

## Polemics of Cultural Regeneration in Soyinka's *The Lion and The Jewel*

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**ABSTRACT** The present study examines social cultural issues, the value of culture as an element of resistance to alien dominance and how Soyinka presents the beauty of Yoruba culture in an attempt to correct Yoruba people's post-colonial assimilation of western cultural practices at the expense of their indigenous way of life. It also explores the differences between the European conventions and indigenous conventions. There are behaviours that are considered acceptable in African culture that might be frowned upon in European culture. Soyinka in his *The Lion and the Jewel* dramatizes some of the Yoruba conventions. Using a literary review methodology this study examines the position of Yoruba culture from the postcolonial perspective analyses and explores the relevance of literary texts in correcting the present day confusion in Yoruba society. The study concludes that the conventions of bride price, moral obligation of women and procreation promotes good conduct and ethics unites the family and the society at large.

### INTRODUCTION

The cultural elements of a people represent the true measure of their identity. Culture according to Guma (2016) is an integral part of every human society and all social groups are characterized by culture. Culture is the sum total of learned and informally transmitted behaviours. It is shared and practiced in all societies of the world. Culture distinguishes a group of people from another and without a peculiar culture a people has no identity and without identity a people do not exist.

The significance of culture in human life cannot be overemphasized. Cultural norms have an important social function; it helps people to understand how to behave in the society and foster cooperation, unity and progress. Culture and customs reflect the people's creativity, their adaptation to environments and the impact of the external world has had on them (Falola and Akinoyemi 2016). In Africa, especially Nigeria, culture permeated man's everyday life, so much that

it moulds morals of the society and keeps man in harmony with his environment. Colonialism viciously disrupted African cultural traditions and enforced, with success, European values upon colonized peoples. According to Falola (2001), Colonialism travels with cultural imposition as the colonizer promotes its own civilization as superior while he colonized imitate the representatives of the colonizing agents (Falola 2001). The precolonial Nigeria with traditional values as its focal point was peaceful before the advent of European conquest brought about its collapse, the cultural and social values and crime control mechanism were functional because the social and traditional values were still in dominant position. However, the moral decadence in the present Nigeria society is devastating. The sexual perversion is on the increase, dignity of labour is no longer cherished, corruption and crime rate are now the rule rather than the exception. The cultural values that consistently define the African personality have now become history.

In order to help Nigeria society regain their lost cultural values, Nigerian playwrights have written profusely to sustain the Nigerian cultural norms and values. Thus, this study investigates Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, to explore the dynamics of the socio-cultural values of the Yoruba people of Nigerian.

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*The Lion and the Jewel* is a post-colonial text that is set in the Yoruba village of Ilujinle in West Africa, Nigeria. It is a satirical comedy in which Soyinka presents an interplay of western culture and the indigenous Yoruba culture through the characters in the play such that it reveals topical colonial and post-colonial disputes and harmony. The playwright uses the characters of Baroka, Sadiku and Sidi to represent the colonised Yoruba people's culture and Lakunle to represent the western culture. The playwright writes to counter the western cultural influence and misconception of the cultural values and religious belief of the Yoruba people.

As the play unfolds, there is an opposition to values between the characters that uphold the Yoruba culture and the character that has acquired and imbibed the western ways of life. The contest is between two men, Baroka and Lakunle, both of whom uphold different cultural values. They have the same aim of marrying the most beautiful maiden in the village, Sidi. As a young school teacher, Lakunle prefers the western culture to his Yoruba culture. He draws his plan of re-fashioning the village of Ilujinle to become a modern village. Baroka, on the other hand, is the head of the village of Ilujinle who upholds strongly his Yoruba culture and opposes the western idea of progress as Lakunle expresses it. He uses his authority to prevent the transformation of Ilujinle village to a western one, be it in development of the infrastructure and ways of life. He also accuses Lakunle of wanting to marry Sidi, their village beautiful girl so that he can turn her into a Western girl and therefore seeks a way of making Lakunle's mission impossible. It is clear that given Soyinka's stand on traditional values, the character of Baroka represents the saner of the two and therefore the playwright's spokesperson in the play. Baroka's intention to marry Sidi is aimed at retaining her in the village in order to pass unto her the Yoruba cultural values.

