

The Dynamics of Tradition and Complexity in Ahmed Yerima's *Ajidewe*

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Abstract

Ahmed Yerima's Ajidewe delve into the complexities of tradition and its motivating factors in Nigerian societies. The play explores the idea of cultural heritage and how it affects the lives of individuals within their immediate communities. Through the use of various literary techniques, Yerima highlights the intricacies involved in preserving tradition, which can sometimes be challenging and even oppressive. This paper will examine the motivations behind the traditions depicted in Yerima's Ajidewe and explore how it impacts the characters and their actions. Cultural criticism and cultural materialism theories are the foundations of the theory. Traditions are not faultless. These traditions' complexity, meanwhile, has not received enough research. Unquestionably, some traditions have the potential to be considered barbaric because they violate people's rights and occasionally sacrifice human lives for their culture. Whether a life is lost or not, it's vital to realise that a lot is occurring when tradition is being upheld. It also challenges prevailing cultural narratives and looks at complex facts and assumptions buried in people's traditions. It emphasises what a given culture considers to be traditional or valuable qualities.

Keywords: *motivating factors, Nigerian societies, cultural heritage, literary techniques, cultural criticism.*

Introduction

Every community, group, or thing has developed with certain identities or ways of living, which are frequently referred to as culture. For culture to be genuinely a comprehensive way of life, it must adhere to a predetermined standard or code of behaviour that is ingrained in the customs, traditions, values, and norms of the society. This distinguishes African societies and is a highly valued feature because of its significant contributions to improving individuals and communities. That is, there is an acceptable code of behaviour every member of the community is expected to exhibit; the requirement in traditional cultures is conduct that fosters the growth

and development of the society. So, African societies pass traditions and practices down orally from one generation to the next (Green, 1997). This distinguishes one group of people from the others and makes them unique. Every group of people has its distinctive customs. Any deviation or waywardness is always punished by isolating the offender, and in the most severe circumstances, it results in the death penalty.

A people's beliefs, settlement patterns, greetings, language, artistic history, and behavioural patterns are all included in their traditions and customs. The belief that most African nations' traditions are intrinsically sacred, as opposed to secular, and that various religious forms and symbols surround them is one of their defining characteristics. This explains why most Nigerians, whether they reside in urban areas or the diaspora, go back to their homes to connect with their communities, especially around traditional holidays.

Tradition and custom have various definitions, just like many other generic concepts, and academics do not generally agree on which definition is the most accurate. The idea encompasses several interconnected notions, with the overarching notion being that tradition refers to practices, objects, or beliefs that were carried out or believed in the past, had their origins there, and were then passed down through time by being taught by one generation to the next (Green 1997). Swidler et al (2015) assert that tradition can also refer to prehistoric ideas or practices that have existed for ages but whose origins are forgotten or enigmatic. Traditions were initially transmitted verbally, without the necessity for a written system. Alliteration and rhyme are two poetic elements that can help in this process. The stories that have been saved in this way are also referred to as tradition or as a component of an oral tradition. Nonetheless, even these customs are thought to have started (or been "created" by humans) at some point.

Traditions are frequently assumed to be long-standing, unchangeable, and extremely significant, even if they may occasionally be considerably less "natural" than is assumed. For a practice, belief, or thing to be considered traditional, it is assumed that at least two transmissions must occur over three generations (Gideons, 2003). Traditions can be modified to meet the demands of the time, and the modifications can become accepted as an intrinsic part of the original tradition.

Similar to (Gideons, 2003), Green (1997) stressed that some traditions were consciously constructed for a variety of purposes, typically to emphasise or enhance the relevance of a particular institution.

Literature Review

Several scholars have examined literature relevant to the concept of traditions and its intricacies. Guerra, L. A. (2015) examines the ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre, Richard Rorty, and Gianni Vattimo, three prominent philosophers, in an article on the concept of tradition. Although each philosopher has a different perspective on the matter, the author claims that all three emphasise how important tradition is for guiding our perception of the present. A helpful summary of the main discussions and arguments on this subject is provided in the article. Furthermore, Ritschl, A. (2016) explores the concept of living tradition, drawing on New Testament theology and Christian philosophy. According to the author, tradition is responsive to changing circumstances and is not static but rather dynamic. The book thoroughly investigates the dynamics and antecedents of tradition in the Christian setting.

