

Research

Political Style, Mysticism, Ritual Killing, and Cultural Content: A Psychosocial Reading of Femi Adebayo's Seven Doors

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Abstract: The main objectives of this study were to identify political style, mysticism, ritual killing and cultural content in *Seven Doors* as the film was adjudged in this study to be a ratiocination of a fictional work in the context of political lifestyle, cultural and mystic world in which the Yoruba Kingship and enthronement system was enmeshed. Alchemical, cultural and mystical expressions of literature in which there was a spark and emergence from deep levels of man's transcendental self; its capture of the field of consciousness and conversion of rearrangement of his mystic feelings, thoughts, and will about new centre of life in the hands of fate were explored as a focus of the study in which such expressions were well examined, interpreted and analyzed.

The theoretical framework chosen for this study was 'Psycho-Social-Exchange'- an amalgam of Psychosocial and Social Exchange theories which were placed under the review of Blau's (1964) and Cropanzano's (2017) evolutions of Social Exchange theory in Literature in which there must have been an expression of actions from an individual or group of individuals on a certain course that must be contingent on rewarding reactions from other quarters. This engagement, which involved sacrificing other people's well-being or lives to achieve longevity, was an action caused by the progeny of the protagonist of the film, which attracted dire consequences. The methodology was Qualitative Content Analysis, which aimed at analyzing the content style chosen as a technique option in the film. The primary data for this study were gathered from *Seven Doors*, a December 13th, 2024, Netflix film produced by Femi Adebayo and directed by the trio of Femi Adebayo, Adebayo Tijani and Tope Adebayo. Information was also sourced from books, articles from journals and the Internet. The study found that there were consequences for every action.

Keywords: Political style, mysticism, ritual killing and Cultural content, Psychosocial-exchange.

Introduction

Film is a visual and artistic work production done under the supervision and direction of an artistic director who combines all artistic elements together through his vast knowledge and through his directorial techniques. It's also a visual storytelling effort that is achieved and packaged through an audio-visual medium of camera technology for the viewing pleasure of a cinema audience. These techniques exhibited by him become his production style that starts from the pre-production to the post-production stages of the film production process.

The content and style analysis of a particular production can be achieved through the principles of space and time, light, movement, plot segmentation and cast. Others include characterization, mise-en-scene, sound, framing and shot composition. Colour choice and locale setting are also production styles in film productions. All of these elements are employed at the discretion of a film director for aesthetic and production purposes. Ododo S. E & Nwazue U. (2017: 263) state that

“The director finds himself/herself at the centre of many artistic and technical crews by being able to make choice of both parties, instruct and direct them towards a vision. This portrays the director as a visionary who must sell his / her vision to both the actors and the crew while strictly supervising towards realization.”

While style is the artistic vision that is employed in film productions, mise-en-scene is used in film studies in the discussion of visual style to mean the contents of the frame and the way that they are organized. It also refers to several other major elements of communication in the cinema, how they are being presented to the audience and the audience's judgment about those elements presented to them in a particular way. This, which means contents and their organization include lighting, costume, décor, properties and arrangement of actors in the film. The organization of the contents of the frame encompasses the relationship between one actor and the other, which also includes their relationship to the décor, the camera and even to the audience's view. Therefore, a good film production must have a shooting plan, shooting script, auditioning, rehearsals and principal photography to include colour, contrast, tone, pattern, budget, location and crewing.

How these elements have played out in the production style of Femi Adebayo's *Seven Doors* is the focus of this study. There is a high potential level of political

manipulation and leadership tussles surrounding the traditional institution of kingship within the context of the culture of the Yoruba people in the film. This conflict is built around certain alchemical symbols, mystical practices and manipulative tendencies for an effective course of social exchange ratiocination in which survival now becomes a game of the fittest. This magical process of engagement in exchanges of sacrificial thrusts for the causation of longevity on the kingship throne prompts us to read the film from a psychosocial perspective.

Cultural systems all over the world do have their clusters of symbols and images that are offered for human imitation, in which such human beings are formed through the values represented in the images of such symbols. An example of this is the symbol of monarchical royalty associated with kingship enthronement in the cultural system of the Yoruba people, in which heredity takes the lead priority. Except in a few cases in the ancient histories of some Yoruba kingdoms, like that of Ibadan, where this does not come first as a prerequisite, one cannot be made king in any other Yorubaland if he does not possess royalty in his blood or come from the lineage of kings. This enculturation or cultural formation that must be conformed to, including other ritualization processes involved in the enthronement procedures, which individuals may likely truncate, subvert, or manipulate, becomes a complexity in the film. No wonder that the notion of culture is considered a complex one, according to Femi Osofisan,

“... Culture in any given society is necessarily plural and complex, because Of the plural composition of society itself. In fact, it is perhaps more apt to talk of the cultures of a society rather than of one culture. Every class in a society defines itself by its culture... (1986:43)”

Therefore, it is equally important to approach this critical and cultural aspect of the Yoruba society in which the director of the film has chosen his production content, which depicts kingship and its enthronement processes as one that is full of ritualization and mystification. Hypothetical questions are raised as to why Oba Adejuwon, from the Adekogbe lineage, the Alara of the prehistoric Ilara kingdom, must sacrifice his seven Oloris (queens) for him to live long on the throne. Even at the expense of the failed experimentation of the ritual killing of these innocent queens, the efficacy of the sacrificial endeavour has only amounted to a futile exercise that only makes him as the ‘appeaser’ to

appear without sound medical condition which has brought more pains and sadness to him rather than joy and satisfaction.

