

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Chapter one takes a cursory look at the general background to the study of drama and concepts adduced by different scholars in adjudging drama: There is the Eurocentric and Afrocentric views on the existence of drama in Africa and what constitute modern African drama. Also in this chapter, there is the view and treatment on the Statement of the problem, Research questions, Purpose of the study, Scope of the study, Significance of the study and Research methodology.

1.1. General Background to the Study

Drama as an art form thrives on performance because it involves the imitation of an action, an enactment or a re-enactment of a story in lifelike situations. In all these, action or imitation of an action is involved. The Aristotelian concept of drama with its emphasis on imitation, plot, dialogue, conflict and so on has generated much controversy on what constitutes drama in the context of African traditional performances, generally. Based on this, two schools of thoughts have evolved. Some scholars support the adoption of the Aristotelian thought either totally or with some modifications while others oppose it. Consequently, there are two schools of thoughts on the contentious issue. These are the relativist school of thought and the evolutionist school of thought. Some adherents of the evolutionist school like Ruth Finnegan and Kalu Uka believe that there is nothing like African drama, and they condemn drama in Africa for its lack of linguistic content, plot, represented interaction of several characters, specialized scenery, among others, in comparison with drama in the western axis which is said to be the source for drama in Africa.

The arguments of the evolutionist school are summed up as Eurocentric, while the arguments of the relativist school, on the other hand, are summed up as Afro-centric views. Scholars such as Akporobaro F.B.O. (62) assert that "...the nature and aesthetic basis of dramatic performances in the traditional African context are in many respects different from what obtains in the European context." Consequently, this school of thought advocates the use of the African dramatic aesthetics in the evaluation of African plays irrespective of their contentious nature as argued by Iyorwuese Hagher (160). Nonetheless, the use of the African dramatic aesthetics is advocated

against the universal western dramatic aesthetics. This is premised on the indisputable fact that drama is an important element in traditional African culture. In other words, drama in Africa is buried in its traditional and cultural personality (Michael Echeruo, 136).

Related to the position of Echeruo, Enekwe Ossie (154), a vocal voice for the existence of African drama who distinguishes drama in Africa from other forms of drama in the world, maintains that the closest form of drama to it is the Asian drama. He goes further to state that African drama is more presentational, stylized, ritualistic, participative, mythic, integrative, religious, metaphysical, sensuous, celebrative, and total because it combines many art forms such as music, poetry, dance, acting, miming, mask, painting, singing, dialogue, acrobatics, among others, which distinguish it from the mainstream European drama quite psychological, peripheral, metaphysical and intellectual. Further to this argument, some Euro-centric critics who condemn African drama borrow from it to bring back the lost dramatic glory of the western drama. This borrowing implies that drama in Africa has attained some uniqueness and distinction.

1.1.1. Eurocentric Views on the Existence of Drama in Africa

The Eurocentric view is summarized in the “evolutionist school” headed by M. J. C. Echeruo. To them, “Africa has no culture or history” or African history and civilization are nothing more than the story of European activities in Africa” (Ademola Ajayi, 10). Jude Agho (10, 11 & 12) notes that the Eurocentric stance was clearly portrayed in works of Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness*) and Joyce Cary (*Mister Johnson*). Generally, the different Eurocentric socio-cultural and political misconceptions about Africa are well discussed by Felix Alao (13-18). These culturally demeaning euro-centric views on Africa generally extend to the literature in Africa (Ogundeji P.A., 211). These views imply specifically that there was no drama in Africa until the incursion of the colonial masters.

To buttress the above stance, Julius-Adeoye Rantimi (4) presents the Eurocentric views of three antagonistic scholars in the persons of Ruth Finnegan, Michael Echeruo and Richard Wallaschek. Finnegan argues that “there is no linguistic content, plot, represented interaction of several characters, specialized scenery in the African drama; Richard Wallaschek bemoans the meaninglessness of African drama as against the European’s meaningfulness in dramatic

content; while Echeruo condemns Igbo ritual drama as lacking in dramatic content and argues that traditional festivals are not drama, but rituals. Echeruo insists that there must exist a story to be enacted or imitated for a performance to be classified as drama. They simply dismiss drama in Africa as mere ritual. Also quite noteworthy here is Ola Rotimi who hinges his argument on the presence of an imitation of action in the performance for it to be termed drama. He opines that “any ritual display which contains mimetic impulse ought to be classified as drama, not ritual” (Ogunbiyi, 7). In addition to the trio’s denial is Uka (1973), cited in Osuagwu & Affiah (2012) who states thus:

What is usually called traditional drama...is not yet drama.
It is the legacy upon which drama may draw and draw with
ever increasing returns....what some usually and glibly call
traditional drama is properly and essentially elements of drama. (6)

From the above quotation, drama in African did not exist until the incursion of the colonialists and consequently, their imposed education and civilization and even if drama existed in Africa, it was not full-fledged. In other words, there was nothing like drama in existence in pre-colonial Africa. Western civilization brought drama to Africa as far as the Eurocentric scholars are concerned. This school insists, therefore, that for any performance to be classified as drama, it must contain elements of an imitation of an action and a story to be enacted or re-enacted. They conclude that the ritual festivals in Africa must conform to the Aristotelian concept of plot as the soul of drama, to be regarded as drama.

However, as far as Osuagwu and Affiah (6) are concerned, Euro-centrism amounts to ‘de-indigenizing’ or ‘de-traditionalizing’ African drama. Furthermore, in reaction to Finnegan’s criticism, Osuagwu and Affiah (6) strongly state that Finnegan’s conclusion was nothing but mere swallowing of Aristotelian postulations on drama which were descriptive of what Sophocles had done, rather than being prescriptive.

1.1.2. Afro-centric Views on the Existence of Drama in Africa

Apart from the observation of Osuagwu and Affiah above, other counter-criticisms by Afro-centric scholars abound. These criticisms are aggregated in the “relativist school.” The view of the relativist school, championed by Ossie Enekwe and Adedeji J. A., is that drama and ritual are reciprocal in function and similar in structure, so one can easily lead to the other. It means that it is difficult to separate ritual and drama, therefore, drama exists in traditional performances. Supporting this view, Ogunbiyi (4) states that the origins of drama lie in the numerous traditional, religious and functional rituals. J. P. Clark (58-59), similarly, suggests that the origins of Nigerian drama which is a subset of African drama, is likely to be found in the early religious and magical ceremonies and festivals of the Yoruba, the *egwugwu* and *mmo* masques of the Ibo, and the *owu* and *oru* water masquerades of the Ijaw; dramas typical of the national repertory still generally unacknowledged today.

Nkala (1990: 7), cited by Okodo (132), argues that, “that traditional African drama exists is not in question”. Agho (2000: 1) clarifies this by stating that “the novel is the only literary art form imported and imposed over and above the development from an entirely native pattern.” Manjula V.N. (6) states that “traditional drama was being performed before the colonial era, and its many forms, still performed”. Jane Plastow (170) also categorically states that drama (both secular and religious) existed in Africa long before the emergence in the 1960s of modern African drama. Okodo (131) discrediting Finnegan’s derogatory stance on the existence of drama in Africa, argues that if the dramatic performance of Greek classical culture originated from ritual performances in honour of gods, Dionysius and Apollos, why would the ritual performances of Igbo gods, nay all the gods in Africa, be rejected?

Besides that, Finnegan’s derogation culminates in naming drama in Africa as quasi-dramatic phenomenon. Similarly, Manjulah (5) quotes Finnegan who says that “Africans like specialized drama”. This, in itself, to a great extent, implies that Africa had some form of drama felt not worth equating with western drama, perhaps, because of its uniqueness that distinguishes it from its counterpart. As further argued by Julius-Adeoye (3) and Ododo Sunday (2), what constitutes drama or theatre is culture-referent and all performances are culture-based. Okodo I. strengthens this argument by stating that no culture is inferior. Besides the fact that no culture is inferior, every culture tends to be the resource for literature. In other words, literature is a cultural

production; by implication, drama is a cultural production. European literature is not in any way different in this case. Similarly, Schipper-de (56) says “there is no clear separation between oral literature and drama”. In other words, oral literature, which is an integral aspect of culture, contains elements of drama and is always at the same time drama in a way because performance is such an essential part of literature, just as in modern written drama.

As noted by Ajayi (24), an indispensable source for reconstructing the early culture and civilization of Africa is oral tradition. Though, oral traditions may take the forms of myths, legends, songs, folklores, proverbs, poems, epigrammatic sayings, popular history, and festivals, among others. Oral tradition is unarguably an integral aspect of culture. This argument further implies that oral traditions must have been the indigenous resources which had given drama in Africa its uniqueness. This Afro-centric stance in the words of some notable scholars, for example, Binebai Benedict (371) citing Nwamuo (2008) clarifies this by making reference to James Ene Henshaw thus:

The issue of sanctified space in African drama and the unique idioms of mime, drama, ritual and drumming which characterized the total African theatre today were first effectively woven into written drama in English by Henshaw in *Children of the Goddess*. (264)

Ogundeji (211), who has argued that traditional performances should be seen as theatre and drama, sums the Afro-centric stance as “before the existence of the corn, the fowl had always had something to eat”, a translation from a Yoruba proverb (kàgbádó tó dáyé, ó nihun tádiye n? je). This seems to find more strength in Chinweizu’s (1980: 4) observation cited in Osuagwu and Affiah (7) that “... African literature is an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literatures. It has its own traditions, models and norms. Its constituency is separate and radically different from that of the European or other literatures” (Osuagwu & Affiah, 7). In the spirit of this self-defense, quite a good number of scholars have argued convincingly that it is in the pre-colonial rituals, festivals and other related performances that we can boast of indigenous theatre practice long before the intrusion of westernization, said to be the genesis of African drama. As further argued by Kafewo Samuel (198), ‘theatre and drama are the meeting points for all the “dormant” elements of culture.’ It means that there was actually drama in Africa before the incursion of the Europeans because drama is an intricate aspect of culture.

The incursion of the colonial masters has only brought about culture contact and conflict. This, however, helps in dividing African drama into two types, namely: the indigenous tradition which is sometimes called traditional or indigenous drama, and the acquired tradition, otherwise called literary drama, or the scripted play (Osuagwu & Affiah, 8). As noted by Ogundeji (2005: 213), what is considered traditional drama appears to have a fluid colouration depending on the meaning implied:

many scholars usually describe the pre-colonial theatre (and drama) practice as “traditional”. The use of the term is usually contrasted with “modern” theatre. Taking the componential meaning of the qualifier “traditional” into consideration, we find it inappropriate for describing the pre-colonial form because the new, “modern” and post-colonial form is also a tradition and can, therefore, be suggested to replace it, since “traditional” is often used to suggest the meaning it connotes. This would have been useful except that the “modern” theatre and drama, which drew inspiration from the pre-colonial forms in adapting the “new” western forms, can also be described as indigenous and, in that sense, appropriately referred to as Nigerian and African theatre (and drama). Instead of dispensing with “traditional”, its usage should be properly contextualized as a special one; a jargon that includes the meaning of both an indigenous and an old form.

However, in spite of the ambiguous nature of the term “traditional drama” as noted in the observation of Ogundeji above, Manjula (6) divides drama (specifically, Nigerian drama) into two: traditional and modern. Michael Etherton in his book, *The Development of African Drama* analyses the causes that led to the development of drama as play-texts in Africa. According to him, there are three main factors such as the development of the study of drama in African Universities, the extensive influence of classical (Greek and Roman) and European form of drama on African playwrights, and the establishment of play-texts as the dominant mode of drama (Manjula, 6). Manjula goes further to divide modern drama into two: popular and literary. These two came about as a result of western education. This classification, in a way, shows the existence of drama in pre-colonial Africa before the imposition of western drama with its attendant effects.

One clear indication from the Eurocentric argument is the fact that the intrusion of the so-called universal western drama has, no doubt, created some indescribable impact on indigenous drama.

Similarly, the imported universal western drama, too, must have been Africanized or indigenized like the English language, thereby resulting in a different drama genre quite far from the western drama. That the peoples of Nigeria and Africa, as a whole, had their civilization prior to any form of contact with the West is no longer an issue.

Ademola Dasyuva (282) who examines western influences on contemporary Nigerian dramatic culture and tradition and classifies such into two (a combination of acceptance and rejection and nativization or domestication through appropriation or adaptation of western plays) agrees that western literary devices that characterize Shakespeare's dramaturgy have wielded much influence on contemporary Nigerian drama in the area of topicality and form, characterology and historicity. Contrary to this is the argument put forward by Ogundeji (221) who argues that the crucial western elements of theatre practice, such as the use of the proscenium stage, the box office, an elaborate narrative plot, dialogue, a passive audience, have generally not influenced the "traditional" theatre practice.

Nelson Fashina (5-6) makes reference to Albert Ashaolu (1982) who discredits Ogundeji's argument by revealing the 'coincidence' and 'correspondence and the marked influence of classical and Elizabethan forms of tragedy on J.P. Clark's *Song of a Goat* and *The Masquerade*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*; Sutherland's *Edufa* and the mythic-ideological plays of Wole Soyinka ranging from *The Bacchae of Euripides*, *The StrongBreed* and *The Swamp Dwellers* and *Camwood on the Leaves* (78). This is also supported by Crow Brian (29) who identifies "syncretism" in post-colonial African Drama- creative recombination of western and indigenous elements. In this case, *A Dance of the Forest* is described as a kind of African *Midsummer Night's Dreams* by the Swedish Academy which announced the award of Soyinka's Nobel Prize for literature (Jeyifo Biodun, 10). There is a distinct link here to indigenous ritual drama and Elizabethan drama.

Nonetheless, the cross-cultural influence brought about by culture contact is clearly reflective of the argument advanced by Afis Oladosu (145), "some aspects of culture are more relevant than others; some aspects may even be more destructive". The culture contact to the Afro-centric minds culminates in severe cultural onslaught and imperialism against the rich African culture generally, and specifically, drama. The cultural contact, no doubt, leads to cultural development

through borrowing and adaptation of new ideas. A culture must exist for it to have contact with another culture. For an existing culture to be self-sustaining, it must have a socio-cultural coping mechanism as well as some inherent means of self-development. However, the indigenous traditions that existed before western civilization have now been relegated to the backstage, and their popularity even in the rural communities which naturally ought to be the “home” of traditions has waned significantly.

In reaction to the above thinking, Ajayi (23) argues that “if it is true that the Africans had a rich history, culture and civilization, the pertinent question that arises is how the people have preserved their rich cultural past?” The implication of this cultural consciousness is that knowledge of this would help debunk the erroneous Eurocentric misconceptions and direct students and researchers’ attention to areas worthy of exploration in modern African drama. In this light, Kehinde Ayo (301) who argues that since literature is culture-bound, advises that emphasis should be placed on the reconstruction of indigenous traditions in works of arts. In other words, the urgent need to embark on cultural reconstruction has become imperative and indispensable. This advice reinforces Achebe’s earlier observation concerning the writer’s role. Achebe vehemently asserts that the writer’s duty is to help the society regain what it has lost by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. In other words, the writers are to engage in cultural nationalism. He comments on his stories’ serious reliance on indigenous traditions: “I have used such things. Before, and I will use them again. This is what I have set myself to do: to reconstruct our history through literature” (1990: 122). For Ali Mazrui, cited in Oladosu (245), “culture constitutes for our people the surest means of overcoming our technological backwardness and the most efficient force of our victorious resistance to imperialist blackmail.” This is borne out of the keen observation that the present-day African society is one that has the dominance of western influence in almost all the areas of her socio-political life. Another challenge from some scholars, according to Iyorwuese (160), is that “those that advocate a celebrated return to traditional roots commit the blunder of classifying ‘traditional’ as African and ‘modern’ or ‘contemporary’ as western. These are baseless assumptions that tend to consider as un-African plays written by Africans on contemporary issues in Africa, that is, such authors as Sarif Easmon in *Dear Parent* and *Ogre*, J. C. de Graft in

Through a Film Darkly and Zulu Sofola in *The Sweet Trap*, among others, who treat diverse problems and issues ranging from urbanization to conflict among the educated.

Agreed that western drama exerts untold influence on African drama, Kehinde (302) discusses how African writers have reconstructed and are reconstructing the indigenous traditions of their continent in their individual works since the task of salvaging the dying culture and traditions of Africa rests on the shoulders of its writers. Writers are influenced by their societies, and they equally influence their societies. Soyinka's comment is apposite here when he states that "the artist has always functioned in African society as the recorder of mores and experience of his society and as a voice of vision in his own time". Chinweizu (1978: 309), cited in Osuagwu & Affiah (8), notes that writers like Achebe have "ever since eloquently insisted that any artist, and especially any African artist, must be consciously committed and accountable to his society in his works, and not to some so-called timeless, universal values which, more often than not, are nothing but the European cultural imperialists salesmenese for Western values."

African writers invariably draw their inspiration from indigenous traditions because they are a source of strength for the writers. This informs their creative operations in life. This explains why modern African literature is being undergirded by African traditions. According to Kehinde, 303), Chinua Achebe goes further to add voice to this when he claims that writers use many sources, most of which are oral and what is most important is sustaining tradition of the people who can lay claim to about 90 % of such sources. Other scholars who agree on this and advocate a cultural reconstruction are Okpewho, 1979; Agho, 2000; Ogundeji, 2005 & Zargar, 2012, 85). In furtherance to the above, Okpewho (1983) also has categorized into four the works of contemporary African writers who employ various indigenous traditions. These are:

- i. *Traditions preserved*
- ii. *Traditions observed*
- iii. *Traditions refined*
- iv. *Traditions revised*

As regard *traditions preserved*, Okpewho is hereby referring to those African writers who publish collections of traditional oral literatures. Examples of such African writers include J.P. Clark's *The ozidi saga*, which is told in seven nights to dance, music, mime and rituals; J.P

Clark's *ozidi* (the play); Taban Lo Liyong's "The old man of Usumbura and His Misery." These works preserved the thematic and stylistic purity of traditional oral literature.

In *traditions observed*, the writers in this group use the context (narrative-audience close relationship) of the oral performance as well as the matter (heroic figure of the oral tale) and the matter (of oral narration) to address moral issues.

The writers that *refine traditions* lean on African cosmology to dwell on socio-political issues. Soyinka's *Idanre and Other Poems*, *A Dance of the Forests* and *The Interpreters* are perfect examples in this regard. In the texts, Soyinka uses a mythic character/essence, Ogun (the god of iron), to negotiate socio-economic issues.

Traditions revised denotes the art and act of using the manner and Oral Traditions "to negate, to indict the matter of Oral Tradition" (George 1997:109).

Therefore, modern African writers are integrating traditions into their works in different ways and intensities. However, they all work towards the same goal-domestication of imported genres in order to rehabilitate the African past, that is, the local ethnic tenets and philosophy, beliefs, attitudes to life and existence of precolonial Africa (Nwachukwu – Agbada: 2000).

Nonetheless, Emmanuel Obiechina wonders why Greek's parameter should be used in the evaluation of drama in Nigeria. Scholars like Obiechina believe that "theatre is first and foremost an experience" and so should be experienced in different ways by people in different cultural milieu. We believe that drama, which is an art, is an outcome of a creative instinct. A creative person is an imaginative individual who is capable of impressing an audience with the product of his imagination. Traditional African drama and theatre are embedded in performances. These include, rituals, festivals, story-telling, masquerade poetry composed performances, music/dance, puppet shows and many other forms of performances. We also believe that for drama to exist, there must be an element of imitation of an action. Dialogue and unified plot structure should not be considered as obligatory in dramatic performance. However, in some traditional performances ritual and theatre are so interwoven that it becomes difficult to extricate the drama embedded in such performances (Ogundeji, 214).

1.1.3 Modern African Drama

In attempting the definition of Modern African Drama, it is important to take cursory look at what makes “traditional” and the “modern” African literature. This is probably useful in the sense that traditional African literature is something which exists in our indigenous languages and which is related to traditional societies and cultures, while modern African literature has grown out of the rupture created within our indigenous history and way of life by the colonial experience, which is naturally expressed in the tongue of our former colonial rulers. This distinction is useful because in their separate characteristics, both with regard to content and to form, the two kinds of literature do show clearly marked differences and derive from various different sectors of the African experience. More so, the fact that they relate to different moments and phases in the collective experience and consciousness of African peoples, gives to their present-day, side-by-side existence a certain historical and sociological significance. It suffices to say then that Modern African Drama is the emergence or creation of some literary works out of the rupture created within our indigenous history and way of life by the colonial experience which is naturally expressed in the tongue of our former colonial masters that also shows a propensity for an artistic reconstruction of indigenous traditions. It draws from the indigenous performance traditions and idioms of precolonial Africa. In the plays of some renowned African playwrights, such as Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark, Efua T. Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ebrahim Hussein, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Micere Mugo, Serumaga, Kobina Sekyi and others, there is reasonable amount of evidence of borrowing from their traditional cultural milieu and all these forms that are artistically embedded in their plays, produce wonderful aesthetics. Most of the above mentioned playwrights belong to the early playwrights and dramatists who are cultural liberationists discussing nationalist ideals, cultural re-affirmation and historical re-engineering in their dramas. Modern African drama could be called the literary drama which is different from the traditional form of drama (J. P. Clark, 1981, cited by Ogunbiyi Yemi, 10). By and large, Binebai Benedict (371) recognizes James Ene Henshaw to be the first Nigerian modern literary dramatist because his first play was published in 1954. His play was in total protest against the cultural debasement of Africa culture. This makes him the first of the first generation.

Ramsaran (1970) testifies to the validity of the claim that modern African drama has been conditioned by the indigenous traditions of its enabling society. Adedeji (1978) also observes that the Alarinjo Theatre is a veritable source for modern African drama. He maintains that although some forces had committed the Alarinjo Theatre into antiquity, it is still a source for the modern African playwrights, most especially the Yoruba writers like Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and Wale Ogunyemi. Commenting on why Nigerian/African drama is full of cultural and verbal elements, Nwachukwu-Agbada declares:

If it were possible for a piece of Nigerian and African fiction to survive without oral tradition materials, its drama variant could not do without and verbal elements. Apart from the fact that Nigerians know of various dimensions of drama and dramatic enactments long before the writing culture, drama is a performance which is implemented before a live audience and which can only authenticate itself if it is an “elegant imitation” of what the theatregoers can identify with (2000:76).

Modern African Drama can be grouped into three major language regions in Africa, namely: the Franco-phone, the Anglo-phone, and the Luso-phone. The Franco-phone deals with the drama of the French language-speaking region. On the other hand, the Anglo-phone deals with the drama of the English language-speaking region, mostly in West Africa; the Luso-phone deals with that of the Portuguese language-speaking region. These classifications can be subdivided into smaller geographical subcategories such as Anglo-phone, West African, Nigerian and Ibo drama and so on, taking one geographical typology into cognizance.

