

**THEATRE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON EFUA T.
SUTHERLAND'S *EDUFA* AND ZULU SOFOLA'S *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS***

BY

SHELTER SAY

10395470

The crest of the University of Ghana is centered on the page. It features a shield with a blue background. The top section of the shield contains three golden stalks of grain. The bottom section contains a golden emblem with two interlocking swirls. Below the shield is a golden banner with the Latin motto "INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS" in blue capital letters.

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT UNIVERSITY
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JULY, 2014

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research, and that no part of it has been represented elsewhere with all references duly acknowledged.

.....

Student

Shelter Say

10395470

Date:



.....

Supervisor

Dr. Grace Uchechukwu Adinku

Date:

.....

Supervisor

Prof. Martin Owusu

Date:

ABSTRACT

Over the years, African writers have contributed immensely to the development of culture. Their contributions are made possible by the fact that, culture has become the main source of material for their creative works. Consequently, their works have become a documentation of their culture. There is therefore much evidence to support the assertion that theatre is a very important medium for cultural transformation and development. The study established the fact that colonialism and its effects on African culture is a motivation for Post-Colonial writers such as Zulu Sofola and Efua T. Sutherland. This research sought to identify and analyse the use of cultural practices in Sutherland's *Edufa* and Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*. The study further examined how relevant these cultural practices are to current society; this then informed which of the practice needed recommendation. Primary data for the study was acquired mainly from the play texts, interviews and a focus group discussion. Additional data was also gathered from published books, online journals and articles among others. Through the analysis of the collected data, the study identified widowhood rites, marriage, extended family, the role of diviners among others as some of the cultural issues discussed within the plays.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Say.



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To God be the glory great things he has done in my life. Really God has been faithful.

To appreciate the efforts of those who contributed in one way or the other towards the successful completion of this thesis, is to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND

Theatre in Africa has gone through lots of changes and yet, it still maintains its viability and potency. The development of African theatre has been largely affected by colonialism. Prior to colonial age, theatre existed in indigenous forms in most African countries. Unfortunately, these indigenous art forms were not documented; hence they were not recognized by the western world. However, with colonialism came formal education, literacy, and a stylized form of theatre. Therefore, African theatre during the colonial period was characterized mostly by the imitation of western form and techniques. On the other hand, Post-Colonial era witnessed writers who are concerned with moving away from western forms and subjects in order to concentrate on developing an African form, with the intention of developing a form of theatre that reflects the African identity.

In the quest to achieve this, writers rely on their environment and cultures for inspiration. Therefore, culture has become a very important element of many African plays. In such plays, writers focus on discussing issues confronting the culture and identity of the African. Through this, they do not only discover themselves, but also contribute to developing the culture of their people.

Culture, in simple terms, can be explained as a particular social, ethnic, or age group patterns of learned and shared behaviors.

It can also be described as the complex whole of collective human beliefs with a structured stage of civilization that can be specific to a nation or time period. At its most basic level, culture can be defined as the ability of human species to absorb

and imitate patterned and symbolic ideas that ultimately further their survival (Lomalin and Stempleski 14).

The above implies that, familial ways are also passed down from generation to generation. Hence, culture is both shared and learned. It is shared because as a family grows, traditional practices are passed down to the new generations and it becomes a routine to that new generation. These practices are learnt through practice and repetition. In current times, some cultural practices and values have been regarded as “primitive” and “uncivilized”. But there are setbacks to this mentality, as some people perceive that culture is a static thing that can be preserved, unchanged by the changing people and times it runs into. It also assumes that people accept at face value and do not wish to change their patterns or ways of life. Similarly, there is a need to view culture as dynamic and constantly changing. There is therefore the need to change the outlook of some cultural practices; especially those that hinder the development of the individual and the society. A pertinent example of this would be Female Genital Mutilation and how it can be looked at, and judged as, violation of human rights. This does not however, diminish one’s appreciation for the ability of the human being to develop Culture (Wolf 12).

For the purpose of this research, and to really comprehend the impact of theatre on culture, the study will look at two prolific and proficient writers namely Efua T. Sutherland and ZuluSofola. In this instance, *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods* will be the plays under review.

Efua Theodora Sutherland was a Ghanaian theatre pioneer, children drama author, and dramatist, whose best-known works include *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967), and *The Marriage of Anansewaa* (1975). In 1960 Sutherland founded the Drama Studio in Accra, which became part of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. Sutherland's plays were often based on African

myths and legends, but she was also largely influenced by western plays and playwrights such as Euripides. Efua Theodora Sutherland was born in the former British colony of Gold Coast, specifically the Cape Coast region. After graduating from St. Monica's Training College, she went to England where she studied at Homerton College, Cambridge, and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Upon her return to Ghana in 1951, she co-founded the cultural journal *Okyeame*. Sutherland founded several experimental theatre groups and writers' workshops. In 1958 she opened the Experimental Theatre Players in Accra. Two years later, with funding from Ghana's Art Council and the Rockefeller Foundation in the U.S., it became the Ghana Drama Studio. Her play *Edufa* (1967) was an adaptation of Euripides's *Alcestis*. Edufa the hero is a Western-educated modern man, who is obsessed with his own longevity. A diviner tells him that he can avert his death if he can find someone to take his place. Ampoma, his wife, innocently promises that she would die for him. Ampoma accepts her approaching death, and expresses love for Edufa.

Zulu Sofola was born in Nigeria on 22nd June, 1935. She later went to school in America where she obtained a B.A degree in English at the Catholic University of America, in Washington DC. She also had an M.A degree in playwriting and Production in 1966. She returned to Nigeria and became a lecturer at the University of Ibadan in 1968. At the same university, she obtained a doctorate degree in 1977. As the first Nigerian female dramatist, Sofola paved the way for many female theatre practitioners. Her writing themes embody the rich African traditions as portrayed through the culture of her people. Her works also capture the perceived conflicts between the western culture and African value systems¹. She is renowned for giving a voice to the voiceless through the poignant characters in her plays; thus advocating human rights, freedom of choice and the empowerment of women at grass root level. Zulu Sofola, the prolific writer and director

¹ www.zulusofola.com/zulu-sofola-biography/ retrieved on 8th October, 2013 at 20:00 GMT.

has about seventeen plays to her credit, fifteen of which are published². Her play, *Wedlock of the Gods*, is a tragic drama that has its roots in the rituals of death and widowhood rites. Ogwoma, a young girl, is given away in marriage to a man whom she neither knows nor loves. Her parents needed the dowry money to cure her very sick brother. When her husband dies unexpectedly, she is expected to mourn for three months and then follow in the custom of glorification to marry her dead husband's brother; bewildered by this, Ogwoma rebels against age old custom and tradition. She clings on desperately to Uloko, the man she has always known and loved but was never allowed to marry. The relationship between Ogwoma and Uloko is seen as a slap on the face of tradition and one that can only result in dire consequences. However their passion to get married is a torrent of tumultuous love that sets to do battle against age old customs.

These two plays address certain cultural issues in the African society. The plays tackle the subjects of charms, love, taboo and arranged marriages within the traditional context of Africa, and witchcraft. The plays are a passionate and ultimately devastating exploration of love, culture, gender politics, superstition and women's rights. To a large extent, some of the issues raised in the plays are relevant and impacts greatly on present day African societies. Although some of the cultural practices talked about could be regarded outmoded, others do hold contrary opinions about these practices in our society today; which, when appropriated can be of great benefits.

These cultural practices would have otherwise been concealed had it not been for theatre. This shows the resilience of theatre in preserving, promoting and sustaining culture. Indeed theatre is a vehicle that can aid in the transportation of culture from one generation to another. Over the years, theatre has proven itself a superior venture; no wonder people are now tapping into it as a repository of history.

² www.zulusofola.com/zulu-sofola-biography/ retrieved on 8th October, 2013 at 20:00 GMT.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In current times, most African cultures are regarded as outmoded and irrelevant. Also, some of these practices are seen as a hindrance to the development of the individual as well as societies. In light of these concerns, there is the need to examine some of these cultural practices so as to determine their place in modern society. For instance, there is the need to investigate the widowhood rites and the use of charms among many others.

Over the years, various researches have been conducted on how Theatre for Development (TFD) is used to effect changes and how it contributes to the development of communities. There have also been studies that dealt with play texts; focusing on characterizations, themes and theories. However, not much has been done to examine the impact of theatre (plays) on the development of culture. This study therefore intended to unveil the existing relationship between theatre and culture through the study of *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. Furthermore, the study observed that, no extensive study has been done on the issue the cleansing rites as expressed by Efua Sutherland in *Edufa*. It is worth mentioning that, extensive research has been carried out on the playwright and her works by scholars such as Martin Owusu whose study focused on the themes in *Edufa*. However, not much has been done on the cultural content of the play. Hence, this research sought to fill that vacuum.

Similarly, available materials on Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the God*, proved scanty. Hence this research embarked on a more extensive work on the play.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

- To find out the cultural practices highlighted by the playwrights.
- To analyze the use of these cultural practices in the plays.

- To investigate which of these practices fit into current societal trends.
- To identify the cultural practices in the plays that need reformation.
- To make recommendations that will help the rebranding of these practices.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The concerns raised above led to questions such as;

- What cultural practices are highlighted in the plays?
- How are these cultural practices used in the plays?
- How relevant are these cultural practices to modern societal trend?
- Which of the cultural practices need recommendations?
- How can a research into these plays affect cultural policies?

1.6 JUSTIFICATION

In an era where indigenous culture is fast losing its value, there is a need to re-evaluate the nature and outlook of some African cultural practices. There is also the demand to understand the place of widowhood rites as well as some traditional religious practices in the modern world. This research helped in throwing light on the role of the post-colonial playwright in preserving the African cultural identity through his or her works. This justifies the fact that, theatre is an effective means through which culture can be promoted and advertised. The study also made suggestions to policy makers with regards to changes and measures to be employed in developing culture as well as theatre. Furthermore, the research outlined ways through which culture and theatre can benefit from each other. This research will be made available for future researchers who will like to further explore areas involving theatre and cultural development.

1.7 DELIMITATION

Due to the limited time within which this research was completed, analysis mainly focused on Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* and Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*. This notwithstanding, examples were drawn from other texts when necessary.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

Chapter One: This chapter included an abstract, a brief introduction to the study and a general background to the study. It also outlined the research questions, objectives, justification and the expected outcome of the study.

Chapter Two: This chapter focused on the review of related literature. The study introduced and thoroughly analysed available literature on the subject. Reviews within this chapter focused on the definitions of culture, development and theatre. It also included discussions on post-colonialism and the decolonization of African drama, the history and development of theatre in Ghana and Nigeria.

Chapter Three: This chapter discussed data collection methods as well as tools used in gathering raw data. It included research design, library research, data collection instruments, primary and secondary data collection sources, administration of instrument, data collection procedure and the data analysis plan for the study.

Chapter Four: This chapter dealt with the analysis of the raw data from chapter three. The cultural issues within the plays were analysed; this was then supported by views gathered from interviews and focus group session.

Chapter Five: This chapter brings out the findings of the study. It also provided conclusions and recommendations which will aid future researchers in this field of study.

1.9 METHODOLOGY

The study focused mostly on the textual analysis of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*. The research also conducted a focus group discussion consisting of randomly selected participants. During the session, the plays were read; the reading was followed by discussions on the cultural content of the plays. The issues raised at the discussion were recorded and later analysed. Also, there were personal interviews with a traditional chief during which additional data was collected for the research. The study also consulted materials by the playwrights and other scholars about the plays. Furthermore, supplementary data on the background of the playwrights was collected; this was to enable the study determine cultural setting of the plays. The study also gathered data from library materials including books, journals, articles both print and online.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter reviews related literature to the study. The review will focus on discussing the theatre and its importance. It also discusses the concepts of development, and culture. The study will also examine the development of West African theatre with examples from Ghana and Nigeria. The chapter will also discuss the role of the African writer in the development of culture. All the above will be discussed with post-colonialism as the theoretical framework.

2.2 THEATRE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Theatre is an art that projects life on stage. Most often the terms theatre and drama are used interchangeably. For this reason, both terms are often closely defined. In this vein, Musa states that:

Drama is ‘a form of literature’ which demonstrates, celebrates, recreates, reproduces, imitates and expresses the cultural essence of man and as a veritable act of presentation and that which is a ‘performance on stage’ (216).

This definition, however, more clearly describes theatre, rather than drama: perhaps this is why they are taken to mean the same thing. But there is a peculiar difference between theatre and drama. Drama in simple terms can be explained as a story in dialogue form. Drama therefore becomes theatre when it is performed before an audience and accompanied by other elements such as lights and costume. Brockett and Bale aptly state that “Though theatre is varied, typically

it is thought of as the stage performance of a written text” (6). Arguably, the written text in this case is drama. Interestingly, however, Dietrich is of the opinion that, “DRAMA IS A STORY, IN DIALOGUE FORM, OF HUMAN CONFLICT, PROJECTED BY MEANS OF SPEECH AND ACTION FROM A STAGE TO AN AUDIENCE” (3). Dietrich’s definition goes to re-emphasize the point the drama and theatre are taken to be one and the same thing. This point, however, is of no consequence to the study. Hence the study will use both terms interchangeably. This is because; the study is focused on the impact of the message on the audience or readers.

There are also other definitions of theatre that captures both its nature and role. For instance, in Cassady’s view, “Theatre is an art form which appeals to the senses while seeking to inspire and transform society, so as to foster development” (2). It is on this premise that theatre is regarded as a mirror of life as postulated by scholars such as Dean and Carra. Through theatre one sees a direct reflection of one’s society including all the good and ill it contains. Through theatre we gain enlightenment and bring order and change to our environment. In view of this, Dean and Carra (2) agree that, “Theatre embraces all the world’s cultures and perspective, answers questions, predicts our tomorrow, and mirrors our today”. Theatre, like all other art forms, is man’s interpretation of life expressions in a way that can be universally recognized and understood.

Theatre possesses certain basic elements that distinguish it from other arts forms. These elements are “what is performed (script, scenario, or plan); the performance (including all of the processes involved in the creation and the presentation of a production); and the audience (the perceivers). Each is essential, and each affects conception of the whole” (Brockett and Bale 6). In explaining the first element, Brockett and Bale point out that, people consider carnivals, sports games, parades and the likes as theatre; because of their performative nature. And it is for this reason

many people presume that, theatre is meant to entertain. They further disclose that, “with so much diversity, it is not surprising that some people think of theatre primarily as entertainment, whereas others find the essence of theatre to be its capacity to provoke thought or action about significant issues” (7). From the above submission, it is clear that theatre serves different purposes depending on the nature of the performance as well as the individual’s needs. What this means is that, a playwright could use his material to educate his audience on a particular subject; similarly, he could use his work solely to entertain his audience.

Theatre has been very proactive in addressing social, political, economic and psychological issues geared towards the development of individuals, societies, and many nations. Like other art forms, theatre is meant to serve a purpose: it can create the social actors that would push for the needed change within the society. Carra and Dean again reiterate that, “the purpose of art, therefore, is to stir us emotionally and intellectually in the same manner in which the artist was moved when he received his inspiration to create from nature” (2). The effective use of theatre is evident in so many African materials. During the apartheid system in colonial Southern Africa, Athol Fugard, Zakes Mda, Cont Mlangah among many others, used their plays as voice for their people. These plays were protest materials, that express the suffering of the blacks. Today, theatre is used to address grass root community problems through the use of Theatre for Development (TFD). One cannot exclude the fact that playwrights use their materials to promote their identity, and sell their cultures to the outside world. Through their works, playwrights showcase and preserve the unique cultures of their people. Therefore, theatre has become a very important element in culture education and preservation. Owusu indicates that;

The role of drama or theatre in the promotion of culture within the context of education is varied and remarkably effective. The nature of drama, the representation of action in any given society,

employing aspects of culture in terms of the activity itself and general lifestyle make drama or theatre a most effective vehicle for the promotion of culture, especially in the educational realm (121).

From the above, it is suggestive that theatre plays an indispensable role in promoting and developing culture. The study agrees with the fact that theatre has the power to promote culture and to foster development.

2.3 DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE

Over the years, the boundaries for defining culture have greatly shifted. In a very simple term, culture could be defined as a way of life of a group of people. However, today, this definition seems much too simple for culture. Scholars from different fields have tried to define culture. Barnouw as cited by Matsumoto (27) states that, culture is “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, communicated from one generation to the next via language or some other means of communication”. Matsumoto rightfully describes this definition as “fuzzy”. He suggests that, there is not a precise way of defining culture since, such a definition will not fully capture the true meaning of the word. Matsumoto explains that, this is so because, it is mainly very difficult especially in modern times to tell whether a person belongs to a particular culture or not. Matsumoto further elucidates that “in this sense, culture is a sociopsychological construct, a sharing across people of psychological phenomena such as values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours” (27). What this means is that people living in a group are most likely to share the same psychological patterns of behaviour but people outside this group will not. Matsumoto’s concern here is that culture must not be mistaken to be rooted in biological compositions. This is because; a person should not be categorized into a particular culture because of his or her race. This means that people of the same race may or may not share

similar values and behaviours. In effect, culture should be viewed not only as a social construction but also as an individual construction.

