

Cultural Displacement and Palliative Measures: An Exploration of Dramatic Literature

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ABSTRACT One of the realities and experiences of contemporary African people is the continual cultural conflict and eventual displacement of their culture in the process of struggling to find a balance in getting the best of modern life or experience without losing the indigenous legacies. This study aims at examining symbolic representation of cultural conflict as well as exploring the possibility of coexistence of the culture of both the coloniser and the colonised using Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. The study concludes that in order to minimise conflict the respect for other people's culture is imperative. However, African people must put their culture first above any other conflicting culture, re-embrace the best of their cultural heritage, and imbibe the best of Western culture to make the society a better place.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is one of the fibres sustaining the continued existence of a community (Megbowon 2015; Megbowon and Uwah 2020). It is considered to be a multidimensional subject, which comprises of knowledge, ideas, arts, ethics, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits learned by man and which are passed from one generation to the other (Tylor 1958). It is the features of a society or particular group of people that differentiate each from the other (Zimmermann 2012; Idang 2015). In essence any community without a culture has no identity and could be easily disintegrated by various forces. Citing Guy (1999), Mafela (2012) noted that culture is important because it is omnipresent and essential to human life. In that it is a means of identity (Lin 2020), an unintentional influencer and shaper of individual's attitude, behaviours and beliefs (Sibani 2018; Karjalainen 2020; Trommsdorff 2020; Gherghel et al. 2020). Cultural representation and expression are heterogeneous,

in that it could be material (for example, dressing, technology, architecture and art) or immaterial (for example, music, dance, kinship, law, norms marriage rites) (Lawal and Emokpae 2018; Sibani 2018), and static or dynamic (in the sense of being changeable with time) (Sibani 2018). One of the reasons for changing of culture or attitude to it over time is culture shock rising from colonisation, globalisation and economic integration among others.

In Africa, the contact of the continent with the West through colonisation and the subsequent spread of Western culture across the region suppressed many of the unique indigenous cultures, beliefs and value system. Though some positives can be recorded from colonisation experience, however Oni and Joshua (2014) pointed out that the forceful as well as the subtle subjugation of the African continent led to the disintegration and relegation of African culture, alteration history and prevention of African cultural development. According to Igboin (2011), colonial rule introduced rugged individualism, corruption, capitalism and oppression. It also disrupted the traditional machinery of moral homogeneity and practice. The intersection of the traditional and Western culture brought Africans to a state of indecision. Ashcroft et al. (2003) citing Achebe (1975) notes, "We had lived at the crossroads of values, and that we still do today, but when he was very young, the peculiar qual-

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ity and atmosphere of it was more clear, but still, the crossroads do have some terrible power; it is terrible because a man may perish there fighting with numerous headed spirits; but also he might be fortunate and return to his people with the boon of prophetic vision". Similarly, Kenyatta (2015) opines to the effect of cultural contact between the Western and traditional culture of the blacks stating that culture is meaningless without the social organisation of life on which it is built, and that this social organisation has been disintegrated by colonisation. Kenyatta (2015) further citing an instance of when the land of the Gikuyu people in Kenya was invaded by the Western country, noting that the invasion not only deprives the people of their land, livelihood, but also the material representation that holds the community together. It is however noted that the need for the indigenous African people's culture to be preserved, or perhaps have a balanced perspective in order to be able to adopt best of both systems, has from the post-colonial period and till date led to various forms of resistance, struggle and conflict against the imposed Westernised values. Therefore, considering the above, it is sure to note that contemporary African societies experiences an increase in various degrees of social vices, which are not seen in the olden days. The displacement of indigenous culture by a perceived superior culture has massively contributed to this current situation. These dynamics and effects of this culture shock are diverse, in that they vary from generation to generation and society to society, and they are seen in ways of life, which depict some level of confusion in character, perspective about and attitude to value system and beliefs.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore cultural conflicts and its causes, and how upholding of different cultural worldview could be conceivable.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify possible factors that stimulates cultural displacement.
2. To examine the idea for palliative measures of the possibility of coexistence of the two conflicting cultures.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument used for this study consists of literary text that was purposefully selected among the list of Wole Soyinka's play. The play is *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975). The play was individually read and analysed. The major focus was on the themes, which point to the cultural and religious representations that the playwright wishes to present. The themes employed by the playwright in portraying the colonised confusion of values and the coloniser will be explored. This study employs an interpretative analysis of the play understudied with attention to the playwright use of Yoruba culture and tradition, and Western influence. The study uses a postcolonial theoretical framework. According to Megbowon (2015) citing Ashcroft (2003), post-colonialism as a theory involves the discussion on the experiences of various kinds, namely, migration, slavery, suppression, psychology, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, culture, place and response with relation to imperialist cultures. This study captures issues of psychology, resistance and response of the indigenous people to the coloniser's culture and values.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Soyinka's Defence of Yoruba Culture

