



ABSTRACT

WIFE FOR THE HIGHEST BIDDER talks about Juliet a young lady with a very desperate and materialistic father whose greed for money made him to collect bride price from three suitors, NDI the farmer, LE GRAND FONCTIONNAIRE and MISSA TCHETGEN, the trader in “TRIOS PRETENDANTS ... UN MARI” by GUILLAUME OYONO MBIA. His intention was to give the daughter to the person who will pay the highest amount of

WIFE FOR THE HIGHEST BIDDER; THE CASE OF JULIET AND HER SUITORS NDI, LE GRAND FONCTIONNAIRE ET MISSA TCHETGEN IN “TROIS PRÉTENDANTS ... UN MARI” BY GUILLAUME OYÔNÔ MBIA

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Introduction

Marriage is an institution ordained by God almighty, the creator and owner of the universe for man. God almighty took time to create everything that will make man's stay on earth comfortable and pleasurable God went a step further to address man's loneliness, this He did after creating Adam and discovered that Adam needed a companion, a help mate, a friend, a dear partner, a wife.

In Genesis Chapter 2 verse 18,

And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone 'I will make him a help meet for him'.

God almighty did this to take care of Adam's loneliness by providing a companion for him. Adam on his part did not like



money as bride price to him and his family. At the end of the day none of the suitors mentioned above was able to marry his daughter Juliet because his greed backfired on him as a result of Juliet's determined decision not to marry any of them. Juliet finally got married to Oko who was able to pay the three hundred thousand francs demanded by his father, Atangana as bride price for her. The article gives the definition of "Highest Bidder" and also a brief summary of the book "TROIS PRETENDANTS ... UN MARI". The article also talks about the methodology used for the work, which is the analysis method with facts drawn also from the internet, article and write-ups. It equally mentions the theoretical framework used for the articles which is radical feminism. A theory which talks about the belief in full social economic and political equality for women.

Key words: Highest Bidder, Suitors, Bride Price, Greed, Desperation, Three Hundred Thousand Francs.

the fact that he was alone and was very happy when God gave Eve to him as wife. And Adam said in Genesis Chapter 2 verse 23 & 24

This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

So marriage as an institution is sacred since it is ordained by God almighty for the good of man, but man over time seems to be deviating from God's purpose of marriage for man and he is bringing his selfish interest into play and has turned marriage into a money generating venture. Man in his uncontrolled greed for material things has turned marriage that God instituted as a sacred institution into a money spinning machine like the case of Juliet, the main character in this article whose father in his uncontrolled appetite for money and a gross display of his deep poverty decided to put his daughter Juliet for sale ready to suck away the blood of any man who is ready to pay the highest amount of money as bride price in the name of giving out the hand of Juliet her daughter in marriage, without bordering to find out what the person does for a living, the age of the person in comparison to the age of his daughter, the number of wives the person already had and whether the daughter is even interested



in the marriage or not. Oyono Mbia is a Cameroonian, who uses his literary works to expose African's cultural heritage and the loop holes therein particularly as it concerns this work and the need for cultural amendments where necessary. Through his literary work, he exposes the problems associated with the systems of bride price in Cameroon, the problems encountered by men in the course of looking for wives to marry and the ugly positions taken by parents to exploit the suitors in the name of traditions and cultural practices, like Atangana the father of Juliet did.

Brief Summary of the Author

Guillaume Oyono Mbia, is a Cameroonian born in Mvoutessi, in 1939. After his secondary education, he taught in the Evangelical College of Libamba after some time, he went to England to study philosophy.