In spite of this, other definitions of culture, including those by Der Borg and Rasso, and Zanden discuss the subject as a social construct; as something peculiar, shared by a group of people. Der Borg and Rasso supports this assertion when they stated that, “In its most general and philosophic terms, culture can be seen as a shared way of doing and understanding things, a system of value and an aesthetic language that binds a community and formed the peculiar historical development of that community”(10).

Evidently, this definition, through the use of key words such as ‘shared’ and ‘community’, clearly categorises culture as a social construct. Similarly, Zanden also defines culture as “the social heritage of a people-those learned patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are transmitted from one generation to another”(13). Additionally, De Borg and Russo explain further that, “Culture is what characterises us as *human beings* and *members of a community*” (10). In the same vein, Taylor as cited by Kottak (49) defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Kottak emphasizes the fact that, culture is not acquired through biological factors but by growing up in a particular society (39). These above definitions clearly categorise culture not as an individual, but as a social concept. This can be seen in the use of words such as, *people*, *community*, *society* and *shared* among others.

Another apparent view in most definitions of culture, including those above, is the fact that culture is transferred from one generation to another. Through observation, practice as well as language, culture is passed down throughout time.

It is the researcher's opinion that, cultures keep changing because the world has become a global village where societies interact and exchange ideas on daily bases. With the evolution of culture comes the need to redefine the term itself. For this reason, the definition of culture is recently been pushed much beyond social constructions to include the effect these constructions have on the individual. In this vein, Awedoba avers that;

Culture is that whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional feature that characterize a society or social groups. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs (25).

From the above definitions, it can be gathered that, culture includes every aspects of social life and how these affect the individual's well- being.

It is worth noting that culture has also been extensively examined in the field of sociology. This is because it is seen as the core to social life and social identity. In the area of sociology, not only has culture been well defined but it has been properly analyzed. Thompson in his Study Guide explains that, "Culture is a design for living: the shared understandings that people use to coordinate their activities...although the contents differ, all cultures consist of six basic elements: beliefs, values, norms and sanctions, symbols, language, and technology" (36).

Thompson further elaborates that, "all cultures are grounded in a set of beliefs, or shared knowledge and ideas about the nature of life" (36). This is to a large extent accurate because beliefs among Africans are considered very important aspects of culture and cannot be dispensed with. Beliefs usually stem from the history of the people. For instance, Africans believe in the Odumankuma (Akan of Ghana), Oladumare (Yoruba, Nigeria), as well as in lesser gods such as Ogun and Sango (Yoruba, Nigeria), Asase Yaa, Akredinbosom (Akan, Ghana). There is also the

belief in ancestral spirit for protection. Thompson, in his discussion of value as the second element of culture argues that, every culture has a set of standards that guards their behaviour and at the same time, identifies them. These are simply, the things that that culture considers right or wrong. In agreement of Thompson's position, Gyekye explains values in terms of its relation to morals. According to him, "moral values are those forms or patterns of conduct that are considered most worthwhile and thus cherished by a society"(55). In explaining the third element of culture, Thompson states that, "norms translate beliefs and values into specific rules for behaviour: Thou shalt and the Thou shalt not" (37). He cites the example of how Vietnamese parents arrange marriages for their young daughters as opposed to America where young females are expected to date and choose their own husbands. However, in some African societies, in the olden days and perhaps today, potential suitors formally seek the hand of young ladies from their parents, with or without initial acquaintance with the lady. As expected, the parents in turn relay the man's interest to their daughter. Nevertheless, in the olden days, a young woman will be branded immoral should she go chasing young men as pertains in contemporary African society (Ghana). According to Thompson, "norms vary in intensity from sacred taboos to everyday habits (folkways). Norms also vary according to the actor and the situation" (37). What this means is that norms are not as strict as taboos. In the African contest taboos are those behaviours or actions that are forbidden. The violation of these forbidden acts will result in serious repercussions. Sanctions therefore are put in place to ensure that people adhere to the norms. Among the Krobo people of Ghana for instance, it is considered a taboo for a young girl to become pregnant before the *dipo* rites (initiation rites). As a punishment, the family of the girl is fined so that, a cleansing rite could be performed to appease the gods.

Thompson in explaining symbols as the next element stresses its important role in culture. “A symbol is something verbal or nonverbal, within a particular language or culture that comes to stand for something else” (Kottak 43-44). Thus symbols can be classified as those specific colours, designs that have earned special cultural meaning in a particular society. This implies that, these symbols can only be understood by the people of peculiar cultural settings. In Ghana for instance, the Akan and Ga tribe as against the Ewes are popular for their ‘Adinkra’ symbols which is used on stools, and linguist staffs as proverbial representations of their beliefs and aspirations.

The next element according to Thompson is language which he explains to be “a key element of culture. Whereas other animals communicate via signs (sound and gestures whose meaning is fixed), humans communicate by means of symbols (sound and gestures whose meaning depends upon shared understanding” (37). For humans, language is a very important means of communication. Different societies have different dialects which they use to communicate. There are also non-verbal signs shared and understood within a specific cultural location. Although there are times when different cultures share same or similar language, altered word combinations may produce different meanings.

Finally, in Thomson’s (37) view, “technology sets the tone for culture, influencing not only how people work but also how they socialize and think about the world”. Does this mean, therefore that technology is part of culture? An African will argue that technology is destroying indigenous culture to a large extent. But in actual fact, technology is merging cultures together thereby making it difficult to define a particular culture.

Culture is dynamic and keeps changing with time. Due to this, terms like cultural diversity and cultural inconsistency have become quite popular. Perhaps, it is the effects of technology on societies that make these changes apparent. Over the years, however, African culture has been put under intense scrutiny. Awedoba discloses that, "...many a time African cultural practices have been condemned by people (both African and non-African) who did not seem to know and appreciate their African contexts" (2). Due to this notion, there seems to be an appeal to change the outlook of some African cultural practices and belief systems. This move for change is also aided by the fact that the world has become a global village, with cultures constantly interacting and impacting one another. There is the general appeal to change the outlook of cultures to suite present ideologies and changing trends. On one side of the argument are those fighting for such practises to be abolished, and on the other are those who think it must be changed or remoulded. A typical example is the decision to abolish female genital mutilation and the "trokoshi"³ practice in the Volta Region and the female genital mutilation in the Northern Region of Ghana. The need for the abolishing of some of these practises stems from the fact that they are regarded as outmoded. Awedoba however cautions that;

If we are to decide wisely on what to change or retain in our cultures, as is becoming clear we must do, we would need in the first place to be informed as fully as possible about these cultures. We need to know what institutions, practices, knowledge systems, belief exist and their roots and backgrounds. .. This attitude is not a way to development, but rather the route to retrogression (Awedoba 3).

This is suggestive of the fact that these cultural practices are rooted in certain beliefs, designed for specific reasons. Some of these practices are to ensure a morally upright society and others to serve as disciplinary measures. Therefore, by abolishing or changing those practises without

³ A practice in some parts of the Volta region of Ghana; where young girls are made to serve at shrines as punishment for sins by their fathers.

considering the conditions surrounding the institutionalization of such cultures will retard the development of the people. Awedoba's view point above is one of the areas this study intends to investigate.

In an era where cultures are seemingly losing their originality, theatre has become a potent tool in its preservation and development. Similarly, theatre has become a means to which culture moves societies toward development. It is these potential and ability of theatre to develop cultures that this study investigates.

2.4 CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Culture is recently been viewed by economists as the fifth pillar of development. A lot of scholarly investigations are being conducted in the quest to find ways through which culture can be improved. Marana attests that;

The relationship between culture and development started to be defended by different experts in the 1970s although it was not until the 1980s or even 1990s when the international bodies and development cooperation agencies started to promote studies and work to analyse how cultural factors could have an impact on the development process.(5)

In an argument to support the need to encourage a study on development and culture, Awedoba takes the position that;

1. Each culture has its dignity and value, which must be respected and valued.
2. The diversity of national cultures, their uniqueness and originality are an essential basis for human progress and development of world cultures (8).

From the above, one gathers that, cultures are being recognised for their worth and are being encouraged and promoted in empowering individuals and societies for development. Today, “culture is taken as a fundamental dimension of the development process. Sustainable development can only be ensured by integrating cultural actors into the strategies to achieve it” Marana (5).

In trying to discuss the role of culture in development, there are two dimensions from which it can be scrutinized. The first is to look at how culture can be used as a tool for development; in this instance, economic indicators must be considered. The second is how the outlook of a particular culture can be improved and developed to fit into modern society. It is for this second reason that “culture-as well as cultural diversity and freedom- has also been the object of investigation and interest as a necessary element for full development of people and communities” Marana (5). This study is of the view that, the first step into using culture for development is to identify and develop the culture itself. The study therefore agrees with Mickov and Doyle who suggest that;

Culture is a necessary part of the development of the individual’s world view and it allows people to question the seemingly immutable certainties that appear to exist within communities of place and shared heritage. Cultural development is also important. Contemporary culture speaks directly about the important question of our time and to the changing landscape of global identity (6).

In the bid to develop cultures, the term cultural development is often used. This term simply deals more with cultural policies. This term is very important since the main pre-occupation of this study is to investigate how theatre relates with cultural development. To be able to fully

understand the issue of culture and cultural development as well, there is the need to define and understand development.

The term development has been around for as long as one can remember. For this reason, it is difficult to say where exactly the term originated from. According to Sachs, “the development discourse is an outcome of the post world-war era of fossil-fuel based triumphalism, under girded by colonial perceptions and the legacy of western rationalism”(xii). This perhaps explains why the development discourse is predominantly political and economic centred. After the world-wars, economic development became a house-hold term. It was the time after which many nations gained independence and began to thrive on their own.

Most often we think of development in terms of economics, education and politics. In a more precise way, “it has taken on the limited meaning of the practice of development agencies, especially in aiming at reducing poverty and the Millennium Development Goals” (1-2). Although, it is true that development involves the above, Corbridge points out that, “the dimensions of development are extremely diverse, including economic, social, political, legal and institutional structures, the environment, religion, the arts and culture”(X). If this is so, then development does not only deal with economics but with many other aspects of life.

In strict economic terms, development can be taken as “a complex, global and multidimensional process which transcends simple growth and incorporates all of life’s dimensions and all of the energies of the community, whose members are called to contribute towards and share in the benefits” Marana (9). In the above definition as well as any economic definition of development, the term deals with issues of wealth, income, poverty and the like. Awedoba confirms that;

Development is certainly economic. For example,
material and non-material resources are necessary if

people's material needs are to be provisioned. What is produced, who produces or does not produce what quantities of goods and services are produced, how the product is distributed or circulated and used are all important consideration (8).

Clearly, Awedoba is trying to explain why development is viewed in terms of economics. Seemingly, the word encapsulates production, as well as costs and standards of living. Another aspect of the word, as pointed out by Awedoba, is its political components. He comments that, "equally important are the political dimensions that underpin development such as law and order, the existence of peace, the opportunities for the exercise of what are seen to be civil liberties..."(9). Here, it is suggested that, when there is peace, law and order then there is development. It could be assumed that, when there is peace, the economy can focus on other aspects such as production, hence development.

Over the years, however, the study of development has extended to other areas of human endeavour. For this reason, the term is being analysed in every area of human existence. One of such areas is human development; which is a more biological approach to development. In this area of development, studies delve into the development of the human being as opposed to the economy. It pays attention to how the society and the environment, culture, family and other factors affect the development of an individual. In this field, development is defined as "the orderly and sequential changes that occur with the passage of time as an organism moves from conception to death" Zanden (4). This definition clearly deals with growth and changes, both physical and mental. Similarly, according to Sachs, "development describes a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form"(xii).

Although development is mostly defined in terms of economic and scientific indicators, there are other parameters within which the term can be defined. This study is of the opinion that, development should be looked at in a much broader term. Awedoba discusses the fact that, development should not be viewed only under the umbrella of economics as it has been cited above; he feels that, modern definitions of development should cover every aspect of human existence. In which case, “development is simply without splitting hairs, progress and the betterment of the human condition” Awedoba (8). Here, it is implied that, development includes education, politics, economics progress as well as all other factor that ensures the progress of the individual and society. This definition and dimension to development is certainly a step further away from economic indicators. In effect, the least improvement in an individual’s living condition could be termed as development. Awedoba expatiates that, “Any activity that can be said to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life of communities and individuals, can be viewed as coming under the preview of development” (8). Arguably, there seems to be a move from economic to social as far as development is concerned. In taking a social approach to development, Mda points out that, “development is usually defined as both a process and a goal in bringing about social change in order to improve the living standards of the people” (39). The focus here is on the phrase “social change”; that is a change in the social life or social behaviour of a community. Again we see the move away from economic indicators. Further, Awedoba reiterates that;

Development takes into account many other aspects of life operating in synergy with the economic and political. These include environmental and health issues, education, access to information, appropriate technology and science as well as the perceived broader cultural goals and objectives of life and existence such as art and aesthetics; these are each

relevant to the developmental aspirations of a people (11).

This research can relate with Awedoba's position since the issue of education, health and environment are all ways to ensure the individual's well-being. It is presumed that, if the individual is of good health and sound mind, he or she can contribute to development. In some African countries, however, it has been observed that, government spends huge sums of money on providing health care facilities that do not function for the benefit of the masses but rather for political and economic gain. Therefore, the study considers it inappropriate to limit development to economic factors only. Mda and Awedoba's definitions to development are much more appropriate since this study is concerned with the subjects of theatre and culture. In this instance, development could mean the slightest positive change in a people's cultural construct; a change that improves the people's way of life. Further, it concerns how theatre is able to bring this change into a society's cultural belief; a change which is positive and can be termed development. This study therefore suggests that, if the proper analyses are made into the chosen case studies, there will be an effort towards changing society's view on culture hence fostering development. If the focus of development is positive change, then the challenge is how culture can be used to attain that change. In Africa, some societies have held on to some indigenous cultures; despite the need for change. This is because; they consider culture an indispensable part of their identity. Thompson attests to this when he states that, "our culture becomes so much a part of us that we think of our own way of doing things as the only way" (37).

Another aspect of development that has been studied is human development; this is much different from human development from the biological point of view. Human development is defined as "increasing the capacity of each person and thereby placing the person at the centre of the development action" Marana (3). In essence, culture has a role to play in the development of

both individuals and societies. This seems to be a rebuttal to the earlier assertions that categorises culture under a social structure. In the study of human development, the view is that, it is the individual that makes the society. Hence, for society to develop, the individual must first develop. This study is of the opinion that, culture as well as cultural practices has psychological and physical effects on the individual. Therefore, if it poses a negative effect, the individual's progress is obviously hindered.

2.5 CULTURE AND POST-COLONIALISM

Here, the study wishes to discuss some theoretical and conceptual frameworks within which this research is grounded. The conceptual framework is to provide basic understanding into the issues the study wishes to address.

Colonialism has over the years become an important part of the history of many nations; some as the colonizers and others as the colonized. Either ways, colonization has played a characteristic role in the development of many nations. Colonialism had diverse effects on many nations depending on the method of colonization experienced. For instance, there was the indirect rule system, the divide and rule as well as “in South Africa, the ruthless economic exploitation and social control of the native people culminating in the nationalist government's official policy of apartheid from 1948” (Crow and Banfield 2).

With colonization came the clash of two cultures with one dominating the other. During colonialism, the colonizers did not only take over the natives, they also stood against the indigenous ways of life. The native culture, tradition, language as well as art forms were largely condemned and branded barbaric. This compelled the natives to embrace the imperialist culture

just to be accepted and recognized. “The problem in Fanon’s view is that, given the relations between blacks and whites, the white other only recognizes the humanity of his black interlocutor to the extent that the latter has mastery of the white language” (Crow and Banfield 6). This is evident of the fact that, the colonized blacks in their quest for acceptance had to learn the imperialist language. This seemed to be the case especially in French colonies. The white man (colonial master) only recognizes the black man (the colonized African) who can speak the French language. So, in order to be recognized, the natives began to embrace French language and French education. The case was the same in many other settler communities in other parts of Africa. There was also the need for cultural acceptance. The Africans were forced to accept other cultures since the native ones were regarded barbaric by the colonizers. Similarly, black natives were exposed to the colonizer’s art forms and techniques. Hence, the few plays written at that time in Ghana for instance were an imitation of the foreign art forms.

Therefore;

It seems that, post colonial theory emerged from the colonized people’s frustrations, their direct and personal cultural classes with the conquering cultures, and their fears, hopes and dreams about their future and their own identities. How the colonized respond to changes in language, curricular matters in education, race differences, and a host of other discourses, including the art of writing become the context and the theories of post colonialism (Shrikant and Sawant 121).

2.6.1 POST-COLONIALISM/POST COLONIAL THEORY

In most of the literatures that this study consulted, there seems to be an interchangeable use of post-colonialism and post-colonial theory; there, however, seems to be no literature to explain why this is so. It will therefore be assumed that, post-colonialism is a term that represents the

period after colonialism whereas post colonial theory represents the works of scholars after colonialism; works through which they debunk colonial claims and fight for a new identity. Over time, the term post-colonialism is used for both the period after colonialism as well as the philosophies that characterize this period. The study will now discuss post-colonialism.