It is in the culture of the Yoruba people to ask for bride price before giving their female children to a man in marriage. Sidi is a typical Yoruba girl who believes in Yoruba culture. Lakunle is in love with her, but he is not in support of the payment of bride price. He sees it as an old culture. In his words, it is an "out-dated" culture (Soyinka 7). To him it is against Western culture and he will not do what is against his newly acquired culture:

LAKUNLE: A savage custom, barbaric,  
out-dated,  
Rejected, denounced, accursed,  
Ex-communicated, archaic, degrading,  
Humiliating, unspeakable, redundant.  
Retrogressive, remarkable, unpalatable.  
(Soyinka 7)

Lakunle tries to appeal to her emotions to marry him and uses his little knowledge of Western social life which he reads in his western books, all to no avail. Sidi commits herself to the principles of her culture and will not yield to his persuasion. She holds her Yoruba culture in high esteem and stays firm in her decision not to marry Lakunle unless he pays her bride price. She loves him, but not at the expense of changing or bending the culture of her land.

Lakunle also refers to the Yoruba culture as a past and irrelevant culture which should be left behind and encourages Sidi to embrace the western lifestyle. Using the character of Lakunle, Soyinka shows the dangers of allowing someone with little understanding of western culture to try to influence the Yoruba culture. Meanwhile, when it became clear that the photojournalist had put Sidi on the front pages of the magazine, Soyinka again articulates the dangers of westernisation through Sidi's new found conceit which goes against the grain of African/Yoruba culture. Sidi knows that her beauty and fame now goes beyond the Yoruba village of Ilujinle to Lagos city. This causes her to pay no attention to Baroka's proposal through his head wife, Sadiku, when she approaches her about Baroka's intention of marrying her.

SIDI: "You'll make no prey of Sidi with your wooing tongue  
Not this Sidi whose fame has spread to Lagos  
And beyond the seas." (Soyinka 20)

She also rejects the western ways of love making such as kissing and romance which Lakunle introduces to her. She perceives it as a deceitful way of getting married to a woman. Sadiku also rejects Lakunle's refusal to pay the bride price which is why he advises him to "take a farm for season, one harvest will be enough to pay the price." (Soyinka 36)

Similarly Baroka rejects the western ways of life thus hindering the civilization of Ilujinle, which would occur through the introduction of motor roads, railways. He believes it will bring about sameness among the people, as revealed by Lakunle.

LAKUNLE: "Voluptuous beast! He loves this life too well"

To bear to part from it. And motor roads  
And railways would do just that, forcing  
Civilization at his door. He foresaw it  
And he barred the gates. ..., (Soyinka 25)

Baroka learns of Lakunle's interest in marrying Sidi and confronts him for attempting to take Sidi as a wife without permission or legal right to do so. Meanwhile, he (Baroka) wants to add a new wife to his harem as the village head and sincerely wants to marry Sidi because of her fame and also to keep her in the Yoruba ways of life in order to transfer the Yoruba cultural values to the upcoming generations, being the village maidenhead. Sidi's rejection of Baroka's hand in marriage causes him to use the old man's deception to lure her to his bed with sweet promises. He was able to achieve his mission by deceiving Sadiku that he has lost his manhood. He hopes to regain it when he marries Sidi.

BAROKA: "The time has come when I can fool myself

No more. I am no man, Sadiku. My manhood  
Ended near a week ago" (Soyinka 29)

Sadiku relays the news to Sidi so that they can mock him for the loss of his manhood. She invites her to attend a village women's gathering where they will be able to make fun of Baroka, the lion of Ilujinle. Sidi shows excitement regarding the news from her speech.

SIDI: O-ho-o-o-o-!

... We won! We won! Hurray for womankind!  
(Soyinka 33)

She is ready to go and mock Baroka's impotence though she receives warning from her suitor, Lakunle, not to go to Baroka's house, but she refuses his warning, hence she is de-flowered by Baroka, a sexually active man of sixty two years old. She returns to Lakunle and Sadiku with the news of how she was de-flowered by Baroka. Lakunle also shows unhappiness but still offers to marry her without paying a bride price since she is no more a virgin, but Sidi rejects his offer being a woman of culture and chooses to marry Baroka who agrees to pay the bride price. Sidi chooses to marry Baroka because he will pay her valuable bride price to honour her as it is significant in her culture. She loves Lakunle but rejects his proposal because he has no regard for his own Yoruba culture. The story ends with the marriage of Sidi and

Baroka, and this shows the triumph of Yoruba culture over the Western culture.