In an article, Rahman, M. M. (2013), examines the relationship between the Sufi tradition and modernity. The author asserts that rather than being in opposition to modernity, the Sufi tradition offers a way to harmonise contemporary with tradition. This article thoroughly investigates the Sufi tradition using various primary and secondary sources. The influence of the Soviet Union on religious tradition and practice in the area is examined in Swidler, L. E., & Mojzes, P. (Eds.). (2015). The editors contend that despite efforts to repress religion, the Soviet Union fostered religious traditions by requiring them to adjust and change in response to the country's shifting environment. The book offers a distinctive viewpoint on how tradition influences social and political structures.

Tradition as a Driving Force: Reviewing Literature on Yoruba Culture and Beliefs

The breadth of Akintoye's work is its greatest asset. The author dives deeply into Yoruba history, providing a wealth of information for the reader. The narrative is further enhanced and enriched by the use of sources and oral traditions. In the end, the book considerably advances our knowledge of Yoruba civilisation and culture.

There are several shortcomings in Akintoye's work, nevertheless. The book's chapters are lengthy and cover a lot of information, making them complicated to understand fully. Although the author considers that foreign influences significantly impacted Yoruba history, there isn't much discussion of how these influences affected Yoruba culture and society. The work of Akintoye demonstrates significant background information that is crucial for the current research. Many of the customs that are shown in Yerima's plays have their roots and importance clarified by the author's thorough study of Yoruba culture. Anyone interested in Yoruba culture

and the history of West Africa should study Akintoye's "A History of the Yoruba People." Although it may have certain flaws, the work's thoroughness and contribution to the literature on Yoruba civilisation make it an invaluable tool for both scholars and students.

Furthermore, Adewale and Odejinmi (2013) explore the Yoruba cosmology and traditional beliefs, highlighting their significance in shaping cultural practices, moral values, and social order. The authors employ a philosophical lens to analyse the cultural tenets, highlight their underlying principles, and show how they shape the Yoruba way of life. They cite numerous Yoruba intellectuals, including Wande Abimbola, who has significantly advanced the study of Yoruba religion and culture. The paper's thorough examination of Yoruba culture, which looks at numerous parts of the culture in depth, is one of its strong points. The authors highlight the interaction between the spiritual and physical worlds to create a broader knowledge of Yoruba cosmology. Additionally, they look at the ethical principles that guide Yoruba society, including respect, generosity, and communalism. The writers demonstrate how these ideals are represented in the language, proverbs, and music of the Yoruba people. Another strength of the paper is the authors' ability to present the Yoruba culture through a philosophical lens. They emphasise the fundamental ideas behind numerous customs and beliefs, demonstrating how they add to the cohesion of Yoruba culture as a whole.

Toyin Falola's essay titled "Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies" (1998) also thoroughly analyses the origins and circumstances surrounding violence in Nigeria. The complicated interaction between religious politics and secular ideas is examined in this essay, along with how it has influenced the rise of violence in Nigeria throughout time. Falola uses a historical and analytical methodology for the investigation. To offer an exhaustive investigation of the several causes that have resulted in the rise in violence in Nigeria, he investigates both primary and secondary sources, including official records, the media, and academic publications. The paper's strength is its thorough evaluation of the contextual and historical aspects of the recent surge in violence in Nigeria. Falola looks at how colonialism, the Nigerian Civil War, the rise of Islamic extremism, economic disparity, corruption, and other factors have affected Nigerian society. Through his investigation, Falola gives readers a comprehensive knowledge of the intricate variables that have contributed to the escalation of violence in Nigeria through his investigation. The paper does, however, have significant drawbacks. The fact that the study nearly solely discusses the killing in northern Nigeria is one of its biggest shortcomings. Even though the Niger Delta has gone through some

of the most horrific violence in Nigeria, the report fails to adequately discuss the severe bloodshed that also took place there.