In addition, modern West African drama as a subset of modern African drama can be said to be compartmentalized into three major phases which are almost intricately related. This is what many literary scholars posit and classify as the era of *paradise on earth*, *paradise disturbed* and *paradise regained*. In furtherance to the above, Oyin Ogunba (1977) has also identified as three broad categories into which modern West African plays can be placed: propaganda plays, involving politics and ideology; plays expressing culture-naturalism, or plays expressing preference for the new cultural integrationist vision; and finally, the satiric plays. The relevance of this classification is limited to its time, the early 1970s when it was made because of the

evolution of new dramatic forms identified to be of contemporary dramatic relevance by scholars.

The pre-colonial period also termed by some writers as the era of *paradise on earth* was predominantly characterized by a communal life pattern. During this period, virtually every activity was done in the way of the people that lived in that particular community, despite the fact that many of these communities were different in terms of population, physical and fiscal endowments, and linguistic variations and so on; one distinct factor which was tradition characterized their life pattern.

The next stage which was the colonial era and sometimes referred to as the era of *paradise disturbed* is a period in which various innovations like western education, religion and western tradition were introduced. Though, these factors collectively undermined tradition, the common denominator that served as a bond among the African people. The colonial era, therefore, marked the beginning of the subtle vandalism and subjugation of African tradition which had hitherto held Africa together. This position is affirmed in Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart* with this apparently terse symbolic lamentation: *he has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (162)*.

The last of the phases termed *post-colonial* era is subject of controversy, as many writers dispute the term post-colonial and prefer call it *neo-colonial*, *post-independence* or *paradise regained* era. This phase is regarded as the period of social, cultural and traditional renaissance. This is the period in which the African literary writers now resolve to reassemble the components of that common unifying factor called tradition that was smashed by the colonialists throughout the years colonialism thrived in Africa. These components are what could be referred to as traditional elements or indigenous elements in African drama. As stated by Iyorwuese (158), immediately after independence, they resorted to African drama by deserting the landmarks of western drama. In this light, J. P. Clark wrote *Ozidi Saga*; Efua Sunderland wrote *Edufa* and *Foriwa* and *Anansewa*. Similarly, Elvania Zirimu and Nuwa Sentogo infused traditional elements into drama in East Africa. Both the western and African critics became confronted with

a metamorphosis of drama and started seeking other evaluation criteria for analyzing African drama.

Modern African drama is, in essence, a pot-pourri of traditional and modern dramatic elements. This is seen through the dramatist's use of materials drawn from western culture and from a broad of African cultural spectra which include folktales, proverbs, myths, dance and songs, rituals, incantations, taboo, inheritance, etc. These are examples of traditional elements that constitute a rich oral repertoire from which the African dramatists explore to enrich their dramatic performance. Iyorwuese (159), while dismissing the early drama like J. P. Clark's, noted that Soyinka was the only outstanding African playwright who could be exonerated from complete reliance on western dramatic style and form because of the synthesis of western and traditional elements in his works. His plays like *A Dance of the Forest*, *The Road* and *Madmen and Specialist* utilize quite fascinating traditional elements that endear him to his fans across board.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Quite a good number of researches on African drama have concentrated on the artistic product, thereby ignoring the means of production. The means of production for African drama are basically culture and oral tradition generally. As far as the Afro-centric scholars are concerned, these should form the basis of evaluation for African drama, rather than the use of universal elements derived from Aristotelian aesthetic elements. Afro-centric scholars have, therefore, disagreed on the use of the universal elements in appreciating African drama in as much as drama is culture-specific and dependent. To them, the use of such accentuates the Euro-centric argument against the existence of drama in Africa before the intrusion of colonialism. As noted by Osuagwu and Affiah (7), judging African literature by standards other than those found within its cultural context shall amount to invalidating indigenous African drama which antagonism has been founded on the faulty assumption and misconception that there is one and only one absolute dramatic standard or dramaturgy - Western dramatic standard. As further argued by Etherton (33), the modification of the Aristotelian aesthetic elements of drama ended in questions as: whether ritual or festival observed in performance provides a new definition for

drama? Ogundeji (215) strengthens this argument by stating clearly that the “formalistic western concept of “art-for-art-sake” is not applicable in the African cultural context because art has always served, and still serves other utilitarian purposes other than aesthetics.” Similarly, the formalistic school cannot be used in the appreciation of Modern African Drama because it is basically rooted and watered by African tradition and culture.

Thus, the validity of indigenous African drama must be rooted within the context of African culture. Once this validity for Africa is established, then it is automatically valid per se. The evaluation of African literature must be based on the aesthetics which are dependent on African culture and world-view. Osuagwu and Affiah (6) further argue that much time and energy need be invested in conceptualizing and operationalizing indigenous African drama as well as identifying, crystallizing and re-iterating the defining characteristics of indigenous African drama as basis for the analysis, understanding and appreciation of African plays.

Based upon the above argument, this work intends to take the above cultural challenge to dwell on the indigenous elements in modern African drama through selected plays of Soyinka and Zulu Sofola. This would help in establishing the extent and efforts African writers invest in reconstructing their cultural identity through literature in contemporary times. This is in line with the dictates of ethno-dramatic theory and its concept of afrocentricity.

This is borne out of the fact that most critiques of African plays by these two playwrights have centred on culture conflict and contact, as well as feminism. Good examples are Ahuama Chika (2011) who hinges her work on the conflicting point between the traditional and western culture in *The Lion and The Jewel* and Oloruntoba-Ojo and Oloruntoba-Oju (2013) who concentrate on the theme of feminism in the works of Sofola, among others. In the words of Iyorwuese (160), it is logical while searching for an African dramatic aesthetic to go to African oral tradition in analyzing the plays of Soyinka and Sofola. Only Zargar Sara (85-89) has attempted to use Afrocentricity in analyzing Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Road*.

1.3. Research Questions

- a. What traditional elements are utilized by African playwrights in modern African drama?
- b. Of what significance are these traditional elements in modern African drama?
- c. To what extent does the use of traditional elements justify the employment of ethno-dramatics or Afro-centricity as a background evaluation theory for African drama?

1.4. Purpose of the Study

Giving the fact that many writers have written and contributed immensely to this particular area of research, it is imperative to fill up the scholarship gap which is yet unfilled in evaluating the traditional contents in modern African drama through some selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola. This is in pursuance of the African dramatic aesthetics of evaluation of African plays towards establishing the fact that drama is actually culture-specific. In doing that, it shall be of importance to this study to dislodge the use of the monolithic universal elements in the evaluation of drama quite beyond the cultural shores of western geography.

More so, the study points out the cultural significance of the utilized traditional elements that give drama in Africa its cultural identity in contemporary times. Finally, it intends to justify how plausible it is in applying the African aesthetics in appreciating African exoglotic drama claimed by scholars like Iyorwuese (160) that the same tenets of Afro-centricity cannot be employed in analysis. Other objective of this study is to contribute to the knowledge of students of literature most especially African drama which is unique and distinct from other forms of drama in the world. Also, this study straightens the argument against the non-existence of drama in Africa as well as disprove the use of western dramatic evaluation model in appraising African drama. To establish this, the traditional contents in African drama through the plays of Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola are explored. This study specifically analyzes the extent of indispensability of traditional elements in modern and contemporary African drama.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The choice of two Nigerian African playwrights (Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola) is to balance the gender equality of male and female writers within the Nigerian literary space and this work is limited to some of their works and to the evaluation of traditional elements in Nigerian drama, a subset of African drama, using sampling technique through some of their selected plays (Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, *The Strong Breed*, *The Lion And The Jewel*; and Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, *King Emene*, and *The Sweet Trap*), as these texts are uniquely embellished with a lot use of traditional elements.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study would help to draw significant attention towards traditional elements as indispensable resources for cultural identity and creativity in not just modern but also contemporary African drama. Evaluation of African drama within the arguments of ethno-dramatics and its localized theoretical equivalent, Afro-centricity, would no doubt, be quite indispensable to the pursuit of reconstruction and re-utilization of oral tradition and culture by playwrights in an era much given to cultural imperialism.

Therefore, this study will accentuate the use of indigenous elements beyond modern African drama. Students and scholars of African drama would be given the scope within which African drama should be appraised. It helps to establish the need or otherwise for not using the universal elements in adjudging African drama like other dramas. And above all, the study would establish the existence of indigenous African drama through the use of African culture, custom, tradition and their carry-over significance in contemporary African drama production, criticism and scholarship. Importantly, this work would serve as the basis for adjudging African drama in world where cultures are converging and submerging in contemporary times.

1.7. Research Methodology

The research method adopted in this study is the content analogy type, that often relies on secondary research such as reviewing available literature and/or data. On the other hand, the data collected from literature review are used in text-analyzing some selected plays of Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola in line with the objective of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two is based on Review of Related Literatures, Evaluation Strategies in African Literature, Discourse of Traditional Elements in African Literature and Drama, and the Theoretical Framework of this Project work.

2.1. Evaluation Strategies in African Literature

Afro-centric scholars often peg their argument on the basis that the critical criteria normally applied to European literature cannot be applied usefully to African literature since the African writer's experience is markedly different from that of his European or north American counterparts, naturally he will evolve new forms of expressions, and consequently his literature should not be measured by the same yardstick. This, the Eurocentric scholars like Palmer (1982) disagree with. However, to the Afro-centric minds, adopting the universal Eurocentric evaluation strategy of drama in Africa downplays the existence and utilization of indigenous African dramatic elements in the modern African plays, which are indisputable different from the universal western elements which include plot, imitation, action and dialogue (Scholes & Klans, 1971). Okodo (131-132) argues that it would be misleading to maintain that theatrical experience that does not conform to western canon is no drama or theatre. As noted by Osuagwu & Affiah (7) judging African literature by standards other than those found within its cultural context shall amount to invalidating indigenous Africa drama, which antagonism has been founded on the faulty assumption and misconception that there is one and only one absolute dramatic standard or dramaturgy - Western dramatic standard.

This line of argument decrees that good African literature is that which approximates or even apes western literature. In addition, this argument produces another fallacy - that there is a single dramatic evolutionary process through which all drama must pass and at the centre of this process stands Western dramaturgy and indigenous African drama must pass through this process. They further argue strongly that it seems obvious that critical standards are products of aesthetic considerations and aesthetics are ethno-cultural. Consequently, critical standards are determined by culture. It is true that there are some universal principles governing world literatures, but by its nature, there is room for differences. Thus, the validity of indigenous

African drama must be rooted within the context of African culture. Once this validity for Africa is established, then it is automatically valid per se. The evaluation of African literature must be based on the aesthetics which are dependent on African culture and world-view (Osugwu & Affiah, 7).

2.2. Discourse of Traditional Elements in African Literature

Quite a number of Afro-centric scholars have exploited the traditional elements inherent in oral traditions in African literature (prose, poetry and drama), indigenous and modern (Kehinde, 301-322; Manjula, 1-166; Crow, 29-51). According to Kehinde (303-304), Vansina classifies oral tradition into five major types which are subdivided into two: literary and historical. The literary encompasses both the formulae (proverbs, parables, oaths, incantations, titles, slogans, and so on) and poetry (praise songs, dirges, divination poems, and abuse and work songs). On the other hand, the historical group includes myths, legends, ancestral stories, anecdotes, ideas, beliefs, symbols, assumptions, attitudes, sentiments of a people, etc. African writers are always conscious of their cultural heritage. They often recreate the whole of their society's traditional way of life with a view to showing its triumphs and failures. Therefore, they see it as their duty to advertise their communal costumes, traditional ceremonies, festivals, beliefs, taboos, rituals, marital systems, etc. To Arne Zerttersen, oral tradition in East Africa, which has been handed down through generations, is impressive, rich and varied. It has affected the people's way of life, and they constitute a veritable source for African writers across regions and epochs. Indeed, African writers freely draw from the body of oral traditions. No wonder, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (17) says "the critical discussions on African literature by Africans have invariably been influenced by socio-cultural issues. This development is not unexpected, considering the fact that African literature is informed by social affairs as well as the culture, politics, economy and religious activities prevalent in the economy" (Kehinde, 303).

According to Kehinde (303-305), Okpewho (1983) has categorized into four the works of contemporary African writers who employ various indigenous traditions. These are: traditions preserved, traditions observed, traditions refined and traditions revised. By traditions preserved, he refers to those African writers who publish collections of traditional oral literature such as Clark's the *Ozidi saga*, Taban Lo liyong's *The Old Man of Usumbura*. These works preserve the

thematic and stylistic purity of traditional oral literature. The writers who observe traditions use the context (narrative-audience close relationship) of the oral performance as well as the matter (heroic figure of the oral tale) and the matter (of oral narration) to address moral issues. The writers that refine traditions lean on African cosmology to dwell on socio-political issues. Soyinka uses a mythic essence, Ogun, to negotiate socio-economic issues in *A Dance of the Forest*. Traditions revised denote the art of an act of using the manner and context of oral traditions to negate; to indict the matter of oral tradition. Therefore, modern African writers are integrating traditions into their works in different ways and intensities. However, they all work towards the same goal- domestication of the imported genres in order to rehabilitate the African past. Similarly, negritude writers and intellectuals advocated the celebration of African culture and blackness. This was, however, cynically condemned by Soyinka as unnecessary when he says that “a tiger does not proclaim its tigritude”, which he modified (Kehinde, 305-306). What seems to have been implied by Soyinka is the indisputable presence of traditional elements in African literature.

This is why the readers of African literature often witness a frequent recourse to oral traditional forms like proverbs, riddles, jokes, witticisms, aphorisms, folktales, festivals, wrestling, marriage, burial, farming, family relationship, etc) and the anti-social (burial of “Ogbanje”, the killing of twin children, human sacrifice, etc), indigenous language elements, traditional justice, traditional taboo, traditional drums, songs, dancing, idiomatic expressions drawn from cultural setting, references to African deities, African mythology, use of foreign language, which rhythm and feeling are clearly African, etc. All these elements are exploited by writers like Achebe, Tutuola, Fagunwa, Elechi Amadi, Ben Okri, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Camara Laye, Ferdinand Oyono, Meja Mwangi, Naguib Mahfouz, and Mariama Ba, Kofi Awoonor, J.P Clark, Okot p’Bitek, Wole Soyinka, Kofi Anyidoho, Niyi Osundare, Flaven Ranaivo, Dennis Brutus, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Christopher Okigbo, among others (Bernth Lindfors, 1979: 30; Obiechina, 1975: 85-86; Cole, 2005: 264; Okpewho, 1985).

2.3. Traditional Elements in African Drama

Echeruo (136) states categorically that it is generally agreed that drama itself is an important element of traditional African culture. Ola Rotimi (1981), cited in Osuagwu & Affiah (8), states that "the standard acceptance of the term Drama, within a cultural setting, at any rate, implies 'an imitation of an action ... or of a person or persons in action', the ultimate object of which is to edify or entertain. Sometimes, to do both."(77). He goes on in the same essay to say that "ritual displays that reveal in their style of presentation, in their purpose, and value, evidences of imitation, enlightenment and or entertainment, can be said to be drama". To this element of mimesis he adds the vitals of plot which are suspense and conflict. To demand that indigenous African drama meets these requirements as Rotimi does, to our thinking is fair and appropriate. The element of mimesis is, perhaps, the most important element of drama for drama is not an original action but an imitation of an original action. Though myth is not the essence of indigenous African drama, drama ought to engage and sustain interest as a means of achieving the objectives of edification and entertainment. This embodies the necessity of the vitals of plot - conflict and suspense. Rotimi gives examples of indigenous performances which certainly meet his criteria for drama before adding, however, that in performances where suspense and conflict are absent, the claim to being drama rests on the presence of mimesis.

Chukwuma Helen (1994) says "traditional drama is invariably music oriented with the attendant features of dance and song" (44). This would mean that for Chukwuma, music, dance and song are important elements of indigenous African drama. On his part, J. P. Clark (1981) asserts that "if drama means the 'elegant imitation' of some action significant to a people..., if the vital elements to such evocation are speech, music, ritual, song as well as dance and mime, ... then there is drama in plenty in Nigeria ..." (57), and by extension, Africa. To Echeruo (137) earlier cited, these elements which are in various combinations have brought about different genres of drama in Africa. Clark and Rotimi agree on the element of imitation, while Clark and Chukwuma agree on the presence of indigenous African drama of dance, music and song. But Clark adds an important element not mentioned by Rotimi and Chukwuma - mime. A large number of performances examined before now show a preponderance of the use of mime. Mime ensures imitation and fills some of the gaps left by the absence of dialogue and sometimes

performs the function of soliloquy. For Awoonor (1975), drama "in this context ... will be defined by the elements of presentation: the actors and impersonators, characters, plot, dance and music" (69). He adds, "the emphasis is on the masks, costume, music, and dancing" (69). Like Clark and Chukwuma, he lists dance and music. He agrees to the presence of mimesis. He agrees with Rotimi on the relevance of plot, while he adds the element of costume. Indeed, costume is a vital element of indigenous African drama. Costume, as we have found in many performances, is a means of telling a story in a subtle manner.

In his discussion of the *Elements of Traditional Drama*, Nketia (1965) lists the ingredients of indigenous drama as costume, properties and the paralinguistic resources of dance, music, mime and gestures and non - verbal language (29 - 36). He agrees to the immanence of mimesis or role playing and adds that "the importance of verbal action in traditional drama ... varies" (33). It depends on the sub category of indigenous drama. Whereas it is prominent in narrative drama, it is not in ceremonial and dance dramas. Note that narrative drama, ceremonial drama and dance drama are the three sub categories of indigenous African drama as identified by Nketia (1965). This essay, however, does not inquire into the categories and sub categories of indigenous African drama. That is subject enough for another inquiry. Earlier on, this essay expressed our acceptance of Rotimi's criteria which include the requirement of plot. Care must be taken to note that our acceptance is of the vitals of plot, those being suspense and conflict. Indigenous African drama, for the most part, does not contain the linear plot found in Western drama. The concept of linear plot is derived from myth which produces, in most cases, clear outlines. In indigenous African drama, however, myth is not of the essence of the performance as Enekwe (1981) argues. Thus, "what the performers usually do," opines Amankulor James (1985), "is to recreate and act some aspects of the story" (87). Indigenous African drama is, it would seem, rather episodic in terms of plot. The unity of the plot is derived from the unity of the theme which runs through all the episodes. The story is the story of the community and everyone is familiar with it. The primary thrust is the reflection of the community's reality. This view is imbued in the relativist's view of the existence of drama in Africa. Enekwe Ossie (149) confirms this by arguing that ritual festivals in Africa represented full and authenticated drama which is communal and are different from secular and individual modern drama.

Since myth is not used for its own sake, it would appear that linear plot becomes irrelevant in this instance. Enekwe (150) states that myth is the soul of drama. The story remains the background of indigenous African drama. But, because the story is not told for its own sake, neither is it strange to the audience whose story it actually is, detailed elaboration (linear plot) is unnecessary. At this point, Nzewi's assertion on this issue is quite instructive. Nzewi (1979) asserts that "the cultural attitudes and tendencies of a society would determine the dramatic quotient of its theatre. In a society where recreation is not a cult, but is rather structured into the various transactions of living, the tendency would be to present such essentials of dramatization as would be relevant to enhance and endorse a theme or a story" (19). He adds that this is why the "drama quotient of most traditional theatre could therefore appear, to the uninformed, as allusions to drama by the yardsticks of our assessment of literary drama" (19). In agreement with Clark, Chukwuma, Awoonor, Nketia and others he lists the ingredients of indigenous African drama as including music, dance, mime, cosmetic arts (which to my mind refers to make - up and costumes) and language.

Kehinde (314) argues that modern African drama also shows a propensity for an artistic reconstruction of indigenous traditions. It draws from the indigenous performance traditions and idioms of pre-colonial Africa. In the plays of the leading African playwrights such as Soyinka, Clark-Bekederemo, Efua T. Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ebrahim Hussein, Ngugi, Micere Mugo, Serumaga, Kobina Sekyi, etc., there is ample evidence of borrowings from their traditional cultural milieu. These forms are always integrated artistically into their plays. Ramsaran (1970), in Kehinde (314), testifies to the validity of the claim that modern African drama has been conditioned by the indigenous traditions of its enabling society. He cites Adedeji (1978) who observes that the Alarinjo Theatre is a veritable source for modern African drama. He further maintains that though some forces had committed the theatre into antiquity, it is still a major source for the modern African playwrights, mostly the Yoruba writers like Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and Wale Ogunyemi. Commenting on why modern Nigerian/African drama is full of cultural and verbal elements, Nwachukwu-Agbada declares:

If it were possible for a piece of Nigerian and African fiction to survive without oral tradition materials, its drama variant could not do without cultural and verbal elements. Apart from the fact that Nigerians knew of various dimensions of drama and dramatic enactments long before the writing culture, drama is a performance which is implemented before a live audience and which can only authenticate itself if it is an “elegant imitation of what the theatergoers can identify with.” (76)

Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not to Blame* also employs African traditional elements for aesthetic, thematic and ideological effects. Among these African traditional elements are African traditional proverbs, oral poetry, idioms. To him, among the African traditional elements, language is the most striking traditional element in the play through which African traditional proverbs, oral poetry, mostly, incantation, traditional oath-taking and folktales; idioms are expressed. The setting of the play is unarguably traditional; opening with the rhythm of Ogun provided by choral singing, drumming and symbolic sound effects, the clinking of metallic objects. The place is the shrine of Ogun. The play exposes the reader to the traditional communal singing and dancing of the Yoruba people. Azeez Tunji (103) notes that, “Ogunyemi and Rotimi are writers with keen interest in the Yoruba history and culture as evident in their works. They employ such elements as song, music, dance and riddles of the Yoruba people so much that their plays appeal to all and sundry irrespective of academic background or social class”. Both Rotimi and Ogunyemi wrote several plays based on history and myth. For instance, Rotimi wrote *Kurunmi* (1971), *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* (1974) and *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1985) based on history, while Ogunyemi (1997, 1976), on the other hand, also draws extensively from history and myth as revealed in *Ijaye* (1970), *Kiriji* (1976), *Esu Elegbara* (1970), *Be Mighty Be Mine* (1968), *Langbodo* (1986), *Obaluaye, Ayo Ni Mofe* (1996), and *Sango* (1997), among others.

