



## Marriage and the Issues of the Bride Price in West African Literature: an Approach to Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* and Efua S. Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*

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**Abstract** – Wole Soyinka and Efua S. Sutherland dealt with the concept of marriage and the bride price in the context of African marriage. In their two plays, it appears that the bride price is very important in African society for the effectiveness of marriage. In this article, efforts are made to show that the bride price is the first condition to fulfill in Africa for marriage to take place. Furthermore, the article calls Africans to define clearly the general amount of the bride price with regard to the realities on the continent

**Key words:** marriage, bride price, materialism, reality, African continent.

**Resumé** – Wole Soyinka et Efua S. Sutherland ont traité du concept de mariage et de la dot dans le cadre du mariage africain. Dans leurs deux pièces de théâtre, il apparaît que la dot est très importante dans la société africaine pour l'effectivité du mariage. Cet article vise à montrer que la dot est la première démarche à entreprendre pour que le mariage ait lieu. De plus encore, l'article invite les Africains à déterminer clairement le montant général de la dot en Afrique en tenant compte des réalités du continent.

**Mots clés:** mariage, dot, matérialisme, réalité, continent africain.

### 1. Introduction

During the middle of twentieth century, African continent faced many changes and these changes affected the whole existence of African people. This situation compelled many African writers, poets and playwrights to write and to readjust these sudden changes in the society. Wole Soyinka, through his play, *The Lion and The Jewel* highlights the concept of marriage and the bride price as they are intrinsically linked. Efua T. Sutherland also in her play, *The Marriage of Anansewa* sheds light on this issue of the bride price and its implications. In the two plays, it appears that bride price is very important in African society for the effectiveness of marriage. In this article, efforts are made to show that bride price is the first condition to fulfill in Africa for marriage to take place. Furthermore, the article calls Africans to define clearly the general amount of the bride price with regard to the realities of the continent, because it is revealed that some people seize the opportunity of the bride price to satisfy their personal interests. The analysis will focus on the two texts using intertextuality to reflect the socio-cultural realities of the continent. Julia Kristeva, for example, defines a text as “the space of a given text, where several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another”. Thus said, one can

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understand that idea in a given text can reinforce or contradict another text. On the basis of this ideology, we will use both Wole Soyinka and Efua Sutherland's plays to show the critical views on the bride price in West African society.

## 2. Tradition and its Implications in the Two Plays

According to *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, Tradition is "a very old custom, beliefs or stories considered together." For Kwame Gyekye, tradition is "any cultural product (values, practice, institutions etc) that was created or pursued by past generations and that, having been preserved by successive generations, has persisted to the present." (K. Gyekye, 1996, p.58.) Tradition is used in these plays artfully and has affected the lives of the characters negatively and by the way, it has deviated it from its essence.

Efua's play is a story about a father called Ananse and his daughter anansewa. Ananse gets entangled in his own web of deceit when his scheme to get rich quick backfires and disaster stares him in the face. The only way out is for his daughter to die...

In the name of tradition, Ananse cunningly manipulates his daughter Anansewa by choosing four men who are rich enough to marry her. All the ceremonies which are performed in this play by Efua show that tradition started losing its authentic values in the favor of modernity. Practices such as, naming ceremony and dowry are losing their original sense due to Africans' adoption of materialistic ideologies. These changes of African traditions to fit capitalistic ideologies increase the weight of some traditions on individuals. It is then clear that African tradition comprises some practices which need to be revisited in order to allow African tradition to keep its values. There are some aspects of African tradition that should be canceled in order to allow this tradition to keep its authentic virtue and this should be the work of African critics and writers. In the two plays, one can notice that tradition has a great influence on the characters. The example of Ananse shows it, all that he did in the play is done in the name of tradition and has impacted negatively the lives of the characters in the play.

