



Literary Narratives and Cultural Identities: A Critical Analysis of Dele A. Sonubi's *the Grand Father's Mandate*

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Abstract

Stories have always been powerful vessels of culture, memory, and identity, especially in African literature, where oral traditions continue to shape the way people see themselves and their world. Dele A. Sonubi's novel, *The Grandfather's Mandate*, brings this rich tradition to life by exploring the tensions between Yoruba heritage and the pressures of Western influence. At its heart, the novel follows a protagonist caught between two worlds—torn between honoring his grandfather's dying wish and navigating the realities of modern society. This struggle echoes W.E.B. Du Bois's idea of "double consciousness," the feeling of living between conflicting identities. This study examines how Sonubi weaves Yoruba oral traditions—folktales, proverbs, songs, and incantatory poetry—into the novel, using them not just as storytelling devices but as tools for preserving culture and addressing contemporary social issues. Through a postcolonial lens, the research highlights the novel's deep reflections on colonialism, neocolonialism, and the ongoing battle between tradition and modernity. A key focus is the Uren River, a powerful symbol of resilience, continuity, and the protagonist's unbreakable bond with his roots. The findings show that *The Grandfather's Mandate* does more than tell a story—it brings Yoruba cosmology to life while tackling complex themes like polygamy, gender roles, and the weight of ancestral obligations. More importantly, it challenges common misconceptions about African traditions, offering a nuanced view of how culture evolves over time. By blending oral storytelling with literary narrative, the novel fills an important gap in scholarship, proving that indigenous traditions are not relics of the past but living, breathing forces that continue to shape identity in a globalized world. Ultimately, Sonubi's novel is a celebration of cultural resilience, reminding us that identity is not just about where we come from but how we carry our heritage forward. By positioning oral tradition as a bridge between the past and the future, *The Grandfather's Mandate* invites readers to rethink the role of storytelling in preserving history, navigating change, and staying connected to one's roots.

Keywords: *Literary Narrative, Cultural Identity, Oral Tradition, Postcolonial Identity, Yoruba Cosmology, Ancestral Mandate.*

INTRODUCTION

African Oral Tradition and its Influence on Literary Narratives

Oral tradition, a cornerstone of human communication, serves as a vital medium for transmitting knowledge, art, and cultural heritage across generations, thereby fostering a rich and dynamic expressive tradition (Scheub, 1985, p. 34). Within the field of African literature, scholars such as Scheub (1985, p. 34) and Sackey (1991, p. 389) underscore the intrinsic thematic and structural connections between literary works and oral tradition. Expanding upon this foundation, Scheub (1985, p. 41) traces the evolution of African literary tradition, illustrating its continuous engagement with oral narratives and performative elements.

Employing a compelling analogy, Iyasere (1975, p. 107) likens the modern African writer to a snail inseparable from its shell, emphasizing the deep-rooted connection between literary creators and their cultural heritage. Advocating for a contextually sensitive approach, Iyasere (1975, pp. 108–109) asserts that a nuanced understanding of African literature necessitates an appreciation of its traditional oral background, which informs both narrative technique and thematic concerns.

Scheub (1985, p. 3) further characterizes African oral tradition as an immersive and performative experience, wherein storytelling functions as both ritual and spectacle. Through the intentional fusion of disparate elements, contemporary and traditional motifs coalesce into a dramatic ritual, forging mythic narratives that offer historical and cultural

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grounding for audiences (Scheub, 1985, p. 3). Sackey (1991, p. 390) challenges conventional literary metrics, arguing that a novelist's success should not be gauged merely by the incorporation of oral literary elements but by the degree of innovation within their creative engagement. He posits that privileging African oral traditions within literary works is essential for literature to retain its cultural significance and artistic purpose (Sackey, 1991, p. 405).

The longstanding discourse on the relationship between oral and written traditions is further advanced by Scheub (1985, p. 15), who critiques the perceived dichotomy between these two forms of storytelling. He suggests that written literature serves as a conduit for transmitting oral narratives across temporal and spatial dimensions, ensuring their continued relevance and adaptation. Similarly, Ogundele (2002, p. 132) highlights the ways in which postcolonial African writers engage with orature as a means of reclaiming cultural authenticity and asserting continuity with the past. His observation that African literature often responds to historical realities through a mythical lens (Ogundele, 2002, p. 137) underscores the symbiotic relationship between traditional African worldviews and contemporary literary expressions.