In the play of Efua T. Sutherland, *Marriage of Anansewa* (1975), there is loyalty to Akan Oral tradition, especially in the reconstruction of *Anansesem* or *Anansegoro* and the creative deployment of the *Mboguo* show. The role of the storyteller is emphasized, a reflection of the play-acting mode. Like the typical African traditional drama, there is very casual interplay and flexibility of roles among the pool of players. The whole performance is organically united by the mnemonic ability of the storyteller... *Mboguo* songs punctuate the rendition in line with the

oral traditions. The rigid division between actors and audience is subverted, reminiscent of the indigenous tradition of play-acting.

In *Foriwa* (1962), Sutherland adapts a well-known didactic folktale of the Akan people. Against the African background of parents making choices for the children during marriage, a pretty proud girl who would not marry any man chosen for her by her parents ends up marrying a young, handsome stranger who turns into a python and swallows her. The theme of disobedience in matters of wisdom and experience is portrayed.

In the *Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), Ngugi and Mugo depend a lot on indigenous African traditions. This is reflected in its choice as Kenya's official entry at the 1977 FESTAC held in Lagos, Nigeria. The play is centred on the legendary hero, Dedan Kimathi, written to correct the distortion of Kenyan history and culture. Its structure conforms to that of traditional epic, while it also reflects the paradigm of the sacrifice to a god. It is full of Gikuyu songs, rendered in dialogues to mobilize the peasants for definite revolutionary action. Lamenting the loss of African cultural values to colonialism, Kimathi says:

They used to dance these
Before the white colonialist came
In the arena....at initiation....
During funerals....during marriage....
Then the colonialists came
And the people danced
A different dance. (Kehinde, 317)

Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile* also contains many traditional elements that bear resemblance with the socio-cultural events in Southern Tanzania during the resistance to German colonialism, now known as "Maji Maji" uprising. The eponymous character and hero, Kinjeketile, once lived in the village called Ngaranbe, and his name appears in a historical account of the uprising. Kibasila, the chief of the Wozaramo of Dar-es-Salam area, is a well-known historical personality. The belief in the supernatural power of water to prevent death comes to the fore. For Femi Osofisan, he wrote *Morountodun* in sixteen movements akin to the sixteen *Odu* of *Ifa* in the exploration of knowledge. The use of cultural and traditional elements serves as cultural education in contemporary times. (Kafewo, 208).

Soyinka, aware of his cultural role, is quoted to have said that “the self– apprehension of the African world involves the apprehension of a culture whose reference points are taken from within the culture itself” (8). In his works, he tries to define African ontology through an interpretation of Yoruba myths and rituals by the use of songs, mime, dance and drumbeats. Soyinka is greatly concerned about the wellbeing of his community. These elements are considered indispensable in African culture. The songs are simple, clear, energetic and full of delight, which reveal the custom and tradition of Yoruba people (Manjula, 8).

The drama of Soyinka is a creative mix of Yoruba rituals, dramatic techniques, music and dance with the foreign language, English. The rites, rituals, gestures, music and dance are some of the non-verbal techniques Soyinka employs in order to achieve his dramatic effect. A perspective reading of Soyinka’s plays proves that his artistic sensibility is suitable. The elements of beliefs in gods and the strong link between the supernatural and man, rituals, incantations, proverbs, folktales, mythology, magic, etc, which characterize African drama, manifest in Wole Soyinka’s plays. Adrian Roscoe corroborates this by saying: “*Soyinka is a Yoruba who acknowledges his roots and clings to them; he is not, in any sense of the word deracine*”(219). In consonance with this, Ademola postulates that:

it is common knowledge that Soyinka, the playwright, does not have an Igbo heritage. He is a Yoruba who exploits to advantage the resources of Yoruba cultural codes for the significating process of his plays including *Horseman*. (267)

Dances are not only used as a reference to Soyinka’s African culture but also to represent the concepts about time, about the dead, about the communal imperatives and about modernism. In the first scene of *Death and the King’s Horseman*, Soyinka makes extensive use of the idioms of Yoruba traditional performance, drawing on praise-singing and cultural inter-play between the singer, Elesin and the women, as well as dance, drumming, and song. He uses these to present significant shifts in dramatic relationship and objective (Crow, 38). Sometimes dance also speaks about the characters, the mood of the play, the setting and focuses on the future too. Ola Rotimi, for example, has acknowledged the effect of Soyinka’s use of cultural elements on his own writing. Culturally and religiously speaking, festival is the prime institution of traditional Africa,

for the festival is the only institution, which has the frame work to virtually co-ordinate all the art forms of a community. Dramatic performances are usually given during a festival. A festival contains rituals and 'drama'. Folk arts are being restored and given new themes and motifs by modern writers and playwrights around the world. Soyinka's part in this sort of modernization and exploitation of traditional forms for a modern audience to express socially relevant themes is great and valuable indeed. The language is generally a symbol of culture of the speakers. The culture of the Yoruba is enshrined in their language. It is a highly tonal and musical language, which gives the impression of being chanted rather than spoken. The rhythmic and tonal qualities do not come in English and that is why Soyinka has introduced Yoruba Songs in English plays. Isola Akinwumi (401) notes the inseparable influence of tradition and culture in African literature with particular reference to Yoruba plays (where in the plays of Wole Soyinka and others belong):

modern Yoruba plays have something in common with other genres of Yoruba written literature: they too borrow a lot from oral literature, especially from oral poetry. So that in spite of some evidence of foreign formal influence, modern Yoruba plays still have a strong structural link with ritual drama and travelling theatre plays. In many contemporary modern Yoruba plays one comes across references to ritual drama either in the form of deities being worshipped or in the form of traditional ceremonies being performed. The inclusion of these features lend colour and movement to the action in some of the plays.

Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* portrays the African worldview of the co-mingling of the spheres of the living and the dead, the re-incarnated spirit of the dead ancestors, Yoruba divinities like Ogun, Esuro and other native spirits (Kehinde, 314-315). In the area of mythography, Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, *The Strong Breed* and *A Dance of the Forests* as well as Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso* and Femi Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed* are few examples of contemporary Nigerian plays in which interaction between the world of the living and that of the ancestors are represented and graphically re-enacted. Awodiya (70-71) asserts that Osofisan utilizes revolutionary reconstruction of history, myth, legend, oral narratives, traditional Yoruba belief system in divinities and mysteries, ritual, festival motifs used to realize themes, linguistic localization, proverbs, parables, riddles, and evocative dramatic

embellishments through songs, music and dance in his plays as a reflection of the influence of his background.

In *Death and the King's Horseman*, Olohun-Iyo, the praise singer, is visibly possessed by the spirit of the departed Alafin. The spirit of Alafin uses the praise singer as a vehicle to communicate to the living his worries over the apparent disturbing delay (Dasylva, 288). The play is replete with traditional Yoruba expressions, pseudo songs, chants and poetry. Here, he dwells much on some other cultural concepts such as reincarnation, ancestral worship, carving, traditional dance, totem, sacred grove, gods, etc. He also borrows from the African traditional philosophy of existence, most especially in the reference to the spirits of the ancestors – Aroni, the one-legged spirit of Yoruba mythology, and Abiku, the half-child. Zargar (2012) identifies and discusses the traditional elements in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Road* to include use of local language, African masking ritual, Yoruba mythology, African mode of thought, Yoruba customs and traditions, Yoruba opera theatre and Yoruba folklore to establish Soyinka as an Afro-centric writer (84-94). According to Manjula (19), these traditional elements in African drama which show the strong capacity of the African tradition to stand erect whatever be the force that tries to knock it off is emphasized in the plays. The western influence, on the natives and their tradition has been the primary subject for the writers. In the case of Soyinka, the incorporation of indigenous performance elements is dramatically coherent and intrinsic, serving his complex dramatic meanings (Crow, 38; Rasheed, 219-220).

Eni Efakponana (155) notes that the plays of Zulu Sofola feature characteristically magic, ritual, myth, legend and tradition; although not with the same depth with which Soyinka explores them in his plays. Her application is rather shallow but liked. She is a shiny supporter of tradition and custom who places young side by side the old. In *Wedlock of The Gods*, she exploits themes of marriage, customs and tradition, upholding the supremacy of traditional marriage in Africa through Ogwoma who suffers from cultural inhibition by being forced to marry a man she does not love. She defies tradition and custom by getting pregnant during a period when she is supposed to be mourning her late husband. This defiance is the conflict of the play. The economic tradition of marriage in Africa is also defied by males. Her drama generally has constantly argued for a more authentic Africanity in theatre and she sought to do this through idealistic presentation of Nigerian value systems. In the words of Julius-Adeoye (60) notes that

many feminist critics of Sofola define her works as celebrating African culture. He goes further to state that “Sofola wrote vivaciously, drawing themes extensively from African cultural milieu and the Bible.” In addition, Iyorwuese (161) adds that Zulu Sofola operates within a traditional setting. Language is however recognized as the vehicle of ritual and narration through proverbs, praise poetry; characters as symbols, music as narrative device and ritual trope. Music and dance are not mere ornamental elements added to enrich the drama, but as the very constructive fabric of the performance. *Shadows on Arrival* is influenced by Africa’s oral traditional performance as modes mixed with ritual and metaphysical vision.

All these traditional elements are used to add local colour and sound, reiterate themes, sharpen characterization, clarify conflict, focus on the values of the society being portrayed, provide cultural education, ideological and artistic purposes, socialization, enculturation and acculturation for the young ones in a world fast becoming lost to culture contact and conflict. The above shows clearly that indigenous tradition constitutes the greatest single source for modern African writers; they borrow a lot from the indigenous traditions of their respective societies to imbue their works with a raw texture of African-ness. More so, it shows the efforts of African writers at reconstructing indigenous culture and traditions in modern African literature through borrowing extensively from African traditions and culture. Reliance on elements of African culture and traditions include myths, folktales, dance, songs, legends, proverbs, poetry, among others. All these efforts are for ideological reasons. Besides, according to Kehinde (321), the use of traditional elements in post-colonial African literature is a post-colonial weapon used to foreground the richness of African culture. This is further amplified by Chinweizu et al (1980) through their comment cited in Kehinde (321) “the cultural task at hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustation of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake our new foundations for a liberated African modernity” (1).

African writers are the custodians of African culture and traditions against the forces of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism- cultural imperialism. Modern African writers demonstrate the great potentialities of African traditional materials as a revitalizing force in the

written literature of the continent. The role of the creative writers is giving new life to old myths, fables, riddles, tales, among others through their works. Okpewho (1994) declares that:

African literary artists have concentrated their attention on the homeland, celebrating its values and denouncing its weaknesses, with the essential aim of liberating the spirits of their fellows and setting them on the path of true cultural pride as well as social and political health (75).

Post-colonial African writers show their culture to be dynamic because they believe that “no culture is static; people create and recreate their culture as they go along on the highways and byways of history (Ogundele, 269). Most African writers re-enact the pre-colonial African culture and tradition as a way of deconstructing the European erroneous views about Africa and to correct the view of African culture by Eurocentric Africans. Modern African writers understand that their role is to help recapture, preserve, re-enact, and portray the pre-colonial African culture and traditions which are being endangered as a result of culture contact. This is borne out of their nationalistic belief towards cultural regeneration.

2.4. Theoretical Framework: Ethno-Dramatics, a Theory of Indigenous Drama

According to Osuogwu and Affiah (9), Jerome Rothenberg with George Quasha, coined the term Ethno-Poetics in 1968, formed along the lines of ethnomusicology. Ethno-poetics is a poetic concept applied in the study of non --Western poetry, often that of indigenous people. It is used in the study of poetry which shows influences or is written in a manner as to manifest the qualities of cultural indigenusness. It is a concept suitable for the study of poetic structures particular to specific cultures. Eventually, many writers and poets accepted the concept and made significant representative contributions. Such writers and poets include Henry Munn, Antonin Artaud, Tristan Tzara, Gary Sinder, William Bright, Dennis Tedlock and Dell Hymes. By the early 1980s, ethno-poetics had acquired a significant entry into the world of literary scholarship and discourse with some big profile works. It was not long before minor differences in approach between Hymes and Tedlock gave rise to two versions of ethno-poetics. Ethno-poetics is devoted to the study of poetry bearing in mind culture specifics.

In line with ethno-poetics, first and foremost, ethno-dramatics is a cultural philosophy that does not support the use of the universal elements of drama in evaluating the works of drama. Rather, it advocates the evaluation of drama along some cultural specifics as advocated by Afro-centric scholars like Okodo (131) and Zargar (85-89). Ojaide (1-19) attempts to look at the concept of Afro-centricity as an African literary canon through which the creative works of African writers explored based on the premise that literature is a cultural production. He argues that “the African literary canon is based on the African-ness of Africanity and what it constitutes in literary terms.” (2). Ethno-dramatics calls for a de-centred dramatics which views and reads the indigenous dramas of Africa outside the Western tradition as it is known. It calls for the study of dramatic structure peculiar to indigenous African drama. It requires a redefinition of drama in terms of culture specifics. It is a movement towards an exploration of creativity over the fullest human range. In preceding sections of this essay a number of assertions have been made or accepted.

They mostly form the foundation of Ethno-dramatics and are outlined as follows:

Indigenous African drama is the imitation of an original action with a view to enlightening and entertaining. The meaning of drama rests on the principle of imitation and the vitals of plot which are suspense and conflict; indigenous African drama shares the basic and universal principle of imitation with other world dramas, but also has differences arising from cultural imperatives. This is based on the fact that drama is culture-specific and culture-dependent. Some of the elements of indigenous African drama include dance, mime, gesture, music and songs, costumes, make up, symbols and symbolisms. Based on the above, it is clear that not all that are considered drama are actually drama. Scholars have the responsibility of differentiating between what is plain ritual, mere spectacle or entertainment and drama.

The concept of ethno-dramatics has been localized into Afro-centricity (Zargar, 85-89). To him, Afro-centricity in literature is a viewpoint which encourages writers to victoriously write about the history and culture of Africa. Thus, it is an act to free African art and culture from eurocentricism. As noted by Temple (139), In *Call and Response: the Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition*, the authors define Afro-centricity as not only a paradigm and orientation to data but also as a “movement” related to literature in as much as it is a

“resurgence of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements of the 1960s.” It is a corrective that expands the scope of African American literary criticism. Afro-centric literary criticism is an application of Afro-centric characteristics, general areas of inquiry, and principles of intellectual creativity to African literatures. It initiates a critical revision and amendment of literary criticism to account for the increased African-centered cultural consciousness that, based on contemporary advances in African-centered scholarship, now better informs our awareness of the Africanity at work as an influence on and determiner of individual and community behaviours that are frequently chronicled in the literary narrative. Afro-centricity, as a theoretical paradigm, has had a dynamic contemporary effect on the possibilities of African literary analysis because the paradigm accounts for not only a holistic revision of how we engage past, present, and future phenomena related to the life experiences of people of the African descent, but it also provides highly focused analytical tools for the critique of literature (Temple, 139). He further states that mainstream anthologies on African American literature and criticism address Afro-centricity to varying degrees, but literary scholarship confirms it as a key analytical tool for the contemporary Africana literary tradition. *African American Literary Theory* (2000), edited by Wilson Napier, has three references to “Afro-centrism,” a derogatory transliteration of Afro-centricity.

Afro-centricity has influenced how scholars analyze and categorize traditional and recent texts, but, most importantly, it has ushered in a radical shift in how scholars interpret cosmology, namely the cultural factors and sources responsible for a text’s spiritual underpinnings and negotiations of worldview. Carolyn L. Holmes applies Afro-centric theory to literature in the name of cosmology and as a significant early model in “African American Literature through an Afro-centric Paradigm.” She regards the Black Arts Movement (i.e. Paul Carter Harrison’s use of cosmology) as “a precursor to the Afro-centric critical approach” and cites cosmological issues among the key areas of inquiry. She also applies it to the life experiences of Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin as a model for literary scholars to use in connecting author biography with spiritual elements. She writes, Both Hurston’s and Baldwin’s early connections with the church were natural (or perhaps unnatural) outgrowths of their lost ancestral heritage. In this hazy realm of what Larry Neal termed their “Epic Memory,” when African peoples created “civilization,” gave “light” to the world, and built temples and pyramids in the Nile Valley, their spirituality would have been the common denominator of their lives.

However, Iyorwuese (160) argues that the application of ethno-dramatic theory or Afrocentricity on African exoglotic drama and literature shows some weaknesses. These weaknesses in the application of an African aesthetic paradigm stem from the use of foreign languages. These problems include that the translation of traditional thought to a foreign language involves a certain loss or modification of the traditional thought; the life experience of the playwright- who is a product of western education- also bears telltale signs in his plays. Another serious concern is how then can a total application of traditional aesthetics convey the treasures of these works to the reader?

2.5. Conclusion

Chapter two is a review of traditional elements on literature in Africa with specific emphasis or concentration on drama in Africa. Furthermore, the evaluative strategies of African literature in general are also taken into cognizance. Ethno-dramatics, an evaluative theory of drama in indigenous context is appraised. Some critics of this theory point out its weaknesses with regard to plays written by Africans in foreign languages. By and large, the theory of ethno-dramatics holds its beauty in the fact that it has ushered in a radical textual analysis approach to how African drama should be evaluated. This is the challenge that this work intends to adopt in the analysis of traditional elements in not only modern African drama but also to stimulate the spirit of scholarship towards employment of this theory in contemporary drama analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a concise biographical outline of the author, Wole Soyinka (WS), relating his life and traditional background to his works. In examining his life and works, we shall examine as explicitly as possible the traditional elements employed in some of his selected plays (*Death and The King's Horseman, The Strong Breed and The Lion and the Jewel*) as basis for analysis.

3.1. Traditional Contents in Selected Plays of Wole Soyinka

3.2. Wole Soyinka's Biography

Wole Akinwande Soyinka, the first African to win the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, is a literary guru, an icon of an enigma, a social activist and critic, and popularly referred to in local parlance as "the William Shakespeare of Africa." He was born on the 13th July, 1934, to the humble family of Mr. and Mrs. Grace Samuel Ayodele Soyinka of Abeokuta in Ogun state, Nigeria. His mother, Mrs. Grace Eniola Soyinka, was a direct descendant (grand niece) of Reverend Canon J.J. Ransome Kuti (a religious leader, educationist and an astute politician). Soyinka is, therefore, the grand nephew of the Kutis.

Soyinka had his primary and secondary education between 1938 and 1950s at St. Peter's Primary School, Abeokuta (where his father, Samuel Ayodele Soyinka, was a headmaster) and Abeokuta Grammar School (where Reverend I.O. Ransome Kuti was principal); though, he left Abeokuta Grammar School to finish up at Government College, Ibadan. He worked for a while at the Government Medical Centre, Ministry of Health, before proceeding to the University College, Ibadan, now University of Ibadan, from 1952 to 1954 and from Ibadan, he proceeded to the University of Leeds in 1957. He came out with a first class honours degree in English Language studies.

After graduating from Leeds, he was attached to the Royal Court Theatre, London as a play reader and this gave him the opportunity to watch production of some plays. This experience helped him in his future career as a playwright and a producer. He came back to his fatherland, Nigeria, in 1960 with a Rockfeller Research Fellowship in Traditional African Drama and by this

time he had already carved a niche for himself internationally as an important dramatist, novelist, academician, and social critic. Some of his published works in drama which shall partly be our major focus in this work include *Keffi's Birthday Treat*, 1954; *The Intervention*, 1957; *The Swamp Dwellers*, 1958; *The Lion and the Jewel*, 1959; *Trials of Brother Jero*, 1960; *A Dance of The Forest*, 1960; *My Father's Burden*, 1960; *The Strong Breed*, 1964; *Before The Blackout*, 1964; *Kongi's Harvest*, 1964; *The Road*, 1965; *Madmen and Specialists*, 1971; *The Bacchae of Euripedes*, 1973; *Camwood on the Leaves*, 1973; *Death and the King's Horseman*, 1975; *Jero's Metamorphosis*; 1975; *Opera Wonyosi*, 1977; *Requiem for a Futurologist*, 1983; *Sixty Six*, 1984; *A Play of Giants*, 1984; *From Zia with Love*, 1992; *The Detainee (a radio play)*, *a Scourge of Hyacinths (a radio play)*, *The Beautification of Area Boy*, 1996; *King Baabu*, 2001; *Etiki Revu Wetin*. Other works of Wole Soyinka that have been published in the area of poetry include *Idanre and Other Poems*, 1967; *A Shuttle in the Crypt*, 1972, and *Ogun Abibiman*, 1976; *Mandela's Earth* (1980), and *Samarkhand and other Markets I Have Known* (2002). Also, he has *Season of Anomy* (1980) and *The Interpreters* (1973) as novels.

In addition to this, he has edited *Poems of Black Africa*. He is also a musician as he has produced the popular song "I Love My Country." And as a film-maker, he has scripted and produced *Blues for a Prodigal*. As a theatre worker, he founded *Masks* in 1960 and *Orisun Theatre*. He has written many articles in *National and International Journals*. From 1960 to 1964, Soyinka was coeditor of *Black Orpheus*, an important literary journal. From 1960 onward, he taught literature and drama, and headed theatre groups at various Nigerian universities, including those of Ibadan, Ife, and Lagos. In October, 1969, he was appointed head of department of Theatre Arts in the University of Ibadan. His non-fictional works include *Myth, Literature and African World* (1976), *Art, Dialogue and Outrage* (1988), *The Open Sore of a Continent: a Personal Narrative of Nigerian Crisis* (1997), and *Climate of Fear: the Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanizing World* (2005). Soyinka's autobiographical works include *Ake: Years of Childhood* (1981), *Isara* (1989), *Ibadan* (1994), *The Man Died* (1972), and *You Must Set Forth at Dawn: a Memoir* (2006). He later transferred his services to the University of Ife now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, as a professor in dramatic arts.

In 2005–06, Soyinka served on the Encyclopædia Britannica Editorial Board of Advisors. Soyinka has long been a proponent of Nigerian democracy. His decades of political activism included periods of imprisonment and exile, and he has founded, headed, or participated in several political groups, including the National Democratic Organization, the National Liberation Council of Nigeria, and Pro-National Conference Organizations (PRONACO). In 2010, Soyinka founded the Democratic Front for a People’s Federation and served as chairman of the party.

