

The Lion and the Jewel in the light of cultures in conflict

The play is characterized by the conflict between cultures. This conflict exists between Lakunle the schoolteacher who is influenced by Western culture and Baroka who is uneducated and represents the traditional one. This study shows the concepts of culture that has focused on the conflicts between old and new, western and tradition. The researcher tries to highlight not only the plight of Nigerian people but the Africans continents as a whole. In the play, there is a confrontation between the tradition and modernity. The researcher relates the modernity to the influence of British culture on Nigerian way of life. Lakunle who stands for change in the play is facing a challenge with Baroka who stands for the tradition. The conflict in this study has different sides. So, it may be as a result of generation gap, or education or age (old and new) or mind and belief. The conflict may exist among the characters themselves. Baroka, Lakunle, and Sidi exhibit internal and external conflict with tradition and modern culture. Throughout the entire play, there is a battle between Baroka and Lakunle for Sidi's hand in marriage. She sees value in both of them and it is hard to choose one of them over another. So, this reveals the conflict between modern and tradition. It represents many of Nigerians of this time who are caught between two worlds and wonder which one they prefer to live in. At the end, the play shows the winner of Sidi will be one of the two Baroka who represents static and traditional values or Lakunle who seeks modernity, social changes, and hopes. Within the end of the play, victory will be for the tradition represents in Baroka by winning the girl Sidi that represents the new generation. Soyinka is one of the foremost contemporary writers and advocates of his native culture. Soyinka has written in the forms of drama, poetry, autobiography, novel, literary and cultural and political criticism.

Conflict between cultures

The Lion and the Jewel tells a funny story involving four main characters. Lakunle is a schoolteacher of the village who is a young man of twenty-three years who is bent on bestowing Western culture onto the people of Ilujinle. Sidi is the jewel, the village's belle whose beauty has been captured by a photographer and published in a magazine. Bale Baroka is the Lion of Ilunjinle, who is a chief and has several wives. Both of Lakunle and Baroka love Sidi. The final major character is Sadiko, the lion's head wife. The play shows the importance of every culture that should

be allowed to be practiced in a way peculiar to the people. Cultural conflicts can be a clash between two opposing cultures. It can be faced by individuals, and also it can be a conflict within a society or more societies. Cultural conflicts start because of the differences in values and norms of behavior of people from different cultures. Actually, conflicts arise because of human relationships. Thus, at the time, that culture has great impacts on our daily life and there are conflicts between individuals, this will lead to conflict between cultures as well. In this regard, LeBaron (1993) says that “culture is always a factor in conflict, whether it plays a central role or influences it subtly and gently. For any conflict that touches us where it matters, where we make meaning and hold our identities, there is always a cultural component” (1). The researcher would fully agree that the conflict in the play is a result of:

The natural culture (Societal conflict)

Individuals may share attitudes, understanding, and perceptions of the environment through attraction and socialization which, in turn, reinforce the development of distinct conflict in cultures. Moreover, this may be called societal conflict. In this regard, Cole (1965) says, “the customs of a society reflect its culture” (136). Hence, individuals are influenced by their community that includes customs, traditions, habits and norms. Therefore, society or community shapes man’s life and culture. Consequently, this study emphasizes the need for cultural conflict through using the two cultural models. More centrally, the main problem that exists between cultures is the conflict created by its peoples which leads to different opinions and ideas. This difference may lead to discrimination especially between citizens and immigrants. Therefore, the problems with regard to integration are a vicious circle that cannot be solved without major changes from the governments. The difference between cultures in a country does not disappear, so it is important to respect and accept other cultures to solve the conflicts. Conflict may have merits because it makes differences. In the play under study, society with its social institutions has a great role in this regard. Therefore, the conflict between them inside the society is social one. One may represent a new belief and the other stick to the traditional one. The conflict in cultures is clear in character clashes as well. The clash between characters is used in two types of cultures the first is traditional one and the second is the other different culture (western one). There is another conflict that may lead to clash as well:

Conflict between individuals' mind and beliefs

Actually, this means that there are opposing ideas between individuals due to their different opinions that may be called individual's conflict. Soyinka shows the various characters to dilate on their inner feelings based on the conflicts between the two cultures. Everyone has his own mind and his way of thinking that is completely different in his or her thoughts. As a result of this clash, a struggle between them ensue. Lastly, there is also another way of conflict that may lead to clash between cultures. This conflict exists between individuals because of:

