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ANCIENT AND MODERN: NEXUS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS AND NEW CULTURE IN TWO NIGERIAN PLAYS

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Abstract

Studies in literary and linguistic analysis of culture in Nigerian literary texts are numerous in existing literature. However, there is still the need to fill the gap in comparative literary and linguistic studies of culture in the ancient and modern periods. This study attempts an investigation of the nexus between traditional elements and new culture in Zulu Sofola's Wedlock of the Gods and Gab Osoba's The Tortoise and the Money Lender that reflect a society in transition. The paper examines the two texts as literary works that explore the conflict of ideas, values, or traditions in contemporary Nigerian society. Thirty-two excerpts selected from the two texts were subjected to rigorous analysis using J. R. Searle's pragmatics and J. Austine's speech act theory. The analysis reveals that linguistic and discursive resources are deployed in the texts to present traditional cultural practices that are being interrogated in the light of modernity and new culture. The paper concludes that African cultural practices that are not in conflict with modernity should be preserved while those that appear bizarre and primitive should be discarded.

Keywords: Ancient, Culture, literature, linguistics, Modern, Pragmatics

Introduction

Culture is regarded as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. It is the characteristic feature of everyday existence, such as diversions and a way of life, shared by people in a place or time. Two things are essential to remember about cultures: they are always changing, and they relate to the symbolic dimensions of life. Culture is constantly in flux as conditions change, and cultural groups adapt in dynamic and sometimes unpredictable ways (Le Brown, 2023:5). When an aspect of culture is threatened or misunderstood, it may result in conflict or violence. Coser (cited by Edem (2021:188) describes conflict as “struggles between parties over desirable values. In other words, a conflict situation results when an action occurs which tends to inhibit or impede the interference of another action to render it ineffective’.

The two texts under review are embedded with traditional and modern elements.

Uloko and Ogwoma in Sofola's *Wedlock of the God* represent modernity by defying the tradition of the people while their family members uphold the customs and norms of their community religiously. In Osoba's *The Tortoise and Money Lender*, elements of tradition and modernity are also observable. The play is based on traditional Yoruba folklore on tortoise the trickster. This paper examines the nexus between traditional elements and new culture in the two texts.

A literary and linguistic study of culture in Nigerian literary texts as being attempted in this study needs to be carried out with an appropriate theory of language that can effectively capture the texts being used for the investigation. Pragmatics and speech act theories are found suitable and therefore employed for the analysis of the two texts as plays that explore cultural identity, the conflict of ideas, values, or traditions, and call for cultural re-evaluation and social change.

2.0 Theoretical and Analytical Framework

Pragmatics and speech act theories are employed for the analysis of data for this study. Pragmatics, according to Lawal (1997), is an offshoot of sociolinguistic approach to the study of language. Yule (1985) referred to pragmatics as 'the study of intended speaker meaning'. Pragmatics was first developed by J. R Searle (1969) and later by H. P. Grice (1975). These linguists came up with the idea that pragmatics is a functional account of the ways speakers use language to express messages in communicative activities and events. This particularly has to do with "how utterances are used and how they relate to the contexts in which they are uttered" (Mey 1993). Speaker meaning is an important concept to the Gricean pragmatics. This concept allows a distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning and suggests a particular view of human communication that focuses on intentions. Grice further emphasizes the notion of conversational implicatures which he claimed are a "set of ...general principles underlying the efficient co-operative use of a language, which jointly express a general co-operative principle" (Levinson, 1983). This principle is labelled "the co-operative principle" and it consists of four specific maxims as follows:

- i. The maxim of quantity: This maxim states that a speaker's contribution should be informative and should avoid providing information that is not required.
- ii. The maxim of quality: It stipulates that a speaker's contribution should be true. Contribution that is false or lacks adequate evidence should be avoided.
- iii. The maxim of relation or relevance: This maxim states that a contribution should be relevant, and that it should not be out of context.
- iv. The maxim of manner: This principle entails that a contribution should be orderly and devoid of ambiguity and clumsy expression.