3.3. Influences of Wole Soyinka’s Background

At a tender age, Soyinka was exposed to a lot of influences ranging from his attachment to his mother (Grace) who was a strong member of “The Kuti Clan of Enlightened Women”: a socio-political group led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti; that was aimed at terminating subjugation, exploitation and nascent tyranny in Egbaland. As for the little Wole Soyinka, the “Compulsive Questioner,” apart from trailing his mother to the “crisis points” (meetings), he became a special carrier for the women’s group. This corroborates Tunde Adeniran’s (13-14) views:

While he (Soyinka) was hardly aware of some of the political developments taking place around him during infancy, including the gradual resolution of conflicts affecting Nigeria which twelve years after his birth (i.e., 1946) culminated in the regionalization of Nigeria; he was, no doubt, very conscious of the events in his immediate surroundings. In Abeokuta, a group of women, including his mother, would meet at Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti’s residence to discuss problems which had to do with the community and matters relating to their homes.

Soyinka was endeared to the hearts of many in his home town due to his regular visits to his home town of Isara, this gave him an edge in learning about the web of relationships that tie a community together and the singular and collective efforts required to sustain them, through his various encounters with the traditional paramount ruler of his home town (the Odemo of Isara) as he did cult priests, high-chiefs, young hunters, festivals, marriages, celebrations of individual achievements ceremonies, etc. with such regularities that he could always predict events in the

town, while clearing doubts which usually surround the enterprise of “homecoming” in many traditional African settings.

3.4. Customs and Traditions of the Yorubas as Background to Soyinka’s Works

The customs and culture of the Yorubas that occupy the western part of Southern Nigeria cannot be undermined in this work as they are bound together by language, traditions and religious beliefs and practices. The Yorubas are often associated with the wearing of voluminous clothes like ‘agbada’, ‘buba’, ‘iro’ and ‘shokoto’, etc. They are wealthy and ceremonial in nature, though they are vast in art, music, and poetry which they love with passion. They are religiously inclined, most especially in the African traditional religion, though many of them have today embraced different foreign religions like Islam and Christianity.

The Yorubas trace their ancestry to Ile-Ife under the common ancestor called Oduduwa. They speak one common language despite some dialectal variations which are noticeable. This Awolalu and Dopemu (1979) say: “they speak the same language though with some dialectical variations such as the Egba, Ijaye, Ondo, Ekiti, Ibadan, Ife, Ijebu, Ilesha, Owo, Oyo and even Lagos.” (229). Despite these dialectical variations, the Yoruba language is characterized with inexhaustible maxims, proverbs, folklores, and myth. And a good knowledge of these leads one into the bounty that has through time, formed the nucleus of Yoruba culture and worldview.

In the Yoruba cosmology, there is a general belief in the existence of gods and deities and the power they exude. They believe that Olodumare, who dwells in the sky heaven created the universe, thereafter he is respected and regarded as the supreme deity along with such divinities as Orisa-nla, otherwise called Obatala, the arch divinity and vice regent of Olodumare in the ordering of things. Obatala is the sculptural artist who moulds man. Also in this category of divinity is Esu, he is the overseer of rituals. The concept of Esu in Yoruba myth conjures up in the mind a character of trickery, confusion and uncertainty. This is firmly registered in his attributive appellations such as Esu Laaroye (to show his unlimited power), Esu adara (his trickery) and Esu Elegbara (devilish attributes). In this regard is another Yoruba god known as Sango who doubles as the god of thunder and lightning.

Ogun is another Yoruba divinity that is worth mentioning in this essay as it is Soyinka's favourite god and plays an important part in his life and works. Ogun, according to Awolalu and Dopamu (1979), "is the god of iron, of war and of the chase. He is pre-eminently the patron god of blacksmiths, hunters, warriors and all who deal in iron and steel." (5). All surgical operations and bodily marks like circumcision belong to him because they are all done with instruments made of iron which all belong to Ogun.

Yoruba tradition has it that Ogun is a chief among the divinities 'Osun Imale' as he is said to have been a hunter who came down from heaven on a spider's web and cleared the way with his magical machete for other divinities to come to earth. He is ferocious and therefore, he is an instrument of god's wrath and judgement. Any oath or covenant sealed in his name must be fulfilled and binding. Hence, for example, we see in some court proceedings some accused persons kiss a piece of iron by swearing to it to show their innocence, for Ogun demands justice, fair play and rectitude. More so, hunters believe he protects them from danger especially when they come in contact with ferocious animals in the bush. He commands great regards and is revered among the Yorubas. His shrine is mostly found in the blacksmith's workshop with its symbol of iron. But there are some cases in which the shrine is buried underground with a tree and pots surrounding it. Other noticeable emblems for Ogun worship are rocks, tusks or tails of elephant, metal scraps, and dogs and palm-wine are his favourite food and drink respectively. Other food and items for sacrifice include fowl, tortoise, ram, kolanut, bitter kola, yam, etc. These are offered to him in worship for protection against all forms of danger.

Despite the belief that there are about four hundred and one of such deities in the Yoruba pantheon, each one has its mode of worship as this is done according to the prescription of the gods and with the guidance of priests who are profoundly tutored in the norms of the society. For example, Sango worshippers do not drink palm wine but those of Ogun do.

The worship of the gods is done at specified periods. And such worship often leads to celebration in the forms of festivals which usually feature dance, songs, feeding and drinking. In this case, the gods serve as intermediaries or mediators and the carriers of petitions of man to God, the Olodumare. Though, there could be individual or community worship as this could be festal or ritualistic. Festal when it is thanksgiving for bountiful harvest, good health, childbirth, protection

of the king and community at large. Ritualistic when a petition is being made to checkmate pestilence, drought, unwarranted happenings like deaths and accidents. And in most cases, the king leads the people in festal or ritual worship as the king is always at the helm of affairs and he is treated with divine reverence by all his subjects, he is also regarded as Olodumare's representative on earth as well as next to the divinities usually via the ancestors. It is of note that when the king dies, the foundation of the community is shaken as he is the community and the community is the king.

More so, if the king is autocratic and is found unruly, he is checked through reprimand, and if the situation threatens the peace, harmony and essence of the community, the king is advised to go on exile or to commit suicide. All these added up constitute the Yoruba mythology which is manifest in their social, political and religious lives. For administration convenience, the offices of the prime minister, Basorun and Kakanfo (supreme commander in charge of the army) are made available. The king doubles as the secular and religious head of the kingdom and he is assisted by priests, he administers justice and leads his subjects in community worships and festivals. Homage and royalties are paid to him by his subjects and tributes by territories he has annexed.

One of the most social aspects of the Yorubas is their festivals. And most of these festivals are performed and celebrated annually, like the New Yam festival described as 'Ilewa', which can be the worship of a god or a thanksgiving ceremony. The New Yam Festival is very important because it is the life-giving spirit, the diligent cultivation of the land and the fruit of fertility. The Yoruba custom forbids anyone from eating the new yam until the oba has made supplications through the necessary rites to the ancestors.

The father-child relationship is quite dignifying, as there is absolute display of respect for elders by the young ones. In this regard, the young ones, both male and female prostrate and genuflect respectively to greet their elders. Thus, in the world view, the Yorubas recognize the importance of tradition and communion with the immanent forces. All these put together are what we see as their attitude to literature, most especially, drama. How these traditional elements play out in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, *The Strong Breed*, and *The Lion And the Jewel*, is what we shall examine next.

3.5. Traditional Elements in Wole Soyinka's *Death and The King's Horseman*

There is no gainsaying the fact that most modern African writers borrow from their indigenous or old local traditional content to write their plays. Ayo Kehinde (314) attests to this that by saying that, "in the plays of the leading African playwrights, such as Soyinka, Clark Bekederemo, Efua T. Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, among others, there is ample evidence of borrowing from their traditional cultural milieu. These forms, which are always artistically integrated with their plays, effectuate wonderful aesthetics." Kehinde (314) refers to Ramsaran (1970) to have also corroborated the validity of this claim, "modern African drama has been conditioned by the indigenous traditions of its enabling society." This is what Soyinka exemplifies in these works explored here.

Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is based on an incident that happened in a local environment in an ancient town of Oyo in the mid-forties. This is one of the most tradition-based societies exposing an aspect of colonial encounter in Africa. By tradition the king's horseman disappeared ritually whenever the king (oba) passed on to join his ancestors, but this did not happen during the reign of Oba Ladigbolu 1, who reigned for some thirty-three (33) years because his king's horseman, Elesin-Oba (Jinadu), was apprehended and detained by the British Colonial Officer before he could perform the passage rite of suicide. The youngest son of Elesin-Oba (Murana) who saw this as a slight and betrayal of tradition, killed himself in order not to be termed the son of a coward. This provides the source for *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975).

Death and the King's Horseman is based on Yoruba society, culture, tradition, death, human sacrifice and British Colonialism. In a nutshell, it is a play shrouded in spiritualism and ritual sacrifice as this is part of the Yoruba customs and traditions displayed at its best by Wole Soyinka. The introductory note in the play attests to this:

...his triumph in this play is evoking
the mystery and ritual of Yoruba-life, a world
of the living, the dead and the unborn,
and in giving it palpable and breath-taking
theatrical form, in striking contrast to the desiccated
life-style of the colonials. (1)

According to the native tradition, when the king dies, he must be followed by his favourite horse, Chief Horseman, and his dog to the eternal world, after a month of his death. It is their duty to cross the realm of tradition and reach their master to escort him with honour to the next world. Soyinka depicts the ritual practice of the Yoruba, through the character Joseph, thus:

It is native law and custom. The king
died last month. Tonight is his burial.
but before they can bury him, the
Elesin must die so as to accompany
him to heaven. (28)

As customs demand, the Horseman offers himself for the sacrifice. His position is to be taken over by his eldest son. His son also will grow up with the same mentality to take up the father's position. In this play, Olude, the horseman's eldest son, returns from London where he is a fourth-year medical student after receiving the news of the king's death as he says: "our king is dead... I had to return home at once so as to bury my father." (52). It is in the ritual that the heir or successor is forbidden to set eyes on his father from the moment the king dies. Any delay or reluctance by the Chief Horseman to accompany the dead Alafin to the other world portends grave consequence for his people.

Actually, this play is full of many forms of indigenous traditions of the Yoruba-world-view. These forms include the Yoruba metaphysics of transition, traditional beliefs, traditional music (rendered by a praise singer), traditional drumming, dances, dirge, proverbs, riddles, idioms, etc. For example, the Yoruba belief that death is not a cessation of existence but a mere transition into a command existence and that the unborn, the living and the dead form a continuum, is the reason why the Alaafin is not thought of as dead, but as having passed unto another mode of being where he waits at the gate to make a proper entrance. Soyinka also portrays Elesin Oba as the community savior, as an ordinary horse rider or orderly of the king, but he is like Marshall or Prime Minister to the Alaafin. Sacrificing such an honourable person is not just an ordinary act, yet his death is essential for the survival of the society in the future.

Ojaide, however, argues that Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* shows African culture and life in relative terms to the European, indirectly saying that each culture has about the same things as others and differences are only relative. In that classic play, Soyinka looks at concepts of honour and sacrifice in particular in terms of cultural relativism. Thus, African writers see themselves as defending their race and culture in the face of European/Western marginalization and denigration. (12).

Femi Euba (394) explains that in *Death and the King's Horseman*, Soyinka uses Elesin-Oba's traditional commitment to death to explore the metaphysical worldview of death in Yoruba-land in relation to the world of the living which Elesin is in the process of leaving traditionally, and the world of the unborn, which anticipates a continuity of tradition by future Elesins. This is corroborated by John Mbiti (1970):

Most people's accept or acknowledge God as the final guardian of law and order and of the moral and ethical codes. Therefore, the breaking of such orders whether by the individual or by a group, is ultimately an offence by the corporate body of the society (5).

Ojaide states that the African idea of law and order can best be seen at play in a literary work like Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, where Elesin has to will himself to die before the burial of the dead Oba so that he will not have to interfere with the rule of succession. On the African concept of land, it is sacred and dedicated to the ancestors. (8). Similar to Mbiti's observation, Olawale Awosika (1989) explains that:

The traditional office of Elesin in Oyo is that of the scapegoat. He is set apart to die when the Alaafin dies, so that he can accompany the king on his journey to the other world. It is a taboo for him to refuse to die at the appointed hour... it is an inconceivable crime for the Elesin to live beyond his appointed time (48)

Horseman, as the prime saviour of the society, is duty-bound to safeguard and enhance the spiritual well-being of his community and society. In respect of this, Tanure Ojaide says:

Order to Africans is perceived as natural and ritualistic to ensure harmony, the absence of which will bring calamity to the whole group, for this reason, an individual could be

sacrificed to avoid a war, a plague, or any anticipated communal disaster. In other words, the well-being of the community. (48)

In the Yoruba traditional society, and by extension, every other African community, mere survival is given essence when there is spiritual well-being of everyone in the community. This is an integral part of the African system of communalism which implies selflessness and a life of sacrifice for all epitomized in Elesin's life. This is a missing link in modern African spirituality, culture and politics; a fruit of colonialism where individuality is priced over all.

The setting of the play is in a market square at the village centre, which portrays a symbolic local environment to the Yoruba community. This is why in some Yoruba communities the market square is usually the place of meeting. In the beginning of the play, Elesin Oba hurries to the market square. There is a kind of mutual relationship that exists between him, the praise singers and the people of the village, especially the market women. This is reminiscent of the traditional African societies which are full of communal love, patriotism and mutual respect. In this play, the reader/audience comes across Yoruba metaphorical language:

Praise Singer: Elesin O, Elesin Oba! Honour! What trust is this
The cockerel goes to keep with such haste that
He must leave his tail behind?

Elesin: (slows down a bit, laughing) A trust where the
Cockerel needs no adornment (9)

The use of proverbs, riddles, and idioms for emphatic communicative effect and for in-depth analysis by the aged cannot be over-emphasized in Yoruba language as this runs through the whole play by various characters, most especially by Elesin, Iyaloja, Praise-Singer, the women, etc., who exhibit a high degree of competence and performance in the knowledge of powerful and very rich Yoruba proverbs and idioms and expressions. This is exemplified in the conversations among the Iyaloja, the Elesin and the Women:

Iyaloja: The best is yours. We know you for a man of honour.
You are not the one who eats and leaves nothing on
his plate for children. Did you not say it yourself? Not
one who blights the happiness of others for a moment's pleasure.

Elesin: Who speaks of pleasure?
O women, listen! Pleasure palls.
Our acts should have meaning.
The sap of the plantain never dries.
You have seen the young shoot swelling
even as the parent stalk begins to wither.
Women, let my going be likened to the twilight
hour of the plantain.

Women: What does he mean Iyaloja?
This language is the language of our elders,
we do not fully grasp it (20-21).

In addition to the above, there are also proverbs in the words of the Iyaloja to the Elesin in his
trance:

Iyaloja: It is the death of war that kills the valiant,
death of water is how the swimmer goes.
it is the death of markets that kills the trader.
and death of indecision takes the idle away
the trade of the cutlass blunts its edge
and the beautiful die the death of beauty
it takes an Elesin to die the death of death...
only Elesin ... dies the unknowable death of death...
Gracefully, gracefully does the horseman regain
the stables at the end of day, gracefully... (43).

This means that proverbs are meant for easy expression and consumption by the Yoruba in all
spheres of their lives. It is important at this point to quote Achebe Chinua's assertion about
"proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten."

Still in reference to proverbs in the play, Simon Pilkings asks, "...must your people forever
speak in riddles?" (71). The above Yoruba traditional philosophy which is Soyinka's literary
playground corroborates Mathew Umukoro's (1990) affirmation that:

Proverbs are esteemed as the efficient search horses for
ferreting our hidden meaning of enigmatic worlds and
Mysterious facts of life (83)

The Yoruba belief in gods, totems, idol worship (juju), egungun (masquerade) prevalent in Yoruba land and most parts of Edo land is also in display in this text. The egungun is believed to be the intermediary/intercessor between the living and the dead and also possesses the power of death, as Amusa says of the egungun mask: “I cannot against death to dead cult. This dress get power of dead” (49). To add to the above, the mask of the egungun is sacred and should be respected as Olunde frowns and says to Jane Pilkings for derobing the masquerade: “And that is the good cause for which you desecrate an ancestral mask?”(51). The belief in Yoruba cosmology in ascertaining the future through divination is another notable point in this play as Elesin chants the story of the ‘Not I Bird’ (12).

Enekwe (152) emphatically notes that Nigeria has a lot of examples of drama structured on dance. Soyinka’s drama is unarguably structured on dance and songs and praises, among other cultural sources. The importance of the drum to the Yoruba people is given cultural attention and emphasis, as it serves dual purposes: as instrument of entertainment, and as a conveyer of message from the gods and spirits. Femi Euba (396) notes the significant use of drumming ritually dramatized through the ritual of Elesin’s passage-dance (feet in dialogue with the drumming), the Praise-Singer is at once the communicant beholding his god, and the god himself (the dead Alafin, waiting at the gate of the passage to the ancestral world). Further to this, are the words of Elesin:

Human eyes are useless for a search of this nature. But in the house of Osugbo, those who keep watch through the spirit recognized the moment they sent word to me through the voice of our sacred drums to prepare myself. I heard them and I shed all thoughts of earth. I began to follow the moon to the abode of gods. (62)

The use of praise names in Yoruba traditional culture also comes to the fore as they are used to appraise great deeds and honour the sons and daughters of the land, for example, as in the use of the name ‘Olohun-iyó’ which is consistently used for the Praise-singer in the play (p.9). This further brings to life the use of images as Soyinka does in this text since most of the characters are traditional people who live their lives nowhere but where they are born as it is typical of the Yoruba to identify names with meaning metaphorically as a way of sharing a sense of togetherness or spirit of oneness.

3.6. Traditional Elements in *The Strong Breed*

3.6.1. Synopsis of *The Strong Breed*

The play portrays the traditional belief of an African village characterized by many forms of indigenous traditions which include the metaphysics, scape-goatism, sacrifice, Yoruba divinities, and belief in gods, native spirits, ancestors, deities and taboos. This play develops on a strong and important traditional African concept of the traditions of an African local community that sees outsiders as sacrificial lambs – this is the character which Eman represents. The play is about Eman, a rebel against his native tradition and culture. He feels bound by the tradition and culture of his land and needed freedom. To achieve this, he decided to leave his native village to start to live a new life as a teacher and doctor in a new village. In his native village, he belongs to a carrier family. In his native land, there is the custom of celebrating the New Year after dumping a boat symbolically loaded with all the accumulated evils of the year into the sea by a carrier, whereas in the new place, Eman finds a new kind of carrier ritual, which contains a human being as a carrier. Once, Ifada is chosen for carrier ritual, Eman is astonished and calls the custom a savage act. Without the knowledge of the customs of the new place, Eman keeps an idiot boy, Ifada, in his house and faces the difficulties.

Sunma, who serves as an assistant to Eman, is the daughter of the village priest, Jaguna. As a member of the village, she tries to save her lover, Eman, aware of the tradition of the land. She prevails on him to leave the village for some time because the village has the custom of using a stranger or an idiot to serve them as carrier of the evils of the old year. She becomes helpless in changing his mind. She curses and accuses the village, “I know they are evil and I am not. From the oldest to the smallest child, they are nourished in evil and unwholesomeness in which I have no part,” and “I found there could be no peace in the midst of so much cruelty” (*The Strong Breed* 121).

3.6.2. Traditional Beliefs in Spiritual Cleansing

The play exploits the myth and rituals of the Yoruba culture which believes in purification rite. The play is centred on the Yoruba ritual of Oro sacrifice or carrier ritual tradition, a ritual of cleansing the sins of community before the beginning of a New Year through a carrier. The people of Yoruba believe that the ritual of carrier will purge all evils of the previous year through the carrier and they are anxious to get rid themselves of the troubles that have harassed them in the past, before entering into a new year. They trust that, their sins, guilt, death, sickness will be relieved through the punishment of the carrier, and it will confer prosperity and salvation on the society from moral chaos. Through the tragic play, Soyinka's ideology on the relationship between the individual and the society shows the sense of a community given to carrying out their New Year resolution in the belief of cleansing the land in order to go into another on a clean slate. By this traditional rite, the community admits the infallibility of man and the danger of sinfulness. Therefore, the cultural need to have a carrier who atones for the sins of the community becomes the crux of the conflict. Through this carrier, evils are cleaned off the land at the beginning of another year. The carrier bears the sins and evils of the land like a messiah. Aware of this, Eman decides to revolt against tradition and culture by running away to another land to start life afresh. Here again, he meets almost the same tradition where in Ifada is earmarked for the carrier role. As different from Eman's native land tradition, the carrier is chosen by the village. In this case, it is the nonentity in the land that is chosen to bear the cross of the people, hence Ifada. Eman steps in to save Ifada.

3.6.3. Traditional Life of Sacrifice

From the traditional point of view, Soyinka brings out another typical tradition of the village of using an idiot or a deformed man or woman as their carrier for the ritual. The village chiefs choose Ifada for the purpose of ritual. The reason behind this choice is informed by their cultural worldview. A deformed character like, Ifada embodies the suffering spirit of Obatala. He is also regarded as an integral part of the larger structure of the universe. That is the reason, Oroge tells, "Ifada is a godsend." However, in the face of modernity, these words make human right meaningless and absurd. In the village, the strangers were highly marginalized and the native

people, like colonizers, exploit them for their religious purpose. Here, Eman represents the voice of subalterns.

Eman explains, according to the context of his culture, that the sacrificial lamb must be self-chosen. Where there is an imposition, it negates the cultural essence of the exercise. But Oroge objects to this argument claiming that none will willingly choose himself for such an exercise. First, he reminds Eman that “Ifada is a godsend. Does he have to be willing?” (*The Strong Breed*, 128). Then, again, he says:

Mister Eman, I don't think you quite understand. This is not a simple matter at all. I don't know what you do, but here, it is not a cheap task for anybody. No one in his senses would do such a job. Why do you think we give refuge to idiots like him? We don't know where he came from. One morning, he is simply there, just like that. From nowhere at all. You see, there is a purpose in that. (*The Strong Breed*, 128)

The purification festival helps to show that the community is conscious of the weight of evil but no one is able to dare the evil. To drive home our point, a similar festival or purificatory rite exists among the people of Ife in today's Osun State, Nigeria, where a stranger is used for sacrifice annually, though; modernity is trying to override this. During the reign of Oranmiyan, Moremi led a war against the people of Ibo which she won. Alas! She was infested with small pox which was believed to be a strange and abominable disease among the people of Ife and for this she had to be taken outside the community to die. The idea of sacrifice is also embedded in the death or loss of the mother that bears the carrier. This means that the child lacks the mother's milk and affection, therefore, has the opportunity to grow the hard unnatural way.