In the case of *The Lion and the Jewel*, Baroka's behavior and that of Sidi, the village girl, can be understood if one tries to analyze the conditions and circumstances in which they live. Having many wives becomes an honor and prestige for chief Baroka, because the society in which they live allows men to have as many wives as they could. Though this attitude puts women under hardship and servitude, it does not bother men to continue maintaining women in this stereotype conditions. In the name of tradition, Sidi, the village girl refuses to welcome the proposal coming from Lakunle who totally rejects the custom of bride price. All Lakunle's efforts to let Sidi understand the real



meaning of the bride price have been fruitless. She sticks to her tradition by insisting on the bride price, which she considers as the sine qua non condition for the effectiveness of marriage. She finally got entangled in the trap of the polygamist and macho man Baroka, because of her total refusal to marry Lakunle without the bride price, a custom that Lakunle views as barbaric and ignoble. Sidi loves Lakunle but for her if the bride price is not paid it is as if she has no value. The following passage illustrates it:

I shall marry you today, next week  
Or any day you name.  
But my bride price must first be paid.  
Aha, now you turn away.  
But I tell you, Lakunle, I must have  
The full bride price. Will you make me  
a laughing-stock? Well, do as you please  
But Sidi will not make herself  
A cheap bowl for the village spit  
Lakunle: On my head let fall their scorn.  
Sidi: They will say I was no virgin  
That I was forced to sell my shame  
And marry you without a price. (W. Soyinka, 1975, p.6)

From this passage, it is clear that Sidi is submitted to her tradition and she is not ready to neglect it. She is determined and she maintains her position in spite of Lakunle's efforts to convince her on the non-necessity of the bride price. Sidi's intention and her entire determination to stick to the norms of the society are expressed in the above passage. For her, if she violates the norms of her society, she is provoking the ill-luck on her. Therefore, she decides to keep her firm attachment to the tradition till the end and she will pay for them. Due to the fact that she is traditionally tutored, all the new changes that Lakunle, the village teacher, proposed are unbelievable to her and she prefers the situations in which she was before. The change, for her, should not prevent her from receiving her entire bride price.

Lakunle: That is all part of what I say.  
But don't you worry. In a year or two  
You will have machines which will do your pounding, which will grind  
your pepper  
Without it getting in your eyes.  
Sidi: O-oh. You real mean to turn  
The whole world upside down....  
Sidi: well go there. Go to these places where  
Women would understand you  
If you told them of your plans with which  
You oppress me daily. Do not know  
What name they will give here?  
Have you lost shame completely that jeers  
Pass you over. . (W. Soyinka, 1975, pp.4-5)

This dialogue between Sidi and Lakunle shows the extent to which, Sidi's attachment to the tradition leads her to consider Lakunle's vision as a dream. Sidi views all that Lakunle says as a mockery toward her population. Since she



is educated in traditional ways whereby there is no initiative of development, she considers any idea of change as illusion. Tradition is so implanted that it blinds people and puts them in a static situation that lets Western people consider African tradition as static, barbaric. Sidi, the representative of the traditionalists in the play believes in no development and prefers this bad situation in which they live.

Another aspect worth mentioning is how the lack of formal education affects people's lives in contemporary African societies. Sidi's hesitation to marry Lakunle and her dreams are possible due to the fact that she did not attend formal school and it is difficult for her to believe in any innovation. Sidi thinks that anything going against the set rules of her tradition constitute a sprain to the development and welfare of her community which is very dear to her. Sidi considers bride price as being the sine qua non condition for the marriage, the idea her lover Lakunle rejects.

Another case which is important to highlight comes from Baroka who is empowered by his society. This chief has power and authority to manipulate and exploit his kinsmen. In the play, Sadiku, Baroka's elder wife does whatever she is told to do by her macho husband. Even wooing other women for her husband. She has come to live and abide by the set rules and norms of the society that placed her in the position of senior wife. A thorough analysis of Sadiku's relationship with her husband Baroka shows as if the main objective of the marriage has been neglected in their marital life. One of the purposes of the marriage is the mutual satisfaction in every domain including sexual satisfaction. With regard to the position Sadiku occupies as a senior wife and her mission, it is obvious to say that she is no more having sex with her husband.

Sadiku's seniority justifies the core role she has played in the success of Baroka's plan toward Sidi who will become Baroka's youngest and favorite wife for some time. The following passage illustrates this issue:

Sadiku: Sidi, have you considered what a life of bliss awaits you? Baroka swears to take no other wife after you. Do you know what is it to be the Bale's last wife?