From a flashback view, the film raises these vital and suggested questions that should put existential scholars on a more rigorous search in their quest into certain aspects of the Yoruba World-view and enculturation system the way they relate to fatalism and determinism for distortion of same which must attract commensurable consequences. This, from which Michael J. White asserts that

“ Fatalism has been characterized as the problem of trying to reconcile the generally accepted belief that all events are casually determined with the equally accepted view that people sometimes act freely in the sense that they could have avoided doing what they actually did. (1981- 241)”

Fredrick Nietzsche, in his own view subscribes to a number of striking doctrines described by him as “fatalism”, which means that fatalism involves the love of fate (amor fati) as against “free will” which undermines any of his interpretations of his philosophy in terms of “self -creation”, and of course, in which Jacob Mathew Barto (2017) argues a sense of love and dynamic engagement with fate as, “a prostration before a prescribed fate, the obsequiousness of which is veiled in the language and pageantry of patriotic heroism.” The film, *Seven Doors*, therefore, indicates an attempt to disrupt the inherence of love and engagement with fate, which subsequently sparks a conflict and contradiction of cultural rites in the film. At the centre of any cultural system is a cluster of authoritative symbols and accepted images of human excellence that are offered and indeed are urged for imitation. This cultural formation, known as enculturation, takes us to the social exchange experimentation in which actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others must be examined.

This prominent theory critically imposes some premium behavioral conditions on Oba Adejuwon, who offers his seven queens for sacrifice in order that he may live longer than expected on the throne. The pact involving the sacrifice of seven palace queens by Esusu, in which Oba Adejuwon is culpable, consequently has an effect on the newly installed king Adedunjoye - Onilara of Ilara. Now that he has to bear the consequences of his great-grandfather’s deeds of an abysmal descent into killing in the name of rituals, the film has exposed the audience to a more robust argument on the discussion of the psychosocial effects of such actions on our contemporary societies. Ritual killings or any

form of killings in an extra judicial manner must stand condemned as a barbaric culture. For whatever reasons, this must not be encouraged. Challenges that are associated with leadership positions must be looked into as this may also aid negative and counter-reactions from those at the top of leadership positions if they are allowed to be manipulated through those challenges they experience as leaders. This effect, by interpretation, takes us further to the popular dictum of the English people on leadership challenges and the uneasiness that follows those in leadership positions. The Englishman would call it, “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown”

Psychosocial development can be viewed from several perspectives. This can be viewed from ego growth that is associated with life cycle, mental conditions, or identity reformulation, as in the case of kingship positions, especially in African societies. What would make any reasonable human being think that sacrificing the lives of others will strengthen their capacity? It further takes us to the Freudian psychoanalysis of ego (Das Ich); and the-self (Das Selbst); the anxiety of the personality; and the theory of psychological functioning that focuses more particularly on the unconscious mental processes of an individual. Donald McIntosh argues that,

“Freud used “Das Ich” as a central concept whose meaning is quite different from the earlier system-structure ego. The “Das Ich’ of this period is broadly similar to the concept of the self which has emerged in recent psychoanalytic thought, most notably in the work of Kohut and his followers. The difficulty, even obscurity, of the 1914-1918 “Das Ich’ is very probably a reason why this similarity has not been recognized. (1986)”

The alchemic experimentation in the death of seven palace queens is considered as a social aberration which can bring retributive implications and negative effects on the marriage system. In essence, the film seems to be emphasizing polygyny and sexuality as one of its thematic preoccupations; this, being central to royalty, especially in a Yoruba monarchy system. Kathryn James, in “Death, gender and sexuality in contemporary adolescent Literature”, (2009), writes, that

“Death associated with issues of sexuality, gender and power is the eroticizing and sexualizing of death, and the ways in which the gendered subject is presented in dialogue with the process of death, dying and grief. Through close readings of

historical literature, fantasy fictions, realistic novels, dead-narrator tales, and texts from genres including Gothic, horror, and post-disaster... cultural discourses influence is influenced by literary works as the study of death is to adolescent fiction- the literature of becoming.”

Meanwhile, as death and ritual killings are becoming a recurring decimal point in Africa’s socio-cultural and political environment with the female gender being the victim of the ugly trend in most cases, our contemporary societies in the 21st century should begin to raise a psychosocial question on the morality behind Africa’s patriarchal and cultural system why the female gender is always the most vulnerable in this regard? In recent times in Nigeria, cases of ritual killings for money lucre are becoming most prevalent. If we are to begin to cite case studies of such reprehensible acts, accusing fingers are likely to be put across at notable religious cultures of prominent towns and religious centres across board. Does this point us to a particular direction of humanity that has lost a great deal of the ethical values of the highly revered ‘Omoluabi’ ethos? *Seven Doors* as a film is an explicit expression of the concerns raised above by Kathryn James, and which bothers on the “dialogue with the process of death, dying and grief” that is associated with such ugly and diabolical practices in the name of either fortification exercise, spiritual consciousness or self-protection that come with unnecessary termination of lives of innocent people.

We all know that what films in its entertainment and education values do aside other functions is to expose vices of the society that must be punished while virtue is rewarded. The film has justifiably addressed this important function of film as a cinematic effort. Esusu – a social caste is a man claimed to have been possessed with a metaphysical power to aid the ritual process in which seven palace queens are being ritually killed. The same Esusu is to be compensated and rewarded in return for this dastardly act. He is to return to town and enjoy the same royal rights and privileges as that of a ruling monarch. Is this not telling us about the African society as one that is being replete with funny exploitation of an action that is contingent on reward system if this is not actually being reported in a fiction?