3.6.4. Cultural Ideological Variation

Soyinka uses the play to explain the cultural differences characteristic of Nigerian communities. It is the general belief that the community should be ushered into the New Year with a feeling of sanctification and for this, a carrier, the scapegoat who will help cleanse the land of all the evils of the old year is to be sought to do this for the community. This kind of ceremony is found in almost every primitive African society and this particular community is not an exception. The

carrier ritual is quite different from village to village. In Eman's village, the ritual carrier family is devoted for the purpose of carrying the sins of the village every New Year. Strangers, deformed or anyone else is not chosen. The carrier family is respected as the strong breed. The family is honoured as the chief of the village. The carrier has attendants for his duty. On the day of ritual he is not decorated or humiliated. Instead, oil will be applied to his whole body and white rings will be marked around his eyes. No one chases or beats him but he is sent with mark of respect by drumming. Oyin Ogunba (1972) says of the Strong Breed:

...are a chain of pivotal persons who
ride on the crest of wave, make the
human problems theirs and from age
to age sacrifice themselves voluntarily
for the common good. (p. 16)

Significantly, the carrier is not sacrificed; instead, a miniature boat contains an indefinable mound, i.e. the sins of the village, and is taken to a river by the carrier and the boat is drowned in the middle of it. The ritual in the new village is more strange and cruel to Eman. His sufferings make him to remember his home and his memory oscillates between his native and new place. In his mind's eye, his father asks him to take his hereditary function as carrier as such a function can be performed only by the men from such a family as theirs, the strong breed. The period of twelve years, he left from his home village, which, altered his mind and he is not ready to accept his father's position. He believes that he is no longer a fit person to hold such position. Moreover, he refuses to go back to his village, after his wife, Omae's death. She died immediately after giving birth to his child. His father tells the reason for her death as, "No woman survives the bearing of the strong ones" (*The Strong Breed* 133).

3.6.5. Traditional Beliefs in Predestination

In the play, Eman is tied to the tragic destiny of being a carrier. In an attempt to avoid being a carrier in his village, he ends up being another in Sumna's village. Like King Odewale in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, Eman could not completely evade his destiny. His escape from his native village, refusal to perform his duties as an heir of Strong Breed and settling in a new place are the effects of his willingness to overcome the destiny. Later, he voluntarily gives himself to villagers to save a pitiable human being like Ifada. In the new place, even though the position of carrier is not imposed on him, but he destined himself to occupy the position to safeguard Ifada.

Here he does his duty as carrier, moreover, as the hire of Strong Breed. At last, his willingness fails, and destiny prevails on him. In many instances, he had a lot of chances to elude from the situation, but something drives him towards his end. Finally, he accepts his destiny. He becomes the proverbial Yoruba dog destined to be lost and can never heeds its hunter warning whistle.

There is to be an end of the year festival in an unnamed African village and this is going to take the form of a purification rite. Eman, the protagonist is a teacher, a dispenser and stranger in this community (Jaguna's village), and as the play progresses he (Eman) is urged to leave the village temporarily in his own interest by Sunma, Chief Jaguna's daughter who has some dark relationship with him, for the period the sacrifice and purification rite will last – which is the last day of the year. All advice by Sunma to Eman fall on deaf ears as Eman refuses to leave, takes custody of the idiot boy (Ifada) who is to be made the scape-goat – carrier and he himself is forced by the chiefs to be the carrier as it is a taboo in the community for one to harbor a carrier. Their communal and collective assertion is noticed in the words of Oroge to Eman:

Oroge (sadly): I am sorry you would not
Understand Mister Eman. But
You ought to know that no
Carrier may return to the village.
If he does, the people will stone
Him to death. It has happened
Before. Surely, it is too much to
Ask a man to give up his own soil
(p. 20).

This particular incidence leads to Eman being exchanged for Ifada as the carrier. In an attempt to show appreciation to her for the part she played during the war, and to cleanse the land of the strange disease, a stranger had to be sought and used as a sacrificial lamb to her. This, as a fact is a whole belief among the Yoruba, that only strangers are good for Oluwo (sacrifice). The execution of this ritual is done at night, and during the course of this rite, no indigene of Ife is expected to be found outside, as this could portend doom for the person (indigene). Everybody is expected to be within the confines of their premises. Initially, a goat is used for the sacrifice to the gods in the bush and the leg of the goat is carried by an elderly male round the town. The sole aim of this is to get a stranger that will be used for the sacrifice. The people of Ife, being aware

of this ritual-sacrifice happening keep themselves indoors as anybody found outside during this rite is assumed to be a stranger. And if such a person is touched with the leg of the goat and within a period of seven days, the person dies. It is the belief of the people that the gods reject the sacrifice if a son of the soil is used. Therefore, it has to be an outsider or a stranger to the land that has to be used for this rite. Now being the carrier, he is to bear the burden of carrying away the community's evils and ills against his wish. He does this with a certain strange power and discovers in the process that this is the role to which he has been unconsciously moving all the time. This form of movement is not ordinary as it exemplifies the mystical power in the African or Yoruba cosmology. This shows that he is in divine communion with the spirits of his ancestors and predecessors in the role and is encouraged to think that the role is worthwhile and that only a special breed of people – the strong breed – can be entrusted with the big task and be expected to carry it through thoroughly.

Eman's uncompromising determination to save Ifada and his willingness to challenge the prevailing institutionalized traditional system in the community is clearly noticed in his dialogue with Oroge and Jaguna, as they attempt to carry Ifada away:

Oroge: Patience Jaguna...
What did you mean my friend?
Eman: it is a simple thing. A village
which cannot produce its own carriers
contains no men)p. 19)
Girl: do you mean my carrier?
I am unwell you know.
My mother says it will
Take away sickness with
The old years (5)

The cultural and traditional belief of the people is further strengthened in the beating of the effigy and in the girl's words to Eman about the effigy being her carrier. The effigy is the symbol of the community in ills and evils. Sane people in the community usually run away from it in order to avoid being contaminated with the community's evil, though the effigy is used as a bait to track down Ifada in the play.

Eman makes attempt to escape by running away in the last but this is not possible as he is already caught in the traditional mysterious web of the community and he is made to discharge

the functions of a carrier with a mysterious gusto leading us into his past. The old man, his father, was once a carrier in his time but this sport, Eman is himself temporarily suited to the mortifying experience which is the role of the carrier. The old man makes his son, Eman, realize that this task is not for the ordinary people but for the strong breed and that it is a sport that he (the old man) has been doing for the past twenty years that Eman should follow suit, as he says:

Old man: ...it is only a strong breed
That can take this boat to the river
Year after year and wax stronger on it.
I have taken down each year's evils
For over twenty years.
I hoped you would follow me. (25)

All these highlights are brought to the fore in order to get an insight into Eman's headlong deep to his tragic end. According to Kumar Naveen (2011), "the play explicates more on fate or destiny of an individual. Through that, Soyinka brings out the Yoruba traditional belief system on destiny or *Ori*. The Yoruba community believes in the form of destiny. Literally *ori* is the physical head. The people believe that success or failure in life depends on *ori* and its quality." (504).

The importance the community attaches to the festival which is meant to regenerate the people could be deduced from the above points. The sacrificial lamb in the community should be a human carrier and a stranger. And here, Eman tries to stop the community from making Ifada, a stranger, the carrier. The community, therefore, sees Eman as standing in its way to achieving peace and happiness which a successful purification rite is likely to bring to them as a community. It is also interesting to know at this point the importance attached to a name in Yorubaland. For example, the name of Ifada in Yoruba is a name but in Yoruba tradition, it connotes Oracle or Orunmila. Ifa Oracle is the creator of human beings. Therefore, in Yoruba translation, Ifada will then mean 'Oracle creates' which automatically translates to 'one created by oracle.' Thus, in this play, the community sees the idiot boy as a token for sacrifice to their god – a carrier of the community's ills and evils. Therefore, Eman's attempt to save the idiot boy, Ifada, is seen as portending danger for the community and so, he must be made to pay the ultimate price for his stubbornness by being the carrier.

3.6.6. The World of Transition or The Fourth Stage

Soyinka presents the spiritual world of the Yorubas through *Death and the King's Horseman*. Through the play, he presents the transition thesis which exists among the spheres of human and supernatural existence. Balogun Lekan (44) discusses the importance of the 'ori' in human existence. He explains that Soyinka posits a deeper and ritualistic position that derives from the Yoruba worldview, especially belief in the existence and interaction of the three worlds. In his words, he argues that "the confrontation in the play is largely metaphysical, contained in the human vehicle which is Elesin and the universe of the Yoruba mind---the world of the living, the dead and the unborn, and the numinous passage which links all: transition", identified as the "The Fourth Stage".

3.7. Synopsis of *The Lion And The Jewel*

The Lion and the Jewel by Wole Soyinka is a comical play based on African society, written in 1959 and published in 1963. As a comical play, it is based on love and marriage within the context of two conflicting cultures; the African tradition and the western culture. The play is set in a remote-fictional Yoruba village called Ilujinle, which literally means 'distant land'. The play portrays the struggle of Baroka, the 'bale', that is, traditional head of Ilujinle, and Lakunle, the culturally-confused village teacher, in the quest to win the love of the village belle—an outstanding beauty—Sidi. While Lakunle, the western-oriented village school teacher attempts to woo and marry Sidi in accordance with foreign practice and without the payment of the traditional bride-price, the old but crafty 'bale' leads Sidi into his net by feigning impotent and consequently seducing her. Having lost her virginity to the more cunning Baroka, Sidi is left with no option but to marry him in a rural community which still cherishes such traditional values like bride price and premarital virginity. The conflict between Lakunle and Baroka is essentially a conflict between traditionalism and westernization, between the callow inexperienced youth and the rich wisdom of age. The more robust African culture, personified by Baroka, naturally gains the upper hand in this typical rural setting which has little room for strange foreign values, represented by Lakunle. With the use of comedy of love and laughter,

Soyinka employs satirical backgrounds to show the encroachment of the western culture upon African value.

3.7.1. Traditional Elements in *The Lion and The Jewel*

Kumar Naveen (1-10) identifies ample use of dance, song, mime, bride-price and its importance in African setting, use of traditional characterization against foreign one, child bearing, significance of chastity, abstract signs and plain usual symbols, polygamy, Yoruba marriage system, oaths on pantheon of gods, livelihood of drummers in Yoruba culture, respect for constituted traditional authorities, and unique role of women-folk as elements germane to African culture and tradition which form the core of its drama.

Soyinka handles dramatically the folk materials of the Yorubas in line with the central message of the play. However, there are western influences undeniably in this play but the traditional African elements are quite overwhelming in influence and symbolic interpretations. The play is very simple in its structure and it is a poetic drama or musical play. All these elements are used to develop the plot of the play and show the deep familiarity of Soyinka with the various aspects of African tradition and the influence of the modern world on the African mind. They further portray Soyinka as a writer who bases his work on his society, culture, tradition and politics of Africa. He infuses the western stage with new dramatic possibilities while commenting on Yoruba tradition and Africa's modern political and social realities. He is a keen observer of his land, culture and customs and very eloquent in expressing such observance in his writings.

3.7.2. Tradition against Modernity through Characterization

A very instrumental traditional element to this play is achieved through characterization and setting. Soyinka truly shows how afro-centric he could be in spite of western influences by not only juxtaposing the characters of the Baale and Lakunle but also showing the superiority of traditional life over western culture. The play focuses on the failure of an elementary school teacher to apprehend the sense of culture, advancement or civilization.

The major characters of the play are very true to life. Soyinka's object of representing something to express something else exemplifies more than what the surface meaning offers. This play is combined with a real flavour of African rural life in the context in which idea of development requires a psyche transformation.

The sense of progress goes through necessary transition. The custom of polygamy and bride barter are challenged. Lakunle is endowed with the glimpses of slapsticks carrying a stigma of the exaggerated, caricature-like portrayal. But the crafty, unscrupulous aged fox, the Bale Baroka is quite satisfactory in his cunning warfare waged against modernism and in the strong method of winding stairs for adopting polygamy.

Lakunle, the semi-European, who stands to represent "progress" and cultured romance fails Sidi at the crucial hours, captivated by her own charm, keeps her head against Lakunle but loses it while encountering the old lion, Baroka. Sidi presents a full spectrum of the panorama of the heart of an African village as against Lagos, which stands for advancement in accordance with definition of Lakunle. Sidi further ridicules Lakunle with the noble idea of bride-price not believed in by him.

Soyinka uses the dramatically scenic rural setting of Ilujinle in a very realistic manner to portray African life in its exact nature. Ilujinle is a typical Nigerian village representative of every African rural setting and what they strongly uphold as culture and tradition. Through the characters of Baroka and Sidi, he holds tenaciously to the dear tradition and culture of the Africans respecting their marital culture of payment of bride-price. Through the failure of Lakunle in winning the nuptial hand of Sidi, Soyinka shows how strong the ties of aspects of African culture and tradition could be on Africans. This he crowns with the victory of Baroka over Sidi as well as the passionate insistence of Sidi on the payment of her bride-price by Lakunle. In other words, there are certain aspects of African culture and tradition that would be defiant to western influences in a predominant style.

3.7.3. Relevance of Bride-price Payment in Africa

Soyinka clearly shows the true relevance of the payment of bride-price in the marriage system of Africans. This is quite different from the western marriage system as epitomized in the life of Lakunle, the semi-European, a metaphor of Euro-centricism. Sidi, as a true African daughter, follows the footsteps of tradition in demanding her bride-price from Lakunle to assert her womanhood dignity. This foils the attempt of Lakunle to ridicule the concept of traditional marriage in Africa, believed to be enslaving of the womenfolk. Sidi, not taken away by the Eurocentric marital views expresses her firmness thus:

I have told you, and I say it again
I shall marry you today, next week
or any day you name.
but my bride-price must first be paid....
but I tell you, Lakunle, I must have
the full bride-price. Will you make me
a laughing-stock? Well, do as you please.

But Sidi will not make herself
a cheap bowl for the village spit....
they will say I was no virgin
that I was forced to sell my shame
and marry you without a price. (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 8)

From the above revelation of Sidi, it becomes clear how ridiculous non-payment of bride-price could be to a well-cultured African daughter, let alone Sidi, the village belle. According to the African tradition, it is a disgrace for an African girl to be married without the payment of bride-price. However, in the case of Lakunle, Sidi expects him to pay more because of her elegance and virginity. Virginity is another traditional element dear to womenfolk in Africa. This they guard with utmost jealousy as it brings them dignity and honour in the world of men. This also turns out to be the pride of men. Aware of these, Sidi stands her ground against being ridiculed in spite of downplaying of such by Lakunle as “a savage custom, barbaric, out-dated ... unpalatable” (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 8). To Lakunle, payment of bride-price is a disgrace and humiliation to women in modern-day Africa: “to pay the price would be /to buy a heifer off the market stall” (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 9). But ironically, it is the non-payment that is a disgrace and humiliation.

3.7.4. Child Bearing as Traditional Element of Marital Success

In the African traditional setting, having a child is a marital fulfillment. It is a major reason for marriage in Africa because it is through procreation that the world continues to exist. Lakunle does not understand the importance attached to child bearing in the traditional world of Africa. He goes further to say that he does seek a wife ““To fetch and carry, / To cook and scrub, / To bring forth children by the gross ...” (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 9). As a core element of African marriage system, childbearing, apart from bringing meaningfulness, epitomizes fertility in a productive world. The transfer of fertility to the husband’s family is a welcome development. This is the essence of womanhood and marriage.

3.7.5. Traditional Significance of Chastity

In the play, the playwright until the end does not show that the bride-price is paid to Sidi by her spouse. After Sidi is seduced by Baroka, Lakunle readily accepts to marry her, there he says, “... it is only fair/ That we forget the bride-price totally/ Since you no longer can be called a maid” (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 54). But she chooses the seducer as her husband than the semi-witted, Lakunle. Her decision is due to the concept of chastity. Through Sidi, Soyinka brings out the culture of the tradition-based rigid society. She would have chosen young Lakunle to marry, but her loss of virginity makes her to marry the old Baroka,

Marry who ...? You thought ...
did you really think that you, and I ...
why, did you think that after him,
I could endure the touch of another man?
(*The Lion and the Jewel*, 57)

Chastity is the only reason that stops Sidi from accepting the proposal of Lakunle. It is not the manliness of Baroka that actually impresses her that she decides to marry him, but the age-old tradition of marrying and living with only one man stops her to take any other decisions. Even though she is portrayed as a not fully matured girl, but she is one of the strong representatives of the tradition in the play. She takes pride in sticking to the man who deflowers her, instead of

giving herself away to the ridicule of somebody else who would play on her un-chastity. This is a strong traditional element always protected jealously by the African women-folk.

3.7.6. Polygamy as an Element of the African Marriage Life and Society

Polygamy is an integral core of marriage culture, especially among the elite in the African traditional setting. It is the stock in trade of royalty. Baroka is the metaphorical character portraying the essence of the polygamous nature of marriage in the African setting and tradition. Wives are counted as part of the wealth of the man in the world of Africa. In other words, polygamy has economic metaphorical implication in Africa. This is to further give more life to the practice of widow inheritance in which the heir apparent marries the widow of a deceased king. In the land of Ilujinle, the Bale is entitled to marrying many wives, but treating them equally according to the dictates of tradition. So, Baroka even at sixty-two exercises the streak of polygamy characteristic of anybody assuming his position. He struggles to add Sidi to the harem of wives like Sadiku and Ailatu. Polygamy is a socio-cultural demand of his social class and royalty. Sadiku is even seen helping out in the wooing of Sidi as it is part of her duty to ensure the happiness of the king. By this, the African society demands total obedience of the womenfolk to their husbands' whims and caprices. Sadiku, aware of her cultural responsibility, is proud in playing her role efficiently. This again shows how supportive the women are of polygamy at the level of royalty, as Sadiku says:

Sidi, have you considered what life of bliss awaits you?
Baroka swears to take no other wife after you. Do you
know what it is to be the Bale's last wife? I'll tell you.
when he dies – and that should not be long; even the
lion has to die sometime – well, when he does, it means
that you will have the honour of being the senior wife
of the new Bale. And just think, until Baroka dies, you
shall be his favourite. No living in the outhouses for you,
my girl. Your place will always be in the place; first as the
latest bride, and afterwards, as the head of the new harem...
It is a rich life, Sidi. I know. I have been in that position for
forty-one years (*The Lion & The Jewel*, p.20-21)

Widow inheritance is not in any way incest. Sadiku reveals that the last shall be the first at the change of the royal baton. She shows herself as a vivid example witnessing the impotence of Okiki, Baroka's father, "I was there when it happened to your father, the great Okiki. I did for him, I, the youngest and freshest of the wives" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 30). These words state that she was the youngest wife of Okiki and now according to the custom, she has become the senior wife to Baroka, i.e. she married father and after his death she became wife to her step-son. It is quite strange custom to the Indian readers. But the Yoruba call it the responsibility of the king to take care of the youngest wife and children of the previous sovereign. This custom is called "isupo" among the Yoruba people.

3.7.7. Elements of Traditional Wedding

Wedding is another traditional element in the play, although not given much detail about its functions. However, some fragmentary statements of Sadiku and Lakunle shed light on the Yoruba culture of wedding. Before the marriage, the bride packs her clothes and trinkets and oils herself as a bride. And she is accompanied by her relatives and peers to the bridegroom's house amidst songs and cultural dance of the village. The marriage has many ceremonies; Lakunle verbalizes it thus "... I have to hire a praise-singer, / and such a number of ceremonies / must firstly be performed" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 56). Soyinka attempts a scenic description of the decoration of the bride, "*Sidi now enters. ...she hold a bundle, done up in a richly embroidered cloth. She is radiant, jewelled, lightly clothed, and wears light leather-thong sandals*", "*Festive air, fully pervasive*" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 57-58). These words show that the ceremony of marriage is a very colourful and mirthful ambiance with songs and dance.

3.7.8. Traditional Elements of Songs, Dance and Mime

Songs, dance and mimes are the major traditional elements in the play. Soyinka has made use of these elements to enhance the action of the play. In the first part of the play, "Morning," Sidi and her village girls and Lakunle perform a dance and mime of "the dance of the lost traveller". In the dance, the villagers enact the experiences of the western photographer on his first visit to

Ilujinle. The second mime is performed by Lakunle to Sidi and Sadiku about the coming of the railway, and of its rerouting away from the village when the Bale bribes the Surveyor. In this episode, Lakunle seeks to expose the wiliness of self-indulgent Baroka by telling them how the Bale has sabotaged all schemes of connecting the village to modern civilization. The next dance is performed by Sadiku after Baroka has confided in her the loss of his manhood. Sadiku gloats over it and places a carved figure of Baroka in the village centre and she performs “victory dance”. The fourth mime is the wrestling match between Baroka and a wrestler. The wrestling motions are mimed in order to impress Sidi with his prowess and virility. Baroka keeps on talking warmly and affectionately to Sidi and defeats the wrestler also. The final song, dance and mime are performed in the end of the play, after Sidi has announced to Lakunle her intention of marrying Baroka and bear his children. Sidi sings and dances the “dance of virility”.

3.7.9. **Traditional Oaths on Pantheon of Gods**

Soyinka includes some religious traditions like making oaths on Yoruba pantheon of gods like Ogun and Sango. These two gods are usually invoked in oaths. Ogun is the god of oaths and justice. In Yoruba courts, devotees of the faith swear to tell the truth by kissing a machete sacred to Ogun. The Yoruba consider Ogun fearsome and terrible in his revenge; they believe that if one breaks a pact made in his name, swift retribution will follow. In the play, when a girl gives the news to Sidi about her photograph published in a western magazine, at first she could not believe and asks,

SIDI: Is that the truth? Swear! Ask Ogun to
strike you dead.
GIRL: Ogun strike me dead if I lie.
(*The Lion and the Jewel*, 12)

In the scene, Sadiku woos Sidi for her husband, Sidi’s acts make her to pray to the god Sango to restore her sanity, “May Sango restore your wits. For most surely some angry god has taken possession of you” (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 22). Sango is considered as god of thunder and lightning. His anger is sudden and terrible. He strikes his enemies down with lightning. And the

Yoruba believe that only Sango can relive the people who behave abnormally or are possessed by any angry god or evil spirit.

Besides this, there is the use of the gods in affirming truth in a typical African setting. The pantheons of gods in Africa are taken as witnesses in conversations where there is an element of doubt. The conversation between Sidi and the Girl shows how dishonest it is to tell lies in the face of the African gods:

Sidi: Is that the truth? Swear! Ask Ogun to
strike you dead.

Girl: Ogun strike me dead if I lie (p. 11).

