developing self, the diaries articulate the entire history of his contact with western education, beginning from 1910 up till the early 1960s, while emphasizing the ‘modernizing’ or ‘civilizing’ influence of that protracted experience. Wokoma also presents the long history of his modern ‘spiritual’ self as a 20th century African ‘Puritan’ who serves as a priest and missionary under the Church Missionary Society between about 1915 and the 1960s. He also offers a private history of his career as an officer in the colonial civil service, from 1913 to Nigeria’s attainment of political independence in 1960. In all of the above—and more—examples of the construction of his ‘historical’ self in his diaries, Wokoma’s overall intention is to articulate a progressive character of Nigerian modernity under the overwhelming influence of ‘colonialism’.²⁸ Thus, in the unravelling of the private history of his modern self in the extended narrative of his diaries, the platform of the autobiographic enables Wokoma what Hegel calls ‘the right of the subject’s peculiarity, his right to be satisfied[...]the right to subjective freedom’ which ‘is the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times’.²⁹ Wokoma’s ‘autobiographical historicizing’ serves to emphasize the ‘journey’ to the ‘satisfaction’ and ‘freedom’ of selfhood, which is the most significant indicator of his modernity.

Apart from this broad outline of the definitive aspects of the private history of Wokoma’s modern self, there are other—perhaps less prominent—aspects

²⁷Georges Gusdorf, ‘Condition and Limits of Autobiography’, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1980), pp. 28-48.

²⁸Wokoma was among the more conservative of imperial subjects who remained grateful for the ‘modernizing’ intervention of the colonial authorities and this is thoroughly reflected in the manner of his construction of the modern African self.

²⁹Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p. 84.

of the personal chronicle of his life, which are nevertheless as instructive, in terms of what they say about his modern identity. There is his Christian marriage of 47 years to Mercy Wokoma (Nee Inko Tariah). There is the long history of his illness, which centralizes the modernity of pain, diagnoses and treatments within the African colonial and postcolonial contexts. There is also the history of his interest in and connections with the Kalabari traditional leadership institution in which he rigorously constructs its transformation from a purely pre-modern, native outfit to a modern corollary to secular partisan politics. Again, these are veritable examples of Wokoma's 'private' history, by virtue of the conveyance through the 'private' medium of the diary, and not based on whether the issues addressed are 'personal' or 'social'. Besides, the modernity of the constructed histories emerges from both the diary's implicit character as a mediator and projector of the modern self, and of course, the particular circumstances of African 20th century reality that illustrate a modern existence—in terms of what Oluwatoyin Oduntan calls 'ideas that tried to systematically displace traditional and pre-modern ways of African life'.³⁰

One of Wokoma's 'private histories' in the context of the diary's essential confidential form as highlighted above is the 'history' of his ownership of a large farmland, identified variously in the diaries as 'Wupakri' 'Hooper-kri' and 'Woopakri'. As his diaries tell us, he came into the possession of the expansive plantation, on which he would subsequently hinge his post-retirement economic survival and sustenance plans, by a stroke of good fortune. However, the history of the farmland commences decades before 1960, when he retired from public service, and within this history is inscribed significant aspects of the modern African self. Selected sections of the 'history' of Wupakri, beginning from May 1942 when Wokoma 'acquired' the land, firmly entrench his modern identity:

December 1942: The name Wupakri applies originally only to that piece of land given to Miller Bros & Co for trading purposes. Subsequently, the name

³⁰Oluwatoyin Oduntan, *Power, Culture and Modernity in Nigeria: Beyond the Colony* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 24.

was applied to all the land or area adjacent to it, extending from the Ariapu-Sikibo to the boundary with Sangama which includes Ariapu-Sikibo, Calvinbay Institute site, Wupakri site, Chief Cutterel Horsefall's plantation or farmland, Chief Charles Wokoma's farmland[...]Chief Tom West later acquired Ariapu-Sikibo, Chief Calabar Horsfall and James Horsefall acquired the Institute site, Chief 'Charse' Wokoma acquired the site occupied by the firm of Messrs Miller Brothers & Co. Ltd. in addition to the farmlands already acquired according to native law and custom, when the Institute and the factory ceased to function and the practice of killing suspected witches and wizards or suspects became illegal under British rule.

'The History of Wupakri', as Wokoma himself captions it in the early diary entries about the farmland in December 1942, spans a period of more than two decades (1942-1965) and comprises four phases—the introductory phase/the phase of early activity (1942-1944), the phase of inactivity (1944-1958); the phase of renewed activity (1958-1965) and the phase of contention (1962-1963). Even in its appearance as a 'marginal' aspect of Wokoma's private history in the diaries, Wupakri provides an important dimension to Wokoma's 'historical' modernity. Before Wokoma appears on the scene as a 'character' in the private historical narrative of Wupakri, it already has a background of colonial modernity. One way of interpreting its significance in the context of modernity is to view its symbolism as a point of demarcation or transition between the traditional pre-modern and the colonial modern. First, the profile of ownership of the land is juxtaposed between European concerns and indigenous interests, a scenario which has implication for the impact of trade modernity³¹—a product of which Wokoma is, as he served at a European Merchant's post between 1906/7 and 1910. Such expatriate trading ventures always involved accumulation of native land, and this explains the stake of 'Miller Brothers and Company Ltd' and 'the Calvinbay Institute'. Second, that British rule in Southern Nigeria stopped 'the practice of killing suspected witches and wizards', a development which freed up the land for more constructive use, is an indication of the intervention of colonial modernity, a perspective which Wokoma himself energetically champions as an agent of the Church and the School. In some evocative way,

³¹The first object of European interest which drove their incursion into Africa, particularly from the end of the slave trade in the second quarter of the 19th century, was trade. 'Trade modernity' therefore began to exert an influence on West Africa of the Atlantic shorelines before 'missionary modernity' and the modernity of the imperial government.

therefore, the history of Wupakri speaks persuasively to the history of the development of his modern self, for it transforms from a site of 'African primitivism'—as the final resting place of social outcasts—to a concrete symbol of modern development.

Again Wokoma's adoption and use of modern legal services establishes evocative dimensions of his African modernity. A part of his 'history' of Wupakiri reads:

In May 1942, the chiefs of Wokoma house and Ebila Home Chiefs—Chiefs Johnson 'Charse' Horsefall and Chaatham 'Charse' Horsefall and Messrs Omoni, Ebenezer, Hooper, Marcus, Paul— approached me asking for a loan of £20 (Twenty pounds) for a court case on behalf of Ebila and Wokoma Houses [...] and agreed to mortgage that land for two years. If they refund the £20 (Twenty pounds) within two years, the land will be released to them with exception of one-third of the land which would be given me as a present, including my portion already occupied by me. But if they fail to refund the twenty pounds within two years, the whole land mortgaged will be forfeited.

An agreement was drawn up, signed and sealed and delivered to me to this effect.

Wokoma, therefore, further inscribes the 'pre-modern'-'modern' transition in the presentation of his private history of Wupakri by emphasizing the modernity of the legal procedures of acquisition and retention. He entrenches his modern selfhood by patronizing modern methods of law in the agreement that hands him the possession of the coveted farmland. The entire Wupakri transaction is framed in the methods of the English legal system. It is a case involving the Ebila and Wokoma Houses in the colonial court, which was displacing the indigenous legal systems, that necessitates Wokoma's intervention with twenty pounds, a modern European 'legal' tender. Secondly, a 'mortgage' agreement which gives a huge advantage to Wokoma, an 'enlightened' figure in the colonial circumstances of his Nigerian society, was 'drawn up, signed and sealed and delivered' for Wokoma's endorsement. The failure of the Wokoma and Ebila Houses to fulfil their own part of the agreement, automatically hands the land over to Wokoma.

If Wokoma came into ownership of Wupakri on the authority of the 'modern' colonial law, he manages to keep possession of it by the same

authority. When a younger generation of the Wokoma and Ebila Houses began to question the rationale for which one man, Wokoma, could hold the entire traditional heritage of a whole clan in the early postcolonial era, he recourses to the authority given to him by the ‘modern’ colonial legal system by signing up the services of a competent lawyer³² to affirm the authority of the 1942 contract. By this time in 1962-1963, colonial modernity had ‘collapsed’ into postcolonial modernity, and postcolonial Nigeria had inherited the modern legal systems of the colonial era. Thus, it is the force of modernity which is retained in the colonial-postcolonial transition—which also sustains Wokoma’s modern selfhood—that ensures his ownership of the land.

Furthermore, Wokoma foregrounds the equally significant portrait of African ‘Agricultural modernity’, in which Wupakiri becomes a symbol of the transition between ‘primitive’ methods of farming and modern techniques, driven by the intervention of science and research. The following entries illustrate:

May 3, 1958: I visited the Agricultural Department this morning to interview the Agric Officer about my proposed farm at Wupakri. He promised to send an officer from Ikoba to see the land,

April 25, 1959: Mr Egeonu, Agricultural Officer, Port Harcourt, visited my Wupakri farm. It was reported to me by Jonah Wokoma.

May 6, 1959: I could not go to Wupakri with Mr Ogbonna who went and planted 50 palm and 5 coffee seedlings and demonstrated the process of using fertilizer to Jonah and the two labourers.

April 1, 1963: I went to Degema this morning and returned. I visited the Agric Office... the Agric. Superintendent promised to send me a member of his staff tomorrow to mark out [my] rubber plot on Wednesday at my plantation. He regretted that no one was sent on the 28th of March according to Mr Degh’s letter.

He also gave me two agreement forms for rubber and palm plantations to be studied.

³²This ‘lawyer’, Nabo Bekinbo Graham Douglas, would become Attorney General of Nigeria in February 1972.

April 2, 1963: Mr Wilson of Brass was sent by the Agric. Superintendent Degema, according to his promise yesterday to mark my rubber plot at Hooper-Kri...

April 3, 1963: We went over to Hooper-Kri to mark and peg the rubber plot. Mr Wilson and his assistants went with me. They pegged two areas and 30 rubber stands. They were delayed till about 11 a.m. to start pegging by a heavy rain storm. They left at about 4.30 p.m. to return later.

The above excerpts highlight the ‘pre-modern’-‘modern’ transition in Wokoma’s actual agricultural engagement with Wupakri as shown in his diaries, particularly in terms of farming methods. Especially in the ‘third phase’ of his private history of the farmland (1958-1965), there is a prompting to upgrade operations to the ‘modern’ standard. There is therefore a greater engagement with the government’s Agricultural offices in Port Harcourt, Degema, and other places, as Wokoma pursues the ambition of converting Wupakri to a model, modern Agricultural plantation or ‘settlement’—in line with government policy of the time.³³ He obtains expert advice on modern farming techniques and receives ‘certified’ materials in the form of seedlings and fertilizer. All in all, his ‘private’ history of Wupakri establishes Wokoma’s self of African modernity, the same way that the dominant private ‘histories’ of his life as presented in his diaries, such as his colonial priesthood, do.

3.1.2 Wokoma’s Diaries, Marginal Figures and the Modernity of Private History

This section examines Wokoma’s construction of a modern identity by presenting the histories of private or marginal figures. It argues that Wokoma’s ‘historicizing’ of the private lives of ordinary characters represents an attempt to recover and project the identity and significance of these marginal figures in the context of the emerging modernity of Africa. In

³³The Agricultural policy of 1954, for instance, while consolidating the focus on research and scientific application of methods enacted by earlier policies, ‘recognised the importance of increasing food production and promoting agriculture as a way of developing the rural areas, meeting the needs of the growing population and boosting the economy on a more sustainable basis’. As Wokoma’s diaries also show, it was arising from this policy that ‘Agricultural extension workers began to educate rural farmers, particularly on the use of natural manure’. (Obi Iwuagwu, ‘Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies in Eastern Nigeria, 1946-1980’, *Lagos Historical Review*, 8 [2008]:1-13 [p.3]).

Wokoma's profiling of the identities of characters in his diaries, there is a clear distinction between the *private marginal* and the *public dominant*. While the public social figures would always dominate biographical and autobiographical projects, particularly against the background of the modernity discourse, Wokoma succeeds in framing ordinary, private individuals, not just as biographical and historical figures, but also as agents and mediators of African modernity.

Wokoma's notion of the 'marginal' or 'private' figure is that of the ordinary character left on the sidelines of what Ciraj Shahid Rassool calls 'national histories'.³⁴ They are private citizens with no claims to political elitism or visibility, a group Karin Barber calls the 'obscure aspirants to elite status'.³⁵ As Davood Gozl and Peter N. Limberg put it, 'what is marginal is left out of our awareness' and is the opposite of what is 'focal'.³⁶ In attempting to recover these marginal lives by inscribing their private histories, Wokoma sets out to establish the indispensable space they occupy in the construction of African colonial modernity. In other words, even though we expect what Barber describes as 'highly educated and publicly visible figures that dominate political histories of Africa' to represent the ideal portrait of African colonial—and postcolonial—modernity, Wokoma tends to resist or complicate that portraiture by granting 'historical' and 'biographical' visibility to the marginal figures. Wokoma questions the validity of a one-sided picture of African modernity.

In what follows, I present brief excerpts of the private histories of marginal figures from Wokoma's diaries with a view to examining how he constructs an identity of African modernity through them, and 'recovers' or 'retrieves' their place in the official 'national history' of Nigerian colonial modernity.

³⁴Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', p. 77.

³⁵Barber, 'Introduction'. p. 1.

³⁶Gozli and Limberg, 'The Marginal Figure', p. 3.

7 THURSDAY (127-238)

We left for Port Harcourt at 6.10 a.m. Arrived Bungeni by Chief Joseph & David West's Out-Road motor canoe by 5.30 p.m. My wife & Harry my boy accompanied

~~to~~ At the Port Harcourt jetty Mr Dan Murray Tariat approached me and said he had a message ^{for me} from the Kalabari Union branches, Sapele & Warri. They sent him to bring me Jelicia Wokoma with her five children - 2 boys - Abraham and ^{and} 3 girls - Rebecca, Hannah and ^{aged} ^{respectively}. The Union rescued them from a place called Lorgi in Benin.

Sapele Branch of the Kalabari Union contributed \$4.18/- and Warri Branch \$5/- for their passage & maintenance on the way. The Union did not ask for a refund except a return passage for Dan to Sapele.

We all arrive Bungeni and I took them to my house - 6 of them including Jelicia the mother, and asked Dan to come & see me tomorrow morning. They were sent to stay with my mother-in-law at Tariat's ^{Wife} and I went to see Mary Babalola Horrofall and the orphan baby

Diary Scan 7: Diary entry of May 7, 1953 capturing Wokoma's attempt to recover the marginal characters of private history and 'restore them to public record'.

May 21, 1941: Marriage between Mr Morgan D. Wokoma and Grace Karibi Harry Horsfall took place at St. Michael's Church, Buguma at 3pm. The Rev A. D. Spiff of St Silas Umuahia, Rev. A. M. Wokoma and Rev. P. Oko-Jombo officiated. The Rev Spiff tied the knot. The reception took place at Chief Karibi H. Horsfall's compound at 5pm and the ceremony (native) of 'mouth buying' at Owukori's Memorial Hall, Wokoma Polo.

May 7, 1953: At the Port Harcourt jetty, Mr Dan Murray Tariah approached me and said he had a message for me from the Kalabari Union Branches, Sapele and Warri. They sent him to bring me Felicia Wokoma with her five children [...] the Union rescued them from a place called Lorji in Benin. Sapele Branch of the Kalabari Union contributed £4.13f and Warri Branch £5 for their passage and maintenance on the way. The Union did not ask for a refund except a return passage for Dan to Sapele. We all arrived Buguma and I took them to my house—6 of them including Felicia the mother—and asked Dan to come and see me tomorrow morning. They were sent to stay with my mother-in-law at Tariah's.

May 8, 1953: Mr Dan Murray Tariah came to see me as arranged yesterday and I gave him the sum of £4 for his passage and maintenance to Sapele and another 20f refund, a debt said to have been paid for Felicia with two letters of thanks and appreciation to the Kalabari Union Branches at Sapele and Warri.

May 17, 1958: Odi John Bull died at Tema and was brought home this morning. He suffered from veneral disease and took overdose of Bell Tongue syrup and was purged to death.

November 17, 1963: Madam Asi Jephemiah Wokoma began a hard labour at the maternity home, Buguma. The midwife, Mrs Henrietta A. Bob Manuel, advised that she should be rushed to the Doctor at Degema, the case being abnormal. But she was removed to Madam Hariba Harry Horsfall, a native midwife and then to Harry Braide who professes to be a doctor and whom they paid £8 after which she was removed to Dueri-Ogbo society where she died on Tuesday.

Even though all of the above examples of 'private history' centralize the life of 'marginal' figures, Wokoma nevertheless inscribes their modernity as an overall contribution to the 'official, national history' of Nigerian modernity. Wokoma's is therefore an attempt at what Rassool regards as the rewriting of the social history from 'below', by seeking to 'uncover the submerged agency of ordinary people and give voice to the experience of marginal groups'.³⁷

³⁷Rassool, 'The Individual Auto/Biography and History in South Africa'. p. 139.

In other words, for Wokoma, there is something seminal and significant that each of the above-cited ordinary subjects of ‘private history’ says about an identity of African modernity that contributes to a fuller, more robust picture of the national, social history. In the May 21, 1941 entry, he frames the modern element of an African wedding within the colonial social and Christian religious contexts. Despite the fact that the traditional Kalabari ceremony of ‘mouth-buying’ forms part of the picture, it is given a subordinate status to the Church solemnization—which features three priests—and the reception party. For Wokoma, Morgan Wokoma and Grace Horsfall may be ‘ordinary’, marginal figures within the elitist political configuration of colonial Nigeria, but their narrative offers something tangible to the cultural and social history of colonial modernity.

In the second example of May 7 and 8 1953, Felicia, the marginal protagonist of the private history, and her children, are transported back to Buguma from Sapele in ignoble circumstances, but their narrative of frustration and failure point to more significant indices of African modernity, especially in the context of colonial Nigeria. Firstly, the rapid urbanization engendered by the expansion of colonial societies provokes what Franco Moretti calls ‘mobility’³⁸—a movement within the modern space in search of satisfying productivity and better welfare. Felicia is one of many examples where modern mobility—always intended as a progressive adventure—goes awfully wrong, highlighting once more the disruptive and disorienting character of modernity.

To illuminate the significance of Felicia—and her children—as a modern marginal figure in colonial Nigeria, I allude to a more popular imaginative model for Felicia and her children within African literature in terms of the failure of modern ‘mobility’ in Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960). Achebe’s novel is a fundamental text in the construction of Nigeria’s 20th century colonial modernity. Apart from the central figure of Obi Okonkwo, who fits Felicia’s image especially in the general sense of the tragedy of the urban adventure, there is the character of Joshua Udo ‘a messenger in the

³⁸Moretti, *The Way of the World*, p.5.

post office' who has 'been sacked for sleeping while on duty'³⁹ and who now has to—like Felicia in Wokoma's narrative—depend on the magnanimity of 'the Umuofia Progressive Union, Lagos Branch' for support. Like Felicia, Achebe's Joshua Udo has been thrown off-balance by the unpredictable waves of modernity, through the agency of mobility. The UPU chairman's remarks to Joshua instructively captures the deep message of mobility: 'You did not leave Umuofia four hundred miles away to come and sleep in Lagos'.⁴⁰ Secondly, Felicia's private history emphasizes the phenomenon of town unions in the social geography of Nigerian colonial modernity. The town union, like Wokoma's Kalabari Union, Sapele and Warri Branches, and Achebe's Umuofia Progressive Union, Lagos Branch, is a forum for migrating kinsmen within a particular city to reconnect and forge a constructive bond of brotherhood. A product of modern mobility itself, the town union is an instrument for mitigating the adverse disruptive effects of modernity, as we see in Joshua Udo and Felicia Wokoma. It is also an agent for fostering modernity, as in the case of Achebe's Obi Okonkwo, whose British university education was heavily assisted by the UPU.⁴¹

In both the May 17, 1958 and the November 17, 1963 entries, Wokoma further inscribes the sense of confusion which pervades the transition from a traditional to a modern existence through the histories of marginal figures. Wokoma's framing of the medical reality of the ordinary citizen in colonial and immediate postcolonial Nigeria also brings to the fore modernity's confusing character deriving from its tendency, according to Harvie Ferguson, 'to obscure and confuse matters already fertile of bewildering'.⁴² The tragic scenario Wokoma constructs around Odi John Bull and Madam Asi Jephaniah provides an aspect of the private history of marginal figures that speaks to the difficulties the ordinary colonial subject faces in the course of embracing modernity. Thus, modern life may be expedient, progressive and positively

³⁹Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 2008), p. 71.

⁴⁰Achebe, p. 72.

⁴¹According to Achebe, the Umuofia Progressive Union has given him a loan 'to study overseas' and is 'expected to repay his debt over four years'. (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, p. 30).

⁴²Harvie Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 1.

transformational, but it also presents its own challenges and contradictions particularly to the marginal figure. The experience of modernity for the marginal protagonist of private history—which is indispensable to the official, social history of Nigerian colonial modernity—is best described in terms of Henri Meschonnic, Gabriella Badetti and Alice Otis’ statement that ‘Modernity is a battle’.⁴³

What Wokoma has achieved by entrenching the modernity of the private histories of marginal figures is to, as Jauma Aurell puts it, bring ‘the margin to the centre’.⁴⁴ For Wokoma, I argue, a proper narrative of African modern selfhood does not issue from ‘the histories of the dominant and the powerful’,⁴⁵ and does not centre ‘on the deeds and biographies of national leaders’⁴⁶ alone but also from the peripheral figures of national history, who according to Gozli and Limberg ‘often go unnoticed because their energy is directed away from, or even against, the status quo’.⁴⁷

3.1.3 A History of Wokoma’s Private Self: The Modernity of the ‘Ordinary’ and ‘the Domestic’

In this subsection, I engage aspects of the history of Wokoma’s private self — as against his public, social self—centralizing those themes, experiences and preoccupations that can be categorized as ‘ordinary’, what John Moran calls ‘the history of everyday, domestic and private life’.⁴⁸ Here, I am concerned with Wokoma’s presentation of the mundane, the banal and even the trivial concerns of his life and the life around him, which ordinarily do not appear to have any place in the official history of Nigerian colonial modernity.

My interest here is not the weighty national and global issues which defined and determined the direction of the 20th century world—even though these also substantially occupy Wokoma in his diaries, and will be addressed in the

⁴³Henri Meschonnic, Gabriella Badetti and Alice Otis, ‘Modernity Modernity’, *New Literary History*, 23.2 (1992), 401-430 (p. 401).

⁴⁴Jaume Aurell, *Theoretical Perspectives on Historians’ Autobiographies: From Documentation to Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 239.

⁴⁵Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, p. 112.

⁴⁶Rassool, p. 139.

⁴⁷Gozli and Limberg, ‘The Marginal Figure’, p. 5.

⁴⁸Moran, ‘Private Lives, Public Histories’, p. 1)

next major segment of this chapter. I am looking at how the less ‘public’, more ‘personal’ and ‘intimate’ aspects of the diaries’ engagement, the ordinary experiences, even though belonging to a category which Grace Musila describes as lying ‘outside official history or are altogether unacknowledged’,⁴⁹ contribute not only to Wokoma’s modern identity, but affords him a place in the historical discourse of Nigerian colonial modernity. Considering the informal character of the diary and Wokoma’s own attitude to near-comprehensive documentation of life around him, it is understandable that virtually every aspect of his marital and family life, nearly all dimensions of his health, almost everything about his dealings with his domestic servants, are recorded. And it is instructive that nothing in Wokoma’s documentation of these ‘ordinary experiences’ suggests that he considers them of lesser value than the avalanche of supposedly weightier issues in the articulation of the modern text which he engages. Wokoma’s attitude brings to the fore the argument of a British politician and anthropologist, Arthur Ponsonby, who contends that ‘ordinary’ lives and circumstances were not just worth recording, but also that the diaries of private citizens—‘human documents of peculiar interest’—were more valuable than those of famous public and political figures.⁵⁰ This is because, according to Ponsonby, they bring us ‘into the trivial pleasures and petty miseries of daily life—the rainy day, the blunt razor, the domestic quarrel, the bad night, the twinge of the toothache, the fall from a horse’.⁵¹

In what follows I analyze two instances of Wokoma’s presentation of what Moran refers to as ‘the history of everyday, domestic and private life’,⁵² highlighting his attempts at constructing an identity of African modernity through them. The first thematizes Wokoma’s troubled marriage, which seems to have come to a climax in the year 1947. In many entries for that year, Wokoma laments what he considers the imminent collapse of his

⁴⁹Grace A. Musila, ‘Archives of the Present’, p. 247.

⁵⁰Arthur Ponsonby, *English Diaries: A Review of English Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century with an Introduction on Diary Writing* (London: Methuen and Company, 1923), 24-32.

⁵¹Arthur Ponsonby, *English Diaries*, p.24.

⁵²Moran, ‘Private Lives, Public Histories’, p. 1.

relationship with his wife, largely caused by the latter's inconsiderate attitudes:

April 1, 1947: This morning at 6:30a.m. my wife declared a final break between us. From the 14th March, I began a reconciliatory move at Burutu being greatly disturbed [...] From that day I pleaded with her day and night but in vain. At last, today she made a clear and definite pronouncement.

October 19, 1947: This morning I went out to my wife to plead with her again to reconsider her plans. I told her that our marriage, I believed, was ordained by God otherwise we should have broken it and there could have been no hope of reconciliation. But the fact that in spite of the horrible and terrible things which happened between us from time to time to the present moment, we still lived in the same house and could have the chance of meeting and pleading as we did now. That fact, is a convincing proof that God still wanted us to live together as husband and wife and if we disobeyed, it would be detrimental. That I had therefore come to appeal to her again and to renew my Burutu promises to her, which I had been keeping strictly since even more than I expect though she had not changed for any better. But if she continued to refuse and went about as she liked then I would also consider myself responsible for her up-keep and maintenance only when she was with me and served me satisfactorily.

These entries in their 'domestic privacy' could not have been subject of great national histories which centralize the far-reaching social, political and economic narratives associated with staggering moments of modernity. As personal issues, they seem not to have a place in the cataclysmic phenomenon Marshall Berman describes as 'the maelstrom of modern life [which] has been fed from many sources'.⁵³ Wokoma, however, 'recovers' their relevance as what Grace Musila calls 'fragments of national histories' and restores them 'to public record'.⁵⁴ What Wokoma does is akin to what Musila describes as validating 'social histories of marginal figures and spaces' by sign-posting 'the ephemeral nature of [...] the everyday'.⁵⁵

Wokoma's elaborate history of his marriage to Mercy Inko Tariah, beginning from 1919 and ending in 1965, emphasizes the contradiction of modernity as it reflects on the institution of marriage. The modern blueprint of

⁵³Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 16.

⁵⁴Musila, 'Archives of the Present', p. 247.

⁵⁵Musila, p. 247.

a perfect marriage, especially as part of the colonial legacy, is a monogamous union, but as Wokoma's peculiar case proves, this carries with it a burden of melancholy, pessimism and uncertainty—which are in themselves, the hallmarks of modernity. Wokoma's confused mind seems to be questioning why his marriage to Mercy, another modern character within the circumstances of modernity could cause him so much heartbreak, the type his more traditional forebears, who were unapologetic polygynists probably did not encounter or even care about. Perhaps, if he had not been shackled or too occupied by 'modern thinking' and the 'modern identity', he would probably have just gone ahead to take a new wife, and cure himself of the heartache of unrequited love.

Part of Wokoma's accomplishments in the construction of Mercy as a non-conformist radical character of a wife is the 'recovery' of the female gender—long sidelined and marginalized in cultural and political discourses of modernity in many world societies as custodians of the domestic 'private realm'. The modern significance of Mercy Wokoma as a historical figure of substance lies essentially in the fact of how different she appears from African women of preceding generations for whom patriarchal domination was a culturally-sanctioned way of life. In African traditional societies, women, as marginalized figures, did the 'pleading' and not the men as we see in the episodes of domestic squabble between Wokoma and Mercy.

Wokoma portrays Mercy, herself a product of Imperial enlightenment, as a model of African feminist modernity, given especially the fact that she, and Wokoma himself, are products of polygamous marriages. Mercy's father, the eminent Chief Charles Inko Tariah married about ten wives, while Wokoma's father, Chief 'Charse' Wokoma, had more than twenty wives.⁵⁶ Mercy shared a sense of marital 'equality' in the modern monogamous setting of her relationship with Wokoma—where she even appears to be the dominant voice. She is radically different from the archetypal private women who merely

⁵⁶In an interview with Dr Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma, (Wokoma's only son and only surviving child) on May 17, 2016, he stressed as follows: 'My paternal grandfather was not a christian. He didn't go to church. In fact, he had thirty-five wives'.

‘reproduced life and serviced men’.⁵⁷ Mercy already operated within what Grazalla Parati calls ‘the privileged public realm, the space to conquer in order to be equal to men’,⁵⁸ going by the fact, for example, of her political life as a leading member of Nigeria’s largest nationalist organization, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). Her public status therefore affords her substantial visibility as a veritable agent of ‘feminist modernity’.⁵⁹

However, in the diary-excerpts cited above, Wokoma is more interested in how Mercy’s private status as wife and mother establishes an identity of African modernity. By imposing her own terms of engagement on the marriage, and even proposing an end to the union if her demands are not met, Mercy inscribes the place of the modern African wife and mother in Nigerian colonial and postcolonial history. This is why Paratti insists that ‘it is from the private sphere that women’s voices from the past can surface’.⁶⁰ Wokoma therefore initiates what Paratti calls ‘rediscovery of the “private realm”’ as an ‘entity that cannot be defined only as the confining space in which women were and are marginalized and silenced’.⁶¹ By attempting to ‘upset’ the social and historical order within the private and domestic context of the marriage institution, Mercy achieves what Simon Gikandi describes as ‘a self-willed movement from the margins’.⁶²

Wokoma’s commitment to the documentation of family history is also profoundly expressed in his narratives about his grandchildren, including and most especially Odein Ajumogobia, second son of his only daughter, Florence,

⁵⁷Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Square: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: MIT & Polity, 1992), p. 3.

⁵⁸Grazalla Parati, *Public History, Private Stories: Haitian Women’s Autobiography*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 6.

⁵⁹I employ the term to refer to the art of construction, in literature or in life-writing, of the portrait of the African woman that has *emerged* or is *emerging* from the constrictions imposed on her by the patrilineal and patriarchal structures of the traditional African society. An archetypal portrait of the modern African female, produced by colonial enlightenment, just as Wokoma’s Mercy, is Clara in Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*.

⁶⁰Parati, *Public History, Private Stories*, p.6.

⁶¹Parati, p.6.

⁶²Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), p.55.

born in June 1956. These narratives portray Wokoma's consciousness of his status as a witness to the emergence of a new generation of modern African subjects and the novel experiences and challenges they are expected to confront, even as infants:

May 6, 1957: Odein was brought to hospital today by my wife on account of the boils all over his body. He was given an injection, some ZDS tablets and blood mixture and sent away.

May 8, 1957: We went over this morning for the treatment of Odein. He was given injection again and was asked to repeat tomorrow and Friday.

May 10, 1957: Odein had his last injection this morning.

May 15, 1957: I bought a bottle of Clark's Blood Mixture for Odein.

May 20, 1957: I sent a letter to my wife to come with Odein to continue his treatment [...] But my wife failed to come; probably she did not receive the letter.

May 21, 1957: My wife came this morning with Odein. His boils have grown worse since. They had developed more [...] We went over to Degema and began treatment again. He was given an injection—Peniciline—with blood mixture and some ZDS tablets. Two more bottles of Peniciline were given to us for tomorrow and Thursday. The doctor put down £10 as medical fee but kindly deleted it on my plea. We paid nothing.

May 22, 1957: We went for Odein's injection.

May 23, 1957: We went over with Odein for the 3rd and last injection.

June 1, 1957: We went over to Degema with Odein to see the doctor. He recommended special injection which could cost £10.

June 4, 1957: To Degema with Odein for the injection.

These excerpts from aspects of Wokoma's private, domestic history concerning his family may seem like an ordinary, routine experience of a mild affliction on a one-year old, but in the manner of many of Wokoma's private histories, this experience says something specific and tangible about a modern African identity. It is actually from Wokoma's perspective, an episode which underlines the confusion and uncertainty inherent in the project of African modernity. This fairly long narrative of Odein's illness—though marginal when compared to Wokoma's general chronicle of his own protracted sickness from 1951 to 1965—is representative of his interest in the construction of the

modernity of illness in his diaries. The ‘medical’ contributes substantially to the identity of African modernity that Wokoma articulates and that identity also highlights the contradictions of modernity. This familiar theme of modernity raising so much hope and then dashing it, common to Wokoma’s representation of the modern African experience of medicine, is also foregrounded here.

Thus, with a subject as ‘ordinary’ and as ‘domestic’ as the ‘rash’ of a one-year old baby, Wokoma executes a demystification of the modern medical institution or the ‘biomedical paradigm’, because, as G. Thomas Couser puts it, ‘the nature of the biomedical paradigm is to promise more than it can deliver—a quick fix for every bodily ill’.⁶³ However, if even with elaborate diagnostic and treatment routines spread across an entire month, both the suffering child-patient and his agitated grandparents do not experience substantial relief, then there is cause for an ambivalent attitude towards the integrity of modernity. Wokoma’s stance here represents a questioning of the glittering profile of modernity as ‘the unprecedented forms of human self-understanding which emerged and helped solve the human problem of stagnancy and retrogression’.⁶⁴ It is therefore in its failure ‘to successfully address this modern healthcare challenge’, according to Suzanne Bennett Johnson, that the authority and credibility of the biomedical paradigm have been vigorously contested.⁶⁵ And as we have seen in the previous chapter with Wokoma’s own long history of protracted infirmity, there is a tendency to ‘limit’ what Mike Bury has called the ‘dehumanizing effects of a medicalized society [...] that delivers increasing technical sophistication but fail to offer

⁶³G. Thomas Couser, *Recovering Bodies: Illness Disability and Life Writing* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p.10.

⁶⁴Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity*, p.1.

⁶⁵Suzanne Bennett Johnson, ‘Medicine’s Paradigm Shift: An Opportunity for Psychology’ *American Psychological Association* 43.8 (2012) <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/09/pc> [Accessed May 14, 2020].



Picture 4: Mrs M.A. Wokoma with little Odein Ajumogobia in late 1956. This was probably a few months before modern biomedical treatment was sought for his 'rashes' in 1957.