Post colonialism is a term rooted in many disciplines including literature and theatre studies. However, providing a clear definition for the term has over the years proved challenging. According to Rukundwa and Van Arde, “the critical part of a definition of ‘post colonial’ concerns the prefix ‘post’, which signifies two different meanings in one compound word” (1172). Secondly, it is challenging to define post colonialism since it is hard to tell in general terms, when colonialism actually ends. Rukundwa and Van Arde further asserts this point when they say that, “the second challenge of defining post colonial theory is its contextual framework, as it is linked with race, culture and gender, settler and native” (1173). Their argument is that theorists are constantly confronted with questions on when a colonizer and colonized becomes post-colonial. Also, when does a race cease to be an oppressed agent and becomes a wealth of cultural diversities of post-colonial setting. All these complexities make it problematic to say that, the word ‘post’ ends the road from colonial to post colonial (1174). Further, Moore explains that, “many critics prefer the term ‘post-colonial’ without a hyphen because it is less ‘suggestive of (imagined) chronological or ideological supersession” (1173). Inferably, post-colonial is more appropriate since the term goes beyond political independence.

Aside the fact that post-colonial is challenging to define, “in a more succinct term, Post-Colonial is often too narrowly defined. The term according to a too -rigid etymology- is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept meaning the time after colonization has ceased, or the time

following the politically determined independence day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state” (Gilbert and Tompkins 9).

In spite of all the above challenges, Gilbert and Tompkins define post colonialism as “an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism’s discourses, power structure, and social hierarchies” (9). This definition establishes the presence or otherwise of a relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. It is implied that colonialism does not merely end when a country becomes independent. In Lawson’s view, post colonialism is a “politically motivated historical-analytical movement (which) engages with, resists, and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural, political, pedagogical, discursive and textual domain (156).

In implication, post colonialism should be looked at much beyond political and cultural independence. “Inevitably, post-colonialism addresses reactions to colonialism in a context that is not necessarily determined by temporal constraints: post-colonial plays, novels, verse, and film then become textual/cultural expressions of resistance to colonization” Gilbert and Tompkins (9). This study finds it relevant to discuss post colonialism because, it will help understand why the play can be situated within post colonialism; hence the choices made by the playwrights. Especially since post colonialism cannot be explained without first understanding colonialism.

2.6. 2 DECOLONISATION OF AFRICAN DRAMA

Much of post-colonial African drama has been shaped, in terms of content and form, by the effects of empire (colonialism). Though Africans had their own art forms long before the arrival of the Europeans, their art forms were disregarded; more so, they were not properly documented.

Colonialism (especially the formal education system) therefore exposed Africans to the Western art forms and that resulted in the reconstruction of African dramatic forms. However, in this reconstruction, some germane issues surfaced. The first of them is the issue of orality.

Orality is a term that deals with anything oral. This is how almost all African societies established their art forms before the advent of the Europeans. Supporting this assertion, Gunner reiterates that;

Orality need to be seen in the African context as the means by which societies of varying complexity regulated themselves, organised their present and past, made formal spaces for philosophical reflections, pronounced on power, questioned and in some cases contested power, and generally paid homage to the “the word”, language, as the means by which humanity was made and constantly refashioned (1)

Orality therefore has been the main mode through which history was passed down from one generation to the other. The oral tradition of Africa, for instance, cannot be discussed without looking at the griots. From studies of the Soninke people, one learns about the griot. The griot is a person who “serve[s] as that society’s historian, lawgiver, teacher, entertainer, and repository for community’s knowledge,” (Wetmore 25). Thus, the griot was the embodiment of oral tradition. Through him, tradition is passed down from one generation to the next. Likewise, in other parts of Africa, Ghana for instance, the aged served as the custodians of the people’s culture. Orality is also portrayed through the folktale tradition in West Africa. “The African folktale performer skilfully deploys literary, musical, linguistic, and dramatic devices to endow his imaginative narrative with an orchestral quality that compels co-participation by his audience” (Wetmore 21). In folktale, the storyteller can be equated to the griot. The story teller knows the end of the story from the beginning and shares it with people (in this case the readers

or audience). Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* lends credence to this assertion when the storyteller in Act Four of the play tells readers what is going to happen. "... [T]his day is the day set by one of the four chiefs for his performance of the head-drink ceremony for Anansewa" (60). However, when the Westerners arrived, they brought with them formal education and by extension literacy. The indigenes were now able to write in the colonizer's language and this made it easier for them to document with precision all that was happening around. The advantage here is that, facts that are documented will remain unaltered in subsequent generations. This contrasted with orality since the information passed on over generations stood the risk of alteration. Hence, literacy became a very important inheritance employed in most African dramas today. This is not to suggest that Africa's oral tradition has become irrelevant since some oral traditions survived modernity. The study agrees with the fact that, "in an era of globalization, orality has not disappeared but has often adapted itself in its many different forms to become a vehicle for the expression of the fears and hopes of new generations of Africa" (Gunner 12).

Another relevant issue that tops discussions on post-colonial African drama is that of language. This is one of the primary indicators which identifies a person's ethnic origin. In Ghana for instance, when someone speaks Dagbani fluently, it is largely assumed by majority that, the person is a Dagbani from the Northern Region of Ghana. Since language is a means of communicating ideas and also identifying a person, it plays a key role in projecting African values, making it more relevant to a continent that has been largely controlled by the principles of the Western world. The dilemma therefore, is whether post-colonial African writers should write in their local languages or in the colonizer's language. Kenya's renowned playwright and

novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, renounced the English language and has chosen to write in his mother tongue, Gikuyu. He justifies his choice as cited by Digole with the argument that;

Language is a carrier of a people's culture, culture is a carrier of a people's values; values are the basis of a people's self definition-the basis of their consciousness. And when you destroy a people's language, you are destroying that very important aspect of their heritage...you are in fact destroying that which helps them be themselves...that which embodies their collective memory as a people (130).

Ngugi feels that by writing in the colonizers language, African writers are destroying the people's culture and identity; thereby embracing the imperialist culture. On the other hand, according to Crow and Banfield (1996), others-such as Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott-have preferred to write in the 'imperialist' language, forging distinctive and often strikingly powerful styles of English. Soyinka's coined style of English for example easily identifies him among Africans in general and the Yoruba people of Nigeria to be specific. He seems to display an impeccable mastery over the English Language in as well though he incorporates aspects of the Nigerian pidgin language into his works. He seems to be indigenizing the western language to suit the African reader or audience despite the fact that his works are not written in his indigenous Yoruba language as his contemporary Ngugi Wa'Thiongo.

The efforts of post-colonial drama to rebut and dismantle the authority of Standard English (an imperialistic language among the countries colonised by Britain) has provoked discussion on the language to use in writing African drama. Gilbert and Tompkin simply state that the increased use of other forms of language (pidgin and creole) in writing instead of writing solely in any European language is one feature that can be identified with post-colonial African drama (184). This implies that, in the quest to decolonize African drama, African writers have made use of

language as a major weapon. It seems therefore inconsequential whether they write in their local languages or in the imperialist language. This is because, even with those who write in the imperialist language, such as Soyinka, Sutherland, Sofola, Osofisan and others, there is a certain authenticity that places their works within the unique context of the African discourses.

Another area of interest confronting post-colonial African drama is that of authenticity and hybridity. Hybridity comes from the word “hybrid” which may be explained as anything made by combining different elements. Sawant and Shrikant, points out that, “hybridization is a kind of negotiation, both political and cultural, between the colonizer and the colonized” (123). Hence, in the case of drama for instance, one will see a blend of both local and foreign ideas. On the other hand, if something is authentic, then it is genuine, real, and original. In Post-colonial theory, hybridity is looked at through the view point that African drama fuses some Western styles with indigenous styles, thus, creating a hybrid which can be considered as authentic in its own right. This hybridization is achieved by incorporating African proverbs, idioms, music and dance that characterize post colonial African drama. Examples of hybridized yet authentic African dramas are *Wedlock of the Gods* and *Edufa*. For the benefit of this session of the study, *Edufa* as a hybrid will now be examined.

Edufa is an adaptation because it was developed out of Euripides’s *Alcestis*. In *Alcestis*, Euripides explores a Greek mythology in which Alcestis agrees to die in place of Admetus, her husband. Admetus was given an advantage which states that when he is to die, someone else may die in his stead. Since no family member was willing to make this sacrifice, Alcestis agrees to die for Admetus. When Alcestis finally dies, however, Heracles who is a friend to Admetus goes to Hades and brings Alcestis back to life. In most scholarly reviews, *Alcestis* is viewed as a

political play in which the issue of female oppression is addressed. The stand is that, the play is meant to explain the fact that, the oppression of women is a benefit for society.

In adapting this play into the Ghanaian setting, Sutherland makes several artistic changes. Wetmore explains that, "...Euripides's play provides a strong framework for Sutherland, who is less interested in the "public and private faces of death" and the oppression of women than in the individual character's choices" (122). In *Edufa*, Sutherland focuses on the protagonist and his inability to strike a balance between modernization and tradition. In this adaptation, Sutherland makes the play Ghanaian through the subject matter and her use of language, and characters.

In Sutherland's play, *Edufa* is the protagonist and also the name of the play; as opposed to what pertains in *Alcestis*; where, the play is named after Alcestis instead of Admetus who is the protagonist. In giving the play a Ghanaian identity, Sutherland also employs Akan names for characters in the play. Another telling difference between *Edufa* and *Alcestis* is the situation created around their deaths. In Euripides' play, Alcestis intentionally offers to die in place of Admetus. Ampomah, on the other hand, innocently swore her life away when she lovingly declares that, she will die for *Edufa*.

Sutherland also infuses the Fante culture into the play thereby making it Ghanaian. She makes use of an all-female chorus, who perform the cleansing rite. The introduction of this rite makes the play authentic.

2.7 THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEST AFRICAN THEATRE: WITH EXAMPLES FROM GHANA AND NIGERIA.

“Africa is home to several traditions of theatre, conceived as an ensemble of culturally marked and consciously staged practices in space and time and before an audience” (Olaniyan 37). There were traces of what has now become known as theatre in Africa long before the advent of the Europeans. Olaniyan further notes that, most of these art forms were of ancient origin; and others were later inherited from European colonisation and subsequently, the imposition of formal education. In spite of this, many western scholars suggest that, Africa had no theatre aside what they inherited from the west. Olaniyan confirms this, when he declares that;

It was asserted and implied that blacks either had no traditions of drama indigenous to them, or had traditions that, in comparison with Europe and Asia, were merely “proto-dramatic” or “quasi-dramatic,” forms in a state of developmental arrest in terms of style, aesthetic canons, formalization of technique, and mode of historical transmission (35).

African indigenous art forms include folktale (storytelling), rituals and festivals, music, masquerade dance, praise poetry among many others. Though these various art forms did not enjoy the privilege of documentation, some contain performance elements that qualify them as theatre. Due to the oral nature of these art forms, it was not recognised by some western and non-western scholars such as Finnegan and as cited by Bame (1999), Echeruo (1981), Adande (1954). Finnegan argued that “though some writers have very positively affirmed the existence of native African drama, it could perhaps be truer to say that in Africa, in contrast to the Western Europe and Asia, drama is not typically a widespread or a developed form” (46). Similarly, Echeruo cites Finnegan’s position that, “it will be truer to say” that “there are certain dramatic and quasi dramatic phenomena to be found” in African traditional festival. This is important he

holds, in the view of what she regards as the absence of “linguistic content, plot, represented interaction of several characters, etc in these indigenous drama” (137).

Evidently, during the nineteenth century, however, the arrival of the Europeans also affected several aspects of the African culture and art forms as colonizers brought along their religion, formal education as well as theatre; thereby reshaping African culture and art forms. In order to entertain themselves the colonizers brought along their theatre. This together with religion and formal education reshaped African culture and art forms. Hence, colonialism has contributed largely in shaping the nature and form of African theatre

Furthermore, in the culture that characterized colonialism in Africa, these indigenous art forms were downplayed. For this reason, the imperialist culture was embraced by the colonized. This did not only reflect in the lives of the indigenes but also in their theatre. Hence, the earliest Theatre materials produced in West Africa was an imitation of the Western models. In colonized Nigeria for example, there was the search for entertainment and recreation for the ever growing population of Lagos. “The result was the coming together by some elites to form clubs and organizations for the promotion of the theatre in Western content and structure” Eze (155). This implies that, the theatre that was promoted by the elite clubs were imitations of western formats. The case was not different in Ghana. The extent of this imitation is what Kobina Sekyi depicted in his play *The Blinkards*. In this play, he satirises the fact that, Ghanaians, and for that matter West Africans, were blindly copying anything European and neglecting everything African. It seems that at that point in time, Ghanaians were not proud of their own culture and wanted to live like the Europeans. In *The Blinkards*, characters like Mrs. Borofosem, Mr. Tsiba, the Cosmopolitan club members among others represent locals who were busy trying to be like the West by discarding their own culture. So, we see, Mr. Tsiba eating a local dish with fork and

knife rather than with his fingers; Mr. Okado and Ms. Tsiba's attempt to get married in "English fashion" by avoiding the traditional marriage ceremony. Also, some characters in the play prefer to speak the English language and dress like the Europeans in order to appear "lady like" or civilised.

Another event that affected the development of West African theatre is Africa's independence from colonial rule. With independence came the need to redeem lost identities. The independence of many African nations flourished from 1950 to 1970. "Ghana, the pioneer in the sub region, had to grapple with the negative attitudes to the values of the arts of Ghana that were perceived as fetishistic by local Ghanaians, resulting from colonial cultural disorientation" (Amponsah 46). This cultural reaffirmation resulted in the creation of a new form of theatre. At the core of this new theatre is the desire to project a new Africa; a liberated Africa. The tone was therefore set for the search for a true African theatre; a theatre that depicts African culture, identity and ideology. At the initial stages of this search was the adaptation phase.

Adaptation simply means the result of change or the process of changing something to fit a new situation or environment. As opposed to the blind imitation, African writers took western plays such as Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, adapting them into the African context. These adaptations were possible because of the universality of the themes discussed in those plays.

This study cannot talk about adaptations without referring to Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*. In Talbert's view, "Efua Sutherland's adaptation of the Greek play *Alcestis*, is a study of the cultural conflicts of the traditional African who is torn between the different values of the traditional tribal society and the modern industrialized world" (183). By all indications, Talbert recognizes *Edufa* as an African play which is very different from *Alcestis*. By infusing traditional

values peculiar to the Fante people of Ghana, Sutherland has created an authentic hybrid. The very title of the play itself readily identifies it as an African play. Equally, in Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Nneora: an African Doll's House* for instance, not only does she transpose Ibsen's *A Doll's House* but also creates situations special to Africans. In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Nora runs into a problem because of forgery. On the contrary, Utoh-Ezeajugh makes Nneora to face problems because of suspected infidelity. This, in many African cultural contexts, is considered much greater offense than forgery. So by making this change, the playwright has given the play an African identity.

In contemporary Africa, writers are now expanding and theorising their own theatre forms. Writers all over West Africa began to look for materials that define their identity. For this reason, culture has become one of the most important material sources for most writers. This is evident in works of Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Efua T. Sutherland, Mohammed ben Abdallah, Ama Attah Aidoo, Zulu Sofola among others. Soyinka as mentioned earlier is internationally acclaimed for his display of culture through his works. Musa discloses that there are a number of factors that characterises Wole Soyinka's drama: "They are; the Yoruba god of iron (*Ogun*), early contact with Western and Christian education: communal rites, rituals and festivals..." (215-216). This clearly proves how Soyinka's works are largely influenced by his cultural background. Likewise, Efua Sutherland, known as the mother of modern Ghanaian theatre, incorporated Ghanaian culture into most of her works. In the search for an authentic Ghanaian theatre, she developed a dramatic style known as 'Anansegoro'. Anansegoro is a clipping of two words, 'Ananse' and 'agoro'. *Ananse* is a mythical character that dominates most Ghanaian folktales. Ananse is often described as everyman; since he possesses all human character traits. *Agoro* is a Twi word which means play. So together, Anansegoro means Ananse play or plays

about Ananse. Therefore, Sutherland in her works, experiments with Anansesem, the act of narrative drama. Anansesem is a narrative drama in which the storyteller narrates the story and sometimes steps into the act of character playing. Evidently, Sutherland's Anansegoro has its roots firmly grounded in Anansesem with shared features such as storyteller, *mboguo* (intermittent singing and dancing), and the players. Consequently, Anansegoro has become the foundation for the development of other unique dramatic styles; such as Abdallah's 'Abibigoro' (black play or plays about blacks). Abibigoro, as the name suggests, is a dramatic style that focuses on the history of blacks from within and outside the African continent. Asiedu notes that;

Whiles Sutherland seeks a Ghanaian-specific aesthetic in anansegoro, Abdallah seeks a wider African aesthetic in *abibigoro*, which is encapsulated in the name he gives his practice. Essentially, Abdallah's *abibigoro* is an expansion of Sutherland's *anansegoro*; not only does he seek a wider African aesthetic, but he goes beyond the use of Ghana folklore and story-telling traditions and is constantly experimenting with form, engaging with myth, ritual and contemporary realities. (371)

Despite the differences, the development of Anansegoro and subsequently, Abibigoro show the initiative of Post-colonial African writers to create authentic dramatic styles.