The above principles provide a basis for the inference of implicatures. This implies that the Gricean Principle and its attendant maxims allow speakers to lead their hearers to interpretations of their communicative intents (speaker meaning) that go beyond logical meanings of what they "say".

Speech act theory was first developed by J. Austin as published in his 1962

posthumous book, *How to Do Things with Words*. This theory, according to Shiffrin (1984), was developed from the basic belief that language is used to perform actions; thus, its fundamental insights focus on how meaning and actions are related to language. In the view of Yule (1985), the use of the term speech act covers “actions” such as requesting, “commanding”, questioning, and “performing”.

Austin (1962) in his contribution, identifies two types of utterances: “constative” and “performative” utterances. According to him, constatives are declaratives whose truth could be judged while performatives are declaratives that “do” an action. He proposes that all utterances have quantities that were initially seen as characteristics of constatives and performatives. The focus of attention, he said, is no longer sentences, but “the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation. Austin (ibid) further postulates that all utterances perform speech acts that are comprised of three aspects as follows:

(i) Locutionary act: A locutionary act involves the uttering of an expression with sense and reference; that is, using sounds and words with meaning. This seems to capture the properties of the original constative group: the act “of saying something”. A locutionary act is a sentence uttered with a determinate sense and reference, an act performed in order to communicate. The study of locutionary acts is the domain of descriptive linguistics which comprises phonetics & phonology, lexis, syntax and linguistics semantics (Lawal et al 1997).

(ii) Illocutionary act: An illocutionary act is the act performed “in saying” the locution, such that what was said had the force (not the meaning) of that illocution. This level captures the acts initially viewed as performative. These acts are conventional in that they could be made explicit by a performative formula. Illocutionary or performative acts can be classified into direct and indirect ones. I am going for instance, which is a direct performative of “stating” or “informing”, can perform the indirect performative of “warning”, “threatening” or “promising” depending on the communicative context. Hence, the speech act theory is essentially concerned with how interlocutors (speakers and listeners) understand one another despite the possibility of their saying what they do not mean. It is this possibility of indirectness and implicitness of meaning that recommends pragmatics as a useful analytical tool in literary criticism (Lawal 1997).

(iii) Perlocutionary act: A perlocutionary act is the consequential effects of an utterance on an interlocutor, that is, what is achieved “by saying” something. It results from a language users’ utterance and a product of the listener’s interpretation. In the view of Levison (1980), it is the intended or unintended consequence of or reaction to what is said. To Lawal (ibid), this act is not part of the conventional meaning of the utterance, but it is derived from the context and situation of the utterance. Lawal postulates further that if for instance, a child starts crying in reaction to the statement “I am going”, uttered by the mother, the crying of the child is the perlocutionary act. This is because the act is the consequence of the child’s interpretation of the mother’s locutionary act of ‘stating’ as an implicit or indirect threat.

3.0 Methodology

This study examines the nexus between traditional elements and new culture using the dramatic works of two Nigerian playwrights; Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Gab Osoba's *The Tortoise and the Money Lender*. Thus, the plays constitute the primary sources of data for this study. Linguistic texts and works on literary theories and criticism constitute the secondary sources of data for the research work. They are used to map out the theoretical focus and perspectives of our analysis in such areas as pragmatics and speech act theory. The method of data analysis is largely analytical, interpretive, and descriptive. The two plays are subjected to critical analysis according to certain linguistic and literary principles to establish the validity or otherwise of the texts being investigated. Thirty-two excerpts selected from the two plays (Sixteen from each text) were subjected to rigorous analysis using literary and linguistic stylistics approaches as theoretical framework.

4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Zulu Sofola - *Wedlock of the Gods*

Wedlock of the Gods centers on two young lovers, Uloko and Ogwoma who fall deeply in love and pledge to get married. Their marriage dreams, however, become intractable as Ogwoma's father Ibekwe, forced her to marry Adigwu against her will. Ibekwe being a poor peasant was unable to raise money to save the life of his sick son. He therefore decides to give Ogwoma to a rich suitor, Adigwe and use the bridal wealth to cure him. Unfortunately for Uloko, he is also poor and unable to pay a reasonable bridal wealth to help in the treatment of Ogwoma's brother.