- **DEFINITION OF WIFE:** According to www.merian.webster.com a woman acting in a specified capacity used in combination. (2) A female partner in a marriage. Synonyms: helpmate, lady, Mrs. Madam, Old lady, woman, helpmeet; while www.oxfordlearnersdictionary.com defines a wife as the woman that somebody is married to. A married woman. For www.quora.com it defines wife as marriage between two opposite sex only duly, legally married bound together by their laws. Henceforth, the woman married is called wife. All the definitions show clearly that a wife is a woman that is duly married to a man as approved by customary and western laws. And from that day when her bride price is paid, she is pronounced wife. She ceases to be addressed as single girl, or a spinster, since her status has changed to that of a married woman "A Mrs." A woman with her husband, therefore, the law recognizes her changed status and every respect and attention required by law to be given to her is accorded her.
- **HIGHEST BIDDER:** According to www.lawinsider.com dictionary, highest bidder means the Qualified Bidder who has quoted the highest Quoted Guarantee per passenger (Q G per PAX) in the Bid Process. While www.law.dictionary.org defines highest bidder as; He who at an auction, offers the greatest price for the property sold. (2) the highest bidder is entitled to have the article sold at the bid while they freedictionary.com defines highest bidder as a publicly held sale at which goods are sold to the highest bidder. These definitions also makes it very clear who the highest Bidder is. Pathetically, these biddings have to do with a human being orchestrated by



Atangana the father of Juliet the girl who is to be given out in marriage and his family members who gave their full support all in their very desperate move to grab cash and material gains from their suitors.

- **BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE BOOK**

“Trois Prétendants ... un mari” published by Guillaume Oyônô Mbia, a Cameroonian in 1962 is his first drama piece he wrote. The work exposes the ugly conditions that goes with bride price payments and all the humanly created bottle necks attached to the process just for the parents to be able to suck the suitors looking for the hands of their daughters in marriage. “Trois Prétendants ... un mari”, presents Juliet a young teenage girl with very burning ambition to get western education, she was very enthusiastic about her studies and demonstrated every needed determination while still pursuing her secondary education but never knew that the family championed by her father “Mr. Atangana had arranged to marry her out to any man who was ready to pay the highest bride price. The family had several meetings concerning the marriage but nobody told her anything about it”. Three men were interested in marrying her. The first suitor’s name was Ndi, a big time farmer who paid a hundred thousand francs as bride price. A very brave and hardworking young man who was very happy to entertain anyone who visits him at home with very fresh palm wine to drink. The second suitor was a very senior civil servant called Mbia, who happily paid two hundred thousand francs but this man who is the second suitor, was quite elderly compared to the age of Juliet, presented as a very young teenage girl. This second suitor was a man as old as Juliet’s father with so many wives and several children already. He was a top government functionary and has worked for several years in government. While the third suitor was a “trader” a reputable businessman called Missa Tchetgen.

In their desperation to get money out of the suitors, they looked for every available opportunity to milk them. At the end of the day they were trapped in their greed, because Juliet the daughter of Atangana was not interested in any of the three suitors that already paid Juliet’s bride price through her father. Ndi who paid hundred thousand francs, Le Grand Fonctionnaire who paid two hundred thousand francs and Missa Tchetgen who was willing to pay two hundred thousand francs was told to pay



three hundred thousand francs. At the end of the day non of the suitors was able to marry Juliet because she did not like any of them but stood her ground to marry the man of her choice. This situation threw Atangana, the father of Juliet and her family members into a very big mess which should serve as a very bitter lesson to greedy and heartless parents who wants to use the opportunity of the marriage of their daughters to milk the suitors of their female children dry forgetting that their daughters are human beings and not commodities, not farm lands, not animals.

Methodology: the book “Trois Pretendants ... Un mari” will be analysed based on the characters and their presentations, relating the story to the happenings of today and how it affects our cultural practices here in Nigeria, even though the author is a Cameroonian and has presented the challenges encountered by suitors seeking the hands of young maidens in marriage in Cameroon which is not a strange practice in Nigeria. Facts will also be drawn from the internet and other articles and write-ups.

Theoretical Frame Work: The theory to be applied in this work is the theory of radical feminism.

Feminism according to www.Britanica.com talks about the belief in full social economic and political equality for women. Feminism largely arose in response to western traditions that restricted women’s rights and participations. It is manifested worldwide and it is represented by various institutions committed to the activities of the rights of women and their interest.

In most of the western history, women movements were restricted to domestics spheres while public life was reserved for men. In medieval Europe, women were denied the right to own properties, to study, or even to participate in public life even at the end of the 19th century, in France, women were still compelled to cover their heads in public and in parts of Germany, a husband still had the right to sell his wife even as late as 20th century, women could neither vote for nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the united states where several territories and states granted women suffrage long before the federal government did so, women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative be it father, mother, brother, or even son. Married women could not exercise control over their own children without the permission of their husbands. Women had little or no access to education and were barred from most professions. In some parts of the world such restrictions on women continue today even in Nigeria.