The essay by Awolalu, "Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites," offers a thorough investigation of Yoruba traditional religious beliefs and rituals about sacrifices. Reading the paper's analysis on the role of corruption and religious politics in Nigerian society may help readers better understand some of the motivations behind the characters' actions and viewpoints. One strength of Awolalu's paper is its comprehensive and detailed analysis of Yoruba sacrificial rites. The many sacrifices, their symbolic significance, and the varied roles played by the participants are all thoroughly explained by him. Awolalu also highlights the relevance of these rites as indicators of identity and community by situating them within the larger social, cultural, and historical settings of Yoruba society. The paper's emphasis on the theoretical and conceptual rather than the actual performance of Yoruba sacrificial ceremonies is one of its limitations, too. While Awolalu gives some hints as to how sacrifices are carried out in actual practice, he does not give a thorough description of the ceremonies themselves.

Nonetheless, the paper remains relevant and significant to contemporary studies of African traditional religions and their impact on literature and culture. In exploring the intricacies of Yoruba beliefs and practices related to sacrifices, Awolalu provides a framework for understanding the cultural and symbolic significance of these aspects of tradition. This framework may be applied to the analysis of works of literature, such as Ahmed Yerima's *Akudaaya* and *Ajidewe*, which draw heavily on Yoruba culture and religious practices. The paper by Falola (1998) explores the intricate Yoruba religious creation narratives. The methodology employed in this paper is qualitative research. The author utilises a thematic analysis approach to explore the Yoruba religious creation narratives. The methodology involves the selection of Yoruba creation stories and analysing them to identify recurring themes, motifs, and patterns.

Falola (1998) introduced the Yoruba religion and its belief system. The paper examines the Yoruba creation stories and their different interpretations. The author analyses the Yoruba religious worldviews by identifying the different roles that the divinities play in the creation story. The paper examines the Yoruba creation story in comparison with the biblical account of creation. With a focus on the opposing viewpoints of the two religious traditions, the author notes the similarities and discrepancies between the two creation accounts. As these stories continue to influence Yoruba people's beliefs, values, and practices now, Falola (1998) shows

how these stories are still important today. The author's capacity to offer an in-depth analysis of the Yoruba creation stories is one of this essay's merits. Falola (1998) utilises a comparative approach and highlights the unique features and differences between the Yoruba creation stories and the biblical account of creation. In this extensive and in-depth paper, the author critically analyses the thematic substance of the Yoruba creation tale. One of the paper's weaknesses is its primary focus on the Yoruba creation tale and a lack of a broader perspective on other African creation stories. The origin myths of other African societies and how they compare and contrast with those of Yoruba culture could have been the subject of a more thorough analysis. Additionally, the paper does not identify the different interpretations of Yoruba creation stories by different scholars and religious practitioners.

The paper's relevance to the current study is that it provides insights into the Yoruba religious worldviews, beliefs, and practices. The traditional beliefs and practices of the Yoruba people have significantly influenced their literature, including plays such as *Ajidewe*. The paper's analysis of the Yoruba creation story provides a broader understanding of the worldview that informs Yerima's work.

Intricacies as Motivated by Tradition in *Ajidewe*

This paper explores the intricacies presented in the selected text, *Ajidewe* and reflects present-day Nigerian society. The paper aims to gain insight into Nigerian society's complex dynamics and challenges by examining these intricacies. Specifically, we will analyse how the characters in *Ajidewe* navigate and challenge the intricacies present in present-day Nigerian society. The analysis to be carried out and will reveal the intricacies in *Ajidewe* that shed light on the complex facets of contemporary Nigerian society by closely examining the text. Various factors, including power relations, social standards, and cultural practices, shape individuals' and groups' lives. We can better grasp the nuances and complexity of modern Nigerian society by critically evaluating these subtleties.

Furthermore, this analysis allows us to explore how the characters in *Ajidewe* navigate and respond to these intricacies. We can learn more about the difficulties individuals encounter and the methods they use to negotiate the complexities of contemporary Nigerian society by looking at their behaviours, decisions, and interactions. In the end, this chapter seeks to advance knowledge of the complexities of contemporary Nigerian society as depicted in *Ajidewe*. Understanding these complexities will help us better understand the difficulties, chances, and possibilities for progress in the context of modern Nigeria.