I'll tell you. When he dies-and that should not be long; even the Lion has to die sometime-well, when he does, it means that you will have honour of being the senior wife of the new Bale. And just think, until Baroka dies, you shall be his favourite. No living in the outhouses for you, my girl. Your place will always be in the palace; first as the latest bride, afterwards, as the head of the new harem... (W. Soyinka, 1963, p.65)

This passage amply sheds light on Sadiku's effort to convince Sidi in order to marry Baroka. She seems to lack affection of her husband but she is compelled by tradition to seek another woman for him because, her mission as senior wife obliges her to do so. All this can only happen in a remote village where patriarchal ideologies are deeply rooted. Portraying all this, the



playwright would like the reader to know that sort of thing can only happen in a patriarchal society where women are regarded as instruments to be used for men's satisfaction. But for a contemporary African woman, this is unimaginable. All these traditional practices should be cancelled in African society in order to allow people to aspire to development.

The failure of Sidi to be Lakunle's wife is due to the fact that she sticks to her tradition which prevents her from marrying Lakunle without the bride price. She vows not to violate the set rules of her society which lead to her to fall into Bale's trap. This situation automatically will lead her to be used as an instrument by Baroka who always sees women as slaves and toys. Sidi, after the explanation of Lakunle, finally decides to marry him by considering Baroka as insatiate dog. She expresses her frustration in the following lines:

Sidi: Ho ho! Do you think that I was only born yesterday?  
The tales of Baroka's little suppers,  
But I know all.  
Tell your lord that Sidi does not sup with Married men...  
Sidi: Every woman who has supped with him one night,  
Becomes his wife or concubine the next... (W. Soyinka 1963, p.23)

This dialogue shows that after Lakunle's explanation about Baroka's attitude, Sidi decides to follow Lakunle. With regard to this passage one can say that the marriage of Sidi with Baroka can be considered as a forced and unwillingly one. The end result of such marriage will be a failure. Baroka's success over Sidi should not be taken for granted. Above all, one can say that tradition overcomes modernity. In the following section, we will discuss the impact of materialism on tradition in contemporary African societies.

### **3. The Impact of Materialism on Tradition in *the Marriage of Anansewa***

Materialism according to *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* is "the belief that money and possessions are the most important aspects of human existence or the belief that only material things exist" Mayor (1985, 880). In this present article, we will show how materialism has negatively influenced tradition, a fact which needs to be eradicated for the development of the continent.

In this very play by Efua, the main issue is about the bride price of Anansewa, a young lady ready for marriage. Under normal circumstances, the bride price is and should be a symbolic amount of money to show to the bride's family the value of the bride. In this play under study, bride price uncovers another meaning owing to the way the involved actors made use of it. Ananse, the lady's father considers bride price as an opportunity to satisfy his financial and material needs. Though Ananse is aware that the misuse of any rule of their tradition can lead ancestors to punish the actors, he couldn't help using it for his own benefit. Being blinded by materialism, everything becomes normal in



his sight. In African tradition, once there is a deviation from tradition, there is a fine to be paid. This particular aspect is highlighted by Naana, a character from Armah's *Fragments*. This old woman on the occasion of her grandchild, Baako's departure to United States of America has called upon the attention of Foli, Baako's uncle on the necessity of respecting traditional rules. For Naana if the prayer is wrongly performed, it will provoke the anger of the ancestors and this will bring ill-lock on Baako. The following passage sheds light on this aspect:

Quietly I went past him into the doorway where I had stood offering libation to those gone before, and in the same place where he had let fall those misery drops I poured down everything in the glass, and it was only after that I opened my mouth again: Nananom, drink to your thirst, and go with the young one. Protect him well, and bring him back, to us, to you (Armah, 1970, p.8).

In the light of this extract, there is ample evidence that Naana's reaction is justified in the sense that being an old woman she is aware that any deviation from the set rules can be lethal.