2.8 CONCLUSION

African theatre has gone through a lot of transformation over the years. Prior to the colonial era, African theatre existed in indigenous rituals, festivals, and dances among others. Due to the oral nature of these art forms, they were not recognized outside the continent. With colonialism came formal education and religion. Together, these colonial legacies altered the nature of the African culture and art forms. European art modules became a standard for most African dramatist of this

period. The end of colonization saw a struggle for self-identity and culture reassertion. African writers began to use their works to re-establish the identity of their people; and to a large extent denounce all imperialist influences. Theatre in Africa today focuses on exploring the challenges and struggles of the people. It also focused on exploring and showcasing African culture to the outside world.

In summary, this chapter was able to provide various definitions and discussion on culture and development. It also discussed theatre in Africa from the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial era. The study has been able to establish the fact that, theatre is a potent tool in remoulding and developing the African culture and identity.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter will focus on the various processes deployed in gathering relevant data on the cultural issues discussed in *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. More specifically, the gathered data contained information on the cultural practices highlighted in the above plays; how the playwrights commented on or used these cultural practices in their works, and also on how relevant some of these cultural practices are to present society and its development.

This chapter will therefore, further discuss the methodology of this study under the following: research design, library research, data collection instruments, types of data, administration of instruments, data collection procedures and a data analysis plan.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted the qualitative research methods. The study found the qualitative research methods more applicable because, “the method allows a researcher to view behavior in a natural setting without the artificiality that sometimes surrounds experimental or survey research” (Wimmer and Dominick 26). What this means is that, this method allows respondents or participants to respond freely to questions posed. For this reason, the researcher is able to acquire relevant information that does not only satisfy the research but also opens up other areas that hitherto had probably been overlooked. As a reminder, this study is interested in culture; which has more to do with behaviors and attitudes rather than science. Hence qualitative research methods become a very important method for data collection in a research such as this one. Therefore, through textual analysis, and focus group discussions, the researcher was able to

identify the cultural practices discussed by the playwrights and at the same time collected participants' opinion on these practices. Through the employment of this method, the researcher was able to gather views and opinions on widowhood rites, the use of charms for protection, taboos, witchcraft, and cultural languages and symbols; all of which were from Ghanaian and Nigerian perspectives. The study further collected views on the reason behind these practices and why they should be continued or discontinued. Since “qualitative methods are flexible and allow the researcher to pursue new areas of interest” (Wimmer and Dominick 2006:49); the study was able to gather information that was not part of the pre-structured questions. These discoveries were further investigated leading to a research into the cultural background of both plays.

3.3 LIBRARY RESEARCH

The major initial approach to this study was to embark on a data search from libraries. The reason for the use of the library was to gather data to support the study. That is to explore works that have been done around the subject. Also, the library research provided data on culture and its relationship to development, the role playwrights play in cultural development, and also on some age-old cultural beliefs and practices. The library research also produced data on the playwrights and their background which customarily influenced the cultural setting of these plays. The researcher visited the Balme, African Studies, and the School of Performing Arts Libraries; all within the University of Ghana, Legon Accra. The researcher also visited the Osagyifo and North Campus Library; all of the University of Education, Winneba.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instruments administered for this research includes interview guides, and focus group guides. This was done using a tape recorder, notepad and pen. The study also made use of interviews in collecting relevant data. The textual analysis of the play, carried out by the researcher also provided required data for this research. The researcher also conducted one-on-one interview so as to collect data on widowhood rite practices. The designing of the interview and focus group guides were done with some specific considerations.

1. Whether the questions in the guide covered all the necessary areas needed to be explored by the researcher.
2. Giving the researcher enough room ask more probing questions that will allow respondents and participants to further express themselves where they felt the need.

After the above requirements were carefully considered, both guides were designed and administered. The interview was administered to two respondents and the focus group discussion consisted of two groups of 8 participants.

The interview guide was, however, designed on open-ended question, aimed at allowing follow-up questions from the interviewees when necessary. The interviews were conducted in ewe language; which is the respondent's preference. The researcher consented to the use of this language because; the respondent was able to better express herself in Ewe. The interview was recorded with the aid of a tape recorder and later translated into English for analysis. The researcher did not have any difficulties conducting this interview since she is familiar with the language herself. Aside the tape recorder, the researcher also took down notes on peculiar issues that came up during the interview sessions. These issues were further investigated in order to get

further insight. The interview guide was not strictly followed. The researcher allowed respondents to freely express themselves. This frequently happened during narrations on the widowhood rite process itself. However, the researcher found ways to guide the respondents back to the interview guide when necessary.

The focus group guide was also designed along the same line. However, the questions within this guide were designed putting into consideration;

- The research questions and objectives
- Their opinions on the research question based on their cultural orientations and beliefs

Just like the interview guide, the focus group discussion guide consisted of open-ended questions. The focus group discussion was employed because, “it takes the form of an exchange of views and opinions through discussions with a group or with different sets of groups, which are known to be concerned with, and knowledgeable in the issues discussed” (Kumekpor 188). This is not to say that the focus group discussion was employed necessarily because participants were knowledgeable about the two play texts; but rather because the researcher believes they are conversant with the cultural and social issues discussed within the plays. Also, the researcher used the focus group discussion because it offers an interactive platform upon which the issues within the plays could be discussed and analyzed. Amoani also suggests that, “the participants feel free to express themselves and furnish the researcher with other laudable information that questionnaires and observation could not bring” (38).

The main purpose for employing the focus group discussion was to gather information on the cultural issues discussed in the plays. The focus group discussion consisted of two groups of eight participants. The first session was carried out on the 16th of December 2013. This was done

at the University of Ghana campus, theatre arts department. The second session was held at the central campus of the University of Education, Winneba. Both sessions were scheduled to commence at 10am; but was delayed by the late arrival of some participants. The discussion was held at different locations with different participants in order to be able to gather as diverse view as possible. Participants were randomly selected from within both university communities for the sessions. Both groups consisted of students from the Theatre Arts Department of the Universities, some graduate assistants as well as a few others from African Studies department. The participants were so selected because, the researcher wanted people who could read, understand and be able to analyze a play text. And these people fell within the category and were readily accessible for the discussion. Due to the nature of selection, almost all the participants have had prior encounter with Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*. They however confessed that they had no knowledge of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*. Although they have heard of the play, they have not had the opportunity to read the text.

At the beginning of the session, participants were made to read both plays and answer questions from the focus group guide. Since participants were more familiar with *Edufa*, it was read first; they picked up roles from the script and read. The reading was completed in about three hours after which the discussion took place. After all areas of analysis were thoroughly covered, the same process was adopted for the discussion on *Wedlock of the Gods*.

The researcher at certain points was inclined to ask certain questions stemming out of participants' answers. There were several instances where the discussions extended beyond the parameters of the study. This is mainly due to the fact that, it is a discursive session; and also because the issues under discussion are social and, to a large extent, relatable. During these

instances, the researcher resorted to the focus group guide to draw the participants back to the relevant issues.

3.4 TYPES OF DATA: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

The data types collected for the study included both primary and secondary data collection methods. The use of both primary and secondary data collection methods was to ensure that, information regarding the study's objectives is well recorded and analyzed. The researcher believes that, by using these two methods of data collection, authentic and substantive information will be obtained so as to draw relevant findings, recommendations and genuine conclusions at the end of the study. The primary data mostly focused on information gathered from the play texts; that is *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. Through thorough reading and analysis of both texts by the researcher, adequate data was obtained. Also, more primary data was acquired from an organized focus group discussion; a session in which the plays were further analyzed and discussed. The purpose of this was to be able to answer the research question in order to obtain the set objectives. The secondary data on the other hand came from textbooks, both published and unpublished, journals and articles, and also from the internet and other relevant sources.

3.4.1 PRIMARY DATA

The play texts were read by the researcher for initial understanding. The reading was done following the research objectives. The researcher tried to identify and comprehend the cultural practices employed in the plays. Then she further tried to analyze them in terms of how they are used by the playwrights while trying to ascertain the relevance of these practices to current

societies. This is how the primary data for this study was gathered. Also, other primary data came out of the conducted interviews. These consisted of first-hand information gathered from people who have been taken through the widowhood rites. Further, the study acquired more primary data from further analysis and discussions done by the focus group. During both the interviews and the focus group discussions, audio recordings and notes were taken.

3.4.2 SECONDARY DATA

The study also consulted other sources such as books and documents. Books on theatre, culture and development were consulted. These books helped in giving the research a framework within which the plays could be studied. Other books on post-colonialism were also consulted; and these served as a theoretical base for the study. What is more, it provided the specific time frame within which the play can be analyzed. And this helped the researcher to understand the choices made by both playwrights in their works. Some confirmations were also made from internet sources, articles and journals and unpublished works.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION OF INSTRUMENT

Having identified that the study needed to conduct a focus group discussion, the research readily drew a plan for its execution. The plan included how to select the participant, the date, venue and time for the discussion to take place; and finally what to include in the guide. Although participants were not given access to the guide, the researcher briefed them on her expectation prior to the sessions. For the interview, the guide was explained to the respondents few days before the interview date. This was to allow them familiarize themselves with the demands of the study. The interview date was arranged in agreement with respondents.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Participants for the focus group discussion were given the texts of *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods* on the scheduled day for the session. For this reason, they had no prior notice on what the focus group guide contained. The reason for this was that the researcher wanted the views of participant to be based solely on what they gather from the session. The study did not want participants to be influenced by any prior contact they might have had with the texts under consideration.

The interview guide on the other hand was given to respondents a week prior to the fixed date. On issuing the guide, the researcher translated the material into Ewe and explained the study's expectations to respondent. The interviews were conducted a week later; and the data was recorded and later analyzed by the researcher.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

The study had examined and analyzed *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. The research has studied the cultural practices used in both plays; and also how relevant these practices are for current society. Data collected from focus group discussions have been transcribed making it easy for further study and analysis. The data gathered after the discussion was grouped according to the participants' response to question. This will make it easy to determine who said what; or how many agree to what.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS* AND *EDUFA*

4.1 OVERVIEW

African playwrights through their works, project their culture and their identity. This is to preserve culture, introduce its uniqueness to the world and at the same time comment on it. Consequently, writers seem to bring out the negative and positive aspects of their cultures. Over the years, scholarly works have been conducted on plays; most of which consist of analysis on themes, plot structures, costumes among others. However, not much has been done on the cultural content of these plays, as well as the purposes they serve within the plays.

This chapter therefore seeks to discuss the cultural practices used in *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*; and how relevant these practices are today. The research will first give the synopsis of the plays as well as the background of the playwrights. This is to enhance a proper comprehension of the plays and the choices made by the playwrights with regards to cultural practices discussed within the texts. The research will then analyse the identified cultural practices within the plays. The discussion on the cultural practices will be supported with views gathered from focus group discussions as well as from one- on-one interviews conducted. Furthermore, the study will examine the relevance of these practices to current society.

As previously discussed in chapter two of this study, some scholars in their definitions suggest that the terms 'theatre' and 'drama' could be explained in similar terms; hence, they (terms) are sometimes used interchangeably as this study has done. However, in order to broaden the analysis in this chapter for deeper understanding, the researcher deems it necessary to consider

infusing some instances of performance of the plays within the study. In this case, the study will assume the role of a member or an audience and examine some theatrical choices made by the playwright.

4.2 WEDLOCK OF THE GODS

Wedlock of the Gods tells the story of two lovers, determined to stay together despite all oppositions; they defy society, tradition and consequently death in order to consummate their love. Ogwoma, the protagonist, considers herself finally freed from a loveless marriage upon the death of Adigwu her husband. She was forced by her parents to marry Adigwu, who is much older, so that her bride price could be used to cure her sick brother. Uloko, her one true love, stood no chance at the time since he had no money to pay her bride worth. With Adigwu finally dead, the two love birds saw it as an opportunity to be together forever.

Now a widow, Ogwoma is expected by society to go through a three-month rite of cleansing which will separate her from her dead husband; and send his soul finally to the land of the dead. However, Ogwoma failed to complete the process of mourning due to her desire to be with the man she loves. She opens her 'doors' to Uloko and becomes pregnant for him; this untimely pregnancy sets the tone for the major conflict that ensued in the play. Taboos are broken, and blames are pushed around. Meanwhile, Odibei, Ogwoma's mother in-law, holds Ogwoma responsible for her son's death; she is bent on going to all lengths to avenge Adigwu's death. Ultimately, there was the need to protect the two lovers from the evil intentions of Odibei. The play ends with Odibei killing Ogwoma; and with Uloko avenging her death by killing Odibei and taking his own life to reunite with Ogwoma eternally.

The playwright throughout her life time, used her plays to plead the case of tradition. She seems to present tradition in its truest forms, leaving her audience to choose their path. Kolawole reveals that Sofola “has always revealed the desire for African women’s self-definition, within relevant cultural context” (29). This means that Sofola advocates for women empowerment; and shows them a way out of societal constraint. Kolawole further explains that, “the playwright creates heroines who confronted marginal social space and defied tradition when tradition was a hindrance to self-realization” (30). This implies that Sofola is more concerned with how the lives of women can be transformed even in the face of traditions and culture. This can be seen clearly in *Wedlock of the Gods*; which is one of Sofola’s earliest plays. Kolawole aptly states that, Sofola’s “earlier heroines dramatized the inevitable tension as a woman tries to come to terms with the tensions of tradition” (30). This is perhaps the case in *Wedlock of the Gods*. In an attempt to further explain Sofola’s preoccupation in this play, Kolawole notes that, “she maintains the good side of tradition especially when it encourages continuity, stability and self – esteem. But she deconstructs tradition as she highlights the ambivalence and attendant contradictions” (32). What this means is that *Wedlock of the Gods* is not contesting tradition but rather exposes both the negative and positive sides so the reader can decide.

From the beginning of the play, it is clear that widowhood rite plays a very important role in the play. The playwright herself introduces its presence when she says “*Wedlock of the Gods* is a tragedy which finds its roots in the ritual of death and mourning” Sofola (1972:1). From the above, it will be safe therefore to identify widowhood rites as one of the dominant cultural practices in this play. Also, when the play opens and Ogwoma first appears on stage, the audience are able to recognize through her costume, mood and utterances that she is in mourning. The study will now discuss this practice as used by Sofola in the play.

4.3 WIDOWHOOD RITES IN *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS*

Widowhood rite is a major cultural practice in many African societies. It is performed on the surviving partner after the death of the husband or wife. It is a practice that supports the African belief in life after death; hence, this rite becomes the way through which the dead is separated from the living. Although widowhood rite is practised in most African countries, there are variations in the nature of the practice itself. That is, the rite itself is done differently in different societies all over the continent. According to Rattray (1969), widowhood rites differ in practice even among the tribes of the Ashanti hinterland. With regards to the above assertion, the study will now examine the nature of widowhood as established in *Wedlock of the Gods*.

Although the nature of the rite is not clearly stated, the reader is able to visualize this through the playwright's description of the setting, costume and even dialogue. For instance, Sofola, in her production note to the play, describes Ogwoma's house in the following words;

The set for Ogwoma's house should portray a place of mourning with rags and cooking utensils scattered about at random; pieces of firewood, ashes, some foodstuffs such as oranges, corn etc. should be seen on the floor and out-of-place locations in order to create a sense of disorder and depression. Pots, baskets, wooden plates, old and dirty farm bags, a brick bier as a fireplace and other essential things in a young woman's house should be seen but the atmosphere should reflect mourning (2).

The above extract paints a picture of the way Sofola wants Ogwoma's living conditions to be. Firstly, it is realized that she lives alone in an unkempt environment. This implies that she is too depressed and dishevelled to pay any attention to her surroundings. One other fact that readily

becomes obvious is the fact that, since it is expected that a widow in mourning is depressed, she is not conscious of the things happening around her. This perhaps is as a result of the fact that;

In many instances the bereaved becomes pre-occupied by memories of the deceased, sometimes even talking to the departed person as though he or she was still alive. The widow or widower is not only isolating him/herself from the living but is making it harder for him/herself to face the reality of the spouse's death" Fazoranti and Aruna (57).

Inferably, this is what Sofola is putting across. Through the above stage directions, the playwright's description of the set is symbolic to most widowhood rite practices especially in Ghana and some parts of Nigeria. In many societies, women in mourning are often kept in untidy rooms. In a comparative study conducted on widowhood rites among the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups of Nigeria, Fazoranti and Aruna (68) reveal some of their findings from Ogburuka. According to them, "the widow is put in a cage where she could sit and not sleep on a mat or mattress". This is perhaps a much more severe case of isolation and deprivation suffered by widows. Similarly, interviews conducted by this study also affirm the above. A respondent discloses that she was kept in seclusion for a month after her husband's death. She was kept in an empty room where she sat on a mat on the bare floor. She was not allowed any visitors except other widows. She had only one piece of cloth for warmth; this cloth was even quite tattered (Ms. Enyonam Agboka 2014). Sofola's representation therefore, is not so different from what pertains to some African societies. Also, in act 1 scene 1 of the play, the playwright throws more light on Ogwoma's surroundings when she says:

The room reflects a place of mourning. Some stools and household utensils are placed at random on the floor, shelves and by the sleeping mat, all near a fireplace where cooking materials are also kept.

There is an inner room, but OGWOMA sleeps by the fire as she is still in mourning. The fire is out, but there are ashes and a few pieces of firewood (5).

From the above, it becomes clear that, Ogwoma is made to sleep on a mat by the fireplace. It is however, not clear whether or not the fireplace actually provides some warmth for Ogwoma; especially when the fire is out.