Summarily, Soyinka uses Ilujinle village to represent Africa as a whole. Lakunle, the village school teacher, imbibes wrongly the Western culture which he uses against his Yoruba culture. He is cast off by Sidi, his lover, who prefers Yoruba ways of life by getting married to Baroka, the village head, who also believes that Yoruba culture and religious practices should not be replaced or go to extinction.

### Objective

The present study looks first at cultural regeneration in Soyinka's *the lion and the Jewel*, from a post-colonial theoretical perspective. Section 2 presents analysis of *the Lion and the Jewel* and then highlights Yoruba people's conventions and elucidates on their significance in an attempt to correct Yoruba people's post-colonial assimilation of western cultural practices at the expense of their indigenous way of life. Section 3 furthermore, reveals a symbolic representation of the past and reoccurring conflicts between the colonized (Yoruba) conventions and the colonizer's conventions.

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this work is highly analytical of the selected texts Soyinka's *the Lion and the Jewel*. This paper employs an interpretative analysis of the play. The major focus is on the themes which point to the cultural representations that the playwright wishes to present.

### OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

#### Understanding the Conventions of the Yoruba People and their Significance

Culture could be classified into material and immaterial concepts. The material technology, architecture and art. The immaterial concept of culture is the intangible cultural heritage of a society which includes music, dance, kinship, marriage rites and so on. This section explores the conventions of the Yoruba society and their significance as are acknowledged to influence and guide the conduct of the people living in it.

### Responsibilities of Women in the Society (Moral Obligation of Women)

Morality is an aspect of culture that deals with human behaviour; it is an intangible aspect of culture. Adisa et al. (2014: 335) citing Mbiti (2006) declares that for the Yoruba, character (*iwa*) is the essence of their morals. Good character shows itself in so many ways; chastity before marriage and faithfulness between married couples, hospitality, generosity, "kindness, justice, truth and integrity as essential virtues, avoiding stealing, keeping covenant and avoiding falsehood, protecting the poor and weak, especially women, giving honour and respect to older people, and avoiding hypocrisy".

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka depicts the morals of the Yoruba people through his characters in the play. Sidi exhibits this morality when she refuses to release the bucket of water she is carrying on her head to Lakunle who wants to relieve her of the load. The load represents commitment to hard work and, therefore, integrity. There is integrity in hard work. Sidi does not want to be deprived of this integrity which is key to her Yoruba culture. He sees her as an illiterate girl while she looks at his action as a shameful act because in Yoruba culture, it is part of the responsibility of a woman to fetch and carry loads on the head. Lakunle condemns her as it is not a civilized way of carrying loads.

LAKUNLE: "Let me take it.

SIDI: No.

LAKUNLE: Let me. (Seizes the pail"

SIDI: ... Have you no shame? (Soyinka 1)

Soyinka also portrays Yoruba morality through the same character, Sidi, in another instance when she lost her virginity to Baroka. Lakunle willingly accept to marry her, but she refuses to marry him.

LAKUNLE: Dear Sidi, we shall forget the past.

But you will agree, it is only fair

That we forget the bride-price totally

Since you no longer can be called a maid.  
(Soyinka 60)

Sidi turns down his marriage proposal because of her moral stand that a woman is bound to the man that deflowers her based on her words:

SIDI: "Marry who...? You though...

Did you really think that you, and I...

Why, did you think that after him,

I could endure the touch of another man?"  
(Soyinka 63)

According to Familusi (2012), "chastity before marriage, on the part of the woman, is essential. A woman who is not virtuous in marriage is a disgrace not only to herself, but also to members of her family. It follows that virginity is a cherished virtue in Yoruba society. This practice has become outdated due to the influence of western culture as virginity is no longer publicly celebrated, and its loss has ceased to be a thing of disgrace". In the play, Soyinka portrays the Yoruba culture of ethics and morality. Morality is the reason why Sidi marries Baroka even after he deceived her into his bed. It is also why she rejects Lakunle's proposal after she lost her virginity to Baroka. Yoruba culture requires women to live with one man, especially the man to whom they lost their virginity. It is taboo and against their culture for women to court more than one man. Familusi (2012) supports this point in explaining that the Yoruba woman is duty bound to be faithful to her husband. "A Yoruba proverb says: *A k ii moko omo tan, ka tunmale omo* meaning it is not proper to know one's daughter's husband and her concubine.

Sidi is a representative of the Yoruba ethical and moral life in the play. This moral value makes a woman to remain a virgin until her wedding day. Sidi maintains her virginity until she falls into Baroka's hands and eventually gets married to him.