To clear our doubts even in history around the 18th century, a Basorun Gaa (Oyo war generalissimo) was once reported to have allegedly killed the daughter of Alaafin Abiodun Adegoroye by the name Agboin because of the mischievous perception by the power-drunk kingmaker Basorun who had taken a homophonic semblance of Agboin for Agbonrin (Deer) because as at the time he had the plan to carry out the alchemic

experimentation and ritual process of his metaphysical fortifications, his marabout could not lay hands on a real deer, (Agbonrin) but on an innocent woman. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that Oba Adejuwon in *Seven Doors* is being portrayed to have taken this same 'madness' of ritual killing to a higher degree. Unfortunately for the king, and Esusu, the charms and the sacrificial experimentation defy all scientific processes to protect the king from a poor health condition. Oba Adejuwon seeks death instead, but death refuses him. The film reports him to have spent 107 years as against 50 years his destiny originally chooses. It is at this point of the recognition of this turn of event that the king ostracizes Esusu who is being dragged away into the bush.

In revenge of this conspiratorial action taken against him, Esusu transmogrifies into a demon to torment Oba Adedunjoye who is a direct descendant of king Adejuwon. Esusu spiritually attacks and kills Oba Adedunjoye's first daughter, while other gory incidences of disruption and death erupt in town like a volcano where several deaths of innocent people are being reported. The Afobaje (kingmakers) and Chief Otun also become victims.

Ifa literary corpus is a divination system which stands significant with the Yoruba traditional religion amongst other cultural contents that are showcased in the film. This cultural exegesis is a traditional practice of the Yoruba people that is worth mentioning here. Ifa is consulted and Oba Adedunjoye, a monogamist is asked by Ifa to 'knock' on seven doors which literally points to a direction of the past. This is a recall in redeeming the error of the past committed by his progeny in killing seven innocent palace queens for spiritual and alchemic experimentation. He is to quickly marry additional six wives including his present queen to make it seven. Metaphorically, asking him to knock on seven doors means he's to marry seven wives in order to redeem the souls of the seven queens ritually killed in the past by his grandfather.

In the past, seven palace queens were offered as sacrificial scapegoats by Adedunjoye's progeny (King Adejuwon). Ifa, (Yoruba divination system) therefore, advises that the spirits of the slain queens be appeased through polygyny. This forceful command into polygamy becomes another difficulty to be challenged by the king. *Seven Doors* in the film is symbolic to mean seven wives As difficult as this may likely pose to the educated king, Oba Adedunjoye reluctantly acquiesces to the pressure from his town men and priests who blatantly tell him he cannot abdicate the throne as an excuse for not 'knocking' on the said seven doors. His wife, Amaka; an Igbo woman and a character played by Chioma Chukwuka Akpotha who is presented from another complete cultural background agrees to

the proposal after the king is seen to be losing his sanity. The king almost walks naked out of the palace, seeing the life of his second born and the only son left for him being threatened by Esusu spirit. The character is played by Aliu Oladele Gafar.

Polygyny as a concept introduced at this point seems not to be capable of solving the conflict in the film. It only aggravates it. This brings more turmoil and panic, strife and hatred within the palace closets. The king sends the six newly wedded queens away while the disaster mounts further. He is being advised later by his chief priest to have a rethink and have them back in the palace where he must show them more love and treat all the seven queens equally in the same manner that the first wife would have been treated. He does this but, nothing seems to change until the final saga in the end when he is being told by his chief priest that he must engage Esusu in a fight which he must as a matter of compulsion win.

With great supports from all the seven wives, and the solicitation of help from his Igbo in-laws who mobilize spiritual support from Igbo culture to consolidate on the metaphysical powers of the Yoruba priests in the course of the fatal duel between Oba Adedunjoye and Esusu, Oba Adedunjoye conquers Esusu and calmness returns to Ilara kingdom. The film ends on this exciting note.

Political Style in Seven Doors

Of all film techniques, style is one of the best that can be recorded in film productions as a visual content. The idea of politics also as a social activity as theatre is, is also indicated in Seven Doors. This is related in the series of lobbying mechanism employed by the chiefs as kingmakers in the film. Kingmakers like Otun, a character played by Adebayo Salami; Olukosin, played by Jide Kosoko, and Agbaakin, played by Hafiz Oyetoro, from the beginning of the film to the end, shows the political and godfatherism tendencies that are associated with our political environment in Nigeria. The kind of huge money that is being spent by Adedunjoye's rival, prince Adeeyo; a character played by Muyiwa Ademola to contest the throne of Alara of Ilara kingdom against the chosen one by Ifa, speaks more of corruption with impunity in our socio-political circle.

Even when he has not been chosen by Ifa, his desperation by spending extravagantly to manipulate the process speaks more than what should be imagined. By another interpretation, this is to show the level of desperation, brigandage and impunity with which politics is being played among the political class in the country. People who want to rule the people by force even when they are not so politically popular and reputedly

recognized to hold such political positions by the people can go to any length to truncate the true process of democratization. More importantly are the controversies always trailing Obaship tussles and enthronement of kings in Yorubaland from ages past. Jonathan Haynes, (2006) has this to say in respect of this particular film culture.

“... Films have established themselves as the dominant of Nigerian popular culture, with more than 1,000 (One thousand) titles being released every year. they arose during politically tumultuous times but have had a reputation for being studiously commercial and avoiding political subjects.”