Motivated Intricacies in *Ajidewe*

Motivated intricacies in tradition refer to the underlying reasons and complexities that drive individuals or communities to adhere to and perpetuate traditional practices, customs, or beliefs. These nuances might differ across many cultures, groups, and circumstances; thus, comprehending them necessitates a thorough investigation of the causes and elements that contribute to the maintenance and continuance of tradition.

In this book, Bruce L. Benson (2011) studies how tradition shapes social order and explains why people cling to traditional practices and standards. He argues that tradition serves as a mechanism for coordinating human behaviour and maintaining social stability. Benson's work provides valuable insights into the motivations that drive individuals and communities to uphold tradition. He highlights the importance of social norms and customary practices in fostering cooperation, resolving conflicts, and preserving cultural identity. By analysing various case studies and historical examples, Benson demonstrates how tradition can serve as a powerful force in shaping human behaviour and societal structures.

A scenario presented in *Ajidewe*, with Shamu expressing concerns about the sacrifice of innocent lives to prolong Kabiyesi's life, reflects the intricacies of tradition within the play. Shamu's statement highlights the complexities and moral dilemmas that arise from traditional practices in the play, *Ajidewe*.

Shamu: No. We are not children. We know what it means to say that Kabiyesi does not want to die. Another innocent soul must die in his place. Why? How many innocent lives must we take to prolong the life of Kabiyesi? The more we take, the longer he lives. Soon we shall have no one else to give, then he will turn on our children, then later on us. One moment, they announce Kabiyesi's death; the next moment, they say he is alive and well. In the eyes of the villagers, we who should protect them, not cage them up like fowls and chickens in a basket cage, where they can be picked up at Kabiyesi's will... (*Ajidewe*, 110)

The belief that sacrificing innocent lives can prolong Kabiyesi's life showcases the intertwining of spiritual beliefs and societal expectations. It portrays the weight placed on the preservation of the ruler's life and the lengths to which people are willing to go to ensure his survival.

The mention of innocent souls being sacrificed raises questions about the ethics and morality of such practices. It challenges the notion of sacrificing one life to save another and raises concerns about the value placed on individual lives within the community. This reflects the

tensions between tradition and human rights, as the sacrifice of innocent lives conflicts with contemporary notions of justice and equality. Shamu's questioning of the number of innocent lives that must be taken to prolong Kabiyesi's life highlights the potential consequences of such practices. It causes worry about the community's resources being depleted and the harm that might be done to its members. This picture captures the complications of tradition, where the community's welfare and safety may be jeopardised in the name of maintaining the ruler's life.

The mention of the villagers being caged up like fowls and chickens in a basket cage, subject to Kabiyesi's will, emphasises the power dynamics and control exerted by the ruler. It portrays the limitations and restrictions placed on the villagers, who should ideally be protected by their leaders. This portrayal reflects the complexities of tradition, where the authority of the ruler can sometimes lead to the oppression and subjugation of the community. Furthermore, Shamu expressing concerns about the potential consequences of Kabiyesi's actions reflects the intricacies of tradition. Shamu's statement reflects the complexities and uncertainties of destiny within the context of tradition in *Ajidewe*. The mention of destiny coming in a bowl of head, muddled, joggled, and unravelled with time highlights the belief in the unpredictable nature of fate. It portrays the idea that one's destiny unfolds gradually over time and cannot be easily controlled or manipulated.

Shamu: I wish we could pick and choose Kabiyesi, destiny comes in a bowl of head, muddled...joggled... unravelled only with time. By the time you spend half of eighty years, we will all be gone. Including Abore. Kabiyesi remember what happened to Oba Ikudeti in this same palace.... his judgement was here and in the land of the dead. For one hundred years, he laid in this palace, neither dead nor living, as punishment from Iku himself. May your story not be a similar one (*Ajidewe*, 118)

The mention of spending half of eighty years and the potential loss of the community members, including Abore, emphasises the transient nature of life and the passing of generations. It reflects the cyclical nature of existence and the inevitability of change. This portrayal reflects the complexities of tradition, where the passing of time brings both continuity and transformation within the community.