Ogwoma's rejection of Adigwu and her insistence on marrying Uloko whom she truly loves pitches her against her parents. Incidentally, her forced marriage with Adigwu is short-lived as Adigwu falls sick and dies after three years of childless marriage with Ogwoma. This provides an opportunity for Ogwoma and Uloko to rekindle their love affairs. According to tradition and custom of levirate, Ogwoma is expected to be inherited by her husband's brother, Okozie, and remain in ritual seclusion for three months to mourn her deceased husband. Ogwoma refuses to be inherited by his late husband's brother but instead gets pregnant for Uloko, an action which is considered as taboo. The two lovers refuse to see anything wrong in their relationship. Instead, they ascribe the turn of events to the act of God who has destined them to marry each other. The knowledge of their action causes unprecedented uproar in the whole community because no man customarily touches a woman in mourning until after three months.

Odibei, believing that her son did not die naturally but died because of Ogwoma harlotry, seeks revenge. To avenge Adigwu's death, Odibei hypnotizes Ogwoma after many threats and gets her poisoned in a fit of anger. Uloko matchets Odibei to death and kills himself with the remaining poison that killed Ogwoma to accompany his dead lover as they journey to the great beyond for wedlock of the gods. Tradition and Modernity which form the nexus of this paper feature prominently in this text. Thus, we begin our analysis of the text with characters representing traditional elements and modern culture.

4.1.1 Traditional Elements

Characters representing traditional elements are dominant and typically exemplified in the play. However, Odibei and Nneka are two prominent characters who can be regarded as the epitome of tradition and enculturation.

Odebie is a fiery-tempered widow who strongly believes in African magical power. She is the mother of Adigwu and has a sour relationship with Ogwoma, her daughter-in-law. The love affair between Uloko and Ogwoma and the resultant pregnancy became a confirmation of Odibei's suspicion. This makes her believe that the lovers deliberately killed her son to have their way. Odebei decides to avenge her son's death by using spiritual power to evoke the spirit of Ogwoma. Through the help of an incantation, Odibei hypnotizes Ogwoma, causing Ogwoma to follow her evil plan. Odibei concocts a poisonous drink and directs Ogwoma to drink it. Ogwoma dies and Uloko avenges her death by killing Odibei:

Excerpt 1 - Odibie: The antelope does not hear its death music and refuses to dance! Bring her! Lead her to me! Bring her here not knowing what she is doing! Lead her and make her do whatever I bid!

The first statement of Odibie is a declarative sentence while the others are directive, that is, direct acts of stating in speech act. Precisely, they are commanded in the form of incantations. They signal revenge and the result is tragedy as Odibie eventually poisoned Ogwoma leading to her death. The action of Odibie affirms the presence of magic, charms, juju, wizard, and witches in African tradition. In Africa, culture and cultural rites are highly regarded. However, in a situation where the cultural pursuit is not made from genuine inclination, but rather as a sublimation of anger and vengeance, as denoted in Odibei's character always results in conflict and crisis.

Nneka is the mother of Ogwoma who loves her husband, Ibekwe and always supports him for the upbringing of their children. Because of the love she has for her children, she supports her husband to force Ogwoma to marry Adigwu to raise money to save the life of her ailing son. This strains her relationship with Ogwoma which eventually leads to hatred and confrontation. Nneka is another epitome of enculturation who respects the highly revered culture of her people. The following excerpts buttress this assertion:

Excerpt 2-Nneka: Oh, my God! You let...oh God, that goat touched you? You let the beast. touch you even in mourning? ...What shall I do? You have violated the worst taboo in the land. Do you know what that means? (p.19).