The nature of widowhood rite in the play is also evident in the description of the costume. The playwright clearly drew from society as far as the costume is concerned. In some African societies where widowhood rites are performed, widows are made to wear black clothes for the entire period of mourning. Black in African culture is symbolic of sadness and mourning; hence it is closely associated with funeral and mourning rites. The case is not different in the play; the playwright prescribed black or dark colours of clothing for Ogwoma and other close relatives of Adigwu. She says “as for costumes, Ogwoma, Odibei and Nneka should wear dark clothes to indicate people in mourning. No blouses, shoes or jewelry for these somber mourners” (3). Also, she specifies that, “OGWOMA is suitably dressed for someone in mourning, with only a piece of cloth which is draped from bust and reaches the ankle” (7). The use of the word ‘suitably’ connotes the colour black or brown; just as it is done in some African societies. Here, it is again clarified how similarly Zulu Sofola’s representation of widowhood rites is a representation of what is usually practiced.

The playwright also further clarifies the nature of widowhood rites in the play by giving the number of months that Ogwoma should mourn her dead husband. In an interaction between Anwasia and Ogwoma, Anwasia asks “Couldn’t you have waited for the three months to pass before letting him in?” Similarly, Udo also says “...A woman mourns her husband for three

months...” From the above, it can be gathered that Ogwoma is expected to mourn Adigwu for a period of three months; a period within which she must remain in black or dark cloths with neither jewelries nor shoes. Again, this is very similar to most traditional rural communities in Ghana. This study discovered that in most Ghanaian communities especially among the Ashantis as well as some Ewe tribes, widows are expected to go through a period of one year mourning (Rattray 1969, Togbe Agbale II, 2014). The one-year process begins as soon as the funeral and burial rites commence through to the one year celebration for the deceased. All through this period, the widow is expected to remain in dark clothing.

Another important aspect of most widowhood rites is the shaving of the widow’s head. This is meant to shed off any ties the widow shares with her dead husband. This act also symbolizes the closing of that chapter of the widow’s life, and the beginning of another; in other words, preparing the widow for a new life. For this reason, most women are shaved upon the death of their husbands. It seems, however, that Ogwoma was not excused from this rite. This is evident in the following lines spoken by Odibei. She asks Uloko, “What man of respect would find the house of a woman in mourning inviting? Is it to see her shaven head or her body in ashes that you have come?”. The above line infers that Ogwoma’s head was shaved as part of the rites she must perform for Adigwu.

4.4 ESSENCE OF WIDOWHOOD RITES

Widowhood rites are considered very essential in many African communities, especially in Ghana and Nigeria. It is a rite that is done following the demise of a spouse. Due to the importance placed on this practice, surviving partner(s) of the deceased is expected to go through the rites. In the playwright’s production notes to the play, she suggests that, widowhood rites and

its associated rituals were meant to cleanse Ogwoma and at the same time send the spirit of her dead husband to the world of the gods. It will be safe therefore to say that the general belief is that, until proper rites and rituals are performed, the spirit of the dead hovers in the land of the living. It seems also that a woman who has not gone through the necessary rites for her dead husband is regarded as unclean. This means that, she still shares a part of her husband thereby making her unsuitable for any other man; this can be deduced from Nneka's lines. She says to Uloko, "You are evil. A man who visits the house of a woman in ashes hides so that people will not see his face. He hides because what he goes to touch has not been cleansed" (38). Nneka is at this point referring to her daughter Ogwoma as unclean since she is still in mourning. From her lines, it is apparent that, it is something society knows about, hence she expects Uloko to know as well.

In stressing the essence of the widowhood rite, Ogoli also says to Uloko;

Ogwoma was his wife. Any other man who touches her is inviting the anger of the gods. I told you this many times. I cried enough to your ears about it. You did not listen. Now you have done an abomination. You have planted a fowl seed in the womb of a woman in morning. You have planted a poisonous snake in the womb that has not been purified. You have touched what belongs to a man whose spirit is still finding its way back to the world of the gods... (42).

In explaining the fact that Uloko has committed an abomination, Ogoli hints on the importance of the rites. In the above lines she talks about the fact that Ogwoma's womb has not been purified making her unclean for Uloko. She also suggests that Adigwu's spirit is still roaming the land of the living; this implies that, widowhood rite is important in ensuring that the spirit of the dead departs from the world of the living.

4.5 THE WIDOW AFTER THE RITES

In most cases, a widow's suffering begins right from the moment of the death of the husband till much after the rites have been completed. The play discusses a number of such sufferings. One such issue is that most widows are accused of having a hand in their husbands' death. Ogwoma is not spared from this plight either. It is not surprising that Odibei, her mother-in-law accuses her of being responsible for Adigwu's death. This is evident in the following conversation:

Odibei: It must be somewhere.

Otubo: What is the matter with you, Odibei?

Odibei: Adigwu cannot die like that.

Otubo: Odibei, people are born and people die.

Odibei: She must have hidden it somewhere.

Otubo: Ogwoma could not have killed Adigwu.

Odibei: My son cannot go like that.

Otubo: He was sick. The sickness refused all the medicines, and so he...

Odibei: Adigwu died of a swollen stomach. A man who dies like a pregnant woman did not die a natural death. Somebody killed him (5-6).

Although Otubo tries tirelessly to convince Odibei, she remains adamant in her accusations. She believes that Ogwoma used diabolical means to kill her son; hence she is determined to find the medicine so as to prove her point. To her, the mere fact that she did not come in to meet Ogwoma sleeping in ashes means she is guilty of murder. In societies where widowhood rites are practised, the widow is most often accused of killing her deceased husband. For this reason, such societies see widowhood rites as a way of punishing the widow. Fazoranti and Aruna concede

that, “In the case of the loss of the husband, the wife becomes the primary suspect as the cause of the husband’s death and is thus treated accordingly” (53).

During such period, women are subjected to dehumanizing activities that pose health and psychological trauma to them. More so, some of these activities violate the basic rights of the victims. It is obvious that Zulu Sofola represents this in the play through the tragic heroine.

There are several instances where widows are made to marry from the family of the deceased after widowhood rites have been completed. Most often, she is given in marriage to a brother of the deceased. The intent of this is to continue the family lineage. This is also done so as to ensure that the widow is catered for and well protected. Miss Agboka⁴, a respondent, discloses that;

after I had gone through the required one-year period of mourning for my deceased husband, I was offered to the brother of my dead husband as a second wife. I declined the offer because I was not in love with him and I felt it will be a dishonor to my late husband’s memory. Upon my refusal, my husband’s family severed all ties with me and my family.

In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Ogwoma is being offered in marriage to Okezie, Adigwu’s brother. Ogwoma however, refuses the offer since she is in love with Uloko. She considers herself liberated from a loveless marriage with Adigwu; hence she was not ready to commit herself to another of such marriages. This can be seen in the ensuing conversation;

Ogwoma: What have I done to them? I have fought for the past four years to marry a man I love, but these people will not let it be. I was tied and whipped along the road to Adigwu. Now that God has freed me they still say I am his brother’s wife.

⁴ A widow interviewed in Ho on the 27th of March, 2014 at 11GMT

Anwasia: Listen, Ogwoma, a friend must always be honest and truthful. It is a common this that when a man dies his brother takes his wife and makes her his wife. This is what our people do. Everyone knows that (21).

Anwasia's lines confirm that it is common practice for a widow to be given to the brother of the deceased as a wife. Therefore, it can be said that Ogwoma is aware that in the absence of her husband, she becomes Okezie's wife. She justifies her disapproval over the matter when she asks Anwasia "Is the woman taken by force? Is she not to choose between her brother-in-law and someone else?"(22). This establishes the fact that Ogwoma is not necessarily obliged to marry Okezie. However, Anwasia further clarifies the point that in Ogwoma's case there are no options. She says, "Adigwu had no child by you. His people want a child for him by a woman who was his wife. You are that wife and his brother can have that child for him by you" (22). Therefore, Ogwoma has no choice in the matter. Seemingly, she is obliged by tradition to marry Okezie mainly because the family requires a child from her. This seems to conflict with her desire to marry Uloko whom she loves. Once more, Sofola establishes the conflict that exists between individual choices and tradition.

As indicated earlier in this study, Sofola uses her plays to question and contest the place and purpose of age-old cultural practice; hence, she uses *Wedlock of the Gods* to question widowhood rites. However, Sofola does not really present a true and vivid picture of the widowhood rite as it is seen in many communities even in Nigeria. This therefore poses some pertinent questions as to how she is able to move the audience and to contest the widowhood rite. In the ensuing discussion, the study has juxtaposed widowhood rites as practised in the play with what pertains in the society. This comparison revealed the fact that, Sofola's representation of widowhood rite in the play is not as severe as what is seen in some Nigerian and Ghanaian

societies. Her representation of the widowhood rite does not really depict its negative aspects. If this is the case, then how can society react to her resistance if they cannot relate to it?

4.6 THE RELEVANCE OF WIDOWHOOD RITES TODAY

Although modernization, education and religion have played a role in the alteration of many indigenous practices, widowhood rites still remain very important to many Africans. While the rite varies in practice from one society to the other, there are peculiar aspects that are common to most communities.

Through interviews administered, the researcher found out that in Ghana for example, immediately a man dies, the news is sent to the family and later to the community. The immediate family members then gather to set a date for the funeral rites and to commence preparations for the burial rites. For a widow, the widowhood rites begin as soon as news of the husband's death is relayed. She instantly changes into dark clothing to symbolize the fact that she is mourning.

When the day of the funeral finally comes, the widow is required to sit next to her husband's corpse wailing. In some communities, people are not allowed to console the widow since they believe that she is responsible for her husband's death. This continues until the burial rites are completed, then the widow is ushered into a room where she will spend the next three to four weeks; depending on cultural requirements. Before she is taken into seclusion, the woman's head is shaved. In the room, she sleeps on a piece of cloth or a mat on the floor throughout the period. She is not allowed to receive visitors; except people who have also gone through the rites. The widow bathes and eats at odd times; and must not be seen outside after six o'clock in the evening. And according to Togbe Agbale (2014), all these are done as a form of punishment for

the widow. After the three weeks period is over, the woman is brought out; and certain rites are performed. From this point on, the widow resumes her life but is expected to wear the black cloth for the next one year.

Today, the place, role and the significance of the widowhood rite is being interrogated. Women are beginning to question the need to go through these rites. The answers to these questions are varied and not farfetched. Primarily, most women will agree to be taken through the widowhood rite in instances where they are being accused of killing their husbands. Meaning that, they will agree to the rites only to prove their innocence. In this case, they see the rites merely as a requirement; hence they are not going through it because they believe in its traditional significance, just as it is in the case of Ogwoma. From the play, it can be deduced that Ogwoma was not in love with Adigwu; hence it will be wrong to say that she agreed to do the widowhood rite in honour of her husband. The mere fact that she was unable to complete the mourning process before getting pregnant for Uloko shows her indifference to the rite.

Secondly, some women see the rites as a way of paying their last respect to their spouses. This is often in the case of women who reside in rural communities; where they understand the importance of the rites and have witnessed their parents go through the process. It could also be seen in cases where the woman loved her husband dearly during their years of marriage.

In most traditional societies, a woman who does not go through widowhood rites is frowned upon. And in many cases, her refusal to go through the rites becomes a stigma on her and her entire family.

Over the years, there have been accounts of inhumane treatments meted out to widows. There are communities in which widows are made to drink the water used in bathing the corpse of their

husbands. In other communities also, the woman is locked in a room with her husband's corpse for several days. There have also been instances where widows were made to use stones as headrest while they sleep. It is in this vein that Fasoranti and Aruna conclude that, "[w]idowhood experiences are generally a trauma but in some African societies, they are considered more as an experience of deprivation, subjugation and humiliation" (54). Although some communities still practise these severe forms of widowhood rites, others have altered its performance to suit current society. The research established that widowhood rite has gone through some relevant transformation over the years. It was discovered that in some communities in the Volta Region of Ghana, the shaving of the head has been altered. Instead of shaving off the widows hair completely, they simply clip off a few strands of hair from the nape of the head. The few strands of hair taken off are meant to represent the shaving of the head as it was formally done. This shows that the rite is gradually adapting to modern times. However, as stressed earlier, this is only the case of a few communities even in Ghana; according to Fasorani and Aruna (2005) the practices of widowhood rites are still very strict in some Igbo and Yoruba communities in Nigeria.

Participants for the focus group discussion were skeptical about widowhood rites. Most of them expressed the fact that, they found the rites irrelevant in modern society. Miss Obeng, a respondent says, "I don't think I would allow myself to go through the rites because I do not find it relevant. What's more, my religion does not permit me to go through widowhood rites. I will mourn my husband in my own way and on my own terms but not because someone tells me I have to". Miss Aryee and even some male participants also shared the same views with regards to the rites. Based on the above, it will be safe to say that, many people's opinion has changed over the years with regards to widowhood rites. These changes can be attributed to religious

beliefs and formal education. This move for change is not surprising since formal education and Christianity have introduced societies and individuals to new perspectives of life; and this has affected their ways of viewing tradition and culture.

4.7 TABOOS AND BELIEFS

Taboos are set of values that govern the moral code of a society. Taboos are known to have serious repercussions should they be violated. Today, most taboos are regarded as mere superstitions. There are indications of taboos being violated in the play. Although Sofola discusses many aspects of the widowhood rites, the most significant is the fact that, Ogwoma is unable to complete her three months of mourning before getting impregnated by Uloko. This action is considered a great taboo and with grave consequences. As hinted earlier, widowhood rites are considered as very sacred and reflective moment for the widow or widower. It is a period during which the widow is isolated from the world; and at the same time guided through solemn rites and processes meant to separate her from the deceased partner. The fact that Ogwoma gets pregnant for Uloko while in mourning means they have interrupted all the necessary rites. In support of this, Udo says to Uloko, "...A woman who loses her husband must not be visited by any other man until she has been cleansed. Any action against this is an abomination and our gods deal severely with such offenders"(36). Also, in a conversation between Ogwoma and Nneka, it is made clear that a grave taboo has been broken; a taboo that has unbearable penalties:

Ogwoma: there is nothing anyone can do about it.

Nneka: Oh, my God! You let... Oh God, that goat touched you? You let that beast touch you even in mourning?

Ogwoma: He is my husband.

Nneka: ...What shall I do?... You have violated the worst taboo in the land. Do you know what that means?

Ogwoma: It is not...

Nneka: Do you know that, the punishment for this deed is a swelling of the body with water leaking from everywhere? Do you know that, nobody will agree to treat you for fear they might catch your curse? Do you know that even after death no forest will accept your body? Oh God, What shall I do...
(19-20)

From the above lines, it has been established that Ogwoma and Uloko have committed an abomination; and Nneka also makes clear the punishments that the young lovers are going to face for their actions. The playwright seems to be making a statement with the young lovers violating this taboo. In this play, the playwright did not make Ogwoma violate her widowhood rites just so readers and audience could see the repercussions; but rather, she is using this as a way of expressing how oppressive such beliefs could be to the happiness of the individual. Therefore, Sofola in driving her point home makes Ogwoma strong and unperturbed by society's criticism. This being the case, one would ask why she allowed herself to begin the widowhood rites only to stand against it later.

Also, Uloko plays a very significant role in Sofola's discussion of widowhood rite in the play. In a way, he becomes the main obstacle between tradition and change. He yielded to the love he feels for Ogwoma thereby getting her pregnant while she is still mourning Adigwu. This act provoked the main conflict point within the play; leading to Ogwoma and Odibei's death as well as his own suicide. It could be said that, the consequence of their acts which violates a taboo of

the land, resulted in their death. Hence, the play opens the eye of the audience to the reality of this situation.

Through the play, Sofola has exposed her readers to some belief systems of her people. One of such beliefs is that, when someone dies with the stomach swollen then it means the person died of unnatural causes. In the play, Odibei says, “Adigwu died of a swollen stomach. A man who dies like a pregnant woman did not die a natural death. Somebody killed him” (6).

Also, the people’s belief is that a dead man’s spirit remains in the land of the living until his wife concludes all widowhood rituals. It has been implied severally in the play that Adigwu’s spirit is still roaming the forest because Ogwoma is still mourning him.

4.8 TRADITIONAL VALUES

In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Sofola creates a community with its unique set of traditional values. It seems however that these sets of values do not only exist in the world of the play but also in many African societies.

4.8.1 THE FAMILY

Family may be considered as “a group of related people. The relationship binding them may be expressed in terms of ‘blood’ or consanguineal ties or kinship ties”, Awedoba (2005:104). For this reason, family as it is known in traditional Africa is usually very large. “...when one speaks of the family in an African context one is referring not to the nuclear family consisting merely of husband, wife, and children, but to the extended family, which comprises a large number of blood relatives who trace their descent from a common ancestor and who are held together by a sense of obligation to one another”, Gyekye (75). Consequently, when an issue confronts one

member of the family, it becomes a problem for all. In the play, Sofola expresses the responsibility of family towards its members. When Ogwoma becomes pregnant for Uloko while she is still mourning Adigwu; Ogwoma's father, Ibekwe, seeks help from his family. At this gathering, Sofola expresses the important role family play in solving one another's problems. This is captured in the following lines;

Ata: Men of Onowu family, I welcome you. Ibekwe, greetings to you and your household. Our people say that, a man who ignores his family is the one who stands alone in the rain. We have heard what you said. We are equally worried and our eyes cannot hold the flood that this matter has caused. You are our brother and Ogwoma is our daughter. We say that when a brother is dancing badly in the presence of observers, his relatives scratch their own eyes for shame. This news about Ogwoma's behavior has punctured our eyes but it has not blinded us. It was God who said that man must beget children and it is also God who gives us wisdom to guide them. Men, we have met to see what we can do to snatch our daughter and bite her ears for her before she dances too long (26).