With regard to Naana's attitude, Ananse could have done the same thing, but being influenced by the materialism, he turned to commercialize his daughter for his own benefit. Ananse in order to satisfy his desire, decides to make his daughter to marry one of the richest kings in their society. Though the lady was not for his plan, he uses all his position as a father to oblige her to accept his devilish plan. When Anansewa was manifesting her anger against this plan, he made her understand that if she refuses, she will be sent out by the founder of her school because of the school fees. This is a valuable argument Ananse used to convince his daughter. The following passage from the play best illustrates:

Ananse: I'll thank you if you stop. Say also, that you'll pay your own fees to the miserly principal of E.P.'s Secretarial School.  
 Anansewa: I'll stop attending them, and ...oh, you are making me miserable.  
 Anansewa: Talk on; you'll stop attending what and do what instead? Give me back the fees in your hand and stop attending; you fool, when in your two months' time you could have your certificate in your hand?  
 Anansewa: did I say I would stop attending anywhere? Did I? But bluntly speaking, as for some old chief with fifty wives, that won't do at all. Never (E. Sutherland, 1963, p.12)

This passage reinforces the view according to which Ananse was forcing his daughter to accept his proposition in spite of her firm decision not to marry one of the chiefs he was proposing her. Anansewa in her attempt to refuse her father's decision was frightened by him when he openly tells her, she will pay him back the money he used for her studies. This is what we call irresponsible father, because it is the duty of the parents to provide their children with whatever they need. This is not the case of Ananse who knows that his daughter as a student could not have means but he is obliging her to pay him back if she refuses to accept his plan. This is not understandable for somebody



who wants his daughter to prosper. Ananse as a materialistic person, does not care about his daughter's future, what matters for him is the success of his plan. What is strange in all this is the fact that Ananse is doing all this in the name of tradition. In African society, bride price does not aim at satisfying the father's need but rather it has a symbolic meaning. What is strange in this play is the fact that Ananse's will is to use bride price to solve his financial problems.

This is similar to what Ananse did in this play. He organized a naming ceremony for his daughter who is already an adult person. It is known that in Africa, a naming ceremony is organized seventh or eighth day after the baby's birth. In this play, it is observed that Ananse, an old man who normally should respect tradition is the one who is violating this tradition. The violation of tradition by Ananse is not without reason, but it is the materialistic spirit that is leading him. Since Ananse is influenced by materialism, everything he has to do is under the influence of materialism. Anansewa's grandmother also expresses her worry as far as this so called naming ceremony of her granddaughter is concerned. Despite her worry, Ananse firmly sticks to his will to perform his ceremony which in fact is devoid of sense. Ananse because of his excessive love of materialism ignores his traditional rules.

Another character whose role cannot be neglected is Naana. The narrator here is an old woman like Ananse. But contrary to Ananse who because of materialism transforms his tradition, Naana here does what an African old person should do. In the light of what has been said so far, there is ample evidence that Ananse is a materialistic and he uses tradition to reach his personal goals. To have more idea about what goes on, it is necessary to shed light on the following passage. This is seen in act three when Aya, Ananse's mother was expressing her entire disagreement of her son, Ananse's scheme. She declares:

Aya: I can't understand my son Ananse at all. Why does he want an outdoor ceremony for Anansewa all of sudden? You school people say you have thrown these things aside. Very well, throw them aside. But to wait until five years after the girl has become a woman and then say outdoor her! That's not good custom-keeping in anybody's world (E. Sutherland, 1963, p.35)

In the light of this extract, one can notice how Aya, Ananse's mother expresses her total refusal as far as the outdoor ceremony of Anansewa is concerned. In this fictional world, we can notice that Ananse organizes this ceremony when Anansewa has already become a woman. In this context, we can say that the ceremony has no longer its spiritual meaning, but it becomes an occasion of ostentation and greed. Ananse uses his daughter as an instrument to achieve his material goal which means that he desires to gain money and material wealth in order to meet his needs. All these odds could only happen in contemporary African society where materialism becomes a new god. Tradition



in anyway could never be influenced by materialism that is why we firmly condemn this behavior which becomes a hindrance to the development of African community. It is worth noting that Ananse in his plan is supported by some categories of people who though aware of this bad practice comply with him. Among these people we can cite property men, singers, dancers and aunt Ekuwa. Ekuwa is Anansewa's aunt. In African society, it is known that the aunt plays an important role in her niece's life. Therefore, aunt Ekuwa has an important role in the life of Anansewa, her niece. Ananse being aware of the situation made all his efforts in order to have the total adherence of Anansewa's aunt. Thus Ekuwa played an important role in the process of Anansewa's outdoor ceremony. To have a clear understanding on this issue, it will be interesting to have a glance at the following dialogue:

Aya: I'm saying that I can't see why Kweku is doing this at all. If the time of something passes by, it has passed by.  
 Ekuwa: Ah, Aya. I've been trying very hard to explain it to you. If this grandchild of yours is going to marry a chief, then it is our duty to prepare her in every way we can for the position she will be occupying in a palace  
 (E. Sutherland, 1963, p.35)

This dialogue clarifies the crucial role that Ekuwa has played in the process of this so called outdoor ceremony. Normally she is the one who should fight for the success of her niece but since she is materialistic, she accepted this dirty ceremony to take place. For her, she will have her part if Anansewa succeeds in marrying one of the chiefs they are planning for. In the light of all that has been said so far, one can say that the actors in this play used tradition in order to satisfy their material and financial needs. This aspect is recurrent in contemporary African society where money and materialism have become a new god people worship.

#### **4. The Impact of Materialism on Tradition in *the Lion and the Jewel***

In the previous session, we have already defined the concept of materialism. In this session, materialism carries the same meaning. It is clear that, there is a slight difference with regard to the first session but in the two plays, it is observable that materialism played an important role in the lives of the actors. In this part, the main actors in whose actions we notice this issue of materialism are Sidi, Lakunle and Baroka, the village bale. The main issue in this play turns around Sidi's insistence on her bride price and Lakunle's rejection of this bride price. While Lakunle argues about the negative impact of the bride price, Sidi was insisting on it. A thorough analysis of the behavior of Lakunle let us say that Lakunle is influenced by the materialism that is why he was hesitating to pay this bride price which will make him lose Sidi at the end. Lakunle's rejection of the bride price shows his denial of his traditional set





rules. Sidi expresses this during their discussion about the bride price. The following passage will highlight it:

Sidi: A way you mean, to avoid  
Payment of lawful bride-price  
A cheating way, mean and miserly  
Lakunle: It is not  
Romance is the sweetening of the soul  
With fragrance offered by the stricken heart  
Sidi: A way with you. The village says you're mad  
And I begin to understand  
I wonder that they let you run the school  
You and your talk. You'll ruin your pupils to (Soyinka, 1963, pp.9-10).

In the light of this passage, it is clear that Lakunle's refusal to pay the bride price demonstrates the extent to which he is influenced by materialism. Ashli Watts is of the same view when he has it that:

Lakunle justifies his refusal to pay the bride-price, saying, "To pay the price would be to buy a heifer off the market stall" (Soyinka 897). James Gibbs, argues that Lakunle "uses or abuses the 'traditional' in accordance with his own needs and situation. Thus he adopts a misinformed Western attitude towards bride-price partially because he is in a bad economic position" (307). Lakunle's Westernized and modern form of courtship is constantly shot down by Sidi's desire to be traditional (Ashli, 2008, p.1)

This is what Sidi expresses using the words 'avoid' and 'cheat'. For Sidi, Lakunle is just looking for the opportunity to avoid what he should under normal circumstances do. All these attitudes of Lakunle can let us say that Lakunle is a materialistic person who, due to his excessive love of materialism refuses to fulfill his duty. For the fact that Sidi did not marry Lakunle can be explained by the firm position that each actor holds till the end of the play. Lakunle is not the only one to be influenced by materialism but this aspect can be noticed in the character of Sidi, the village girl. When we consider all the promises made by Lakunle to Sidi, one can also say that if she were not materialistic, she could have accepted to marry Lakunle. But since she is longing for material wealth, she reacted as if it is because of tradition she refuses Lakunle's offer. Despite all the explanation that Lakunle provided for her, she refuses because of her desire to make profit of all that she will receive as bride price. Whether it is Lakunle or Sidi, one can say that all of them are materialistic that is why they stick to their positions till the end of the play leading them to fail in their plan of marriage.

Considering the attitudes of each actor, one can conclude that the excessive love of materialism can lead a human being to lose even the plan that God made for him, this is the case of Sidi and Lakunle who failed in their plan.

This attitude of the actors discussed in this work is a sample of what usually happens in contemporary African societies and is a way for the playwrights to draw people's awareness on the mores that threaten human society nowadays. This similar attitude is witnessed in Ngugi's *Devil on the*



Cross where Mwaura for the sake of money is ready to undertake whatever job he sees, even the vilest that can provide much money.