Nneka's first statement has a pragmatic force of emotion and hatred. Nneka's use of derogatory words such as 'dog' 'harlot', 'goat', and 'beast' has concretized images that intensify the conflict. Such use of abusive words violates the efficient co-operative use of a language, which jointly expresses a general co-operative principle". This principle, in pragmatics, emphasizes the need for a speaker to avoid ambiguity, unnecessary prolixity, derogative words, etc that can militate against effective communication and

harmonious relationships amongst the interlocutors. The other utterances of Nneka, “...you have violated the worst taboo in the land. Do you know what that means?” are indicators for people who have to break a sacrosanct tradition. They trigger rather than mitigate the conflict.

Marriage by tradition and not by choice is another prominent traditional element in the text. In African tradition, the younger brother of the husband takes over the wife when the brother dies. Even when it is against the wish of the wife, this tradition of forced marriage must be upheld. This is evident in the text thus:

Excerpt 3 - Nwasia: Listen, Ogwoma, a friend must always be honest and truthful. It is common thing that when a man dies his brother takes his wife and makes her wife. This is what our people do. Everyone knows that (p21).

Excerpt 4 - Nwasia: Listen to me, people don’t do things that way. You were forced to marry Adigwu, we all know that, but this pregnancy is not a good thing (p9).

Excerpt 5- Ogwoma: You don’t understand how my heart beats because you were not tied like a goat and whipped along the road to a man you hated. You are not able to understand what my heart tells me.

The above excerpts are all ‘direct illocutionary acts’ of stating. The utterances of the interlocutors also contain ‘indirect illocutionary acts’: They are indirect ‘verdictive’ acts of persuasion and pleading. Nwasia’s statements in excerpts 3 and 4 are ‘directive’ acts of stating the fact about the tradition of the society. Nwasia is seen in these excerpts pleading with Ogwoma to accept the wishes of her parents and stating emphatically that the pregnancy is taboo. Despite the pleading and warning by Nwasia of the impending doom because of her action, Ogwoma is adamant and not ready to surrender. The implication of the perlocutionary act of the statement is the impending consequence of Ogwoma’s failure to listen to the wise counsel of her friend.

In excerpt 5, Ogwoma’s utterances in response to Nwasia’s persuasions contain the Perlocutionary act with the attendant illocutionary force of crisis. This aspect of psychological context is responsible for mistrust and misgiving that eventually trigger off internal crisis in Ogwoma’s family.

Payment of Bride price as a source of wealth to parents also features as a major traditional element in the text as shown in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 6 - Nwasia: Ogwoma, our people say that a man’s daughter is a source of wealth to him. Your parents needed the money for a very expensive sacrifice for your brother whom sickness almost killed. You should have been happy that your money saved him (p9).

Excerpt 7- Ogwoma: No, it is not the way others are given away to their husband 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.

Excerpt 8 - Nneka: Your tongue is bad, and your heart is a rock. Any good daughter with a dying brother would have told her parents to give her away to a husband and use her bride's wealth to cure her brother. You did not do that. We did the best the poor parents

of a dying son could have done and all we now get from you is shame and disgrace. (p18).

In excerpt 6, Nwasia attempts to establish that the tradition of girls being the source of wealth to their parents is strongly rejected by Ogwoma, while in excerpt 15, Ogwoma accuses her mother of forcing her to marry a man she hates because of money.

In excerpt 8, the expression, “your tongue is bad” and “your heart is rock” is a direct illocutionary act presenting Ogwoma as a stubborn young woman. The two lexical items “shame” and “disgrace” also portend frustration and anger. These words are presuppositions of misgiving, destruction, and violence are entailment of crisis and the beginning of the end of the relationship between the family of Ogwoma and Ulokos. The expression has pragmatic force of skepticism and pessimism. Nneka out of frustration, descends heavily on Ogwoma with harsh words which clearly violates Grice’s (1975) ‘co-operative principle’ that refers to quasi- interactional agreement which speakers enter as they perform speech acts. All the utterances of Nneka can be regarded as ‘face threatening’ and they signal ‘mistrust’ and ‘hatred’. Ogwoma is still not deterred with all these harsh words and threats from her mother as she exerts her rebellion and non-compliance to an oppressive culture.