Abiodun Olayiwola, (2018:57) also talks about the same film culture here while he mentions the works of Tunde Kelani.

“...These films undertake a deconstruction of Nigerian political landscape through a critical re-reading of its history and suggest a cultural solution to the lingering political dilemmas in the country... The intersection of culture, arts and politics and science in the region has remained subjective to the dominating effects of these phenomena as the continent contends with their vestiges. In Nigeria, for instance, the post-colonial experience is defined by the varying attempts to restructure the system in response to the demands of modernity, democracy and the changing face of globalization.”

Lastly, Akin Adesokan (2009) also affirms this new trend in the title of his paper, Practising ‘democracy’ in Nigerian films as a culture pursued to demonstrate the implications of the phenomenon in the changing of the socio-political structure that crystallizes with the advent of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. This technique has given film production in Nigeria the narrative power in the expression of emotions and ideas.

Mystical symbols and cultural contents in Seven Doors.

Symbols that suggest mysticism and cultural contents such as, Aganju Oro deity, Opa rite and the appeasement processes, are indicated in the film to portray a processional journey that evokes reflexive, progressive and transformative experience of ritual participation to indicate some aspects of the religious beliefs of the Yoruba as being traditionally rigid, stereotypic, invariant and ‘occultic’ in nature because of some level of secrecy that is speculated that such beliefs do contain. The ineffable experience of this intense state with the Divine or Ultimate reality in which the Oba-elect must go through

now becomes an experiential unification exercise for him to connect spiritually with the divine powers as recognition of his quest to attain certain metaphysical realm. It is the term that is related to as 'la mystique' by Michael de Certeau (1992) demonstrated by him to have come to the fore in France in the seventeenth century. The Ipebi rites (Oro Ipebi) quickly point to this assertion in the film, as it shows the process been secretly administered only to the King being taken to Ipebi recess by two initiates who are chief priests. This could not have been done openly in the gaze of the general public because of the spirituality and secrets involved. The traditional values Yoruba people attach to ritual experience as a journey takes them further into induction system through which they believe one can be fortified to successfully accomplish life expectations. Ositola, Kolawole, (1988:31-41) writes that

“... The whole lifespan of a person is a journey. And to make the journey successfully realistic, a person must be well inducted into life, into the world, so that his journey will be progressive... As soon as somebody comes to the world, he has started a journey... Life is a continuous journey... Nobody can just stay adamant at a place”

During this process and after appeasing the Aganju Oro deity with a live cockerel, which the deity accepts, the Oba-elect (Adedunjoye) is asked to light the 'Ina-Ola' candle which is the ancestral and traditional torchlight of the kingdom that symbolizes the spiritual strength of the land which in a way, is to herald in a new dawn into the kingdom. This first hurdle of Ipebi rite is instantly accompanied by a chorus song from the chief priests who have accompanied the Oba-elect into the recess to indicate his passing of a preliminary test for his subsequent hurdles of tests that he must pass to qualify him to be crowned as Onilara of Ilara kingdom. The song is also a ritual and cultural symbol in its own contextuality. It is indicated as follows:

“E tan ina ola rokoso o! E tan ina ola rokoso
Oba tan ina ola ni'le yi, e tan ina ola rokoso!

(Translation)

Let there be a brighter light of prosperity! Let there be a brighter light of prosperity!

The king has ignited light of prosperity in the land! Let there be a brighter light of

Prosperity”

We are still undone yet with the Ipebi rite. The attention of the film audience is to be drawn to the symbolic significance of three human statues depicted in the film to represent the human-spiritual connectivity and liminal interconnectedness between the living and the dead. In the area of the talking-drum as an essential communication tool in Yorubaland which the statue of ‘Ayantoye-Oniluola’ stands for, Ayan-Agalu means the deity of drums which is the appellation accorded the talking-drummer in Yoruba culture. Therefore, Ayantoye-Oniluola’s depiction is a deliberate and experimental recognition taken to immortalize the first powerful and skillful ‘Ayan’ (talking drummer) who, in this regard, represents the dynasty and lineage of professional talking drummers in the land.

This can be affirmed, according to Euba Akin, (1990:90); and Omojola, Bode (2012: 16) that the ‘Ayan’ deity whose dynamic ways in which folk musicians have interpreted these attributes in specific cultural context are to solidify the link between human, ancestral and spiritual level of existence that is consistently constant and unalienable with Yoruba cosmological belief system. The symbolic relevance of this is that ‘Ayan’, through this vessel - the talking-drum with a brass-bell accoutrement decoration at both sides, regularly seeks counsel for remedial solutions to solving daily challenges encountered by human beings and their communities, and not merely for a communication or entertainment purposes alone, as may have been misconstrued by most scholars.

The statue of ‘Asun’kungb’ore-Asunraragbayi’, is also a symbol of a well-established Yoruba oral narrative performance. This traditional oral art also known as orature or oral literature that often operates through oral poetry or chants is a communication system that is deeply rooted in the rich ‘public activity’ of folklore and storytelling, which is achieved by vocalization. Baron & Spitzer (1992:102) claim that

“While folklore is private and intimately shared by groups in informal settings, it is also the most public activity when used by groups to symbolize their identity to themselves and others”

Oral traditional performances are uniquely connected to the cultural essence of the African people, no doubt, and this is significantly prominent with the traditional lore of the Yoruba people. They serve as vehicles of promoting or projecting and communicating the

history, values and belief systems of the African culture. Ropo Sekoni (cited in Okpewho, Isidore, 2003:139) writes that

“Oral narrative performance, like all other speech acts, is a communication system in which a social discourse takes place principally between a narrator/performer and an audience. All instances of such discourse are designed by the performer for an examination of the dominant concerns of the artists’ immediate community in particular, and human behavior and the human condition in general. The nature of communication or the exchange of ideas in oral narrative-performance may be similar to other processes of communication in which the communicator transfers some message to his listener.”