Generation gap

In fact, this difference exists in different characters in the play under study. There are two poles: one who is old and the other who is young. Everyone of them has different ways of learning, traditions, norms, beliefs, and education. The gap between the old generation and the new generation is extremely wide. The old generation sticks to traditions, customs, and old-time aged in culture, on the contrary, the new generation may find this useless and has no meaning because they believe in modern and upstart life. They stick to freedom and individuality and represent tradition as a cage that prisons themselves in. In addition, education standard creates a gap of conflict between generations. In the case of Lakunle in *The Lion and the Jewel*, he is a school teacher in his village and tries hard to change it to the modern ways of life. Unfortunately, he is faced by the gap between him and Baroka, the lion of the play, who kept traditional customs of the community. Therefore, the gap between generations leads to conflict between cultures especially in education, because the new generations respond to the new ways and changes of education. They try to assimilate with the new culture and transform the society into a modernized community. However, they were confronted by the old generations' restrictions and refuse.

Communication

Communication means a contact between different groups or individuals with different linguistic and cultural origins. Its aim is to observe another culture, recognize and react to it. It means, generally, to consider the "otherness". Hence, LeBaron (1993) says that "culture is inextricable from conflict, though it does not cause it. When differences surface in families, organizations, or communities,

culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes” (1).

Identifying cultural conflicts

Additionally, clash is the main reason for cultural conflict. There is no doubt that conflict exists between the new culture and the dominant (old) culture. If one looks at this conflict, he/she assures that it leads to misunderstanding, and may lead to respect of other identities. Misunderstanding is a result of a mistake and a lack of good faith or it may deepen understanding in human communication. The researcher would like to confirm that, understanding is a miracle. In these societies, there is a dualism because of new culture and old culture. Social interactions form the main theme of society. However, in our life, humans spend most of their time interacting with other people. Through this interaction, cooperation and competition can be created. The researcher highlights that identity is an important issue in the play because it is a clue that a man is he, himself. People in a society keep their own identity and try to assimilate with other cultures as a kind of leading a respectable life.

Culture and its role

Ideally, culture is a powerful force in any society. It refers to shared values, beliefs, symbols, and behaviours among individuals. It guides their decisions and actions. As for its role, it has been described as a glue that holds individuals together. It refers to a sense of unity and communication among individuals. Culture according to Madzingira (2001) is the totality of human endeavors in a given time and place. People are constructs of their culture. Culture gives people their identity and dignity. It is every day expression and future aspirations. Culture and development are intertwined because culture underpins development and reinforces it (5). Thus, culture is the way of life inside the society. It includes its language, religion, habits, and norms, etc. Culture is responsible for people’s dignity and identity. The researcher tends to give a very accurate picture of culture within the play the Lion and the Jewel that depicts the tragic and comic nature of life.

The lion and the jewel

Obviously, the play is set in the Nigerian village of Ilujinle, it takes place within a day and is divided into morning, noon, and night. The main theme is the conflict between traditional Nigerian Yoruba values and the Western influence of Nigeria's colonizers. In this play, Soyinka seeks to satisfy his thirst for Afro-centricity by applying many methods, which are in African origin, in his play. The play draws on Nigerian traditional poetry, music, and dance. It is needless to say that this play enabled the Nigerian drama to become part of the world theater. He introduces two male characters and by them, he introduces two worldviews; the Afrocentric view and the Eurocentric view. Hence, the play turns to be a kind of ideological war between these two poles; and furthermore, Soyinka adds another important character who is a female to mediate the conflict.

Conflict between old and new

In fact, the play explores the value of traditional Yoruba ways against the European innovations. The first character is Lukunle, an eager but naive schoolteacher who believes in modernity and Western ideas and accepts them without understanding. Baroka, the village leader, accepts traditions and sees modern ideas as a threat to his authority. In this regard, the two characters represent the two sides of the major social and political issue in Africa. The researcher highlights that the play has its setting in the village of Ilunjiunle in Yoruba West Africa. The play is characterized by culture conflict. Thus, the lion is Baroka and the jewel is Sidi. She is the village belle. The lion seeks to have the jewel. More centrally, *The Lion and the Jewel* is about a beautiful young girl named Sidi who should choose either the young schoolmaster or the old village chief as her husband. At first, she makes fun of the chief for his impotency, but after some events, she marries him. Actually, the play is a comedy with a message, which puts the Westernized schoolmaster Lakunle against the leader Baroka, illustrating the division between the modern and the traditional. Thus, Wole Soyinka writes about Yoruba rituals and beliefs to reveal his roots. The play starts with Lakunle pouring out his heart to Sidi but she does not want to pay attention. If only Lakunle can pay dowry then she would marry him. However, to Lakunle, that is being barbaric, outdated and ignorant. Lakunle is dressed in an old style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. His tie is done in a very small knot, disappearing beneath a shiny black waistcoat. He wears twenty-three-inch-bottom trousers and blanco-white tennis