4.1.2 Modernity

Modernity is represented by Ogwoma and Uloko who feel the traditional culture is not kind to them and vehemently reject it. The duo defy tradition to consummate the love they have for each other. Following this defiance of the tradition, the community is unhappy with the two lovers for their transgression and expresses deep disapproval. Ogwoma is an oppressed woman who exemplifies a cultural product of acculturation, protest, and liberation. She stands for cultural re-evaluation and social change by bluntly refusing the culture of marriage by tradition and not by choice. Ogwoma is a young and childless widow, who against her wish was forced by her parents to marry Adigwu, her deceased husband. According to tradition, she is expected to be inherited by Adigwu’s brother. Rather than complying with this tradition she allows Uloko (her genuine lover) to impregnate her while still mourning her late husband. This is against tradition and is considered a taboo and a punishable offence. Despite opposition, Ogwoma insists on keeping the illicit pregnancy and marries Uloko. Ogwoma exhibits the character of a young stubborn widow when she declares:

Excerpt 9- Ogwoma: Kill me if you like but you cannot stop me from loving Uloko. (p20). The psychological context of the statement of Ogwoma has the pragmatic force of emotion, tension, mutual suspicion and crisis within her family and that of her late husband. Her refusal not to bear children for her late husband but instead allows Uloko to impregnate her fuel the crisis in the play. Ogwoma’s determination to free herself from bondage and her eagerness for liberation prompts her to make certain declarations that are somehow combatant:

Excerpt 10 - Ogwoma: ... Let the moon turn into blood; let the rain become fire; Ogwoma loves and Ogwoma will do it again (p10). This statement is a direct

illocutionary act. It is an assertive act of stating and has a pragmatic force of defiance. The expression indicates Ogwoma's desire to embrace acculturation, an alteration to despise culture. It shows her dexterity and desperation to become a cultural defiant. She is determined to embrace whatever will make her free from this traditional despotic practice of levirate, no matter the consequence.

Uloko is a vibrant and resentful young man who is passionately in love with Ogwoma. He is, however, not financially buoyant enough to pay the bride price demanded of him by Ogwoma's father. As a result, he loses Ogwoma to Adigwu who is rich enough to pay the dowry. Uloko becomes bitter and frustrated and refuses to marry any other girl. While Ogwoma still mourning her late husband, Uloko impregnates her, an action considered as taboo with grave consequence. Odebie kills Ogwoma with poison and Uloko avenges by killing Odebie:

Excerpt 11- Uloko: I have

done it! Odebie is dead!

This statement also has

the pragmatic force of tension and crisis. Realizing the crime committed and the love he has for Ogwoma, Uloko takes his own life himself by drinking the same poisonous concoction to reunite with Ogwoma in heaven. The killing of Odebie and committing of suicide by Uloko are actions that are alien to African tradition.

Marriage by choice and love in contrast to tradition/force marriage is another prominent modern element in the text. Ogwoma and Uloko demonstrate this in the play as the duo insist on marrying each other despite the rejection of the marriage by their parents. The following excerpts clearly demonstrate this in the text:

Excerpt 12- Nwasia to Ogwoma: Uloko has blinded you...It is true that when the sweetness of a man touches the heart of a woman nothing else matters. (p10)

Excerpt 13- Ogwoma: Oh God, Uloko has blinded me. I go to the market, it is Uloko I see in every stall; I go to the farm. It is Uloko in every tree; The wind blows, it is his hands that touch me; The bird sings, it is his voice I hear; Oh God, his child moves in me. (p10).

Excerpt 14- Ogwoma: Kill me if you like but you cannot stop me from loving Uloko) (p.20).

Excerpt 15- Ogwoma: What have I done to them? I have fought for the past four years to marry the 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. (p.21)

Excerpt 16- Uloko to Nneka: It is a pity that you are angry with me. I have clean hands and a heart. I have worked no medicine on your daughter. It is in our destiny that we be husband and wife and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it.