‘Akobi-Okoto’ - the first dancer of Ilara kingdom, is the third statue in the film that is brought to the view of both the Oba-elect and the audience, which culturally stands for a specific symbol of total theatre expression. Ayantoye-Oniluola is for Music, Asun’kungbo’re is for Drama, while Akobi-Okoto is for Dance. This is also to confirm the reason why theatre is regarded as rooted in every culture and festivals where ritualization is an experience that is courted through performances of dance movements, chants and incantations during festivals and mythological activities even from the Dionysian festival rituals of the Greek. Oscar G. Brocket & Franklin J. Hildy argued this from ancient ritual and ceremonial perspectives. In the case of Aristotle, theatre could be traced back to ancient Dionysian rituals and festivals because according to him, these festivals featured music, dance and storytelling.

The three statues, therefore, namely, Ayantoye-Oniluola, Asun’kungb’ore and Akobi-Okoto, interrelate in a close manner of symbolization that is associated with the enculturation system of the Yoruba people as the statues of the trio suddenly transpose to human figures in Oba-elect’s dream during the initiation process which is meant to call him to performance of chants, dance and song. This particular essence is to interpret the link between the dead and the living, which the belief system of the Yoruba people does not discountenance. Ayantoye-Oniluola starts the performance process through drumming. Asunkungbore joins the lead through vocalization of the ancestral praise-names (oriki) of the Oba-elect. This is simultaneously followed by dance movements from Akobi-Okoto, as all join one another in this unified effort.

The chorus of ‘Kori ko se o loba’, started by Akobi-Okoto is a spiritual sanction from the spirituality realm that is being facilitated through the ancestral prowess and powers of the ‘Alale’ (ancestors) of the land to crown Adedunjoye as the new Onilara of Ilara kingdom. The song is as follows

“K’ori ko se o loba o, k’ori ko se o loba,
K’ori ko se o loba o, k’ori ko se o loba,
K’ori Adekogbe so o d’ori apesin. k’ori
O se o loba!”

Translation

“May Ori crown you as king, may Ori crown you as king
May Adekogbe’s Ori lead you to become he whom obeisance
must be paid to, may Ori crown you as king”

Yoruba are very emotional people, who, in their philosophical mythology have conceived a concept for themselves in their thought system and the mythological disposition of that concept is a discourse that is universally open to academic debate. The discourse is a conceptual metaphor for human journey in life. They call it ‘Ori’. Ori, being mentioned in the above song by the trio as they sing for the Oba-elect in his dream is ‘Ayanmo’, and that which is apportioned or that which is affixed to someone. An exercise of the invisible pre-natal world conceived in the thought system of the Yoruba people to which human beings are regarded powerless. In that pre-natal and metaphysical world of helplessness, Yoruba believe that there’s an exercise in which a human being is faced with no option, except if he’s been guided by his inner head, ‘Ori Inu’ in the choice of his ‘Ipin’ (One’s lot) which eventually becomes a manifestation in the physical world.

Obatala is referred to as Orisa-Nla (The Arch-Divinity) by the Yoruba. An Orisa saddled with the responsibility by Olodumare, – God in Yoruba belief, to design human bodies, which at that creation point is lifeless until Olodumare breathes into it. That body that is carried on by any Man after Olodumare has breathed into it receives life instantly and is sent to ‘Ajala Mo Ipin’, an entity to rationalize variety in human head forms. But because ‘Ajala’ is an entity with a carefree attitude, he has in his warehouse all manners of shapes of heads, the good, the bad and the ugly, in his kitty. And that is the emphasis in the song that the Oba-elect should be guided to be confirmed as the authentic king of Ilara.

It is therefore, in the house of ‘Ajala’ that the choice of ‘Ori’ is made after which everyman is made to pass through the water of forgetfulness, (Omi Igbagbe) which is a boundary between heaven and earth. Meanwhile, ‘Ori’ is also considered as a ‘divinity’ – an ‘Orisa’, by the Yoruba, while ‘Orunmila’, - god of Divination is also considered a witness to the choice of every ‘Ori’ affixed to all individuals. Has anyone, therefore, wondered why ‘Orunmila is being referred to by the Yoruba as ‘Eleri Ipin’? (A witness to one’s lot) A major reason Yoruba will rather advocate for Ifa consultation in order to ascertain the likely causes of their troubles, because the belief is that, Orunmila was there as a witness at the inception of their choice of destiny.

Researches have shown that at this stage of quest by individuals, there seems to be quiet a whole revelation of secret to unveil man’s ‘faintness’ in his ‘wobbled journey’ which must have brought him to his calamitous point aside his choice of ‘Ori’. This, which often manifests in ‘Iwa pele’- good character, or ‘Afowofa’- Infliction of a problem on oneself or causation of a problem by oneself, can also determine the fate of individuals as well. ‘Iwa pele’, - plays a vital role in the integrity of an individual or a group of individuals before it can pass to an ‘Omoluabi’- a paragon of excellence in character. An Odu Ifa, Ose Meji, affirms this, by saying that;

“‘Inu bibi ‘o da nnkan, suuru baba iwa.
Agba to ni suuru, ohun gbogbo lo ni.
A di’fa f’Ori, a bu fun ‘wa,
Ti’wa nikan lo soro;
Ori kan ‘o buru ni’le Ife;
Ti Iwa nikan lo soro...’