Wole Soyinka grew up in the knowledge of his cultural heritage. He upholds his belief in Yoruba culture, which is why he writes to defend it against Western intrusion and partialities. During the colonial period in Nigeria, he experienced influences from both his Yoruba and Western culture. He uses his knowledge of African culture and language to fight against colonial preconceptions as expressed in his works. Soyinka derives his dramatic theory from Yoruba dramatic traditions, rituals, and festival dramaturgy. He draws on Yoruba ritual drama and mythology to assert his cultural identity and to inform the world about his culture. He also identifies himself as a representative of African culture (Megbowon 2015).

Identifiable Factors that Stimulate Cultural Displacement

Identifiable factors that stimulate cultural displacement are discussed in this section.

These factors are observed to have been caused by both internal and external conflicts. A further implication of the historical and contemporary perspective is inferred with the symbolic representation of old and younger generation characters in the contemporary Yoruba setting. While the older generation in the contemporary Yoruba setting is symbolised by Elesin, Iyalaja and the women, the younger generation is represented by the characters of Joseph and Amusa. Specifically, the identified factors are: self-indulgence, foreign actors' actions and activities, acceptance of foreign religion, and the demand of economic survival.

Self-indulgence

This study identified self-indulgence as one of the causes of cultural conflict (also referred to as an internal conflict) and displacement. Internal conflict is a kind of conflict where there is a clash or contradiction of ideas within an individual relating to unbridled desires and passion vis-à-vis what ought to be. It is a struggle within a character in which debates occur in his or her own mind about what is desired to be done as against what is expected, which eventually leads to a state of dilemma. Internal conflict in this study is viewed from the character of Elesin, the King's horseman. Elesin Oba also known as the Abobaku in the text as well as in the Yoruba tradition is referred to an individual who is expected to die with the king in a ritual suicide when a king die. It is a practice premised on the idea of accompanying the king to the world beyond. The Abobaku do enjoy several privileges and pleasure along with the king during the king's reign. In the Yoruba community, the practice is very important because it signifies communal regeneration. According to Megbowon (2015) citing Ojaide (1992), Africans perceived such ordinance as essential and sacred to ensure unity and peace in the society, and the absence of it will bring calamity to the whole society. An ordinance could require the sacrifice of an individual to avoid war, pestilence, or any predicted communal catastrophe. The individual can be sacrificed for the welfare of the society. As noted in the play, Elesin is aware of the certainty of death, even if it is willingly or not. He equally knows that death is the end of the phys-

ical life, so he approaches it with fearlessness. He strongly maintains his stand from the beginning of the play to perform his duty being the king's horseman with a perfect understanding of the significance of his duty. He displays this through several of his words as shown in the following extracts:

Extract 1:

ELESIN: Not I; cries the courageous hunter, 'but
It's getting dim, and this night- lamp
Has leaked out all its oil. I think
It's best to go home and resume my hunt
Another day. (Soyinka, 1975: 10)

ELESIN: My rein is untied. I am master of my
fate. When the time comes

Watch me dance along the narrowing lane.
Glazed by the soles of my countless prede-

cursors.