Taken together, these scholarly perspectives affirm that African oral tradition functions as a foundational pillar of literary creativity, offering a dynamic reservoir of narrative strategies, thematic preoccupations, and cultural signifiers. The intricate interplay between oral and written traditions not only defines the unique identity of African literature but also underscores its enduring vitality. Despite the breadth of existing scholarship, there remains a critical gap in examining the contemporary implications of oral tradition within modern literary narratives. While foundational studies have established the historical significance of orature in African literature, there is limited engagement with its evolving role in shaping present-day cultural identities.

This study, *Literary Narratives and Cultural Identities: A Study of Dele A. Sonubi's The Grandfather's Mandate*, seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the contemporary relevance of African oral tradition through a critical analysis of Dele A. Sonubi's novel. The research aims to explore how Sonubi integrates and transforms oral storytelling techniques within a written literary framework, thereby negotiating the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity. By examining *The Grandfather's Mandate*, this study will illuminate the ways in which oral traditions continue to shape literary narratives, reinforce cultural memory, and contribute to the ongoing discourse on African identity in a postcolonial and globalized context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for examining the lasting impact of colonialism on cultural, political, and economic structures. Emerging as a response to colonial legacies, the theory interrogates power dynamics,

identity struggles, and resistance movements that define the postcolonial experience (Said, 1978). It challenges Eurocentric historical and literary narratives, rejecting linear progressions of history and instead emphasizing the deep entanglement of colonial pasts with contemporary realities (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000; Young, 1990). By foregrounding the voices of the formerly colonized, postcolonial theory exposes and disrupts colonial hierarchies (Spivak, 1998).

A central concern of postcolonial thought is the complex relationship between power and identity. Colonialism imposed cultural hegemony through the suppression of indigenous languages, traditions, and epistemologies (Fanon, 1967). In response, postcolonial theorists explore how colonized peoples negotiate their identities, balancing the residual effects of colonial structures with the reclamation of cultural autonomy (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's concept of **hybridity** captures the fluid and dynamic nature of postcolonial identities, illustrating how cultural encounters result in adaptation, reinvention, and resistance rather than simple domination (Hall, 1996). Similarly, **mimicry**, another concept introduced by Bhabha (1994), reveals how the imitation of colonial norms by the colonized can both reinforce and subvert colonial authority.

Postcolonial theory also examines resistance strategies, ranging from direct rebellion to subtle cultural subversion (Scott, 1990). Spivak's (1998) concept of the **subaltern** underscores the challenges of representation, questioning whether historically marginalized voices can truly be heard within dominant power structures. These discussions extend to literature, where postcolonial narratives serve as sites of resistance, offering counter-narratives to colonial discourse and reclaiming indigenous histories (Gandhi, 1998).

Despite its contributions, postcolonial theory has faced critique. Some argue that it overemphasizes victimhood, potentially diminishing the agency of colonized peoples (Chakrabarty, 2007). Others question its broad scope, as it encompasses diverse experiences across different regions and historical periods (Loomba, 2000; Bhabha, 1994).

Nevertheless, postcolonial theory remains an essential tool for analyzing literary narratives and their role in shaping cultural identities. Literature from postcolonial societies often reflects themes of hybridity, power, and resistance, challenging dominant colonial narratives while asserting indigenous perspectives. The theory also highlights language as both a vehicle of colonial control and a site of cultural reclamation.

Application of Postcolonial Theory to the Present Study

This study applies postcolonial theory to examine how Dele A. Sonubi's *The Grandfather's Mandate* engages with themes of cultural identity, colonial legacy, and resistance. The novel presents a protagonist navigating a world shaped

by both indigenous Yoruba traditions and the lingering influences of colonialism, embodying the struggle of **double consciousness** (Du Bois, 1903) that many postcolonial subjects face. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, this study will explore how Sonubi employs **oral tradition** as a means of cultural preservation and resistance against the erasure of indigenous identities.