(Indignation will not bring forth anything good,
Patience is the best character.
A patient elder has everything.
Ifa divination is made for Ori, and so apportioned to Character.
Exhibiting good character is most difficult.
No destiny is bad in pristine Ife.
Exhibiting good character is most difficult)”

The import of this Odu Ifa is that the concept of ‘Ori’ is not only determined by that which is affixed or apportioned at the pre-natal stage, but that a people’s destiny can also be aided by their character, either good or bad, or by an ‘afowofa’ (self-inflicted pain), aside from other factors. At this stage, ‘riru ebo’- appeasement, is desirable, but is it a major determinant in bringing a complete alteration to someone’s destiny? This is where the contradiction is, because, while some scholars have argued it that appeasement through sacrifices or prayers can help alter one’s choice of ‘Ori’, some have counterpoised it as an appreciable effort that is not entirely dependable. Ibitokun (1995) juxtaposes this with the popular Yoruba adage, ‘Ayanmo ko gboogun, Ori eni le le jo (That which is affixed to one cannot be rectified with medicine, one’s Ori is a causative factor). Whereas, Olatunji, (1984) argues on the basis that the universe is the physical world realm that is replete with benevolent and malevolent forces in which man is found at the centre of the perpetual spiritual and moral conflict between these forces. According to Olatunji, for any individuals to be at cosmic peace with these forces, with themselves, and with their fellow men, they need a sacrificial appeasement. How much of these sacrifices have been made, or intended on behalf of the (Nigerian state) and the people therein, for her to be at its present cosmic peace?

No wonder that a scholar, Fashina (2009) had argued that sacrificial appeasement among the Yoruba is only a ritual ideology to cause an interaction with the physical and the supersensible energies of the universe from which man wrests his livelihood and being. The question now is, is the choice of ‘Ori’ an individualistic effort or a collective exercise in nature? The answer is in the short odu Ifa story drawn from Ogunda Meji and Ogbegunda.

“ Ebiti e gbake ni ye idi pee!
Adifa fun Oriseku omo Ogun,
A bu fun Orileemere omo Ija,
Adifa fun Afuwape ti i s’omo Orunmila,
Ni’jo ti won n re’le Olodumare lo ree yan Ori ...”

There were three friends, Oriseku, the son of Ogun-god of Iron and creativity, Orileemere, the son of Ija and Afuwape, the son of Orunmila, who intended to leave heaven in order to embark on a sojourn to settle down on earth. Meanwhile, they left heaven, and before their departure, they have been warned by ‘Orisa-Nla’ never to call on anyone or stop at any place, including their homes before the commencement of their journey. Oriseku

and Orileemere heeded the warning, while Afuwape, the son of Orunmila shunned the advice. He headed straight to his father, Orunmila, and narrated his good intention to embark on a journey together with his other two friends to 'Ode-Aye'. Oriseku and Orileemere got furious at Afuwape that he had defied Orisa-Nla's warning by insisting to meet with his father despite the warning. Both left him to his fate and hurried up on their journey.

They got to Ajala Mo Ipin's house ahead of Afuwape who had tarried behind to seek the counsel of his sage and prescient father, Orunmila. Ajala Mo Ipin was on that fateful day hiding away from his creditors to avoid the embarrassment adduceable to his huge indebtedness. So, Oriseku and Orileemere waited for so long that they became tired of waiting. At this point, they were left with no other option than to ask the people found around Ajala's home to show them the storehouse where Ajala usually had kept varieties of shapes of 'Ori' (heads) he had moulded. The duo randomly picked just any two heads for themselves and left Ajala's house. Alas, they had picked the wrong heads Ajala had not bothered to make properly because of his inebriate mind. As for Afuwape who had tarried to seek the counsel of his sage father, Orunmila consulted Ifa oracle and was asked to offer sacrifice for his son. Some of the items used for the appeasement were cowries (money), a small pestle and a handful pinch of salt. After the appeasement, he was admonished by his father to take along with him the remnants of the items used for the appeasement on his journey.

Afuwape got to a settlement where needle was being used to pound yam. He introduced the use of a pestle as a better alternative to them there, and he was extolled for his kindness. The place is called 'Ilu Af'abere gun'yan. On his journey, Afuwape encountered a gatekeeper from whom he had asked for the road leading to the house of Ajala Mo Ipin. The gatekeeper was cooking soup and was using ashes instead of salt. Afuwape had to introduce the use of salt to season the soup being prepared by the gatekeeper as he had never seen salt before. The gatekeeper was amazed at the wonders of seasoning soup with salt. In return of Afuwape's kind gesture, the gatekeeper personally led him to Ajala Mo Ipin's house. A gesture the Englishman terms as 'one good turn that deserves another'. Ajala was still hiding to evade the wrath of his creditors as at the time Afuwape was led to his house. He asked Ajala to come out of his hiding place as he was willing to help him settle all his debts. Ajala came out of his hiding, and Afuwape handed all the cowries of money on him to Ajala who quickly went out to settle his creditors.

Dazed by this strange philanthropical exhibition by Afuwape, Ajala entreated what Afuwape wanted in return as the latter had asked that he had come to choose an 'Ori' for his earthly journey. Ajala led Afuwape straight to his storehouse where he had handed his magical wand to Afuwape. The magical wand was to help Afuwape attract a successful 'Ori'. The good 'Ori' attracted to Afuwape enabled him withstand all the hazards he encountered on his journey from heaven down to the planet earth where he eventually became successful, while his other two friends, Oriseku and Orileemere were not.