My soul is ready. I shall not turn away'. (Soyinka
1975: 13)

Elesin is here proud of his communal obligation, and his language remains fixed without fear of death. It is that of strength and harmony which shows a world of order. Likewise, the significance of his duty to the community cannot be over-emphasised. His sacrifice is for the benefit of his community, and he appreciates his role as a communal hope and cultural demand. The practice of human sacrifice, as an element of religious ritual, was prevalent in African cultures. It is carried out to appease the gods (Megbowon 2015). Frazer (1993) argues that in the olden days, plants, vegetables, animals, birds, slaves, women, chiefs, ministers, princes, sometimes rulers were used as a sacrifice to the gods. The purpose of the ritual is to bring peace, unity and ensure the welfare of the society. Elesin in the play is the ceremonial sacrifice who arbitrates the world of the living, the unborn and the dead. His wilful death brings unity between the three stages of existence as believed by the Yoruba. This belief and practice of the Yoruba emphasise sustaining the continuous connection between the three stages of life (the living, the dead and the unborn). The practice is also considered as a way of salvation of a community from a diver's forms of danger. Ojaide (1995) notes that the Yoruba believes that passing away is not the end of life but a transition from the physical world to an eternal world. He also states that the living, the dead, and the unborn make a pattern of continu-

ity, and this underpins the play's (*Death and the King's Horseman*) mystical order.

However, despite Elesin's understanding of the importance of his role in the king's burial proceeding and to the entire community, and his strong positive language use in the process of carrying out his duty, he is seen later exhibiting a strange attitude that reflects an internal conflict between the need to perform his duty and the desire to enjoy the pleasantness of the living (Megbowon 2015). While in his market dance of death, his first request is to be clothed with royal robes, which signifies honour, and then requests to be honoured with a new bride.

Extract 2:

ELESIN: Honour me. I am worthy of a bed of honour to lie upon.

IYALOJA: You deserve the best. We know you for a gentleman of honour (Soyinka 1975: 20).

While Elesin, the supposed saviour of the community was enjoying his last moment in pleasure he was equally warned of the danger of self-indulgence by the Praise singer and Iyaoloja without him yielding to it.

PRAISE SINGER: They want to spoil you but be careful (Soyinka 1975: 8).

IYALOJA: Those who are alive must eat and drink. When the time comes, don't turn the nutrients to rodents' droppings in their mouth. Don't let them taste the debris of the world when they step out at dawn to breathe the morning dew (Soyinka 1975: 23).

Eventually, he allows his weakness to overpower him to the neglect of his duty. According to Jeyifo, the inability of Elesin to perform his take is as a result of flaw in character, and the inability to balance between the desire for spiritual communion with the ancestors and earthly desires. Similarly, he supported the view by pointing that the realisation by Elesin that life is sweet, and it is unthinkable for anyone to deliberately end his life at the peak of pleasure led to his hesitation to carry out his duty. According to Obafemi (2008), Elesin allows his sensuality to weaken his spiritual resolve. Unfortunately, he is consumed by his desire and unbridled appetite for life pleasure (Chergui 2018). Without doubt, Elesin's act of self-indulgence is a cause and representation of conflict between two contradicting demands. His downfall symbolises

disloyalty to his culture and community and eventual displacement of culture. It can also be added that Elesin's action is a conflict with ideology, or culture of communalism, which the Yoruba people stand for and their stand on materialism before the emergence of colonisation. An African tradition, for example, stresses the concept of togetherness as opposed to a society of competing individuals (Megbowon 2015). Pre-colonial African society is generally described as being communal rather than individualistic in its outlook, social solidarity, and the continued existence of the community was of prime importance. Communal spirit is well portrayed in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. In the text, the necessity attached to the ritual self-sacrifice of Elesin Oba after the death of the Oba is in the interest of his community and not a personal interest. Elesin Oba's self-sacrifice is in the interest and wellbeing of his community, which supersede that of any individual. Ojaide (1992) points out that pre-colonial communalism prevailed in small societies with non-monetary economics in which members were bonded together by common blood and feelings of extended family-hood. Such societies were also characterised by substantial agreement regarding customs, morality and religious beliefs, which combined to provide a sense of solidarity and indeed, shared destiny amongst the people. Unfortunately, the contemporary lifestyle and operation have remained in conflict with the culture of communality, which is peculiar to the indigenous African society. The modern life of individualism has greatly severed the bond between individuals in the society, thereby leading to further disintegration of the society, and erosion and eventual displacement of indigenous culture and value systems.