Also unique among Africans is the belief that the gods are in charge of human affairs. Africans believe that there are gods assigned to every aspect of human life. At the appropriate time, such gods are invoked to take charge of the affairs of man concerned. This is shown to us at the end of the play, in the conversation between Sadiku and Sidi in respect of productivity:

Sadiku: (lays her hand on Sidi's head.) I invoke the fertile gods.
They will stay with you. May the time come soon when
you shall be as round-bellied as a full moon in a low sky (p. 64).

3.7.10. Drumming as Traditional Means of Livelihood

Drums, drumming and drummers occupy a significant place in the cultural life of the Yorubas. So it is generally in Africa. Drums have symbolic messages culturally. In this play, the use of drums cuts across the significant traditional lives of the people. But beyond the use of drums in the passage of messages, it is the cultural heritage of quite a good number of families in Africa. Those who play drums earn a means of livelihood from it. Soyinka throws light on the use of drumming as a means of livelihood in the play. This is shown below:

SADIKU: [*wheedling.*] Come on, school teacher. They'll expect it of you ... The man of learning ... the young sprig of foreign wisdom ... You must not demean yourself in their eyes ... you must give them money to perform for your lordship ...

[Male dancer enters first, persuaded by a number of young women and other choral idlers. ... He and about half of his pursuers have already danced off-stage on the opposite side when Sadiku

dips her hand briskly in Lakunle's pocket, this time with greater success. Before Lakunle can stop her, she has darted to the drummers and pressed a coin apiece on their foreheads, waving them to possession of the floor. Tilting their heads backwards, they drum her praises....] ("The Lion and the Jewel", p. 51)

In the above passage, Soyinka brings out another traditional practice of the Yoruba. The passage evokes a picture of the livelihood of professional drummers. Timothy writes regarding this, "The person whose praise is sung is expected to dance towards them and begin to press money on the forehead of the singers – the more money they are given the more and the longer they sing the praises of their benefactor."(1). The passages explicate more that if one is not ready to give money to them, it is considered as an act of belittling one's image in the society. As Lakunle is not ready to spend money for the singers, Sadiku wants to save his face, so she plunges her hand into his pocket and takes some money for them.

3.7.11. Respect for Constituted Village Authority

Moreover, Soyinka brings out the virtue of respect accorded the head of the village by the commoners. The head of village is called Bale; and he is respected and revered as a demigod. In the first section of the play, "Morning" when the villagers enact the dance of the lost traveller, Baroka enters. Immediately all stop the play, all go down prostrate and kneeling with the greetings of 'Kabiyesi' and 'Baba'. Although the people mock him in the dance, they pay respect to the post he holds. In another scene, before entering the room of Baroka, his senior wife, Sadiku goes down on her knees at once and bows her head into her lap. It shows that even in home also, his people show their respectfulness to him. In the seduction scene, Sidi the young and mischievous girl, on seeing him in his house, she greets him, "Good day to the head" ("The Lion and the Jewel", 36). According to the tradition of the society, the people consider him next to god, so they give much respect to him at least for the post he holds, as the Bale of the Village. After Sidi rejected Baroka's invitation, he spreads a rumour that he is impotent. But Sidi is caught in his trap by going to his house to mock him for his impotency, which leads her to be seduced by him. Such a mode of seduction is very common among the anecdote-makers in Yoruba.

3.7.12. The Significant Role of Women in Society

Soyinka, through Lakunle, attempts to ridicule the womenfolk by looking down on them as the fairer sex. Ordinarily, Lakunle sees Sidi as a portrayal of the weaker vessel, which is a traditional perception of African men, but in his case, an enlightened mind with the intension to ridicule Sidi (*The Lion and The Jewel*, p. 4). He refers to them as a sex with 'smaller brain.' But Sidi proves him wrong by turning down completely his love overtures. Instead, she gives her love to the polygamous man of Baroka.

The polygamous society gives importance to the Bale, it allows him to marry as many girls he can, he uses the girls only for his pleasure, and after a new arrival of favourite, he sends the last favourite to an outhouse. It shows the society never give respect to women, and a woman, as Lakunle tells, "pounds the yam or bends all the day to plant the millet ... to fetch and carry, to cook and scrub, to bring forth children by the gross" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 7 & 9). The custom of a late Bale's last wife becoming the senior wife to the successor, i.e. son is very awkward and surprise to almost all the readers, particularly the Indian readers. However, the playwright does not make any condemnation, dislike or rejection of it. Instead, by ending the play with the marriage ceremony of the Bale and the girl seems to show that Soyinka nods approval to this custom. By the marriage of the cunning Bale and the ignorant and proud Sidi, the author emphasizes that chastity is only for female. All these show that the female society is highly marginalized by the males. The female characters like Sidi and Sadiku are the representations of the doubly oppressed in the society.

In the play, Lakunle, like a champion of feminism, voices for the females, who are fastened with the traditions of the society. But he is portrayed as a foolish and stupid teacher, who never gets any respect from anyone, Sidi chides his state in the village, "...You and your ragged books dragging your feet to every threshold and rushing them out again as curses greet you instead of welcome.... The village says you're mad, and I begin to understand" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 3). Even after so much humiliation he tells his dream of a new, improved and modern society to her. But his expectation of development is a mirage. And through the character of Baroka, the playwright expresses that the society is not ready to accept the changes, even if it is necessary.

By portraying Lakunle as a hollow-modernist, Soyinka presents the stubbornness of society. Even the mild satire is also made only through the weak character Lakunle. The society is out of its sensibility, which never heeds to the words of the educated. Along with that, the playwright satirizes the educational system in his land through the character of Lakunle. Through him, the dramatist brings out the African tendency to imitate the life of the white man. He presents an ironical situation through the depiction of the character.

Lakunle is an embodiment of the qualities found in the foreign educated African student. He must be an intelligent herald of the revolution against old customs and blind faith; but he is stuffed with empty bombastic words, and unclear vision to change his society. The sphere of education requires a complete sense of devotion; but pretensions, affection, hypocrisy, lack of depth, have clouded the atmosphere. It is so disheartening to note that in the context of newly evolving nation, where the universities do not promote the custodians to upgrade in the sphere of education; instead they breed bugs as in any other fields. The antithesis to Lakunle, Baroka, is a very impressive character in the play and he does not sound like Lakunle, the chatterbox, rather through his actions, he proves himself as a man of action. Physically, he is very strong and vigorous. His worldly wisdom keeps him as a head of the village for a long time. He keeps control over the village under his rule; he isolates the commoners as far as possible from modern ideas, even modern transportation, like railways. He combines courage with cunning to pursue pleasures. He enjoys the privileges and power with zest, with care and caution. At the outset, he represents tradition, but the study of his character shows out that he represents neither tradition nor modernity. He utilizes both ideologies for his personal satisfaction.

3.7.13. Use of Proverbs and Parables

Awere (8) affirms that proverbs are used extensively by Soyinka from the beginning to the end of the play. The use of proverbs gives the play its African uniqueness. The proverbs are an enriched language typical of Africans and are used to bring out the various meanings forcefully

and more remarkably, this is noticed when Baroka was explaining to Sidi that as a king he also had problems:

Those who know little of Baroka think
his life one pleasure-living course
but the monkey sweats, my child,
the monkey sweats,
it is only the hair upon his back
which still deceives the world (p. 54)

From Sidi comes this proverb:

If the tortoise cannot tumble
it does not mean that he can stand (p.42)

Baroka replies in a notable manner:

when the child is full of riddles, the mother
has one water-pot the less (p. 42)

As part of the tradition of Africans to relate even gossips through story form, there is also the use of a story within a story. Lakunle attempts to tell Sidi how the old tradition represented by the likes of Baroka resists change during the construction of the road:

Lakunle: Did you not know it? Well sit down and listen
my father told me, before he died. And few men
know of this trick – oh he's a die-hard rogue
sworn against our progress...yes...it was...
somewhere here... (p.24)

3.7.14. Traditional Relevance of Setting

The setting of *The Lion and The Jewel* is quite rural but faced with the challenge of change, although, the play is a comedy of different metaphorical messages. The character of the Baale and his actions tell more of what the setting of his village symbolically implies. Here in Baroka's village of Illujinle, the Baale remains unperturbed in his dear attachment to traditional privileges and their promotion. The fear of change leads to some cunning consolidation of the traditional ethos as it behoves the traditional king whose responsibility it is to ensure cultural rigidity, at least in his reign.

The basic fears that come from the introduction of “civilization” to new societies spark off in the conservative the impetus to ward off the threats of the unknown. This responsibility falls traditionally on the king to spare the village of the impending danger disguised in civilization in the form of modern roads, railway, among others. He sees change as something that must be resisted.

Lakunle, the European metaphorical character, however, has a corresponding responsibility to find behavioural change in as much as he has to champion the course of change. For the Baale, the change might be welcomed if it is devoid of devastation. Baale Baroka reveals that:

“I do not hate progress, only its nature
which makes all roofs and faces look the
same.... (p. 52)

From the utterance of the Baale, the concern is to ensure the preservation of those values that do not create socio-political distortion. He goes further to allow the formation of trade union on the grounds that such would not jeopardize the local values and preferences which he is stuck towards protecting as tradition demands of him.

3. 8. Conclusion

Chapter Three is based on the use of traditional elements in selected works of Wole Soyinka. The works reviewed in this respect include *Death and the King’s Horseman*, *The Strong Breed* and *The Lion and The Jewel*. No doubt, Soyinka shows that as a strong advocate of the utilization and infusion of African traditional elements in drama in Africa, there are enough traditional elements in his plays to show the rich cultural repertoire of Africa. However, among these plays, *Death and the King’s Horseman* utilizes most of the cultural traditional elements in the Yoruba world in aspects of drama.

From the above discussion, it is evident that there is no way we can divorce ritual, sacrifices and other traditional elements from the activities of man in the Yoruba cosmology and cultural existence depicted in the works of Wole Soyinka and others, as, most of these traditional elements are also partly replicated in Zulu Sofola’s work

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is on the background of Zulu Sofola, her socio-cultural influences and the traditional elements in some of her plays. Three of her plays selected for discourse here, in line with the afro-centric dramatic philosophy are: *Wedlock of the Gods*, *The Sweet Trap* and *King Emene*

4.1. Traditional Contents in Selected Plays of Zulu Sofola

4.2. Background of Zulu Sofola

Onuekwuke Nwazuluoha Sofola, alias Zulu Sofola, was born on the 22nd June, 1935, into the royal family of Okumabua in Isele-Ukwu, Aniocha area of the then Mid-western region, later Bendel state and now Delta state of Nigeria. She had her primary and secondary education in Nigeria and had a B.A. in English from the Virginia Union University, Richard, Virginia in the United States of America in 1959 followed up by an M.A. degree in Drama at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC in 1966. On her return to Nigeria, she had her PhD in 1977 from the premier University (The University of Ibadan) where she lectured for some years before moving to the University of Ilorin (Unilorin) where she was the head of department of Performing Arts and later became the first African woman professor of Theatre Arts.

Sofola was a workaholic and a woman of great creative talent and invincible strength and resolute in her beliefs as she made her mark in creating a department that emphasized the uniqueness of various aspects of performing arts – drama, music and dance. She also wrote eighteen plays, articles, national and international publications. Among her plays are *Wedlock of The Gods*, *The Love of Life*, *King Emene*, *Queen Omu Alikoof Oligbo*, *Wizard of Law*, *The Sweet Trap*, *Old Wines Are Tasty*, *Disturbed Peace of Christmas*, *Fantasizing The Moonlight*, *Song of A Maiden*, *The Operators*, *Igeme*, *The Showers*, *Lost Dream*, and *The Ivory Tower*. Nwazuluoha Onuekwueke Sofola belongs to the second generation of playwrights to emerge to prominence after the Nigerian civil war. Zulu Sofola, as she is fondly called, occupies an important position in the history of the development of modern drama and theatre in Nigeria as a pioneer female Nigerian dramatist. She is regarded as one of the first generation of African female writers along

with Mabel Segun, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua T. Sutherland, Nadine Gordimer, Bessie Head, Flora Nwakpa and Micere Githae Mugo (Stephen Solanke, 117). She is also regarded as the first published female Nigerian playwright. Her plays are said to be highly moralistic and pro-tradition (Udengwu Ngozi, 101).

Aside her academic career, she was a great feminist and an embodiment of African women's resilient versatility and liberations, as she was the matron of "Women Who Care" in Ilorin, a group that sees to the plight of Women and Children. Her feminist ideology is well encapsulated in most of her works. Sofola was married to Professor J.A. Sofola and the love they shared was so close and intimately legendary as Kolawole (1999) says, "it was well known that her husband often stayed with her till late nights during rehearsals so that she would not have to drive home at midnight." Her love for her five children was also not in doubt as she always visited the USA where all the children are based. It was during one of such visits to them that she took ill and was hospitalized in a American hospital where one of her children was a medical doctor. But she was unable to come out of the sickness as she died in the USA with a terminal cancer on September 7, 1995. This marked the end of the literary icon.

4.3. Sofola's Background Influence

Sofola was greatly influenced by a variety of forces that enabled her to shape her own unique vision of drama, based on a philosophical foundation that affirms classical African contribution to myth, legend, folk-lore of the world civilization long before the Greeks started the secularization theatre through an adaptation of religious festivals. As a matter of fact, Sofola's work clearly reflects the impact of Ika traditions and folklores, being her native land; the Yoruba tradition being where she attended school, the belief that art, literature, drama need to start its operation from the centre of the culture, located in its historical heritage and traditional values in order to educate the masses. Art needs to reflect the society's values; it has to be collective and functional.

These paradigms were later adopted by advocates of the black arts movement in the aftermath of the civil rights movement as they followed the model set forth by Amilcal Cabral and others. Cabral argued that a nation would control its future only by cleansing itself of foreign ideological

hegemony and return to the “upward paths of its own culture” (Richards, p. xxii). As a matter of fact, her emphasis on cultural centered-ness would comprise one of the basic tenets of Afro-centric philosophy; that is looking back at African culture and traditions.

In recent years, cultural centered-ness became such an important element in socio-cultural studies that no analysis is complete unless its components are evoked. This serves as basis for our discourse on Sofola’s works. Lastly, the background of Zulu Sofola by birth and marriage is enough why she is quite Afro-centric and pro-tradition. According to Udengwu (101), Zulu was born into a royal family and married into a royal family; she probably felt she owed a duty to protect traditional culture. Her royal blood made her a custodian of her people’s culture and she devoted her energy into the enterprise.

4. 4. Traditional Elements in Zulu Sofola’s *Wedlock of The Gods* (1972)

Wedlock of the Gods is a tragedy which finds its roots in the ritual of death and mourning. The traditional solemnity of the ritual is distorted however, for rather than engaging in the normal funeral rites and rituals which should have cleansed her and sent the spirit of the deceased to the world of the gods, the widow expresses a sense of liberation from unwanted marriage, while the mother of the deceased performs rites meant to destroy her son’s widow as an act of vengeance for supposedly killing her son.
(P.1)

The above prelude serves as a background to *Wedlock of the Gods*, a play about two lovers (Ogwoma and Uloko) who defy tradition in order to consummate their love for each other. Ogwoma is forced to marry an older and wealthier suitor (Adigwu) in order to raise bride wealth required to obtain medical treatment for her sick brother (Edozie). But as fate would have it, Adigwu and Ogwoma never lived long together as couple to consummate their marital bliss as the cold hands of death snatched Adigwu away in a mysterious circumstance as Odibei says, “Adigwu died of swollen stomach...a man who dies like a pregnant woman did not die a natural death. Somebody killed him” (p. 6), and Ogwoma now being a widow becomes free of her unhappy marriage. And as custom and tradition demand, Ogwoma must mourn her late husband for three months in sackcloth in a solitary confinement as a condition to honour her late husband after which Okezie, the younger brother to her late husband, is to inherit her as a wife. Bride inheritance is a tradition of the people and is to be respected as Nneka warns her daughter,

Ogwoma: “you are a man’s wife, dead or alive. Adigwu has a brother and you are his wife” (WOG: 20). But this is not the case, because as at the second month of her mourning, Ogwoma is already pregnant for Uloko, her unfavoured lover whom she wanted before she was earlier forcefully married off to Adigwu. This act is forbidden in the law and it is a taboo and a sacrilege, as Adigwu condemns it entirely by warning her friend (Ogwoma) knowing the implications and the wrath of the gods that could visit any violator of such act. Anwasia says:

Ogwoma, it is not a sign of good sense to look dry-eyed and clear-faced after such a forbidden act. No matter how much a woman loved a man, the gods forbid what you have done. You seem to forget that you are still in mourning (p.9)

In affirming the implication of the abominable act, Udo in a family meeting says:

A woman who loses her husband, must not be visited by any other man until she has been cleansed: any action against this is an abomination and our gods deal very severely with such offenders (p.36)

The rite of purification and cleansing for a woman in mourning is further strengthened here as it is the traditional way of life of the Africans. As events unfold in a twisted circle, Odibei, the tricky, wicked, revengeful mother of Adigwu threatens to avenge the death of her son, whom she suspects must have been killed by Ogwoma. She vows to look for her son’s killer, as she says: “she must not go free, I must find it. I must find the cause of my son’s death”(p.7).

All entreaties by the two families and the community to restore peace and to assuage frayed nerves in alliance with tradition could not yield peaceful result as Odibei, with the aid of diabolical incantations and hypnotic spell, directs Ogwoma to drink a poisonous concoction that kills her (Ogwoma). She commands:

That is good. Go to your lover, open the door and enter. Behind your water pot is another small pot. Open it and say into it once. ‘I have done what the land forbids.’ Cup your hand and drink from the pot with your hand trice saying before each drink, ‘I have done what the land forbids. Let me perish. Let my blood appease the disgraced spirit of my husband,’ close the pot and wait for whatever comes. is that clear? (p.53)

Ogwoma dies and Uloko avenges her death by killing Odibei, and in return Uloko takes his own life by drinking the remains of the poisonous substance that killed Ogwoma in order for him to be united with Ogwoma in heaven. *Wedlock of the Gods* depicts the culture of the Emeani people of the then Bendel-Igbo society, which is Sofola's immediate society. It is purely based on the themes of bride-inheritance, love, mourning rites, sacrifices and ritual of cleansing, taboo, use of black magical power, spirits and gods, which were predominantly a way of life of the people of Bendel-Igbo at the time; though, some of these elements are still on-going or practiced in this region and other parts of Africa. Gbemisola Adeoti (2003) affirms that:

In traditional society, myth, symbols and religious rituals nurture social interactions. Thus, the ritual of cleansing is common to many communities in pre-colonial Nigeria as it is a significant aspect of the people's religious and civic culture. Whether among the Edo or Yoruba kinsmen or the Igbo across the Niger, different communities dedicate certain occasions to spiritual renewal by individuals and the community as a whole (89-90).

The display of supernatural elements in this play cannot be over-emphasized as every action or move made by the character is dictated and influenced by the gods. This is noticed in what ought to have naturally been *Wedlock of Ogwoma and Uloko* that twisted dramatically into a *Wedlock of the Gods*. This drastic twist in the course of the people's history and well-being is facilitated by the hastiness of the actions of the lovers. This hastiness can be exemplified through the cultural codes:

Udo: would you not have waited much longer
if God had planned for Adigwu to live
with his wife for six more years?
... what often destroys you young men
is rash and hasty action. A woman
who loses her husband must not be
visited by any other man until she
has been cleansed: any action against
this is an abomination and our gods
deal very severely with such offenders (p.36)

It is noticed from the above quotation that it is a cultural tradition of the people that a woman must mourn her late husband in solitary confinement with sack-cloths and also go through the

ritual of cleansing for purification in order to set her free from the bond uniting her with the late husband. But this did not happen in this case as she (Ogwoma) is involved in a conjugal relationship with another man (Uloko) who has not paid any bride price which is an important cultural demand on her and therefore not the rightful man to inherit her. The tradition of inheritance of the people is further strengthened in the words of Anwasia to Ogwoma:

Anwasia:

Listen, Ogwoma, a friend must always be honest and truthful. It is a common thing that when a man dies his brother takes his wife and makes her his wife. This is what our people do. Everyone knows that. (21)

Ogwoma:

Is the woman taken by force?
Is she not to choose between her brother-in-law
and someone else? (22)

Anwasia:

It is true that she is not taken by force,
but your case is different. (22)

Also very important is the value for girl-child wealth in African traditional culture. Because of such value placed on the wealth from the girl-child, girls are not allowed the same latitude accorded the boys in terms of education and other similar ends which could play down such value. It is, however, quite interesting that the girl-child wealth from Ogwoma is needed for a sacrifice to spare the life of her brother. For instance, Anwasia's statement shows a clear indication of this dear culture placed on the girl-child:

Anwasia:

Ogwoma, our people say that a man's daughter is a source of wealth to him. Your parents needed the money for a very expensive sacrifice for your brother whom sickness almost killed. You should have been happy that your money saved the life of your own brother. (9)

Besides the girl-child wealth is the availability of culturally metaphorical symbols. The dominant symbol that goes along with cleansing and mourning is black; it signifies evil and bad omen. So, the implication of sleeping with a widow that is in mourning and has not been cleansed evokes a

lot of evil and death. Therefore, for Uloko to try this act is a total deviation from the norms and values of the land, against the wish of gods which outcome naturally is punishment by death. In line with this, Ogoli says:

Ogwoma was his first wife and still his wife. A man who touches her is inviting the anger of the gods. I told you this many times. I cried enough to your ears about it. You did not listen. Now you have done an abomination. You have planted a foul seed in the womb of a woman in mourning. You planted a poisonous snake in the womb that has not been purified. You have touched what belongs to a man whose spirit is still finding its way back to the world of the gods. (p.42)

More so, it is important to say that the African society is characterized by the belief in appeasing the gods through divination to see into the present and future in order to solve their problems. This is what we see in the play as Ogwoma's brother (Edozie) is sick and in an attempt to find solution to his sickness, divination comes into practice. Okolie says:

Edozie's sickness could only hear a sacrifice to our God.
But that was not all, brothers. The oracle stated clearly
that before Edozie could fully recover he must be initiated
into manhood even at his age of ten. (p.28)

In addition to the above statement by Okolie, the significance of the indigenous traditional cult called initiation into manhood by the youths in an African community is also showcased as it is believed to have healing powers. It is apposite to conclude in the words of Stephen (117) who states that Sofola, "...in *Wedlock of the Gods*, interweaves tradition, love, taboo and sacrifice and the need for a society to continuously look inwards towards developing all spheres of its life."