From the above extract, Ata stresses the fact that Ogwoma is their daughter as well; hence anything that affects her affects the entire family. For this reason he expresses the shame and disappointment the family feels for what Ogwoma has done. This notwithstanding, he points out that it is the duty of the family to find a solution for the matter at hand. Here, Sofola tries to revisit the traditional African family system and its importance. It can be understood that the extended family system today is fast losing its relevance. The reasons for this are many and varied. A major cause of the breakdown in the extended family system is westernization. Civilization has brought about rural urban migration; where people settle and build a family in urban centers away from the extended family setting. Today, it has become difficult in some cases to see the extended family come together to solve problems confronting one another. It has been discovered that the extended family system is more functional in rural communities; this is

because, almost all the members of the family live in the same community. However, in Ghana for instance, families come together annually or during festive occasions to discuss issues confronting them. Sofola acknowledges the role and importance of the extended family system in traditional African societies. However, in this same play, she points out the fact that the extended family system is not as influential as it was in the olden days. This is authenticated by the fact that although the Onowu family met to discuss Ogwoma's predicament and to find solutions, they were unsuccessful. While discussing the extended family, Sofola also hints her attempt to advocate for the re-establishment of the extended family system into society. The playwright does this through Ibekwe who acted without soliciting the views of his extended family; consequently, he is left alone in his times of need. From the play, one gathers that Ibekwe did not solicit the family's opinion, or ask for their help when he was giving Ogwoma away to Adigwu. This is emphasized in the following lines;

Okolie: You said earlier, Diokpa Ata, that it is the man who ignores his family that stands alone in the rain. Ibekwe had a very sick son. That son nearly died but for his God who said it was not his time to go. There are some illnesses that medicine can cure while there are others which only offering to our God can cure.

Atta: That is true.

Okolie: Edozie's sickness could only hear a sacrifice to our God. But that was not all, brothers. The oracle stated clearly that before Edozie could fully recover he must be initiated into manhood even at his age of ten. Ibekwe had not enough money for all this. But rather than lean on our backs he decided to give his daughter away. It is true that, a man's daughter is his source of wealth, but never have our people supported such actions when there is another way to solve the problem. Diokpa Ata, I say that Ibekwe ignored his family and so should be left to stand alone in the rain (28).

Here, the elders question why Ibekwe did not rely on them for help to cure his sick son rather than give Ogwoma away. The family felt that, if Ibekwe did not seek their help then, it was irrelevant to seek their help now that the situation had escalated. This also takes the argument back to the fact that, Sofola emphasizes the importance of the extended family.

4.8.2 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN MARRIAGE

Unlike in other parts of the world, marriage in Africa is a union of two families rather than of individuals. As Gyekye (78) aptly puts it, “In Africa- in the setting of communal relationships and the extended family, marriage is not merely an affair between two individuals who have fallen in love and plan to spend the rest of their lives together”. In this vein, the entire family has a role to play in the marriage process. In instances where the family is denied its participation in the process, the couple will have no one to fall on should they encounter problems in their marriage. It is therefore necessary for both families to accept the couple and each other. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Sofola highlights the importance of family in marriage. In the play, Ibekwe refused to heed the family’s disapproval as far as Ogwoma’s marriage to Adigwu was concerned. This is made clear when Udo says;

When Diokpa Ibekwe was giving Ogwoma to her husband, she came to me several times in tears because she did not want to marry Adigwu. She begged me many times to talk to her father. I did so without any success. Ibekwe did not want to listen because, as he said, it was he who fathered Ogwoma and it was he who gave her away. Brothers, when the matter almost caused trouble between me and Ibekwe, I swallowed everything else. Ogwoma was led to her husband still protesting and I did not as much as look through the door to see if she was tied and carried to Adigwu or whipped along the way like a ram to the altar (26).

In the same way, Odibei reviled the idea of her son Adigwu marrying Ogwoma from the onset. It is therefore not surprising that she accuses Ogwoma of killing her son. In a confrontation between Odibei, Ogwoma and Uloko, Odibei says, “One does not have to see a skunk to smell him. I suspected this dog when her people were hawking her for any available man. I protested enough but my husband saw her as Adigwu’s wife. So we took her in and took upon us a curse” (16).

Also, Sofola uses the play to call attention to how parents give their children away in marriage. In the olden days, it was the responsibility of parents to choose life partners for their children. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, however, there is an appeal for parents to allow their children to choose their own partners. Ibekwe gave Ogwoma away in marriage to Adigwu despite the fact that he is aware of the relationship that exists between his daughter and Uloko. In effect, Ogwoma blames her parents for not allowing her to marry the man she loves. This is captured in the following;

Nneka: I heard everything and I cannot walk on the road for shame...Did we do anything that the land forbids? Is it not as others give their daughters away in marriage to husbands that we gave you away to one?

Ogwoma: No, it is not the way others are given away to their husbands that you and father threw me away to Adigwu. No, mother, you and father were so hungry for money that you tied me like a goat and threw me away to a man I hated.

Ogwoma seems to represent the voice of a new generation in which people should be allowed to marry for love. Nneka on the other hand represents the old, who are concerned about the security of their children; thereby marrying them to partners that can take care of their needs. It is this form of conflict that tradition places on the individual that Sofola addresses.

4.8.3 TRADITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN

One important traditional value Sofola discusses in *Wedlock of the Gods* is the responsibility that children have toward their parents and vice versa. Parents are obliged to take care of their children by providing them with necessary comfort, love and security. Children on the other hand are to obey their parents. If both parties do not fulfill these responsibilities, society tags them as being irresponsible. These values are embedded in the moral fiber of many African societies. As stated by Awedoba (107), “The reciprocities between African parents and their children are life-long ones and are backed not by legal requirements necessarily but by moral and religious obligations”. Ogwoma’s parents, in performing their responsibilities, ended up sacrificing her happiness. In their quest to cure a sick son, they had to give Ogwoma away in marriage to a man from whom they could get enough money. The lesson here is that parents sometimes hide behind their responsibilities in order to satisfy their personal needs. From all indications, there were alternative means of raising the money needed to cure Edozie. In justification, Okolie says, “it is true that, a man’s daughter is his source of wealth, but never have our people supported such action when there is another way of solving the problem” (28). Okolie points out that Ibekwe did not necessarily have to give Ogwoma away in marriage, when there were other ways of solving the problem. For instance, Ibekwe could have solicited help from his extended family but he did not. One could say that, Ibekwe and Nneka performed their parental duties by saving Edozie’s life although in so doing they had to sacrifice their daughter’s happiness.

Also, it is the moral duty of a parent to call his or her child to order when necessary. So, when the truth about Ogwoma and Uloko finally came out, Ogoli reprimands Uloko for not paying heed to her earlier warnings.

Similarly, children are obliged to heed their parents' advice; this is because, it is believed that, the elderly knows best. Hence, if a child refuses to heed his or her parent's advice, he or she will encounter problems eventually. This is evident in the ensuing lines;

Uloko: I have not committed any crime. It is ...

Udo: Shut up your mouth

Uloko: I will not shut up my...

Udo: Shut your mouth, I say! Let good sense come into your head for once. You may be in love with Ogwoma, but there is a limit to what you can do. I stuck my head out very strongly for you when Diokpa Ibekwe was giving Ogwoma away to Adigwu instead of you. The matter almost caused trouble between us. I advised you as a father to find another wife...

From the above, it can be gathered that Udo warned Uloko about Ogwoma when it became obvious that she belonged to Adigwu; but Uloko remains adamant. His and Ogwoma's stubbornness coupled with their will to stay together, is what drives the plot to a tragic end.

4.9 MAGIC/WITCHCRAFT

Magic or witchcraft as it is known in the African context is an old spiritual practice that exists in many African societies. Just like most cultural practices, witchcraft takes different forms depending on the culture of a particular community. As Awedoba aptly captures it, "...beliefs can differ so much so that what might be called witchcraft in one society may not be witchcraft at all to members of another society"(209). The most significant thing about witchcraft is its ability to destroy and to kill. It offers its possessor sacred powers to see and do things which ordinary human beings should not be able to see or do. Arguably, the playwright employed witchcraft in the play; perhaps to give it an African tone. In the play, Sofola describes objects

and situations that seem supernatural. This is revealed in the last act of the play. In the stage directions introducing Act 3 Scene 1, the playwright says;

OGWOMA'S house. ODIBEI enters with a small pot containing herbal medicine. She also has a snail shell containing herbal medicinal powder with a small feather sticking out of it. OGWOMA is still not in. ODIBEI opens the door gently, walks in with care, goes straight to the water pot and lays down what she is carrying. She wears a vicious expression which suggests that she is intent on revenge (45).

In the stage directions above, Odibei has certain props that are described as herbal and medicinal; these seemingly harmless herbs became the object through which Odibei destroys Ogwoma. The playwright further says;

Odibei: (does some business with the medicinal objects, then lifts the medicinal pot high and speaks) Let her come to you. Let her drink! (Pause. Then she places the pot gently and securely behind OGWOMA'S drinking pot, concealing it with the parcel of cola nuts wrapped in green leaves which OGWOMA put behind the pot. She picks up the snail shell, ready to speak, when she hears footsteps outside... (45).

It seems as though Odibei was in the middle of a ritual when she was interrupted. That is the reason why she tucked away the objects she is carrying before she turns around to face her intruder.

Also, the playwright shows the strength and potency of African magic or witchcraft at the dying scenes of the play. Here, Odibei summons Ogwoma into the bush and commands her to go back home and drink the poison she had kept behind her water pot. In Act 3 Scene 2, the stage direction says; *"in the bush. ODIBEI has a small medicinal gourd, a snail shell containing medicinal powder and a pot oozing with smoke. She sits with these items in front of her. She*

arranges them, then picks up the gourd and shakes it thrice as she talks” (52). After the above stage businesses, Odibei says;

...The antelope does not hear his death music and refuses to dance; Ogwoma cannot hear call and refuse to answer! Bring her here! Lead her to me; Bring her here not knowing what she is doing! Lead her and make her do whatever I bid! Ogwoma, your soul is summoned; (*OGWOMA appears in a trance and walks towards ODIBEI.*) 52

The above lines suggest the presence of a third party; someone who serves as an intermediary between Odibei and Ogwoma. It seems as though an invisible person or object, perhaps a supernatural relays Odibei’s message to Ogwoma. In some African societies where magic is practiced, it is assumed that there are always objects of contact. These objects are used by the witch or magician to reach his or her target. These are sometimes household animals or pets, objects of clothing, or even food items among others. In this instance however, Odibei is seen taken into a smoking pot; she issues her command into the pot and her biddings are done almost immediately.

Another fascinating aspect of Odibei’s act is the fact that she is able to summon Ogwoma into the bush in a trance. Ogwoma doesn’t seem aware of her surroundings or what was happening to her. For performance purposes, the playwright is able to represent a soul (spirit) well enough to achieve the required effect. In the play, Odibei summon the soul of Ogwoma; but instead, Ogwoma appears in a trance showing that she is not her physical self. For an audience watching the play, Sofola’s artistic representation of Ogwoma’s soul will help them understand the playwright’s intent. When Ogwoma appears before Odibei, she instructs her on what to do. This is evident in the following dialogue;

Odibei: That is good. Go to your house, open the door and enter. Behind your water-pot is another small pot. Open it and say into it once, 'I have done what the land forbids', Cup your hand and drink from the pot with your hand thrice saying before each drink, 'I have done what the land forbids', 'Let me perish', 'Let my blood appease the disgraced spirit of my husband.' Close the pot and wait for whatever comes is that clear? (*Each phrase is said only once, a phrase for a drink*)

Ogwoma: It is clear

Odibei: Good. Go now, and do everything.

Ogwoma: I will do everything

After the above conversation, Ogwoma goes home and follows Odibei's instructions. Ogwoma dies after drinking the potion Odibei kept behind her drinking pot. Just like all the other cultural practices portrayed in this play, Sofola's representation of magic mirrors what pertains to our society. Today, witchcraft has become a thing of shame. For this reason, people who practice it do not allow themselves to be seen. In Ghana for instance, any elderly person who is wicked or mean is tagged as a witch. With many charismatic churches around today witchcraft is greatly frowned upon by society.

4.10 ABOUT EFUA SUTHERLAND'S *EDUFA*

Edufa is an adaptation of Euripides' *Alcestis* in which Sutherland discusses the inability of a protagonist to strike the balance between civilization and tradition. In this play, Edufa consults a diviner who saw death hanging over his head. Rather than accept his fate, he opted for a charm that allows him to trade his death with another. Meanwhile, Ampoma his beloved wife innocently pledges to die for him without knowing about the existence of the charm. When the deed is already done, Edufa tries all he could to make his wife undo the oath she swore. Eventually, Ampoma becomes very ill; and despite Edufa's effort to save her life, she dies at the end of the play.

As discussed previously in chapter two of this study, Sutherland infused the culture of her people into the play in order to make it Ghanaian; and also in order for her audience and readers to be able to identify with the play. This study will discuss the playwright's use of cultural practices, values, and symbols in the play.

4.11 THE CLEANSING RITE

The cleansing rite is an age old cultural practice among many African societies especially in Ghana. It is a rite used to drive away alien and evil spirits from the community. It is also meant to avert any ill omen within households and the community at large. As revealed by Mr. Cobbah, these rites are done annually in most Ghanaian societies; it is mostly done before the annual traditional festivals. In the Volta Region in Ghana for instance, specifically within the Gbi traditional area, the cleansing rites are done at the beginning of the Yam Festival. Due to the sacredness of the rites, the Gbi people perform this rite in the middle of the night; since it is believed that evil spirit lurks around while all human souls are asleep. On the morning before the

rites are performed, a curfew is declared, therefore people must not be seen outside after 10pm. Hence, should anyone be seen outside during the time of the cleansing, that person is treated as an evil spirit.

Today, these rites, although not common in urban areas, are still very popular in rural communities; not only during festivals but also during other special occasions. The study discovered that in some villages in the Central Region where this play is set, the cleansing rites are performed. Mr. Cobbah further explained, “I come from a small community within the Agona Traditional Area of the Central Region. In my village, the cleansing rites are done after every five years. An entourage visits homes where there has been death within the five-year-period to offer libation and prayers to the gods; during the visitation, certain rites are performed and the protection of the gods is sort against any future death within the household.

Sutherland introduces the performance of this rite in *Edufa*. Although she uses the rite as foreshadow to Ampoma’s death, its cultural significance cannot be overlooked. The cleansing rite is performed in the play by the chorus consisting of only women. The ensuing conversation explains the purpose of the cleansing rites performed in the play;

CHORUS: Are there no people in this beautiful house?

SEGUWA: (*Entering from the kitchen*) Who let you in...?

CHORUS: (*Cheerfully*) The gate of this house is always open.

SEGUWA: (*Uneasily*) Well...greeting...

CHORUS: We answer you.

SEGUWA: (*Still hesitating at the kitchen door*) And you have come...?

CHORUS ONE: We have come to drive evil away. Is the man of the house in? And the lady? We are driving evil out of town.

CHORUS: From every home. From every lane. From every corner of our town. Ei! Ei-Ei! We orphans cry.

CHORUS TWO: (*Steps up, sniffing and trying to locate the scent*) Incense.

SEGUWA: (Moving quickly forward) Whose funeral sends you out in ceremony?

CHORUS: Another's, and our own. It's all the same. While we mourn another's death, it's our own death we also mourn.
(23)

It is indicated in the above lines that the cleansing rite performed in the play is for a dead soul. In other words, it is performed upon the death of a member of the community. Also, it could be gathered that the performers of this rite use the opportunity to go round and drive evil spirit out of town. Thirdly, it could also be realized that the cleansing rite is also a form of mourning; where the deceased is mourned alongside the souls of other departed friends. The playwright further explains the essence and nature of the rites in the following lines;

EDUFA: Whose death is it? Is the rite for a new funeral?

CHORUS ONE: No. It's for an old sorrow out of which time has dried the tears. You can say that we are doing what gives calamity and woe the final push in the back-which is a manner of speaking only, as you know...

EDUFA: And you have come here...

CHORUS ONE: To purge your house also in the same old manner, for calamity is for all mankind and none is free from woe. (24)

From the above, it is suggested that the rites are being performed for an old soul. This perhaps means that the rites are performed very frequently; either as soon as someone dies or at a later date. Therefore, the chants and songs that accompany the performance of the rite clearly explains

the importance and purpose of the rite. During the performance of the rite itself, the chorus says; “Evil has no place here. Nor anywhere. Away, away”. In essence, this goes to show that the cleansing rites are not only for mourning but also to avert ill omen.

4.12 SYMBOLS

In some African communities, specific symbols are used to communicate specific messages. These symbols and their meanings are peculiar to each community; this makes such symbols most likely to be misunderstood within other cultural settings. In *Edufa*, Sutherland makes use of certain objects that have symbolic meaning.