“comfort and care” for patient as whole human beings’.⁶⁶

3.2 The Modernity of Wokoma’s ‘Public’ History in His Diaries

This section examines Wokoma’s construction of the identity of African modernity through the presentation of public history. It argues that Wokoma’s idea of ‘public’ is largely rooted in the ‘political’, and this location within the province of politics is comparable to the formation of public, social histories of Nigerian modernity, particularly in the national context. For Wokoma, the concept of ‘public history’ will always have a wider national significance, specifically within the frame of the modernizing project of the institution of colonialism. Therefore, if Wokoma can produce private histories by virtue of his location within the marginal societies of his Kalabari hometown where he deals with a group Jaume Aurell identifies as ‘lesser known historical figures (women, peasants, heretics),’⁶⁷ he could also construct even greater public histories of far-reaching implication for African modernity from his robust and extensive association with the cream of the Nigerian educated political elite, both in the colonial and immediate postcolonial settings.

As Wokoma’s diaries demonstrate, there is a sense in which history is always, necessarily public, in which what is ‘historical’ tends more towards the ‘public’. Ronald J. Greele observes that ‘histories have always had a public’ because ‘from its earliest times, the study of history has been a public act’.⁶⁸ For Bakscheider, ‘the national-historical-social context’⁶⁹ is at the zenith of the public sphere. Furthermore, Silke Schmidt, in his exploration of the relationship between autobiography and society theorizes the place of the historical—and also the political—within the ‘extended’ public self.⁷⁰

⁶⁶Mike Bury, ‘Illness Narratives: Fact or Fiction?’ *Sociology of Health & Illness* 23.3 (2001), 263-285 (p.282).

⁶⁷Aurell, *Theoretical Perspective*, p. 239.

⁶⁸Ronald J. Greele, ‘Whose Public? Whose History? What is the Goal of a Public Historian?’ *The Public Historian*, 3.1 (1981), 40-48 (p.41).

⁶⁹Bakscheider, ‘Introduction’, p. 9.

⁷⁰Silke Schmidt, *(Re-) Framing the Arab/Muslim: Mediating Orientation in Contemporary Arab-American Life-Writing* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014), p. 51.

As Wokoma's diaries also show, there is similarly a sense in which 'public' history is always 'political' in terms of what Joe Bailey describes as 'the nation-state, along with its institutions, practices, and overall political centrality'.⁷¹ Theorists like Julien Freund have taken an extreme position that 'the true political relation is public', with the implication that there is hardly a public that is not 'political'.⁷² Wokoma apparently does not take this rigid standpoint, for he probably considers such other social categories as the 'civil society' and the 'community' as part of the 'public square', which form an entire 'archeology of publicity',⁷³ but the 'political' is certainly the anchor of his construction of the public history of African modernity. Apart from centralizing the political as a feature of the nation-state's power-structure, Wokoma also highlights what is political in other related social formations, like the traditional leadership institutions. It is instructive, therefore, as Wokoma's diaries demonstrate, that in the context of the public history of Nigerian 20th century colonial—and postcolonial—modernity traditional authority served as an extension of the State. It is for Wokoma's kind of consciousness that Jill Liddington contends that 'public Histories will [...] need to be aware of the state, nationally, regionally, and, of course, locally'.⁷⁴

In the three subsections that follow, I examine Wokoma's construction of modern African identity of public history in his diaries through three institutions of political power—all of which contribute material to the official social, public history of Nigerian modernity—the Imperial, or the colonial state, the nation state and the traditional leadership institution.

3.2.1 Public History and Colonial Modernity in Wokoma's Diaries

Wokoma's most dominant ideological attitude, as expressed in his diaries, is that which centralizes the position of colonialism as the harbinger of African modernity, and as the condition on which the continent's emergence from the 'pre-modernity' or the 'backwardness' of tradition was achieved. For

⁷¹Bailey, 'From Public to Private: The Development of the Concept of the "Private",' (p. 21).

⁷²Freund, *L'essence du Politique*, pp. 292-293.

⁷³Arnaud Sales, 'The Private, the Public and Civil Society: Social Realms and Power Structure', *International Political Science Review*, 12, 4 (1991), 295-312 (p. 297).

⁷⁴Jill Liddington, 'What is Public History? Publics and Their Pasts, Meanings and Practices', *Oral History*, 30.1 (2002), 83-93 (p. 91).

⁷⁸Kumar, 'Nation-states as Empires', p.125.

Wokoma, particularly in his early life, the notion of the African of enlightenment and civilization can only assume validity in the context of the colonial encounter, as he suggests in his World War II tribute-sermon in which he expresses appreciation to ‘the great structure of civilization’⁷⁵ that is British imperialism. That Wokoma’s idea of the public history of the Nigerian modern identity will be steeped in the ambience of the colonial is understandable, given that the imperial provides the social and political structure of his self-development as a 20th century, modern African. Even if the element of his original ‘traditional self’ remained strong throughout his life, his emergence as a modern character—in line with the prevalent ‘maelstrom’⁷⁶ of human life during that phase of history—was necessarily forged in the circumstances of the colonial.

Similarly strategic is Wokoma’s affirmation that it is in the sphere of the public—or the political—that the history of the colonial presence in Africa assumes significance as the history of African modernity. Thus, I view the ‘public’ of the colonial ‘government’ to which Wokoma paid absolute allegiance as a subject in the same ‘political’ breadth as the nation-state structure in which the conceptual frameworks about the ‘public’ as ‘political’ have been framed. There are three reasons for this. First, the imperial represented the ‘national’ authority for much of Wokoma’s life—for 60 out of 74 years—and formed his foundational idea of a ‘Nigerian political system’. Secondly, the difference between the ‘nation-state’ as the ideal bastion of democratic leadership, and the ‘imperial state’ as the ‘direct antithesis’ of the former is not as substantial as always thought. As Krishan Kumar puts it, ‘whatever their self-conceptions and self-representations, empires and nation-states have more in common than is usually allowed’.⁷⁷ One sense in which this is true is that ‘most nation-states, or what became nation-states, are, like

⁷⁵Atkinson Wokoma, Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, August 16, 1942.

⁷⁶See Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, p. 16.

⁷⁷Krishan Kumar, ‘Nation-states as Empires’, p. 120.

26 TUESDAY (57-308)

Dr. Azikiwe & Party expected today from Bonny, Bakana, Tombia. The Premier & some of the Party went to Okrika & Bonny; the others went to Bakana & Tombia. They met at Pungwa.

The Bakana-Tombia Party arrived first at about 11:30 a.m. They waited in their boat till the Bonny party arrived at about 4:30 p.m.

All came down together & went up first to the Amanyan abo, Chief J. T. Princewill, & came together to Amachree Square.

Hon. F. G. Warmate introduced members of the Delegation & Chief Robinson. Mark Jaja introduced the Chiefs & notable gentlemen of Kalabari.

The following addressed the great crowd through a loud speaker after a welcome address read by

1. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe
2. Chief H. O. Davelo
3. Chief
4. Mrs. Skpo

Refreshments were then served. Several plays were staged by Danang Women's Clubs & The Sekiapa Club of which Dr. Azikiwe was a member. On retiring they reminded him by a gift of the traditional 'eagle teeth' which only Sekiapas were entitled to wear.

Diary Scan 8: Diary entry of February 26, 1957 in which Wokoma inscribes the modernity of the Nigerian nationalist political public.

most empires, the result of conquest and colonization'.⁷⁸ This is obviously very true about the Nigerian situation, which brings us to my third reason: the modern Nigerian political infrastructure which the postcolonial emblemized is a direct legacy of the colonial. Therefore, the public history of modern Nigeria, even as Wokoma's diaries show, has the imperial firmly lodged at its centre. This is particularly obvious in the very direct manner of the British practically masterminding the postcolonial political process of the country, as Achebe articulates in his *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (2012). For Achebe, the fact that 'Nigerian independence came with a British governor-general'⁷⁹ determined the enduring negative order of Nigerian postcolonial politics, what Mpalive-Hangson Msiska identifies as 'the flawed structure of the national formation'.⁸⁰

Thus, Wokoma's documentation of the public history of the colonial presence in Nigeria and Africa serves as a narrative of the formation of his modern self as a colonial subject. The most common way in which Wokoma presents the modern identity of his public history is his own self-representation as an absolute example of the imperial public self. This self manifests first and foremost in his privileges and obligations as an imperial citizen. The most obvious forms of these privileges are that the colonial provided the structures for his development as a modern individual, and of course, the prestige he enjoys in his society as a figure of enlightenment. His rise to the zenith of his career, both as an Anglican Reverend Canon,⁸¹ and as the General Manager of Schools⁸² was achieved within the context of imperial enablement.

⁷⁸Kumar, 'Nation-state as Empires', p.125.

⁷⁹Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 51.

⁸⁰Mpalive-Hangson Msiska, 'Imagined Nations and Imaginary Nigeria: Chinua Achebe's Quest for a Country', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 16.2-3 (2014), 401-419 (p. 405).

⁸¹Wokoma, according to his diaries, was 'canonized' on January 9, 1955.

⁸²Wokoma, according to his diaries and other biographical information started to serve as General Manager of Anglican Schools, at the CMS headquarters in Onitsha in 1949 (Florence Daisy Inetubo Ajumogobia, *A Brief Sketch of the Life and the Work of the Late Rev. Canon Atkinson Mbrenegogo Wokoma, J.P.* Unpublished Tribute, p. 3).

Wokoma's representation of his obligations and his duties to the colonial government also affirms his public identity as a modern Nigerian citizen. These responsibilities come in different 'statutory' and 'special' circumstances'; *statutory* such as the April 15, 1957 occasion where he ratifies his tax status with 'the tax office Degema', and *special* such as when he makes the announcement in his official capacity as General Manager of Schools, that His Majesty, King George VI, the Head of the British Empire had died on the 6th of February, 1952.⁸³ There are other occasions, as presented in Wokoma's diaries, of the 'public' display of responsibility in modern colonial citizenship. One of such can be found in the context of World War II, when the imperial subject made tangible contributions towards victory for Britain and her allies. The following entries from his 1944 diary illustrate:

March 7, 1944: I gave my milk Ration Card to Mr Wey to be reviewed by the Resident, which he did and returned with a letter to John Holts.

March 8, 1944: I obtained Ration Card from John Holts Ltd. for flour and milk. It was through the help of Mr Wey that I secured the approval of the Resident who is the food controller.

Wokoma's 'practical' citizenship of the Empire, which gives him a modern 'public' identity, is highlighted in his presentation of the history of perhaps the most devastating political crisis of the 20th century. In the above excerpt, he frames his modern self in the 'win-the-war' strategy of food rationing. This was necessary sacrifice that well-meaning imperial subjects in the colonies made to demonstrate their loyalty to and solidarity with the colonial establishment.

As evident in Wokoma's self-representation within the context of his 'public history' of World War II, his contribution to the war effort transcends involvement in stringent conditions of food rationing. For instance, he also supports fundraising initiatives, such as those of Warri women, led by 'Mrs Williams'. According to Wokoma's diary entry of 16th March, 1944, these women 'sometimes had concerts and other entertainment towards the Win-the-War Fund. They realized £16 at the last 'Delta Do' and gave £8 to the

⁸³Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, February 7, 1952.

war fund. They had realized larger sums before.’⁸⁴As mentioned in chapter one, Wokoma is called upon on the 9th of July 1944, to deliver a tribute-sermon in honour of ‘the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy who guard and defend the great oceans and seas, the great highways of the world and make movement of troops and supplies possible for the prosecution of the war’.⁸⁵

Part of the modern identity of imperial patriotism which Wokoma constructs is his presentation of events of colonial public history as his own ‘national history’. His keen interest in such events as the United States joining World War II late in 1941 is predicated on the stake of Great Britain, which is, by extension, *his own stake* as an imperial subject. According to him in an August 24, 1941 entry, ‘the Prime Minister, Mr Winston Churchill [...] broadcast, speaking about his dealing with President Roosevelt of the USA. He referred to the great might of the combined fleet of Britain and America’.⁸⁶ The ‘point of view’ in this record does not stress the message of *America joining the war* as much as it does Britain taking the strategic step of *bringing America* into the war. The same applies in his February 7, 1952 entry about the death of His Majesty King George VI, and his June 2, 1953 entry about the ‘Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey, London’.⁸⁷ The Queen’s event assumes greater significance because the new Bishop of the Niger Delta Diocese, Rev E. T. Dimieari, Wokoma’s close friend, attends.

Wokoma also illustrates how participation, or even interest in the imperial public rituals of political affirmation, such as the Empire Day and occasions of visit by high-ranking members of the imperial political class constructs a public history of African modernity. The Empire Day, the most important national celebration in all of the Empire, was, just as Saheed Aderinto notes, ‘a significant symbol of imperial domination’.⁸⁸ Most importantly, in the case

⁸⁴Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1931-1950, March 16, 1944.

⁸⁵Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, July 9, 1944.

⁸⁶Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box II, 1931-1950, August 24, 1941.

⁸⁷Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, June 2, 1953.

⁸⁸Saheed Aderinto, ‘Empire Day in Africa: Patriotic Colonial Childhood, Imperial Spectacle and Nationalism in Nigeria, 1905-60’, *The Journal of Commonwealth History*, 46.4 (2018), 731-757 (p. 731).

of Wokoma, these symbolic occasions present the context for the reiteration and reinforcement of a modern, 'British' identity, or 'Britishness'. There is always a sense of importance, veneration, and celebration, as on the occasion of May 24, 1928, where all schools in Kalabariland competed for prizes in assorted sports events. Wokoma's entries about visits of high ranking dignitaries in the colonial government are also framed in the ambience of epochal 'State' events. Wokoma, for instance, on the 11th of September, 1920, notes that 'Governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford [is] expected at Degema tomorrow' and on the July 10 and 11, 1928, he describes the visit of Sir Graeme Thompson, the Governor of Nigeria—with lady Thompson—during which 'an Address of Welcome was presented to him by the chiefs of New Calabar'.⁸⁹

Another element of the African modern identity that occupies Wokoma in his presentation of public history is the 'colonial' Church. Wokoma's diaries provide important material for the understanding of the strong relationship between the British Church and the British State, particularly as it concerns the forging of the modern African self. This is the sense in which his presentation of the public history of the Church of England, from a Nigerian perspective, also becomes 'political' in character. The entry on 24th May, 1920 (Empire Day) captures his articulation of the relationship:

Service in St Michael's Church Buguma by order of Bishop Tugwel, Diocesan, at the request of the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford. Preacher: Rev: Kemmer. An African chief desired to know from Queen Victoria what makes the British Empire so large, her answer was the Bible.

Here, the political and the spiritual—the State and the Church—converge in the modern public spectacle of the Empire Day, bringing to the fore how the two institutions combined to introduce modernity, both in the form of Reformist Christianity and in the form of imperial government, to Africa and other parts of the world. Wokoma, who was part of this spectacle digs into the history of British interest in Africa to produce an episode that matches the instructiveness of the May 24, 1920 exhibition. This episode is about King William Dappa Pepple who was exiled from the Niger Delta to the United

⁸⁹Atkinson Wokoma Archive, Diaries Box 1, 1915-1930, July 10-11, 1928.

Kingdom by the British in the mid-1800 and who managed to find an audience with Queen Victoria in the late 1850s.⁹⁰

Other historical presentations of the intersections between the Church and the State also evoke the public spectacle of colonial modernity. On August 26, 1941, Wokoma writes about how the ‘Silver Jubilee Procession of King George V [in all its] power, and greatness and might and great glory and grandeur’ inspired his own ‘allegiance to the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings’;⁹¹ on May 26, 1952, he records his delight at how Bishop Dimieari of the Niger Delta became part of the Nigerian government delegation to the coronation of Her Majesty the Queen. At other times, Wokoma highlights the modern significance of definitive Church policies as part of the public history of colonization in Africa. It is in this sense that he inscribes the symbolism of the two assignments performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury on April 15, 1951 and on April 17, 1951—the consecration of the Bishop of Gambia and ‘the inauguration of the Province of West Africa’⁹² respectively. For Wokoma, because of the Church-State unity of the British imperial establishment, these public scenarios of high Church politics also signify the expansion of modernity.

3.2.2 Public History and ‘Postcolonial’ Modernity in Wokoma’s Diaries

In this subsection, I examine Wokoma’s construction of African Modernity through the presentation of the public history of postcolonial Nigeria. Here, I interrogate how Wokoma’s idea of the ‘public’ as ‘political’, especially in the context of the Nigerian nationalist movement and post-independence politics, establishes a modern African identity that is distinct or *emerges* from the colonial. I argue that with an emerging nation-state as ‘public’, Wokoma presents an identity of postcolonial modernity which shows a *transformation* on his part in terms of ‘political’ or ‘ideological’ positioning. It is important to note that with the evidence of his diaries, and his other life-writing, Wokoma was neither a fire and brimstone-spitting revolutionary in the manner of a

⁹⁰For a brief account of the narrative, see John H. Enemugwem’s ‘A History of the Niger Delta Diocese 1952-2012’, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 25 (2016), pp. 119-139.

⁹¹ Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, May 26, 1952.

⁹²Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, April 15 & 17, 1952.

Dedan Kimathi⁹³ nor a nationalist intellectual-politician in the mold of a Kwame Nkrumah⁹⁴ or a Nnamdi Azikiwe.⁹⁵ Although he appears to begin to embrace the principles of nationalism much later in life, Wokoma's public image was largely that of an imperial apologist.

It is in highlighting the patterns of his transformation from an 'imperial subject' to a 'nation-state subject' that Wokoma inscribes his notion of 'postcolonial', 'nationalist' modernity through public history. This transformation, even though only completed well into the Nigeria postcolonial era, commenced deep in the colonial period. Wokoma's presentation of his metamorphosis was that of a slow and gradual process that would not even end with Nigeria's political independence in 1960. This position, boldly entrenched in his diaries, is corroborated by an interview submission by his son Dr Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma, about Wokoma's pessimism regarding an independent Nigeria sometime in 1962. According to Charles Wokoma, his father felt that 'the time was not yet ripe for national self-determination; that independence came too soon'.⁹⁶

A major strategy in Wokoma's construction of the modernity of 'public history' is what Ciraj Shahid Rassool calls the 'Great Man' paradigm, which provides a platform for the interconnection between public history and the political figure. For Rassool, 'the "Great Man" approach to public history' is similar to the 'genre of the Hollywood biopic, where public history intersects with the making of a celebrity [and with] exemplary lives'.⁹⁷ The implication of Rassool's framework in the reading of Wokoma's diaries is that the political provides a space, a sphere of 'public' interaction between the political figure

⁹³(October 31, 1920-February 18 1957), Kenyan revolutionary anti-colonial leader.

⁹⁴(September 21, 1909-April 27, 1972), Ghanaian intellectual, and revolutionary politician and political thinker about whom F.K. Buah wrote: 'Nkrumah shook the very foundations of the imperial system by being the first in the "Black World" to lead his country to overthrow colonial rule' (F.K. Buah, *A History of Ghana* [Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1998], p. 7.)

⁹⁵(November 16, 1904-May 11, 1996), Nigerian politician, nationalist and statesman who served as the inaugural president of Nigeria.

⁹⁶Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma, Personal Interview, May 17, 2016.

⁹⁷Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa,' p. 84.



Picture 5: Wokoma, dressed in a 'doni', an attire worn only by Kalabari chiefs. Wokoma's modernity, particularly in the 1960s, after his retirement from ministerial service, would begin to manifest the hybrid self of the postcolonial subject

and the political event in the construction of African modernity. It is in Wokoma's representation of the emergence of the postcolonial Nigerian 'Great Man', beginning from the period of anti-colonial agitation, that his own notion of the post-independence modern self began to emerge. It is this consciousness of the concept of the 'great black colonial subject', the inimitable nationalistic figure, that gradually developed his own nationalism.

Among the public figures of political significance in postcolonial Nigeria, Wokoma admired, encountered or followed the likes of Nnamdi Azikiwe, first President of Nigeria; Chief Festus Okotie Eboh, First Republic Minister of Finance; Sir Adetunbo Ademola, first indigenous Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and many others. However, his sensitivity to the 'indigenous' 'Great Man' in terms of visibility in the modern public and political sphere was probably aroused by Chief Charles Inko Tariah, one of Kalabariland's aristocratic figures who would eventually become Wokoma's father-in-law. For Wokoma, Chief Tariah represents the ideal figure of African colonial modernity in terms of social relevance and refinement of taste.⁹⁸ He also demonstrates for Wokoma the identity of the nationalist figure as early as the first two decades of the 20th century. As Wokoma records in his diaries, Chief Tariah was among 'a deputation of Africans' who went to England in April, 1913 to protest the appropriation of native land for colonial trade concerns.⁹⁹ According to Wokoma's diary entry of January 8, 1921, Chief Tariah led another group of local chiefs who took up a matter with the colonial authorities: 'An item of the petition presented to His Excellency Hugh Clifford in August 1920 at Degema i.e. to complete the £400 subsidy payable to New Calabar [...] was granted'.¹⁰⁰ By highlighting Chief Tariah's admirable leadership attributes, Wokoma presents him as a veritable subject of public history of 'nationalist' significance, therefore framing him as a modern African leader who functioned with distinction even in the context of the colonial society.

⁹⁸Chief Charles Inko Tariah was, both historically speaking and in Wokoma's construction, one of the leading aristocratic figures of 20th century Kalabari land, whose influence spans politics, the economy, education, the church, among others.

⁹⁹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box I, 1915-1930, September 3, 1915.

¹⁰⁰Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box I, 1915-1930, January 8, 1921.

Wokoma's inscription of the public sphere as the stage for the performance of nationalist modernity assumes greater prominence in his representation of the intensity of African postcolonial politics. Wokoma brings *events* and *figures* of historical importance to illuminate the political value of the personalities involved, what Rassool calls 'focus on exemplary lives.'¹⁰¹ For instance, Wokoma reconstructs in his diaries the December 2, 1941 public event of the 'homecoming' of Ernest Ikoli, leader of the Nigerian Youth Movement' (NYM),¹⁰² a first generation nationalistic front under whose auspices much ground was gained in the early phase of the Nigerian anti-colonial battle. It is in the public sphere of the 'very grand reception' accorded Hon. Ikoli, in which a welcome address was presented and 'dances were staged',¹⁰³ that his significance in the 'public history' of modern Nigeria is asserted. This can also be said about Wokoma's presentation of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Premier of the Eastern Region and eventual inaugural President of postcolonial Nigeria in his February 1957 political tours of Niger Delta towns.

February 2, 1957: Dr Azikiwe and party expected today from Bonny, Bakana, Tombia. The premier and some of the party went to Okrika and Bonny, the others to Bakana and Tombia. They [all] met at Buguma [they] went up first to the Amanyabo, Chief J. T. Princewill and came together to 'Amachree Square'. Hon P. G. Warmate introduced members of the delegation and Chief Robinson Mark Jaja introduced the chiefs and notable gentlemen of Kalabari. The following addressed the crowd through a loud speaker after a welcome address read by Chief R. M. Jaja:

1. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe
2. Chief H. O. Davies
3. Chief [...]
4. Mrs Ekpo

Refreshment was served. Several plays were staged by Dancing Women's club of which Dr Azikiwe is a member.

In the above excerpt, Wokoma foregrounds the fundamental identity of modern Nigerian postcolonial politics by bringing together the public event

¹⁰¹Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa', p.51.

¹⁰²Founded in 1934, the NYM is regarded as 'the first Nigerian nationalist organization [...] to stress national unity over racial divisions'. (Brian Gann, 'The Nigerian Youth Movement (1934- 1951)' *Blackpast* <https://www.blackpast.org> [Accessed May 3, 2020].

¹⁰³Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box II, 1931-1950, December 2, 1941.

and the public figure. Here, the public sphere, in its essential political outlook, becomes a stage for the affirmation of the historical significance of the 'Great Man', who is both a 'maker of history' and 'one of the dominating individuals who have shaped the modern world'.¹⁰⁴ Azikiwe and his fellow public figures and political entities are engaged in what Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson call 'a symbolic dialogue with each other and with the public in an attempt to gain prestige, legitimacy and influence'.¹⁰⁵ However, it is a different kind of prestige, legitimacy and influence from that afforded by the 'imperial', colonial situation. In the case of the nationalist public space, prestige, legitimacy and influence are authorized from the 'inside', not from the 'outside', as obtainable in colonial circumstances.

Just as in the imperial state, where the public sphere is the space for rituals of the affirmation of modern political authority, like the 'Empire Day', the postcolonial state also centralizes the symbolic place of the public space in the reiteration and validation of the mandate of modernity. For instance, Wokoma reinforces the significance of Nigeria's Independence Day Celebration on the 1st of October, 1960 in Degema, the capital of Kalabari Province, where the message of the Premier of Eastern Region was read and 'the commissioner, Mr Okafor, received the salute'.¹⁰⁶ The sense of ceremony and ritual, as evident in imperial circumstances, further entrenches the abiding significance of the occasion in Nigeria's public history: 'The Bakana Brass Band was in attendance. They gave excellent music. Refreshment followed with Kalabari and Ibo dances. School children's sports at Abonnema [...] Cocktail Party at the New Calabar Tennis Court, Degema [...] Ball Dance at U.A.C. club, Abonnema'.¹⁰⁷ In some way, Wokoma's intention in this episode appears to be the foregrounding of the 'actual commencement' of modern Nigeria, where any reference to national modernity would have to begin from October 1, 1960.

¹⁰⁴Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa', pp. 51-52.

¹⁰⁵Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, 'Unveiling the Threads of History: Soviet Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92.3 (2002), 524-527 (p.524).

¹⁰⁶Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, October 1, 1960.

¹⁰⁷Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, October 1, 1960.

Wokoma presents the same scenarios of ritual affirmation of the political and the historical significance of national events in his construction of Nigeria's investiture as a Republic on October 1 1963. On this occasion, at 'Tafawa Balewa Square [...] Dr Azikiwe was sworn in as 1st President of the Republic by the Chief Justice, Sir Ademola [Adetunbo]'.¹⁰⁸ On the same day, according to Wokoma's records, 'the new Supreme Court Buildings' were opened by the President and the Judges sworn in'. For Wokoma, it is the events—and their protagonists—of nationalist dimensions that inform and validate the historical significance of the public space and articulate the identity of African modernity. As Michael Schudson puts it, 'the "public Space" refers not to a space as such but to a set of activities that constitutes a democratic society's self-reflection and self-governance'.¹⁰⁹ It is in the context of the Nigerian nation-state that Wokoma inscribes the imperative of self-reflection based on landmark events of modern public history.

Wokoma's emphasis on public events and figures of national significance strongly affirms his notion of the public as political. Again, his location of himself as a participant of sorts in these events, and even as the authorial narrative voice, enables the development of his own modern self, particularly in the form of his 'transformation' from the 'imperial subject' to the 'nation-state'—or nationalistic—subject. Thus, there is an important sense in which Wokoma's presentation of the public history of postcolonial Nigeria constructs an identity of African modernity, not just for the nationalist figures whose 'biographies' he presents, or the events he focuses on, but, most importantly, for himself. It is in this context that Wilhem Dilthey argues that 'we are first of all creatures of history, before we became observers of history, and only because we are such creatures can we become such observers'.¹¹⁰ Wokoma is thus an integral part of the postcolonial African modernity that he constructs in his diaries, both as a 'creature' and an 'observer' of that colonial and immediate postcolonial Nigerian history.

¹⁰⁸Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries Box III, 1951-1965, October 1, 1963.

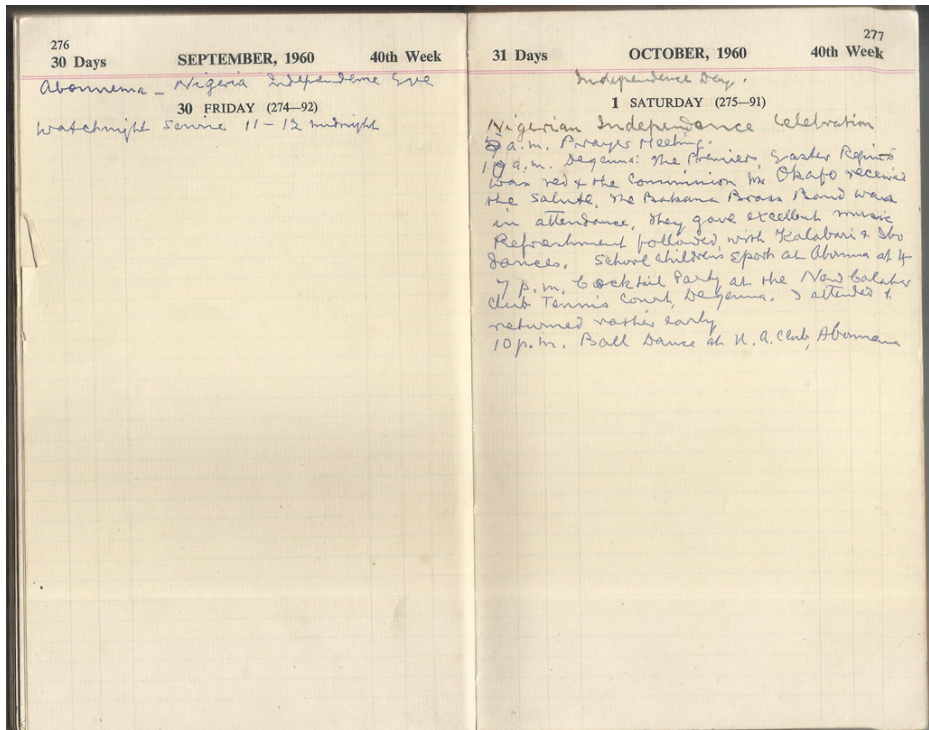
¹⁰⁹Michael Schudson, 'The "Public Sphere" and Its Problems: Bringing the State (Back)', *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy*, 8.2 (2012), 529-546 (p.530).

¹¹⁰Popkin, *History, Historians and Autobiography*, p. 16.



THE NIGERIAN CHIEFS WHO VISITED THE BIBLE HOUSE IN JUNE. *See p. 232.*

Picture 6: Chief Charles Inko Tariah, sixth from back row-left, in England during 1913, with other Chiefs from Colonial Southern Nigeria, over the colonial authority's policy on native land. Wokoma uses the diary entry on this episode to frame the publicness of colonial political modernity.



Diary Scan 9: Wokoma's demonstration of postcolonial political modality in the diary of October 1, 1960, Nigeria's Independence Day.

Federal Republic Day of Nigeria
Stoji Lago 1 TUESDAY. (274-91) and
 Mac obtained an invitation for me,
 I attended the Parade & Swearing-in
 Ceremony at Tafawa Balewa Square
 when N. Azikiwe was sworn in as
 the 1st President of the Republic by
 the Chief Justice, Sir Ademola
 I sat with Odem in the first row
 of the VIP stand. Mac & Sisi, Eni & Bill
 went up the

This afternoon the New Supreme Court
 Buildings were opened by the President &
 the judges sworn in. I did not attend

I did not attend the Reception at
 the State House in the evening as
 well.

Diary Scan 10: Diary entry of October 1, 1963 in which Wokoma frames the public zenith of the protracted transition period of his political allegiance from the colonial to the postcolonial.

It is strategic that within the frame of his transformation from an 'imperial' subject to a 'nation-state' subject, Wokoma also constructs a space of 'political' importance in the public history of Nigeria's postcolonial modernity for his wife, Mercy. As Wokoma's diaries and other biographical records show, Mercy is a politically active individual who eventually dies from her political convictions during the Nigeria-Biafra war that took place in the same decade of Nigeria's independence.¹¹¹ According to Wokoma's depiction, Mercy is in the public sphere by virtue of her intense political life. Her political and historical significance, from Wokoma's account, lies in her ability to link the ethnic/traditional and the national as one of the most visible female political figures in the Niger Delta. She is not just a card-carrying member of the NCNC, who knows President Azikiwe personally,¹¹² she is also a 'grassroots politician' who worked closely with the Kalabari King, the Amanyanabo, for the attainment of stability and development in the society. One of the occasions during which her public profile is made prominent is the visit of 'Dr Imoke, Minister of Education Eastern Nigeria', himself an NCNC stalwart. Mercy is given an assortment of assignments, including coordinating refreshments for the events, and she accomplishes these tasks with trademark effectiveness. A day after the Minister's visit, on February 13, 1963, as Wokoma records in his diaries, 'Chief Fred Princewill, Amanyanabo of Kalabari came to thank Mrs Wokoma, my wife, for the refreshment she prepared for the reception of the Minister of Education yesterday'.¹¹³

Wokoma's attitude to Mercy's highly 'public,' 'political' visibility and relevance is that of ambivalence. He is definitely grateful that she motivates his own greater involvement in the postcolonial public sphere and in the establishment of his own 'nationalist' profile. Yet, he is not exactly

¹¹¹From the NCNC, which was regarded as an 'Igbo' party, Mercy joined the Biafran movement, made up mainly by Igbo revolutionaries and secessionists.

¹¹²As consistently recorded in Wokoma's diaries, Mercy was quite popular among the NCNC stalwarts in Enugu and Lagos. On one or two occasions, she was a personal guest of Dr Azikiwe's, including on the occasion of the 'courtesy visit' of February 6, 1962.

¹¹³Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, February 13, 1963.

comfortable that she subverts her statutory private roles as a wife. He, however, tends to accept his dilemma as part of the 'disruption' from which the modern identity emerges. This position can be linked to Wokoma's own understanding that 'fragmentation' is a major aspect of the modern identity. In the modern context, as Anthony Giddens observes, fragmentation denotes the 'use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrative narrative'.¹¹⁴ In other words, the sense in which Mercy—and Wokoma—combines the personalities of a private wife, a 'community'¹¹⁵ leader and a 'nationalist' is that in which 'a cosmopolitan person [...] draws strength from being at home in a variety of contexts'.¹¹⁶

Wokoma's diaries depict the ways in which the colonial informs the transformation of his modern self from the imperial subject to the postcolonial subject in his construction of the modernity of African public history. In other words, they demonstrate how his sense of the public shifted from the 'colonial state' to the 'nation state', in line with Julien Freund's conception of the public sphere as essentially the political and strictly relating to 'the State'.¹¹⁷ First, Wokoma entrenches the ways in which the colonial infrastructure of modern enlightenment—what he exuberantly calls 'the great structure of civilization'¹¹⁸—prepared him as an ideal, productive citizen with a proper awareness of his obligations and rights. Western education 'transformed' him literally to a modern individual who could contribute meaningfully to a modern African society. This is what Christopher Miller calls 'the centrality of literacy in the development of modern nationalisms'¹¹⁹ and what E. A. Ayandele

¹¹⁴Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 189.

¹¹⁵According to Joe Bailey, the 'community' is one of 'three indicative, dimensions of the modern public sphere' ('From Public to Private', pp. 21-22.).

¹¹⁶Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 189.