The above excerpts identify the significance of marriage by choice and love in achieving peace and happiness in society. The forceful marriage of Ogwoma to somebody she never loved is an instance of human rights abuse that has a consequential effect on society. A pragmatic interpretation of Ogwoma's utterances provides a better understanding of her conditions, especially the underlining reasons for her display of impolite verbal

behaviour. Here, Sofola tends to explain the characters in the play in terms of mythos-symbolic representations of competing ideological positions that pitch modernism against tradition in the evolution of African culture.

4.2 Gab Osoba: *The Tortoise and the Moneylender*

The roots of this play, *The Tortoise and the Moneylender*, according to Toyin Abiodun, the blurb writer, 'are traceable to the Yoruba folklore of tortoise—a trickster in the animal kingdom. Known amongst the Yorubas as *iijapaa ologbon ewee* (which translated, means tortoise the trickster), the fable of tortoise continues to be embroidered in spools of yarns with variegated literary colours, patterns, and fabrics which interweave to say simply that the quality of being wise is supreme'.

Yet, one must not be too quick to aspire to the kind of wisdom the fabulous tortoise is known for since he often applies that wisdom to morally questionable purposes. In this play, Osoba picks on the haves and the have-nots and adapts the templates to a contemporary, human, African society to probe our long-held notions of ideals concerning survival in a world that has become intensely capitalist.

4.2.1 Tradition Elements

The root of this play is from *Ìjàpá* of Yoruba folktales which is the counterpart of the fabled trickster of many other cultures. According to Olatunji, "Yoruba folklore is the most vital element of Yoruba cultural heritage (1987:7). Folktale is the oral form of literature that is generally derived from the daily experience of the people, their environment, their predominant occupation, aspirations, and moral rules. The multifarious exploits of Tortoise, variously named Ajapa, Ijapa, Alabaun in Yoruba have long fascinated folklorists, who have sought to explain what it is about him that so engages the imagination of those who celebrate him. In examining the traditional elements in the text, an exploration of how the Tortoise displays his exploits in his encounter with Pig is presented in this section.

Folklore on pig's search for a moneylender is one of the prominent traditional elements in the play. Moneylending is a traditional practice in Yoruba society to help borrowers with problems. The following excerpt clearly illustrates this:

Excerpt 17-Tortoise: The option, the only option, the only realistic option is to look for a moneylender to solve this financial problem.

Excerpt 18- Yonnibo: Who do you have in mind?

Excerpt 19-Tortoise: Who else if not Pig, the money lender (p.14).

Tortoise's statement in this excerpt is a direct performative act of "stating" or "informing". Here, Tortoise informs his wife, Yonnibo of his intention to search for Pig to loan money to him to solve his financial problem. The repetition of the word, 'option' has the pragmatic force of "hopelessness". This is an indication that Tortoise has no hope of solving his financial problem by himself unless he borrows from Pig, the moneylender. His wife, Yonnibo is not comfortable with this idea and challenges him to work hard so that he won't be a borrower but a lender.

A tortoise as a trickster is another traditional element in the play. *Ìjàpá*, is a familiar figure in Yoruba folklore, where he is consistently depicted in the trickster role. No other character has received nearly as much attention in Yoruba folktales, and, as in the case with tricksters in other cultures, like the Tortoise. A typical example of his tricks is how he outsmarts Pig despite his wealth. When Pig refuses to lend him money to finance his child's education, he quickly uses his tricks to lie to him that he needs the money to bury his relative. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 20- Tortoise: My daughter has been sent away from school. I need money to pay for her school requirements.

Excerpt 21-Pig: Don't you know I have policies? Yes...principles. I don't lend people money for their children's education...if you died, I would lend your children money to bury you. You won't die twice. And if you came to borrow money for your father's burial, I could consider you.