To many Africans, an owl is a very symbolic bird. In Ghana, it is usually associated with evil, calamity and most often death. For this reason, the owl is hooted at and cursed by people especially in Ghana. Once again, Sutherland uses the owl as a symbol of the death that is hanging over Edufa’s household. She captures the African’s reaction to an owl in the following interactions;

SEGUWA: (*Entering from the kitchen*) You’re back.

SAM: Are you pleased to see me? (*Lifting up the cage*) look, he is my bird.

SEGUWA: (*Horried*) Don’t bring it near me. It’s an owl.

SAM: (*Blithely*) Of course. An owl is a bird.

SEGUWA: What’s it doing here?

SAM: It came with me. It was an owl before, but now it’s with me, it’s no longer itself. It’s an owl of an idiot. What we get, we possess. I caught it in a tree.

SEGUWA: Take it outside... (33)

Seguwa is clearly uncomfortable and upset over the presence of the owl in the house. She is an elderly woman and therefore, knows what the owl stands for. It is not surprising that she readily asks Sam to take the owl out of the house. In the same way, Edufa is also terrified when he came out and saw Sam with the owl. The playwright also uses the owl as an element of premonition in the play. When this play is staged before a Ghanaian audience, they will be able to relate with Seguwa and Edufa's reaction to the owl. They will also be able to understand the fact that there is imminent danger. Hence, the owl hoots at the end of the play to remind the audience about the earlier premonition.

The playwright also makes use of colour symbols to communicate to the reader. The African has special meanings for each colour; hence by looking at what a person is wearing, one could easily assume the individual's mood. To the Ghanaian, when someone wears black, it means the person is sad or in mourning. Similarly, when a person wears white, then that person is in celebration. In the play, Senchi was able to tell the mood of the chorus merely by looking at their cloths. He says, "Impossible. (*His eyes on the CHORUS*) You couldn't improve on this welcome here. All good stock, by their looks. Local breed? They're not dressed for fun and games, though, are they? Pity" (28). Although the Chorus' attire was not described, it is clear that they are not happily dressed. With regards to the nature of the rites they are performing, it is possible they are wearing black or dark coloured cloths.

In Ghanaian culture, a woman's waist bead is very sacred and should be treated as such. It is an object of a woman's pride that should be seen only by her husband; although this is seldom the case today. Ghanaians also believe that there are ways through which a woman enslaves a man to herself using her waist beads. In *Edufa*, Ampoma publicly throws her waist beads around Edufa's neck to symbolise a covenant. This is made clear in the following;

EDUFA: (*Confused and uncomfortable*) What's this?

AMPOMA: (*Opening the casket, and taking out some smart waist beads*) Waist beads, bearing the breath of my tenderness.

CHORUS: (*Nonplussed, eyes popping, but laughing*) Oh! Oh!

EDUFA: (*Astounded, embarrassed, but not displeased*) Ampoma!

SENCHI: (*Beside himself*) Great! Whew!

AMPOMA: (*Inscrutable*) Women, you understand, don't you, that with this, I mean to claim him mine. And you are witnesses. My husband, wear this with honour. (*She surprises EDUFA by slipping the beads round his neck. His first reaction is of shock.*) With it I declare to earth and sky and water, and all things with which we shall soon be one, that I am slave to your flesh and happy so to be. Wear it proudly, this symbol of union of our flesh.

Today, many people believe that the owl is just a bird, and all other symbolic meanings attached to its existence are mere superstitions. This notwithstanding, the owl will always be cursed and hooted at by others; mostly, rural dwellers.

4.12 HERBS AND MEDICINES

Africans over the years rely on the use of herbs in curing many illnesses. The indispensable role of herbal medicine in present day African society is authenticated by the fact that tertiary institutions, such as the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana) offer courses in this field. Hence, it is not surprising that Sutherland also infuses the use of herbal medicine in her play *Edufa*. Edufa with all his education and modernization adheres to the potency of herbal medicine; therefore he utilizes this method in his attempt to cure Ampoma. However, his use of herbal medicine is more of an act of desperation since he is willing to try anything that can possibly help Ampoma recover from her illness. In Ghana like some other parts

of Africa, herbs are used in many different ways for medicinal purposes, depending on the nature of the illness. In the play, Edufa says "...In a little while we will bathe in the herbs, and later today, at the junction between day and night, we will bathe again, the final time..." (7) Just as it is done in all cases of medication, it seems Edufa has been given specific instructions on the usage of the herbs.

The incense is a very important element of healing, not only in Africa but also in other parts of the world. Likewise incense burning plays an indispensable role in the worship service of some religious groups; mainly the Catholic and the Anglican churches. It is believed that incense is very effective in cleansing and deterring evil spirits. In the play, Edufa instructs "...Keep the incense burning while Ampoma and I bathe in the herbs" (5). With the burning of the incense, Edufa was hoping to perhaps ward off the imminent death that looms over his household.

Sutherland employs the use of both herbal medicine and the incense to show Edufa's desperation; and at the same time, to establish Edufa's conflicting religious beliefs. This is made evident when Senchi says;

...And I smell- what is that I smell? Incense? (*To Edufa*) Say, have you changed your religion again? What are you practicing now? Catholicism, spiritualism, new-theosophy or what? Last time I passed through here, you were an intellectual atheist, or something in that category. I wouldn't be surprised to see you turned Buddhist monk next time... (28)

From the above, Senchi confirms the association of the incense with religion. Also, one can gather from the above that Edufa constantly changes his religion and philosophies.

4.13 THE DIVINER

Diviners are often considered very powerful people since they serve as messengers to the gods. They possess great powers; powers that allow them to see into the future, kill and destroy, and also to save lives. Also, according to Sarpon, “the diviner or medicine-man provides amounts of mythical power to people in the form of charms, amulets, powder, rags, feathers, figures, special incantations or cutting on the body” (193). In this vein, a visit to the diviner in present day society is frowned at because of people’s perception that the act of divination is associated with witchcraft and magic; hence, they are regarded as evil. Due to this, some people who visit diviners do it in secret to avoid being judged by others. Nevertheless, some African writers introduce the act of divination in their work in order to showcase the mystery of the act. Ola Rotimi for instance in *The Gods are not Blame*, uses the soothsayer (Baba Fakunle) to divine the future of the baby (Odewale) born to King Adetusa. Surprisingly however, the divination did come to pass as predicted when Odewale, oblivious of the divination, kills his father (King Adetusa) and marries his mother (Queen Ojuola). This goes further to demonstrate the power of the act of divination. In *Edufa*, though Sutherland did not display the process of divination, she is able to simulate the presence and the role of the diviner and its divination. This is evident in the confrontation that ensues between Kankam and Edufa. It is gathered that they both consulted diviners. Kankam says “...I went to my own diviner to consult him about my health. He spread his holy patch of sand, lit candles and over his sacred bowl of water made incantations; and scrawled his mystic symbol in the sand. I’ll tell you what he saw in his divination, for it was all about you, my son. (*Advancing on EDUFA*) Four years ago, you went to consult one such diviner...” (14). In the above scenario, the diviner that Kankam consulted was able to discover through his divination that Edufa also consulted one such diviner some years ago. Kankam

however explains that, there is nothing wrong with visiting diviners. He says "...That's alright, my son. Most of us consult diviners for our protection. All men need to feel secure in their inmost hearts" (14). Here Kankam suggest that there is nothing wrong in visiting a diviner as long as the purpose is genuine; and it is indicated here that Edufa's motives for visiting the diviner was not genuine. This is evident in the following lines;

EDUFA: I am not all men. I am emancipated.

KANKAM: As emancipated as I'll show. Your diviner saw death hanging over your life- a normal mortal condition, I would think. But what happened, coward, what happened, when he said you could avert the danger by the sacrifice of another life?

Again, we see the power of divination; the fact that Edufa's diviner is able to see into his future and tell him he was going to die. Most important of all is the fact that the diviner also has a means through which Edufa could be saved. This is perhaps the reason why some people regard diviners as evil. Sutherland also paints the picture of a diviner's shrine in the play; and clearly it is an unpleasant sight. This is captured in the following;

EDUFA: (*Smiling in spite of himself*): All right. Now tell me quickly what I want to know. (*Anxiously*) Did you find the place?

SAM: It's an awful place. What do you send me to places like that for? Not the village itself. That is beautiful, floating in blue air on the mountain top, with climb-way in the mountain's belly going zig-zag-zig, like a game. (*He thoroughly enjoys his description.*)

SEGUWA: (*Impatiently*) He's so tiresome with his rambling.

EDUFA: (*Trying to be patient*) Good, you found the village. And the man?

SAM: He is a nice man, tall as a god. And he fed me well. You don't give me chicken to eat but he did. (*Thinks a bit*)

What does such a nice man live in such an awful house like that for? That's the awful part.

From Sam's utterances, it can be gathered that the place he was sent to is a bad looking place; he openly expresses his disgust. Sutherland however tries to establish the fact that diviners are mere mortals; and they do things that every human being does. This can be gathered from the fact that Sam describes him as a nice man who gave him chicken to eat.

In discussing the role of the diviner in today's society, Miss Aryee, a participant says "I used to be very sick as a child; and my parents took me to see many diviners. Because I was young, I didn't understand what was happening around me; but I clearly remember how terrified I was at those shrines. Today, there is no way I will visit such a place or accompany anybody there, I do not believe in diviner because I think they are evil; my faith clearly opposes them" .It can be realized that western religion and formal education have once again affected the manner in which society views diviners. People will rather seek solace in churches and prayer camps than in shrines where they are required to make grave sacrifices; the sacrifice being Ampoma, in Edufa's case.

4.13.1 CHARMS

There are cultural similarities that exist between charms, herbs, medicines, diviners and witchcraft. The above mentioned elements are well linked together; hence one cannot be separated from the other. While some people possess charms for protection, others use them as objects of faith. The charm that Edufa acquired largely affects the plot of the play; since it is on this charm that Ampoma swore to die for Edufa. This charm has the power to kill anyone who vows to die for Edufa, and it so happens that Ampoma is the one who took that oath. In his lines, Kankam recounts the day the oath was innocently taken by Ampoma. He says;

It had been raining without relief since the night before. Dampness had entered our very bones, and no one's spirits were bright. But you were of all of us, most moody and morose; in fact, so furious that you snapped at your wife for merely teasing that you couldn't bear, for once, to be shut away from your precious business and society. It was as if you couldn't tolerate yourself, or us. Suddenly, you jumped up and rushed out into the raging storm. That was the day you did your evil and killed your wife.(16)

He further says;

Towards evening you returned. The rain had stopped, and we of the household were sitting here, in this very place to catch what warmth there was in the sickly sunset. You seemed brighter then, for which change we all expressed our thankfulness. In fact, contrarily, you were cheerful, though still a little restless. How could we have known you were carrying on you the hateful charm? How could we have suspected it, when your children were playing around you with joyful cries? How could we have known it was not a joke, when you suddenly leaned back and asked which of us loved you well enough to die for you...you had willed that some old wheezer like me should be the victim. And I was the first to speak. 'Not me, my son', said I joking. 'Die your own death. I have mine to die'. And we all laughed. Do you remember? My age was protecting me. [Pause] then Ampoma spoke... I will die for you Edufa', she said...(16)

From the above, Kankam vividly describes how Ampoma became the victim to Edufa's charm.

The playwright also attests to the strength and irreversibility of the charm which Ampoma took.

This is evident in the ensuing lines;

... You know you killed your wife that day. I saw fear in your eyes when she spoke. I saw it but I didn't understand. I have learned that in your chamber that night, you tried to make her forswear the oath she had innocently sworn. But the more you pleaded, the more she swore away her life for love

of you; until, driven by your secret fear, you had to make plain to her the danger in which she stood. You showed her the charm. You confessed to her its power to kill whoever swore to die for you. Don't you remember how she wept? She had spoken and made herself the victim. Ampomah has lived with that danger ever since, in spite of all your extravagant efforts to counter the potency of the charm by washing and rites of purification... (17)

The above indicates the potency and irreversibility of the charm upon which Ampomah swore. For this reason, all efforts made by Edufa to reverse the curse proved futile. Despite the indication that the charm was irrevocable, Kankam says "...Confess and denounce your wrong. Bring out that evil charm. And before Ampoma and all of us whose souls are corporate in this household, denounce it. Burn it. The harm may not be irrevocably done if we raise the prayer of our souls together" (17). It is suggested here that, should Edufa burn the charm and confess, coupled with the prayers of the household, Ampoma could be saved. This goes to affirm the belief that, the most difficult situations could be salvaged with confessions and prayers.

4.13.2 PRAYERS TO THE GODS

In some traditional communities in Africa, people believe that there are spirits around that protect everybody. These spirits dwell in trees, stones and many other elements that surround us. During times that people feel cornered or worried, they offer silent prayers to these spirits. In the play, Kankam offers prayers to the spirits and to God above. He says, "Spirits around us, why don't you help him save himself. When he went to consult the diviner, he was doing well. You could tell. If you look at his new clothes you could tell. If you looked at his well-appointed household in whose precincts hunger wouldn't dwell..." (18). There seem to be a tone of helplessness to Edufa's situation in the above lines. It seems as though he has given up on Edufa's ability to redeem the situation; so he say a prayer to the spirits for help. Again he says

“...Pity him, you spirits. He grew greedy and insensitive; insane for gain; frantic for the fluff of flattery. And I cautioned him...” (18).

Also in the play, Kankam says a silent prayer in acknowledgement of the gods. In the stage directions, the playwright says, “*SEGUWA gives the water to KANKAM, who pours a little on the floor stylistically for libation, drinks it and thanks her. She returns to the kitchen*” (13). This routine is a very common practice with the elderly. Before they drink water, they pour a little on the floor in form of libation; then they offer a silent prayer before drinking. This practice is not as common as it is today; it has become something that is found only in very traditional individual or people occupying royal posts.

4.14 TABOO

In Ghana, as well as some parts of Africa, it is regarded disrespectful for a child to insult an elderly person. For this reason, when a child insults an elderly person, that child is scolded and mostly punished. It is however more offensive for a child to verbally abuse his or her parents. Sutherland, in *Edufa* drew attention to this traditional value in the confrontation between Edufa and Kankam. This is apparent in the following lines;

EDUFA: Father, are you mad?

KANKAM: [shocked] Nyame above! To say father and call me mad! My *ntoro* within you shivers with the shock of it!

EDUFA: [Aware that he has violated taboo] You provoked me

In the Akan society, it is believed that every child is guarded by the mother’s spirit and father’s spirit. The mother’s spirit is called *mogya* and that of the father is *ntoro*. The *ntoro*, therefore

becomes the spirit that binds the child to the father. As such, it is a taboo for Edufa to call his father mad; it is therefore, not surprising that, Kankam expresses pain over Edufa's utterances.

4.15 CULTURAL CLASH IN *EDUFA*

In Sutherland's *Edufa*, this subject is realised through the character of the eponymous hero, Edufa. He is a wealthy modern man, who is well respected and adored by many. His benevolence knows no boundaries; hence he is much loved by all in the society. Though Edufa calls himself an "emancipated man", he secretly consults a diviner in order to secure his life; one will wonder how come he did not consult a medical doctor instead. He visited a diviner who offered him a charm with which he could exchange his death with another's; and Ampoma, his wife, becomes the unlucky victim. The cultural clash is seen when Kankam confronts Edufa over Ampoma's health; Edufa strongly denies his role in Ampoma's illness. Kankam offers to help him but Edufa insists that Ampoma will be healed by modern medicine knowing clearly that his wife's illness is as a result of a charm. Edufa says, "indeed, in this age, there are doctors with skill enough to sell for what's ailing her, and I can pay their fees". His actions, however, contradict the above words because he still resorted to charms rather than modern medicine. His failure to balance the traditional and modern values leads to the inevitable tragedy at the end of the play.

Also, Edufa's inability to strike a balance between tradition and civilization is seen in the methods he employed in finding solution to Ampoma's ailment. In the play, he administers herbs, incense and dew water on Ampoma. There was no instance in the play where Edufa uses modern medicine to cure Ampoma. This perhaps goes to authenticate Edufa's ambivalent nature.

One would say that Edufa was hesitant in exhausting all available avenues to find a cure for Ampoma; he is probably hesitant because he still wants to live.

4.16 CULTURAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN *EDUFA* AND *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS*

Ghana and Nigeria have enjoyed cultural interactions for as long as one can remember; this resulted in the similarities that exist between both cultures. Through the power of electronic media, specifically television, both countries are able to relate with one another on cultural basis; that is, both countries are exposed to each other through their films, documentary, social media interactions among others. Also, migration and inter-cultural marriages have also encouraged some kind of familiarity between the two countries. The forged intercultural relation between these two nations is reflected in their dramatic works. On this premise, this study has identified certain similarities that exist within the cultures presented in *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. These will now be discussed.

The study identified some similarities in the way both playwrights discussed family and family values. The power of the extended family to remain knitted together in times of trouble can be seen in both plays. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, the Onowu family meets to discuss and find solutions to what Ogwoma has done. Although they do not succeed in reaching an agreement, the mere fact that they are able to come together is commendable. The value here is the fact that, they are each other's keeper and are willing to share each other's problems. In this same play, Sofola exposes the loopholes within the extended family. She highlights the fact that the extended family, might not always readily comply with each other when the need arises; especially when they feel secluded. In *Edufa*, the playwright shows how members of Edufa's

household fought to stay together in the face of Ampoma's sickness. Although Seguwa becomes agitated every now and then, she continuously offers her services to Edufa. In the same way, Abena also performs her duty in order to ensure that Ampoma recovers. Although she did not know exactly what was happening; she kept her concerns to herself and served her brother Edufa.