¹¹⁷Freund, *L'essence du Politique*, pp. 292-293.

¹¹⁸Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box III, 1931-1950, May 21, 1942.

¹¹⁹Christopher Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone Literature and Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 119.

implies when he talks about how the church—and its school component—provoked ‘an independent, nationalist spirit’¹²⁰ in Africans.

Secondly, it was within the context of the colonial that Wokoma imbibed the fundamental nationalistic character of patriotism. Wokoma’s total allegiance to the imperial state is illustrated in several episodes, particularly in social contexts of public proclamation. On one of such occasions in September 1942, he admonishes his audience: ‘what do we mean by our displays and demonstration on occasions like the Empire Day or at any other national event? [...] If they are no more than mere cultural forms and ceremonies, then they are worthless and have no meaning’.¹²¹ He would gradually transfer this exemplary character of loyalty to the Nigerian nation state upon independence. He demonstrates this attitude of allegiance to Nigerian postcolonial authorities by locating a space for himself in the circle of political elites, whereby he attends and participates in landmark events of national historical importance such as the ceremonies establishing Nigeria as a Republic in 1963.¹²² His loyalty is strongly etched in his personal goodwill message and prayer to the President and the 1st Lady on this occasion: ‘May God’s all sufficient Grace abide with Your Excellencies always’.¹²³

3.2.3 Public History, Modern Identity and the Traditional Leadership Institution in Wokoma’s Diaries

In this subsection, I affirm Wokoma’s notion of the public realm as the political sphere by focusing on how he constructs a modern African identity by engaging the Nigerian traditional leadership institution. Here I consider the traditional leadership institution—represented in Wokoma’s case by the Kalabari Royal House, led by the Amanyanabo of Kalabari, and his group of Chiefs—as an extension of the ‘State’, and therefore as a ‘public domain’ of African modernity. Thus, I argue that with the evidence of Wokoma’s diaries, the traditional institution as a modern, public ‘political’ establishment is

¹²⁰E.A. Ayandele, ‘External Influence on African Society’, *Africa in the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1981 [1960]), pp. 123-148 (p.140).

¹²¹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, September 13, 1942.

¹²²Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, October 1, 1963.

¹²³Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, October 1, 1963.

representative of what Freund refers to as the ‘necessary organs of a political collectivity’ in his delineation of the ‘public’ as strictly ‘political’.¹²⁴ Beyond the above, as the diaries establish, the traditional institution forges a link between the State as the supreme public sphere of modernity and the ‘community’, which according to Joe Bailey, is ‘the final location of the public [...] which refers to structured sets of social relationships based upon shared identity and, in some residual way, locality’.¹²⁵ The traditional as an arm of the state provides the category of the public sphere where, according to Freund, ‘the public or the state and the individual [...] confront each other’.¹²⁶

By the time Wokoma begins to construct a space of public, political prominence for the Kalabari Royal House, the Southern Nigerian traditional institution had sufficiently become an extension of the modern imperial state. This status of ‘political modernity’ was established by virtue of violent confrontations between the invading imperial interests and forces, and such powerful African dynasties as that of King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny,¹²⁷ King Jaja of Opobo,¹²⁸ and Ovonranwen Nogbaisi of Benin.¹²⁹ The aftermath of this experience is what Msiska describes as ‘the loss of a traditional African social and political order in the encounter with political modernity’.¹³⁰ Wokoma, thus, depicts the modern identity of the traditional authority by centralizing its *subordinate* complimentary role in the public sphere of ‘modern’ government orchestrated by the imperial state. This is illustrated, for instance, by the engagement by the chiefs of Kalabari (New Calabar) with ‘His Excellency Sir, Hugh Clifford [Governor of Nigeria] over ‘the £400 subsidy

¹²⁴Freund, *L' essence du Politique*, pp. 292-293.

¹²⁵Baily, ‘From Public to Private’, p. 21.

¹²⁶Freund, *L' essence du Politique*, pp. 292-293.

¹²⁷King of Bonny between 1830 and 1866. Instrumental in the evangelizing of the Niger Delta, beginning from the 1860s.

¹²⁸(1821-1891), a merchant King and wealthy trading figure in the vibrant and intense economic transactions between the Niger Delta and the British in the mid-to-late 19th century. King Jaja of Opobo is a major reference point in the historical discourse of West African trade modernity.

¹²⁹(1857-1897), another major figure in the Nigerian colonialist narrative. King of the expansive Benin Kingdom before the British punitive expedition of 1897 which deposed and exiled him.

¹³⁰Mpalive-Hangson Msiska, ‘Imagined Nations and Imaginary Nigeria: Chinua Achebe’s Quest for a Country’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 16. 2-3 (2014), 401-419 (p. 405).

payable to New Calabar’,¹³¹ as captured in Wokoma’s diary entry of January 8, 1921. Even before this, there was the ‘historic’ ‘Deputation of Africans’ to England in April 1913.¹³² These and more are expressions of the functioning of the ‘traditional’ authority within a modern colonial public sphere as a complementary but subordinate arm of the State.

It is, however, within the context of the public spectacle of the rituals of affirmation of political authority of the modern state—the imperial and the post-imperial—that a definitive modern identity of the African traditional leadership institution emerges. For instance, as Wokoma records in his diary entry of June 10, 1928, the chiefs of New Calabar present the visiting Governor of Nigeria, and his wife, ‘an address of welcome’ as part of the statutory display of loyalty and demonstration of subjecthood. In his June 6, 1941 diary entry, Wokoma further illuminates the symbolism of the position of traditional leaders in the imperial state:

I visited the Native Court this morning to introduce myself to the chiefs of Nembe and to talk with them about the ‘Flag Day’ arrangements. 8 chiefs were present. 6 from Ogbolomabiri and 2 from Basambiri. Chief Samuel Bonny was the President. I went over to Basambiri to see Chief Ben Warri. He was not quite well but he promised to attend the Flag Day Service tomorrow morning.

In the above scenario, Wokoma in his capacity as an agent of the ‘imperial state’ engages the chiefs, as leaders and representatives of a traditional African society confronting the reality of political modernity. The ‘Flag Day’,¹³³ just like the Empire Day, was a ceremony which reinforced allegiance to imperial authority, and the modernity of the traditional institution as part of the ‘public’ sphere makes its participation inevitable.

In constructing the ‘public sphere’ of the traditional society’s political stake in the modernity of postcolonial politics, Wokoma also emphasizes these spectacles and rituals of affirmation. For instance, during the visit of the Premiere of the Eastern Region on February 20 1957, the Amanyano and

¹³¹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box I, 1915-1930, January 8, 1921.

¹³²Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box I, 1915-1930, September, 1915.

¹³³Another major ‘national’ event in the British Empire. Flag days ‘were held by organizations to raise money for causes including soldiers on the frontline, prisoners of war and support for disabled servicemen’ (<beamish.org.uk/events/empire-weak-end/> [Accessed 4 May 2020]).

Chiefs of Kalabari played their role of ceremonial ‘declaration’ of their membership of the State. This is also seen during the visit of the Minister of Education on December 2, 1963,¹³⁴ where the ‘Amanyabo and chiefs’ take their appropriate place in the public spectacle as ‘subordinate’ hosts to a state authority. However, the most instructive aspect of Wokoma’s construction of the modernity of the ‘public’ sphere of the Kalabari traditional institution is the presentation of the latter’s deep involvement in the volatile postcolonial politics of the Nigerian state. Even though he might have intended it as an extension of his expansive commentary on the disruptive influence of modernity on African societies, particularly in the sense of Achebe’s idea of ‘things falling apart’,¹³⁵ Wokoma succeeds in entrenching the modern identity of Nigerian traditional leadership institution as an integral part of the state’s ‘national public space’.

According to Wokoma’s diaries, the postcolonial Nigerian State, where the public ‘political’ sphere is structured along lines of party loyalty, is neatly replicated in the Kalabari traditional society. The Amanyabo and a section of the chiefs are not just sympathetic to the NCNC—now, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens—they are card-carrying members of the party. The other group of Kalabari chiefs, loyal to the rival AG—Action Group—reproduced the political opposition at the regional and national levels within the Kalabari traditional council in particular and Kalabariland in general. Wokoma depicts this rift, variously in the form of physical confrontation, as in the episode of September 25, 1961, where a fight nearly ensues ‘between the Action Group chiefs and the NCNC [chiefs]’ during a funeral; and in the form of shunning important community occasions, as in the event of the July 27, 1961 visit of ‘His Excellency the Governor of Eastern Nigeria’, an NCNC stalwart, in which ‘the cocktail party was boycotted by the chiefs and people of Abonnema’ who are largely of the AG stock. There are also the court cases such as that of September 16, 1959, where the opposition AG chiefs ‘were

¹³⁴Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, December 2, 1963.

¹³⁵Achebe’s 1958 novel, *Things Fall Apart* dramatizes the negative, even tragic impact of the European, particularly British, incursion into the African cultural space.

allowed to petition her Majesty¹³⁶ to interfere in the action of the government of the Eastern Region in recognising Chief J. T. Princewill Amachree as Amanyanabo VII of Kalabari'.¹³⁷

It is therefore strategic that Wokoma constructs the transformation—from the 'pre-modern' to the modern—of the African traditional institution in his attempt to establish the modernity of Nigerian public history in his diaries. This is in conformity with its profile as an agent of the 'public sphere' of the State. However, he perhaps brings his notion of the modernity of this institution to the fore in his presentation of his own investiture as a 'chief of Kalabari in Amachree Hall' on December 24 1962. This portraiture emphasizes not just the modern identity of the institution but Wokoma's own self-presentation as a modern African self.

3.3 The Private-Public Intersection in Wokoma's Diaries: African Modernity and Historical Presentation

In this section, I examine how Wokoma's presentation of the intersection between private and public history constructs an identity of African modernity. I do so through four main approaches: First, I investigate the private-public patterns and dynamics of how Wokoma's diaries, as intimate writings, simultaneously serve as the instrument of constructing both his modern individual self and the evolving public identity of the Nigerian nation—or the 'collective' modern Nigerian self. Second, I interrogate the 'interaction' between Wokoma's diary as 'autobiographical' history and formal, public history with a view to establishing how and what each could benefit from the other in the presentation of African modernity. Third, I examine the overlapping of what R. G. Collingwood calls the 'inside' and the 'outside' of

¹³⁶At this time, Nigeria enjoyed 'partial independence'—the reason why, the Governor of Eastern Nigeria is a Nigerian. Her Majesty, the Queen was still the supreme Head of State of the country, until October 1, 1960, when Nigeria gained 'full' independence from Britain. The AG Chiefs were therefore appealing to a 'higher authority' in the tussle with the Amanyanabo.

¹³⁷Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, September 16, 1959.

history,¹³⁸ and how it influences Wokoma's presentation of the African modern self. Fourth, I explore how Jurgen Habermas' concept of the 'private' character of the 'public sphere'¹³⁹ offers interpretative insights into certain aspects of Wokoma's presentation of the history of the Nigerian public space.

3.3.1 Intimate Text as Public History: Wokoma's Diaries and the Simultaneous Construction of the Individual Self and the 'Collective National' Self

There is, at a most fundamental level, a strong sense in which the private-public intersection manifests in how Wokoma's intimate, private reflections offer invaluable insight into the public history of modern Africa at the ethnic, state and global levels. It is in the examination of the intersection between Wokoma's diaries as private texts of self-fashioning and their engagement with the public history of Nigeria that their significance as narratives of African modernity comes to the fore. I am interested in the modes of interaction between Wokoma's private and public in the establishment of a *modern nation*, or a *modern society*, what Irina Paperno describes as 'the interpenetration between intimacy and publicity' which highlights the diary's 'capacity to serve as an instrument of self-construction, mediate between the self and community and adapt to the needs of a specific culture'.¹⁴⁰ In this function, according to Paperno, 'the diary is not merely a genre, but a cultural artifact existing within a social context on which its uses and significance for historical research depend'.¹⁴¹

Wokoma's diary-narrative of course transcends his own personal self-representation as an agent of modernity and brings under its scope the expansive story of Nigeria's metamorphosis from a pre-modern traditional entity, through to its existence as both an 'imperial society', and then a 'national society'. Thus, Wokoma's private modern identity as constructed in his diaries reflects the general identity of 20th century African modernity, especially in terms of what Paperno describes as 'self-construction and self-

¹³⁸R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1946), p. 146.

¹³⁹Habermas, 'The Public Sphere'. An Encyclopedia Article', *New German Critique*, 3 (1974), pp. 49-55.

¹⁴⁰Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?' p. 567.

¹⁴¹Paperno, p. 569.

fashioning within a common ideological mold'.¹⁴² In a very broad sense, Wokoma's 'personal' modern identity as an imperial subject as presented in his diaries is sufficiently representative of the larger picture of the colonial Nigerian society, complete with the patterns and dynamics of evolution. The same applies to Wokoma's presentation of his postcolonial self, and its evocative portraiture of the postcolonial Nigerian identity. It is in this sense that Jochen Hellbeck treats the Russian diaries produced during the Bolshevik regime¹⁴³ as 'laboratories of the Soviet self'.¹⁴⁴ By the same approach, Wokoma's diaries can be referred to as 'laboratories of the *modern Nigerian self*'.¹⁴⁵

Taking a further cue from the Russian example, I interpret Wokoma's construction of the 'collective social self' of modern—colonial and postcolonial—Nigeria with the 'private' and 'intimate' material of his diary along the lines of John Randolph's examination of the context in which 'the historiography of Russian thought [...] was constructed out of materials of family archives'.¹⁴⁶ An important aspect of this comparative reading for me is the investigation of what Randolph calls the 'role women played in the process' of the emergence of the modern social self from intimate sources.¹⁴⁷ In other words, what type of roles does Mercy Wokoma—and indeed other female figures of the supposed private, marginal, domestic, intimate provinces of the African society—play in Wokoma's construction of the private-public intersection of modern Nigerian history? The answer is clearly inscribed in Mercy's 'social mobility': she 'moves' from the sphere of 'marginality' to the realm of 'focality', where, according to Gozli and Limberg, 'the focal figure' reaffirms 'the status quo and maintains order and stability'.¹⁴⁸ Despite maintaining her private domestic status as a wife, Mercy's active involvement

¹⁴²Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?' p. 567.

¹⁴³The Bolsheviks, a revolutionary party founded on far-reaching marxist ideas, seized power in Russia in 1917.

¹⁴⁴Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?' p. 567.

¹⁴⁵Particularly in the sense that Wokoma's diaries provide a veritable portrait of Nigerian colonial modernity. Thus, by centralizing the 'individual self', Wokoma projects, in some remarkable way, the 'Collective self'.

¹⁴⁶Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?' p. 569.

¹⁴⁷Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?' p. 569.

¹⁴⁸Gozli and Limberg, 'The Marginal Figure', p. 3.

with partisan politics, with ‘the State’ foregrounds her location within the public sphere’. She attends high profile NCNC meetings¹⁴⁹ and spearheads several political programmes at other times and in other places.¹⁵⁰ Mercy Wokoma is certainly not the only female figure associated with political visibility in Wokoma’s construction of the role of women in the unfolding of Nigeria’s public identity. There is also, for instance, a ‘Mrs Banigo, Area Secretary of the NCNC’, who has been appointed ‘as a member of Bonny Town Council’.¹⁵¹ Wokoma portrays these women as a representation of the kind of intersection between ‘domesticity’ and ‘publicity’ that engenders the emerging modernity of 20th century Africa.

3.3.2 Wokoma’s Autobiographical Chronicles and the Discipline of History: Interactions of the Private and the Public

Another aspect of the interconnection between the private and the public which Wokoma’s diaries highlight, especially in the articulation of African modernity, is the interaction between the diary as an autobiographical chronicle of the past and formal history as a ‘public’ discipline. The character of this relationship is illustrated in Arnaud Sales’ presentation of the ways in which ‘the public and the private spheres [...] continually interact’.¹⁵² According to Sales, ‘the private can call into question the public and then reshape it, while the public can reorganize [...] the private sphere in a specific domain, or it can regulate the activities of the sphere by helping them to develop or simply by absorbing them’.¹⁵³ On the one hand, Wokoma’s status as a first-person witness to the events he records in his diaries is capable of ‘calling into question and then reshaping’ official, ‘formal’ historical representation of those events—perhaps in the form of intervening in situations of factual errors or in the affirmation of truth. On the other hand, public history can ‘reorganize [...] in a specific domain’ the historical presentation of Wokoma’s diaries, particularly considering the generic

¹⁴⁹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, November 13, 1960.

¹⁵⁰For instance, she organizes the women to stage a play ‘during the February Public Holiday’, a venture that is endorsed by the Amanyanabo (King). (Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, February 9, 1963).

¹⁵¹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, February 16, 1962.

¹⁵²Sales, ‘The Private, the Public and Civil Society’, p. 299.

¹⁵³Sales, ‘The Private, the Public and Civil Society’, p. 299.

peculiarities of the latter as ‘arbitrary’ daily notations without the narrative coherence of history. To put it in clearer terms, while the diary provides the material for history, history presents that material in a better structured, more coherent narrative order, and validates it within a wider, more objective circumference.

For instance, Wokoma’s diaries present an original, private, eyewitness account about Nigerian colonial modernity, capturing the sense of *immediacy* and *atmosphere* of the historical account, but lacking the proper structure and objectivity of public history, which the public historian ultimately provides. As Jeremy D. Popkin stresses:

The historian hesitantly suggests what it might have been like to be a slave before the Civil War or to have been in the trenches during World War I; the memorist *knew*, even if the historian comes along to raise doubts about the details of an account or to wonder whether it represents a typical experience.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, if a historian could only suggest *what it might have been like to be* an imperial subject in one of the West African colonies during World War I, Wokoma *knew*, because he attended fund-raisers for the ‘Red Cross Fund’ in Degema (entry of October 21 1915) and lived through and witnessed the devastation of the influenza epidemic ‘that has been sweeping [through] the West Coast’ (November 4, 1918) and which intersected with the last year of the war. The same applies to World War II, where Wokoma used ‘food ration cards’ and paid public tribute to the fighting imperial troops.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, a historian may only *suggest* the circumstances of the outbreak of the Nigerian workers’ strike of Burutu in June 1947, but Wokoma *knew*, because the event happened within his missionary work-field, and his church premises ‘was the meeting ground of the strikers’ (June 2, 1947). Furthermore, Wokoma *knew* the public impact of the death of his Majesty, King George VI in the West African colonies, because it was his responsibility as the General Manager of Schools ‘to announce the news’ to teachers and students (February 7, 1952).

¹⁵⁴Popkin, *History, Historians and Autobiography*, p. 24.

¹⁵⁵Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Sermons, Box II, 1931-1950, May 21, 1942.

3.3.3 Collingwood and the 'Inside-Outside' of History: Wokoma as 'Historical Agent'

A related dimension of Wokoma's construction of the African modernity of the private-public intersection of history in his diaries is the overlapping of what R. C. Collingwood calls the 'inside' and the 'outside' of history. For Collingwood, while the outside is the principal historical event, 'what actually happened', the inside comprises the thoughts of the historical agents.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the inside and the outside of history can conveniently be viewed as its private and public elements respectively. The tendency of their intersection is, however, high in life-writing circumstances, because in as much as the autobiographic is personal and intimate, 'no life story can be completely detached from the collective experience of the author's time—in other words, from history'.¹⁵⁷ Thus, there is a 'complimentary' relationship between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of Wokoma's historical presentation. I illustrate with three instances from his diaries:

April 17, 1951: There will be the inauguration of the Province of West Africa today by the ArchBp. of Canterbury at Sierra Leone. *I guess* Bishop Horstead of Sierra Leone will be elected the first ArchBp. of West Africa.

Province of West Africa created. Bp. Vining of Lagos elected the first ArchBp. of the new Province today.

July 27 1961: His Excellency the Governor of Eastern Nigeria and Mrs Ibiam visited K.N.C. Buguma and returned to Degema [at]11:45. We attended the Governor's cocktail party at Degema at 7:30pm. Mr Clayton kindly gave me and my wife a lift in his speed boat. The Cocktail Party was bycotted by the chiefs and people of Abonnema except Chief Gbobo Boywhite, Mrs Fanny A. K. Bob Manuel, and Mr Harris Blackduke whom I saw.

December 12 1959: To Buguma. Federal Election Day. Polling Day. I voted for NCNC candidate Chief Jonah Ngiangia of Tombia.

In the above excerpts, the definite historical event, 'what actually happened' are all clearly foregrounded: the inauguration of the Province of West Africa in Sierra Leone in April 1951, the visit of the Governor of Eastern Nigeria to Buguma—and Degema—in July 1961, and the Federal elections of December 1959. All of these instances are representative of the emerging modernity of Africa especially in political and Christian religious terms.

¹⁵⁶Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 146.

¹⁵⁷Popkin, *History, Historians and Autobiography*, p. 24.

However, the introduction of the ‘thoughts’ and personal experiences of Wokoma as a ‘historical agent’ enhances the understanding of the scenarios and reinforces events, and their African modernity—or what they say concerning the modern identity of not only Africa but Wokoma himself.

Wokoma’s private thoughts which compliment the modernity of ‘public history’ in the above instances include his—although incorrect—‘private’ speculation or *guess* about the choice of Bishop Horstead¹⁵⁸ as an inaugural Archbishop of the new West African Province. That he underlines *I guess* is an indication that this is the ‘private material’ that he is bringing into a public history. However, his demonstration of a ‘wider knowledge’ of the province is a commentary on the degree of missionary modernity already achieved by West Africa, and also his own profile as a modern African of the missionary calling. The next two instances centralize African political modernity from a Nigerian perspective. Wokoma’s ‘thoughts’ or ‘experiences’ about the boycott of the Governor’s visit by chiefs of Abonnema, who, according to the larger narrative as presented by Wokoma, belong to the rival political party, the Action Group, highlight the heavy political leaning of the modern traditional leadership institution. Wokoma’s depiction of the rift in the Kalabari Council of Chiefs along the lines of political loyalty inscribes another aspect of the disruption of African traditional systems by the agents of modernity. In the last example, Wokoma’s ‘thoughts’ about voting entrenches not just his own developing modern self as a nationalist, but also the transformation of the African political landscape to another phase of its modernity, as the colonial regime draws to a conclusion.

Wokoma, by virtue of his presence as a ‘character’ in the frame of particular historical episodes, is ‘a historical agent’, whose thoughts provide invaluable private insight into the public event. It is therefore the intertwining of the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ in Wokoma’s presentation of history in his diaries that articulates a ‘complete’ identity of African modernity.

¹⁵⁸Most Rev James Lawrence Cecil Horstead (1898-1989) eventually succeeded Bishop Leslie Gordon Vining as Archbishop of West Africa in 1955. Thus, Wokoma’s guess was a close one.

3.3.4. Habermas' Public Square: Wokoma and the Private *of the* Public

Wokoma's construction of African modernity through the presentation of the intersection of the private and the public of history in his diaries can be read along the framework provided by Jurgen Habermas about the interdependence of the private sphere and the public realm. I have posited in a previous section that Wokoma's notion of the 'public' aligns with Julien Freund's concept of the 'public sphere', which is strongly linked to the *political state*. However, Wokoma's idea of 'public' also incorporates the *civil society*—that is, 'those collective public activities that are independent of the state's regulating'—and the *community*, which are 'structured sets of social relationships based upon shared identity and in some residual way, locality'.¹⁵⁹ By adopting Habermas' 'liberal approach' to the public sphere, which according to Lawrence Klein, 'delineate[s] an intermediary zone',¹⁶⁰ Wokoma is not just able to articulate intersections of the private and the public, but also demonstrate how a more robust category of African modernity emerges from it.

Wokoma's presentation of the civil society is illustrated for instance in his membership of such bodies as the Governing Board of the Kalabari National College, KNC,¹⁶¹ his association with the Kalabari traditional institution at different levels, his membership of community development outfits such as the Buguma Electricity Fund,¹⁶² and his general active presence in the 'community' public sphere. The core of the private-public intersection lies therefore in the fact that Wokoma, as a *private* modern individual, forms part of a modern *public* assembly of other individuals to constitute a *public sphere*. This is in line with the submission of Habermas that 'the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which the private individuals assemble to form a public body'.¹⁶³ According to Habermas, 'the public sphere is 'constituted by private people [and] through the vehicle of the public opinion it

¹⁵⁹Bailey, 'From Public to Private', p. 21.

¹⁶⁰Backscheider, *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England*, p. 13.

¹⁶¹Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, February 25, 1962.

¹⁶²Atkinson Wokoma Archives, Diaries, Box III, 1951-1965, June 24, 1961.

¹⁶³Hebermas, 'The Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article', p. 49.

puts the state in touch with the needs of society'.¹⁶⁴ In other words, Habermas asserts a link or a space of overlap between the 'political state' which is the highest level of the public sphere, and lower levels, such as the civil organization and the community. These lower levels constitute Habermas' interpretation of civil 'society'.

Wokoma's construction of the modernity of the African society through the presentation of history highlights his attempts as a private individual to play certain 'social roles' as a member of the public sphere to address the need of his Kalabari community. One striking illustration is taken from Wokoma's history of the conflict between Chief J. T. Princewill, the Amanyanabo of Kalabari, with the Buguma chiefs loyal to him and to the NCNC political party, on the one hand, and the opposition chiefs and people belonging to the Action Group party, who are largely from the neighbouring town of Abonnema, on the other. Wokoma, a native of Buguma and a friend of the Amanyanabo who serves as head-pastor of the Anglican Church in Abonnema—where many of the opposition chiefs and people are his congregants—is motivated to broker peace between the warring groups. An outline of his records to this effect—commencing from when the NCNC-inclined Chief J. T. Princewill is 'recognized' as 'Amanyanabo'¹⁶⁵ by the NCNC Eastern Regional government and ending in the legal procedure instituted by the AG chiefs contesting that 'recognition'—is presented below:

May 4, 1959: Chief J. T. Princewill's title enquiry by the Eastern Regional Government began today. The Action Group members of the Kalabari community boycotted the Inquiry by walking out.

July 30, 1959: Chief Charles D. Wokoma gave me an invitation and a copy of the programme for the recognition of the Amanyanabo ceremony.

August 3, 1959: The Recognition Ceremony.

August 13, 1959: At 6p.m. I went to see Chief Samuel Bara Will Braide to plead that I might be permitted to intervene in the matter between them and Chief J. T. Princewill about the Amanyanabo question. He told me that the matter has gone again to the High Court, Port Harcourt. They had filed a

¹⁶⁴Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁵'Amanyanabo' is the official cultural title of the Kalabari king.

motion to be allowed to take action against the Government of the Eastern Region and the motion would be debated on the 16th and they would attend.

I asked that he might remember this evening whether the motion was allowed or not.

September 16, 1959: The Amanyanabo of Kalabari case motion was debated at the High Court, Port Harcourt today [...] The Motioners were allowed to petition Her Majesty to interfere in the action of the Government of the Eastern Region in recognising Chief J. T. Princewill Amachree as Amanyanabo VII of Kalabari.

September 18, 1959: This evening at 6p.m. I went to meet Chiefs Will Braide and Obediah Douglas [...] I addressed them together for about forty minutes to allow us and help me to settle the Amanyanabo case out of court.

It was agreed that they would give me an answer tomorrow afternoon.

September 19, 1959: This afternoon at 3p.m. I went to see Chiefs Samuel Will Braide and Obediah Douglas for the reply [...] They replied as follows

1. They thanked me about the trouble I had been taking about this matter.
2. They were convinced that I was acting in the interest of the *peace* and *welfare of the people of Kalabari*.
3. They were particularly impressed by my appeal to them to consider the *welfare* of the *country* in the name of the Almighty God.
4. If it were a matter which exclusively concerned them they could have given a definite answer. But this was a matter in which several people were involved.
5. But they would give me the assurance of their co-operation in the interest of peace. (My emphasis)

The above narrative vividly depicts Wokoma's *private self* entering the *public space* of the explosive modern politics of the Kalabari traditional leadership institution. His motive for this action is clearly in line with Habermas' notions of the public sphere, for his intention is ultimately to influence the 'opinion' held about the Amanyanabo by an important segment of the public, the 'Action Group members of the Kalabari community', through their representative chiefs. Here, the public sphere, as Lawrence Klein puts it, becomes an important 'vehicle for the clarification of public matters and the advancement

of public morals as expressed in economic and political life in religion and in arts and letters'.¹⁶⁶

Wokoma's overall intention, therefore, even as admitted by the chiefs, is 'the peace and welfare of the Kalabari people', which justifies his endeavour in mediating between his private modern self and the modern Kalabari society. However, Wokoma appears to be interested in connecting the peace and welfare of the Kalabari society to the general welfare of the country as both an 'imperial state', because full independence had not been obtained from Great Britain, and as a 'nation state', since partial independence had been granted. An explanation of the modern Nigerian public sphere at that historical moment is provided by the 'motion' inviting the interference of Her Majesty the Queen 'in the action of the Government of the Eastern [Nigerian] Region', the authority of State that validates and 'recognizes' the Amanyanabo, especially as an extension of State power. In other words, the 'public opinion' which Wokoma sets out to influence as a private citizen, who is an integral part of the public sphere, is also meant to mediate 'between the state and the society' in the interest of progress. Thus, Wokoma's presentation of this aspect of the intersection between the private and the public is illustrative of a more robust identity of African modernity, because the modernity of the individual activates the modernity of the public.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter examines how Wokoma's presentation of history in his diaries establishes a modern African identity. I adopted a three-pronged analytical approach in responding to the research and sub-research questions in the chapters and these form the three sections of the chapter—investigating the modernity of the private, then examining the modernity of the public and

¹⁶⁶Lawrence Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and Sexuality in Early Seventeenth Century England', in *Textuality and Reading Theories and Practices*, ed. by Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp.100-115(p.108).

finally, analysing the modernity of the intersection between the private and the public.

In the first section, I investigated how Wokoma's presentation of private history in his diaries establishes a modern African identity. Under this section, I explored the general significance of Wokoma's diaries in the light of the form's character as a private document that bears essentially private content, private 'history' inclusive, and what it says about African modernity. I also analyzed Wokoma's presentation of marginal figures and the ways in which it entrenches the African modernity of his private history. I also explained Wokoma's construction of a modern, private African history by presenting ordinary, domestic and intimate experiences which appear to have no value in the power politics of the public sphere.

In the second section also, I analyzed Wokoma's presentation of imperial politics as public sphere, where the African imperial subject attempts to construct a modern identity for himself. I interrogated Wokoma's depiction of the 'postcolonial, nation state' as public sphere and its implication in the construction of the modern African identity. I also examined Wokoma's presentation of the African traditional leadership institution as a modern public sphere.

In the third section, I argued that Wokoma's presentation of the intersection of the private and public of African history articulates an identity of African modernity. In this section, I examined the relevance of Wokoma's private, intimate documents in the production of the collective, public modern identity of colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, in the sense of their use in the simultaneous construction of Wokoma's modern private self and the collective *self* of Nigeria's modern 'public' life. In this section also, I looked at the mutually-beneficial interaction between Wokoma's diary as private, autobiographical history and formal history as a public discipline and its implication for a more robust identity of African modernity. I also analyzed Wokoma's presentation of the intersection of the 'inside' and the 'outside' of history, in line with R. G. Collingwood's framework, in terms of the interconnection of the 'thoughts of the historical agent' and the actual event of

history. I then read Wokoma's presentation of the intersection of private and public history along the lines of Jurgen Habermas' 'Public sphere' in which the private individual makes up the public collective whose role is the fashioning of public opinion for the welfare of both society and the State.

As an extension of Wokoma's increasing social, political and 'historical' awareness, the next chapter focuses on Wokoma's 'life journey' in terms of the specific cultural aspect of social refinement and taste. This is because the 'culture of taste' of a given location and period proceeds logically from the historical ambience which determines the dominant cultural, political and social sensibilities.

Abomame - Abomame by Taxi.

19 SATURDAY (262-103)

This afternoon at 3 p.m. I went to see Chief Samuel with Boraid & Obadiah Douglas for the reply.

They retired for a few minutes & replied as follows:

1. They thanked me for the trouble I had been taking about this matter.
2. They were convinced that I was acting in the interest of peace & welfare of the people of Kalitani.
3. They were particularly impressed by my appeal to them to consider the welfare of the Country in the name of the Almighty God. A name that must be respected.
4. If it were a matter which exclusively concerned them they could have given a definite answer. But this was a matter in which several people were involved.
5. But they would give me the assurance of their co-operation in the interest of peace.
6. There would be a meeting of their section at Bakama on the 6th of October when all would assemble. They'd bring up the matter. But before the meeting they use their influence to speak to other. Chief S.W. Boraid would speak to Bakama & Chief Douglas to Abomame. I shall speak to as many as I could.

Diary Scan 11: Diary entry of September 19, 1959, where Wokoma constructs his participation in the community public sphere as a private citizen for the purpose of public good.

Chapter Four

The Private and the Public Selves of the Culture of Taste: Wokoma's Diaries and the African Modern Identity of Refinement and Sensibility

4.0 Introduction

This chapter extends Wokoma's attempt at fashioning a modern African identity for himself by responding to the tangible elements of the emerging culture of European enlightenment as a logical progression from his engagement with the African historical space. In Chapter Three, I argued that Wokoma entrenches his African modernity by establishing his status as a historian of the African colonial and immediate postcolonial societies. In this chapter, I am interested in how he configures his modern African self in line with the pervading culture of taste in the context of those colonial and immediate postcolonial societies, and how this framing of his individual self affirms his place in the collective selfhood of his social community. In the course of locating the culture of taste within the province of African modernity, I distinguish between the private and the public aspects of Wokoma's consumption and performance of high culture. On the one hand, my idea of Wokoma's private taste includes aesthetic and intellectual interiority and the inner evidence of what Lawrence Klein refers to as 'the cultivation of the polite arts'.¹ On the other hand, I read Wokoma's public identity of social refinement in terms of what Soile Ylivouri has called 'venues of public sociability' which constitute spaces 'for the stylization of the external self'.² Wokoma's spaces of 'public sociability' therefore represent exterior, outer settings for the construction of his African identity of modern taste.

In addressing the private-public intersection of Wokoma's culture of taste, I rely on Jurgen Habermas' theorization about how the 'public sphere' emerges from the 'private realms' of existence,³ and also on Paula R. Backscheider's views on the intersection of the public and the private domains in early

¹William Roscoe, 'On the Comparative Excellence of Science and Arts' in *The Annual Register, Or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1791*, ed. by Edmund Burke (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1824), pp. 397-407 (p. 403).

²Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness*, p.107.

³Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Square*, p.3.

modern England.⁴ In other words, I examine Wokoma's presentation of private and public selves of taste, sensibility and refinement by exploring and analysing the intertwining of the interior and the exterior on the one hand, and the domestic-intimate and the communal, on the other. I also investigate the kinds of portraits of civility or Englishness Wokoma constructs for himself and their implication for African modernity. I attempt to establish the extent to which Wokoma's inscription of a culture of taste in his diaries draws directly from his background as an imperial subject, in the light of what Simon Gikandi describes as being 'a product of the imperial experience and the European story it valorizes'.⁵ However, I am also interested in the types of identities and selves that emerge from the convergence of English civility and appropriate material from Wokoma's indigenous Kalabari traditions in the form of hybrid categories of cultural expression. This is particularly in the manner of what Stephen Allen describes as how 'indigenous societies have harnessed the source and institutions of modernity [...] to protect and supplement, rather than replace their premodern'.⁶ Wokoma's self-representation of this hybridity and its attendant 'third space'⁷—'a contradictory and ambivalent space [which] makes the claim to a hierarchical "purity" of cultures untenable'⁸—is demonstrative of how new cultural provinces arise from the intersection of the local and the foreign.

In this chapter, I read Wokoma's notion of taste as an extensive, variegated scope, ranging from the social mannerisms of the aristocratic and gentlemanly classes to the consumption of categories of assorted artistic and cultural forms, to the ceremonial rituals of imperial political affirmation, to the morality and ethicality of public behaviour, and the intimate domesticity of family life. However, within the context of Wokoma's self-construction in his diaries,

⁴Backscheider, 'Introduction', p.2.

⁵Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (London: Interservice Press, 1973) p. ix.

⁶Stephen Allen, 'The Consequences of Modernity' for Indigenous People: An International Appraisal', *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* 13.4 (2006), 315-340 (p.315).

⁷Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.34.

⁸Nasrullah Mambrol, 'Homi Bhabha's Concept of Hybridity', *Postcolonialism*, <https://literariness.org/2016/04/08/>, [Accessed November 26, 2020].

these sites of taste have both private and public implication for his African modernity. Again, the idea of taste serves to bring together the seemingly vast diversity of political, economic, cultural and intellectual elements that constitute Wokoma's conception of refinement and sensibility.

For Wokoma therefore, taste serves as a unifying element in the aestheticization of the domains—in private and public terms—of the African colonial modern self. As Julia Brninski puts it, 'taste unites aesthetics, material culture, and self-expression or self-fashioning while locating them within time, place, and social space'.⁹ In other words, Wokoma assembles even apparently incongruent, incompatible categories—such as social politeness, aristocratic arrogance and extravagance¹⁰—as performance of taste by investing in them what Pierre Bourdieu calls the 'specific logic' of 'an economy of cultural goods'.¹¹ This 'logic' provides the aesthetic value that engenders the discovery of 'the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurate "choices", such as preferences in music and food, painting and sports, literature and hairstyle'.¹² I argue in this chapter that there is a conscious attempt by Wokoma in his diaries to aestheticize and unite a variety of cultural and quasi-cultural forms in order to represent them as genres or categories of modern taste. Wokoma uses these genres and categories to construct an important aspect of the socio-cultural history of colonial and immediate postcolonial Nigeria, spanning roughly 1906-1965.

⁹Julia Brninski, 'The Functions of Taste: Aesthetics, Ethics, and The Desire in Nineteenth-Century England' (2013). Dissertations 505. <https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc-diss/505>, p.10.

¹⁰Just as slavery and a culture of taste coexisted productively in 18th century Britain, as Simon Gikandi has also persuasively argued in *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, taste can sometimes emerge from the co-existence of the 'good' and 'bad', and can even emerge from outright negative human values. For instance, Adam Badeau highlights class inequality as an arena for the production of taste. According to Badeau, 'They [aristocrats] are placed so high so much above other people with education and taste and refinement equal and often superior to their own [creating] a carelessness and superciliousness of behaviour and feeling not only offensive, but almost coarse' (*Aristocracy in English* [New York: Haper & Brother, 1886], p. 148).

¹¹Pierre Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), p.1

¹²Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, p. 1.

My approach to Wokoma's presentation of taste as culture in his diaries will benefit from what Anna Green describes as the dualism of the 'symbolic' and the 'material', referring respectively to 'the mental world of ideas' and 'the social and material context'.¹³ Thus, I will be interested in the symbolic or mental and the social or material dimensions of Wokoma's construction of an identity of taste and sensibility in his diaries. I will also read Wokoma's framing of the African cultivated self in the light of Raymond Williams' holistic characterization of the cultural sphere. According to Williams, culture consists of 'a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development; a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general [and] the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity'.¹⁴ I aim to demonstrate that in the construction of his personality as an African figure of refined tastes, Wokoma illustrates the full scope of the cultural domain, especially as theorized by Green and Williams above.

I aim to respond to Wokoma's aestheticization of experiences, in terms of how he invests the value of beauty in them, and portrays them as components of African modern taste. Thus, I intend to flesh out the outline—which I presented in Chapter One—of the intellectual personality which Wokoma constructs for himself in his diaries, including the functional literacy which enabled the production of such knowledge-texts as life-writing. I also set out to interrogate Wokoma's inscription of his African modernity within the context of lifestyles and cultural categories which underline the social, political and economic realities of early-to-mid 20th century Africa, rooted in the colonial and the early postcolonial dispensations.

My framework for reading Wokoma's culture of taste largely derives from Gikandi's work on the relationship between sensibility and slavery in *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (2011). Gikandi's interpretation of taste is both extensive and varied, especially as 'a general reference to a set of practices and ideas that are now considered central to British society'.¹⁵ It includes such classes as literature, portraiture, theatre, architecture, cosmopolitanism,

¹³Anna Green, *Cultural History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.2.

¹⁴Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 99.

¹⁵ Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 56.

aristocracy, tourism, gentlemanly courtesy and the ethics and morality of social relations, among others. I set out to investigate how Wokoma engages these cultural categories in the construction of the man of taste in early 20th century Southern Nigeria, and how he characterizes the cultural influence of the modern British society on the emerging urbanity of colonial—and postcolonial—Nigeria.

In the three main sections that follow, I analyse Wokoma's construction of his modern identity as a figure of sensibility in three ways. First, I argue that the presentation of the private aspects of the culture of taste in Wokoma's diaries establishes his African modernity. I do this by highlighting the refinement of his emotional and intellectual interiority, and by the representation of the patterns of the domestic performance and consumption of high culture involving him in the context of immediate postcolonial Nigeria. Second, I establish that Wokoma's presentation of the public dimensions of a culture of taste in his diaries enables the construction of a modern African identity. To achieve this, I centralize his articulation of the public domains of colonial consumption, gentlemanly politeness, ceremonial order, and cultural hybridity. Third, I show how the presentation of the interconnections between the private and the public in Wokoma's diaries entrenches a modern African selfhood for him. I do this by highlighting Wokoma's production of public selves by presenting his diaries as conversational pieces for publicizing the private consumption of cultural material, and by underscoring his inscription of 'semi-public' contexts of politeness.

4.1 Wokoma's Construction of the Modernity of the Private Aspects of the Culture of Taste

In this section, I examine the extent to which Wokoma's construction of the private dimensions of the culture of taste establishes an identity of African modernity. My notion of private in this chapter, as consistent with the conceptual framework of the thesis, derives from William B. Swann, Jr. and Jennifer K. Bosson's distinction between 'personal self-views' and 'social self-

views'.¹⁶ It also benefits from Constantine Sekides, Lowell Gaertner and Erin M. O'Mara's conceptualization of the 'individual self' as different from the 'collective self'.¹⁷ The idea of 'private' also includes Hegel's outlining of the key components of the identity of intimacy, such as 'love, romanticism, the quest for the eternal salvation of the individual [...] moral conviction and conscience'.¹⁸ As Wokoma's work shows, the genre of the diary, with its emphasis on the intimate space, serves as an important instrument for the construction of a modern private identity.

The character of Wokoma's diaries as documents of private sensibility and refinement is informed by his recognition of the diary's capacity to provide him with the stage to explore the deepest recesses of his being in the overall project of defining his identity. In constructing an identity of the gentlemanly, cosmopolitan African, he demonstrates a consciousness of the diary's supreme profile as a personal document and as private literature by inscribing in different forms, his intimate personality of taste. Wokoma therefore illustrates Andrew Hassan's standpoint that 'a founding principle of the diary is a belief in its own privacy'¹⁹ in three main ways: by entrenching the general outlook of his diary-narrative as the private history of a modern self of refinement; by presenting the diary as the rendition of the *interiority* of cultivated manners, in the dimension of what Richard Sennett calls the 'psychic life'²⁰; and by centralizing the aestheticization of the domestic, which, according to Patricia Boling, comprises 'the intimate spheres of the family, household, or sexual relations [that] may thus be trivialized and personalized, and thereby deprived of public significance'.²¹

In the subsections that follow, I read Wokoma's construction of the modernity of private refinement in his diaries along two lines: first, as an expression of his interiority as a consumer and performer of high culture and

¹⁶Swann, Jr and Bosson, 'Identity Negotiation', p. 448.

¹⁷Sekides, Gaertner and O' Mara, 'Individual Self, Collective Self', p.98.

¹⁸Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p.84.

¹⁹Andrew Hassan, 'Reading Other People's Diaries', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 56.3 (1987), 435-436 (p.436).

²⁰Sennet, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 4.

²¹Patricia Boling, *Privacy and the Politics of Intimate Life* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.51.

as a subject of psychic refinement; and second, as a representation of the modern African self of polite tastes and habits within the domestic space.

4.1.1 Wokoma's Private 'Interiority' and the African Modernity of Taste

In examining the interiority of Wokoma's modernity of taste, I analyze his self-representation in his diaries in two main dimensions—the 'emotional' and the 'intellectual'. I argue that these aspects of his self-construction establish a distinct portrait of sensibility for him while contributing significantly to his overall identity of African modernity. I aim to demonstrate that for Wokoma the notion of interiority is central to the project of self-development and identity-construction, particularly as it concerns the cultivation of manners. I therefore interrogate how Wokoma's aestheticization, or 'sublimation' of the emotional and intellectual spheres of his life designates his 'romanticism',²² particularly in the evocation of some of the governing ideals of the institution of European—and American—Romanticism. The character of Wokoma's emotional and intellectual interiority, especially within the frame of his identity of social refinement, fits the stereotypical Romantic image of 'the autonomous self, often regarded as an invention of this period: the solitary, contemplative, typically male hero'.²³ As Noel Jackson elucidates, 'the profundity of the culture of sensibility' during the Romantic period—as a key aesthetic and philosophical epoch in the modernity of the 17th and 18th centuries—was a direct outcome of the emergence of the male figure of solitary 'taste', who, in 'the sublimity of his own thoughts', reflects 'a keen understanding of the reciprocal and mutually determining relationship between self and society'.²⁴

Wokoma's construction of his psychic self in his diary-narrative represents a modern African example of the diversification of the notion of interiority into other genres of writing apart from the novel, the form in which the governing aesthetics of the modern interior was formulated. And as evident in Wokoma's work, reading the diary through the lens of the interior space—what Judson

²²For instance, Bianka Ballina and Carlos Jimenez problematize what they call 'the aestheticization or sublimation of trauma' in their construction of the extreme psychological impact of the global migration experience ('Introduction', *Media Fields Journal* 12: Media and Migration [2016], 1-10 [p.4]).

²³Jackson, 'Solitude and Community', p.1067.

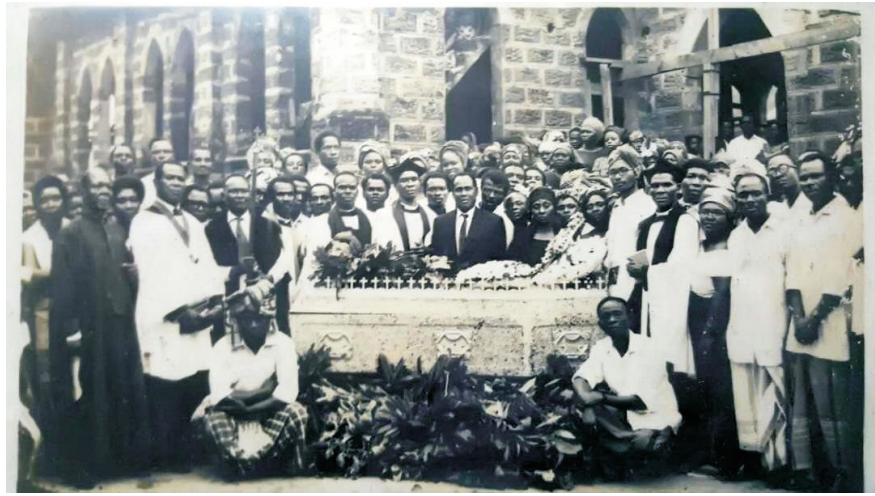
²⁴Jackson, p.1067.

Lyon describes as the affinity with the ‘inner eyes, inner ears, and inner senses’²⁵— has instructive implication for both the genre of the personal self-narrative and the idea of the transcendental. For instance, it is within these conditions of intra-personal conversation enabled by his diary that Wokoma, convinced that he is losing his protracted battle with illness, embarks on the writing and ‘revision’ of his will (August 14th and 15th 1965). This ambience of productive interiority is activated by both the physical pain of illness and the psycho-spiritual toll of the ‘rumour’ of his death ‘being circulated at Buguma that my corpse was being taken to Buguma’ (August 13, 1965). However, this atmosphere of painful introspection is mediated by the expression of his cultivated self through writing. From the charged space of the interior also emerges the cultural meaning of his performance of the modernity of preparing his own grave and purchasing his own coffin. He records as follows on March 11, 1965: ‘Coffin was removed from my tomb house to my other house behind Feinba-ada house by Kala-Tom at my request’. By underscoring, through his narrative, the nearness of death, and his readiness to transfer to the sphere of immortality, Wokoma’s inward self engages the sublime on the platform of his diary, the arch-symbol of his psychic refinement. The diary form—in its capacity as ‘an act of intimate communication the diarist is having with himself’²⁶—provides an effective setting for the presentation of the intimate dimensions of refinement, and the articulation of the patterns of the cultivation of the identity of taste. The trajectory of Wokoma’s development as a persona of sensibility can therefore be traced to the internalization process which the medium of the diary affords him.

The emotional circumstances under which Wokoma wrote his diaries inform the quality and quantity of his self representation, particularly in the

²⁵Judson S. Lyon ‘Romantic Psychology and the Inner Senses: Coleridge’, *PMLA*, 81.3 (1966)], 246-260 (p.246).

²⁶Paperno, ‘What Can be Done with Diaries’, *The Russian Review*, 63.4 [2004]), 561-573 (p.564).



Picture 7: Wokoma's funeral in June 1968. He bought the coffin and prepared the tomb-house some three years before in a unique demonstration of his modern consciousness.



Picture 8: Wokoma's wedding in April 1921. An expression of his colonial and Christian modernity. His marriage to Mercy became a significant source of his melancholic solitude on the one hand, and catalyst to psychic refinement, on the other.

dimension of constructing a persona of melancholic solitude, or what Ira J. Cohen calls the ‘aesthetically refined image of solitude’.²⁷ When Wokoma’s mental anguish from his troubled marriage comes to a climax in 1947, it is to ‘himself’ in the private space of his diary that he returns for emotional stability and therapeutic reassurance. The following excerpts from his 1947 diary illustrate the emotional circumstances under which he constructs a Romantic persona of melancholic solitude:

April 1, 1947: This morning at 6:30am, my wife declared a final break between us. From the 14th March I began a reconciliatory move at Burutu being greatly disturbed by my daughter’s importunities with weeping to forgive my wife. Moreover, I was forced to yield to my daughter’s request to relieve her sufferings already intensified by the disaffection of Mr Doomahby, her intended, who suddenly broke their engagement without previous notice. If my reconciliation with my wife would relieve her burdened heart I should do so and bear my suffering and aching heart.

May 31, 1947: Our daughter Florence tried to bring peace and reconciliation between me and my wife [...] For the past 9 months, 6 of which she spent at Buguma, Port Harcourt and Abonnema [...] and the last 3 in Warri, we were virtually divorced although I gave her the usual £3 while she was at home and £2 since she came. Evidently we were just temporarily waiting for the hour to strike. My daughter very tactfully achieved a measure of success. May God help her.

In the above passages, Wokoma attempts to construct his modern psychic self of refinement in the context of the romance of a broken heart—a product of what Jean-Paul Baldachino describes as ‘the modern ideology of romantic love’²⁸—by engaging the poetics of melancholic solitude especially in ways in which they are crucial in the articulation of his emotional subjectivity. Thus, in constructing an image of cultivated taste through the interiorizing of the traumatic narrative of unrequited affection, Wokoma illustrates Eva Illouz’s contention that romantic love is the ‘cultural core of modernity’.²⁹ The abiding

²⁷Ira J. Cohen ‘Three Types of Deep Solitude: Religious Quests, Aesthetic Retreats, and Withdrawals Due to Personal Distress’, in *Cultures of Solitude: Loneliness – Limitation – Liberation*, ed. by Ina Bergmann and Stefan Hippler (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 155-167 (p.160).

²⁸Jean-Paul Baldacchino, ‘In Sickness and in Love? Autumn in My Heart and the Embodiment of Morality in Korean Television Drama’, *Korea Journal*, 54.4 (December 2014), 5-28 (p.5).

²⁹Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), p. 45.

tone of solitary lament conditions his modern identity of Romantic contemplative masculinity—what Renata Grossi calls ‘the capacity to feel strong emotions and keep promises’³⁰—which contrasts sharply with the traditional African models of manliness that emphasize polygamy. In invoking the feeling of loss and sadness, a scenario Sigmund Freud refers to as ‘mourning’—‘a state produced by the object loss of a person or a thing bearing the imprint of affective investment’³¹—in the private space of his diary, Wokoma situates his heartbreak, particularly in terms of William Savage’s characterization of ‘Romantic love’ as coming ‘tightly yoked to the pains of love rejected or lost’.³² As we see in the record of April 1, 1947 above, there is a litany of wounded souls, ‘burdened hearts’ and ‘suffering and aching’ hearts in Wokoma’s household, which infects the entire ambience of the family, but all of these tend to converge in and be given force by the sublimity of his own interiority.

Wokoma’s desperate appeal to Mercy for reconciliation is in itself a radical gesture that positions his gentlemanly refinement in terms of the manner of his socialization into the mores of what Olufemi Taiwo describes as ‘companionate marriage and romantic love that are the basis of the bourgeois nuclear family’, which, in the African context, represents ‘a radical severing of links’ with their traditional societies.³³ His foregrounding of the intervention of his daughter—as evident in the two passages above—and his seeming narrative endorsement of that intervention, represent the refined attitudes of the educated middle-class family emerging in the colonial Southern Nigeria of the 1940s, and its framing in the complex intertwining of the intellect and emotions in the modern era. In other words, just as it is evident in Wokoma’s self-representation of his romantic self, Florence’s own emotional response to

³⁰Renata Grossi, ‘Romantic Love: Our “Cultural Core,” “General Ideology” and “undeclared Religion”’, *Contemporary Sociology*, 43.51 (August 2014), 653-655 (p.653).

³¹See Lawrence D. Kritzman, ‘Melancholia Becomes the Subject: Kristeva’s Invisible “thing” and the Making of Culture’, *Paragraph*, 14.2 (July 1991), 144-150, (p.144).

³²William Savage, ‘Melancholy and the Romantic Movement’, <https://penandpension.com/2019/07/03/melancholy-and-the-romantic-movement/> [Accessed 7 November 2019].

³³Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 77.

‘the disaffection of Mr Doomahby’ (April 1, 1947) and the crisis of her own parents’ relationship demonstrate Wokoma’s awareness of the link between cultural refinement and the emotions. In some insightful way, this illustrates Simon J. Williams’ assertion that ‘in the ambivalent nature of modernity [...] reason and emotions are not antithetical to one another’.³⁴ It is in this sense that Wokoma evokes the oeuvres of a number of Romantic exponents of the poetics of unrequited love, including John Keats, whose ‘You Say You Love’ (1817) thematizes the despair of unreciprocated affection for Isabella Jones,³⁵ and Lord Byron, who composed verses of lament in sad remembrance of Mary Chaworth.³⁶

Thus, if Wokoma’s dramatization of his cultivated self as an African agent of romantic, companionate love frames him as an ‘English’ gentleman of civil manners, then his depiction of his *writing self*, especially within the ambience of his painful interiority, establishes for him a convincing identity as an African figure of sensibility. There is also sufficient evidence that Wokoma is able to transform his melancholic solitude into the type of productive condition that grants a new forcefulness to his writing, in qualitative and quantitative terms, and foregrounds his emotional—and intellectual—refinement. For instance, his marital troubles contribute most of the entries in the diary of 1947, arguably the most challenging year in his marriage to Mercy. Again, the charged emotional circumstances of melancholic solitude under which he wrote tends to impact his narrative intellectually and spiritually as we see in the excerpts above and in many of the entries for 1947. This is, of course, not unconnected to melancholy’s character as a positive productive force, described in Aristotelian terms as ‘some kind of compensatory quality of

³⁴Simon J. Williams, ‘Modernity and the Emotions: Corporeal Reflections on the (IR) Rational’, *Sociology*, 32.4 (November 1998), 747-769 (p.747)

³⁵Said to have been dedicated to John Keats’ ‘former friend and lover, Isabella Jones with whom he was in a relationship before May 1817’ (<https://poemanalysis.com/John-Keats/you-say-you-love-but-with-a-voice/>) [Accessed May16,2020].

³⁶George B. Rose, for instance, writes about Byron’s ‘boyhood love for Miss Chaworth’ in his ‘The New Byron’ (the *Sewanee Review*, 19.3 [July 1911]), 363-369 (p.369).

brilliance, intellectual refinement, genius and creative energy'.³⁷ For example, Wokoma couches the October 12, 1947 entry as a Puritanic sermon on marriage delivered to his wife where he highlights God's enduring wish for them 'to live together as husband and wife' and how 'detrimental' disobedience to God's plan for them will be. In another entry on July 4, 1947, he presents a fiery, gothic-style dream-narrative—which evokes the unique Romantic modernity of Edgar Allan Poe³⁸— in which his wife, Mercy, with the connivance of an imaginary lover, plots to harm him by placing 'a pot of medicine' in front of his door. In other words, Wokoma's melancholic solitude of emotional suffering, especially as it illustrates what Aleksander Franciczek describes as a productive 'condition resulting from the experience of [...] partly forced, partly self-imposed exile',³⁹ indicates his aestheticization of 'Romantic withdrawal'⁴⁰ as a figure of 'solitary taste',⁴¹ part of what Martin Schutz conceives as the 'glorification of the withdrawal into self-centred states of mind'.⁴² The excerpts above suggest an inward exile where he detaches himself from the physical environment to find succour in the tranquility of his conversation with himself, what Franciczek describes as 'the capacity of melancholic solitude to divorce the individual from time and place' and connect him to 'the analogous emotional experience of the sublime'.⁴³

Another significant source of Wokoma's emotional interiority and melancholic solitude as a modern African figure of taste is the pain of illness. Just as his marital problems, Wokoma's protracted sickness is one of the main

³⁷Jennifer Radden, 'Introduction: From Melancholic States to Clinical Depression' in *The Narrative of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.12.

³⁸Darlene Harbour Unrue characterizes Poe's aesthetics as incorporating 'romantic', 'Gothic and transcendental properties' ('Edgar Allan Poe: The Romantic as Classicist', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 1.4 [Spring 1995]), 112-119 (p.113).

³⁹Aleksander Franciczek, 'The Pleasurable Pain of Melancholic Solitude: Examining Rousseau's Emotional Self-Indulgence in Reveries of the Solitary Walker', *Undergraduate Awards*, 19 (2017) <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/undergraduateawards-2017/19>, [Accessed 10 January 2021], p.2.

⁴⁰Franciczek, 'The Pleasurable Pain of Melancholic Solitude', p.12.

⁴¹Jackson, 'Solitude and Community', p.1067.

⁴²Martin Schutze, 'Studies in the Mind of Romanticism', *Modern Philology*, 16.6 (Oct. 1918), 281-296 (p.283).

⁴³Franciczek, 'The Pleasurable Pain of Melancholic Solitude', p.9.

features of his latter life, and of his diaries. This unpleasant health situation not only predicated his engagement with the public province of the modern biomedical institution, but also provokes an intense melancholic solitude which addresses his private, emotional response to the pain of infirmity. I argue that an offshoot of the modern identity that Wokoma constructs with bodily hurt is the culture of taste and social refinement—achieved through the process of acute introspection of painful experiences. As his diaries show, one of his worst spells of illness occurs in the first half of 1951, when he comes down with serious urinary and digestive problems. His reflections in his diary-narrative centralize the enormity of his pains:

March 22, 1951: I was rushed to Degema [...] I was in great torment all night. We met Dr Tonye. I was admitted and treated with a rubber tube which drained nearly two pints of urine [...] After the draining of the urine, I was relieved, the tube was removed. This was by 10:15am. By 4pm the bladder was full again and I relapsed to my former condition of torment and suffering.

March 23, 1951: I was in great pain and great discomfort due to pain in the urethra and severe dysentery. Both the urethra and rectum [were] bleeding. The doctor called to see me. I informed him of my condition. I asked him the case, he said it was enlarged prostate, but he had no instrument to perform the operation.

If Wokoma's aestheticization of the emotional pain of unrequited love substantially propels the interiority of his private identity of taste, then his aestheticization—or sublimation—of physical pain through the process of self-representation, as the examples cited above show, is capable of even more. Thus, even when the above entries may not indicate pleasantness in the light of the pervading circumstances of bodily and emotional distress, they are, all the same, representative of how a gentleman of cultivated sensibilities comes to terms with pain and ill-fortune. Wokoma's pained self appears conscious of his identity as a gentleman of taste and modern enlightenment. Though it is not clear when exactly he discovered the healing and stabilizing powers of writing—an endowment, and a skill he cultivated as an agent of western enlightenment in the context of colonial Nigeria—it is evident from his work that he totally understood this therapeutic significance, and sought to explore it for his own mental and intellectual well-being. However, Susan Borkin's observation that 'many writers, poets and certainly journal writers have always

intuitively known that writing can heal'⁴⁴ may apply to Wokoma, given the immense autopathographical content of his diaries. That some of the most compelling passages of his self-representation appear to have emerged from the deep distress of affliction not only suggests the intensity of his melancholic solitude and the character of his solitary tastes, but also the fact that the exercise of writing provided him considerable palliative effect. In outlining the psychological and spiritual benefits of writing, Gillie Bolton avers that writing's creative capacity, involving 'an exploration of cognitive, emotional and spiritual areas otherwise inaccessible [and] inexpressible [...] tends to increase self-confidence, feelings of self-worth and motivation for life'.⁴⁵ This explains why Wokoma could maintain his motivation as a diarist for five decades, between 1915 and 1965, in spite of the many crises of his life.

In writing and interiorizing his bodily pains, Wokoma exercises the cultivation of his mental self in such a manner that his narrative can now function as a personal therapy. Thus, his recollection of the unsavoury experience of the physical suffering of illness in the private-interior space of his diaries is not merely an exercise in reportorial writing for note-keeping purposes; it is textual evidence of an intense emotional dialogue with himself, a search for the deeper meaning of life, in the light of the pain and the suffering around him. It represents for him what Brittany Pladek has called 'palliative poetics', which, even though may not provide total cure from illness, 'can render unspeakable pain bearable'.⁴⁶ Therefore, within this frame of his melancholic solitude—in which, as Franciczek tells us, the sufferer engages 'the analogous emotional experience of the sublime'⁴⁷—Wokoma is able to invoke the healing and restorative properties of his writing. It is in this sense that Franciczek writes about the 'pleasures' of deep reflection that accompany the melancholic condition. It is also in this regard that Wokoma's aestheticization

⁴⁴Susan Borkin, *The Healing Power of Writing: A Therapist's Guide to Using Journalising with Clients* (New York W.W. Norton, 2014), p.3.

⁴⁵Gillie Bolton, 'Introduction: Writing Cures', in *Writing Cures: An Introductory Handbook of Writing in Counseling and Psychotherapy*, ed. by Gillie Bolton, Stephanie Howlett, Colin Lago and Jeannie K. Wright (Hove and New York: Bruner-Rutledge, 2005), pp. 1-4 (p.1).

⁴⁶Brittany Pladek, *The Poetics of Palliation: Romantic Literary Therapy, 1790-1850* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), p.4.

⁴⁷Aleksander Franciczek, 'The Pleasurable Pain of Melancholic Solitude', p.9.

of the pain of illness foregrounds Clark Lawlor's concept of 'fashionable melancholy', in which the representation of the suffering of infirmity becomes 'frothily fashionable'.⁴⁸ However, Wokoma is also a beneficiary of other healing procedures associated with the writing exercise. According to Susan Borkin, 'in addition to strengthening the immune system, expressive writing can regulate emotions, psychological responses and behaviours'.⁴⁹ For Borkin, this regulatory function 'provides a sense of mastery in managing and tolerating negative emotion'.⁵⁰ In other words, through the writing of melancholic interiority, Wokoma builds the shock-absorbing capacity to resist the pain of illness, and mobilizes the inner strength to ultimately defeat it. This explains why he managed a successful public career as subject and mediator of colonial and postcolonial modernity, while carrying the heavy burden of infirmity.

As we have seen from his aestheticization of emotional pain and bodily hurt, Wokoma utilizes the state of suffering to construct a 'psychic' portrait of refinement in his diaries—one of the few instances of such substantial levels of the Romanticization of the African diary, and in fact, all of African literature. Thus, by engaging what Rebecca Steinitz calls 'the diary of feelings',⁵¹ Wokoma achieves 'the dramatization of the self as an emotionally-charged creature of prompt sensibility'.⁵² The strong link between the emotional and the culture of taste is, therefore, an important feature of the modern African identity that Wokoma constructs in his diaries. Wokoma's self-representation, I then contend, is further corroboration of the position of moral philosophers like David Hume and Adam Smith that 'the dramatization of the self as an emotionally-charged creature of prompt sensibility—and not, as was

⁴⁸Clark Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy', in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century: Before Depression, 1660-1800*, ed. by Allan Ingram et.al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 25-53 (p.25).

⁴⁹Borkin, *The Healing Power of Writing*, p.4.

⁵⁰Borkin, p.5.

⁵¹Steinitz, *Time, Space, and Gender*, p. 36.

⁵²Steinitz, p. 34.

traditionally asserted, reason and understanding—[are the] hallmarks of civilized, polite humanity'.⁵³

I am also interested in how Wokoma constructs his modern identity of Englishness and psychic refinement through the presentation of his intellectual sensibilities with the evidence of his preparatory reflections on his sermons. I read Wokoma's intellectual interiority as it contributes to his identity of sensibility and high culture, in two main directions. First, I examine the intellectual content of his sermons, as work-in-preparation on the pages of his diaries, and what the intimate conversation with himself says about the interiority of his culture of taste. Second, I analyze Wokoma's sense of aesthetic judgment in the form of an intimate intellectual response to a work of art, using his discursive recollection of the Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession of King George V on May 6, 1935.

In constructing an identity of African modernity in his diaries, Wokoma presents the image of the refined, enlightened self of intellectual interiority. Just as he demonstrates in his emotional inwardness, Wokoma 'aestheticizes' and 'sublimates' his intellectual experiences on the pages of his diaries, in the form of an intensely private cerebral dialogue. In this subsection, I establish the link between Wokoma's intellectual interiority and the traditions of 'solitude' and 'conceptions of psychological interiority that were equally important to the subsequent development of Romantic thought and literature'.⁵⁴ I therefore argue that Wokoma's intellectual tendencies possess elements of what Kathryn Carter has described as 'introspective Romantic withdrawal',⁵⁵ which characterized the social manners of 17th and 18th century England and which was modeled after the hero of Goethe's *Die Lieden des Jungen Weathers* (1774). According to Carter, the 'private' element of the diary worked well 'with a Romantic conception of subjectivity which advanced a mode of introspection, someone who has withdrawn from the world in order to engage it more meaningfully'.⁵⁶ As we will see in this

⁵³Jackson, 'Solitude and Community', p. 1067.

⁵⁴Jackson, p. 1067.

⁵⁵Carter, 'The Cultural Work of Diaries', p.251.

⁵⁶Carter, p.251.

section, many of Wokoma's sermons and teachings bear evidence of a reflective detachment from society to engage Franiczek's notion of 'the analogous experience with the sublime,'⁵⁷ for the purpose of an intellectual response to the unravelling modernity around him. If that aspect of modernity bears the imprint of an unprecedented tragedy of devastating proportions like World War II, which he bore witness to as a British subject, then the degree of introspective access is even deeper.

Wokoma's intellectualism—as we see in both his diaries and other self-writing—even in the public sphere, could be said to be a product of the intensity of his private reflections. What Wokoma does fundamentally is to withdraw from the encumbrances of the society in order to activate a contemplative session of acute introspection within the private 'chambers' of his diaries. Thus, as we see in Kenneth P. Kramer's framing of T.S. Eliot's intellectual tendency of 'contemplative withdrawal',⁵⁸ Wokoma's character of introversion provides a fertile ground for his intellectual interiority, where he could construct his philosophical self by reaching into his innermost being to engage and make profound meaning out of abstract phenomena. We find an illustration of this deep-thinking disposition in how he deploys a complex piece of Platonic philosophy to make a complex but profound theological point about the sinful nature of man in an April 26, 1942 entry:

There are two worlds viz: the World of Time and Space which is the outer world, our world, and the World of Eternity or the spiritual world. The world of Time and Space is sacramental to the spiritual world. It is the outward and visible world symbolizing the spiritual. They are both expressive of the same divine plan and purpose. They are the same in a sense.

Plato's interesting picture is a very appropriate illustration of [the above]. The World of Time and Space is symbolized by a huge cave with men sitting in it at the entrance with their backs to the door and their faces to the wall at the far side with their shadows and the shadows of objects passing behind them outside the cave cast on the wall by the light from outside. Most of the men look upon the shadows and regard them as realities of life. But the philosopher turns round and sees the objects which cast their shadow on the wall of the cave and no longer regards them as realities of life. Such is nearly the relationship which exists between the World of Time and Space and the World

⁵⁷Franiczek, 'The Pleasurable Pain of Melancholic Solitude', p.9.

⁵⁸Kenneth P. Kramer, 'A New Type of Intellectual Contemplative Withdrawal and "Four Quartets"', *Religion and Literature* 31.3 (Autumn, 1999), 43-75 (pp. 45-46).

of Eternity. The things of our world are merely shadows compared to the things of eternity[...]The place of sin in Plato's picture? Sin may represent the shadow cast by the disobedient and selfish and self-centered activities of man at the entrance to the cave and not the shadow of any object outside the cave.