Shamu's reference to Oba Ikudeti's punishment in the same palace serves as a cautionary tale. It highlights the potential consequences of Kabiyesi's actions and the possibility of facing judgment and punishment from the spiritual realm. This portrayal reflects the belief in the

influence of supernatural forces and the idea that actions have consequences, even beyond the physical realm. The wish for Kabiyesi's story not to be a similar one to Oba Ikudeti's reflects the desire for a different outcome and a hope for a more favourable destiny. It portrays the complexities of tradition, where individuals navigate the potential pitfalls and challenges that come with their roles and responsibilities within the community.

Additionally, the character Kabiyesi questions why Olodumare (the supreme deity in Yoruba mythology) allows human beings to kill themselves and animals to eat each other, but does not permit Kabiyesi to take his son, even by a simple mistake. He says: Kabiyesi: But Olodumare permits human beings to kill themselves, animals eat themselves. Why can I not take my son, even by a simple mistake? (*Ajidewe*, 113). The play *Ajidewe* explores the complexities of Yoruba tradition and culture, highlighting the clash between traditional beliefs and modernity. Kabiyesi's question reflects the deep-rooted belief in the Yoruba tradition that everything that happens in the world is governed by Olodumare's will. This belief system is an integral part of Yoruba culture and shapes the characters' actions and decisions throughout the play.

Kabiyesi's frustration stems from the apparent inconsistency in Olodumare's actions. He questions why Olodumare allows certain acts of violence and harm to occur, such as humans killing themselves and animals preying on each other, but does not permit him to take his son, even if it was unintentional. This dilemma highlights the moral and ethical complexities within the Yoruba tradition. The situation also represents the principles of cultural materialism, a theoretical system that investigates the connection between culture and material circumstances. In this instance, Kabiyesi's query brings up the problem of how societal material realities affect cultural ideas and practices.

Kabiyesi's desire to take his son, even by mistake, suggests a conflict between traditional values and personal desires. It illustrates the conflict between a person's agency and the limitations placed on them by cultural standards. As people negotiate their duties within the Yoruba culture while simultaneously juggling their individual aims and desires, this conflict is a reflection of the larger societal conflict between tradition and modernity.

Furthermore, the scenario highlights the complexities of moral reasoning within the Yoruba tradition. Kabiyesi questions the moral justification behind Olodumare's actions, seeking to understand the underlying principles that govern the divine will. This reflects the Yoruba belief in the importance of moral reasoning and the constant negotiation between individual agency and divine authority.

Intricacies in present-day Nigerian society as portrayed in *Ajidewe*

The complexities of contemporary Nigerian society as depicted in literary works include the intricate and multifaceted facets of the nation's social, political, and cultural terrain. Nigerian literature is an effective tool for examining and critiquing many aspects of Nigerian society and for illuminating the struggles, aspirations, and experiences of its citizens. A variety of topics and challenges pertinent to modern-day Nigeria are frequently covered in Nigerian literature. The effects of colonialism and the war for independence, nation-building difficulties, political corruption, racial and religious tensions, gender injustice, economic inequities, and the experiences of ordinary Nigerians are among the topics that are explored by writers. These themes reflect the intricate tapestry of Nigerian society and provide a platform for critical engagement and social commentary.

Moreover, Nigerian writers employ various literary techniques and narrative strategies to capture the intricacies of their society. They may draw on oral storytelling traditions, incorporate local languages and dialects, and experiment with different narrative structures and styles. These choices not only reflect the diversity and richness of Nigerian culture but also contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of present-day Nigeria, as explained by Richard Bourne. Shamu's statement about Kabiyesi joining his ancestors and the ancestors being tired of waiting reflects the belief in ancestral reverence and the importance of ancestral connections within Nigerian society. Ancestral veneration is a significant aspect of Nigerian culture, where ancestors are believed to play a role in guiding and influencing the lives of their descendants. This portrayal reflects the continued importance of ancestral traditions and beliefs in present-day Nigeria.

Shamu: No. Kabiyesi must join his fathers who have been waiting forever. Otun say something that will make Kabiyesi know that the ancestors are tired of waiting for him in the land beyond. Even the living wants a change.