Foreign Actors' Actions and Activities

The actions and activities of aliens is another cause and display of cultural conflict and displacement. Conflict here is considered to be a conflict between the lifestyle or cultural practises of an individual, indigenous group of people or a community, and outside force. The outside force uses all he or she has in power to oppose, negate or disapprove existing ways of life of the indigenous people. The outside force in the text

examined is the European represented by the Pilkings, who are antagonising the indigenous culture of the Yoruba people. Specifically, external conflict in the play is portrayed from the action of Simon Pilkings (the Colonial District officer) in arresting Elesin and the instantaneous contrary reactions of the community members, which are exemplified in the characters of Elesin and Iyaloja who are representation of culture (Megbowon 2015). As narrated by the playwright, Pilkings finds out that the king's horseman (Elesin) is about to perform his societal obligation through ritual sacrifice. He orders his arrest in an attempt to discontinue the Yoruba cultural practice of him accompanying the king to the world beyond a month after the death of the king. He blames the British officer as the stranger who hinders the performance of his duty as to why he fails. He laments when confiding in his new bride the calamity that befalls him as a result of his arrest by the colonial District Officer:

ELESIN: 'For I declare to you, daughter, my flaw came not merely from the evil of the white man... The white ghost arrived and all was polluted' (Soyinka 1975: 71).

ELESIN: The alien hand defiles the source of my will, when an alien force of cruelty shatters the mind's calm my determination, when a man is made to commit the horrible treachery of relief, commit in his thought the awful blasphemy of seeing the hand of the gods in this alien rupture of his world. I know that this thought killed me, exhausted my powers and turned me into a child in the hands of awkward strangers. I wanted to utter my spells again but my tongue merely vibrated in my mouth. I touched hidden charms and the contact was damp; there was no spark left to sever the life-strings that should stretch from every finger-tip. I realised that my will was thwarted in the spittle of an alien race, and all because I had committed this blasphemy of thought that the gods might be involved in the stranger's intervention (Soyinka 1975: 75-76).

Iyaloja (head of the market women) is another character in the play who exemplifies the conflict between the Yoruba culture and foreign influence. Like many older people in the modern-day Yoruba setting, Iyaloja is an embodiment of culture in that she is knowledgeable of her culture and keen on the preservation of her cultural

heritage. For instance, Iyaloja acknowledges the importance of the role of Elesin to the community, and no wonder she stands with Elesin to ensure he fulfils his obligation, which is why she honours him with all his requests and satisfies his appetite before the ritual, including the request for a bride. However, she then warns Elesin of the danger ahead of him.

ELESIN: In my entire life. As Horseman of the King, the exciting fruit on each tree was mine. I saw, I touched, I charmed, hardly was the response No. The nobility of my place, the honour I received in the eye of man or woman flourished my suit (Soyinka 1975: 18).

ELESIN: Honour me. I am worthy of a bed of honour to lie upon.

IYALOJA: You deserve the best. We know you for a gentleman of honour. (Soyinka 1975: 20)

IYALOJA: 'Fine, the earth is yours. But ensure the seed you leave in it attracts no curse' (Soyinka 1975: 23).

She, at the same time, communicates the depth of her despair and that of the community to Mr Pilkings, referring to Western values. She frowns at Mr Pilkings' arrogance on interfering with her cultural practises, which are different from his Western culture. She further explains the significance of the Elesin's ritual sacrifice.

IYALOJA: 'White man, you have a ruler here, a guest from your land. We know of his presence here. Say to me, if he dies would you leave his spirit wandering restlessly on the surface of earth? Would you lay him to rest here among those you consider less than human? In your land don't you have ceremonies of the dead?' (Soyinka 1975: 78).

She is an example of the historical character that will do everything to preserve her culture and ensure it is duly passed to younger generations even though there is interference from Western culture. Specifically, the shade of external conflicts in the play is represented by the intrusion of Western culture represented by Mr Pilkings' arrest of Elesin to prevent him from performing his communal duty. Following his (Elesin) arrest, Iyaloja expresses her grief first to Elesin in prison where Mr Pilkings keeps him. She displays her understanding of her culture throughout the play without compromising with Western belief. The older generation, though confronted with the alien belief, give high re-

gard to their cultural heritage. Gibbs (1980) citing Moore (1997), while commenting on Elesin's failure, sees it as a disaster of will as metaphorical of a wider African failure to twig to indigenous values, even when not really enforced to abandon them.