Through the production of texts of the type illustrated above, Wokoma frames his identity of intellectual refinement in David Hume's characterization of 'true men of taste' as 'easily distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind'.⁵⁹ Wokoma's interrogation of the identity of 'sin' against the backdrop of the philosophical framework provided by Plato does not just represent original thought but also a refreshingly insightful interpretation of spiritual reality. The uniqueness of Wokoma's personality as a figure of refinement within the context of 20th century colonial Africa is firmly located in his unusual capacity for rationality and intellectual inquiry. In his theorizing of how the 'darkness' of sin limits the attainment of enlightenment—a reinterpretation of Plato's use of 'the metaphor of prisoners chained in the dark to explain the difficulties of reaching and sustaining a just and intellectual spirit'⁶⁰—he establishes a brilliant link between theology and philosophy, and also between theology and the classics. His fascination with the philosophical oeuvre of the classics, especially in their centralizing of rigorous meditation, not only lends credence to his contemplative capacity, as afforded by an abiding habit of introversion, but also gives him a convincing identity of psychic refinement.

Wokoma's intellectual interiority and his psychic refinement as expressed in the preparation of his sermons constitute a crucial component of his identity of Englishness, what Anthony Easthope refers to as the project of sustaining 'the English national character'.⁶¹ At the centre of Wokoma's intellectual self as an African custodian of English civility is the English language itself, particularly its use in situations of public address and oratory. Thus, in his presentation of his refined rhetorical attitudes, Wokoma seeks to inscribe his

⁵⁹David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (New York: Cosmo Classics, 2006), p. 326.

⁶⁰N.S. Gills, 'The Allegory of the Cave from the Republic of Plato', *Thought Co*, Thoughtco.com/the-allegory-of-the-caver120330, [Accessed May 3, 2020].

⁶¹Anthony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.3.

status as an English gentleman of proper habits and cultivated tastes by engaging the hallmarks of the English excellence in language use: simplicity and elegance of thought. Sir William Johns, notable English letter-writer and renowned surgeon of the 19th century, puts the English rhetorical culture in perspective: ‘the eloquence of no modern nation [...] approaches so near to the purest models of antiquity, in elegant simplicity of style, solidity of thought, or luxuriance of imagination as the eloquence of the British’.⁶² It is this emphasis on eloquence, transmitted to the Empire in the cultural project of colonialism—which Sarah Gracombe describes as the ‘imperial efforts to convert colonial subjects, largely through a regimen of culture to make them more English’⁶³—that shapes Wokoma’s intellectual sensibilities. The following example is taken from the diary entry of August 9, 1942:

But when we consider the majesty of God and, as far as possible, take a mental survey of this vast and wonderful universe of God, with all the wonderful things in it, this great planet on which we live with all its beauty and marvelous design, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the great wide oceans with the millions of wonderful creatures they contain; the world of vegetation—the beautiful flowers with their delightful fumes and fragrance; the great forests with their countless numbers of small and great and powerful inhabitants; the winged world with its flock of fledged creatures of wonderful variety with their beautiful plumage and melodies; the mighty and powerful forces of nature; and the many millions of people in the world—like the agnostics we are almost tempted to ask ourselves, can it be possible, really conceivable that the almighty God, the great and Most Holy God to whom this wonderful and mysterious universe owes its existence should condescend or have the time to take any notice of the poor wretched sinner? Is it not presumptuous to expect such an attention from him?

Given his intention to construct an identity of Englishness, Wokoma makes compositional elegance—an important element of the performance of English linguistic culture and mannerism, even within the context of 20th century colonial Africa—the mainstay of his rhetorical tastes. He therefore demonstrates a colonial Nigerian version of what Paul Langford, writing in his *Englishness Identified: Manners and Characters, 1650-1850* (2000), describes as ‘English schooling in oratory [which] was certainly impressive’.⁶⁴

⁶²See *The Port Folio* VI.I (July 1811), p.589.

⁶³Sarah Gracombe, ‘Imperial Englishness in Julia Frankau’s “Book of the Jew”’, *Proof texts*, 30.2 (Spring 2010), 147-159, (p.149).

⁶⁴Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Characters, 1650-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), p.205.

Wokoma's text, as evident in the above passage, reveals substantial aspects of this 'schooling in oratory'. His performance as a man of sensibility and refinement in the privacy of his diary is shaped by the simple sublimity of his thoughts, where even though he engages the delightful colour of mental pictures, he still maintains what Chauncey Allen Goodrich, writing about English parliamentarian James Charles Fox's oratorical strengths, calls 'luminous simplicity'.⁶⁵ It is a performance of Englishness, where rhetorical expertise clearly emerges from an expansive mind of enlightenment and cultivated consciousness; a combination of a robust imagination and fertile intellect that is able to make profound connections between concrete and abstract phenomena. Wokoma's aesthetic and intellectual approach to eloquence also calls to mind the well-remarked oeuvre of Archibald Alison, Scottish Anglican priest of the Enlightenment, famous for his 'dilettante taste for writing elegant fragments and well-tuned sermons,'⁶⁶ and for forging a balance between 'aesthetics and morals, and between imagination and judgment'.⁶⁷ Wokoma's construction of the interiority of cultivated tastes through the preparation of his sermons—in the manner of Alison's representation of the Scottish Enlightenment as a priest—clearly illustrates his status as a major agent and mediator of African colonial and postcolonial modernity, and in many ways, a symbol of what Olufemi Taiwo calls an African 'proselytizer' of his own people in the imperial project of western civilization.⁶⁸

The Englishness of Wokoma's intellectual interiority as expressed in the quality of his sermons and speeches is certainly meant to exemplify his rhetorical refinement, particularly as a member of the educated genteel class of the African colonial world. However, it also foregrounds the imperial African version of the ascendancy modern British intellectualism has gained

⁶⁵See Martin J Medhurst's *Landmark Essays on American Public Address* (Klagenfurt: Hermogoras Press, 1993), p. 23.

⁶⁶John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997) p.5.

⁶⁷Michael Michie, *An Enlightenment Tony in Victorian England: The Career of Sir Archibald Alison* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. 19.

⁶⁸Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p.6.

against rival intellectual traditions of English expression, especially those of North America. This position is reinforced by the fact that the potential audience Wokoma has to bear in mind in the preparation of the sermons in the 1940s—from where most of the illustrative entries here are taken—consisted of Englishmen and women colonial officers and missionaries, who expected a ‘proper’ English performance from him. The above scenario is corroborated by the novelist, Chinua Achebe, whose high school career in the South-eastern Nigeria of the 1940s was at the British-styled Government College, Umuahia—branded ‘the Eaton of the East’⁶⁹ for its thorough English values. In his *The Education of a British-Protected Child* (2009), Achebe, a member of the generation of imperial subjects that Wokoma mentored as General Manager of Schools, conveys his teachers’ irritation at the ‘low standard of American education’,⁷⁰ which produced such individuals as Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, author of ‘badly written articles’ and whose oratory engendered a ‘bombastic example’.⁷¹ As we have seen, the elegant simplicity of Wokoma’s language, in writing and in speech, is certainly far from Azikiwe’s ‘verbose’ sensibility, popular in the Nigerian nationalist politics of the 1940s and 1950s. The sentiments that provoked the British superiority complex in matters of intellection—which Wokoma must have been aware of as a product of the imperial education system—is well etched in the history of Anglo-American relations, particularly revolving around the Puritan project of the 17th century. Writing in September 1811, William Johns captures the degree of American inferiority in matters of intellectual and psychic refinement, in an attempt to frame English supremacy: ‘the American people, as yet, have been too immersed in Agricultural and commercial pursuits, to have preeminently excelled in the arts of taste and imagination, and all the refined graces and ornaments of rhetorics’.⁷² This impression was duly carried into the British Empire during the cultural projects of evangelical Christianity and colonialism, where African intellectual proselytizers like Wokoma worked to sustain the identity of Englishness.

⁶⁹Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, p.20.

⁷⁰Chinua Achebe, *The Education of a British-Protected Child* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), p. 30.

⁷¹Chinua Achebe, p. 31.

⁷²*The Port Folio*, p. 589.

Another important aspect of Wokoma's self-representation as a modern man of letters with a predilection for good taste in the arts, and by extension, a capacity for an intellectual response to products of the imagination, is found in the notion of aesthetic judgement, an important component of psychic refinement. Wokoma's early 20th century African colonial modernity may not have reached such high intellectual levels of the patronage of the arts and allied aesthetic forms which Gikandi describes in terms of 'the location of art at the centre of systems of knowledge'⁷³ but he demonstrates sufficient consciousness of some form of what Immanuel Kant refers to as 'the judgement of taste'⁷⁴ to sustain his identity of psychic refinement, as a gentleman of high artistic and interpretative predilections. I am particularly interested here in the interiority of Wokoma's aesthetic judgement as it emerges from his private consumption of imperial rituals of political affirmation in African or British contexts. It is important to establish at this point that Wokoma, in his intellectual response to these ceremonial exhibitions, considers them as art forms requiring the critical application of the ideas of what Paul Oskar Kristeller calls 'Taste and Sentiment, genius, originality and creative imagination'.⁷⁵ Thus, I argue, Wokoma's intellectual attitude to these ceremonial spectacles, including his reflective recollection of King George V's 1935 Royal Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession, is that of an aesthetic piece demanding critical evaluation. Wokoma enters in his diary of August 26, 1941:

Rev. Hodgetts in his chapel address preached from Rev. 5⁶⁻⁸
 'and lo in the midst[...]stood a lamb as it had been slain'.
 He contrasted between man's conception of greatness and power and might
 with our Lord's—the Beatitudes. Math 5⁷—
 The Lion of England
 The Eagle of Germany and Italy
 The Russian Bear
 All Beasts and Birds of prey symbolising power and might.

It reminded me of the impression the Silver Jubilee procession of King George
 V made on me—surrounded by power, and greatness and might and great

⁷³Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁴Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p.35.

⁷⁵Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Art: A Study of the History of Aesthetics, Part I', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12.4 (1951), 496-527 (p.497).

glory and grandeur—and then the procession filed into the great Abbey and the two central figures, the object of all [this] display of power and might and glory and splendour humbly kneeling at the throne of Grace.

Beautiful and inspiring allegiance to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Wokoma's articulation of a critical idiom of a significant degree of profundity, particularly as expressed in the skillful manipulation of striking imagery, is an affirmation of his artistic-aesthetic approach to ceremonial rituals. In his reading of this royal ceremonial spectacle as performance art, Wokoma centralizes such artistic features of ritual as what Ellen Dissanayake calls its 'social or cultural function', and its 'patterning, channeling and formalizing of emotion'.⁷⁶ In the excerpt, Wokoma highlights the 'social' and 'cultural' function of the anniversary procession, which is the proclamation of the political power of the imperial establishment. The emotional import of patterned movement and action is also inscribed in the evocative symbolism of the procession.

Wokoma's most effective analytical strategy in achieving what D.N. Rodowski calls 'the necessary interiority of his aesthetic judgement'⁷⁷ is symbolism, mostly deriving from his interpretation of the entire ceremonial process in terms of power and beauty. As Dissanayake further asserts, one hallmark of reading and representing ritual as art is the 'use of out-of-context elements' to direct 'ordinary elements (for example, colours, sounds, words) into a configuration in which they become more than ordinary'.⁷⁸ In the context of World War II, Wokoma seeks to inscribe the supreme Almightyness of God in the affairs of men, irrespective of how unprecedented and stragging the social and political upheavals. He does this by comparing the totemic national symbols representing the claims to power by the major

⁷⁶Ellen Dissanayake, 'What is Art For?' (London: Washington Press, 1990), p.89.

⁷⁷D.N. Rodowski, 'Impure Mimesis, or the Ends of the Aesthetic', in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Ed. By Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), pp. 89-107 (p. 102).

⁷⁸Dissanayake, 'What is Art For?', p. 89.

AUGUST 1941

Tuesday 26

Rev. Hodgetts in his ³⁸⁴² chapel address preached
ad from Rev. 56. "And lo in the midst.... stood
a Lamb as it had been slain";

He contrasted between man's conception
of greatness and power and might with
our lords - the Beatitude, Matt 5'....

the Lion of England

the Eagle of Germany & Italy

the Russian Bear

all Beasts & Bird of Prey symbolizing
power & might.

It reminded me of the impression the
Silver Jubilee procession of King George V.
made in me - ^{Surrounded by} the Power, and greatness &
might and great glory & grandeur - and
then the procession filed into the great
Abbey and the two central figures, the
object of all these display of Power &
might and glory and splendour humbly
kneeling at the Throne of Grace

Beautiful and inspiring allegiance
to the lords of lords & King of Kings.

Diary Scan 12: Diary entry of August 26, 1941 showing Wokoma's reflective interiority over the King George V Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession of May 1935 and highlighting his self-construction of a persona involved in aesthetic judgement as a component of his intellectual interiority.

combatant-countries as presented by Rev Hodgetts, with the grand spectacle of the processional magnificence of Imperial Britain with its unmistakable metaphor of strength which he recalls by memory. In his fascination with the symbolism of power, he draws richly from the animal kingdom, and from the delightful images of magnificence and opulence to conclude that all power belong to God, irrespective of the claims and the perceptions of men.

Wokoma's aesthetic judgement as expressed in the interiority of his critical reading of King George V's Anniversary Procession in the light of an artistic spectacle, affirms the 'metaphysical' order of his interpretation. His analysis is consistent with the preeminent element of his Christian spirituality, where his analysis is configured as a worship session in 'beautiful and inspiring allegiance to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings'. This can be better understood in the light of what Jeremy Begbie describes as the 'sublime', a category that informs 'a great many of the modern and late modern appeals to divine transcendence'.⁷⁹ Begbie's notion of the sublime is that which plays a 'formative role for modern "spiritual", theological, or crypto-theological accounts of art'.⁸⁰ Wokoma's sublimation of the royal ritual can also be accounted for in David Morgan's characterization of the 'sublime' as 'the most influential aesthetic idea in the spiritualization of art,'⁸¹ and in Simon Gikandi's highlighting of the 'transcendental claims of the aesthetic realm' and the 'process of purification' which it engenders.⁸²

Wokoma's interiorizing of his culture of taste—in emotional and intellectual situations—raises two main issues concerning the construction of a modern African identity. First, by framing the interiority of his social refinement largely within his identity as a Christian priest, he reiterates the idea of the contribution of the Church to the modernization of Africa. He therefore appears to support Olufemi Taiwo's contention that 'the credit for

⁷⁹Jeremy Begbie, *Redeeming Transcendence in the Arts: Bearing Witness to the True God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), N.P.

⁸⁰Begbie, *Redeeming Transcendence in the Arts*, N.P.

⁸¹David Morgan, 'Art and Religion in the Modern Age', in *Re-Enchantment*, ed. by James Elkins and David Morgan (New York: Routledge, 2009), 25-46 (p.37).

⁸²Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 125.

introducing Africans to modernity must go to the missionaries'.⁸³ Second, Wokoma is able to construct a more convincing identity of the modern African self of refinement by mediating the sentiment of emotion and the logic or reason of the intellect. He therefore foregrounds the fact that the culture of Romanticism, which has provided much of our theoretical material in the foregoing—both within and outside what Philip Dickson calls Romanticism's *periodicity*⁸⁴—is more or less, a 'mellowing' perspective to the modern view of the world, which not only complimented the fundamental ethos of the latter but also provided an essential 'balance' of identity for its subjects. The implication of this for Wokoma's 20th century modern African self is simply that both temperaments—or selves—can also sit comfortably within one inspired individual.⁸⁵

4.1.2 Wokoma's Private 'Domesticity' and the Postcolonial Consumption and Performance of Cosmopolitan Taste

In this section I examine Wokoma's attempt at constructing a postcolonial cosmopolitan selfhood within the domestic sphere by presenting categories of the culture of refinement, consumption and performance of tastes that were enabled by the colonial experience. I interrogate the ways in which Wokoma's cosmopolitan self is framed in the domesticity of family life, where the outlook of refinement is now located in the collective intimacy of the home or household, and the entire 'geography' of the domestic environment. I read Wokoma's private domesticity as constituted by his close relationships of family intimacy—particularly his nuclear family ties, consisting of his wife, his children and his grandchildren—and the extensive paraphernalia of the home, what Roberta Sassatelli describes as the things 'which structure our domestic spaces'.⁸⁶ This interpretation derives from what I read as Wokoma's

⁸³Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p.6.

⁸⁴Philip Dickson, *Romanticism and Aesthetic Life in Postcolonial Writing* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.19.

⁸⁵Peter N. Miller, "'The Man of Learning' Defended: Seventeenth-Century Biographies of Scholars and an Early Modern Ideal of Excellence', *Representations of the Self from Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Patrick Coleman, Jayre Lewis and Jill Kowalik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.39.

⁸⁶Roberta Sassatelli, *Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics* (Los Angeles: Sage Books, 2007), p. 69.

conception of domesticity in terms of Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner's categorization of intimacy within the cluster of such ideas as 'privacy, familiarity, love, sex, informality, and personal connection'.⁸⁷ Here, According to Pratt and Rosner, 'intimacy suggests something hidden away from the larger world, apparent only to one or few of the inside [...] that which is walled off from the public sphere, from governance and from oversight'.⁸⁸ The implication of Pratt and Rosner's framework for my reading of Wokoma's intimate self of sensibility is that even though 'domesticity' seems far less personal than the psychic representations of 'interiority', it is also actually far less 'social' than all categories of 'public,' especially in terms of Joe Bailey's delineation of the public sphere into the 'political', 'the civil society', and the 'community' spheres.⁸⁹

Wokoma's interpretation of the 'cosmopolitan' self in his diaries aligns with John Brewer's description of a person who 'was literate, could talk about art, literature and music and showed off his refinement through agreeable conversation in company'.⁹⁰ His articulation of the cosmopolitanism of the domestic sphere is therefore entrenched in his depiction of his family's relocation to the Nigerian postcolonial capital of Lagos in the early 1960s, and how they participate in the evolving contexts of urbane culture and civility. Within this narrative of his engagement with postcolonial taste, Wokoma inscribes the 'upgrade' of his family from what Paul Langford describes as an 'upwardly mobile, modestly middle-class' status, established in the colonial era as imperial subjects, to the full African elite class following the departure of the colonialists. His presentation of this ascendancy of his family to the postcolonial aristocracy of Lagos, a group Karin Barber describes as 'the highly educated and publicly visible figures that dominate political histories of Africa',⁹¹ is therefore at the centre of the cosmopolitanism that he constructs

⁸⁷Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner, 'Introduction: The Global and the Intimate', in *The Global and the Intimate: Feminism in Our Time*, ed. by Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p.4.

⁸⁸Pratt and Rosner, 'The Global and the Intimate', p.4.

⁸⁹Bailey, 'Public to Private', p. 21.

⁹⁰Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination Century*, p.59.

⁹¹Barber, 'Introduction: Hidden Innovators in Africa', p.1.

around his domestic universe. The novelist, Chinua Achebe, himself among the group ‘upgraded’ from an educated middle-class to the national elite upon the departure of the colonialists, vividly captures aspects of the portrait of the upper class of Nigerian postcolonial enlightenment that Wokoma attempts to construct in his diaries:

Members of my generation also moved into homes in the former British quarters previously occupied by members of the European Senior Civil Service. These homes often came with servants—chauffeurs, maids, cooks, gardeners, stewards—whom the British had organized meticulously to ‘ease their colonial sojourn’. Now following the departure of the Europeans, many domestic staff stayed in the same positions and were only too grateful to continue their designated salaried roles in post-independence Nigeria. Their masters were no longer European but their own brothers and sisters. This bequest continued in the form of new club memberships and access to previously all-white areas of town, restaurants, and theatres.⁹²

Thus, Wokoma’s suggestion that the domestic was pivotal in considerations of the manner of consumption and performance of good taste in the Nigerian colonial and postcolonial contexts is supported by Achebe’s centralizing of the notion of the domesticity of ‘home’ in the above passage. Just as certain other elements of late 19th and early 20th century modern Nigerian culture, the intersections between ‘home’ and a culture of ‘taste’—as we see it in both Wokoma and Achebe, may have Victorian England origins, for as Morris J. Vogel writes, ‘the Victorian home [...] represented refinement and higher aesthetic tastes in the midst of a culture directed increasingly towards the masses’.⁹³

Wokoma’s diary-narrative captures in profound and very instructive ways the indicators of the private-domesticity of postcolonial culture of taste highlighted by Achebe above in terms of the carefully structured concept of home. Yet, as he demonstrates in his diaries, there are other—sometimes special—domestic mannerisms of taste which contribute to the identity of postcolonial modernity that he tries to construct. For instance, the particular episode of Christmas 1961/ NewYear 1962 festive season illuminates my

⁹²Achebe, *There Was a Country*, p. 49.

⁹³Morris J. Vogel, *Cultural Connections: Museums and Libraries of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), p. 75.

view about the domestic civility and refinement of the now elitist Wokoma household:

December 25, 1961: This morning, everybody had a present from the Christmas tree supposed to have come from Santa Claus—Father Xmas. I have two very fine shirts from Kingsway [Stores]. Only the sizes were 16 instead of 15—a size too big for me. They were changed to size 15 later by Mac, our Santa Claus.

Wokoma's articulation of the private-domesticity of refinement in the above episode derives its authenticity from the fact that in spite of the ambitious spectacle of the event, all 'actors' are linked in a familial relationship, and the context of performance is the family's home in highbrow Lagos. Again, a major implication of Wokoma's construction of the domestic culture of taste above is that it takes a group of enlightened individuals to indulge in the apparently trivial drama of an elaborate but private Christmas exhibition. The theatricality of it all—from the role play to the costuming, and even to Wokoma's underscoring of the evocative scenarios on the pages of his diaries—constitutes important elements in the self-representation of a postcolonial culture of taste. The objects of representation, such as the shirts from Kingsway Stores are also symbolic of a culture of high taste—given the reputation of the prestigious supermarket in the colonial and immediate postcolonial Nigerian setting as an indicator of modern, urbanist living.

Wokoma's formulation of the scenarios of a private family reunion within the same celebrative ambience/timeframe of the Christmas and New Year season of December 1961-January 1962 is also achieved against the background of a culture of taste. A leisurely, indulgent, holiday round-trip to Ibadan provides an opportunity for two branches of the Wokoma family—the Lagos and the Ibadan—now occupying elevated positions in the Nigerian postcolonial society to 'perform' the private, 'domestic' cultural significance of their social ranking:

Dec 25, 1965: Lagos. This evening, we got Mbee and Dorothy on the phone. We agreed that they would come for me on Saturday December 30. Mac, Sisi and the children will go with me for the whole weekend; and Mbee [Dr Charles Wokoma] would bring them to Lagos about Saturday, the 6th or Sunday the 7th. Their school will resume on Monday the 8th.

Dec 30, 1961: Lagos-Ibadan. My son, Dr Charles Wokoma arrived from Ibadan by 11:30a.m. We left Lagos in two cars—my son Charles, Emi, Seniapuye, Odein, and I travelled in my son's car; and Mac, Sisi, Ibiai, Mbee and Nanny in Mac's car. We started at 3:30pm and Mac's party started later and arrived Ibadan at 6:30pm. We arrived at 6:00pm.

Beyond the implication of the above entries for the solid cosmopolitan outlook of Wokoma's family, particularly in the context of the enactment of a fashionable and exclusive piece of relaxational adventure, Wokoma establishes the connections between rank and a culture of taste. In deploying the elitist character of the domestic performance and consumption of the festivities surrounding Christmas and New Year as organizing construct, Wokoma underscores the types of domestic selves that collective refinement of the postcolonial Nigerian family, mediated by a combination of intellectual power, political pedigree and good breeding, can produce. Wokoma's self-representation brings to mind the influence of English traditions of domestic refinement on colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, in the sense that, as Gikandi puts it about 18th century Britain, 'the culture of taste was predicated on the marriage of money and manners' and 'the necessities on which a modern subjectivity depended [was] money, rank, and taste'.⁹⁴ According to Wokoma's diaries, as Permanent Secretary of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education, Mr F.I. Ajumogobia,⁹⁵ husband to Florence, Wokoma's only surviving daughter, is one of the most prominent officials in the political configuration of immediate postcolonial Nigeria. This position of power also means that Mr Ajumogobia and his family live in relative affluence, and patronize the high culture of taste, refinement and sophisticated civility on offer among the political class of postcolonial Lagos. Not only do the Ajumogobias live in the upper class 'Government Reserved Area of Ikoyi',⁹⁶ their children attend the most exclusive public and private schools, and their circle of friends is drawn from the pioneer elite classes of independent Nigeria. As recorded in the diaries also, Wokoma's first and only surviving

⁹⁴Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 125.

⁹⁵1914-1996, taught in the best Nigerian schools modeled after the best traditions of the British public school system—including King's College Lagos for decades until 1957, when he became a very senior member of the Ministry of Education.

⁹⁶The exclusive residential area reserved for the political class in Lagos during the colonial and immediate postcolonial era.

MONDAY 25 December 1961
Week 52 (359-6) Christmas

Lagos.

Mac, Sisi & I attended Holy Communion at the British Church Cathedral at 8 a.m., and the children's family service at the Colonial Church.

Mac drove us round to Ram. Beach and Carter Bridge & back home.

This morning everybody had a present from the Christmas tree supposed to have come from Santa Claus - Father Xmas. I had two very fine shirts from Kingsway, only the sizes were 16 instead of 15 - a size too big for me. They were changed to size 15 later by Mac, our Santa Claus.

We drove by the British Church Cathedral after leaving the Colonial Church. Dr. & Mrs. Agbisiwe attended the Cathedral Service.

This evening we got Mbele & Dorothy on the phone. We agreed that they would come for me on Saturday December 30. Mac, Sisi & the children would go with me for the week-end & return on Monday. Sini, Bisi & Odain would stay with me for the week & Mbele would bring them to Lagos about Saturday the 6th or Sunday the 7th. Their Schools resume on Monday the 8th.

Diary Scan 13: Diary entry of December 25, 1961 capturing the domestic 'Father Christmas' drama which takes place in Florence's Lagos home, and also the plan for the to-and-fro leisurely family travel to Ibadan.

son, Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma, is settling down as a surgeon in the University College Hospital, Ibadan, after successfully training at Queens University, Belfast. Charles' Irish nurse wife, Dorothy Johnston, who also works at the UCH, lives with him at the doctor's residential quarters of the hospital. Together, Charles and Dorothy form the cream of Nigeria's professional and intellectual elite constructing the foundation of postcolonial nationhood from the important political city of Ibadan. This 'nationalist' outlook to Wokoma's immediate family helps to shape his domestic modernity, and engage the emerging national culture of taste and social refinement, as clearly articulated in Achebe's account on 'the handover of power'.⁹⁷

Wokoma's location of his individual self within the frame of this intimate relationship with accomplished family members enables him the private narrative platform to construct the domestic dimensions of the illustrious postcolonial identity of the Wokoma family, and affords him the ambience to dramatize and emotionalize the cosmopolitan outlook of the social, cultural, political and economic progress and attainment of the family. Gillian Swanson contends:

The documentation of private life became an essential component of the intimate histories of individuals and their attachments. Diaries, photograph albums, relics, souvenirs—all recorded familial and personal bonds and significant events, and thereby became saturated with sentimental meaning of an individual's emotional and subjective life.⁹⁸

Therefore, Wokoma's objective in the documentation of these experiences—which indicate the family's posture in matters of taste and high culture—is to capture the domestic significance of the family's emergent 'nobility' and cosmopolitanism, and to ultimately establish an intimate, private portrait or identity of African postcolonial modernity. His reflective objectification of the Christmas and New Year celebrations of 1961-1962 and the concomitant

⁹⁷Achebe, *There Was a Country*, p.59.

⁹⁸Gillian Swanson, 'Subjectivity, the individual and the Gendering of the Modern Self', *Deciphering Culture: Ordinary Curiosities and Subjective Narratives*, ed. by Jane Crisp, Kay Ferres and Gillian Swanson (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 68-90. p. 79.



Picture 9: Wokoma's Irish daughter-in-law, Dorothy Johnston, with his Lagos grandchildren at Ibadan during the Christmas/New Year Celebrations of 1962-1963.



Picture 10: Mr F. I. Ajumogobia, husband to Wokoma's only daughter, Florence (Daisy, 'Sisi'), a symbol of postcolonial modernity of Wokoma's family, and a major figure of post-independent Nigeria's political public sphere.

programme of leisure and pleasure serve to foreground how the family's socio-political ascent has engendered the cultivation and exhibition of certain mannerisms of taste. Essentially, Wokoma achieves a domestic subjectivity of taste and a modern African postcolonial identity of refinement by investing in the relatively 'ordinary' and 'routine' experience of Christmas and New Year celebrations with what Hanford Henderson describes as the aristocratic spirit, and its 'transcendent beauty of excellence'.⁹⁹

4.2 Wokoma's Construction of the Modernity of the Public Aspects of a Culture of Taste

Just as I established in the last chapter about the sense in which history is always necessarily public, I argue in this chapter that, as Wokoma's diaries clearly show, the substance of the construction of a culture of taste in life-writing, or in any other narrative form, heavily depends on the inscription of its public manifestation. It is therefore in the production of a 'proper' public image, in terms of an individual and collective identity, that the consumption and performance of refinement attain significance. Echoing David Hume and Immanuel Kant, Monique Roelof provides a compelling treatise on the 'publicness' of the culture of taste:

Eighteenth-century philosophers associate the concept of the aesthetic with that of the public. David Hume and Immanuel Kant are prominent exponents of this interconnection. Their theories of taste lay the groundwork for much contemporary thought about the aesthetic in the Western tradition. Both thinkers invoke operations of common human appreciative capacities. On the assumption that observers share such facilities, and allow them to govern their perceptions of artworks and other objects, the resulting judgments of taste attain intersubjective validity. This landmark proposal links the aesthetic with the public: apprehensible to any appropriate observer, artistic value requires a public dimension. The aesthetic experiences we undergo register generally accessible meanings. The exercise of aesthetic perception comprises a public good in the sense that it is in principle available to everyone, irrespective of anyone's particular characteristics. The pleasure that aesthetic practice potentially provides us all, and the judgments that it is capable of legitimizing for each and every person anchor us in a common human world. Aesthetic activities instantiate a collective register of subjectivity. The public status of

⁹⁹Hanford Henderson, 'The Aristocratic Spirit', *The North American Review*, 211.772 (1920), 387-401 (p.388).

aesthetic experience finds further elaboration in Hume's view that taste, refinement, and the arts contribute to the advancement of the public sphere.¹⁰⁰

Wokoma demonstrates in his diaries that these same principles of the fundamental public location of the aesthetics of cultural production and consumption apply also to 20th century Africa. This is not just because the European societies which provided an analytical base for Hume and Kant would influence—largely through imperialism—the emergence of African consciousness of a culture of taste, but also because of what Kant calls the 'universality' of aesthetic faculties.¹⁰¹

As we will see in this section, one of Wokoma's accomplishments in the articulation of the modern identity of public refinement is his foregrounding of the role of Protestant missionaries in the socialization of the African into the western tradition of the culture of civility—what Olufemi Taiwo has described as 'the more pedestal elements of the culture they traveled with' including 'drinking tea, clothing that met European standards of modesty and so on'.¹⁰² Within his self-representation, this accomplishment is summarized in Wokoma's characterization of the imperial adventure—and its far-ranging implications for religious and cultural revolution—as the product of the connection between what Wokoma calls the 'great and wonderful world with its beauty and splendour' and 'the great structure of civilization [...] built by several generations of culture and sacrifice' (May 21, 1942).

As Wokoma shows in his diary-narrative, his consciousness of the public identity of the African figure of sensibility may also have come from other sources that are not very directly connected to the missionary project. Wokoma's portraiture of the public dimensions of the cultivated African self, as we will see in this section, accommodates such sources as politics, urbanization, education, and so on. For instance, Wokoma's framing of his identity of cosmopolitanism, and also his production of multiple selves of

¹⁰⁰Monique Roelof, *The Cultural Promise of the Aesthetic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.5.

¹⁰¹See Peter Lamarque, 'The Aesthetic and the Universal', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 33.2 (Summer, 1999), pp. 1-17.

¹⁰²Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p.74.

refinement and cultural consumption in the urbanity of 1960s Lagos, is consistent with the emergence of the postcolonial city as an epicenter of 20th century African refinement. Wokoma's portraiture illustrates a kind of progression from Michael Echeruo's construction of the civility of 19th century Lagos which produced 'a new kind of Africa [and] Africans of Victorian persuasion'.¹⁰³ Furthermore, from the early 1900s, the colonial government began the project of recreating in the colonies, the elite English public school system, designed in the best of Victorian and Edwardian' traditions, to 'socialize their students into the mores and values of the gentlemanly classes' and to uphold 'a distinctive model of imperial masculinity'.¹⁰⁴ Beyond his work as education officer in the imperial-sponsored CMS school system, and its implication for the entrenching of British cultural ideals, Wokoma's contribution to the establishment of the Kalabari National College (KNC), a foremost public school without mission affiliations, and his work as a long-standing member of its Board, as his diaries show, represents his contribution to the production of such masculine selves of African sensibility through the British-styled public school system.

I read Wokoma's attempt to construct a persona of public refinement in his diaries through his foregrounding of the intersection between a culture of taste as a measure of African modernity and what Joe Bailey has called the 'three locations [...] of the contemporary public'—the state, the civil society, and community.¹⁰⁵ I aim to show how Wokoma's characterization of African urban spaces establishes a modern identity of cultivated tastes—in line with Maxine Berg's views about late 18th century Europe that 'the enlarged public sphere of the city invited cultivation of "politeness."' ¹⁰⁶ For instance, I note that in Wokoma's representation of the social mannerisms of the ruling elite of the Nigerian inaugural post-independence political dispensation, he establishes a certain scenario of an indigenous aristocratic deportment and cultural

¹⁰³Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos*, p. 110.

¹⁰⁴Terri Ochiagha, *Achebe and Friends at Umuahia: The Making of a Literary Elite* (Rochester: Boydell Brewer, 2015), p. 49.

¹⁰⁵Bailey, 'Public to Private', p.21.

¹⁰⁶Maxine Berg, 'Luxury, the Luxury Trades, and Industrial Growth', *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. by Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 173-192 (p.181).

correctness, which informs the direction of the postcolonial modernity of tastes. There is also, of course, Wokoma's centralization of the cultural demands of the civil society. According to Graig Calhoun, 'the first and most basic notion of civil society comes from urban sociability',¹⁰⁷ public spaces outside family circles, where people mix with each other. These public spaces, according to Calhoun, include 'theatres [...] market places, coffee houses, streets and squares'.¹⁰⁸ Wokoma's dramatization of the cultural tendencies of the emergent African colonial and postcolonial urbanity underscores the aesthetics of that publicness.