Each actor wants to fight for his or her interest but since they could not say it openly they managed to rely on the tradition to achieve their goal. Like Mwaura who is ready to use all means to achieve his goal, these actors also have used all the means at their disposal to achieve their purpose. In the light of ongoing paragraphs, the conclusion one can draw here is the hypocritical way in which people use tradition to achieve their goal. The link one can establish between materialism in the two plays is that in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the actors expressed it openly whereas in *The Lion and the Jewel* the actors rather adopt hypocrite ways in their search for wealth.

##### 5. Cultural Impediment on Actors as Seen in the Two Plays.

Culture is defined by Soyinka (1988, p.20) as “the organic sum of knowledge and capacity which characterizes the entire society. It embraces and penetrates all fields of human work and unifies them into a system. Individual achievements rise above this level and elevate it gradually.” Impediment on it part is defined according to *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* as “something that makes it more difficult for someone to do something or for something to happen”. Another definition of the culture worth mentioning is the one coming from *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, 7<sup>th</sup> edition* which defines it as “the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country tribe or group”. In one word, this part attempts to study the obstacles that African culture has on peoples’ lives, because it is well established that culture is the particular way of life or the way of living of a community but as we are going to show it, some of the beliefs of African culture have some negative impact on Africans. To do so, we will put more emphasis on the predicaments that women undergo in African society because of the rules set by African culture.

In traditional African community, men are culturally empowered to dominate women and this situation makes women silence by reducing them to the state of submissiveness. Another aspect is the very nature of some cultural beliefs that compels people to unquestionable respect of these practices. In these two plays under scrutiny, the playwrights have presented African societies in which some of the cultural practices instead of stimulating development rather enslave them. In Wole Soyinka’s play, *the Lion and the Jewel* we are presented a society in which women are subjected to different kinds of sufferings making them be in the state of servitude. The strong belief on some cultural beliefs put some characters in the play in a state whereby they become slaves and blind. Despite the negative impact of this culture, people are obliged to support it,



because for them nobody is allowed to challenge the set rules of their society. This undermining situation that women undergo led many creative writers focus on this particular issue of the power which society confers to some individuals to the detriment of the others to the bottom of the society. In this logic, Eugene Ngezeme shed lights on this notion of power by collecting the views of other scholars in following lines, has it that:

In the forms of power, Bertrand Russel defines power a "production of intended effects". To Max Weber, "power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in the position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which the probability rests". He further associates power with domination: "domination constitutes a special case of power...But in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interview and Other Writings*, Michel Foucault insists: "power is essentially that which represses. Power represses nature, the instincts, a class, and individuals". Peter Bachrac and Moron S. Baratz simply state in 'Two Faces of Power' as follows: "of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B" (Ngezem, 2006, p.152).

In the light of these quotations, there is ample evidence that power differs from one individual to another and it depends on the one who uses it. Therefore, it can be said that power is neutral.

In these plays under study, almost all female characters are subject to many predicaments imposed on them by culture. When one considers all the wives of the chief Baroka, we can see that they are under the burden of this macho man. According to the cultural beliefs of the milieu, that is Ilujinle village, the value of chief is measured according to the number of wives he has. Therefore, marrying many wives is one of the goals a chief should achieve. This cultural belief confers Baroka a legitimate right to claim even if he knows that he will be unable to satisfy all of them. This led him to marry a young girl Sidi who under normal circumstances should marry Lakunle, a young village teacher who is of her generation. Sidi abiding by these customs was obliged to marry Baroka, the village bale, a man who is sixty years old, because according to the norms of this society, a man who gets a girl's virginity is the one who should marry her. Baroka has been able to deflower Sidi and as a consequence, she is bound to marry him as stipulated by culture. The fact that the author let a young girl who is faithful to customs fall in the hands of a polygamist shows his desire to denounce these negative sides of African culture. If only Sidi knew that her loss of virginity does not compel her to marry Baroka, we hope she would decide to join Lakunle, a man of her age. Under the yoke of cultural beliefs, Baroka's wives though they know that their lives are at stake are compelled to bear it because for them, they do not have any right to say anything.