Acceptance of Foreign Religion

The effect of foreign religion on culture is also seen as an external cause of cultural neglect. In the text, Soyinka depicts the character of Joseph as an example of the contemporary individuals who are caught between the two conflicting cultures (Megbowon 2015). Joseph is the house assistant to Mr Pilkings, and he appears once in scene two of the play. In his first appearance, he gives them (Pilkings and Jane) information about what is happening in the community regarding Elesin's ritual sacrifice. Mr Pilkings and his wife are sceptical as to what the ceaseless drumming in the community signifies, and they immediately decide to inquire from their native house help, Joseph. This conversation is seen in the following extract:

JANE: The drumming, do you think it really linked to this ritual? It's been going on all day.

PILKINGS: Can we ask our native guide. Joseph! Just a minute. What is it about the drumming?

JOSEPH: I don't know sir.

PILKINGS: You mean you don't know? It's only two years since you were converted. Don't tell me all that holy water nonsense also rubbed off your tribal mind.

JOSEPH: Master (surprisingly)!

JANE: It is not my preaching you have to worry about Joseph, it is the preaching of the missionaries who preceded us here. When they make converts they really convert them (Soyinka 1975: 32).

The response of Joseph in the text typically shows how Joseph lost his cultural mind, cultural identity and eventually displaced his culture as a result of his newfound faith, which he acquired through colonisation. He is seen to imbibe Western religion and totally neglects his own traditional belief to the extent that he cannot trace his cultural roots. He lost his cultural heritage to the coloniser, and no wonder Mr Pilkings is surprised at his ignorance of the symbolic representation of the traditional events in the

community. He has internalised the white man's religion to the extent that he forgets his indigenous cultural practice. Joseph's gullible acceptance of Western religion is seen as symbolic of the contemporary youth who abandon their cultural practice, beliefs and value systems and embrace new ways brought by the colonisers and the agents of propagation of colonisers' ways of life without critical judgement. Sijo (2016) notes that colonial invasion of the African space led to the loss of African identity in respect socioeconomic, culture, religion, politics and language among others. In collaborating the view of Sijo (2016), Royanian and Sadeghi (2014) note that West Africans also lost part of their cultural identity in the field of education, since the tribal history and beliefs were no longer taught, rather Christian education used the Bible to teach reading and language skills and Western practices and beliefs. This situation has also been presented in the Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart*:

Does the white man understand our custom about land? "How can he when he not even speak[s] our tongue?" But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad... He came quietly and peaceably with his religion... He has put a knife on the things that held us to gather and we have fallen apart. (Achebe 2014)

Okeke et al. (2017) also maintain that the presence of Christianity in Africa especially in the Igbo land affected cultural perspectives of marriage, burial ceremonies birthing and naming. Without doubt, loss of cultural identity and cultural displacement by Africans has links with the Westernisation the missionaries brought along with Christianity.

Demand of Economic Survival

The demands for economic survival has the potential of making people neglect and betray their heritage. There are two observable reactions to colonial rule in Africa, these are collaboration and resistance. According to Wamagatt (2008), African collaboration was a strong support of European colonialism in Africa because collaborators were the connection between the colonisers and the colonised. Collaborators were

active or passive, educated or uneducated elites, and they work together commercially, administratively, educationally, and ecclesiastically. There were formal and informal collaborators such as chiefs, headmen, mission workers, teachers, dispensers, policemen, soldiers, and interpreters. They were collectively “an indispensable channel through which the dictates of imperial rule are handed down; and up through them are transmitted the responses and reactions of the governed.” There were many individuals who aspired to collaborate because the attraction of what colonialism had to offer. In essence, collaboration was enabled by those who hoped to benefit from the wealth, power, prestige, and influence derived from the colonisers, and thereby preserve or improve their social, political, or economic standing (Wamagatt 2008).