Wokoma's construction of the intersection between the 'community public' and the culture of civil refinement is given force by the representation of the Kalabari peculiar system of elitism which brings together local and foreign elements of the clan's colonial and postcolonial political reality. In Chapter Three, I underscored the significance of aspects of the cultural hybridity of the Kalabari, deriving from a long history of interaction with the western world. This hybridity, particularly by its shaping of the system of the social class, also informs the ways in which the culture of taste and refined civility are read as public categories. Thus, when Wokoma refers to particular individuals as 'Chiefs and gentlemen of Buguma', as he does in the entry of March 2, 1941 on the occasion of an important meeting on behalf of Kalabari National College; or 'Chiefs and Gentlemen and three Ladies of Abonnema' in the entry of June 22, 1961 on the occasion of a political courtesy call on the Amanyanabo of Kalabari, he underlines the public value of the traditional aristocracy, and also highlights the public mannerisms tied to that status.

The sense in which Wokoma entrenches the idea of the gentleman in his diaries is corroborated by Lawrence Klein's position that the classification of 'gentlemen and ladies' is associated with 'politeness' and 'gentility', and is used 'to distinguish a distinct group of society—marked by pedigree and land

¹⁰⁷Craig Calhoun, 'Civil Society and the Public Square', *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*. ed. by Michael Edwards (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.311-323 (p.315).

¹⁰⁸Calhoun, p. 315.

ownership—from the rest’.¹⁰⁹ For Klein, however, the substance of this ‘gentility’ is a certain ‘ascendancy of politeness’ and the capability ‘to make a cultural rather than a sociological claim about oneself’.¹¹⁰ Wokoma’s idea of the gentleman is also exemplified in David Hancock’s preference of ‘a deportment’ rather than ‘a hereditary or professional definition of gentility’.¹¹¹ Among the Kalabari gentlemen whose public sensibility Wokoma has diligently constructed, as we will see in this section, is the eminent Chief Charles Inko Tariah, whose far-reaching influence on Wokoma’s own development as a person of taste is also one of the major themes of the diary-narrative.

In what follows I establish that Wokoma’s presentation of the public dimensions of a culture of taste addresses these three main locations of the public domain—the State, the civil society and the community. To achieve this, I first explore the public dimensions of his consumption of variegated categories of taste within the colonial society of his Southern Nigeria. Secondly, I engage the modernity of the ‘publicness’ of colonial politeness that he presents in his diaries. Thirdly, I analyze Wokoma’s representation of the public aesthetics of the social, political and religious rituals and ceremonies and how it projects his Englishness. Under the third subsection, I also read Wokoma’s construction of ceremonial ‘order’—in both the colonial and postcolonial eras—as the public spectacle of hybrid taste, in terms of the intertwining of local and foreign cultural forms, and argue that it is part of his project of ‘extending’ both the scope of Englishness, and his African modernity.

¹⁰⁹Lawrence Klein, ‘Politeness and Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 869-898 (p. 876).

¹¹⁰Klein, p. 876.

¹¹¹David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 280.

4.2.1 Wokoma's Diaries and the Public Dimensions of Colonial Consumption and Performance of Taste

Wokoma's construction of an African colonial modernity of refinement substantially depends on the manner of his presentation of the public dimensions of the consumption and performance of cultural and artistic forms entrenched in the African social and political space by the colonial experience. His conviction about the superiority of British mannerisms is therefore demonstrated, or performed, as a means of articulating the 'publicness' of his imperial subjecthood, and the class distinction which it affords him. Wokoma's diary-narrative as a platform of self-representation affords him the space to articulate his public identity as a figure of taste within the African colonial context. Wokoma therefore considers himself, and in *public* aspects, as an epitome, or public face of what J.F.A. Ajayi and J.B. Webster call 'new values, new ways of acquiring status and imitability' as introduced to the African by the European colonialist.¹¹² These 'values' and 'ways' have important cultural and artistic manifestations through which the new social status of African modernity is affirmed and inscribed. Olufemi Taiwo provides some insight into why colonial African gentlemen would 'exhibit', in the form of a definite public image, their prized imperial cultural legacies:

Africans bought into the new civilization with aplomb. They fancied themselves as inheritors of a new civilization and sought to rearrange their mental and physical spaces to reflect their embrace of the new. They built new houses that sometimes in their opulence were far out of proportion to their surroundings. They adopted new modes of dressing. They were fastidious in their observation of new social etiquettes concerning food, recreation, music, theatre, and so on.¹¹³

Despite his quiet, introverted nature, Wokoma understood and accepted his responsibility as a public symbol of the new civilization, particularly in the expression of his aesthetic predilections.

¹¹²J.F.A. Ajayi and J.B. Webster, 'The Emergence of a New Elite in Africa', in *Africa in the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by Joseph C. Anene & Godfrey Brown (Ibadan and Surrey: Ibadan University Press and Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), 149-162 (p. 149).

¹¹³Taiwo, *How Colonialism*, p. 91.

Wokoma constructs a self of African colonial modernity out of such recreational and cultural activities as the performance categories of musical concerts and theatre. In this section, I approach Wokoma's involvement with certain types of dramatic and musical exhibitions as an expression of his public cultural taste, and also analyze his consumption of these forms as important material for the construction of his public identity. First of all, in presenting these performances as sites of African colonial modernity, Wokoma inscribes them as *public* events with *public* objectives. For instance, the October 21, 1915 play which he attends at Degema is for the *public* purpose of raising money for the 'Red Cross Fund' in support of World War I efforts. There are such other examples as the women's concerts or 'other entertainments' towards the 'Win the War Fund' of World War II about which Wokoma is 'very impressed' in the March 16, 1944 entry; and the 'grand concert and religious play, "The Prodigal Son", [which] was staged in the BCM Upper Room' for the St Augustine's Church Anniversary on August 29, 1959.

Wokoma also adopts the strategy of articulating an identity of high culture by presenting these concerts and performances, not as having a core social or political function, but merely as recreational ventures. One example is the musical concert of April 21, 1919 at the Baptist Church, Buguma, which featured the most prominent gentlemen of cultivated tastes in the land—including 'Chiefs Inko Tariah and Brown West', an African version of the group Gikandi describes as 'colonial barons [who] understood the significance of art and taste as their point of entry into the inner sanctums of Englishness'.¹¹⁴ This is basically a night of musical entertainment—without any attachment of a substantial social function—which the wealthy chiefs sponsored. Wokoma's construction of his own identity of refined, elevated musical tastes richly derives from his affiliation with and his admiration of these chiefs, particularly the highly cultured Chief Inko Tariah, for whom western music, either in the form of personal consumption with their own instruments, or in their patronage and sponsorship of public displays and concerts, constituted a persuasive portrait of a culture of taste. As Michael

¹¹⁴Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 124.

Echeruo asserts in his *Victorian Lagos* (1977), music was a crucial element of the construction of the cultural modernity and the ‘Britishness’ which the colonial experience began to establish in Southern Nigeria from the 19th century.¹¹⁵ For Echeruo, music was a necessary symbol of status and culture within ‘the tradition of the 19th century European values’, where ‘the educated Lagosian [...] was anxious to demonstrate his love for and accomplishment in music’.¹¹⁶ It is within this same tradition that Chief Inko Tariah’s ‘mentorship’ of Wokoma becomes veritable material for the construction of the latter’s colonial modernity in his diaries.

The other aspect of the musical and theatrical performances that is significant in Wokoma’s public identity as a figure of taste is the foregrounding of his own role in the circumstances of the organization of these events. For Wokoma, it represents a mark of refinement to consume these spectacles as part of the audience, or to even be a performer in them. However, it is probably more so when one enables or facilitates these public occasions of British-style entertainment. Wokoma’s public role as organizer therefore entrenches his public self as a person of taste and refinement. The following passages illustrate:

December 21, 1920: A misty morning. Concert notice placarded. Invitation notes sent out. Lydia Igbaba Douglas starts surplice sewing. Concert curtains sewn by her also in white bafts.

December 24, 1920: School concert at 8.30 p.m. Chief T.B. Harry’s play on Iria (a woman from fattening house at Ido). Very rainy morning. Cold. Chief Inko Tariah supplied his organ.

In the above excerpts, Wokoma frames his public identity of refined tastes in his role as a modern Nigerian impresario adept in the technical and administrative aspects of theatrical production. Wokoma underscores the fact that one does not need to participate as a performing artist to inscribe an identity of aesthetic refinement in the theatre domain; that the role of an organizer can produce as much a convincing portrait of a performer and consumer of high culture. In methodically outlining the circumstances of the

¹¹⁵Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos*, p. 113.

¹¹⁶Echeruo, p. 113.

December 24, 1920 St Michael's School event, which features some innovative musical theatre, he grants insight into the patterns of the modern African cultural organizer's itinerary. For instance, by the 21st of December, Wokoma is coordinating an intense preparation for the programme, ensuring that the 'concert notice' and 'invitation notes' are sent out, and supervising the preparation of the stage infrastructure, including the 'concert curtains' contracted to 'Lydia Igbada Douglas', and the organ to be borrowed from Chief Inko Tariah.

In other examples of his self-representation as a figure of theatrical and performance tastes, Wokoma foregrounds other dimensions of the cultural organizer's engagement with the public, especially in the context of colonial Nigeria. Thus, beyond establishing the public aesthetics of the actual performance, he foregrounds his engagement with other levels of the connection between culture and the modern society thereby linking the 'cultural public sphere' with the 'political public sphere':

December 4, 1947: Igbudu Girls' School Parents' Day concert at King George V Memorial Hall, 8-9.30p.m. Very successful. Mrs Matthews, the Resident's wife after agreeing to preside declined at the last moment on the plea that it was not a Girls Guide concert. She would not accept invitation to preside over a school concert in Warri Township lest she would be much worried by other schools. Archdean Fooks was very much annoyed that Mrs Fooks was not invited to preside over & and they were not even told there was going to be a concert. I expressed regret for not telling them. The fact was that they were both ill, too ill to be asked to attend or preside. I asked if [he] would now take the chair in [place of] Mrs Fooks [even though] I thought it was too late & would not be the best thing to do now.

August 17, 1959: Visiting. I asked Chief B. Inko Tariah & later Mr T. G. Member to assist me to watch and advise the D.W.C.A. Abonnema preparing to stage a play. They both agreed.

August 27, 1959: I went to Degema to see A.S.P. to arrange for Police protection at the concert on Saturday night. We wanted two constables for three hours—8.30-11.30 p.m. He also promised two more to watch the place.

August 29, 1959: A grand concert & religious play, 'The Prodigal Son', was staged in B.C.M. School Upper Room. Admission by tickets & by invitation.

Apart from underscoring the public significance of the space of the performance, what Habermas regards as its 'literary public', Wokoma establishes his identity as a figure of sensibility by entrenching the importance

DECEMBER 1947

Thursday 4

Ighite Girls' School ⁽³³⁸⁻²⁵⁾ Parents' Day Concert at
King George V Memorial Hall 8-9³⁰ p.m.

Very successful. Mrs. Mathew, the Resident's
wife after agreeing to preside declined at the
last moment on the plea that it was not
a Girl Guide Concert. She would not accept
invitation to preside over a school concert
in Warri Township lest she should be much
worried by other schools.

Archdean. Jooks was very much annoyed
that Mrs. Jooks was not invited to preside
& they were not even told that there was
going to be a concert. I expressed regret
for not telling them. The fact was that
they were both ill, too ill to be asked
to attend or preside. It was their illness
that prevented them from continuing the
tour of the Archdeaconry with Rsp. Patterson.

I asked if John would now take the chair but
Mrs. Jooks thought it was too late & would not
be the best thing to do now.

Diary Scan 14: Diary entry of December 4, 1947, showing Wokoma's foregrounding of his culture of taste as an organizer and facilitator of concerts.

of the 'political public'.¹¹⁷ Thus, even though Wokoma also foregrounds the publicness of aesthetic appeal—for instance, by declaring the Igbudu Girls' show 'very successful' (December 4, 1947) and by consulting Chief B. Inko Tariah & later Mr T. G. Member for purposes of critical judgement—he also establishes the function of the wider public of power. By attempting to get the Resident's wife, Mrs Matthews, to chair the Igbudu Girls' School concert (December 4, 1947), Wokoma not only affirms his political allegiance to the British imperial government, but perhaps more importantly, inscribes the influence of the British culture in the development of modern African performance aesthetics, and also in the construction of the African figure of theatrical sensibility. In the second example above (August 29, 1949), Wokoma's involvement with the Police represents his consultation with the political authority and his engagement with the political public. The commitment of the Police to 'watch the place' can thus be read as a contribution of the state to the success of the cultural sphere. Wokoma's role as a modern African impresario and theatre organizer, therefore, goes beyond the 'text' of the performance—and involves the sorting out of the significant *public* matter of State involvement. In the three events highlighted above—the St Michaels Christmas concert (1920), the Igbudu Girls Parents' Day concert (1947) and the staging of 'The Prodigal Son' (1950)—Wokoma underscores his self-consistency, and indeed his developmental progress as a man of the theatre, from the impressionable stages of his youth in the 1920s to the point of artistic, technical and organizational maturity on the brink of postcolonial modernity.

One strategy of representation that Wokoma employs, especially in the construction of his public self of refinement within the frame of these domains of taste, is to locate Chief Charles Inko Tariah as a motivating agent or symbol of cultural modernity. In establishing Chief Tariah as a model of colonial cultural sensibility to which he aspires, Wokoma places him within the 18th and 19th century British tradition of cultural elites whose 'modern

¹¹⁷Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Square*, p.3.

subjectivity' according to Simon Gikandi, depended on the 'money, rank, and taste' blend.¹¹⁸ The following examples from his diary illustrates:

April 21, 1919: Concert held today 8p.m. Chief David West Chairman [...] Chiefs Inko Tariah & Brown supporting.

March 19, 1920: Two wild pigeons killed & given me today by Chief Inko Tariah who was out shooting.

June 10, 1920: Chief Inko Tariah arrived from Port Harcourt with his typewriter.

June 12, 1920: Chief Tariah got a picture of [a] funeral car from England to be ordered by the Church.

June 26, 1920: Chief Inko Tariah's organ arrived home from Port Harcourt today.

Wokoma therefore frames his own emergence as an African figure of sensibility in the wide scope of Chief Tariah's personality as a model of the consumption and performance of culture and forms of aesthetic refinement. In the above excerpts, Wokoma does not just highlight the public significance of Chief Tariah's patronage of a variety of sites of taste within the emerging colonial modernity of Southern Nigeria; he perhaps, more importantly, underlines his profile as a pioneering figure in the cultural project of entrenching the European sensibility in 20th century Niger Delta. The above excerpts illustrate the ways in which Wokoma was socialized into the consciousness of a culture of taste by Chief Tariah, and perhaps a few other 'gentlemen' like Mr Kaiser T. West, on whose new organ—'he bought and brought it home last night' (April 19, 1919)—Wokoma began to develop and exercise his musical talent as an instrumentalist before the arrival of Tariah's own organ on June 26, 1920. For instance, Wokoma's first exposure to musical concerts (April 19, 1919) is facilitated by Chief Tariah and other patrons and 'barons' of the musical culture; his—and indeed the entire community's—introduction to the vehicular facility of modern funeral culture (June 12, 1920) is courtesy of Chief Tariah. The same applies to his induction into the aestheticization of game-hunting (March 19, 1920 and July 21, 1920)—an exclusive category of taste over which, according to Greg Gillespie, the British constructed 'elitist cultural significations [...] thereby

¹¹⁸Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 125.

populating colonial landscapes with the “right sort” of game’.¹¹⁹ Wokoma establishes that at a time when many colonial subjects in the Niger Delta were yet to fully understand imperialism as a process of acculturation, Chief Tariah, like the English barons whom, according to Gikandi, ‘often used their money and political influence to control art and taste’¹²⁰ was to provide a 20th century African colonial version of the ‘representative man of the age of enlightenment’.¹²¹ Thus, through the personality of Chief Tariah, Wokoma is able to identify the sites of the public performance and consumption of refinement which colonial enlightenment enabled.

Wokoma’s construction of the public aspects of his culture of refinement through photography—or ‘portraiture’, as it is described within British traditions of taste—also highlights the status of Chief Charles Inko Tariah as an African model of colonial civility and enlightenment. It is obvious, with evidence from his diaries, that the significance of photographs as instruments of public self-fashioning within the colonial society was impressed on Wokoma by Chief Tariah:

January 7, 1920: My photo taken by Chief Tariah delivered to me.

January 8, 1920: Miss Mercy Tariah took a photo with her father today.

January 5, 1920: I took a photo today by Chief Inko Tariah.

March 1, 1920: My father’s photograph enlarged in England obtained from Chief Inko Tariah this morning.

In presenting himself as a protégé of an individual with a robust taste for image-making as an expression of his extensive English attitudes, Wokoma establishes his own identity as a person keen about proper representation—of himself or of others. The high value placed on the public symbolism of portraiture by the elite in the colonial society is boldly stressed by the fact that Wokoma’s father’s photograph had to be sent to England to be enlarged by Chief Tariah. Writing about male portraiture as art in England, David H. Solkin contends that ‘the Englishman who sat for his portrait expected to be

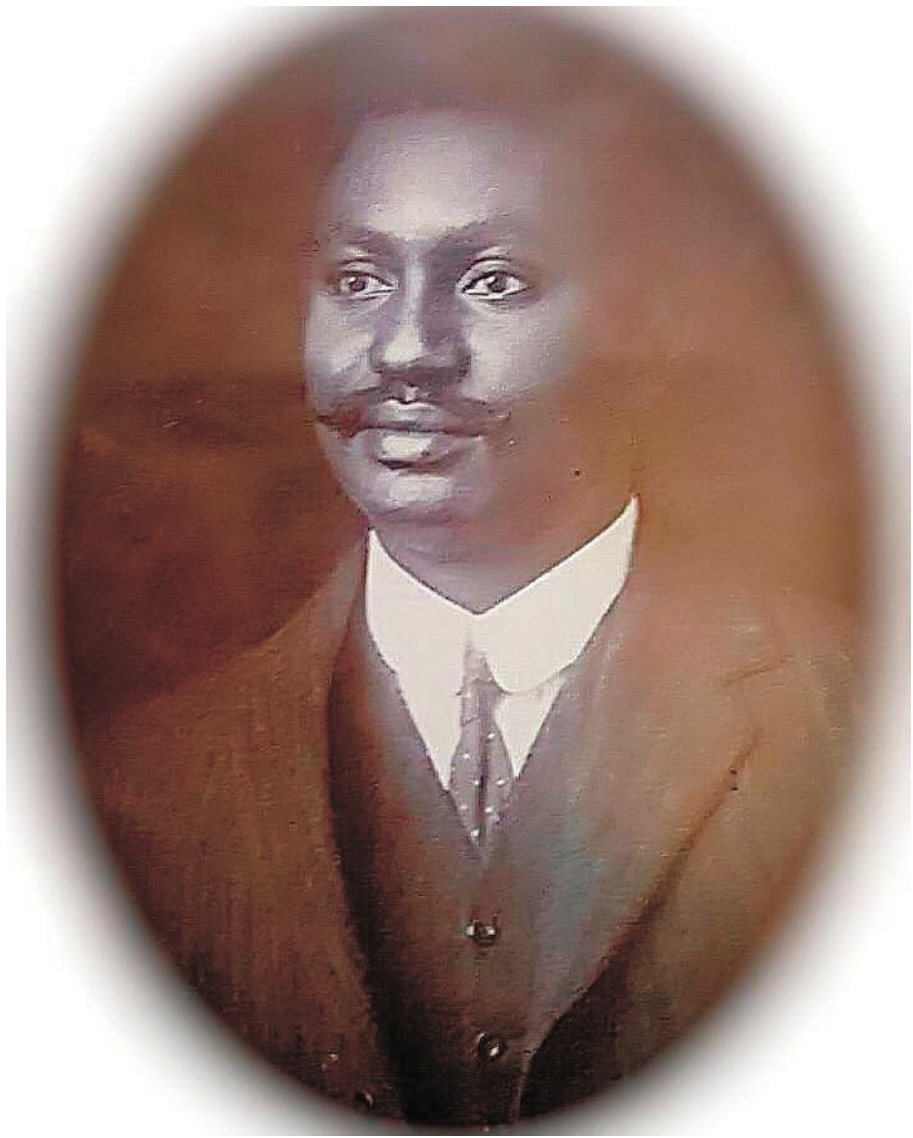
¹¹⁹Greg Gillespie, *Hunting For Empire: Narratives of Sports in Rupert’s Land, 1840-70* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), p.50.

¹²⁰Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 125.

¹²¹Gikandi, p. 125.



Picture 11: Mercy Wokoma (nee Inko Tariah) and her father, the eminent Chief Charles Inko Tariah, a figure of cultivated taste and a model of colonial sensibility. This photo was taken in her late teens before her marriage to Wokoma.



Picture 12: A portrait of Chief Inko Tariah in the 1930s indicating his self-construction as a proper 'English' gentleman.



Picture 13: Wokoma's portrait as a young priest and 'agent' of African modernity in the 1920s.

shown as a gentleman' and that 'personal display' was 'a matter of inescapable political significance'.¹²² In the same vein, and with evidence from both Wokoma's diaries and surviving family photos, the objective of his portraiture in early 20th century colonial Nigeria—and of course that of Chief Tariah—is to entrench the modern African persona of 'proper' English sensibilities. This intention is perhaps most aptly illustrated in his delight at having to receive—as a birthday gift from his wife, Mercy—on his 71st birthday in 1965, an old picture taken about 1906-1907. According to Wokoma:

June 10, 1965: The picture contains Mr J.A. Hartly, my European Master, Shop Clerk, and Mr Yule, a beach clerk, both sitting, with Chief Harrison Tom Princewill and Mr Kaiser Tom West, both standing behind. And I was sitting on the floor between the two Europeans.

Reflecting on this colonial portraiture from a postcolonial perspective nearly five decades later, Wokoma reinvokes its significance as an abiding inscription of his imperial subjecthood, an enduring insignia of his public image of colonial modernity.

Through his self-representation as a colonial education officer and teacher, Wokoma functions in the consciousness of his public duty as an agent of the propagation of the imperial cultural ideal, at the apex of which was sports. When Wokoma plays an organizational part in St. Michael's School's game of cricket in the afternoon of January 2, 1920; when he arranges for a suitable venue for the school sports component of the Flag Day celebrations of June 7, 1941; and when he approves and personally supervises the novelty girls-boys game of football in Warri on March 15, 1944, what he achieves essentially is to construct his place in what Jonathan Rutherford calls 'the cult of games and its promotion of team spirit [which] molded boys into the vocabularies and discourses of nation and empire'.¹²³ According to Rutherford, 'games-playing became the emblem of this regime, and its athlete the touchstone of imperial

¹²²David H. Solkin, 'Great Pictures or Great Men? Reynolds, Male Portraiture, and the Power of Art', *Oxford Art Journal*, 9.2 (1986), pp. 42-49 (p.42).

¹²³Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), p.16.

manliness'.¹²⁴ Wokoma's spotlighting of the celebrated English tradition of masculinist refinement through a sporting identity compares well with Chinua Achebe's representation of the place of sports in the cultivation of English manners during the imperial era. Not known for his own 'athletic ability',¹²⁵ Achebe is all the same conscious of the significance of sports, particularly cricket, in the formation of the English culture of taste. Achebe recalls, in his *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (2012), the status of the game of cricket during his schooldays in colonial South-eastern Nigeria: 'the schoolmasters referred to the game as one for "gentlemen" and made sure Umuahia athletes played it "properly"—dressed in immaculate white shirts and trousers, gloves, knee-high pads, and helmets'.¹²⁶ In the context of his work as 'schoolmaster' in the same period as Achebe's college days, Wokoma projects an image of English civility as a facilitator and an organizer of sporting activity.

4.2.2 Wokoma's Diaries and the Modernity of the 'Publicness' of Colonial Politeness

In the preceding section, I examined Wokoma's presentation of the private domains of politeness, particularly within the realms of intimate domesticity, and established ways in which he articulates an identity of African modernity in the process, as an individual sensitive to the production and consumption of high culture. In this section, I argue, with the evidence of his diaries, that he constructs an even more convincing identity of African colonial modernity by inscribing the publicness of the culture and aesthetics of politeness. Wokoma shows that the character of politeness, as a feature of the culture of taste and civil refinement, is more persuasively presented as a public, social category. In establishing what she calls 'the polite spectacle', Soile Ylivuori has argued:

Politeness was a culture that had [a] strong visual aspect, and the body was the means of communicating polite identity. Politeness was thought to reveal itself in multiple ways of standing, walking, gesturing, dressing, and facial expressions, up to where a person's level of politeness could supposedly be evaluated by mere looking [...] It will, suffice to say that the new urban

¹²⁴Rutherford, p. 16.

¹²⁵Achebe, *There Was a Country*, p. 22.

¹²⁶Achebe, p. 22.

sociability was acted out in respectable public and semi-public space, where polite society gathered to see and be seen.¹²⁷

My interrogation of Wokoma's presentation of the public character of politeness draws richly from Ylivouri's exploration of 18th century British contexts of public performance of cultivation, and social agreeableness. Therefore, if the public, as Ylivouri suggests above, was the 'spectacle' for the expression of polite qualities, what Lawrence Klein has identified variously as 'notions of civility and gentility' and as 'bodily comportment and the disciplines of social interaction',¹²⁸ then Wokoma's self-representation provides instructive 20th century colonial Nigerian examples.

Thus, in spite of his well-remarked attribute of introversion, Wokoma constructs perhaps a more convincing portrait of refinement by intensely engaging the social, exterior aspects of his status as a colonial agent of African modernity. Wokoma proves that it is in the public domain that his identity of politeness, a key aspect of his Englishness as a subject and mediator of the imperial cultural project, becomes properly articulated. Wokoma represents the character of public politeness, not just as an outward demonstration of his cultivation and good breeding in English mannerisms—what John Locke describes as a way of 'expressing the internal civility of the mind'¹²⁹—but also as an affirmation of his class and exclusivity within the emerging modernity of Nigeria. As a public personification of the British culture of taste, Wokoma engages with what Keith Thomas calls 'a form of social distinction and self advertisement'.¹³⁰ According to Thomas, 'politeness involves distancing oneself from the culture of the populace and being in tune with the latest cultural fashions of the European elite'.¹³¹ In the context of colonial Nigeria, Wokoma achieves this distinction in his refinement of polite tastes and sensitivity to the cultural fashion of the British upper classes.

¹²⁷Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England*, p.109.

¹²⁸Lawrence Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation', p. 875

¹²⁹John William Adamson, *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922), p.111.

¹³⁰Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilizations in Early Modern England* (Waltham, Massachusetts, 2018), p.21.

¹³¹Thomas, p.21.

Wokoma presents public politeness in two spheres of social interaction—the professional and the recreational. In Chapter Two, we saw how Wokoma’s construction of the public spectacle of his missionary and educational encounters placed a demand on his comportment and civility as a colonial agent, and as both a subject and mediator of Englishness. On some occasions, like in the May 24, 1924 episode at Ahoada Division with ‘Mr Briggs’, he has to invoke the full depth of his ‘English’ refinement to save a difficult situation:

May 24, 1924: No sooner I ended my statement than Mr Briggs got up from his seat with threatening and brawling against me pointing at me with his fingers [and] insulting me before the people. He threatened to see the D.O [...] He threatened to deal with me as he dealt with one Mr Epele under whom he was working in the Mission at Okpuala. He said there would be bloodshed [and] I would drink his blood. He said I thought I was above him, that he would have attained to importance in education had he cared to do so at the start [...]

He used so many bad words, [and] threats against me, but I kept my temper [and] and asked the people to beg him to cease to insult me. They all begged him but he refused. I started to go out but the people begged me to stay a little for the returns [and] the bicycle money which they brought accordingly [...]

Mr Briggs started his brawling by saying that he was not going to accept the £40. [That] he must know if £10 should be cut off [and] that I had no power whatsoever to reduce his salary or dismiss him [and] that he had been working for eight years in the mission [and] I who came only yesterday [came] to disparage him. That we are equals employed by the same people.

Wokoma’s culture of civility as expressed in the above piece of restraint in the face of an aggressive attack by a subordinate officer within the colonial establishment is a demonstration of the public dimension of his cultivated tastes. In his construction of a convincing portrait of civility and refined manners in the above passage, Wokoma projects the whole idea of imperialism as a cultural enterprise. His capacity to restrain himself and maintain a composed calm under extreme provocation is an exhibition of high standards of English civility and politeness. According to Paul Langford, civility in the English culture of refinement entails ‘self-command, self control [...] moderation of affections and collectedness of mind’.¹³² It also involves ‘propriety’, in terms of ‘what was fitting, suitable and appropriate in the sense

¹³²Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p. 157

of taste as well as virtue'.¹³³ Wokoma's public display of self control above illustrates his cultivation of both the taste and the virtue of civility. Beyond his public demonstration of what Keith Thomas has described as 'bodily comportment and emotional restraint' as 'outward signs of the inner disposition of the soul',¹³⁴ Wokoma is fully aware of his status as a representative of the British political and cultural establishment, and understands that the public occasion of the altercation with Mr Briggs is an opportunity to either, as Easthope puts it, 'sustain the English national identity',¹³⁵ or put it to public ridicule. Wokoma's conscious performance of civility, and in a difficult situation, therefore represents the 'superficial' dramatic aspects of politeness, which Langford describes as 'a code of conduct that regulated social behaviour from the way to make a bow to the proper manner of holding a tea-cup'.¹³⁶

Wokoma's portraiture of the character of Mr Briggs—also a teacher and an 'agent' in the missionary establishment—is not merely to emphasize the solidity of his own English mannerism of self-government and regulation of emotions, but also to exemplify what Saheed A. Adejumobi has called the 'contradictions in the African encounter with modernity'.¹³⁷ Wokoma's strategy in this apparent questioning of the aims and accomplishments of colonialism—in the manner of what Gikandi has referred to as 'the incomplete project of colonialism'¹³⁸—is to create two opposing sides of a public conversation within the same British civilizing project, the *polite* and *civil*, represented by Wokoma, and the *rude* and *uncultured*, symbolized by Mr Briggs. That Mr Briggs could exhibit such uncivil behaviour and in the public spectacle of the school and the Church, the very hallowed platforms of imperial enlightenment, is a subtle reference to the confusion and the

¹³³Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p. 154

¹³⁴Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility*, p.18

¹³⁵Anthony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture*, p. 3.

¹³⁶Paul Langford, 'British Politeness and the Progress of Western Manners: An Eighteenth Century Enigma', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7 [1997]), pp 53-72 (p.63).

¹³⁷Saheed A. Adejumobi, 'African Intellectual History: Contradictions in the African Encounter with Modernity', *Intellectual News*, 13.1 (2003), 38-55 (p.38).

¹³⁸Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p.13.

ambivalence surrounding the merit of the modernization venture. Wokoma's overall philosophical pronouncement in creating contrasting attitudes to politeness within this scenario could therefore be read as the imminent crisis of sensibility inherent in what Keith Thomas describes as 'the notion that it was permissible to impose civilization by force'.¹³⁹ For Wokoma, the character of Mr Briggs is a profound illustration of the miscarriage of that notion.

The second aspect of Wokoma's construction of a modern African public image of politeness is his presentation of civil and refined behaviour in contexts of lightheartedness, such as dinners, lunches and tea sessions—settings whose objectives Lawrence Klein describes as 'the pleasures of polite conversation for the pursuit of public improvement'.¹⁴⁰ In his representation of occasions of public gathering over categories of food, Wokoma frames his identity of cultivated Englishness in the regulated codes of interpersonal or group behaviour, what Bettina Boecker has explained in terms of taste providing the 'aesthetic and moral guidelines that further increase social cohesion'.¹⁴¹ Thus, by engaging what Soile Ylivuori has called 'venues of public sociability',¹⁴² Wokoma foregrounds his identity of public refinement. In other words, what Wokoma attempts to underscore is not the idea of food, or feeding, but the notion of social interaction, and the creation of a platform for the performance of what Samuel Parker refers to as 'the arts of behaviour and conversation'.¹⁴³ Wokoma therefore represents a colonial African version of the British fashioning, or 'stylizing of the external self'¹⁴⁴ over food. The following entries from his diaries illustrate:

January 3, 1920: My twenty-fifth birthday. Tea and luncheon specially prepared. Messrs Joseph David West and Kio Frank Goodhead being invited, formed the birthday party on the table. Miss Tariah served.

¹³⁹Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility*, p.151.

¹⁴⁰Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation', p. 875

¹⁴¹Bettina Boecker, *Imagining Shakespeare's Original Audience, 1660-2000: Groundings, Gallants, Grocers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.31.

¹⁴²Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness*, p. 109.

¹⁴³Samuel Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonic Philosophy* (Oxford: W. Hall, 1966), p. 27.

¹⁴⁴Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness*, p. 107.

February 28, 1944: I visited Judge Jibowu this afternoon at 5.p.m [...] We had tea together. He was very kind and polite.

March 4, 1951: I had dinner at Iyi-Enu Hospital at the invitation of Mrs W. Bingham. The following were at the table: Dr and Mrs Longley, Dr and Mrs Piercing, Dr Miss Kerry.

November 25, 1951: My wife and I had tea with European staff of the hospital, Mr and Mrs Willet and Mr Ross were also present.

In ceremonizing tea and dinner occasions as integral parts of colonial public life, Wokoma does not just affirm the British heritage of his public culture of taste, but also foregrounds the modernity of his imperial citizenship. As Paul Langford has argued, ‘English dining was more than socializing; it constituted a kind of public legitimacy’.¹⁴⁵ The tea and dinner sessions therefore provide Wokoma with an opportunity of entrenching the public legitimacy of the performance of British-style politeness in African colonial contexts of recreational gathering. In the above illustrations, the degree of Britishness—in terms of the observance of Lawrence Klein’s ‘criteria for politeness’¹⁴⁶—of Wokoma’s public performance of the civility of polite conversation is dependent on the formality of the context, and of course, on the identity and constitution of the conversationists. For instance, the semi-urban, semi-public setting of Wokoma’s 25th birthday party, in its inscription of his keen aspiration towards the politeness and refinement components of colonial modernity, cannot compare in levels of conversational civility with the two meetings with British gentlemen and ladies in March and November 1951. The latter gatherings—the dinner at Iyi-Enu Hospital and the tea party with Hospital staff—apart from enabling the Europeans to affirm their Britishness, also validates their connections of English civility with Wokoma’s category of imperial citizens whose conversion to British ideals has been one of the abiding achievements of the cultural project of colonialism. The meeting with Judge Jibowu is similarly insightful because it presents an opportunity for two enlightened Africans to exhibit their ‘high esteem for conversation and conversability’¹⁴⁷ in the British tradition of politeness. Jibowu, an accomplished Nigerian lawyer who was trained at Oxford University and who

¹⁴⁵Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Characters, 1650-1850*, p. 239.