Bhabha's concept of **hybridity** is particularly relevant in analyzing the protagonist's negotiation between Yoruba heritage and external influences. The novel illustrates how identity is not a static construct but a fluid, evolving process shaped by historical and contemporary forces. Additionally, the study will examine the use of **mimicry**, investigating whether certain characters adopt elements of colonial culture as a survival strategy or as a means of subtly undermining colonial authority.

Furthermore, this research considers Spivak's notion of the **subaltern**, particularly in relation to the marginalized voices within the novel. By examining how the narrative gives agency to traditionally silenced perspectives, this study will contribute to broader discussions on representation and voice in postcolonial literature. The study aims to illuminate the ways in which literary narratives function as tools for cultural resistance, identity negotiation, and historical reclamation. In doing so, it situates Sonubi's work within the broader discourse of African postcolonial literature, reinforcing the enduring significance of indigenous storytelling traditions in shaping cultural and literary identities.

EXPLORING LITERARY NARRATIVES AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN DELE A. SONUBI'S THE GRANDFATHER'S MANDATE

The *Grandfather's Mandate*, written by Dele A. Sonubi (1), is a novel that delves into the experiences of a young African man grappling with his cultural identity amidst the clash of traditional African values and Western influences (2). The story unfolds as the narrator, an educated African man, finds himself caught between his love for a European woman, Ute, and his obligation to fulfill his grandfather's mandate, a deeply rooted cultural responsibility (3).

The novel opens with the narrator's revelation to Ute about his decision to step away from their relationship, a choice driven by his grandfather's mandate (4). This revelation sets the stage for a profound exploration of the narrator's cultural identity and the complexities of navigating between two distinct worldviews (5). The narrator's cultural background is deeply intertwined with African oral traditions and the reverence for his ancestors (6). He acknowledges the influence of his "benevolent spirits" and the guidance they provide in upholding his cultural values (7). However, he also recognizes Ute's struggle to comprehend the significance of these traditions and their role in shaping his identity (8).

The cultural divide between the narrator and Ute becomes increasingly apparent as their relationship progresses (9).

Ute's inability to grasp the importance of respecting elders and maintaining silence during reprimands highlights the contrasting cultural norms that govern their respective backgrounds (10). The narrator's attempt to warn Ute about these differences further emphasizes the challenges of bridging the cultural gap between them (11).

As the novel progresses, the narrator delves deeper into the historical and cultural context that has shaped his grandfather's mandate (12). He unravels the layers of tradition, revealing the deep-rooted significance of fulfilling one's ancestral obligations (13). This journey of self-discovery compels the narrator to confront his own cultural identity and the sacrifices he must make to honor his heritage (14).

The *Grandfather's Mandate* serves as a poignant exploration of cultural identity, tradition, and the complexities of navigating relationships across cultural divides (15). The novel challenges readers to consider the importance of understanding and respecting diverse cultural perspectives, while also acknowledging the challenges and dilemmas that arise when individuals from different backgrounds forge connections [(16).

The Portrayal of Cultural Memory in Dele A. Sonubi's *The Grandfather's Mandate*

In his novel *The Grandfather's Mandate*, Dele A. Sonubi employs various elements of African oral tradition to re-examine, redefine, re-interrogate, reaffirm, and re-authenticate African identity. The use of oral tradition, as Ogundele (2002) asserts, facilitates the articulation of history and the reawakening of the cultural memory of Africans (p. 124).

One of the key ways in which Sonubi achieves this is through the narrator's realization of the task ahead of him. The narrator acknowledges the sacrifices he must make in order to fulfill his grandfather's mandate, which he received on the eve of his grandfather's death. This statement foregrounds the African worldview, which places a high value on honoring the wishes of the dead, especially those who are dear to one's heart (Sonubi, 2004, p. 4).

Sonubi also deploys masquerade, a significant aspect of African culture, to narrate and articulate his cultural and linguistic disposition. Masquerade serves as a powerful tool for social commentary and cultural expression, and its use in the novel allows Sonubi to explore themes of identity, tradition, and belonging (p. 5).