Excerpt 22- Tortoise: I've reached half of my way home before...Look Pig, it is not good to tell lies. People have advised me to stop telling lies. But I have not taken to their advice...The father of my father's brother. I'm the one to be responsible for the burial. The brother had died. My father had died too. The only father remaining has now died. That was the reason for my coming at first, but I thought if I told you about my daughter's education problem, you would be moved to lend me money rather than for matters of death.

Excerpt 23- Pig: Stop weeping like a woman. I will loan you Twenty Thousand Naira ...

In the pragmatic structure and function of a language, Lawal (1997) identifies three contexts that are considered closely inter-connected and very relevant to the four excerpts presented above. These are situational, psychological, social, and cultural contexts.

The situational context is the inability of Tortoise to finance his child's education. The situation he finds himself is not only hopeless but also embarrassing as his wife indirectly calls him a lazy man.

The psychological context of the conversation between the Tortoise and Pig is marked by emotion, mutual suspicion, mistrust, and deceit. Pig is suspicious of Tortoise because of his tricks. Tortoise, on the other hand, deceives Pig by telling him lies.

The social context is depicted by the attitude of Pig who cherishes spending money on a burial ceremony rather than financing the education of a child.

The cultural context can be inferred as the concept of communalism and family bonds in African culture. This is evident in excerpt 20 when Tortoise claims the responsibility of performing the burial rites of 'the father of his father's brother'. This is a kind of harmonious social culture that is achieved in traditional social settings because everybody believes that he is his brother's keeper. This fosters a sense of communalism and a functional social rhythm.

Another traditional element in the text is the Pig's search for the Tortoise's pepper

grinder:

Excerpt 24 - Dog: Mr Pig, I've been to your house to pay that balance and collect my bicycle. I didn't find you. What are you doing here?

Pig: (raises his head) Looking for Tortoise's pepper grinder.

Dog: Tortoise' pepper grinder? (aside) You will look for its world without end.

(Pig is seen as he continues to grunt and search for Tortoise's pepper grinder, ignoring Dog)

The above excerpts attest to the assertion in the traditional folklore which narrates that any time you find Pig ravaging bushes with its nose, it is searching for the Tortoise's grinder which it flung out in anger.

4.2.2 Modernity

Modernity or acculturation has greatly devalued the belief of the people about their universe. In modern societies, exposure to new ideas and technology has changed the perception of people's African beliefs and values. Modernity has brought about a condition of social existence that is significantly different from all past forms of human experience. Today, modern societies are witnessing the transitional process of moving from traditional "primitive" communities to modern ones. The following discussion portrays modernity or acculturation in the text. The metaphor of the haves and the have-nots is a major element of modernity and new culture in the play. As Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991) noted, "Modern societies are characterized by European individualism. What the Hausa rightly call 'kowa de nasa'. This means that no one is concerned with the plight of others. The rich are not bothered about the poor as they hold enormous influence over the commonwealth of the people. This wide gap between the rich and the poor in our society is the 'metaphor of the haves and the have-nots' presented by Osoba in this play. The interaction between Tortoise and Pig when the former comes for financial assistance attests to this: **Excerpt 25**-Tortoise: No. No, yes. I used to visit you before your wealth arrived. But the moment I heard you have left the 'Masses Club' to join the 'Moneybags Club', I withdrew into my shell. ... Our lines of thought are no longer the same. As you know, the wish of a potter is for all the ground to turn into clay. That of rich people is to turn everyone into their slaves. Your rich people have the innate tendency to look down on other less fortunate people. Well...our women say it is their children that make them expose their private parts (pp. 25-26).

Excerpt 26 - Pig: You shouldn't have brought a child you cannot educate into the world.

The tortoise's statement in this excerpt has a direct illocutionary act of stating. It also contains a pragmatic force of accusation and condemnation. Pig's response to Tortoise's statement is a direct illocutionary act and has a verdict function of insulting. This relationship between Tortoise and Pig can best be described as social stratification. The rich amass so much wealth and power to the extent that their whims hold dominant sway over the hopes and aspirations of the down-trodden masses. This brings about separation of relationships and social disintegration of the society.