In this work the theory of radical feminism is applied because it is a perspective of feminism that calls for a radical re-ordering of society in which male supremacy is



eliminated like we saw in the book “Trois Pretendants ... Un mari, where Juliet the daughter of Atangana stood her ground and refused to marry any of the suitors that her father brought and went ahead to marry the man of her choice not out of disobedience to her parents but based on realities which she tried to make them understand”.

REACTIONS OF THE SUITORS

According to the book, all the suitors were very happy and excited to get married to Juliet because she was a very young teenage girl, very beautiful and attractive, with basic education and also quite smart and very promising but the father, Mr. Atangana had a very selfish motive which was not in the interest of the daughter.

Hear the discussion between Atangana Juliet's father Missa Tchetgen one of the suitors and Mbarga.

TCHETGEN: Venant au fait: combien?

MBARGA: Trois cent mille francs seulement!

TCHETGEN: Suffoqué: kooo! Tant d'argen pour une femme?

ATANGANA, explique: C'est que Juliette a été au collège, et ça coûte cher, ah Missa Tchetgen! Elle parle parfaitement le français.

Tchetgen was very eager and happy to take Juliet for wife and so asked the father how much is the bride price. The moment Atangana mentioned three hundred thousand francs, he almost got suffocated and became very furious and surprised and exclaimed! So much money just for bride price of a woman?

To further convince the suitor (Tchetgen) Juliet's family members started mentioning Juliet's qualities and abilities to Tchengen).

Matalina: Elle sait aussi caudre!

Markrita: Brother ...

Atangana: Faire la causine ... euh ... enfin quelquefois!

Abessolo: Bref, Juliette sait faire tout ce qu'une femme blanche peut faire! De plus comme mon fils te le disait.

Missa Tchetgen: elle parle parfaitement le français.

Mbarga: Elle parle aussi l'anglais. Intéressant, hein. Missa Tchetgen? Pour ton commerce!

Tchetgen: Paisqu'elle sait tant de choses, j'irai jusqu'à cent cinquante mille francs.



Tchetgen having listened to all they have said about Juliet, that she speaks French language perfectly, she also speaks English language, she can cook very well in fact, that Juliet can do everything any white woman can do. Still very willing and interested in the marriage went further to tell them that he was ready to pay as much as one hundred and fifty thousand francs, since she knows so many things.

The whole members of Juliet family rejected Tchetgen's offer of one hundred and fifty thousand francs because they were not satisfied with what he has offered. Hear them:

Tous, désapprobateurs: Ah ka ka ka ka!

Atangana, comptant sur les doigts; elle parle l'anglais, l'allemand, le doiche, le Jaman, toutes ces langues que les blancs enseignent à Dibamba!

Tchetgen: impressionné: ko o!

Cinq langues?

Abessolo: surenchérissant:

Sans compter le bulu, évidemment!

Tchetgen: Mais que voulez-vous que je fasse de toutes ces langues.

Je me sers seulement du pidgin English pour mon commerce!

Toutefois, je veux bien aller jusqu'à deux cent mille francs.

Tchetgen, after offering one hundred and fifty thousand francs and still did not meet the expectations of the family, they kept convincing him by letting him know that Juliet had some other qualities that were not previously mentioned to him, they said she can speak English language very well, Dutch, German, and all the languages taught in Dibamba! Tchetgen was very impressed but told them that he didn't need all those languages for anything after all he uses only pidgin English to sell his goods. Never the less he was ready to increase the bride price from one hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand francs, still showing every readiness to marry Juliet but the greedy Atangana and his family members were not willing to give out Juliet. What a bidding method that turned Juliet, a young teenage girl into an essential commodity that was kept to be taken by the highest bidder! What a custom!! What a tradition indeed.

Mbia, the second suitor who happily paid two hundred thousand francs as bride price with every excitement and thinking everything about payment of bride price was over visited his inlaws expecting to discuss modalities of taking his wife home but was



shocked when he was told that he needed to pay additional hundred thousand francs before Juliet will be released to him as his wife, hear his words:

Mbia, après un silence gêné, tu disais donc ...