### Procreation

The Yoruba people believe that human life is a continuous, starting from the spirits of the unborn child to the existence of a child to the spirits of departed ancestors. This makes a complete life cycle. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka identifies the reality of the invisible world of the gods; the spirit, the unborn and the dead. According to the Yoruba, the ancestors regulate the human life. He uses the characters of Sidi and Sadiku to live out the essentiality of the religious Yoruba worldview. In the Yoruba mind, the ancestors, the living and the unborn are forces that revolve and give meaning to human life. Thus, bearing a child after marriage is a very significant part of the Yoruba culture. According to Ngcobo (2015: 19), marriage among Africans is mainly an institution for control of procreation. Every woman is encouraged to marry

and bear children in order to express her womanhood to the full. The basis of marriage among Africans implies the transfer of a woman's fertility to the husband's family group.

In the Yoruba worldview, child bearing makes a complete life cycle. Lakunle is the character in the play who does not see child bearing and other Yoruba cultural beliefs as necessary in marriage due to the influence of western culture which overrides his Yoruba culture; the society, therefore, refers to him as a mentally derailed being. Soyinka presents him as someone who is in a state of confusion in between the two cultures and cannot use his newly acquired Western culture in a way that will benefit his society; instead, he challenges the Yoruba tradition of child bearing.

In his conversation with Sidi, his lover, he promises her that she does not need to undergo the process of child bearing as he is not getting married to her to bear children.

LAKUNLE: "Sidi, I do not seek a wife  
To fetch and carry,  
To cook and scrub,  
To bring forth children by the gross...

SIDI: Heaven forgive you! Do you now scorn

Child-bearing in a wife? (Soyinka 7 and 8)

To Lakunle, child bearing is not important according to his new belief, which he uses against his Yoruba culture. According to Alaba (2004) as quoted by Ojo (2014), the primary purpose of marriage among the Yoruba people is to sustain Yoruba race through legitimate and responsible procreation. Sidi, an archetypal character of Yoruba culture, seeks to preserve her cultural heritage and rebukes him sharply because child bearing makes a complete family life and generational continuity. Sadiku also portrays the essentiality of child bearing in the family life of the Yoruba people when she prays for Sidi for her to give birth to children as she decides to marry Baroka:

SADIKU: "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." (Soyinka 64)

### Songs and Dance

For the Yoruba of western Nigeria, music is an integral and all-pervasive part of their cul-

ture. Without it, "the people cannot properly create poetry, record history, educate children, celebrate at festivals, praise or abuse, entertain, marry, or even die" (Colin 2004). Songs and dance in Yoruba land are means of communication such as, expression of joy, storytelling and praise of influential people and deities. According to Omojola (2012:3), "music in traditional Nigerian societies provides an efficient means through which community-shared values and skills are transmitted from one generation to another". In traditional Yoruba music, social meaning is communicated when structural elements are interpreted within social situations in which they are performed. Even when they are not performed within specific social situations, musical performances in Yoruba land still arouse specific feelings and reinforce social values usually associated with their traditional contexts of performance.

Soyinka draws on Yoruba interpretation of life through music in the play and through the dance of the lost travellers by, Sidi, Lankule and Sadiku. The play starts with the dances of Sidi, Lakunle and other village girls and miming of the lost traveller. A dance for the initial appearance of the photographer to the village who takes the photograph of Sidi and Baroka to print a magazine is also performed. The play also tells of Lakunle's performance of a dance to Sidi and Sadiku during their discussion of the construction of the railway line from the nearest village to Ilujinle before Baroka bribes the surveyor. Similarly, as a show of excitement, Sadiku dances to mock Baroka when she heard of the loss of his manhood and when she further reveals the secret to Sidi and Lakunle.

SADIKU: Ask no questions my girl. Just join my victory dance. (Soyinka 33)

Another instance of the use of miming dance in the play is during the wrestling match between the wrestler and Baroka. Baroka mimes the wrestling stages to excite Sidi of his potency, and that is why he defeats the wrestler at the end of the game. She breaks into a kind of shoulder dance and sings of his victory. At the end of the play, the playwright uses song and dance to show Sidi's acceptance to marry Baroka, an active man full of vigour.

SIDI: Now bless my wordly goods.

Come, sing to me of seeds

Of children, sired of the lion stock.