Otun: what can I say? Kabiyesi is king over life and death, now he has chosen life. we have no choice in this matter. we must agree. (*Ajidewe*, 109)

The mention of the living wanting a change suggests a desire for transformation and progress within the community. This resonates with the aspirations for change and development that exist within present-day Nigeria. It reflects the recognition of the need for societal advancements and the desire to move beyond stagnant or oppressive systems. Otun's acknowledgement of Kabiyesi's power over life and death and the necessity of agreeing with

his choice reflect the hierarchical structures and authority that exist within Nigerian society. It reflects the complexities of power dynamics and the influence of traditional leaders in decision-making processes. This portrayal reflects the ongoing discussions and challenges around governance, leadership, and the balance of power within present-day Nigeria.

Furthermore, Yerima uses Adifala to reflect the intricacies of tradition and how they can resonate with certain aspects of present-day Nigerian society. Yerima portrays this in the excerpt below;

Adifala: Deadly Consequences Kabiyesi. Ifa wants us to be more careful. many will die, some may even go mad with their minds twisted, Kabiyesi Olodumare is set to wash the dirty pots clean.

Kabiyesi: What is new in that? Olodumare always gives man too much Freedom to rewrite his destiny, then just when one is begging to soak himself in the new pleasures of life. He becomes angry and tries to wash the plate clean. let him, I am not worried. are you? if Olodumare now wants to be a dishwasher, let him. The Osun River has so much water. men use their pots, and they get dirty, they must be washed. And yet life does not stop there, does it? Men must die for the world to grow. My father had to go, so that I can sit on his throne. Do you understand me my people? (*Ajidewe*, 116)

Firstly, the mention of the Osun River and the need to wash dirty pots reflects the importance of cleanliness and purification in Nigerian culture. In modern Nigeria, rituals involving water, such as bathing and cleansing, are widespread and cleanliness is highly prized. This illustrates the continuing importance of conventional notions and methods of spiritual and physical purification.

A second point raised by the adage "Men must die for the world to grow" is the cyclical nature of life and death. This demonstrates the idea that generations are linked and that life is continuous. There is an understanding of the value of respecting ancestors and their role in directing and affecting the lives of their offspring in modern-day Nigeria. This portrayal reflects the continued importance of ancestral traditions and beliefs in present-day Nigeria.

In addition, the reference to the character's father needing to leave for them to take his throne emphasises succession and the transfer of power from one generation to the next. The problem of succession and leadership changes is a key element of societal and political dynamics in

modern Nigeria. This portrayal reflects the complexities of power dynamics and the influence of traditional leaders in decision-making processes. It also reflects the ongoing discussions and challenges around governance, leadership, and the balance of power within present-day Nigeria.

Moreover, the statement made by Kabiyesi highlights several themes that are relevant to contemporary Nigeria. Kabiyesi's proclamation of his kingship and the assertion that nothing can be denied to him reflect the power dynamics and hierarchical structures that exist within Nigerian society. It exhibits the power of conventional leaders and the faith in their legitimacy and decision-making skills. Traditional chieftains continue to exercise considerable power and participate in administration and decision-making in modern-day Nigeria.

Kabiyesi: This very minute, I am king. He who says what can I do, will see what I can do before his very eyes. I am king, and nothing can be denied me or my person. I have said what I want and I must get it. life is sweet and I must live it. Whether mere mortals or even the deities forbid my desire (*Ajidewe*, 116)

The statement also reflects the desire for personal fulfilment and the pursuit of one's desires, even in the face of opposition. This is in line with the modern Nigerian society's individualistic ambitions and pursuit of pleasure and success. It expresses the desire to lead a fulfilling life and the conviction in the value of self-determination.

Furthermore, mentioning mortals and deities forbidding Kabiyesi's desire highlights the tension between tradition and personal agency. It reflects the complexities of navigating societal expectations and personal desires within the context of tradition. In modern Nigeria, people frequently struggle to balance upholding cultural traditions and achieving their objectives. Traditional chieftains continue to exercise considerable power and participate in administration and decision-making in modern-day Nigeria.