A thorough analysis of the conditions under which Baroka's wives live allows one to say that African cultural beliefs harm more than profiting people. How can a man who has almost forty wives desire again to marry a young girl who is as old as his granddaughter? This situation is unbearable because all his



wives do not have the joy of motherhood, for “the only roles truly allowed women in the real or imaginary world have been those of wife, mother, daughter, lover, whore” Dobash and Dobash (1979, p.32.) Baroka considers all that he does as normal and finds nothing wrong in it. Because the society in which he lives empowers him to view things in that way. For Lakunle, it is not good for a woman who is suffering to continue looking for other women for her husband who does not have time to care for her due to his macho behavior. This is why Lakunle considers Sadiku as a woman without sense. In the following dialogue, we are informed:

For though you're nearly seventy  
Your mind is simple and unformed  
Have you no shame that at your age  
You neither read nor write nor think?  
You spend your days as senior wife  
Collecting brides for Baroka  
And now because you've sucked him dry  
You send my Sidi to his shame (Soyinka, 1963, pp.37-38).

This dialogue shows Lakunle's condemnation about the role Sadiku has played in the household of her husband Baroka. In the light of this dialogue, we notice the role that Sadiku plays as a senior wife which consists of wooing other women for her macho husband. It shows that in traditional societies, men are so empowered that sometimes they are obliged to use women as instruments to play with. All these undermining situations are sustained by traditional beliefs which consider women as “second class citizen”. Baroka's behavior is the result of the rules established by the culture in this milieu.

The fact that the playwright is an African shows that, he raises this issue for his readership to learn a lesson out of this aspect. Even the modern Lakunle also becomes victim of this, by looking down on Sidi for having a smaller brain and later by wanting to marry her after she lost her virginity since no dowry was required in such a situation.

There is also the conflict between education and traditional beliefs. The educated people seek to spread their knowledge to the tribal people in an attempt to make them more modern. This in turn is opposed by the tribal people who see no point in obtaining an education as it was of no use in their daily lives. The rapid modernization of Africa, coupled with the rapid evangelization of the population have driven a wedge between the traditionalists, who seek to nullify the changes done in the name of progress due to vested interests or simply not liking the result of progress, and the modernists, who want to see the destruction of outdated traditional beliefs at all cost. Culture imposed on women a kind of silence that all women should exhibit and they are obliged to submit themselves into it without protesting, anyone who will say something against is considered as disobeying African culture. Anate opines that “No woman says ‘no’ to me” Anate (2016, p.70.) This



belief makes many women become men's slaves in many African societies. This technique is the one the playwrights used in order to raise people awareness on all the unbearable situations in African community set by the culture. Under normal conditions, culture should promote human well-being but we notice that in African society, culture to some extent contributes to the human suffering. In the name of culture, Ananse succeeded in using his daughter as object in order to achieve his financial needs. In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, here, Ananse's penetrative insight into the cultural stipulations of the traditional society enables him to manipulate culture in his own favour.

In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, we see the significance of the head-drink as an important aspect by which marriage is legally established. Referred to as the bride wealth by Sarpong (1974), it ratifies the marriage because it is considered as evidence that attests to the fact that matrimonial union has duly been entered into. Thus, it is the duty of any man wishing to marry to pay the head-drink before he can claim the woman as a wife. In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, Ananse displays his knowledge of this traditional stipulation. He knows that the financial gifts he receives on behalf of Anansewa do not constitute the head-drink and, so, he coaxes the four chiefs to oil the wheels of custom. The playwright attests to this fact when she comments as follows.

It is very clear that he knows the customs more than well. Notice how he has them at his fingertips spinning them out, weaving them into a design to fit his purposes. It would be amazing if there was any among those four chiefs who did not know that a man who desires to marry somebody's daughter can improve his chances by paving his way with gifts. Ananse has selected men who will do exactly as he hopes and do it properly (E. Sutherland, 1963, p.16)

The micro story of Akwasi and Akosua in *The Marriage of Anansewa* buttresses the fact that no man can claim a woman as a wife even if he has given her a lot of gifts, unless he has placed the customary head-drink on the table. And, in *The Marriage of Anansewa* itself, this is also clearly expressed by the male messenger of Sapaase palace, who informs Ananse that the chief of Sapaase has disassociated himself from Anansewa's burial because he had not presented her head-drink; Therefore, what our royal one has to say is this: "he has no right to give burial to this child because the head-drink did not come to make it conclusive" Efua (1963, p.71). This utterance from the male messenger of Sapaase palace could indeed indicate the fact that the chiefs knew of the cultural stipulation of head-drink and this could explain why none of the three other chiefs dared lay claim of Anansewa after the latter had 'come back to life' to marry her sweetheart, Chief-who-is-chief.