4. 5. Synopsis of *King Emene*

King Emene, co-opted as *Tragedy of a Rebellion*, is Sofola's quite outstanding play replete with traditional elements in its entirety. As a traditional play, it is centered on defiance against oracular instruction from the goddess to be carried out by the king of Oligbo on behalf of his people during the Peace Week which would usher in the New Year. It is a ritual of purity especially within the royalty, the intermediary between the physical and the spiritual. It is a period the king is transformed into a god before entering the shrine to carry the people's

problems to the gods. Traditionally, the king must be stainless. Besides, the oracle and the goddess, Mkpitime, of the kingdom must affirm that all is well before the king enters the shrine. But all is not well as Nneobi, the king's mother, has soiled the royalty by killing the son of Obiageli for King Emene to be enthroned. This marks the beginning of a turning point in the kingship of the kingdom of Oligbo community.

This the oracle points three times to ensure she confesses to cleanse the throne and then the land. But as leaders without conscience, the crime is concealed stubbornly while Omu, the go-between the people and Mkpitime, the goddess of the land, is unjustly relieved of her position and then exiled for standing for the practicability of the oracular instruction. Nwani and others, in the same line of thought with the king, ensure the gods' bidding is averted in spite of persistent elder's entreaties. The king sees the elders' entreaties as misleading and a plot to dethrone him. He goes ahead to the shrine but gets a fair reward for his defiance as the confession comes at last. The gods turned into a boa, the thunder and lightning and a dark encircled the sun to portray the ominous wrath of the gods for such defiance. The people of Oligbo lead a protest to ensure the king does not carry out ritual to save the land. The confession triggers the committing of suicide by the king, thereby fulfilling the proverbs that a disobedient eye always follows the beheaded head to the grave. The people's actions become justified and exonerative.

4. 6. Traditional Elements in Zulu Sofola's *King Emene*

The play, *King Emene*, is centered on culture and tradition. A lot of traditional elements are therefore used to give rhythm to the expression and sustenance of such tradition and culture of the Oligbos. Among these elements are the African belief in the supernatural and extra-mundane forces and communication with them, sense of communality and sustenance of cultural heritage, metaphorical significance of incantation, libation, and invocation, purity, proverbs, significance of non-verbal communication and respect for tradition and culture.

As part of the African culture is celebration of festivals all through the year. The Peace Week, Iba-nzu, is a cultural festive period of transformation and purification which culminates into the New Year. The purification exercise becomes a sine qua non for the relation of the people's prayers to their gods and goddesses. But to ensure a successful celebration of the Peace Week

which gloriously would lead the people into the much-awaited New Year, the oracle which was consulted reveals that the royalty is conspicuously stained. The consultation of the gods and goddesses through the oracle further brings the customary element of extra-mundane communication between the physical and the spiritual realms of human existence. Second, it affirms the Oligbos' strong belief in the supremacy of the supernatural and the reliance in seeking a sense of direction from such world. As customary of the Oligbos, the gods and goddesses' order becomes indispensable in charting a road map for the socio-cultural future of the Oligbos. It therefore recommends nothing but confession and then purification.

But King Emene, a leader against the old cultural and traditional values of the Oligbos, defies the oracular instruction, with the support of some misleading and reactionary elements given to perverting the traditional course of justice. The Queen attests to this when she says "the oracle has already sent a frightening message" (p.2). Omu, the mouthpiece of Mkpitime, brings the message three times to the king, but it is rejected completely by the stubborn king who has been backed up by some citizens. This, therefore, becomes the trying times old traditions have to pass through to test how far they can weather the storms of life in the face of civilization and modernity. In addition to this is the manipulative and subversive tendency of man to suit his whims and caprices. Upon the insistence and persistence of Omu about the gods' instruction, King Emene commits a sacrilege by sacking Omu without prior consultation with the gods of the land. This development becomes a strange traditional practice in history. And to worsen matters, he appoints Nwani without due consultation with neither the gods nor their approval. This becomes a sacrilege against tradition and culture of the land of Oligbo.

Against Omu's words that the oracle never changes, the message of the oracle is changed to soothe the king by Nwani. All entreaties by the elders and Olinzele council to make sure the king does the right thing fall on deaf ears of a dog already earmarked for destruction which will not hear its master's whistle. The advisory function of the elders' council fails because of the king's stubbornness since he thinks the people want him dead as it was done to his father who was adjudged by the people to be a better leader.

The people unwilling to lose their sense of communality consequent upon the dismissed entreaties, on the verge of the Peace Week celebration, protest against the king's defiance to

protect their culture and tradition in order to avoid the wrath of the gods. Sofola, therefore, proves the point that there is need for collective struggle by the people themselves to assert their freedom to maintain the status quo. Indeed, she establishes that the okra cannot be taller than the planter and a tree does not actually make a forest. Their collective action of protest against something strange to their culture and tradition becomes fruitful and salvaging as Nneobi makes the confession which brings King Emene doom, instead of the kingdom.

Quite outstanding is the exploitation of non-verbal communication through symbols and some cultural props. To show that the supernatural world of the gods and goddesses is perfect, a dark circle, a non-verbal cultural communication from the gods and goddess is seen around the sun to foretell the impending danger. More so, the king right in the shrine encounters another reactionary cultural communication of the gods in the form of a boa. As part of the traditional observation, the king quickly wears his crown before he could hear the confession of his mother. Obiageli confesses of how she made way for the king to become king by killing his elder brother who should have inherited the throne in order to avoid the vicious cycle of poverty. As part of the extra-mundane communication elements in the play, Chibuize appears to Ogwoma in a dream to disturb her which she confesses to her son, the king. She even attempts making peace between them. Ezedibie supports the revelation of the oracle on how Chibuize was killed (p. 42). The king commits another sacrilege by committing suicide. The women are barred from crying until after the rituals have been carried out to cleanse the sacrilegious suicide.

There is the use of the horn and gunshots to announce the regal presence of the king and also communicate different significant messages from time to time all through the play. Also is the use of dance, music, drumming, and gong music. There are different kinds of drumming; there are drums that accompany the king which are sounded until he takes his seat. The king uses the gong to summon the servants (Act I Scene Three, page 14). The tonal variation of the horn in communicating messages is not in doubt. In Act ii scene one, page 20, the horn is used to communicate a solemn tone offstage about the impending doom. This is the case again in Act III Scene One, page 46. There are gun salutes especially during the king's visit to the shrine to perform some rites. In Act three scene one, page 40, two gun salutes announce the king's arrival, and another informs him to enter the shrine. Another signals silence. There is also the use of

silence to communicate the cultural messages of the people non-verbally. In Act two, scene two, the men stand in silence when the king leaves them in anger having been told the unchanging message from the oracle. Kolanut and palm wine are traditional entertainment foods to visitors to the palace. The palm wine which is not only meant for entertainment is used for prayers to the gods and drank traditionally with deer horns.

Sekwute interprets the oracle's message through a host of body gestures understood only by the aged. Ojei, the king's godfather recognizes this. Subsequently, Sekwute goes out to sight the ominous darkness hovering around the sun (p. 40/41). Ezedeibe interprets this to be the gods' anger against them. The strike of the thunder and lightning further affirms the gods' anger (p. 43). Even at the point Emene attempts to kill his mother, the lightning almost knocked him down.

There is the ample use of local proverbs and parables between the elderly all through the play. Sofola handles these proverbs with some outstanding dexterity. Some of these proverbs are even localized in English. Diokpa, Okolo, the king, Odogwu, Jigide, Ojei, Obiageli, among others, are reputed for use of proverbs. For instance, Diokpa speaks to the king in proverbs in Act II Scene One (p.17) "...as the saying goes, it is very early in the evening that a black sheep is brought into the stall..." As part of his entreaties to ensure the king gets the people's message to abide by the terms of tradition and culture, he tells the king: "it is often said that each bubble in a cooking pot of soup fights so hard for supremacy that none listens to the cry of the pot itself." At another instance, he says to the king, "there is a saying that it is the trees that make the forest, and the king of the tree does not grow in a desert" (p. 18).

The play is woven around traditional cultural beliefs and defiance against these beliefs as a result of ignorance and in-authenticity of human life among the young people and sycophants. As part of the traditional beliefs, the oracle must be consulted before any cultural activity is embarked upon. This is observed before the Peace week which will usher in the New Year believed to be the only time the king is publicly seen. The king himself puts it thus:

...the New Year festival is the biggest event of the year.
It is the only time when the king appears in full glory before
his subjects after he has successfully carried their burdens and

problems to our ancestors and to our God (Act II Scene II, p. 24)

As part of the beliefs, there must be cleansing of the land before there can be effective communication between the worlds of the physical and the supernatural. It is also part of the belief that whatever the gods and goddesses say should be binding on man, but the new world disobeys this for lack of knowledge undermining the omnipotence of the supernatural world. Obiageli shows the absolute belief in the power of the dead over the living when she invokes the spirit of her son to punish Nneobi whom she suspects to have killed Chibuize (Act I Scene Two, p.9). The removal of Omu as the intermediary between the Oligbos and Mpkitime without due consultation with the gods and goddesses and their approval is believed to be a sacrilege as it sounded strange in their history. Similarly, the choice of Nwani to replace him without due consultation and approval from the supernatural world is an abomination (p. 10).

Also commendable is the intermittent use of praise songs, especially for the king each time he moves. This is one of the strategic devices used by the supporters and sycophants of the king to make sure he is at home even in the face of wrongdoing and loss of a sense of direction. Sofola exploits the local repertoire of Igbo praise names to the fullest. Jigide, in Act I Scene III (p. 13) sings the praises of the king thus:

Obi Igwe!
The king with the might of a lion;
the fearless eagle whose words shake the earth;
the king of Oligbo;
the pride of the Royal Family;
the king whose head was made to wear the crown, I greet you.

Ojei, the godfather of the king also sings praises of the king lavishly in Act II Scene III (p.30):

Greetings to you, my son who is born into wealth;
one to whom money is plenty like sand;
one who when he stands on the road nobody passes;
the lion of his kingdom;
the fear of his peers;
the king of Oligbo;
the one whose no is no, and whose yes is yes;
the son of the line of leopards;
the indomitable son of him whom kings
fear to challenge.

King Emene
I salute you

Through these praise songs, the king erroneously feels that his actions and policies are embraced by the kingdom of Oligbo. These undeserved encomiums make him harden his mind such that the entreaties made by the council of elders to ensure compliance with the dictates of the kingdom's tradition fail. In fact, by the time he gets a clear understanding, he was already neck-deep into unstoppable destruction. He, therefore, defiles tradition and gets punished for this with his life.

The use of libations, incantations and invocations permeates the actions and words of the characters from the beginning of the play through to the end. Libations are poured to the gods and goddesses to ward off any impending danger. This becomes intensified as the Peace week draws nearer and danger is sensed. Nneobi is traditionally empowered to do this every morning to clean the environment. As part of the rivalry between Obiageli and wife of the king, the queen becomes restless when she senses that Nneobi is pouring libation too. Sekwute spices this up with his medicinal pouring during the Peace week by sprinkling medicinal powder at the shrine and medicinal water on the king. He also uses white chalk, white loin cloth and armbands as part of the world of the *dibia* to fortify themselves (p. 40).

In terms of costume and props, Sofola uses professionally befitting costumes that characterize the individual roles she created to convey the traditional and cultural messages embodied by the play. The servants could easily be identified by their costumes and conversation. Similarly, the king is gorgeously dressed in the royal regalia of the land's culture. So also is Sekwute who uses all the paraphernalia of an intermediary between the seen and the un-seen worlds appropriately to convey the religious beliefs of Oligbo land. Prayers, as part of cultural communication between the seen and un-seen worlds, are offered intermittently to the gods and goddesses of the land at demanding times.

The spirit of communality is displayed towards the collective struggle against the defiance of the king to carrying out the demands of tradition. The people aware of the wrath of the gods and

goddesses when disobeyed gang up to confront the king at the appropriate time when the Peace week celebration is about to be carried out by the king. Diokpa conveys the people's collective feelings in Act II Scene I (p.19):

The people have taken it upon themselves to stem the
impending disaster and all we now hear from you is
that you are not a king who must be told what to do
by his subjects

Sofola shows that the people must at all times take their collective destiny into their hands to assert freedom and peace when some persons are toeing the wrong path to bring doom upon them. Ezedibie leads the protest against the king to prevent him from bringing calamity upon the Oligbo community. Through Ezedibie's commitment and visionary leadership, the community forces Nneobi to confess her wrong deeds, thereby bringing the conflict to a climax. The culprits get punished at last and the wrath of the goddess that would have befallen the entire community is graciously averted. Through the protest, Ezedibie sheds more light on the conflict of the play lucidly to motivate the people to assert the omnipotence of the goddess so much believed in by them. Ezedibie remarks thus:

Brothers, brothers, our forefathers taught us that the Peace
Week is a week when man and the gods become one. Our
king is that man who becomes one with the gods for us so that
he can tell our gods our problems and see to it that the good things
of life come to us. (Act III Scene I, p. 42)

4.7. Synopsis of *The Sweet Trap* (1977)

Zulu Sofola's play, *The Sweet Trap* published by Oxford University Press, Ibadan, centres on the conflict of culture and civilization in the colonial Yoruba setting of Ibadan. The play exposes the age-old battle between the sexes in a different setting of the modern university community of Ibadan. The play progresses through the period of the celebration of the Okebadan festival, an all-male festival of fertility meant to ridicule the females and their femininity, to the birthday party of Mrs Clara, a birthday party organized against the voice and decision of the males. Against this backdrop, the party suffers a setback upon the intrusion of the ruffians which was a punishment meant to teach Fatima the lesson of her life for defying Mr. Ajanaku's decision.

4. 8. Traditional Elements in Sofola's *The Sweet Trap*

Although, there are not as many traditional elements in *The Sweet Trap* as contained in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, yet there are significant traditional elements quite different from *Death and the King's Horseman*. There are traditional elements of patriarchal system, festival celebration, non-verbal Yoruba cultural gestures such as greeting, silence, genuflection, marital conflict resolution strategies, Yoruba language use, male love for their cultural aesthetics, females' love for celebration and cultural costume acquisition, un-cultural female protest against male domination, and supremacy of traditional culture over western culture and civilization. In the words of Eni Efakponana (1991):

Her plays feature characteristically magic, ritual, myth, legend and tradition, but not with the same depth with which myth and ritual is employed by Soyinka in his plays. Her application is rather shallow but lucid. She places young side by side the old. She is a strong supporter of tradition and custom. (155)

The Okebadan festival is an ancestral all-male festival of the Yoruba meant to ridicule females. It is a festival of fertility handed down by their forefathers and sustained by the Yoruba elite in the modern Yoruba cultural setting. The males, in spite of their high level of civilization, exposure and education, tenaciously stick to their culture to the chagrin of the women-folks. This is portrayed in the words of Mrs Ajanaku, the arrow-head of the women liberation efforts against the age-long and outdated festival:

...Okebadan festival is a ridicule of the female organs and nothing could be more exciting to the men than a legalized opportunity to take a swipe at us women
(*The Sweet Trap*, p. 2)

However, Yoruba elite like Dr. Sotubo take indescribable pride in celebrating what their forefathers have left behind. It, therefore, becomes interesting that the elite are given not just to enjoying their fathers' cultural legacy, but strive to sustain such cultural relic of much significance to the male world:

Dr. Sotubo:

(laughs). It is interesting, isn't it, that our forefathers understood the value of psychological and emotional

release of tensions. Okebadan is the epitome of their understanding of the human psyche.
(*The Sweet Trap*: 4)

Through the Yoruba elite, Sofola is conditioned to the exploitation of the rich repertoire of African cultural and traditional resources such as the Okebadan festival in contemporary times. By so doing, she agrees with the afro-centric drama scholars that advocate strongly the preservation and utilization of African cultural resources.

Sofola also explicates the overbearing patriarchal nature of African setting epitomized in Yoruba cultural setting. In the African world, it is all men's affairs in almost all spheres of life. However, against this, Sofola counters the Shakespearean assertion that "women are necessary evils" when she states through Mrs Ajanaku that "men are necessary evils" (p. 13). Sofola is portrayed as a reactionary writer who reacts to societal issues, especially of age-long disturbance (Eni, 157).

This is the thrust of the Okebadan festival which the women counterparts attempt to revolt against through Clara's shattered birthday party. Sofola completely ridicules the advocacy of feminism in a world completely all-male inadvertently. The women become defiant and disobedient to the decisions of their husbands. The height of this defiance is expressed through Clara's birthday party. Clara disobeys her husband just in the same way Mrs Fatima does to Dr. Oyegunle. The women secretly plan the birthday party behind the men. Clara, with the connivance of Mrs Ajanaku and Fatima, relocate the venue to Fatima's house. Here Mr Ajala's plan to disrupt the party through the ruffians becomes executed successfully. This becomes not just the punishment of his rebellious wife but also the fate of the wives of the elite and indirectly the burden of all the characters. The women are overly defeated, ridiculed and disgraced publicly by their male counterparts intended to be ridiculed. This is the source of the play's title.

To also buttress that the Yoruba world is an all-male one, Mr Ajala suspends his marriage to teach his wife a lesson. The consequences of the overbearing attitude of modern wives against the world of submissiveness of the women in African marital culture come to the fore in the lives of women. Apart from suspension of marriages, there are separation within marriages and single parenting on the increase in contemporary African setting as well as divorce in critical cases.

This is discussed by other men. All these are alien to African cultures in terms of frequency of occurrence. Dr. Oyegunle laments for the society the frequency of marital failures because of the so-called education and civilization attained by women which makes them struggle equality with the men:

Dr. Oyegunle

(handing Sotubo a drink)

Separation is now the vogue among couples.
So to say that couples are separated is saying virtually
nothing. They wed to live separately.

(p.18)

Sofola contrasts the primary role of women in a typical African traditional setting with that of the liberated western women. In other words, she portrays her female characters as people who should not play second fiddle in any way. This is the conflict of roles in the African and western setting, putting the African marital world apart. It is only Mrs Jinadu that understands and stands by the understanding that the role of the women in an African setting is being submissive and respectful to the whims and caprices of their husbands. In other words, she maintains her African motherhood and wifehood in spite of education and civilization (p. 24).

As part of the theatrics of the play which make it to be linguistically accommodating, there are elements of the use of pidgin, Yoruba and the English language to permeate the different levels of characters. However, quite remarkable in the context of this review is the use of Yoruba to interject conversations. A good case is the use of Yoruba by Fatima, Dr. Jinadu and others. Similarly, the culture of greeting is freely shown in the character of Clara towards her uncle (p. 12). Besides, there is the use of Anglicized Yoruba proverbs by the elite characters, especially in the character of Dr. Oyegunle.

The play ends with the traditional method of conflict resolution. As part of the typical African setting, third parties are involved in conflict resolution and management. In this case, it is marital conflict resolution where advanced couples are involved in marital conflict management. Clara's

uncle, Dr. Jinadu, is called upon by Dr. Oyegunle to use his marital experience to resolve the conflict amicably. This he does excellently well as the play ends on a happy note.

Dr. Oyegunle:

A party failed and our wives have become enemies as a result.
We have now called you to help us settle the matter. It is from
the mouth of age that comes forth wisdom. We beg you to help
us as a father and friend.
(*The Sweet Trap*, p.68)

Akinjobi (114) notes in *Wizard of the Law* that prostrating oneself, spitting, greeting, respect for elders, among others, are intrinsic non-verbal gestures in Yoruba communication system. Similarly, there are also elements of non-verbal gestures or para-linguistics that are quite significant in Yoruba cultural communication system in *The Sweet Trap*. For instance, there is the use of cultural silence by Mr. Ajala on pages 73/74 of the play. Mr. Ajala who was part and parcel of the conflict resolution party becomes silent for a while to show that he was guilty of engaging the ruffians to destabilize the birthday party during the resolution of the marital conflict towards the end of the play. Having organized them to make sure that his wife was disgraced, he lost touch with the boys and the situation got out of hands. That mood also asks for forgiveness from the offended. Upon Kike's insistence that she was going to her parents' home, Dr. Jinadu ensures that she kneels down. Therefore, her kneeling down shows that she accepts the resolution strategy to end the crisis naturally. This is an integral non-verbal cultural gesture in marital conflict resolution. This also indicates respect for elderly instruction. The kneeling of Clara before her husband shows, metaphorically, the supremacy of the African culture and tradition over modernity within the African setting (Jeremiah Methuselah, 155). This the playwright puts thus on page 76:

[Clara goes before her husband, slowly but in tears gets on her knees]

Furthermore, the significance of traditional marital conflict resolution strategies in the African cultural setting cannot be over-emphasized. The neglect of these strategies has brought about breakdown of marriages in not only Yoruba setting, but also other African cultural settings right in the face of modernity. This underscores the increase in single parenting, divorce and other consequences of marital mismanagement in family homes. In a way, Sofola ridicules the failure

of modern marriages which create problems like divorce against all cultural settlement patterns. But in the case of Clara and her husband, irrespective of the level of education and civilization, cultural marital conflict resolution strategy worked out because they still hold such in high esteem and reverence.

4. 9. Conclusion

From the entire analysis, it is obvious that there is no way we can divorce rituals and sacrifices from the African world view as these are central to its religion and ways of life. Similarly, it becomes apposite to assert that Africans cannot be divorced from their gods.

In conclusion, it suffices to say that despite the reconstruction of indigenous culture and tradition in Modern African Drama upon which this work is based, it has been observed that many African writers, in varying degrees of interests, borrow extensively from the indigenous traditions of their respective communities in presenting to their readers and audience contemporary creative works and worlds; they rely on certain features of indigenous traditions, proverbs, poetry and others to survive artistically. This artistic orientation and leaning is for an ideological purpose besides being socio-cultural, it aims at redefining African culture and tradition in the phase of a changing time. In commenting on this objective, Chinweizu, (1980) say:

The cultural task in hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustation of colonial and slave mentality to clear the bushes and stake out new foundations for a liberated African modernity (p. 1)

The basic assumption of the three radical critics is that Modern African culture is under foreign domination. Therefore, on the one hand, African Culture has to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality, and on the other hand, map out new foundations for an African modernity. The African writers, as custodians of culture, always perform a sacred duty to their people. They are defenders of their cultural heritage that the forces of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism have tried to discredit and destroy. Thus, the Modern African Drama is a powerful instrument for reawakening and moulding the individual and collective consciousness of the African cultural personality towards a more meaningful existence. From the foregoing, the

Modern African writers have proven that their culture is dynamic and believe that: “no culture is static; a people create and recreate their culture as they go along on the highways and byways of history” (Ogundele, 289).