*Mo te'ni. Mo te'ni.*

*Mo te'ni. Mo te'ni.*  
*Sun mo mi, we mo mi*  
*Sun mo mi, fa mo mi*  
*Yarabi lo m'eyi t'o le d'omo* ( Soyinka 64)

The interpretation is:

I have spread my mat, I have spread my mat  
 I have spread my mat, I have spread my mat  
 Come close to me, curdle me  
 Come close to me, entwine me  
 Only God knows which moment will produce  
 a child

The Yorubas are a singing people. Their songs are permeated with their beliefs and they employ songs in every sphere of their lives, in worship, in naming ceremonies, in weddings, in funerals, in wrestling, in cultivating the farm, in working, in going to war, in praising the rulers, in rocking babies to sleep and in many other activities. Such songs are usually accompanied by drumming and dancing (Awolalu et al. 2005 cited by Omobola 2014). Music and dance go hand-in-hand in Yoruba culture”.

Song, as part of a multi-media experience, is fundamental to the Yoruba culture. Songs and dance are highly cherished in Yoruba culture, used at the social gathering, naming ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, festive periods and also in ancestral worship. The ancestral worshippers sing and dance to praise their gods. Furthermore, societal norms and values are communicated through indigenous song, mime and dance.

### **Belief in Divinity (Devine Being)**

Yoruba people are spiritually-minded people. Among the religious system of the Yoruba people, as pointed out in the play, are the beliefs in divinities, spirits and ancestral worship, which are shown in the form of rituals and sacrifices. They believe that the divine plays an important role in their daily living. According to Adejumo (2010), religion permeated man's everyday life, moulding morals of the society and keeping man in harmony with his environment. Gods like Ogun and Sango are believed to always influence the lives of the people such that people make oath on the Yoruba pantheon of gods to confirm them right or wrong. Yoruba people believe that Ogun, being the god of iron, is a very fearful god. Sango, on the other hand, is the god of thunder and lightning. This is seen when Sadiku praises Sango when she mocks Baroka for the loss of his manhood:

SADIKU: Ask no questions my girl. Just join my victory dance.

Oh Sango my lord, who of us possessed your lightning

And ran like fire through that lion's tail (Soyinka 33)

Ogun punishes the offender and takes vengeance against the erring one. In Yoruba courts, people swear to give truthful testimony by kissing a machete consecrated to Ogun. Lugira (2009) confirms this point, “Ogun is an associate of god who ranks high in the Yoruba pantheon. He is the divinity of war and iron. He is as hard and tough as steel, and all iron and steel are his spiritual possessions. He rules over oath, covenant-making and cementing of pacts. In local courts, instead of swearing to speak the truth and nothing but the truth by holding the Bible or Quran, Yoruba people take oaths by kissing a piece of iron, usually a machete, in recognition of Ogun's spiritual authority.” In the play, a girl swears by the god of Ogun in her conversation with Sidi to attest to the truth about the news of Sidi's photograph in a recently published western magazine:

SIDI: Is that the truth? Swear! Ask Ogun to Strike you dead.

GIRL: Ogun strike me dead if I lie. (Soyinka 11)

The Yoruba gods are fierce in anger and strike whoever offends them. This reflects in their prayer. In another instance, Sadiku also prays to the god of Sango for the restoration of Sidi's intellect when she speaks strange words, and according to her belief, Sidi has offended the angry gods unknowingly.

This belief is significant in the life of the Yoruba people because it brings about unity in the society; it also makes people to speak the truth as well as to assume good behaviour since a wrong behaviour provokes the gods into anger, and they can strike the offender. Likewise, Yoruba gods identify with human beings. The gods intervene and influence human struggle and are responsible for their misfortune and offer solution to it. Soyinka exemplifies this in the play where he tells of how the actions of human and the gods mutually influence each other, as seen in the conversation between Baroka and Sadiku.

BAROKA: “The time has come when I can fool myself

No more. I am no man, Sadiku. My manhood Ended near a week ago.

SADIKU: The gods forbid!  
 The gods must have mercy yet  
 BAROKA: "My veins of life run dry, my  
 manhood gone!  
 Sango bear witness!" (Soyinka 29)  
 Furthermore, Lakunle urges Sango not to  
 interfere in his misfortune when he realises  
 that Sidi lost her virginity to his enemy:  
 LAKUNLE: Let Sango and his lightning keep  
 out of this. It  
 Is my cross (Soyinka 60)

Furthermore, according to the Yoruba people, some occupations have a link with the worship and belief in Ogun. Ogun is principally believed to be the deity in charge of iron, which is iron for working and iron implements, weaponry; hence, he is the patron of blacksmiths, hunters and warriors and all who use metal in their occupations. Ogun is, however, known to be flexible and adaptive, changing and modernizing with society. In modern times, he has become the patron of motor vehicle mechanics and drivers (Abiola et al. 2010).