Amusa in the text, is an example of an individual who because of economic survival collaborates with colonial power to promote the ideals of the coloniser and in the process displaces his indigenous culture. He is a devout Muslim, and he appears thrice in the play. At first, as a police officer, he enters the Pilkings’ house to report Elesin’s ritual sacrifice, but he is surprised to see Mr Pilkings and his wife wearing Egungun masks, which in the traditional Yoruba world symbolise the spirit of death. He is in a state of confusion as he is there to report the unlawful death to his master whom he sees dancing in a costume of death. He refuses to make his report inasmuch as he (Pilkings) is in Egungun mask. He explains:

AMUSA: Master, it is a matter of death. How can I talk against death to someone in uniform of death? It is like talking against government to someone in police uniform. Please sir, I will go now and come back (Soyinka 1975: 26)

Confusion, as seen in the character of Amusa, is visible among the contemporary youth in the Yoruba society. He believes in traditional culture even though his job demands him to reject it and place it below the colonisers’ culture. Amusa’s loyalty to his traditional Yoruba belief is in conflict with his economic demands. One can say he is colonised economically and spiritually. This is seen in his conversation with Jane:

JANE: Amusa, what is there to be afraid of in the costume? You saw it impounded last month

from those Egungun men who were making trouble in town. You aided the arrest of the cult leaders yourself if the magic didn’t harm you at that time how could it probably harm you now? And just by looking at it?

AMUSA: Ma, I arrest the agitators who make trouble but me I no touch Egungun. That Egungun, I didn’t touch. And I no misuse ‘am. I arrest ring leader but I treat Egungun with reverence (Soyinka 1975: 26).

Amusa has to arrest *Egungun* (masquerade) on the request of colonial administration. Omobola (2010: 38) asserts that the *Egungun* clan existing either as the communal spirit of the ancestors of a particular community or as ancestral spirits of different families, offers a significant religious setting for periodic worship of, and communication with, ancestral spirits by persons who seek divine guidance to negotiate the human situation.

In another instance, when he has to arrest Elesin who is consummating his marriage with a new bride, he tries to find his way into the bridal chamber to arrest Elesin but the market women and the schoolgirls prevent this, and drive him and his entourage from the market. They mock him when he says he is ‘on official duty’: Official duty you white man’s eunuch. Another official duty is taking place where you want to go and it is a business you wouldn’t comprehend (Soyinka 1975: 37). He is blinded by his confused sense of duty not to understand what traditional practice is going on in his community and the duty of Elesin. This is seen in his conversation with the market women:

AMUSA: Do you women know that interrupting officer in performance of his duty is wrong. I warn you women to clear the road to that shed. I know he is there. The one who calls himself Elesin.

WOMAN: Ignorant man. He is not he who calls himself Elesin Oba, it is his blood that says it. As it is called out to his father before him and so to his son after him. That is in spite of the whole thing your white man can do (Soyinka 1975: 37-38).

The girls also mock him that they do not want to see eaters of white man’s leftovers at the feast (Soyinka 1975: 40).

Soyinka presents Amusa and Joseph as representing the Yoruba people who have lost their

cultural roots due to their embracing of the new religion. This state of affairs brings them in conflict with their traditional beliefs and values.

Mr Pilkings and his wife have no admiration for the Christian religion, and they have no regard for Egungun (Masquerade), Islam and traditional religion. That is why the playwright makes one believe that there is nothing special or moral in Pilkings' cultural belief that allows him to pass judgement on other people's ways of life. Mr Pilkings does not necessarily have respect for human life when he opposes the ritual sacrifice, as his main concern is to destroy the people's cultural practises. He is ready to shoot down anyone who fights against his efforts to stop the ritual sacrifice. In his attempt to save Elesin's life, he is prepared to kill many people, and this is seen in his conversation with Iyaloja at the prison.

PILKINGS: My subordinate have directives to shoot at the first sign of trouble

IYALOJA: You mean to stop one death you will really make other deaths? Ah, excellent is the sense of the white race (Soyinka 1975: 80).

This betrays his underlying purpose of his interference with the ritual sacrifice. It shows he does not value life and is only keen to obliterate the cultural beliefs of the people whose significance he does not understand.