Finally, it is evidently clear to say that the dominant tone of African writings through drama has been nostalgia for what has been lost, that is, the glory of African culture before her contact with western culture and reclamation of such to ensure progress, growth and development. And in effect, the African writers have availed themselves the opportunity of wide range of indigenous traditions in their societies to produce their works.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0. INTRODUCTION

Geographically, ideologically and culturally, to a large extent, the existence of African drama cannot be gainsaid. African drama scholars have truly shown that drama in Africa is quite different from other forms of drama in other parts of the world, although, there is no gainsaying the existence of cross-cultural influences. Quite a good number of African plays written by African playwrights attest to the uniqueness of African drama because of its possession of distinct salient features. The distinguishing factor lies in the exploitation and utilization of traditional elements. Traditional elements are the socio-cultural resources which help distinguish the genre of drama classified as modern African drama. These socio-cultural resources are also reconstructed as a way of holding on to our rich cultural heritage. In line with this, it is therefore pertinent, as strongly argued, to employ ethno-dramatic theory in appraising African drama, whether old, modern or contemporary. This chapter, however, consists of summary, conclusion and recommendations on the use of traditional elements in modern African drama through the eyes of Wole Soyinka's and Zulu Sofola's selected plays.

5.1. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.2. Summary

This study has looked at the use of traditional elements in drama, generally in Africa through drama in Nigeria using selected works of Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola. The exploration of traditional elements in drama in Nigeria through the selected works of Nigerian playwrights is more or less an extension of such elements in African drama. There is the fusion of both traditional and literary drama in the works of both playwrights. Also, the study shows that quite a good number of traditional elements are used by both Soyinka and Sofola but in varying degrees, tastes and styles and for various aesthetic reasons. Most of the traditional elements exploited are similar to both playwrights and works. By and large, traditional elements run through the works of Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola. The use of traditional contents, therefore, reinforces the influence their cultural and traditional backgrounds and their avowed interest in employing such contents in giving African drama its unique character.

5.3. Conclusion

In view of all observations, analysis and examination, in the previous chapters of this work, it could be argued that African drama draws its base from the African community life and socio-political experience as affirmed by Cyprian Ekwensi's popular statement, "African writing is based on the living heritage as a background to today's events and tomorrow's crises." Though various arguments have been proffered by different writers and scholars of Euro-centric and Afro-centric views and ideologies that most African works are imitations of western folklores especially that of Greek mythology, suffice to say here that it is because there exists a high level of similarity between Greek and Yoruba mythology. As a matter of fact, the issues of gods, rituals, violence, birth, war, ruler-ship, metaphysics and others, are indigenous elements which tend to closely link the Yoruba ancient Greek mythology. Most of the traditional elements as used by Wole Soyinka and Zulu Sofola serve as the bases of analysis in chapters three and four. More so, African playwrights tend to relay stories that affect the African continent thereby asserting her political history of colonialism, struggles for independence and socio-political change through address of persistent issues that affect the African continent.

Subsequently, it is therefore important to reiterate advocate here that the entire work is centered on the reconstruction of indigenous culture and traditions in modern African literature, as it has been observed that African writers, at different levels, borrow substantially from the indigenous traditions of their environment and communities in presenting to their readers and audiences contemporary creative works of art. They rely on certain features of indigenous traditions, myths, proverbs, dance, songs, legends, folktales, poetry and rituals, among others. This artist orientation is purposely for an ideological objective as it aims at redefining African culture and tradition. Chinwezu lend a voice on this goal: "the cultural task in hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustation of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake out new foundations for a liberated African modernity" (p. 1). The basic assumption of Chinwezu and his colleagues is that modern African culture is seriously influenced by foreign domination. Therefore, on the one hand, African culture has to map out new foundations for an African modernity. The African writers, as custodians of their culture, always perform a sacred duty to their people. They are also seen as the defenders of their

cultural heritage that the forces of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism have tried to discredit and destroy. Modern African literature is, thus, a powerful instrument for reawakening and moulding the individual and collective consciousness of the African cultural personality.

Modern African playwrights demonstrate the great potentialities of African traditional materials as a revitalizing force in the written literature of the continent. The role of the creative writers in giving new life to old myths, fables, riddles, tales, and the likes is best illustrated by the works of modern African writers. The only remarkable thing about the use of these elements, according to J. P. Clark (1981: 66), is that the difference in the use of these elements vital to drama has been in the variation, that is, the degree of the mixture these vital elements to drama undergo from play to play, place to place, each according to the purpose motivating the act. However, the above assertion confirms Isidore Okpewho's (1991) declaration that:

African literary artists have concentrated their attention on the homeland, celebrating its values and denouncing its weaknesses, with the essential aim of liberating the spirits of their fellows and setting them on the path of true cultural pride as well as social and political health (75).

Post-colonial African dramatists show their culture to be dynamic as well as their belief that “no culture is static; a people create and recreate their culture as they go along on the highways and byways of history” (Wole Ogundele, 2003: 269). It has been argued that the African experience of cultural contact, which is disruptive to Africans to an extent, and the diabolic insistence by the European intelligentsia that western culture is the centre of human culture to which every other world culture is considered to be at the margin (African culture inclusive) should inspire cultural nationalism among African writers.

It is then obvious from the foregoing analysis that the dominant tone of African writings has been nostalgia for what has been lost, that is the glory of African culture before her contact with western culture. Therefore, in effect, the African playwrights have availed themselves the opportunity of the wide range of indigenous traditions in their societies open to them as writers. They always re-enact the pre-colonial African culture and tradition as a way of deconstructing European erroneous views and perceptions about Africa and to correct the view of African culture by euro-centric Africans. Modern African writers believe that their culture was developed

and well-defined, even long before the colonialists set their feet on African soil. This concern with cultural regeneration is informed by the writers' nationalistic belief that they should strive vigorously to help their fellow Africans through their works to ensure:

The revival, resurgence, propagation and promotion of African cultural values and civilization;

To present African culture in its highest and widest conception;

To bring to light the diverse contributions of African peoples to the universal currents of thoughts and arts;

To promote African writers, artists and performers and facilitate their world acceptance and their access to world outlets;

To promote better international and inter-racial understanding;

To facilitate a periodic "return to origin" in Africa by African writers, artists, and performers who were earlier uprooted to other continents like America, Europe, Asia, etc, as this is the only way Africans can regain their lost cultural heritage, dignity, pride and identity in the comity of nations. More so, this project will further be of great help to students and researchers in the analysis of traditional contents in modern African drama and other genres of literature.

5. 4. Recommendations

Following from the above review of some selected Nigerian plays based on ethno-dramatic indigenous theory, it is hereby recommended that:

First, there is hardly any drama output in Africa without a reflection of and borrowing from its culture and tradition. Therefore, African writers are implored to exploit and explore the vast availability of culture and traditional elements in their works. Such exploitation and exploration of African traditional elements have a multi-disciplinary significance for not just African drama but also other areas of research. This is particularly important because of the fact that "...in realizing a theatre of greater relevance, a theatre as well as drama must be built on not just the history but also the culture of our peoples' songs, their drama, dances, drumming, masquerades, puppetry, and other traditional forms needed for resistance against several forms of oppression

and corruption and other contemporary challenges bedeviling our country. Besides, with the use of tradition and culture of African communities in drama, African drama would be further enlarged and culturally cross-fertilized in such an enriching general manner.

Second, African drama deserves to be appreciated and evaluated with dramatic theoretical framework quite Afro-centric. In this regard, African scholars have a responsibility to come up with such traditionally viable cultural theories that would be driven towards the development and expansion of the frontiers of drama in Africa;

Third, a conscious return to African tradition and culture would, no doubt, help in the restoration of our lost socio-cultural glory, especially as the world which is fast becoming a global village is tilting towards cultural homogeneity wherein African societies are suffering from cultural abandonment and abuse because of extensive borrowing from foreign cultures displacing our traditional values and ethos;

Finally, African drama has passed through stages of metamorphosis. The years of experimentation are gone. The years of culture contact and conflict which are still with us appear indispensable in the discourse of the modern African drama. Efforts should be made towards taking African drama to the next level. Through these efforts, a contemporary African drama would evolve without being culturally antagonistic to the dear cultural values and ethos. African playwrights and scholars alike have the sole responsibility of projecting African drama beyond its present level and stabilizing such an appreciable level that would emerge in the course of time. This is the challenge posed by Ogunbiyi (37) when he states that “Osofisan has sought to reshape traditional Yoruba mythology and ritual in the light of contemporary realities, to squeeze out of old myths fresher meanings, in the belief that man, in the last analysis, makes his own myth.” In order to sustain the cultural fibre of African drama, and literature in general, the objective of modern African literature in colonial languages which is to express an African content in the medium of a European language such as English or French has to be kept. The five recommendations for the use, exploitation and utilization of African myths, legends, proverbs, folktales, poetry and other forms of African languages contained in the pamphlet of the 1977 FESTAC, which constitute the background of African writers whose imprint must be imposed on the colonial language, must be adhered to. Similarly, in as much as the it is also recommended

that African criticism should recognize skilful application of content of indigenized substance as canon of modern African literature; efforts must be made towards honouring this imperative call in adjudging African literature (Ilo Isaiah, 4).

WORKS CITED

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*, Nigeria: African Writers' Series, 1958
- Adedeji, J. A. "Alarinjo: The Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre" in Ogunba, Oyin and
Abiola, Irele. eds. *Theatre in Africa*, Ibadan. University Press, 1978.
- — — "Alarinjo: The Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre" in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed)
Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book. Lagos: Nigeria
Magazine, 1981, 221-247
- Adeniran, Tunde. *The Politics of Wole Soyinka*, Ibadan, Fountain Publishers, 1994: 58
- Adeoti, Gbemisola. "Traditional Cleansing Rites and State Reconstruction in Contemporary
Nigerian Drama" in *IBA (Essays on African Literature in Honour of Oyin Ogunba,*
Wole Ogundele & Gbemisola Adeoti (eds), Ibadan, OAU University Press, 2003
- Agho, J. A. *Standpoints on the African Novel*, Jos, Jubilee Press, 2000
- Ahuma, Chika. "Conflict between Traditional and Western Culture: a Case Study of Soyinka's
Death and the King's Horseman and The Lion and the Jewel, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in
English to the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Kwara State,
May 2011
- Ajayi, S. A. "Sources for the Study of Early African Culture and Civilization" in Ajayi, S. A
(ed) *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan, Atlantis Books & Ibadan Cultural
Studies Group, 2005, pp.22-33
- — — "The Concept of Culture" in Ajayi, S. A (ed) *African Culture and Civilization*,
Ibadan, Atlantis Books & Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, 2005, 1-11
- Akinjobi, A. "A Socio-linguistic Analysis of Zulu Sofola's *The Wizard of Law*" Ibadan Journal
of Humanistic Studies, No. 13 & 14, 2003-2004, 109-118
- Akporobaro, F. B. O. *Introduction to African Oral Literature*, Lagos, Princeton Publishers
Company, 2005

- Akyea, Ofori E. "Traditionalism in African Literature" in Heywood Christopher (ed) *Perspectives on African Literature Ibadan: Heinemann, 1975*
- Alao, Felix O. "Misconceptions about African Culture and Civilization" in Ademola Ajayi S. (ed), *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan: Atlantis Books, 2005, 12-21
- Awere, Oti J. *Notes, Questions and Answers on The Lion and the Jewel*, Ilesa: Fatiregun Publishers Ltd, 1-93
- Awodiya, M. *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: A Critical Perspective*, Ibadan, Kraft Books Ltd, 1995
- Awosika, Olawale. "The Metaphysical Context of Elesin's Heroism" *Ekpoma Journal of Languages and Literary Studies Ejolls*, Vol. 2, 1988, p. 42- 52
- Azeez, T. "Reading Kurumi and Ijaye as Factual Historical War Dramas: a Genre and Text", *International Journal of English and Literature*, Vol. 4 pp. 102-114, <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJEL>
- Baldick, C. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990
- Balogun, Lekan. "Ori, Ritual and Yoruba Drama of Existence" *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol. 17, Issue 1 (Nov. – Dec. 2013), 42-47, www.iosrjournals.org
- Binebai, Benedict. "Protest Premise in Drama and Theatre of Africa: A Spotlight on Cultural Nationalism" *The Dawn Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 2, www.thedawnjournal.com,
- Clark, J. P. "Aspects of Nigerian Drama" in Ogunbiyi, Yemi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book* Lagos: Nigerian Magazine, 1981, 57-74
- Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa J. & Ihechukwu Madubuike. *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980
- Crow, Brian. "Tradition as Theme & Form in Three Nigerian Dramatists", *ARIEL*: 31: 3, 2000, 29-51

- Dasylyva, Ademola, "Wole Soyinka's Horseman and the Horses of Words" in Oyeleye, L. (ed) *Language and Discourse in Society*. Ibadan: Hope Publishers, 2004, p. 266-287
- _ _ _ "Cross-cultural Influences and Correspondences in Contemporary Nigerian Drama" in Ajayi, S. A (ed) *African Culture and Civilization*. Ibadan: Atlantis Books & Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, 2005, 282-298
- Diala, I. "Ritual and Mythological Recuperation in the Drama of Esiaba Irobi" *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 36. No. 4, 2005, <http://www.jstore.org>, 87-114
- Echeruo, M.J.C. "The Dramatic Limits of Igbo Ritual" in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981, 136-148
- Ejeke, Odiri Solomon. "Theatre in Nigeria and National Development", in Sam Ukala (ed) *African Arts and National Development* Kraft Books Limited, Ibadan, 2006, p.251-262
- Eldred, Jones. *The Writings of Wole Soyinka*, London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1973
- Ellison, R.T.E. "A Bornu Puppet Show" in Ogunbiyi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981
- Enekwe, Ossie, "Myth, Ritual and Drama in Igboland" in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981, 149-163
- _ _ _ "Modern Nigerian Theatre: What Tradition," *Nsukka Studies in African Literature*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 1978), 26-43.
- Enem Edith , "Kwagh-hir Theatre" in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981
- Eni, Efakponana K. "Zulu Sofola And The Nigerian Theatre Influences And Traditions," 1991, www.ajol.info/.../67077, 154-169

- Enita, Godfrey O. "Theatre as Instrument for Conflict Resolution in Africa: *Lysistra* Paradigm," in Eldred Jones, "The Writings of Wole Soyinka," London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1973: 73
- Fashina, Nelson. "Evolution of Theory and the Problem of Contextual and Cultural Configurations in African Dramatic Literature" *Nawa Journal of Language and Communication* Vol. 2, No. 2, December, 2008, 1-14
- Finegan, R. *Oral Literature in Africa*, London, African University Press, 1977
- George, Karibi. "Myth and History in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Basi* and Company: A Modern African Folktale" In Emenyonu, Ernest. ed. *African Literature and African Historical Experiences*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1997.107-115
- Ilo, Isaiah. "Language in Modern African Drama" *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 8, Issue 4, 2006, 4-9
- Inegbe, S., *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria after Soyinka*, Trends, Forms and Development, African Mediterranean, Vol. 013 (46), 2013
- Iyorwuese, H. "The Aesthetic Problem in the Criticism of African Drama" *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9mv9g2z6> 10(1-2), 1981, 156-165
- Isola, Akinwumi. "Modern Yoruba Drama", in Ogunbiyi Yemi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: a Critical Source Book*, Lagos, Nigerian Magazine, 1981, 399-410
- Iwuchukwu, Onyeka. "Classification and Criticism of Nigeria Literary Drama", an International Journal of Arts and Humanities, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, Vol 2 (1), S/No. 5, 2013, 70-82
- Jeremiah, Methuselah "Women Playwrights and Female Imaging in Nigerian Literary Drama: an Overview" *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association*, JNESA, 13:2, September, 2009, 151-164
- Jeyifo, B. *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Post-colonialism*, London, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2004, 1-10

- _ _ _ “Literary Drama and The Search for a Popular Theatre in Nigeria”, in Ogunbiyi, Yemi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: a Critical Source Book*, Lagos, Nigerian Magazine, 1981
- Julius-Adeoye R.J (2013) “The Drama of Ahmed Yerima: Studies in Nigeria Theatre” www.openaccess.leidenuiv.nl/bitstream/...
- _ _ _ “On the Scholarship and Controversy: The Case of Director in the Traditional African Theatre, *The African Symposium: An online Journal of the African Educational Research Network*, Vol. 10. No.2, 2010, 1-10
- Kafewo, S. A., “Understanding Nigerian History and Culture through its Theatre and Drama” in Ajayi, S. A (ed) *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan: Atlantis Books & Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, 2005, pp.197-210
- Kehinde A., “Inter-textuality and the Contemporary African Novel”, *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 12 (3): 2003, pp. 372-386
- _ _ _ “Indigenous Traditions and Modern African Writers” in Ajayi, S. A (ed) *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan: Atlantis Books and Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, 2005, pp. 301-324
- Kolawole, Mary E. Modupe. *Zulu Sofola: Her Life and Her Works*, Ibadan, Caltop Publications Ltd, 1999
- Kumar Naveen, K. (2011) “Yoruba Tradition and Culture in Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and The Jewel*,” *International Refereed Research Journal*, Vol. II, Issue –3, July 2011 [88], www.researchersworld.com
- _ _ _ “Visceral Interlocking of an Individual with the Fate of a Community in Wole Soyinka’s *The Strong Breed*” *Language in India*, Vol. 11: 12, 495-507, December, 2011, www.languageinindia.com, retrieved: July 21, 2014.
- Manjula, V. N. *A Song for the Road - Wole Soyinka’s Imagery and Tradition, language in india,languageinindia.com*, 2011
- Mbiti, J.S. *African Religion and Philosophy*, New York: Anchor Books Print, 1970

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, Merriam Webster Incorp., Springfield, Massachusetts, USA, 1994,

Nwachukwu-Agbada, J.O.J. ‘Nigerian Literature and Oral Tradition’. In Emenyonu, Ernest. ed. *Goatskin Bags and Wisdom-New Critical Perspective on African Literature*, Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2000. 67-89.

Nzewi, Meki. “Music, Dance Drama and the Stage in Nigeria” in Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed). *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981, p. 433

— — — Traditional Theatre Practice, Nigeria Magazine, Lagos: Department of Culture, Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth Sports and Culture, 15-25

Ododo, S. E. “Theatrical Aesthetics & Functional Values of Ekuechi Masquerade Ensemble of the Ebira People in Nigeria”, *African Study Monographs*, 22 (1): 2001, p. 1-36

Ogunba, Oyin. *African Literature Today, A Journal of Explanatory Criticisms*, Vol.No.1-4, Eldred Jones (ed), London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1972

— — — “Modern Drama in West Africa” in *Perspectives on African Literature*, Christopher Heywood (ed), London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1971

Ogunbiyi, Yemi. “Nigerian Theatre and Drama: A Critical Profile”, in Ogunbiyi, Yemi (ed) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: a Critical Source Book*, Lagos, Nigerian Magazine, 1981

Ogundele, Wole. “Early Yoruba Cultural Nationalism Contra Nigerian Nationalist Historiography: A Reassessment” in Ogundele et al. (eds) *Iba: Essays on African Literature in Honour of Oyin Ogunba*, Ile-Ife, Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003, pp.257-272

Ogundeji, P. A. “Functions and Forms of ‘Traditional’ Theatre Practice in Nigeria” in Ajayi, S. A (ed) *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan, Atlantis Books and Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, 2005, pp.22-33

Okpewho, Isidore. *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983

- _ _ _ “African Literature and African Culture”, in Thompson Llord, Dapo Adelugba and Egbe Ifie (eds) *Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan, Afrika Link Press, 1991, pp. 67-77
- Ojaide, Tanure. “Modern African Literature and Cultural Identity”, *African Studies Review*, 35: 3 (Dec. 1992), 43-57, JSTORE, Web, 5 Jan. 2012
- _ _ _ “Examining Canonization in Modern African Literature”, *ASIATIC*, Vol. 3, No. 1, June 2009, 1-19
- Okodo, I. “African Traditional Drama: the Igbo-Nigerian Experience”, *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research & Policy Studies (JETERAPS)* 3 (2) 131-136, 2012
- Oladosu, Afis A. “Cross-Culturalism: Rereading Arabic into African Culture” in Ajayi, S. A (ed) *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan: Atlantis Books & Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, 2005, pp. 301-324
- Oloruntoba-Oju, M. and Oloruntoba-Oju, T. “Models in the Construction of Female Identity in Nigerian Post-colonial Literature” *TYDSKRIF VIR LETTER KUNDE* 50 (2), 2013, 5-18
- Osuagwu and Affiah. “Ethnodramatics: Towards a Theory for Indigenous African Drama” *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (JHSS)*, Vol.5, Issue 2 (Nov.-Dec.), 2012, 06-10, www.iosrjournal.org
- Plastow, Jane. “Leeds African Studies Bulletin”, 2005, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lucas>
- Ramsaran, J.A. *New Approaches to African Literature*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan. Ibadan University Press, 1970
- Rasheed, Abiodun M. *The Drama and Theatre of Wole Soyinka, An Encyclopedia of the Arts*, Vol. 11 (3): 2006, 216-229
- Roscoe, Adrian. “Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature,” Cambridge University Press, Britain, 1971
- Rotimi, Ola. *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Ibadan .University Press, 1975

- Schools, R. and C. H. Klaus. *Elements of Drama*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1971
- Schipper-de Leeuw, M. "Origin and Forms of Drama in the African Context", www.jstore.com,
accessed: 5 Jan., 2014
- Sofola, Zulu. *Wedlock of the Gods*, Evans Brothers Nig. Pub, Ibadan, 1972
- _ _ _ *King Emene*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, Ibadan, 1974
- _ _ _ *The Sweet Trap*, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1977
- Solanke, Stephen. "Mytho-symbolic Representations: Accessing Heroism in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* Journal of Post-colonial Cultures and Societies, JPCS, Vol. 4, No 4, 2013, pp. 117-136
- Soyinka, Wole. *Death and The King's Horseman*, Methuen Ltd, London, 1975
- _ _ _ *The Strong Breed*, Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers Ltd, Ibadan, 1964
- _ _ _ *The Lion And The Jewel*, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1963
- Taiwo, Oladele. (ed) *An Introduction to West African Literature*. Nairobi: Nelson, 1985
- Temple, C. N. "Ancient Kemet in African American Literature and Criticism, 1853 to the Present", *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.5, No.4, 2012, 129-148
- Umukoro, Mathew. "Poetry and Symbolism in Wole Soyinka's Drama," *Review of English and Literary Studies*, Department of English⁷ Ibadan, University of Ibadan, 1990
- Udengwu, Ngozi. "Challenging the Masters and Breaking the Jinx: The Pioneer Theatre Women in Focus" *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities number 21*, 2013, 94-106
- Zargar, S.M.A. "Traces of Afro-centricity in *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Road* by Wole Soyinka", *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 5, 2012, 83-96