¹⁴⁶Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation’, p. 875.

¹⁴⁷Klein, p. 875.

is part of the high society of colonial urban Warri,¹⁴⁸ as Wokoma observes in the passage, does not disappoint, for he ‘is very kind and polite’. All in all, Wokoma’s presentation of his disposition towards polite gatherings is an affirmation of his cosmopolitan identity which is crucial to his construction of a self of colonial modernity.

Wokoma’s aestheticization of tea sessions is particularly illustrative of the public legitimizing of his modern self of refinement. For instance, he dramatizes the importance of tea by underscoring its function on significant occasions of conviviality, in conformity with the association of the tea ceremony with ‘high breeding and social awareness’,¹⁴⁹ according to Meredith Mahoney, which underlines its significance in the British culture of politeness. However, as evident in the cited excerpts, Wokoma underscores the important role tea plays as an identity-affirming cultural category in the sites of imperial domination. Beyond contributing to what Mahoney refers to as ‘the overall pleasantness of life for British colonists in the tropical frontier’,¹⁵⁰ tea also serves to validate the prestige of the civilized class of Africans among whom is Wokoma. Wokoma’s company in the social event of tea drinking may be, according to the excerpts, European or British, or African, but what marks it out is its implication for high culture. Tea thus becomes, both in the British society and its imperial outposts, as Chin-Jung Chen argues, a ‘fashionable’ exercise in status affirmation which ‘the upper classes guarded jealously in an attempt to preserve its exclusivity’.¹⁵¹

Wokoma also entrenches the social significance of dinners in the construction of an African colonial culture of refinement in the same mode as the tea parties. The March 4, 1954 dinner outing with a group of British doctors and their spouses not only foregrounds the Englishness of his polite sensibilities, but also his rank as an enlightened African in the colonial setting.

¹⁴⁸Warri served as the headquarters of the then ‘Warri Province’ in colonial Nigeria.

¹⁴⁹Meredith Mahohey, ‘Hospitality, Civility, and Sociability: Taking Tea in Colonial Barbados’, Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Project: Paper 1539626529, <https://dx.doi.org/d.i:10.21220/52-+4xk-2581>, p.20. [Accessed 2 December 2020], p.28.

¹⁵⁰Mahohey, ‘Hospitality, Civility, and Sociability’, p.28.

¹⁵¹Ching-Jung Chen, ‘Tea Parties in Early Georgian Conversation Pieces’, *British Art Journal*, 10.1 (Spring/Summer 2009), 30-39 (p.30).

Wokoma therefore presents dinners, just like tea ceremonies, as rituals of sociability which could bring together the main characters in the colonial project in contexts of the performance of high culture. Carol Summers, in her study of the role of dinners in colonial Uganda, has suggested that they constitute some kind of ‘ritual of affiliation’¹⁵² where the upper class connection between the British colonial agents and local subjects are mobilized and fostered. Wokoma demonstrates how tea occasions and dinners also serve as ceremonies of affiliation connecting the elite ranks of Southern Nigerian natives with the British colonial officers, missionaries and Europeans of other callings.

By dramatizing the domestication of English manners in his colonial Southern Nigeria—particularly those thematizing the codes of public conversation, in terms of what Thomas Hobbes identifies as ‘the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind’—Wokoma frames his colonial modernity within the expanded scope of their performance, reception and interpretation as cultural forms. Thus, by re-enacting the production of British taste in colonial situations, Wokoma extends the meaning of Englishness to the point where, as Angela Woollacot puts it, ‘colonialism becomes an inter-constitutive process that shaped British society and culture’.¹⁵³ Wokoma’s construction of the colonial identity of politeness tends to corroborate the impression that there are ways in which the performance of high culture in the imperial outfields sharpens and gives force to British practices of sensibility and refinement

Wokoma’s public performance of the culture of gentlemanly politeness in the episode involving Mr Briggs, and in the several contexts of sociability over food, could also be read as his signposting of the attitude of colonial mimicry. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, mimicry occurs when ‘colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to “mimic” the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions

¹⁵²Carol Summers, ‘Radical Rudeness: Ugandan Social Critiques in the 1940s’, *Journal of Social History*, 39.3 (Spring 2006), pp. 741-770 (p.743).

¹⁵³Angela Woollacot, *Gender and Empire* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.4.

and values'.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the exhibition of composed restraint in the face of aggression and abuse by Mr Briggs does not just imitate or 'mimic' the English cultural code of the government of emotions, but is also an inscription of his identity as a British subject. Encouraged by 'colonial discourse', therefore, Wokoma frames his public identity of taste and refinement in the domain of colonial modernity within established British traditions. However, Wokoma also underscores the inevitability of what Bhabha describes as mimicry's construction 'around an ambivalence', and its mandatory 'slippage, its excess, its difference'.¹⁵⁵ For instance, in the presentation of the uncivil behaviour of Mr Briggs—supposedly an agent of colonial modernity himself, by virtue of his location within the civilizing space of the missionary project—Wokoma highlights the slippages and differences in the cultural exercise of mimicry. Again, in expressing surprise at the level of Judge Jibowu's politeness—'he was very kind and polite' (February 28, 1944)—Wokoma acknowledges the probability of slippages and differences in a setting where two 'native' colonial subjects are re-enacting a key aspect of British conversational sociability. These possibilities can be framed in what Olakunle George has called 'the ambivalent location of black subjects'¹⁵⁶ in the cultural transaction of colonialism. Moreover, in entrenching the necessary ambivalence generated by the process of imitation, Wokoma illustrates Keith Foulcher's description of mimicry as 'the mottled reproduction in the colonial environment of a European subjectivity that is itself "impure", displaced from its origins and reconfigured in the light of colonialism's particular sensibilities and anxieties'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 155.

¹⁵⁵Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *Discipleship*, 28 (Spring, 1984), 125-133 (p.126).

¹⁵⁶Olakunle George, 'Missionary, the African Novel, and In-between', *A Forum on Fiction*, 36. 1 (Autumn 2002), 5-25 (p.25).

¹⁵⁷Keith Foulcher, 'Dissolving into the Elsewhere: Mimicry and Ambivalence in Marah Roesli's 'Sitti Noerbaja' in *Clearing a Space: Postcolonial Readings of Modern Indonesian Literature*, ed. by Keith Foulcher and Tony Day (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), pp. 85-108 (p.85).

4.2.3 Wokoma's Diaries, Rituals of Ceremonial Order and Public Aspects of Cultural Refinement

In this subsection, I examine Wokoma's presentation of ceremonial order as an inscription of the public dimensions of his culture of taste, and ultimately, an assertion of his African colonial modernity. In the last section, I read ritual and ceremonial order in Wokoma's diaries—with the example of the Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession of King George V—from the point of view of the private interiority, or 'transcendence', of Wokoma's aesthetic judgement. Here, however, I analyze ritual and ceremonial order in terms of the aesthetics of public propriety which entrenches an identity of cultivated tastes. I also locate Wokoma's presentation of the notion of ritual firmly in the public domain of the performance of culture, for it is in foregrounding their significance as social events that most ritual categories achieve enduring relevance. As Jane Campbell Hutchinson puts it, 'urban ceremonies impress public events upon the collective memory of the inhabitants of a city'.¹⁵⁸ As Wokoma demonstrates in his diaries, it is the enduring public outlook of 'urban ceremonies' that establishes and properly positions their significance—as rituals of religious allegiance or as celebrations of political affirmation—on the collective memory of the colonial and postcolonial Southern Nigerian society. For instance, it is the depth and manner of this inscription of the public element that enables Wokoma to recall and analyze the spiritual and political implications of the King George V's Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession many years after it took place. It is, therefore, in Wokoma's inscription of the publicness of what Lucy Johnstone and Mary Boyle have described as 'community rituals and definitional ceremonies' that his construction of identity becomes 'a public and social achievement rather than a private and individual one'.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸Jane Campbell Hutchinson, *Albrecht Durer: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 137-138. (p.137).

¹⁵⁹Lucy Johnstone and Mary Boyle, *The Power Threat Meaning Framework: Towards the Identification of Patterns in Emotional Distress, Unusual Experiences and Troubled or Troubling Behaviour, as an Alternative to Functional Diagnosis* (Leicester: British Psychological Society, 2018), p.91.

Wokoma therefore entrenches his own public identity as a subject of cultural refinement by constructing these events of ritual celebration and ceremony as ‘public performance’ and himself as participant, audience or organizer. As Scott Hughes Myerly and Tamara L. Hunt argue, ‘public rituals, such as royal coronations, protest demonstrations, the Olympics opening ceremonies, or mass rallies, are meant to be seen by everyone, and as such they are essentially a form of theatre’.¹⁶⁰ For instance, Wokoma’s presentation of the rituals of affirmation of colonial political authority, such as the Empire Day and the Flag Day, is consistent with patterns of public performances of British ceremonial order. This is especially when the ceremony is at the instance of the British authorities themselves, like the Empire Day Special Service which held at the St Michael’s Church, Buguma, on the 24th of May 1920 on the ‘order of Bishop Tugwell, Diocesan, at the request of the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford’. Even when the occasion is devoid of the direct prompting of British authorities, like the June 7, 1941 Flag Day celebrations, the proceedings are also held in strict compliance with the British standard, consisting of the special Church service, the school sports component and the civic ceremony. Wokoma’s utilization of occasions of ceremonial ritual, especially featuring a processional order of deep symbolisms, to construct a modern self of English refinement is fully captured in the following important Church service in Warri:

March 3, 1947: The First Assize Service in Warri was held in St Andrew’s Church Warri at the instance of His Honour Justice S.B. Rhodes. Chancellor Mbanefo of the Niger Diocese and Chancellor Doherty of the Lagos Diocese led His Honour with me to his seat in the following order of procession:

1) The Pastor (leading) 2) The Chancellor and 3) The Judge. The Registrar and others following.

His honour the Resident, the District Officer, Lt Col. and Mrs Laws, the local authority were present. The following lawyers, Messrs T.E. Nelson-Williams, Hon E. Egbuna, Arthur Presh, were also present.

Mr Nelson-Williams read the only lesson, Rom. VII.

¹⁶⁰Scott Hughes Myerly and Tamara L. Hunt, ‘Holidays and Public Rituals’, *Enclopedia.com*, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/international/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-andmaps/holidays-and-public-rituals> [Accessed February 4, 2021].

The service was conducted by me. The sermon Text was taken from Prov. 14³⁴—Righteousness exalted a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people.

Wokoma constructs an identity of public refinement in the above passage by framing himself within the British tradition of ceremonial ritual. He erects the portraiture of an individual of cultivated public tastes by presenting himself as a participant in the action of the ceremony, an admirer of the ritual spectacle by virtue of his perspective of aesthetic judgement, and as a chronicler who gives these ceremonial performances a form of permanence in his diary records. In highlighting his Britishness, the fulcrum of his self-construction as a figure of sensibility, Wokoma duly foregrounds the fact that the colonial Nigerian sense of ceremonial order and civility of public occasion is built largely on the British model. One of the most crucial elements of British ceremonial ritual that the above passage conveys is that of the intersection between the Church and the secular society—which Wokoma himself substantially epitomizes—and the concomitant sense of order and propriety in the delineation of the roles of participants, where every action, gesture and spoken word, have been carefully planned according to rank, purpose and significance. In the above illustration, as well as in others—including the King George V Silver Jubilee Anniversary celebrations—Wokoma frames his identity of polished civility in the light of the British premium on order and organization, what Langford describes as ‘a certain capacity to proportion their exertions to their objectives’.¹⁶¹

In the foregrounding of his participation in the ceremony cited above, Wokoma constructs his identity of Englishness by centralizing its implication for the affirmation of imperial power. In this way, he substantially corroborates Bridget Cherry’s contention that ‘processions help to mark the boundaries of power’,¹⁶² therefore lending credence to the British emphasis on the relationship between power and taste—which Wokoma sufficiently underscores in his diary-narrative. The critical import of the whole public spectacle of the ceremonial procession for Wokoma is to give lucid symbolic reference to the power and authority of the British political

¹⁶¹Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Characters, 1650-1850*, p.65.

¹⁶²Cherry, ‘London’s Public Events and Ceremonies’, (p.2).

MARCH 1947

Monday 3

The first Assize Service ⁽⁶²⁻³⁰³⁾ in Warri was held in St. Andrew's Church Warri at the instance of His Honour Justice S. B. Rhodes.

Chancellor Mbanefo of the Niger Diocese and Chancellor Doterty of the Lagos Diocese led his honour with me to his seat in the following order of procession: - (1) the Pastor (leading) (2) the Chancellor and (3) the Judge. The Registrar & others following.

His honour the Resident & Mrs Matthews, Magistrate Mr. C. Roberts, the District Officer Lt. Col. and Mr. Law the Local Authority, were present.

The following lawyers - Messrs T. S. Nelson-Williams, Hon. S. Egbuna, Arthur Presh, were also present.

Mr. Nelson-Williams read the only lesson Rom. VII

The service was conducted by me. ^{Text} the sermon was taken from Prov. 14²⁴ - Righteousness exalseth a nation: But sin is a re proach to any people.

^{show} Rev. G. R. Looks (Archdeacon Designate) ^{with Mrs Looks.} arrived Warri by the "Sobo" Today. He arrived Lagos on the 16th February 1947. (I did not know of it) ~~He~~

Diary Scan 15: Diary entry of March 3, 1947 showing Wokoma's subscription to British-influenced ceremonial order in illustration of his English refinement during an important Church service in Warri.

establishment—with its highly influential religious component—that, by this time in the late 1940s, particularly with victory in the recently concluded World War II, was all too obvious. In accentuating the power element of the Assize Church opening ceremony, Wokoma demonstrates his full understanding that ceremonies and rituals, as Shirin M. Rai contends, should not simply be explored as ‘historical backdrops, but as operative frames of power in public life’.¹⁶³

Wokoma’s expression of his modern taste through public ceremonial observances is sometimes complicated by the amalgamation of the local and traditional with the foreign and modern in his cultural space. There are, in other words, certain sites of the demonstration of modern African taste—in the colonial and postcolonial dispensations—that must derive energy and force from the cultural order as established in the African trado-cosmological world. This is the main import of Simon Gikandi’s contention that the project of cultural imperialism is only valuable when it is ‘fertilized by figures of the “other” imagination which colonialism has sought to repress’.¹⁶⁴

Wokoma’s depiction of his chieftaincy coronation of December 24, 1962 profoundly illustrates the traditional-modern interplay in his self-construction as a modern African gentleman of taste:

December 24, 1962: This morning, I was installed chief of Kalabari in Amachree Hall. I was presented by Chief W. Omoni C. Horsfall supported by all the chiefs and members of Horsfall’s House present [...]

I was then escorted to Wokoma compound where drinks were served with biscuits. I gave £3 and soft drinks to the women & a further 20f to the church women who accompanied me. Only Christian songs were sung in prayer, thanksgiving & praise to God.

Before we went to Amachree Hall, I was led to West India’s Hall (Dodo West India was my maternal grandfather), then to Horsfall’s Hall. The Amanyanabo also requested me to pay the same courtesy visit to him after I had already taken my seat in Amachree Hall. We went.

¹⁶³Shirin M. Rai, ‘Performance and Politics: Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament’, in *The Grammar of Politics and Performance*, ed. by Shirin M. Rai and Janelle Reinelt (New York: Routledge, 2015), 148-162 (p.148).

¹⁶⁴Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 4

Penguins 24 MONDAY (358-7)

This morning I was installed chief of Kelabori in Amachose Hall, I was presented by chief W. Omori G. Horsfall supported by all the chiefs & members of Horsfalls House present.

I paid the following fees:-

Chief Taincy fee 105 - -

Escort fee - Okunoyaba and chief to lead ~~me~~ escort me here 10 10 -

Secretary's Allowance 2 2 -

117 12 -

I was then escorted to Wokoma Compound where drinks were served with biscuits, I gave \$3 and soft drinks to the women & a further some of 20p to the church women who accompanied me. Only Christian songs were sung in prayers, thanksgiving & Praise to God.

Before we went to Amachose Hall I was led to West India's Hall. (Dodo West India was my maternal grand father). Then to Horsfall's Hall. The Amanyanabo also requested me to pay the same courtesy visit to him after I had already taken my seat in Amachose Hall. Weweweh.

Diary Scan 16: Diary entry of December 24, 1962 where Wokoma frames the hybridity of the African postcolonial public ceremonial process with the occasion of his chieftaincy installation.

Even though the core features of this essentially ‘native’ ceremony, especially those supposedly linked to heathenish backgrounds, are dismantled at Wokoma’s instance, he diligently observed the more secular rituals, including the procession symbolizing his induction into his community’s hall of fame and the reiteration of allegiance to the appropriate political authorities. For example, he demonstrates the fusion of the ‘local’ and the ‘modern’ by giving money to both the community women and the ‘church women’. Thus, even though ‘only Christian songs were sung in prayer, thanksgiving and praise to God’ in demonstration of his modern Christian self, he could not avoid the ‘traditional’ ceremonial procession, the foreign model of which he is very accustomed to through his exposure to British royal processions and to church processional rituals. Wokoma’s intention therefore is ultimately to demonstrate, and in the public form of a native ceremony, the interpenetrability and permeability of cultures and the implication of these in the construction of the modern African self of taste.

It is substantially beneficial to read Wokoma’s attempt to construct a credible persona of refined tastes and high culture by producing a public space of cultural fusion with material from both local and foreign sources, along the lines of what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha has called the ‘Third Space’, ‘a place of hybridity’ that is ‘new, neither the one nor the other’.¹⁶⁵ The deeply Christian, modern circumstances of Wokoma’s chieftaincy investiture is a form of the public consumption and performance of taste and culture in the Third Space. Wokoma’s construction of this important spectacle of cultural intertwining calls to mind Stephanie Newell’s notion of ‘paracolony networks’, which describes ‘new social relations and cultural flows [...] facilitated by British colonial presence [that] created meanings which were not generated in the metropolis’.¹⁶⁶

However, I argue that the ‘Third Space’ seems to mean much more to Wokoma— something close to a mutually-beneficial cross-cultural or inter-cultural interaction, particularly in the form of an ambitious extension of the

¹⁶⁵Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁶Stephanie Newell, *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: How to Play the Game of Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.44.

symbolic scope of Englishness. For Wokoma, the presence, or even *dominance*, of what is Kalabari in a given category of ‘modern’ taste does not diminish the quality of his identity of English sensibility, but rather extends the reach of the imperial cultural geography—or what Gikandi calls the ‘maps’ of Englishness.¹⁶⁷ Wokoma therefore presents a public performance of the ways in which the hybridity of cultural forms in the imperial historical moment, according to Carol A. Breckenidge, ‘situated metropole and colony within a single analytical field’.¹⁶⁸ This unified ‘analytical field’ seriously accounts for the Empire’s contribution to the shaping of the idea of Englishness. It is also the basis on which, according to Gikandi in his *Maps of Englishness* (1996), ‘we recognize the mutual imbrication of both the colonizer and the colonized in the making of modern social and cultural formations’.¹⁶⁹ In his presentation of the public aspects of this ‘mutual imbrication’, therefore, Wokoma does not just expand the circumference of Englishness, but also extends his own identity of African colonial modernity.

4.3 Wokoma’s Construction of African Modernity through the Intersection of the Private and the Public Aspects of the Culture of Taste

In this section, I argue that Wokoma’s presentation of the intersections between the private and the public aspects of the culture of taste enables the construction of his modern selfhood. In other words, Wokoma’s inscription of his personality of sensibility, high culture and social refinement, particularly in his production of a convincing portrait of African colonial modernity, makes a demand on the interior-exterior, domestic-social relationships he presents in his diaries. Thus, I pay attention to how Wokoma’s self-representation as a person of taste articulates the interpenetration of the private and public provinces of refinement and civility, what Paula R. Backscheider describes as the ‘infinitely permeable’ boundaries of both spheres.¹⁷⁰ I therefore read Wokoma’s construction of the interconnections between the private and public

¹⁶⁷Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*.

¹⁶⁸Carol A. Breckenidge, ‘The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3.3 (April 1989), 195-216 (p.196).

¹⁶⁹Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p.20.

¹⁷⁰Backscheider, ‘Introduction’, p. 9.

aspects of taste as important to the establishment of his identity of African modernity. I argue that his attempt at foregrounding the public as the product of the private, and the private as the motivation for the public, in his articulation of a culture of taste, represents what Gikandi calls ‘one of the preconditions for the emergence of the modern identity’.¹⁷¹ Similarly, as John Brewer puts it, the bringing together of the public and the private contexts in ‘conversational pieces’ enables ‘the emergence of a new identity as a person of taste and refinement’.¹⁷²

In the first subsection below, I invoke Jurgen Habermas’ conceptualization of the private sources of the public sphere to read Wokoma’s intersection of the private-public of cultural refinement as a progression from the interior, intimate spheres to the public realms and to analyze the processes involved in what Simon Gikandi refers to as the publicization of privately consumed culture in ‘conversational pieces’.¹⁷³ In the second subsection, I examine Wokoma’s presentation of the private-public intersection of the culture of politeness, particularly as it pertains to the establishment of what Soile Ylivuori calls the ‘semi-public’ arena of civility and consumption of culture.¹⁷⁴ In the third subsection, I read the private-public intersection of Wokoma’s culture of taste in terms of the interlinking of the interior and the exterior as enabled by the platform of the diary. Here, I examine how Wokoma ‘interiorizes’ the social experience of culture, on the one hand, and how he performs his reflections about culture in social, exterior settings, on the other.

4.3.1 Wokoma’s Diaries as ‘Conversation Pieces’ of a Culture of Taste

In many preceding segments of this thesis, I have highlighted Wokoma’s inscription of the fundamental character of privacy of the diary as a modern genre of self-representation. In this segment, I read Wokoma’s presentation of the diary as a version of Habermas’ ‘public sphere’, where the modern private self performs acts of identity construction, particularly in the area of the aesthetics of culture. Simon Gikandi illuminates:

¹⁷¹Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 57

¹⁷²Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p.59.

¹⁷³Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p.57.

¹⁷⁴Ylivuori, *Women and Politeness*, p.107.

In the domain of cultural consumption and refinement, the private self would become a public subject. Indeed, the presentation of the cultured self in public spaces of entertainment such as luxury gardens, concert halls, and theatres, or even the presentation of what might appear to be private gestures, including reading, as public acts was a prerequisite for what one may call the pose of the self. Even when culture was consumed privately, it needed to be publicized in portraits and conversational pieces.¹⁷⁵

Wokoma's diaries, as 'conversational pieces', therefore become 'public contexts' for the performance of the cultured self in the mold of 'luxury gardens, concert halls, and theatres'. For instance, the 'public' platform of his diaries provides an arena for the 'publicizing' of his private consumption of the aesthetic offerings of King George V's Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession, as recorded in his entry of August 24, 1941. His brilliant interiorizing of the transcendental dimensions of that ritual of affirmation of imperial power and influence, as well as 'Rev. Hodgett's chapel address preached from Rev. 5⁶⁻⁸' which inspired the entire session of aestheticization, becomes even more persuasive in the 'public sphere' of the diary. The same principle applies to his aestheticization of the episode where he receives an 'old photograph' of '1907 or 1908' from his wife as a 71st birthday gift and which has profound implication as one important cultural souvenir of his modernity. His private 'consumption' of this photograph as an artistic piece in the context of its significance in the construction of his modern identity is 'publicized' in his diary entry of June 10, 1965. Such other instances of the private demonstration of Wokoma's inclination to taste and aesthetics, like his playing on Mr Kaiser T. West's new organ in expression of his deep musical culture on April 19, 1919 is also 'publicized' in his diary. In all of these examples, Wokoma highlights the intersection of the private and public realms of his personality of cultural refinement to establish his African modernity.

Wokoma's diaries also centralize the aspect of Gikandi's notion of the 'presentation of the cultured self in public spaces',¹⁷⁶ in which—also in conformity with Habermas' idea—the private individual becomes a part of the collective public space of cultural consumption. In other words, beyond Wokoma's diaries serving as 'conversational pieces' or platforms for the

¹⁷⁵Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁶Gikandi, p. 57.

publicizing of private consumption of culture, they also capture Wokoma's representation of Habermas' private-public 'transition' within the frame of autobiographical construction. Thus, in attending 'Rex Cinema on the night of May 3, 1941', going 'for a film show about Martin Luther, the great Church Reformer' at the University College Hospital recreational room on January 28, 1962; attending the World War I fund-raising play at Degema on October 21, 1915; attending the musical concert at the Baptist Church Buguma on the night of April 21, 1919; going 'to see the German organ musical display at the international trade fair in Lagos on November 18, 1962'; calling on the 'office of the *Southern Nigerian Defender* [Newspaper]' to register as a regular subscriber' on February 23, 1944; attending the exclusive 'cocktail party' to mark Nigeria's independence on October 1, 1960, and so on, Wokoma entrenches his private 'cultured self' on the public space of the consumption of culture. In achieving this interconnection between the private and the public in the performance of taste, he establishes an identity of African cultural modernity.

Wokoma's implication, therefore, is that the private, domestic space becomes a site for the cultivation of private refinement. For Habermas, the private intimate sphere is 'the domain of production' where the individual becomes an 'economic producer' within the economy of taste and refinement.¹⁷⁷ In other words, there could be several ways in which Wokoma develops his culture of taste within the private 'enclosure' of the domestic—through the intellectual habits of reading and reflection; through the private impartation and influence of famous culture icons such as Chief Charles Inko Tariah; through private practice such as his playing on the organ; domestic interactions among family members, among others. As Gillian Swanson has argued, 'developing an orderly home of "proper" places [serves] to cultivate ways of behaving, thinking and expressing oneself'.¹⁷⁸ 'The function of the domestic realm' according to Swanson, 'was to cultivate forms of taste and familial feeling which were appropriate to the person of middle-class men and

¹⁷⁷Rick Roderick, *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Macmillan Education, 1986), p. 102.

¹⁷⁸Swanson, 'Subjectivity,' p.77.

women'.¹⁷⁹ The categories of Wokoma's programme of private acculturation outlined above—in Gikandi's words, 'domestic scenes of cultural posturing'—conform to Swanson's notion of domestic cultivation. However, we may also add Wokoma's three-year tenure with a British trader, 'Mr J. A. Hartly' at 'Fort Bellamy, Buguma, as a pantry boy' between 1906/07 and 1910 (June 10, 1965). In highlighting the domestic as a preparatory ground of cultivation, in readiness for public performance, Lauren Berlant asserts as follows:

Persons were to be prepared for their critical social function in what Habermas calls the intimate spheres of domesticity, where they would learn (say, from novels and newspapers) to experience their internal lives theatrically, as though oriented toward an audience.¹⁸⁰

As Wokoma's diaries show, the public arena of collective cultural consumption is a product of the private domain of domestic acculturation. In other words, and to put it in Habermasian terms, Wokoma's sphere of domestic production is a constitutive element of the public contexts of the economy of taste, especially within the colonial and postcolonial frame of modernity addressed by his self-representation.

4.3.2 Wokoma's Diaries and the 'Semi-Public' Contexts of Politeness

In the preceding section, I established with the evidence of Wokoma's diaries, that the domestic, intimate sphere of the home is the domain of influence of the woman, especially in terms of a culture of taste. Here, I examine the meeting point between Wokoma's presentation of the private culture of taste of the home, as epitomized by the woman, and the public contexts of civility and refinement as represented by the man, and how he constructs an identity of African colonial and postcolonial modernity in the process. This space of intersection is what Ylivouri has defined as the place of 'mutually beneficial mixed sociability', the 'semi-public' sphere.¹⁸¹ Thus, I read Wokoma's construction of this point of convergence of the private and the public

¹⁷⁹Swanson, 'Subjectivity,' p.77.

¹⁸⁰Lauren Berlant, 'Intimacy: A Special Issue', *Critical Inquiry*, 24. 2 (1998), 281-288 (p. 284).

¹⁸¹Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness*, p.149.

dimensions of taste in his diaries as an extension of his recovery and restoration of the significance of the woman to the ‘official’ public history of Nigeria which I addressed in Chapter Three. As we saw in that chapter, Wokoma’s women, in their almost aggressive public and political visibility, significantly expand the modern notion of the private, and to a large extent, break the boundaries between the private and the public. In this subsection, therefore, I am interested in how Wokoma’s women, as the traditionally ascribed guardians of the domestic sphere, have complicated the conventional understanding of contexts of public sociability, particularly as it concerns the performance of refinement.

Wokoma’s main strategy for inscribing the private-public identity of taste is to invest a high degree of the political element—particularly in Julien Freund’s conceptualization of the public as strictly ‘political’—¹⁸² in the colonial contexts of social interaction involving the woman as the figure-head of the domestic space. By so empowering his female characters, Wokoma accomplishes what Ylivouri identifies as the expansion of the ‘sphere of influence and modes of acceptable conduct’.¹⁸³ He expands the scope of the domestic presence in the colonial domain of ‘semi-public sociability’—albeit in his ‘emancipatory project’¹⁸⁴ on behalf of the domestic; in his bid to restore the woman to ‘public record’¹⁸⁵—by ‘politicizing’ the contexts of polite conversation. For instance, in his discussion with Mrs Williams, a Sierra Leonean women leader in Warri on March 16, 1944, the subject of conversation was the women’s efforts to contribute to the World War II ‘Win-the-War Fund’ which Wokoma found ‘very interesting’ from the political point of view. There is also Mercy Wokoma’s nationalist politics, highlighted in Chapter Three, where she ‘invades’ the public arena of the menfolk to make a significant contribution to the nationalist struggle and to the formation of the

¹⁸²Freund, *L’essence du politique*, pp. 292-293.

¹⁸³Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness*, p. 107.

¹⁸⁴Terry Lovell’s ‘Subjective Powers? Consumption, the Reading Public, and Domestic Woman in Early Eighteenth-Century England’, in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. by Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 23-41, (p. 31).

¹⁸⁵Grace A. Musila’s ‘Archives of the Present in Parselelo Kantai’s Writing’, p.247.

postcolonial nation through mainstream partisan politics. Wokoma therefore constructs the identity of refinement by bringing together the domestic and the political, an unlikely combination—especially given the partisan texture of the ‘ideology of domesticity’.¹⁸⁶ In achieving this, he affirms Bettina Boecker’s assertion that ‘situated at the intersection of the private and the public, taste is a manifestation of political responsibility’.¹⁸⁷

In the postcolonial context, however, Wokoma would further expand the frontiers of the domestic, increasingly blurring the boundaries between the private and public domains of civility. The enhanced visibility that he gives to women even outside core political settings is a direct outcome of his ‘upgrading’ of his family from the colonial middle-class to the postcolonial elite class. However, the public arenas of civility and social refinement within which Wokoma constructs his post-independence modernity of taste have valid links with the platforms of political power. Wokoma’s son-in-law, Mr F.I. Ajumogobia, holds the high government position of Permanent Secretary of Education by virtue of which the spheres of Wokoma’s engagement with taste, civility and politeness become more public in the Freudian political sense. The idea of private sociability driven by the domestic-public interface is also further expanded. In this new social and political status, Wokoma’s wife could now accompany him on a ‘courtesy visit’ to the Governor-General, His Excellency Dr [Nnamdi] Azikiwe at State House Office’ on March 9, 1962. He could also visit ‘The Hon. Minister of Education, Mr Aja Nwachukwu’ with his daughter, Florence, on February 23, 1962. Again, Florence could, in her capacity as the senior officer in charge of the Domestic Science Centre in Lagos, attend ‘a reception by the Minister of Education, Mr Aja Nwachukwu in London’ on June 12, 1963.

Wokoma also establishes the notion of semi-public and private sociability within the domestic context of postcolonial civility, taste and politeness as he does in the colonial. While he still affirms the prominence of the female figure

¹⁸⁶Lovell’s ‘Subjective Powers?’, p.31.

¹⁸⁷Boecker’s *Imagining Shakespeare’s Original Audience*, p.31.

in the configuration of the domestic, it now encompasses the entire space of the home as a collective private sphere. As Swanson puts it:

The boundaries between public and private, civil and personal life, masculine and feminine, were evident within the domestic sphere as well as the split between the public ‘civil’ world and that of the private sphere of the home. Women were responsible for the effective segregation of living spaces in the home into public and private zones, so that functions concerning family and physical concerns—eating, cooking, washing, sleeping—were separated from areas where entertainment and social intercourse would occur, and the maintenance of hygienic and visual barriers between the home and the dirt and crowded bustle of the city outside was a task that denoted a family’s sense of order—and a woman’s virtuous respectability.¹⁸⁸

Wokoma’s presentation of his postcolonial Lagos domesticity attends to both strands of private-public intersection within the home. For instance, in the preceding section, I highlighted the cosmopolitanism of the ‘in-house’ family Christmas party of December 21, 1961, where ‘Mac’—Mr Ajumogobia—played ‘Santa-Claus’ and every member of the family, including Wokoma, gets a Christmas gift. This is the type of scenario that informs Swanson’s idea of the ‘segregation’ of family concerns from areas of ‘entertainment and social intercourse’ within the same domestic location. However, Wokoma presents another Christmas party within the same domestic environment and in the same Christmas season, where ‘outsiders’ attend, to blur the barriers between the private integrity of the home of the Ajumogobia’s and what Swanson symbolically refers to as the ‘bustle of the city outside’. According to Wokoma:

December 23, 1961: The children had a Christmas party this evening. About 12 children from outside attended. They had sports, biscuits and drinks. Their parents brought them and came for them. Their parents also had some drinks when they came for them. The party lasted 5-7 p.m.