The Possibility of Coexistence between the Two Cultures

This section examines the possibility of coexistence of the two conflicting cultures in the play that demonstrate cultural displacement, as portrayed, in the characters of Olunde, the women and the girls. The playwright portrays the schoolgirls as the contemporary youth who are taught the new ways brought about by the colonisers. They are the children of Iyaloja and the market women and appear only once in the play (Megbowon 2015). However, they stick to their traditional culture even though they learn the new ways in school. The schoolgirls help their mothers chase Amusa and his associates away from Elesin's wedding chamber. They also imitate the white man in a performance, showing their knowledge of the Western style.

GIRLS:

How do you find the location?

The communities are all right.

Are they friendly?

Are they tractable?

Not a little bit restless?

Well, a little bit restless.

One might approximately say, tough?

But you are you coping?

Yes indeed I am. I have a true ox called Amusa.

He is loyal?

Completely.

I had one like that once.

Ordinarily of course they are deceivers.

We try to do our best for the old nation.

It is good to serve

Where is that Sergeant?

AMUSA: (Responds) Yes sir! (Soyinka 1975: 40-41)

The schoolgirls replicate the white man's speech perfectly because they readily access Western cultural patterns through education. They do not, nevertheless, disregard their traditional ways of life even though they learnt Western ways. They are able to defend their cultural heritage against alien intrusion, unlike Amusa and Joseph. The playwright depicts through them the possible co-existence of the old and new culture without conflict or superiority of one over the other.

The possibility of coexistence of Yoruba and Western culture is also exemplified in the characters of Iyaloja and the market women who are custodians of Yoruba culture, yet they accept the best of the Western cultures by sending their children to school to learn the new values and balance their knowledge with the old values. They expressed wonder at their performance.

WOMEN: Do you learnt all that at school?

WOMAN: And come to think of it I nearly kept Apinke away from the place

WOMAN: Can you hear them? Can you see how they imitated the white man?

WOMAN: The voices accurately. There are wonders in this world.

IYALOJA: Well, our elders have said it: 'Dada may be feeble, but he has a younger one who is truly brave' (Soyinka 1975: 42).

One of the market women nearly kept her child from going to school because of the effect of Western education on the contemporary youth,

thinking that her child may imbibe new ways learnt in school and neglect the old values she passes onto her.

Similarly, the possibility of coexistence between the two cultures, despite their contradiction, is exemplified in the character of Olunde, which reflects on his decision to uphold his cultural heritage, having learned the new ways. He understands the benefit of Western education and the ideals of his Yoruba culture, and this enables him to accept the Pilkings' offer of going to England to study medicine even when his father disagrees. He learns the Western ways, acknowledges and respects the people together with their culture and at the same time, his own cultural tradition. He travels home when he hears about the death of the king to give compliments to his father whom he expects to find dead. He sees the death of his father as an essential offer for the survival of his culture. Olunde's return coincides with the visit of the Prince of England to Yoruba society. He appears for the first time in Act four at the English Ball looking for Mr Pilkings. He finds Mrs Pilkings wearing the Egun-gun mask and "mocking an ancestral masquerade to entertain the Prince at the Ball." He frowns and expresses his grief:

OLUNDE: Do you not find it rather hot in there? Your skin must find it difficult to exhale.

JANE: Fine, it is a little hot I must admit, but it is all in a good reason.

OLUNDE: What reason Mrs Pilkings?

JANE: All this, the ball and his Highness being here in person and all that.

OLUNDE: And that is the good reason for which you defile an ancestral mask?

JANE: Oh, so you are surprised after all. How disheartening.

OLUNDE: No I am not surprised, Mrs Pilkings. You forget that I have now spent four years among your people. I observed that you have no respect for what you do not appreciate.