This vivid story drawn from 'Ogunda Meji' and 'Ogbegunda, in which the concept of 'Ori' in Oba-elect's dream is being primarily treated is to confirm the essence of Ori concept in the ministration of the song by the trio to the Oba-elect, while the interplay of Freudian experience in the interpretation of dream is to clear doubts about the interconnectedness and link between the world of the dead and the living which is central to the ancestral belief of the Yoruba people. In critical thinking just like in the analysis and interpretation of the psychoanalytical efforts of Sigmund Freud, interpretation of dream is simply about the understanding of the meaning of evidence and tracing the significance of a particular experience before looking at the implicit reasons and assumptions adducible underneath in the interpretation of such evidence. According to Jenkins Williams, (2017)

“Interpretation of dreams is a masterclass in building analyses from ingenious interpretation of evidence. Freud worked from the assumption that all dreams were significant attempts by the unconscious to resolve conflicts. As a result, he argued, they contain in altered and disguised forms clues to our deepest unconscious urges and desires. Each must be taken on its own terms to tease out what they really mean. Though Freud's theories have often been criticized, he remains the undisputed master of interpretation- with his critics suggesting that he was, if anything, too ingenious for his own good.”

Yara-Osi (the left room) experience in which the king-elect is expected to sleep while he uses his left side of the body and fight to conquer a spirit is part of the fortification process during the ritual participation. It symbolically marks the end of the secret Ipebi ritual journey before climaxing into that of the public which is done collectively in a participatory manner by the king and his town people prior to his coronation ceremony which comes with feast and pageantry. There is mimicry of the 'burden bearer' junket with a slight semblance of the 'Arugba' ritualistic process that is associated with Osun Osogbo

festival being experimented with in the film. This is because while the Arugba ritual engagement as a spiritual excursion is to seek for cleansing and purification essence, the carriage of dirt by the entire populace of Ilara to the dumpsite location of Esusu to ward off evil is a condition of historical coercion that must follow immediately after Ipebi rites which must not be regarded to serve the dual purpose of purification and cultural solutions.

Though in a way, the belief is that by so doing, at every period prior to coronation of installing a new king, this will incapacitate the spirit of Esusu to tamper with the peace and stability the land is to enjoy during the reign of such a crowned king. This experimentation also fails like that of the ritual efforts made in the ritual killing of seven palace queens in exchange of longevity from Esusu from the beginning of the film by Oba Adejuwon who had manipulated himself to become king by orchestrating the murder of his elder brother in the prehistoric Ilara. Immediately after the coronation of Adedunjoye, a direct descendant of Adejuwon from the lineage of Adekogbe's dynasty, scores of tragic events begin to trail blaze the land. The tragic event becomes so enormous that it defies all forms of propitiations and ritual performances. Oba Ademidun Adedunjoye loses Fola, his first daughter. Oloye Otun and the Chief Priest including the Afobaje share from the tragic experience as they also lost their children in a multiple road accident caused by a timber truck in which several innocent Ilara people lost their lives. What is this telling us? Existential complexities where human essence becomes emptiness and striving to achieve self-plenum as existential counterpoise? This, Ibitokun, B.M. (1995) writes that

“Man is so much overwhelmed by his day-to-day activities that he does not always remember the idea of his being as nothingness. The better for his existential sanity! But when, at times, he reverts back to his sole, calm self and takes a stern, critical look at the mystificatory perorations of collectivist ethos which is being hollered here and there, he will discover, with self-pity that he is ontologically a loner, a nothingness which he himself tries unsuccessfully (so far?) to invest with meaning and plenum. But the fact remains that he cannot attain solidity and permanence, which are the exclusive attributes of the Eternal Most High.”

Polygyny and sexual discourse as key signatures of cultural content in *Seven Doors*

The traditional sexual system among the Yoruba of old was structured in a way that it frowned against monogamy as a type of marriage that was commonly practiced in Africa.

Even having to know a lot of challenges associated with this system, the African society being a patriarchal one by nature, partially frowns at monogamy because it could reduce the procreation chances of some people from keeping family names and dynasty in perpetuity. One of those factors the African society considers before embracing polygyny is in the areas of challenges that are traceable to their professions, especially agriculture, which may increase manpower and productivity chances. Aside this major factor, procreation and health challenges or religion or change in social status could also be good factors and reasons for which this type of marriage has continued to thrive in Africa.

Femi Adebayo's *Seven Doors* is a creative expression in line with the Auteur's theory which recognizes the importance of directorial vision and artistic expression. The film is not referring to a particular historical account to depict Ilara kingdom as an adherent of history. Rather, the film is a fiction that explores recurring themes of political instability, power tussles, land grabbing, corruption with impunity and greed, as motifs and ideas from the creative imagination of the producer of the film. Consistency of this style in recreating certain awareness to reexamine some cultural aspects of the Nigerian society, aside the political inconsistency with power wrestling in our traditional societies where we think money and power can fetch us every inordinate desire, the director as author in Auteur concept prepares the audience with a body of work that is recognizable and distinguishable to a unique style of thematic preoccupations with a vision to pursuing such a cultural content.