In constructing the Ajumogobias’ disposition to the cosmopolitan culture of Christmas parties, Wokoma extends Swanson’s entertainment and social intercourse component of the ideal ‘domestic’ home to accommodate aspects of the public life of other elite families. The Christmas party ‘performance’ represents, in Swanson’s theorization, the ‘family’s sense of order’ which is characteristic of the refinement of culture in the British-influenced traditions of

¹⁸⁸Swanson, ‘Subjectivity’, p.77.

early postcolonial Nigerian modernity. Another instance of this type of ‘private sociability’ in the presentation of the domestic is the August 29, 1958 party organized by Mr and Mrs Ajumogobia ‘in honour’ of Wokoma and his Wife Mercy. While this event, held at the Ajumogobias’ high-brow Ikoyi government residence, is essentially private, there is a public angle to it, engendered by the presence of a number of guests from the Nigerian elite. According to Wokoma, ‘among those present were Honorable and Mrs Aja Nwachukwu, Minister of Education (Federal), Mr and Mrs Bunton, Acting Federal Adviser, Mr and Mrs Esua (Secretary, NTU)’. Here the ‘private’ of the domestic setting meets with the ‘public’ of ‘the city’, to establish a ‘semi-public’ spectacle of refinement. Wokoma’s portraiture of the domestic space of the Ajumogobias is perhaps best captured by Ylivouri’s observation that ‘the elite home [...] was not a private but a semi-private sphere, and [was] the sphere for polite sociability, hosting tea tables, dinners, concerts, and balls’.¹⁸⁹

What Wokoma achieves in his presentation of the ‘semi-public’, ‘private-sociability’ angle of the intersection between the private and public dimensions of refinement and civility is to entrench an important balance between the domestic intimacy of the home and what Terry Lovell has called ‘the carnivalesque street life of the modern city which in its flux and unpredictability, was the very antithesis of the culture of domesticity’.¹⁹⁰ About this all important balance, Richard Sennett avers: ‘The line drawn between public and private was essentially one on which the claims of civility—epitomized by cosmopolitan, public behavior—were balanced against the claims of nature—epitomized by the family’.¹⁹¹ Sennett further stresses about the modern urban society: ‘The tensions between the claims of civility and the rights of nature, epitomized in the divide between public and private life in the cosmopolitan centre, not only suffused the high culture of the era but extended into more mundane realms’.¹⁹² The intersection between the domestic and public in matters of taste is therefore part of Wokoma’s project of recovery

¹⁸⁹Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness*, p. 109.

¹⁹⁰Lovell’s ‘Subjective Powers?’, p.31.

¹⁹¹Sennet, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 18.

¹⁹²Senett, *The Fall of Public Man*, p. 18.

and restoration of the significance of the intimate narrative of civility, social refinement and culture of politeness in the 'official public history' of modern Nigeria.

4.3.3 Wokoma's Diaries, the Interior-Exterior Intersection and the Culture of Civility and Refinement

In this subsection, I argue that the intersection of the interior and the exterior in Wokoma's engagement with matters of civility, and the consumption and performance of culture affords him the context to construct a convincing identity of African modernity in his diaries. Here I examine the psychological domains of Wokoma's identity of social refinement and taste in the sense of the interiorization of 'external' action. I am therefore interested in the interior dimensions of Wokoma's performance of the tangible, social behavioural patterns associated with colonial—and also postcolonial—manifestations of 'Britishness'. I focus on the internal motivations and 'rationalizations' of the external experience of a culture of taste, in terms of Wokoma's own efforts to build up a private-public character of sensibility.

I read Wokoma's presentation of the interior-exterior identity of taste, civility and aesthetics in the light of what Mark S. Cladis calls 'the inward gaze' arising from 'periodic retreats from the public sphere for the sake of independent critical reflection', where this private retreat serves 'the benefit of public vision'.¹⁹³ This critical reflection, as we see in Wokoma's diary, can either happen as a prelude to or an aftermath of the consumption or performance of the specific cultural experience. What is implied here, therefore, is 'the cultivated connection between the inner self and the situational environment'.¹⁹⁴ My interpretation of Wokoma's interior-exterior self in matters of civility and refinement also centralizes David Coghlan's description of psychological inwardness as 'creative acts of understanding, of grasping and formulating patterns, unities, relationships, and explanations in response to questions posed to our experience'.¹⁹⁵ I am therefore interested in

¹⁹³Cladis, 'Radical Romanticism', p.31.

¹⁹⁴Cladis, p. 31.

¹⁹⁵David Coghlan, 'Interiority as the Cutting Edge between Theory and Practice: A First Person Perspective', 6. 2-3 (2010), 288-307 (p.290).

how Wokoma's identity as an individual of high sensibility, civility, and modern tastes presents an internal-external connection in terms of cultivation; and how his diaries function as a platform for the engagement of the interior-exterior, especially in its capacity as a genre of intimate conversation.

Wokoma adopts two strategies in the construction of the intersection of the interior and the exterior of the refined self in his diaries. First, he inscribes the ways in which the interior serves as the forge for the articulation and production of cultural material and the performance of civility. Second, he entrenches the manner in which the practical experience of the consumption and performance of culture and refinement becomes material for internal reflection. To put the two points above in more straightforward terms, I examine how internal reflection activates external performance in Wokoma's engagement with taste and sensibility on the one hand, and how external performance constitutes material for his internal reflection, on the other.

For Wokoma, the culture of taste as a private psychological positioning finds public expression in its performance. For instance, in the entry of February 23, 1944, Wokoma demonstrates his intellectual and cultural attitude by registering 'as a regular subscriber' of the *Southern Nigerian Defender* newspaper, a product of the internal, mental structures of his orientation of literacy built across years of personal and social development. Wokoma's mentality of high culture is such that presents his modern self of enlightenment as a public performance of the cultivated consciousness of the African. His public participation in such manifestations of the cultural tastes of colonial enlightenment as concerts, theatre, cinema, dinner and lunches, sports and formal ceremonies, among others, emerges from deeply cultured interior faculties.

Another illustration of Wokoma's presentation of the interior-exterior is as an internal, reflective preparatory ground for his public performance of taste and civility. This is probably the sense in which Paula R. Backscheider has stated that 'in the solitariness of the creative act and in the expression of deep, private feelings, often about the "private" sphere, epistles to the public are

composed'.¹⁹⁶ The implication here for our understanding of Wokoma's identity of refinement is that he 'sets up' the public, 'exterior' demonstration of culture and civility in the 'interior' domain of his diary before it actually takes place. This is illustrated in his sermons, which, as we established in the first section of this chapter, are products of protracted spells of interiority. Wokoma's diaries therefore become the private stage for the interior engagement with himself in the artistic venture of preparing sermons and addresses for public delivery or *performance*. Apart from the sermons, Wokoma's diaries serve as private planning texts for events of cultural significance which he organizes or plays a leading role in. There is the example of the August 1959 St Augustine's Church anniversary grand concert and religious play which he spearheads, and also the December 24, 1920 production of an end-of-year play and concert for St Michael's School Buguma. In both of these instances and several more, he begins to prepare for the cultural episode several days before, and his thoughts on that process of preparation are always captured in his reflections in his diaries. This means that his audience could foreshadow the episode before it actually takes place.

Wokoma's other strategy for the construction of the interior-exterior intersection of a culture of taste in his diaries is to 'privatise' or 'interiorize' a public episode of social refinement that has already taken place, particularly in the manner of re-interpreting it to affirm its significance. I highlighted this—albeit without foregrounding the interior-exterior aspect of it—in the first section of this chapter with the example of Wokoma's reflective recollection of King George V's Silver Jubilee Anniversary procession of May 6, 1935 as recorded in his diary of August 26, 1941. There are several other instances where the exterior experience of taste constitutes material for interiority, a process Sidney I. Dobrin calls 'the privatization of discourse', deriving from the idea that 'before a discourse can be made private [...] it must first of all be experienced publicly'.¹⁹⁷ This 'interiorization' of the public discourse of taste is expressed in Wokoma's admiration and glowing portraiture of certain individual 'performers' of high culture and civility that he considers as role

¹⁹⁶Backscheider, 'Introduction', p.17.

¹⁹⁷Dobrin, 'Going Public: Locating Public/Private Discourse', p.221.

models. One of these—as we have seen in a preceding segment—is Chief Charles Inko Tariah, whose ‘English’ attitudes manifest in various tangible forms, including his elevated musical culture, where he organizes and plays an assortment of musical instruments at concerts; his high sense of aesthetics in photography and game-hunting.

Wokoma also engages the relationship between the sincerity of inner conviction and the external display of polite manners in his portraiture of the interior-exterior of civility. In his diary-narrative, Wokoma explores the distinction between inward genuineness and outward exhibition, for his work serves as an autobiographical platform for articulating the opposing categories that Ylivouri describes as ‘theatrical self-representation and mirror of authentic interiority’.¹⁹⁸ As Gikandi affirms, politeness, ‘as the key word in the construction and presentation of British common culture’ has interior and exterior dimensions, where ‘politeness as a private category’ is ‘authorized or legitimized by its perspicuity in the public realm’.¹⁹⁹ This major marker of the British tradition of civility inevitably became part of the cultural package of British imperialism, and, as Wokoma’s diaries show, also served as one of the formative ethos of postcolonial refinement.

In establishing the interior-exterior intersection of polite courtesy and observation of the codes of civility, Wokoma centralizes the representation of the motives behind his participation in the ceremonial rituals of the affirmation of power and authority in both the colonial and the postcolonial political dispensations. Wokoma’s public, political identity is legitimized by a certain patriotic genuineness found within the provinces of imperial subjecthood. Some of the most convincing indicators of the interior sincerity of his absolute loyalty and allegiance to the British throne include his very committed service as an African agent of British colonialism, in both its political and socio-cultural senses, which brings him in direct confrontation with several aspects of the traditional life of his people. There is also his apparently uncompromising belief in the divine endorsement of the colonial enterprise,

¹⁹⁸Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness*, p. 107.

¹⁹⁹Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p.59.

which he expresses in thought, in speech and in action. A good example of the patriotic honesty of Wokoma's colonial civility is his aestheticization, and sublimation of the King George V's Anniversary celebration and his linkage of its major theme of power, authority and glory of the imperial establishment to '[the] beautiful and inspiring allegiance to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings'. In other words, his whole-hearted acceptance of British colonial power and authority is made inevitable by its supposed divine sanction.

Wokoma's mindset of honest patriotism is also found in his quite robust project of underlining his allegiance and loyalty to British authority during World War II, where there is always evidence of the inscription of interior sincerity in public proclamation. For instance, when he, in the public setting of a tribute sermon presented on July 9, 1944, refers to antagonists of Britain as perpetrators of 'the awful catastrophe that threaten this great and wonderful world of God with all its beauty and splendor, and the collapse that seems to threaten the great structure of civilization', it is based on the authority of his moral conscience. In the preparatory context of the sermon of September 12, 1942, Wokoma instructively remarks:

What do we mean by our displays and demonstration on occasions like the Empire Day or at any National event? Surely, they are the forms and ceremonies by which we show and express our feelings of loyalty and allegiance [...] But the value of these forms and ceremonies or words and expressions depend on their genuineness and sincerity, if they are no more than mere outward forms and ceremonies, then they are worthless and have no meaning. They are even worse, because they are hypocritical and unreliable. But if, on the other hand, they express the inner feelings of the soul, then they are priceless; their value cannot be estimated.

Wokoma's notion of the ideal identity of modern African refinement and politeness takes into consideration the intersection of interior honesty and exterior display. As evident in his diaries, the moral logic inherent in the public performance of genuine civility, especially in contexts of affirmation of allegiance to political authority, is validated by a commensurate inner sincerity. Wokoma's admonition in the above passage is situated against the backdrop of his awareness of the pervading hypocrisy among colonial subjects, even in their outward displays of loyalty to the imperial powers. According to Douglas Haynes, in the colonial era, many natives felt that 'imperial ritual was a

meaningless charade' and participated in it only 'as a means of avoiding offence to their rulers'.²⁰⁰ Wokoma's own virtue of inner sincerity in the performance of rituals and ceremonies, and in the discharge of official function, not only derives from his spiritual status as a 'Puritan', but from his convictions as a colonial African bastion of Englishness. Paul Langford, in establishing the integral place of honesty in British civility and cultural life, stresses that 'among the public figures who most seemed to represent the English spirit, the most valued were those who were transparently sincere'.²⁰¹ By his self-representation, Wokoma seeks to construct that 'British' persona of valued transparent sincerity within the context of his colonial Nigeria in the overall project of foregrounding his identity of refinement.

I therefore read Wokoma's disposition in this regard along the lines of Soile Ylivouri's observation concerning 18th and 19th centuries English politeness that the dichotomy between the 'internality and the externality' of politeness 'is visible in questions of moral and honest internal politeness versus dissimulative and hypocritical external politeness'.²⁰² Wokoma's articulation of the refined self through the interconnection between inner sincerity and outward performance is also illustrated in his portrayal of postcolonial Nigeria. Even though it takes some time, according to his diaries, for Wokoma to fully settle into the mental frame to accommodate postcolonial Nigerian politics, when he eventually does, he extends virtually the same level of civil responsibility and allegiance to the new political authority. One major illustration of this position for me is found in his thoughts about the 'Swearing-in-Ceremony' of Nigeria's first postcolonial President on October 1, 1963.

Monday, September 30, 1963: This morning I sent the following telegram to their Excellencies, Dr Azikiwe, President-designate of the Republic of Nigeria and Mrs Azikiwe (First Lady)...:

²⁰⁰Douglas Haynes, 'Imperial Ritual in a Local Setting: The Ceremonial Order in Furat 1890-1939', *Modern Asian Studies*, 24.3 (1990), 493-529, (p.494).

²⁰¹Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p.122.

²⁰²Ylivouri, *Women and Politeness*, p. 107.

‘Please Kindly accept our congratulations. May God’s all-sufficient Grace abide with your Excellencies always’. Rev. Canon and Mrs Wokoma.

Tuesday, October 1, 1963: I attended the Parade and Swearing-in as the 1st President of the Republic by Chief Justice, Sir Ademola.

Perhaps the first and most fundamental evidence of the genuineness of Wokoma’s civility in the above passage is his introspective reflection over the episode on the pages of his diary, the supreme literary platform for not just the conversation with the self, but also the determination of the ‘truth’ of the self. That he maintains his respect for Dr Azikiwe, even in the privacy of his diary, perhaps his closest ‘confidant’, what Daniel E. Will describes as ‘the private inner sanctum of individual feeling and thought’,²⁰³ is an authentication of the sincerity of his public relationship with ‘the President-designate’. Secondly, even when the excerpts may not contain a very overt statement of loyalty in the panegyric sense, his invocation of the sacred divine element, in terms of what ‘God’s all sufficient grace’ can enable the new President to achieve, foregrounds the genuineness of his outward show of civility and refinement. Thirdly, his identification with the national public ceremony, including the ritual order of the ‘Swearing in’—which follows an inner conviction to do so on the pages of his diary—represents an expression of his ‘British’ consciousness concerning the significance of events like this, where political power is both aestheticized and legitimized. Wokoma’s conviction that political rituals and ceremonies—described as ‘crucial arenas of politics in which authority was generated, confirmed and contested’²⁰⁴ by Douglas Haynes—are veritable instruments for the formulation of the cosmopolitan self, is also critical to the interior-exterior identity of taste that he foregrounds. The episode of the ‘Swearing-in’ thus becomes another illustration of Wokoma’s framing of his identity of cultivated tastes within what Bettina Boecker calls the ‘political dimension of civility’, where ‘the import of taste and politeness clearly transcends the purely aesthetic [and] the realm of sophisticated living and good manners’.²⁰⁵ In ‘genuinely’ identifying with the hierarchies of power

²⁰³Daniel E. Will, “‘Dear Diary--Can You Be Used Against Me?’: The Fifth Amendments and Diaries”, *Boston College Law Review*, 35.4 (1994), 965-1002. p.974.

²⁰⁴ Douglas Haynes, ‘Imperial Ritual in a Local Setting’, p.494.

²⁰⁵Boecker’s *Imagining Shakespeare’s Original Audience*, p.31.

in his postcolonial nation, Wokoma indicates his identity of modern refinement.

Wokoma's clear demonstration of interior sincerity, as a prelude to and legitimization of outward performance of civility in the postcolonial context serves to establish that the influence of British modernity, and modes of social refinement and politeness which informed colonial cultural identity, was also a formative aspect of postcolonial political consciousness. Wokoma now serves as a symbol of the link between the colonial and the postcolonial, particularly in the 'Britishness' of political ritual of affirmation. Thus, when Gikandi, in his *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (1996), argues that 'in the formerly colonized space itself, we encounter the foremost insignias of colonial culture overdetermining the making of what were supposed to be decolonized identities',²⁰⁶ he is, for me in this thesis, problematizing a phenomenon of African modernity which Wokoma's presentation of the interior-exterior intersection of civility in his diaries epitomizes.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the extent to which Wokoma's presentation of the private and public dimensions of a culture of taste articulates an identity of African modernity for him. In responding to the research and sub-research questions of the chapter, I presented my analysis in three sections. In the first section I examined how Wokoma's presentation of the private aspects of the culture of taste establishes a self of African modernity for him. In my delineation of Wokoma's notion of the private in matters of cultural refinement, aesthetics and civility, my argument proceeded in four subsections—Wokoma's framing of his diary-narrative as an extended private history of African taste and refinement, his private interiority and the African modernity of taste, his domestic cosmopolitanism and its implication for the African culture of taste, and Wokoma's domestic intimacy and the culture of politeness and gentlemanly courtesy.

²⁰⁶ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p.9.

In the second section, I argued that Wokoma's presentation of the public aspects of a culture of taste constructs an identity of African modernity for him. Here, my analysis proceeded on the structure of three main subsections. First, I investigated Wokoma's presentation of the public dimensions of 'colonial' consumption and performance of taste. Second, I explored the 'publicness' of Wokoma's construction of colonial politeness. Third, I interrogated the public aspects of British rituals of ceremonial order as integral aspects of the African colonial modernity of cultural refinement. In the third subsection also, I explored Wokoma's exploration of colonial and postcolonial ceremonial order as the public spectacle of hybrid taste, in terms of the fusion of local and foreign cultural forms, and argued that it is part of Wokoma's project of extending the scope of Englishness.

In the third section, I examined Wokoma's presentation of the intersection between the private and the public aspects of a culture of taste. This section also has three subsections. In the first subsection, I argued that Wokoma's diaries, as 'conversational pieces' serve as settings for the publication of privately-consumed culture, along the lines of Habermas' theorization of the private sources of the public square. In the second subsection, I read the private-public intersection of Wokoma's culture of taste in line with Ylivuori's conceptualization of the 'semi-public' sphere of civility and politeness, and argued that the point of convergence of the domestic and the public in Wokoma's diaries is a veritable illustration of the notion of 'private sociability'. In the third subsection, I analyzed Wokoma's private-public interconnection of taste and social refinement as the interior-exterior, centralizing the intersection between the 'interior' as the site of psychic production and 'the exterior' as the arena of the performance of that production.

Ikeji, Lagos 30 MONDAY (273-92)

Mrs. ~~St. John~~ Jumbo called to see me.

A letter was received from Chief Donald Wokoma expecting me to be at Buguma on the 5th of October for a Wokoma Home Meeting. This is probably impossible in view of the present country-wide strike. Besides I have just started Dr. Hummer & White's medical treatment.

This morning I sent the following telegram to their Excellencies Dr. Azikiwe, President designate of the Republic of Nigeria & Mrs. Azikiwe (First President), Mac.
Kindly forward it for me free: -

Please accept our congratulations
May God's all-sufficient grace
abide with your Excellencies al-
ways

Rev. Canon & Mrs. Wokoma.

Republic Day Celebrations

Mac kindly brought me (1) Invitation to the parade & the swearing-in ceremony at Tafawa Balewa Square, G. A. M.
(2) Reception at State House 6.30 p.m.

Diary Scan 17: Diary entry of September 30, 1963, where Wokoma constructs a modern African self of the the public demonstration of internal sincerity with the episode of his felicitations to the soon-to-be-sworn-in President of Nigeria.

Chapter Five Conclusion

My central argument in this thesis was that Atkinson Wokoma's presentation of his private and public selves in his diary-narrative establishes an identity of African colonial and postcolonial modernity. I investigated the ways in which Wokoma—an Anglican priest of the Protestant and Puritanical persuasion who served in the Church Missionary Society (CMS) evangelical programme of Southern Nigeria in the early 20th century—deploys the life writing form of the daily record in articulating his modern African selfhood in the private and public spheres of existence. The analysis and discussion of the thesis responded to the main research question: How does Wokoma's construction of his private and public selves in his diaries articulate a modern identity? The thesis also tried to answer the following sub-research questions which constituted the core chapters of analysis: How does Wokoma's construction of the private and public of his 'Puritanic' self establish his African modernity? How does Wokoma's presentation of private and public history in his diaries establish an identity of African modernity? How does Wokoma's articulation of the private and public aspects of a culture of taste in his diaries establish his modern African identity?

For my analysis in this thesis, I adopted a methodology that centralizes the place of life-writing in the construction of the modern self. I read Wokoma's diaries as autobiographical texts of self-representation and self-construction that inscribe the significance of the private and the public as both opposite and intersecting spheres of the self in African colonial modernity. My analytical approach established the role of the diary in the construction of the African modern self, through an examination of Wokoma's collection, produced between 1915 and 1965. I concentrated on three main aspects or sites of modernity—'Puritanism', 'presentation of history' and 'the culture of taste'—which also formed the three analytical chapters of the work. Thus, I explored how these 'themes' of the modern self can be read as modes of interpretation of Wokoma's construction of his African modernity through the presentation of his private and public selves in his diaries.

Wokoma's diaries, produced within the context of colonial and immediate postcolonial Nigeria, at the apogee of 20th century African modernity, constituted the primary text of this thesis. However, there are other documents of self-construction and representation, which are part of the general oeuvre of Wokoma's life-writing that provided inter-textual evidence and possibilities in the course of analysis. They include Wokoma's letters, sermons, notebooks, photograph and minutes of meetings. I also relied on manuscripts of semi-biographical documents on Wokoma, produced by close family—including Florence Ajumogobia's 'A Brief Sketch of the Life and Work of the Late Rev. Canon Atkinson Mbrenagogo Wokoma, J.P. 1894-1965' (1975) and Odein Ajumogobia's 'Soldiers in the Parsonage: A True Story of Faith, Sacrifice and Courage in Southern Nigeria 1894-1968' (2016). The above biographical accounts, a couple of published materials which provide biographical information, including a 2016 newspaper tribute marking the 50th anniversary of Wokoma's death, interviews with surviving acquaintances, and scholarly texts of cultural, historical, political and sociological inclination, formed the core of secondary sources for the thesis.

My analysis benefitted from conceptual frameworks that centralize the diary's critical profile as an autobiographical genre in discourses of how the emergence of the individual self predicated the dawn of modernity. I examined the extent to which Wokoma's diaries vividly illustrate the connections between the individual self and the notion of modernity on the one hand, and the relationship between both selfhood and modernity and the autobiographical form of the diary, on the other. I also problematized, through my analysis of Wokoma's work, the manner in which sociologists like Max Weber connect the emergence of the individual self with the outset of modernity in the 16th century¹ and literary scholars like Georges Gusdorf establish a linkage between the diary as a life-writing genre and the inscribing of modern selfhood.² I tried to illustrate how Wokoma's diaries open up to interpretative parameters that draw upon the above lines of inquiry; and also underscore the diary's profile as both an instrument of the construction of

¹Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*.

²Gusdorf, 'Condition and Limits of Autobiography', pp-22-28.

modern selfhood or subjectivity and a medium for the projection of the constructed self. Thus, I located Wokoma within Hegel's assertion that 'the right of the subject's particularity, his right to be satisfied, or, in other words, the right of subjective freedom, is the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times'.³ A central objective for me, therefore, was to analyze Wokoma's modern selfhood according to how he constructs the distinction between pre-modern Africa—or Wokoma's 'traditional Kalabari self'—and the modern self of 20th century colonial and postcolonial Africa.

Furthermore, I explored the ways in which Wokoma's production of his modern private and public selves exemplifies Hegel's important remark concerning the dual composition of the modern self as *private* and *public*. For instance, I anchored my analysis of Wokoma's quite robust self-representation of emotional and intellectual interiority on Hegel's classification of the private, for within Hegel's private identity are 'interior' categories such as 'love, romanticism, the quest for the eternal salvation of the individual [...] moral convictions and conscience'.⁴ I also relied on Hegel's 'principles of civil society'⁵ in my interrogation of Wokoma's social, public self. In other words, in examining Wokoma's construction of African modernity in his diaries, I was interested in what his private and his public selves, as separate spheres of existence, say about his modern identity.

My argument concerning the modernity of Wokoma's private and public selves also benefitted from the work of psychology theorists and scholars like William B. Swann, Jr and Jennifer K. Bosson, who contextualize the distinction between the private and the public by stipulating the 'two broad classes of identities or self-views' as 'personal self-views' and 'social self-views'.⁶ I found particularly useful Swann Jr and Bosson's position that individuals like Wokoma who 'perform' acts of 'self representation'⁷ seek to establish the modernity of their selfhoods, by presenting their private and

³Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p.84.

⁴Hegel, p.84.

⁵Hegel, p.84.

⁶Swann, Jr and Bosson, 'Identity Negotiation', p. 448.

⁷Swann, Jr and Bosson, p. 448.

public identities as distinct compartments. It was also rewarding for me to substantiate Swann Jr and Bosson's ideas with similar theoretical material provided by Constantine Sekides, Lowell Gaertner and Erin M. O' Mara, who highlight the dichotomizing of *the individual self* and the *collective self*.⁸ My central concern, therefore, became how Wokoma's individual 'private' self and his collective 'public' self inscribe an identity of African modernity.

This thesis also drew upon theorizations about the interconnections and intersections between the private and the public domains, particularly in the analysis of Wokoma's construction of the modern African self. Jurgen Habermas' conception of the 'public sphere' as a product of the 'private'⁹ explains, to a large extent, Wokoma's presentation of the modern intertwining of his private and public identities, in terms of how his 'personal' subjective self contributes to the formation of his 'social', objective self. Furthermore, Richard Sennet's concepts of the 'public domain' and 'the fall of the public man', in which the 'private realm' gives 'a new focus for [...] emotional energies'¹⁰ to the 'public sphere', provided theoretical support on how the experiences of Wokoma's public life impact his private self.

I tried to demonstrate how Wokoma's construction of African modernity through the presentation of the intersection of the private and public selves in his diaries illustrates the several categories of the interaction between the interior-exterior. Paula R. Backscheider's work on the intertwining of the public and private spheres in early modern England was beneficial to my reading of the interactions between Wokoma's private and public selves. According to Backscheider, for whom the 'boundaries' between the private and the public are 'infinitely permeable',¹¹ the intersection between the private and the public in life-writing ventures such as Wokoma's manifests in about six sub-spheres or sub-realms:

(1) The interior life of the subject (2) the personal space [where only a few, perhaps not even all members of a nuclear family are admitted] (3) the intimate space [in which all kinds of intimate thoughts, intellectual as well as emotional,

⁸Sekides, Gaertner and O' Mara, 'Individual Self', p.98.

⁹Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Square*, p.3

¹⁰Sennet, *The Fall of Public Man*, p.4.

¹¹Backscheider, 'Introduction', p.1.

are shared] (4) the social space (5) the shared space (6) the national-historical-social context.¹²

Furthermore, I tried to underscore that one way of describing the force of Wokoma's private on his public is found in Backscheider's statement that 'in the solitariness of the creative art and in the expression of deep private feelings, often about the "private" sphere, epistles to the public are composed'.¹³

I consider my foundational accomplishment in this thesis as the examination of the extent to which Wokoma's work demonstrates how the art of self-representation became one of the indicators of the new African educated elite of 20th century colonial Nigeria, at the apogee of the African modernity project. I also view as a key statement of this work the argument—through Wokoma's text—that the diary genre was one cultural form capable of presenting a most convincing, most profound, and most authentic identity of African modernity, in both the private and the public spheres.

For me also, one of the chief achievements of this study, is the affirmation of the scholarly significance of the diary—as a form of life-writing and a category of the autobiographical genre—in colonial and postcolonial discourse. One way in which I underscored this in this thesis was to establish, from a self-representation point of view, the sources of colonial and postcolonial modernity, particularly in the context of 20th century Southern Nigeria. In other words, against the backdrop of Wokoma's diary-narrative, I examined how African modernity emerged from such socio-historical and political experiences as trading contacts with Europe, beginning from post-abolition 19th century; the missionary project, which began in the same timeframe of the mid-1800s; and the imperial politics of domination which was firmly established in the early 20th century. Beyond this, however, I attempted to foreground the ways in which Wokoma's work illustrates the major theoretical formulations of colonial and postcolonial studies. I tried to demonstrate how such notions as 'hybridity', 'the third space', mimicry,

¹²Backscheider, 'Introduction', p.9.

¹³Backscheider, p.17.

agency, among others, could be sufficiently and profoundly exemplified within the narrative of the African diary as in the more popular and conventional forms of artistic and literary expression. I sought to entrench the ways in which Wokoma's strategies for the construction of his modern African self in his diaries enables a rewarding interpretation of the dominant ideas and concepts of colonial and postcolonial modernity.

This thesis, through the examination of Wokoma's self-construction, also enabled a productive interrogation of the significance of the private and the public domains in the discourse of modernity. Apart from illuminating—in the cultural form of the diary—the contributions of such major theoretical voices as Hegel, Habermas, Calhoun, Senett, Freund, Backscheider, Burckhardt, among others, in the articulation and application of the guiding, foundational principles of the modern private and public spheres, I attempted to highlight precise categories of these spheres as they provide insight in the reading of Wokoma's self-representation. For instance, across the core analysis chapters of the thesis, I was able to frame certain aspects of Wokoma's construction of his private self within the province of narrative interiority—as a psychic, transcendent quality significant to the interpretation of emotional and intellectual circumstances and experiences. My reading of Wokoma's presentation of his private self also consisted of an examination of his portraiture of the domestic self, particularly as expressed in his marital, family, friendship and neighbourhood relationships, and in the centralization of symbolic and concrete representations of the home, the household and the entirety of the domestic space. Similarly, I framed my investigation of Wokoma's public self in the identification of such broad categories as the political public, the public of the school, the public of the Church, the social public, the community public, the civil society public, the historical public, among others; and also in such deeper ideological categories as resisting publics, national publics, transnational publics, colonial publics, postcolonial publics, competing publics, counter-publics, and so on.

One other accomplishment of this thesis is the centralization of the African diary, as represented by Wokoma's work, in the 'elevation' and 'dignification' of the marginal and marginality in colonial and postcolonial discourse. I

consider as both rewarding and insightful my exploration of how the marginal form of the diary—according to Cynthia Huff, ‘marginal because it is excluded from the artistic hierarchy’¹⁴—is utilized as an agency to, in the words of Grace Musila, ‘recover’ the relevance of such marginal discursive categories as the domestic, the mundane, the ordinary, the feminine, among others, and to ‘restore’ them ‘to public record’.¹⁵ In Chapter Two, for instance, I examined Wokoma’s elevation of the domestic and the mundane, the immediate and the ordinary to discursive significance through the processes of ‘sacralization’ and ‘sanctification’—both denoting the conferment of spiritual importance on events, objects and experiences ordinarily undeserving of it. In Chapter Three, I established that Wokoma engages with the historical dimension of this discourse by underlining the identity of the African woman, in the form of Mercy, his wife, whom he ‘recovers’ from the margins of colonial and early postcolonial social history and ‘restores’ to the national ‘public record’.¹⁶ In Chapter Four, part of my argument is that within the frame of the culture of taste, he upgrades this project of recovery and restoration by progressively ‘complicating’ the domesticity of the African woman, thereby setting up crucial structures for her public responsibility in the post-independence era.

There are enough reasons to project that this thesis on Wokoma’s construction of his colonial and postcolonial modernity through the presentation of his private and public selves would stimulate further intellectual engagement with the African diary. My prediction is based on my conviction that the African diary—particularly the African diary of the colonial and early postcolonial dispensation—provides abundant resource material for the study of the cultural value of the African experience. This thesis, and the

¹⁴Cynthia Huff, ‘That Profoundly Female, and the Feminist Genre: The Diary as Feminist Practice,’ *Women Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 17, No.3/4 [Fall-Winter, 1989]), pp. 6-14 (p.8).

¹⁵Musila, ‘Archives of the Present in Parselelo Kantai’s Writing’, p.247.

¹⁶Musila, p.247.

circumstances in which it was conceived,¹⁷ has demonstrated that African archival research is still a hugely uncharted cultural territory, particularly in terms of the discovery, the publicizing and the study of such archival material as Wokoma's diaries, a category Karin Barber calls 'tin-trunk texts'.¹⁸

The 'tin-trunk' classification of Wokoma's work—in terms of forms of 'printed and handwritten texts often preserved for many years' in 'trunks under [...] beds', 'plastic bags' or 'glass-fronted cabinet'¹⁹—has particular implication for the development of African archival research. First is that there is certainly a considerable mass of prestigious primary material of the life-writing dimension yet to be unearthed; still stowed away, unaccessed and unexplored, in 'trunks' in Africa. Second is that these resources—as I believe I have demonstrated with Wokoma's oeuvre—can tell us more about the patterns and processes involved in the modernization of Africa and the African, in instructive, profound private and public dimensions. Third is that, as I have also tried to underscore with Wokoma's work, these archival resources may yield more scholarly and intellectual dividends when exposed to the insight provided by contemporary conceptual frameworks in cultural studies.

Writing about the crucial place of access and discovery in the development of African cultural studies of the archival kind within the context of African modernity, Barber writes:

This hoarding of texts, often taking place over a lifetime, provokes inquiries not just into the nature of the texts themselves but into the habits and dispositions surrounding them. What we appear to be witnessing is a kind of local, do-it-yourself archiving, the purpose and effects of which we want to explore further.²⁰

I anticipate greater institutional participation in the promotion of archival research, which would in turn stimulate greater and more sustained individual interest. It would therefore be intellectually-rewarding to see more doctoral research projects, like the present one; more books—like Karin Barber's

¹⁷Wokoma's diaries were discovered in 2016, while scouring through his papers in search of material for a biographical project. Before this time, nobody had any idea the treasures the informal storage systems which contained them bore.

¹⁸Barber, 'Introduction', p.4.

¹⁹Barber, p.4.

²⁰Barber, p.4.

seminal *African Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (2006) and more journal articles emerge from such discoveries as that which has Rev Canon Atkinson Mbrenagogo Wokoma and his diaries as subject.



Picture 14: Even in death, Wokoma remained a symbol of African modernity. The setting of his lying-in-state during his funeral in June 1968 evokes a western ambience. There appears in this last photo of him a certain sublime signposting of what he represents as both an agent of colonial civilization and a proselytizer of his people.



Picture 15: Just two months before his own death in January 2020 at the age of 90, Wokoma's son and heir, Dr Charles Inko Tariah Wokoma (with walking stick) pays a visit to the graveside of his beloved elder sister, Florence (Sisi) Daisy Inetubo Ajumogobia (nee Wokoma, 1922-2001) in Lagos, Nigeria. Second from left is Wokoma's grandson, H. Odein Ajumogobia, mentioned several times in this work. All of Dr Wokoma, Florence, and Odein provided important biographical material for this researcher.

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