Atangana, comme je le disais, nous autres de Nvoutessi n'aimons pas garder deux choses en même temps: on ne sait jamais, de nos jours!

Ainsi ce peuvre Atemeteme, à Ngôlbang ...

Tu avais entendu cette épouvantable histoire, Mbarga?

Mbarga: impatienté: vas-y? Dis-lui ce que nous avons décidé!

Atangana: se jétant à l'eau: Bon ... Moi, j'aime toujours parler en grand! Je ne suis pas de ces pères – là qui compliquent inutilement les questions de mariage! Verse-moi cent mille francs de plus, et tu emmènes Juliette ce soir même!

MBIA, sursautant: Quoi? Cent mille francs de plus?

ATANGANA, battant déjà en retraite: Rein que cela ...

MBARGA: avec toute sa dignité de chef! Et je te fais signer l'acte de mariage!

MBIA: tonnante Trois cent mille francs pour une seule fille? Qui êtes-vous dans ce village?

ABESSOLO: Je ... nous ...

MBIA, sec: Ça suffit! (Tendant la main) Mon argent!

Tous: Hi yé é é é!

MBIA: Mon argent, je dis! (voyant que les villageois se regardent, consternés) Ah je vois ... je vois! Vous essayez de me voler afin de marier vos fils! Attendez donc voir! (Tonnant) Engulu

Mbia, the grand fonctionnaire who was so full of himself and very sure that he has paid a very huge amount enough to marry Juliet, was not expecting to hear Mr. Atangana talk about money again as far as the bride price issue was concerned, but to his rudest shock, he was told to bring another one hundred thousand francs plus the two hundred thousand francs he paid before. this piece of news was too strange for him to hear and too much for him to bear, he got furious, became very angry and saddened by the situation demanded for the refund of his money” “mon argent,” my money “mon argent,” my money. His reactions goes a very long way to explain in detail the challenges and pains African men go through in the hands of some families



whenever they want to get married. It paints a very ugly picture of happenings surrounding African's cultural practices particularly as it concerns the payments of bride price.

Ndi too, who was the first suitor to pay one hundred thousand francs also demanded a refund of his money when he was told to pay additional two hundred thousand francs before he could get Juliet as wife.

“NDI: qui est légèrement”

IVRE: Bon, bon, ça va!

Je suis d'accord! Remboursez-moi

(Murmures désapprobateurs)

Et gardez votre fille! Tout bien pense: je préfère chercher une épouse moins instruite que Juliette, et qui sera peut – être plus docile.

Ndi too got disappointed, frustrated and sad. And left with no option asked for the refund of his money and said he will rather prefer a less educated girl that will not cost him his fortune.

Ndi's reactions too shows the frustrations young men go through when they want to get married.

CONCLUSION:

At the end of the day it was the suitor with the highest amount of money called Oko that got Juliet as wife, he was the suitor that was able to pay the sum of three hundred thousand francs as demanded by Juliet's father Mr. Atangana and his family members. Ndi, the first suitor could not meet up with the amount so did not marry Juliet, Missa Tchetgen also could not pay the three hundred thousand francs and also did not marry Juliet. Even Mbia, the “grand fonctionnaire” could not meet up with the demands of Juliet's parents and also missed marrying Juliet. All these go to show the extent of greed, the level of desperation and the length African parents are ready to go when it comes to the exploitation of suitors seeking the hands of young girls in marriage.

There is the urgent need for African Traditional institutions to step into this matter to make parents know that their daughters are not meant to be sold when it comes to the issue of marriage but to be given out to a man of their choice who actually loves them and who can take care of them. After all no man can pay any man back in return for all the money he spent training his daughters.



Churches and mosques too should also teach their members through their pastors, Imans, and their leaders that female children are humans not commodities and as such are not to be kept for the highest bidder when it comes to the issue of marriage. When these are done, parents will gradually get to learn with time to do the right thing and young men's frustrations during marriages will be reduced while more young men will become more interested in marriage, this action will take away many young men and women who are due for marriage from the stress.

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