JANE: I take it then that you did not find your stay in England altogether enlightening. (Soyinka 1975: 54-55)

Jane is surprised to see Olunde condemning the act of defiling the masquerade mask. She thinks he should overlook his religious practices, having been to England and exposed to Western culture. Pilkings and his wife deal with the belief they do not understand without due

consideration of the significance of such a belief. They referred to the masquerade mask as 'fancy dress' (Soyinka 1975: 25). Soyinka reveals that Olunde is a person whose experience of the Western world gives him a profound insight of his heritage. He throws not away his old ways but rather complements it with the new ways. The playwright further discloses his conviction of his Yoruba belief when he criticises the Western cultural arrogance of Mr and Mrs Pilkings. Olunde, unlike Amusa and Joseph, maintains his cultural roots with a better understanding of his heritage despite his experience of the Western world. He considers his father's ritual sacrifice as self-sacrifice, which is essential for the existence of his people. He happens to be in England during the war, where an individual sacrifices his life to save the lives of many. He admires the courage of the captain who blows himself up with the ship for the safety of others.

OLUNDE: I found your people quite excellent in many ways, their behaviour and courage in this war for instance

JANE: The captain blew himself up with it. Intentionally, Simon said someone had to remain on board to light the fuse.

OLUNDE: I find it rather exciting. It is a confirmatory explanation of life. That captain's self-sacrifice.

JANE: Nonsense, life should never be thrown intentionally away.

OLUNDE: And the guiltless people around the harbour? That was a risk the commander couldn't take (Soyinka 1975: 56).

Olunde does not condemn the Western ways of survival but rather admires it together with his own religious belief. He requires Jane and Pilkings to respect the culture of his people even if they are not in agreement to it:

OLUNDE: But have the humility to let others survive in their own way (Soyinka 1975: 58)

He ingeniously shows Jane that self-sacrifice is an inspiring human value. The ability to acknowledge other people's culture without necessarily suppressing one's culture makes one stable and balanced in his conscience and way of life, thus, eliminating the confusion that arises from doing otherwise. This is seen in the character of Olunde, and unlike Pilkings and Jane, his wife, who neither acknowledges nor respects the culture of the Yoruba people before institut-

ing an order against the people's belief. In addition, Pilkings considers not the disparity in the two cultures before instituting an order against the practise inherent in the Yoruba culture. That is why Olunde stirs up anger against his determination to prevent his father's death, which results in a clash between them. Soyinka depicts Olunde's courage and his sense of understanding of his culture and community as he stands to defend it against:

OLUNDE: But I knew I had to return home at once so as to bury my father... (Soyinka 1975: 57)

According to Soyinka, what Pilkings sees as a feudalistic barbaric custom is a very important system of communal renewal. George (1999: 82) states that Elesin, at the time of self-sacrifice, represents the communal social and supernatural aspirations of the Yoruba society. He is a sacrificial victim who arbitrates the world of the unborn, the living and the dead. Through his wilful death as a duty he owes his society, he ascends to the world of the dead on behalf of the living and the unborn, and his death brings unity between the three stages of existence constitutive of traditional Yoruba interplanetary order. The intrusion of Pilkings results in catastrophe for the community, that is, the death of Olunde who killed himself instead of his father for the stability of the society and to save his family from indignity, and the death of his father who sees his son's corpse strangles himself in detention. Olunde has a strong belief in his culture, so he is not open to the conflicting view of others to change his culture though he tolerates other people's values (Megbowon 2015). This is further seen from the tolerance he exhibits in England. His death is said to mark a cultural change in the ritual practises of the Yoruba people because he gladly submits himself to death for the preservation of harmony and peace in his community. His sacrifice shows a sense of belonging to his society.

CONCLUSION

Culture is not stagnant, cultural habits and tradition change with time and most especially in an integrating world, cultural conflict and eventual displacement is inevitable. However, what is being displaced and the manner of displace-

ment need to be of more concern to the indigenous society. The displacement of logically ideal, appealing and morally promoting indigenous culture and values will lead to total destabilisation of the indigenous system, as compared to displacement of unappealing practice like the practise of the king's horseman ritual suicide, which has relatively no positive identified impacts to the society. However, no matter how unappealing and illogical a culture may be, the acknowledgement, tolerance and respect for other people's culture will promote coexistence thereby reducing possible conflict that may arise from cultural contacts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends emphasising on the need for the contemporary Yoruba society to re-embrace the best Yoruba cultural heritage, modernising the old values and imbibing the best of Western culture to make the society a better place. The propagation of the best of Yoruba cultures and values in a modern world through various means at various levels should be given maximum priority.

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