shoe” (Collected Plays 2, The Lion and the Jewel, 1). Erapu (1975) illustrates that: The school teacher turns out to be a man with a missionary zeal to transform the village from „primitivity“ to „modernity“. Lakunle is a romantic and a dreamer on the one hand and a jester with an imperfectly hidden zest for life on the other hand (3-4). He proves to Sidi that he is a man of words not action. She says “These thoughts of future wonders- do you buy them or merely go mad and dream them?” (The Lion, 5). Therefore, she calls his speech nonsense. Moreover, he says Nonsense? Nonsense? Do you hear? Does anybody listen? Can the stones Bear to listen to this? Do you call it Nonsense that I poured the waters of my soul To wash your feet? (6). Baroka is the leader of the village and sticks to his traditional beliefs. We learn that he is distributed by issues from the beginning of the play that represented in his secret to his wife and his apparent impotence. In addition, he manages to lure Sidi into coming to his palace. Baroka is cunning and has power than Lakunle who fails to persuade Sidi to marry him. Finally, Sidi is responsible for her decision. If she chooses Baroka as a husband, she will reflect the playwright’s opinion that old tradition are better than the new and western one.

Youth and self-realization

In fact, Sidi’s photograph covers three pages and Baroka’s photograph seems to be in the corner of a page. This shows that Sidi is far important than Baroka. In addition, she has confusion in her decision to choose between Baroka the chief who represents the old value or Lakunle the schoolteacher who represents the new allurements of Western culture.

Bride-price and its importance

It is clear that, the price of the bride is money or property given by the bridegroom to the family of the bride. In the primitive African societies, they follow the footsteps of tradition and culture. Thus, the good price is an honour to the bride. If a girl marries without the price, it is assumed that she is not a virgin. In Sidi's case, she insists on dowries, because she is untouched by the foreign ideas and culture. She tells Lakunle, I have told you, and I say it again I shall marry you today, next week or any day you name. But my bride-price must first be paid, But I tell you, Lakunle, I must have The full bride- price. Will you make me A laughing-stock? Well, do as you please. But Sidi will not make, herself A cheap bowl for the

village spit... They will say I was no virgin That I was forced to sell my shame. And marry you without a price. (Collected Plays 2, The Lion and the Jewel, 8). The brideprice is a traditional African custom of marriage. As for Lakunle, he calls the system of brideprice as "a savage custom, barbaric, out-dated...upalatable (8). Lakunle opposes this custom because of his influence on the Western concept of gender equality or his empty pocket. In his concept, this custom is a disgrace and humiliation to women, he says, "To pay the price would be to buy a heifer off the market stall" (9). Also, he completes: "To pay price would be to buy a heifer off the market stall. You would be my chattel, my mere property" (22). In this regard, Sidi does not pay attention because he believes in modern marriage. To her, a girl for whom dowry is not paid will be hiding her shame for she will not be known as a virgin. Her beauty has captured many souls besides Lakunle. The researcher would fully argue that Sidi's traditional viewpoints have been shown in her rejection of Lakunle's many modern advances towards her. In the first scene, she denies Lakunle's request to carry the pail for her because she is aware of his motives for doing it. Thus, she will not allow him to put aside her values, she makes it clear to Lakunle that her declination of his marriage proposal is based on his refusal to pay the price, because she would not be a "cheap bowl for the village to spit" (8). He thinks that bride price is uncivilized and outrageous custom: Ignorant girl, can you not understand? To pay the price would be To buy a heifer off the market stall. You „d be my chattel, my mere property. (8) Finally, Sidi is uncomfortable by Lakunle's ideas and beliefs especially, his ideas about the role of women and the duty of wife. She hates his miserliness that she considers "a cheating way, mean and miserly" (10).