Furthermore, Sonubi's portrayal of polygamy serves to reaffirm the Africanness of the situation and its unique nature. The narrator's explanation of polygamy to Ute, a European woman, highlights the cultural differences between the two worlds. Despite Ute's initial shock and disapproval, the narrator defends polygamy as a valid and accepted practice in African culture (p. 6).

In addition to these specific elements of oral tradition, Sonubi's novel engages with a broader politics of cultural

reaffirmation. The narrator asserts that Africans are born into African civilization, an innate quality that cannot be erased by exposure to Western civilization. He contrasts his experiences in Europe, where he felt like a different person, with his life in Africa, where he feels a deep connection to his cultural heritage (p. 7).

Sonubi's use of marriage traditions further underscores his critique of Westernization and the forced abandonment of African traditions. He argues that Africans who embrace Western civilization may do so out of a sense of necessity or a desire for acceptance, but they will always carry the cultural mark of their ancestry within them. He refers to Western civilization as a "borrowed life," suggesting that it is ultimately inauthentic and unsatisfying (p. 8).

Ute's reaction to the narrator's insincerity highlights the feminist critique of the objectification and commodification of women. Her accusation that the narrator is using her and then discarding her like a "filthy rag" speaks to the broader issue of gender inequality and the exploitation of women in both African and Western societies (p. 9). *The Grandfather's Mandate* effectively employs elements of African oral tradition to portray the cultural memory of Africa and to engage with a broader politics of cultural reaffirmation. The novel's exploration of themes of identity, tradition, and belonging challenges readers to consider the importance of preserving and respecting diverse cultural perspectives.

In his exploration of cultural identity and belonging, the narrator of Dele A. Sonubi's *The Grandfather's Mandate* grapples with the concept of "double consciousness," a term coined by W.E.B. Du Bois to describe the psychological state of Africans living in a predominantly Western society (Sonubi, 2004, p. 5). The narrator acknowledges the internal struggle he faces as he attempts to reconcile his African heritage with his exposure to Western culture. This conflict is further highlighted by the narrator's avoidance of categorization as either purely African or purely Western, instead identifying himself as a "child of two worlds" (p. 6).

The novel's exploration of African cultural identity is further enriched by the introduction of the Ogboni cult, a traditional Yoruba secret society known for its emphasis on wisdom, knowledge, and justice. The narrator's connection to the Ogboni cult underscores the importance of cultural heritage and ancestral ties in African society.

The practice of marriage by affiliation and inheritance, as described by the narrator, is another example of the deep-rooted traditions that shape African social structures. The narrator's statement, "Each wife is a granddaughter of four great colleagues of my grandfather at the Ogboni cult," highlights the interconnectedness of families and the significance of lineage in African communities (p. 7).

The proverb, "Things that cannot be changed must be endured," further underscores the resilience and adaptability that characterize African culture (p. 8). This proverb reflects

the African belief in accepting and finding strength in the face of challenges that cannot be altered.

The setting of the novel, a remote African environment surrounded by nature, serves as a backdrop for exploring the unique characteristics of African society. The narrator's description of the "Uren river" and "Iroko trees" evokes images of a vibrant and natural landscape that holds deep significance for the characters (p. 9).

Harold Scheub's observation on the power of African oral tradition is particularly relevant to Sonubi's novel. Scheub asserts that oral tradition "distills the essences of human experiences, shaping them into rememberable, readily retrievable images of broad applicability with an extraordinary potential for eliciting emotional responses" (Scheub, 1985, p. 1). Sonubi effectively employs myths and legends to narrate the historical experiences of the community, demonstrating the enduring influence of oral tradition in shaping cultural identity. The narrator's tale about the origin of the Uren River highlights the African belief in the spiritual and life-giving power of nature (Sonubi, 2004, p. 10).

The portrayal of the Uren River as a source of strength and vitality challenges the negative stereotypes often associated with Africa. The river's fresh and cool water symbolizes the resilience and adaptability of African culture, contrasting with Western perceptions of Africa as a place of hardship and danger.