According to Courlander (1973: 23), in Yoruba land "no hunter goes on a hunting expedition without giving offering to Ogun or paying due regard; no soldier goes to war without paying homage to Ogun; no truck driver considers himself safe until an offering is made to Ogun. All workers of steel and iron look up to Ogun for protection against accidents or for help in their work. If Ogun is neglected, he can cause very bad accidents and bloody battles. To avoid catastrophes, offerings to propitiate Ogun are offered by Yorubas. In this way, Ogun is seen as a symbol of the superior one, the conquering one".

In Yoruba society, Sango (god of thunder) and Ogun (god of Iron) are known to be prominent gods who carry out punishment against unlawful acts. Every Yoruba man or woman fears the two gods. Abiodun (2004) argues that prior to the influence of Western culture, the Yoruba mostly avoided criminal acts because of the fear of being destroyed by the gods. Such fear deterred most of them from engaging in criminal acts. Sometimes, the gods strike the offender with madness, death or any other evil, even before such an offender is known and brought before the traditional court. However, with modernization and westernization that the Yoruba people had experienced, less emphasis has been placed on these two gods as agents of supernatural punishment. The aesthetic of Yoruba

culture and religion in their belief in deities is expressed in the words of Sofola (1994) stating that the Yoruba culture, particularly the non-material aspects, the humane, moralistic, humanistic and spiritual values are seen as superior, more meaningful, and more beneficial, in terms of salvaging the twentieth century world of man's inhumanity to man, greed, avarice heartless acquisitiveness and materialism.

### The Culture of Drumming

The activity of drummers is also a significant part of the Yoruba cultural practice that Soyinka presents in the play. According to Colin (2004), drumming, as one of the Yoruba traditions, provides drummers with a repository of cultural knowledge and practices from which to draw, while at the same time, offering them a creative outlet capable of reshaping and redefining those very same traditions. Drumming is a profession in the Yoruba land, and the drummers speak to the people through drums, and people readily understand. Colin (2004) supports this thus: "The technique employed in Yoruba drumming enables a drummer of sufficient skill and dexterity to literally "talk" with his drum. This is possible because Yoruba is a tonal language, and the specific drums used by Yoruba drummers allow them to mimic the tonal utterances in order to approximate actual speech." The drummers make the society interesting and lively; they drum to praise people at home, especially at ceremonies and so on, and they are usually rewarded with gifts or money. Soyinka shows this through the character of Sadiku:

SADIKU: Have you any money?  
 Don't be a miser. Will you let them go without?  
 Giving you a special performance?

LAKUNLE: If you think I care for their obscenity...

SADIKU: Come on, school teacher. They'll expect it of you ... the man 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... (Soyinka 56 and 57)

Lakunle did not want to give money to the drummers because he is not interested in all the aspects of the Yoruba culture, but Sadiku dips her hand into his pocket and brings out money which she gives to the drummers. They drum to her praise.

Drumming is significant because it plays an important role in physical, emotional, spiritual and communal life of the Yoruba people and their communities. As an essential part of Yoruba culture, drumming acts as a musical bridge between humans and gods, enabling the worshippers to appeal to the gods for assistance and intervention in their daily lives (Akpabot 2015). The drummers play a crucial role in the religious experience of the Yoruba people and act as agents of cultural transmission through their drumming traditions and practices and by beating drums of Yoruba origin. Drummers perform to celebrate, mourn, entertain, praise and communicate during relevant situations like birth, death, planting, harvesting, peace and war situations.

### The Culture of Bride Price

Bride price is an important cultural practise that has great significant implication among the Yoruba people and in Africa generally. As a common practice in Africa, payment of bride price is believed to be sacred, symbolic and has cultural and religious implication. Bride price, which can be in monetary or in the form of goods, is given to the family of the bride by the bridegroom and his family before or during wedding ceremony. According to Farahmandian (2012), bride price is money or property given by the bridegroom to the family of his bride. Big bride price is regarded as a great honour to the bride and if a girl marries without the price it is assumed that she is not a virgin or she is not worthy to marry. Soyinka points out the conflict between western and African culture through the character of Lakunle who, in the play, is presented as being confused with the Western ideas. He disagrees with paying the bride price when he proposes to Sidi. He sees the payment of bride price as an old Yoruba culture which should be abolished. He believes that the Western idea should supersede the old Yoruba culture. He, therefore, seeks to turn the village of Ilujinle to a westernized village by changing all the Yoruba cultural beliefs to Western ideas. Sidi, who upholds strongly her Yoruba culture, refuses to marry Lakunle without paying her bride price as this idea is against her cultural belief. She will not give herself cheaply to Lakunle. She is also aware that without payment of bride price, the community will see her as a maid without honour.