Sutherland's expression of the cultural stipulation of head-drink in *The Marriage of Anansewa* comes with a note of caution. It tactically advises prospective husbands to exercise some level of restraint when giving too many



gifts to a young woman, since the woman is not obliged under any custom to refund those gifts in the event of a break up. And because of this set rules of the culture, Ananse has without any pity manipulated his lone and unique daughter as object for his own benefit. This aspect of the play shows how culture impedes on people in African community and, it is what the playwright raises people awareness in order to get rid of such practices. By revealing all these aspects in this work, the playwright knows that literature is of great importance in the building of human beings that is why she uses this means to achieve this precious goal.

Furthermore, we observe that the two plays aim to construct icons and symbols for women in particular and as a way of raising the consciousness of society or mankind in general about certain practices that affect women in particular in one way or another. Accordingly, among other things, we explore the use of literature as a means of teaching acceptable cultural practices and also as a means of criticizing unfavorable aspects of a particular culture. This makes us recall once again the importance of literature in human community. Literature is the means par excellence of correcting human society that is why these two playwrights resort to it in order to provide adequate ways of reconstructing the society. This is seen in the same way by Eagleton (1983) who opines that literature embodies the values and tastes of a particular social class. Here, Eagleton lays emphasis on content, which must teach those values considered important; "... in much that is classified as literature, the truth-value and practical relevance of what is said is considered important to the overall effect".

Accordingly, it is clear that literature must provide a widely-accepted and approved forum through which shared values may be delivered. Eagleton notes that the concept of literature in the 18th century referred to the whole body of valued writing, rather than creative and imaginative writing as we have it today. The writing which embodied the values and 'tastes' of a particular social class therefore qualified as literature. In this view, the plays, *The Marriage of Anansewa* and *The Lion and the Jewel* by Efua Sutherland and Wole Soyinka respectively can be considered as classical portrayals of literature. They teach 'the truth-value'; they articulate the cultural values and tastes of their respective cultures.

We all are aware that marriage should be based on love; therefore nobody is allowed to oblige another actor to be engaged without the entire consent of the person. Here in this Efua's play, it is noticed that Ananse cunningly uses culture to achieve his financial goal. In order to lure people, Ananse himself tried to explain the essence of the marriage. Here the choice of a spouse, it is important to state here that, in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the traditional view of marriage and, for that matter, the choice of a husband is redefined. Despite the



fact that Ananse machinated the marriage of his daughter, which is largely in consonance of the traditional marriage procedure among the Akans, it is observed that love ultimately ruled.

Thus, it is proposed that marriage should be based on love and that all one needs in marriage is a loving partner. This opinion is expressed by Ananse as he cunningly admits to the power of love; E. E. Sutherland (1975, p.8) "His love has won a victory for us all". This is also seen in *Anowa*, (1970, p.42) where Anowa's decision to marry Kofi Ako is based on love for it is said that she had refused so many eligible suitors only to end up with "good for nothing", Kofi Ako. She rejects all cultural stipulations in Akan marriage procedure and marries Kofi Ako showing total disregard to her family, because for her some cultural practices constitute hindrances to the welfare of people in the society. By depicting this aspect in the play, the playwright is raising people awareness on this issue and at the same time she is condemning this aspect of human society.

## 6. Conclusion

With regard to what has been said in this article, we can say that bride price is the first condition to fulfill for the effectiveness of marriage in Africa. Without a bride price, marriage becomes illegitimate. Owing to the importance of bride price, it is high time a precise amount could be clearly defined with regard to the realities on the continent in order to prevent those who make use of it for their personal and egoistic interests from achieving their nasty goals.

The groom and the bride, the two actors of the marriage should discuss and decide by themselves the nature of the bride price to be paid with regard to the existing amount already defined.

Parents should know that the success of the marriage does not depend upon the huge amount of the bride price paid rather, it can be the source of problem.

African ladies should know that their importance and quality have nothing to do with the nature of the bride price and therefore, they are invited to be flexible and tolerant.

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