Oba Ademide Adedunjoye's acquiescence to 'knock' on seven doors implies that he consents to adopt polygyny as a marriage type even when he is not prepared to come in terms with reality that the Yoruba society also frowns at their monarchs, who, for whatever reasons adopts monogamy instead of polygyny. Therefore, the wedding ceremony into six additional families in Ilara kingdom to seek the hands of their daughters in marriage by the king is considered a traditional feat. The Onasanya family is known for wealth and riches where the king takes one of the new brides from. The Adeyanju family is reputed for education and academic scholarship where the king takes another bride, while the Ejiwunmi family where another is taken from is a well-established family. Agriculture being a well-recognized occupation in Yoruba culture could also be one of the reasons recognition is apportioned to Baale Agbe family where Damilare as one of the new brides is taken from. The Ogungbemi family where Ibidunni, one of the new brides comes from is a conscious effort of the director of the film to establish the cultural imperatives and auteur's

concerns of the producer and director of the film as authors who intentionally want to propagate the Yoruba socio-cultural and occupational life in line with the Yoruba traditional marriage system.

This same fact can also be adduced to the Asobunloore family background as successful textile dealers who value fashion and good social appearance. The cultural display of rich costumes and props including décor, dance movement and musical scores at the wedding ceremony scene in the film has actually added some kind of aesthetics to the film in terms of mis-en-scene. The ‘Kemuye’ music being one of the folksongs chosen for the wedding scene tells more of a wedding event more than the live Apala music by Musiliu Haruna Ishola that is incorporated into the film. ‘Kemuye’ song is call and response that is more typically tied to the emotional motion images of the film. The folksong is purely traditional as it also has a filmic effect generally. Let’s read the song

Call: Awa a ko kemuye wa lo o
Response: Kemuye!
Call: Awa a ko kemuye wa lo o
Response: Kemuye!
Call: E je a ko kemuye fun won o
Response: Kemuye!
Call: Ile Oniyawo la n lo o
Response: Kemuye!
Call: Ka b’onire yo, b’onire jo
Response: Kemuye!
Call: Ijo di’jo oniyawo, abawon jo, a ba won yo, bebi o pa wa lola
Response: A wa a ko kemuye fun won
Call: Oniyawo o!
Response: A wa a ko kemuye fun won
Call: Oniyawo o!
Response: Awa a ko kemuye fun won
Call: Oniyawo o!
Response: Awa a ko kemuye fun won...

Translation

Call: We shall go ahead with our kemuye

Response: Kemuye!
Call: We shall go ahead with our Kemuye
Response: Kemuye!
Call: Let's give them Kemuye
Response: Kemuye!
Call: We are heading straight to where wedding shall take place
Response: Kemuye!
Call: Let's wine and dine with the celebrator
Response: Kemuye!
Call: The dance is a wedding one; we shall rejoice and dance lest we famish
Tomorrow
Response: Kemuye
Call: Let's give them kemuye
Response: The celebrator
Call: We shall give them kemuye
Response: The celebrator!
Response: We shall give them kemuye
Call: The celebrator!
Response: Let's give them kemuye...

Dialogue, Musical Score and Sound Effects in Seven Doors

Film dialogue is used to tell a story and not to dominate the screen except when the dramatic situations call for it. This is because film is motion driven. Dialogue usage in the film is minimal and essentially driven towards gestural actions. This is used moderately. The use of sound effect, musical incidentals, bridges and songs are used to create structural rhythms and to stimulate emotional responses to create effect of the motion images. Nostalgic feelings are equally related with to build dramatic tensions in the film. Above all, songs are used to propagate cultural awareness in the film. Several examples of this can be related with during the multi-cultural coronation ceremony scene where both Yoruba and Igbo cultures interact without any clash. This intercultural activity is held in a bid to exhibit the cultural potentials of both the Igbo and Yoruba to express the cultural feelings of the producer and that of the film director(s)

Conclusion

The film, *Seven Doors*, is a fiction and a creative expression which upholds the principles of the Auteur's theory as the authorial expression of a body of work, especially in filmmaking, whereby a director, in a way, creates a specific and distinguishable thematic and artistic vision due to his unique personal style. There is an apparent indication that the film is to demystify and disapprove of some negative aspects of the belief system of the Yoruba people. The film has overall benefits of propagating diversity from a cultural perspective, though, as we see at the end of the film, where both Igbo and Yoruba cultures interrelate with each other and in unison for a common objective of stability and cohesion.

Queen Amaka, as the first queen to Oba Ademidun Adedundoye, exhibits these nuanced behaviours in an extensive manner to show loyalty and compliance even in the face of provocations as a queen whose background is different from the culture of the palace where she has become established as a queen. Through her support, her husband is able to enjoy solicitations from the Igbo chief priests, who also work in collaboration with the Yoruba chief priests in the restoration of peace and stability process in the Ilara kingdom. This cultural fusion is keenly observed through the character portrayal of Queen Amaka and her kinsmen, who also give their full support during the fight between the king and Esusu by working together and in collaboration with the Chief priests of Ilara, despite the dissimilarities in languages and in religious practices.

It is also pertinent to note that the last scene of the film presents Queen Amaka to the audience as the first wife of Oba Ademidun Adedunjoye, who is the only person that is allowed to embrace him after his victory over Esusu, while the remaining six wives are cut off from the camera lens.

Native reasoning or intelligence would have demanded that the other six queens should also embrace their husband in the same manner for having succeeded in fighting and winning such a fierce battle. Is it a deliberate way by the director or producer of the film to technically distance themselves from polygyny as a marriage type in Yoruba culture that must not be encouraged because of the highlights of unfortunate incidences and sad experiences recorded at the twilight of contracting the marriage of the said additional six wives? This will continue to beg for an answer from film critics and scholars.

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