Sonubi's creative use of oral tradition aligns with Edward's (1991) view that a novelist's success should be measured by their ability to innovate and adapt traditional forms of storytelling rather than simply replicating them. Sonubi's novel demonstrates the power of oral tradition to engage readers and convey complex cultural themes. *The Grandfather's Mandate* effectively utilizes elements of African oral tradition to portray the cultural memory of Africa and explore the complexities of identity in a postcolonial world. The novel's exploration of themes of identity, tradition, and belonging challenges readers to consider the importance of preserving and respecting diverse cultural perspectives.

Sonubi further emphasizes the Uren River's protective powers, stating that it shields children from harm, both seen and unseen (Sonubi, 2004, p. 9). He narrates the existence of a covenant between the community and the river goddess, Oluwari, ensuring protection as long as the river is revered and respected. This reverence is reflected in the prohibition of fishing in the river (p. 10). The portrayal of the Uren River aligns with ecocritical perspectives that advocate for environmental protection and the interconnectedness of humans and nature.

The Uren River serves as a unifying force, connecting individuals to their ethnic roots. The narrator explains that the river's water is used in child initiation rituals, symbolizing the initiation of young members into the community and their ancestral heritage (p. 9). This connection to the river

fosters a sense of belonging and collective identity among the community members.

The river goddess, Oluwari, is portrayed as a benevolent figure, bestowing the gift of children upon barren women. During the annual Uren Day Festival, women seeking fertility gather at the river to pray for children, earning Oluwari the moniker "Mother of many children" (p. 10). This mythical portrayal of the Uren River highlights the importance of fertility and the continuation of the community's lineage. Sonubi's portrayal of the river goddess, a powerful and nurturing female figure, challenges negative stereotypes that often portray women as unproductive or subservient. Oluwari's ability to bestow life and fertility counters these stereotypes and positions women as central to the community's well-being.

The historical legend of Uren, the river's namesake, signifies Africans' deep respect for their ancestors and their heroic deeds. Uren's self-sacrifice to save her daughter and provide water for the community exemplifies the selflessness and heroism that Africans value. This connection to ancestral heroes reinforces the importance of history and tradition in African society. Harold Scheub (1985) asserts that oral tradition plays a significant role in African literature, shaping narrative structures and thematic elements (p. 15). Sonubi's novel exemplifies this interplay, as he incorporates elements of oral tradition such as storytelling, proverbs, and mythical narratives to enrich his storytelling and convey cultural values. He highlights the role of oral tradition in transmitting wisdom from elders to younger generations. The narrator recounts how Uren, the river goddess, would gather children and share stories with them, imparting valuable lessons and nurturing their moral development (p. 15). This practice of storytelling serves as a conduit for cultural transmission and ensures the continuity of traditional knowledge.

The novel delves into the African belief in the spirit world and its interconnectedness with the physical realm. The narrator's statement about death being a transition to another place, rather than an end, aligns with the notion of reincarnation and the continued existence of the spirit (Sonubi, 2004, p. 38). This belief system shapes the characters' understanding of life, death, and their place in the universe.

African Medicine and Healing is underscored in this novel. The portrayal of African medicine emphasizes African's ability to address physical and spiritual ailments. The narrator acknowledges the effectiveness of traditional healers and their knowledge of herbal remedies (p. 42). This recognition of African medicine challenges Western stereotypes and underscores the value of traditional healing practices.

The novel's first-person narrative perspective, employing personal pronouns such as "I," "we," creates a sense of intimacy and believability. The narrator's voice serves as a conduit for the reader to experience the story from an insider's perspective, fostering empathy and understanding of the characters' motivations and experiences. The

incorporation of oral-literary elements such as proverbs, panegyrics, dirges, legends, myths, rituals, and African cosmological views serves to address social concerns and reinforce cultural values. These elements provide a platform for exploring themes of identity, tradition, spirituality, and community life.