Tradition versus modernity in the play

More centrally, in this play, Soyinka manages to describe the existing environment that has been enriched with variegated realistic scenes. He depicts the life of Africans, for example, he shows the characters holding a mirror up to nature and presents life as it is. The main theme of the play is tradition versus modernity. He offers some of the customs of Yoruba such as brideprice, polygamy, and wife wooing girls for her husband. No doubt, the modern customs challenge the outdated customs and traditions. Soyinka has made use of elements such as songs, dance, and mimes to forward the action of the play. It is clear that he offers the native tradition, and confirmed the people's livelihood policy and role of women.

As the main theme in the play is the conflict between tradition and modernity, the play shows the intimacy of Soyinka with the various aspects of African traditions. On the one hand, the play also shows the influence of the modern world on the African mind. On the other hand, *The Lion and the Jewel*, focuses on the failure of an elementary school teacher to apprehend the sense of culture and advancement. Feld (1993) writes "the comedy clearly operates in terms of the characters adjusting ideology [tradition or modern], or selecting convenient aspects of it, in accordance with their situation and their psychological needs"(307). Actually, the main characters of the play exhibit external and internal conflicts with modernity and tradition. There is a battle between Lakunle and Baroka for Sidi's hand in marriage and this is the main plot of the play. The conflict reveals a confrontation between their two different ways of life. Hence, Lakunle stands to represent "progress" and cultured romance who was captivated by Sidi's own charm. Unfortunately, he failed at the crucial hours to obtain her while encountering the old lion. In this regard, Kumar (2011) says "Sidi presents a full spectrum of the panorama of the heart of an African village as against lagos, which stands for advancement in accordance with definition of Lakunle" (3). Therefore, Ogunba (1975) remarks the major theme of the play is the "choice between the rival worlds of tradition and modernism" (32). The researcher would fully agree that Baroka is a strictly traditional and keeps his village the same way, but he later reveals his transition into modernity. In his first appearance in the play, he shows his displeasure with modern ways of life. His movements and actions when he enters the scene are without words and all in attendance, except Lakunle, give a traditional kneel and greeting of "Kabiyesi, Baba". This is a Yoruban greeting used to address a ruler. Thus, Baroka is upset when he gets a simple "good morning" from Lakunle. In his anger, Baroka asks why he is not getting the respect that he deserves. Baroka's concept is to keep tradition in his village. He also stops Western Civilization from spreading to his village. The Public Works attempt to build a railway in Ilujinle, but Baroka is against progress. The Public Works send in workers and surveyors to tear down jungles in order to run a railway through the village. When Baroka learns of this, he pays off the surveyor with money, a coop of hens, and a goat. Pleased, the surveyor and workers pack up their things and leave "convinced" that the tracks were intended to be laid further away. Baroka's aim is to keep his village in its traditional form with no progress at all. He prevented Ilujinle from attaining railway:Trade Progress, adventure, success,

civilization, Fame, international conspicuousity... (Collected Plays 2, The Lion and the Jewel, 24) Thus, Erapustates (1975) mentions the other modern things which he would like to see in the village: breakable plates, cocktail parties, a school for Ballroom dancing, a modern park for lovers, etc (7). In this part, the researcher assures Baroka's selfishness is clear in keeping the old version of everything. He prevents the railways from passing through the village because he wanted to protect his wives.

Moral war

More importantly, Lakunle treats himself to be the representative of the modern revolution against men like Bale, and confirms what he sees as a moral war. Thus, Lakunle develops an association with Sidi, the village beauty. He aims at civilizing the bush girl. Lakunle represents a semi-European and wants to make revolutionary changes in the village. He appeared in the English suit of the ancient kind. At first, he imposes his ideas on his love for Sidi. To her, he represents a reformer and all his ideas are new. When he proposes his love and talks to marry her, she demands the bride price to marry him. In fact, one of his modern ways of life is that when he goes to request Sidi's hand in marriage as a westerner, will not pay the bride price. Thus, Gibbs (2001) remarks, "Lakunle is madly in love with Sidi and "offers her a „Western“ monogamous marriage" (307). Thus, with Western civilization's influence, the school teacher of the village, Lakunle, has become fonder of the modern ways of life. He wants the village of Ilujinle to back away from tradition as well. This task is difficult because villagers refuse to set aside their Yoruba roots and traditions. On the other hand, the village belle, Sidi, and the village Bale, Baroka, stand for tradition. Nevertheless, they do not hesitate to use each to their own advantage.