SIDI: I shall marry you today, next week  
Or any day you name.  
But my bride-price must first be paid  
Aha, now you turn away.  
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. (Soyinka 7)  
Sidi is a virgin and a beautiful Yoruba girl  
who will not yield to Lakunle's persuasion except  
if he pays her bride price to honour her. She  
loves Lakunle but loves and respects her culture  
much more; that is why she insists on getting  
the bride price before they get married.  
SIDI: They will say I was no virgin  
That I was forced to sell my shame  
And marry you without a price.  
LAKUNLE: An ignoble custom, infamous,  
ignominious  
Shaming our heritage before the world.  
(Soyinka, 7)

Arowolaju (2005:12) posits that "bride-price is traditionally or culturally required of a man for the woman. It is a social and family dishonour and disgrace for a bride not to be found as a virgin on the night of the wedding when the marriage is traditionally consummated. This means that premarital intimacy or intercourse is treated as a social taboo or even an abomination by the Yoruba, which no one thinks of committing".

The rebuke of Lakunle by Sidi, when he tries to kiss and cuddle her, is a contradiction to her culture and her reaction further restates the importance of the payment of bride price. Olarinmoye (2013) states that "the bride price is an instrument to ratify a marriage. It is one of the highest honours confirming a bride's value and womanhood giving a husband the full rights to the sexual, economic or procreative powers of his wife".

LAKUNLE: Bush-girl you are, bush-girl  
you'll always be;  
Uncivilized and primitive- bush-girl!  
I kissed you as all educated men-  
And Christians- kiss their wives.  
It is a way of civilized romance.  
SIDI: A way you mean, to avoid  
Payment of lawful bride-price  
A cheating way, mean and miserly. (Soyinka 9)  
The significance of this cultural practise to  
the Yoruba people cannot be over-emphasized.  
Bride price is given to the family of the bride in



gratitude of her nurturing from infancy to maturity. Payment of the bride price confirms the bridegroom as the legal owner of the bride and comes along with parental blessing for a fruitful union. It demonstrates the ability of the man to continue to take care of their daughter as they begin life's journey together. Women whose bride prices are not paid before marriage often feel cheated and the man considered a cheat. A marriage is further considered illegal and incomplete when the bride price is still outstanding, and until the man does the right thing, the woman's family will not accept him as an in-law.

### The Practise of Polygamy

Polygamy is a significant feature of the Yoruba cultural life, which is traditionally acceptable. It is a common practice among the Yoruba people. It allows men to marry more than one wife as he desires, provided he can provide for them. Horton (1993) notes that the marriage customs of the Yorubas permit polygamy and incestuous marriages, as well as the practice of marrying a dead male relative's widow and adopting his children. The traditional Yoruba society is agrarian in nature, which requires a large output of labour, this, the father gets from the number of wives he marries and the number of children he has. According to Falola (2001), a large family provides the labour necessary for the maintenance and growth of the business for those in agrarian production. He adds that the tradition allows widow inheritance, in which a man marries the widow of a deceased brother. This implies that when a married man dies, his younger brother has the right to remarry any of the brother's wives, if he wishes. This practice is of significance because it ensures that the woman and her children are under care, economically and socially. Omobola (2014) stated that the "Yoruba people did not practice polygamy in the sense that it is understood today. A man had more than one wife usually because of his office, for instance, the king. At other times, rich and successful farmers take on more than one wife for reasons of manpower to keep up the workload on the farms. In addition, brothers take on their deceased brother's widow because she remains a member of the family. Meanwhile, to have children by the widow is optional and oftentimes decided by the entire family".

Soyinka portrays this Yoruba culture in the play using the character of Sadiku, Baroka's head wife, when she ridicules Baroka's loss of manhood. She recalls how his father also lost his manhood before his death after which she married Baroka and became his senior wife.

SADIKU: So we did for you too did we? We did for you in the end.