Money lending and loan interest also feature as a typical example of modernity in the

play as shown in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 27-Pig: Stop weeping like a woman. I will loan you (Twenty Thousand Naira so that you will leave me alone. But...but...but...when will you pay me back? (p.32).

Excerpt 28-Tortoise: In three months.

Excerpt 29-Pig: Are you ready to repay it with fifty percent interest?

Excerpt 30-Tortoise: I have no choice...Thank you. Thank you. (Takes the biro). Bad people have spoiled many chances for good people. Bring the money before I sign.

Excerpt 31-Pig: Trickster. If you don't sign the book, I will not give you the money (p.33). Pig's statement has a direct illocutionary act of stating. This is a 'directive' act of stating, precisely a statement accepting Tortoise's request and a question that requires an answer. The statement (by Pig), "Trickster. If you don't sign the book, I will not give you the money" this is 'face-threatening' and it connotes 'mistrust'. It also contains a pragmatic force of autocratic order. In this play, Osoba picks on the haves and the have-nots and adapts the templates to a contemporary, human, African society to probe our long-held notions of ideals concerning survival in a world that has become intensely capitalist.

Education is another key element of modernity in the text. In modern societies, education is considered as a major tool of development. It is a major contributor to technological transfer, economic growth, and political emancipation. This element of modernity is evident in the play on the discussion on the education of Tortoise's child. The following excerpts clearly illustrate this:

Excerpt-32: Tortoise ...Why are you here when your mates are in school? Kekere: Our teachers sent us home -those of us who have not paid for Common Entrance form, lesson, P.E...uniform, mid-day meal and ... (p.9).

Tortoise to Pig: My daughter has been sent away from school. I need money to pay for her school requirements (p.24). The statement, "Why are you here when your mates are in school?" is a direct illocutionary act. It is a question that requires an answer. The perlocutionary effect of Kekere's response to her father's question is her being sent away from school. Tortoise statement to Pig is a direct illocutionary act of requesting. The action taken by Tortoise to go and borrow money from Pig to take care of the education requirements of his daughter shows the importance of education in modern society.

The period of political transition in which African countries find themselves calls for cultural re-evaluation and social change in our contemporary society. This is the fact that Zulu Sofola and Gab Osoba seem to present and clarify the two dramatic texts investigated. *Wedlock of the Gods* is set in a period of transition, a period where romantic love, is a new idea and alien to traditional African marital practices. This is personified by Ogwoma and Uloko who demonstrate that the traditional marriage system, where parents arrange marriage for their children based on socio-economic consideration alone, requires urgent reconsideration and overhauling. Ogwoma and Uloko in the play,

struggle, even at the cost of self-sacrifice, to show that culture is not immutable but is receptive to change and permutation of history.

Gab Osoba's *The Tortoise and the Money Lender* also advocates social change in our society. In this play, Osoba picks on the haves and the have-nots and adapts the templates to a contemporary, human, African society to probe our long-held notions of ideals concerning survival in a world that has become intensely capitalist.

5.0 Conclusion

An implication derivable from this study on Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Gab Osoba's *The Tortoise and the Moneylender* is that the ultimate goal of pragmatics and speech act studies is not to simply identify the linguistic patterns in a text but to also analyze the contexts implicated in these patterns and how the contexts in turn are instrumental to the performance of certain acts, the sequencing and patterning of which would give a distinct thematic focus and a definite perlocutionary force to the text.

Having explored both traditional and modern elements in the two plays through the employment of pragmatics and speech act, it is imperative to state that the relationship between the traditional and modern does not necessarily involve displacement, conflict, or exclusiveness. Modernity does not necessarily weaken tradition. Both tradition and modernity form the basis of ideologies and movements in which the opposites are converted into aspirations, but traditional forms may supply support for as well as against change. The paper therefore concludes that African cultural practices that are not in conflict with modernity should be preserved while those that appear bizarre and primitive should be discarded.

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