Iya Mopo: He cannot die that easily. He tied his life to too many threads of different gods. Oba Durigbade. I hope you know that he is an Abiku? My mother treated his case when he was young. seven times he was born and seven times did he die. They had to beg him by making him wear a crown for the third year, until he decided to stay. Now that he has tasted life, like all greedy men, he does not want to die. we are fed up with him (*Ajidewe*, 135)

The mention of Kabiyesi's desire to stay alive after tasting life reflects the human desire for longevity and the fear of death. This resonates with the aspirations for a long and fulfilling life that exist within present-day Nigeria. It reflects the universal human desire to cling to life and the reluctance to face mortality. The community's frustration towards Kabiyesi's refusal to die reflects the tensions that can arise within traditional systems. It portrays the challenges and conflicts that can emerge when traditional leaders hold onto power beyond what is deemed acceptable or beneficial for the community. This reflects elements of cultural criticism, as it questions the actions and motivations of those in positions of authority.

Furthermore, the statement about being fed up with Kabiyesi reflects the dissatisfaction and disillusionment that can arise when leaders fail to meet the expectations of their community. It reflects the desire for accountable leadership and the need for leaders to prioritise the well-being and interests of the community. This criticism of Kabiyesi's greed and refusal to die reflects a critique of power dynamics and the potential abuses that can occur within traditional systems.

Additionally, Asabi questions whether the person they are discussing is the daughter of the Iyalode, a prominent female leader in the community. This suggests that lineage and social status are essential to traditional Nigerian society. The mention of the Iyalode indicates the influence of matriarchal figures and the significance of family ties.

Asabi: Is that not the Iyalode's daughter?

Kabiyesi: Yes. you came to see me, not her.

Asabi: I thought she is betrothed to Aremo

Kabiyesi: She is betrothed to a man, is she not? I am one, am I not?

Tilewa: Is there no shame here? Father taking over the wife to be of his son? (*Ajidewe*, 152)

Kabiyesi confirms that the person in question is indeed the Iyalode's daughter, emphasizing that Asabi has come to see him, not her. This exchange highlights the hierarchical structure of Nigerian society, where the authority of the Kabiyesi (king) takes precedence over other individuals, regardless of their social standing. Asabi then expresses her belief that the Iyalode's daughter is betrothed to Aremo, who is likely a prince or a high-ranking individual. This demonstrates the importance of arranged marriages and the preservation of social status

through strategic alliances. Traditional Nigerian society places great value on maintaining family honour and ensuring the continuity of lineage.

Kabiyesi responds by asserting that the Iyalode's daughter is indeed betrothed to a man, implying that he is that man. This statement reveals a power dynamic where the Kabiyesi exercises his authority to claim the bride-to-be for himself, disregarding the previous arrangement with Aremo. In the scenario, another character named Tilewa voices her disgust at the behaviour, challenging the father's lack of guilt in taking over his own son's future wife. This behaviour is a reflection of the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, where men are frequently in positions of authority and can make choices that have an impact on the lives of women. This criticism highlights the contrast between conventional principles and current social standards is highlighted by this criticism. It suggests that cultural practices, such as arranged marriages and the dominance of male figures, may clash with modern ideas of individual autonomy and gender equality. The scenario in *Ajidewe* reflects the present-day Nigerian society by portraying the complexities of tradition and the tensions that arise when traditional practices clash with evolving societal values. It highlights the influence of lineage, social status, and gender roles in Nigerian culture. The dialogue also serves as a critique of these cultural practices, illustrating the tenets of cultural criticism by questioning the ethics and implications of such traditions.

Conclusion

This paper emphasises the importance of recognising the diverse cultural heritage and identities within African societies. African writers navigate the complexities of multiple cultural traditions, both African and non-African, and challenge dominant Western narratives. They create narratives that reflect African cultural heritage, incorporating storytelling forms, language, and oral traditions. This demonstrates the depth and variety of African literature as well as its capacity to present a range of perspectives on the complex aspects of African identity.

The study's findings also shed insight into the power relationships and social support systems that exist in African communities. The analysis reveals the significance of community guidance, support, and solidarity in navigating the complexities of tradition. It also highlights the role of spiritual beliefs and ancestral traditions in shaping individual lives and societal norms. The research underscores the importance of critically examining traditional practices, promoting gender equality, and fostering empathy and solidarity within African societies.

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