The use of oriki, a form of Yoruba praise poetry, is particularly evident in the characters of Baba Ologuro and Onifade (Sonubi, 2004, pp. 48, 62, 200). Oriki serves as a means of expressing profound cultural identity, social connections, and emotional healing in Dele A. Sonubi's "The Grandfather's Mandate." The author strategically employs oriki, a traditional Yoruba praise poetry, through the characters of Baba Ologuro and Onifade to convey a deeper understanding of the cultural and emotional fabric of the narrative. In the instances where oriki is utilized, such as on pages 48, 62, and 200 of the novel, the characters engage in the rhythmic and lyrical recitation of praise poetry. This practice is more than a mere verbal performance; it is a deliberate act that reinforces their cultural identity, expressing a connection to their lineage, ancestors, and communal history. Baba Ologuro's use of oriki serves as a form of self-identification, aligning himself with the esteemed lineage of his ancestors. By praising his lineage, he not only affirms his cultural roots but also establishes a sense of continuity and belonging within the larger Yoruba community. Oriki becomes a tool for Baba Ologuro to assert his identity and significance within the cultural context.

Similarly, Onifade's engagement with oriki on different occasions throughout the novel further illustrates its role as a means of emotional healing. The rhythmic and melodic qualities of oriki create a therapeutic and uplifting atmosphere. By reciting oriki, Onifade taps into a cultural reservoir that provides solace and strength, contributing to his emotional well-being. Additionally, the use of oriki underscores the interconnectedness of oral tradition and emotional expression within Yoruba culture. The rhythmic flow of words and the emphasis on positive attributes act as a form of psychological support, fostering a sense of pride and resilience. This aligns with the broader Pan-Africanist ideals of celebrating and preserving cultural practices that contribute to the holistic well-being of individuals within the community. The incorporation of oriki in "The Grandfather's Mandate" transcends mere linguistic expression; it serves as a powerful cultural and emotional tool. Through characters like Baba Ologuro and Onifade, oriki becomes a means of affirming cultural identity, fostering emotional healing, and contributing to the larger discourse on the importance of oral tradition in preserving and celebrating African heritage.

Sonubi's incorporation of proverbs, dirges, and other elements of oral tradition into her novel, enriches the narrative and provides insights into Yoruba culture and worldview. Proverbs, with their concise wisdom and metaphorical language, serve as a powerful tool for conveying cultural values and beliefs. Sonubi's use of proverbs like "A handshake that extends to

the elbow is going beyond simple pleasantries" (Sonubi: 96) and "It is foolish man who hears the call of a king and still goes to consult the Ifa Oracle" (Sonubi: 61) not only adds depth to the characters' interactions but also reflects the importance of social etiquette and respect for authority in Yoruba society. Dirges, with their expressive language and emotional intensity, play a crucial role in mourning the dead and expressing grief. The narrator's dirge for his grandfather (Sonubi: 49) poignantly captures the pain and sorrow of loss, while also highlighting the communal nature of mourning in Yoruba culture.

Through skillful deployment of oral tradition, Sonubi successfully interweaves traditional wisdom, cultural values, and emotional depth into the fabric of her novel. These elements enhance the reader's understanding of Yoruba society and its traditions, while also adding a layer of authenticity and resonance to the narrative. The author's use of oral tradition in the novel demonstrates the power of storytelling to bridge cultures and convey profound truths about human experience. By weaving together proverbs, dirges, and other traditional elements, Sonubi creates a rich and nuanced narrative that resonates with readers on both a personal and cultural level.

The Preservation and Transmission of Culture

In "*The Grandfather's Mandate*," oral tradition serves as a powerful vehicle for conveying the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people. Through the skillful employment of folktales, proverbs, rituals, and other traditional forms of storytelling, Sonubi immerses readers in the vibrant tapestry of Yoruba customs, beliefs, and values. Folktales, with their captivating narratives and embedded teachings, play a pivotal role in shaping the moral compass of Yoruba society. The grandfather's storytelling sessions, as recounted by the narrator, instill in the young minds of the listeners a deep understanding of societal norms, ethical conduct, and the interconnectedness of all things. Through these stories, children are guided towards empathy, respect for elders, and an appreciation for the supernatural realm.