In both plays, there is the fight by parents to protect their children. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Nneka and Ibekwe married Ogwoma to Adigwu in order to use her bride price to cure their sick son; this they did at the cost of their daughter's happiness. Also, since it is the cultural responsibility of parents to ensure the safety of their children, Ogwoma's parents do all they can to save Ogwoma from Odibei. Similarly, Kankam returns to Edufa's house in an attempt to help him save Ampoma's life. From the play, one gathers that the relationship that exists between Edufa and Kankam was a stained one; and yet, he felt obliged to protect Edufa. Nevertheless, Kankam realizes eventually that Edufa was helpless, he still protects him. This is captured in the ensuing dialogue

EDUFA: One moment (*KANKAM turns to him hopefully.*) I hope you haven't talked like this to anyone. You could do so much harm. Unjustly.

KANKAM: (*With a rage of disappointment*) Worm. Coward. You are afraid for your overblown reputation, aren't you? You are afraid that if the town got to know they will topple you. No. I am tied by my fatherhood, even though I am not proud that my life water animated you. It is not my place to disillusion your friends. I'll let them bow to a worm. In time, they are bound to know they are bowing too low for their own comfort. Were this matter a simple case of crime, I would perhaps seek solution by bringing you to secular justice. As it is, to try still to save the woman's life our remedy is more probable in the path of prayer, which I now go to pursue away from your unhelpful presence...(19)

From the above, Kankam confirms that, he is restrained by his fatherhood to keep quiet over what Edufa has done. Although Kankam shows his disappointment towards Edufa, he is aware that Edufa is still his son. Just like in *Wedlock of the Gods*, this is one of the many sacrifices parents make in order to protect their children from society.

In Africa, every community has its own way of welcoming visitors. In Ghana, a visitor is welcomed with a cup of water; since it is assumed that journeying has made the visitor tired. Water is used because; culturally, water symbolizes life. This notwithstanding, other cultures also receive visitors with drinks or cola nut. These were well captured in both *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, characters received each other with cola nuts and palm wine just as it is done in almost all Nigerian cultures. There are several instances in the play where this is done. When Uloko visits Ogwoma, she says to him “Sit down and let me bring kola nuts” (11). Similarly, Uloko says to “Ede, Diokpa. Come in, Nna. Here is a seat, Diokpa. I have Ogolo palm wine...” (34). A person is considered rude when he or she fails to offer visitors water. In stressing the cultural importance and significance of offering water to visitors, Kankam say “...Don’t let us fail, however, on the sacredness of courtesy. Had I entered the house of a total stranger, he would have given me water to drink, seeing I’m a traveler” (12).

4.17 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the study has been able to identify and analyze the cultural practices highlighted by the playwrights in *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. The study also supports the analysis with views gathered from the focus group discussion and one-on-one interviews conducted. The study discovered that the cultural practices, values, and symbols among others discussed within the

plays are very identical to what obtains in the cultural background of the playwrights. The study also discovered some cultural similarities that exist between the two plays.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 OVERVIEW

In this chapter, the study answers the research questions in order to fulfil the research objectives. This is done by outlining the research findings based on the analysis of the data gathered; the chapter will also make some recommendations based on the findings of the study. The study will then conclude.

5.2 FINDINGS

The first objective of the study was to discover the cultural practices highlighted by the playwrights in *Edufa* and *Wedlock of the Gods*. This was achieved by reading and analyzing the plays and a focus group discussion. This objective produced the following findings:

- *Wedlock of the Gods* reveals the presence of the following; widowhood rite practices, taboos and beliefs, traditional values (traditional responsibility of parents and children, the extended family system, the role of the family in marriage), magic or witchcraft among others.
- In *Edufa*, the following are highlighted; cleansing rites, cultural symbols, herbs and traditional medicines, prayer to and the belief in gods.
- In both plays, the study uncovered some cultural similarities, these are: the power of the extended family system, the responsibility of parents to ensure the security of their children, courtesy (how to receive visitors in the traditional way).

The second objective of the study was to analyze how the highlighted cultural practices were used in the plays. These were some findings:

- In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Ogwoma is made to go through a three- month period of mourning for her dead husband, Adigwu. Within this period, she is required to remain in dark cloths, wear no shoes or jewelry and she also had her hair shaved as indicated in the play by Odibei. Also, she is expected to sleep on a mat that is positioned behind her cooking fire.
- Sofola also makes use of taboos in the play; and according to characters in the play, these taboos had serious repercussions. In the world of the play, it is considered as a taboo for a woman who is still mourning for her husband to give in to Uloko. Therefore a taboo is violated when Ogwoma becomes pregnant for Uloko while she is still mourning Adigwu.
- Also, the belief system of the people states that the spirit of a dead person remains in the purgatory until the surviving partner completes the necessary widowhood rites; since it is these rites that will send the spirit of the deceased into the land of the dead.
- Within an African family tradition, parents are expected to provide all the necessary material and security needs of their children. To the contrary, in the play, Nneka and Ibekwe in their quest to save their sick son's life gave Ogwoma's hand in marriage to Adigwu; her bride price was consequently used to initiate their son and also provide the needed materials for his cure. Similarly, children are supposed to respect their parents and listen to their advice. Hence, Nneka reprimands Ogwoma when she proves disrespectful and ungrateful over her parent's choice of spouse for her.
- Sofola also underlines the importance of the extended family system. This is seen where the Onowu family gathers to address and find solutions to Ogwoma's predicament. At

this meeting, the elders point out that, Ibekwe's family is falling apart because he does not rely on the extended family when he needed help in curing his sick son.

- Also, the role of the family in marriage cannot be ignored, as it is seen in the play. Ibekwe discarded his family's advice not to marry Ogwoma to Adigwu. Their disapproval which was blatantly dismissed by Ibekwe resulted in their reluctance to offer solutions to Ogwoma's problems. Likewise, Odibei discloses her disapproval over Ogwoma's marriage to her son; as a result, she blames Ogwoma for being responsible for her son's death.
- Sofola makes use of magic or witchcraft in the play. This is evident when Odibei summons the soul of Ogwoma into the forest and instructs her to go home and drink poison from a pot she had placed in Ogwoma's house. Ogwoma follows Odibei's instructions till she was at the point of death.
- In *Edufa*, Sutherland discusses the cleansing rites. It is performed in the play by the chorus; consisting of a group of women. They are clad in mourning attires and carry clapper sticks. It is made clear that, the sole purpose of the cleaning rite is to drive evil and calamity away from the society. The chorus enters Edufa's house and perform the rite to dispel evil spirits. It is indicated that the rites could be performed upon the death of a person or at a later date.
- Also, Sutherland makes use of cultural symbols in the play. When Sam returns from his errand with an owl, he throws both Seguwa and Edufa into an immediate state of terror. This is because, in most Ghanaian communities, the owl signifies evil, bad omen or death. The symbol of colour is also used; where Senchi is able to tell the nature of the

Chorus' visit by merely looking at their costumes. They are dressed in dark cloths; a symbol of mourning in most Ghanaian societies.

- Edufa in his quest to find solutions to his wife's illness resorts to burning of incense, using traditional medicine and bathing in herbs. This method is employed in many Ghanaian societies. In recent times, however, most people resort to
- In the play, Kankam confronted a diviner who discloses Edufa's involvement with one such diviner. The diviner saw death hanging over Edufa's head and offers him a charm that allows another to die in his stead.
- Edufa possesses a charm with which he was able to swap his life for Ampoma's. He also acquires another charm which he burns in order to undo the effect of the initial charm. Edufa acquired this charm so as to ensure that he lives longer; however, he does this at the expense of Ampoma's life. He later acquires another charm in an effort to counter the potency of the initial one. Although Edufa does this and many other thing in an attempt the save his wife's life; a greater part of him still wanted to live. This is seen in the hesitant manner in which he dealt with issues regarding Ampoma's health.
- During the interaction between Edufa and Kankam, Kankam offers silent prayers to the Gods to redirect his son's life. Also he offers a prayer to the gods in the form of libation when he is offered water by Seguwa. This authenticates the African belief in the lesser gods as well the ancestral spirits.
- In both plays, it is made apparent that it is courteous to offer a visitor water (in the case of Ghana) and cola nut or palm wine (in the case of Nigeria). In *Edufa*, Kankam was offered water by Seguwa upon his arrival at Edufa's house. Similarly, in *Wedlock of the Gods*, Uloko offers Udo palm wine when he comes to visit. The playwrights use these instances

to highlight the moral aspect of the African society which promotes hospitality and courtesy.

- Also, from both plays, it can be realized that, parents will protect their children no matter the situation. In *Edufa*, Kankam promises to keep Edufa's actions secret although he was not supposed to; he feels restrained by his allegiance not to expose him. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Nneka, Ogoli and Ibekwe all put their differences aside to protect their children from Odibei when it became apparent that their lives could be in danger.

The third objective of the study was to establish how the cultural practices fit into current societal trends. Here are some findings;

- In the present day of globalization, formal education and religion, it has become difficult to decide the place of culture in many African societies. This is because; cultural practices such as widowhood rites as well as divination practices are often regarded as wicked, devilish, and uncivilized. Hence, some women are beginning to object to going through widowhood rites upon the death of their partners.
- Witchcraft and magic in some Ghanaian societies have become a controversial issue as society feels that, the existence of witchcraft is not accepted hence the establishment of places such as the Gambaga witch camp in the Northern Region of Ghana where supposed witches are secluded from the rest of society. In this kind of society people who are accused of practicing the act of witchcraft are generally tagged as wicked. Today, with the increase in the growth of charismatic churches, the exposure of the activities of "witches" during deliverance sessions is gradually becoming a regular sight among 21st century Ghanaian. Therefore, it has become difficult to logically assess the true nature and role of witchcraft in the society.

- Again, traditional values, norms and beliefs, although very important and relevant; are also losing their potency due to globalization. The electronic media especially, has exposed Africans to foreign culture; hence the African culture is now being substituted for some of these foreign ways of life. In effect, both children and adults are losing the basic moral features that identify them as Africans.

The fourth objective of the study was to determine which of the above mentioned cultural practices should be encouraged. Through the data from the focus group discussion, the study made the following discovery:

- The study observed that, it is important to encourage our traditional values. Such values expressed in proper moral upbringing by parents should be included in raising children. Not only will this bring about the raising of responsible adults, but it will also ensure a morally upright society; especially in an era where globalization is influencing new generations.
- As the adage goes, “two heads are better than one”; it is important to consider strengthening the extended family system. The system helps to create a strong, united and committed society. It also allows children to learn from the elderly (aside immediate parents); it will also ensure that children stay connected with their roots and origins.
- As it is well known, marriage in Africa is a union between two extended families rather than between couple. The family should not be denied its role in the union of a couple since it is a way of ensuring peace and tranquility in marriages.

The study wanted also to ascertain how the research could affect policy. The study discovered that both theatre practitioners and stakeholders in the area of culture can benefit from this study.

It is important to note the viability and potency of theatre in educating societies on culture and at the same time exhibits these cultures to the outside world. The study will include other finding on this objective in the recommendation.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Theatre plays a very important role in the development of a people's culture; the more reason why playwrights rely on their cultural backgrounds as sources of materials for their creative works. In this research, Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Efua T. Sutherland's *Edufa* have been analyzed based on their cultural contents. This analysis was done in order to examine the cultural practices used in the play and their relevance to current society. Also the research sought to identify which of these cultural practices need remoulding or recommendation. Through a thorough analysis of the play and data gathered from focus group discussions, the study discovered that practices such as widowhood rites, witchcraft and a few others used in the plays, need to be examined. This is because; these practices tend to pose health issues to victims and at the same time violate their basic human rights. The study suggests that stakeholders should play their part in educating women on the violation of their rights through widowhood practice; so that these women can utilize the available human rights protection bodies whenever their rights are violated.

Furthermore, in today's age of globalization and modernization, cultural values are fast losing their relevance; and this loss is negatively affecting the moral fibres of society. The study therefore challenges theatre practitioner to continue using their works to educate and advocate the re-enforcement of cultural values.

5.3 CHALLENGES

- One major challenge faced by this study is the unavailability of scholarly materials on specific cultural practices such as those found in the plays under study. For this reason the study relied more on the data gathered from the play text and focus group discussion. In addition to this, the study incorporated the few materials that could be obtained.
- Also, due to the limited time within which the study was conducted, the researcher was unable to fully explore certain parts of the study. The researcher was unable to travel to Nigeria to experience firsthand the widowhood culture of the people. This would have offered the study a more varied and objective approach rather than solely relying on secondary data.

5.4 Recommendations

- From all indications, widowhood rites are considered very important in communities where it is being practiced. However, there is a need to revise the nature of the practice; since its current nature puts women through a lot of humiliation; mostly because they are treated as offenders. Also, the study will recommend that aspects of the rite that pose health risks to victims should be totally eliminated. Also, special attention should be paid to the fact that aspects of the rite violate the basic human rights of the individual. The study will recommend that widowhood rites should be simplified much like the widower rites.
- Also, there are now laws put in place to protect women who are abused through widowhood rites. For instance, Section 88A(1) of the criminal code of Ghana, 1960, as amended by PNDCL 90, states that “whoever compels a bereaved spouse or a relative of a bereaved spouse to undergo any custom that is cruel in nature shall be guilty of

misdemeanor” (Ajetey 24). However, these laws cannot be enforced if women do not come forward to report cases of abuse. There is therefore the need to educate and inform women on the existence of such laws. This is where the impact of writers such as Sofola can be felt. *Wedlock of the Gods* and other plays that advocate cultural change could help in offering such education. Furthermore, theatre practitioner, especially those in the field of Theatre for Development (TFD) should take up project which will educate people on widowhood rites. It is important that women are educated on the fact that aspects of the rites violate their basic human rights; hence, they should fall on human rights protection agencies should they feel violated.

- In addition, the study recommends that policy makers consider re-emphasizing traditional value and belief systems through the educational system and also through traditional rulers. Also, measures should be put in place by individuals and families to reconsider the importance of the extended family system.
- The study will also encourage future researchers to conduct more studies into the cultural content of plays as this study has done; since it is one of the ways through which our cultures could be documented and showcased.

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APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS*THEATRE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON EFUA SUTHERLAND'S
EDUFA AND ZULU SOFOLA'S WEDLOCK OF THE GODS

SET 1

- What cultural practices and belief systems do you identify in *Wedlock of the Gods*?
- How does Sofola discuss the Widowhood rite within the play text?
- In your opinion, does Sofola discuss the subject of witchcraft in the play? If yes, how does she present it?
- Do you think Odibei killed Ogwoma with witchcraft?
- In your opinion, is Sofola advocating for cultural change through the play?

SET 2

- Is the widowhood rite performed in your community? If yes, how is it done?
- In your opinion, how relevant is widowhood rite to present society?
- Do you think Sofola's presentation of widowhood is synonymous to what pertain to your community? If yes, what are the relations?
- What is your view on witchcraft and current society?

- Do you think widowhood rites are outdated and should be abolished?
- How does the cultural values, taboos, and belief discussed in the play relate to your community
- Which of these practices would you encourage?

SET 3

- Do you think a study such as this one can positively affect cultural policies?
- In what other ways do you think theatre is used to promote cultural development?
- Are there any recommendations you can make in regards to widowhood rite?
- How do you think the laws governing the rights of women can be employed in cases of widowhood rite?

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR *EDUFA*THEATRE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON EFUA SUTHERLAND'S
EDUFA AND ZULU SOFOLA'S WEDLOCK OF THE GODS

SET 1

- What cultural practices do you identify in the play?
- How does the playwright employ the Ghanaian belief in Charms in the play?
- Are you familiar with the cleansing rites performed in the play?
- How is the cleansing rite performed within your community?
- What cultural values do you identify from the interaction between Edufa and Kankam?

SET 2

- What do you think about people using charms for protect in present society?
- What is society's reaction to people in your community who use charms?
- In your opinion, what role does the diviner or soothsayer play in present society?

SET 3

- Would you recommend the use of charms as a source of protection?
- Are the cleansing rites still effective in your community?
- If yes, what measures are being taken to ensure its continuity?

SET 4

- Do you think a study such as this one can positively affect cultural policies?

- In what other ways do you think theatre is used to promote cultural development?
- Are there any recommendations you can make in regards to cultural practices used in the play?
- How do you think the laws governing the rights of women can be employed in cases of widowhood rite?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE ADMITTED ON WIDOW

- What were some of the rites you were taken through during widowhood?
- What was your psychological reaction to some of the practices you were taken through?
- Did you feel abused in any way during widowhood?
- Are you aware of any laws that protect you from being abused whiles in mourning? If yes, did you use any of these laws?
- Were you offered into a levirate marriage after the rites? If yes, did you accept?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE ADMINISTED ON A CHIEF

THEATRE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON EFUA SUTHERLAND'S
EDUFA AND ZULU SOFOLA'S WEDLOCK OF THE GODS

NAME.....

- What is the nature of the widowhood rite performed within your community?
- Have there been any changes in the rite over the years?
- Are there any traditional laws within your community that ensures that women go through the widowhood rite?