A- ya-ya-ya ... we women undid you in the end. I was

there when it happened to your father, the great Okiki. I did for him,

I, the youngest and freshest of the wives. I killed him with my strength. (Soyinka 32)

Sadiku is a good representative of this Yoruba tradition. She understands her role within the polygamous setup, which is why she tries to woo Sidi, the village girl, for her husband. According to custom, the senior wife is responsible for initiating the process of getting a new wife for her husband. In most cases, this is so because the senior wife can choose the woman with the right temperament for the family. Sidi rejects his proposal because it is coming after her fame is known to the world. Sadiku then reminds her of the benefit of being another wife to the Bale (Chief).

SADIKU: Sidi, have you considered what a 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 palace;

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. (Soyinka 20)

Sadiku explains the benefit of wife inheritance to Sidi; whenever the Bale dies, the new

Bale inherits the wives of the deceased, and his last wife will be the head wife of the new Bale and receive all glory of the family.

Specifically, polygamy is significant such that the wives and the children, collectively, can contribute to the progress of farm work. This ensures that widows are under economic protection in the family, which keeps the society in peace and harmony.

### **The Family Life**

Soyinka praises the traditional Yoruba life and condemns individualism. The Yoruba traditional family system plays significant roles in all spheres of life in the society. The family is the most sacred and significant institution to the Yoruba, who are child-oriented, ruled by the elderly and controlled by adults. The family is an effective unit of political control, religious affiliation, resource allocation and assurance of safety. It is also the most effective agent of socialization. The family teaches the first lessons in discipline, personal gratitude and affection (Ojo 2014). Yoruba family, like every other family in the world, comprises the father, mother and children. Each position has defined household duties and plays a significant role in social control such as father and mother motivating children to conform to societal norms and values. Every individual in indigenous Yoruba setting belongs to a family and has the responsibility of protecting the image of the family by not performing shameful acts in the society. The Yoruba people are guided by social values such as religion, morals, economics, politics and so on. The characteristics of the Yoruba social values include religiosity, respect for authority and hospitality. Each family exposes their children to the virtues of communal life also the societal norms and values. These guide them in exhibiting positive conducts that promote and protect the good image of the family and eschew negative activities that can mar it. The Yoruba people control social menace in the society through norms and values which characterize their cultural heritage. Any member of a family who goes against the accepted norms will be disgraced in the society. The Yoruba family ties are strong in regulating the behaviour of its members and ensuring adequate provision of social security and justice (Okunola et al. 2012). Adejumo (2010) explains that in the Yoruba society, satire is a form of

weapon for public ridicule used among the Yoruba to checkmate erring members of the society. It is also used as a form of traditional judicial system. The pre-colonial traditional period was non-violent, and western intrusion battered the Yoruba traditional family system. In the Yoruba community, societal norms and values are highly honoured. Parents, as well as the mass media, educate children to uphold the right social values of good behaviour, hard work and so on, as this is the way to succeed in life.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study views culture and religion as vital to human existence. The study reveals the cultural and religious practises of the Yoruba people that they hold in high esteem and their significance and serves as a corrective response to the Yoruba people's post-colonial assimilation of western cultural practices at the expense of their indigenous way of life. The conventions of bride price, moral obligation of women and procreation promotes good conduct and ethics unites the family and the society at large. *The Lion and the Jewel* answers questions that pertain to cultural identity with its related themes, and motivates the need to identify, redeem and revive the indispensable priceless values of the Yoruba that is fading. Soyinka, a seasoned Nigerian African playwright has showcased the fact that his life and background provides a bank of knowledge to the blossoming field of African literature. It is now an indisputable fact that he does not only fraternise with his Yoruba roots, but also stands tall. He sees the need to preserve the progressive part of Yoruba culture and religion and implant with them the best from western culture.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The humanist essence of Nigerian culture should be maintained and cherished in the attempt to create harmony and peaceful coexistence in the society. As exemplified by the playwright, the culture and tradition of the people remains part of their life and adds value to the society, and any attempt to disrupt this will lead to a total destabilization of the social system. Thus, the need to revitalise, redeem and revive the indispensable priceless values of the Yoruba that is fading. Soyinka has demonstrated

through his writing that writers can act as vanguards of society's culture and values. In an age where the cultural norms of Yoruba society is facing extinction, Soyinka has used literature not only to promote the cultural norms and values but also to attempt a reversal of the cultural decadence that has taken place in Yoruba's post-colonial period. The Yoruba cultural values that respect dignity of humanity are to be continued. Western values with the application of some basic traditional values will solve deep rooted problems in the present Nigerian society.

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