On the other hand, proverbs, with their concise and impactful language, serve as condensed capsules of Yoruba wisdom. Sonubi seamlessly weaves proverbs into the dialogue and narrative, adding layers of depth and cultural insight to the characters' interactions. Proverbs like "A handshake that extends to the elbow is going beyond simple pleasantries" (Sonubi: 96) offer commentary on social etiquette and the dangers of overfamiliarity, while others, such as "It is foolish man who hears the call of a king and still goes to consult the Ifa Oracle" (Sonubi: 61), underscore the importance of respecting authority and following established protocols.

Rituals, with their symbolic actions and prescribed utterances, serve as tangible expressions of Yoruba beliefs and values. The naming ceremony of Ayobami's child, for instance, is a complex ritual that meticulously incorporates symbolic

items like salt, water, palm oil, honey, sugarcane, kola nuts, orogbo, alligator pepper, and dried fish. These items, each imbued with specific meanings, represent the blessings, protection, and prosperity that the community wishes upon the newborn child. Sonubi employs folktales not only to entertain and educate but also to address social imbalances and promote good moral judgment. The story of the tortoise, his daughter, and his daughter's husband, the snail, serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the importance of humility, patience, and respect for elders. The narrator's retelling of the folktale underscores the wisdom of the revered sages of Yoruba society, emphasizing that solutions to African problems lie within the African value system itself.

On the other hand, the novel offers a unique perspective on the Yoruba conception of death, challenging Western notions of finality and permanence. The statement, "He lived to be one hundred and two years before he allowed death to take him away" (Sonubi: 93), suggests that death is not an external force that seizes an individual but rather a conscious choice made by the deceased. This perspective aligns with the Yoruba belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, where death is viewed as a transition into another world rather than an absolute cessation of existence.

Sonubi's portrayal of polygamy, a prevalent practice in Yoruba society, provides a nuanced understanding of its complexities and challenges. The depiction of the physical altercation between a husband and his three wives highlights the potential for conflict and tension within polygamous households. However, he also hints at feminist tendencies by showcasing the women's assertion of their rights and refusal to be subjugated by a domineering husband.

The author's masterful integration of oral tradition into *The Grandfather's Mandate* serves as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. Through folktales, proverbs, rituals, and the exploration of sensitive social issues, Sonubi not only entertains and educates readers but also offers a profound insight into the rich tapestry of Yoruba beliefs, values, and traditions.

Summary

Dele A. Sonubi's novel, "*The Grandfather's Mandate*," effectively employs oral tradition to explore cultural identity, confront contemporary social issues, and preserve Yoruba cultural heritage. Sonubi interweaves folktales, proverbs, songs, and incantatory poetry into the narrative, creating a storytelling that resonates with readers on multiple levels.

Folktales serve as cautionary tales, highlighting societal norms and the dangers of pride, greed, and colonial exploitation. Proverbs encapsulate Yoruba wisdom and cultural insights, emphasizing communal spirit, authority, and respect for established protocols. Songs express emotions, celebrate communal events, and reinforce cultural identity. Incantatory

poetry bridges the physical and spiritual realms, reflecting the enduring belief in the power of words to influence events and communicate with spirits.

Sonubi's novel addresses contemporary social issues, including colonialism, neocolonialism, and cultural conflict. The narrative exposes the exploitative practices and enduring effects of colonial rule, highlighting the unequal power dynamics between colonial powers and African societies. It also explores the challenges faced by individuals caught between traditional African values and Western ideals, emphasizing the tensions and contradictions that arise from cultural assimilation.

CONCLUSION

Sonubi's masterful integration of oral tradition into "*The Grandfather's Mandate*" serves as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling in preserving cultural heritage, transmitting values, and addressing contemporary social issues. Through folktales, proverbs, songs, and incantatory poetry, Sonubi not only entertains and educates readers but also offers a profound insight into the rich tapestry of Yoruba beliefs, values, and traditions, while simultaneously engaging with the complexities of African identity in a globalized world.

Recommendation

"The Grandfather's Mandate" is a valuable resource for scholars and students interested in African literature, oral tradition, cultural identity, and contemporary social issues. Sonubi's novel provides a compelling narrative that interweaves traditional and contemporary themes, making it an engaging and informative read for a wide audience.

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