

**FOLKLORIC ELEMENTS IN SUTHERLANDS THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA
AND FEMI OSOFISAN'S MOROUNTODUN**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This study aims to examine the integration and significance of folkloric elements in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, emphasizing their role in preserving and reflecting African cultural heritage. By exploring the use of oral traditions, proverbs, songs, myths, and storytelling, the research seeks to illustrate how both playwrights incorporate folklore to address social issues, critique colonial and postcolonial experiences, and reinforce cultural identity. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of folklore in promoting communal values, resistance, and the negotiation of modernity within African drama.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study is confined to examining the folkloric elements in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*. It specifically focuses on identifying and analyzing the use of oral traditions, myths, proverbs, songs, and storytelling within these plays. Additionally, the research explores how these elements contribute to thematic development, characterization, and cultural representation. It also considers the socio-political and cultural contexts that shape the playwrights' use of folklore, highlighting its role in addressing themes such as identity, resistance, and communal values. While the primary focus is on the two selected plays, references to relevant African oral traditions and literary criticism will be incorporated to provide a broader perspective.

1.3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, using textual analysis as the primary approach to examine folkloric elements in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and

Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*. Through close reading, the research identifies and analyzes the integration of oral traditions, proverbs, myths, songs, and storytelling, exploring their contributions to the thematic, cultural, and socio-political dimensions of the plays.

A comparative approach is also adopted to highlight similarities and differences in the playwrights' use of folklore, considering their respective cultural and historical contexts. Additionally, secondary sources including scholarly articles, books, and critical essays on African folklore and drama will be reviewed to provide theoretical and contextual support. This methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of how Sutherland and Osofisan employ folklore as a means of cultural preservation, social critique, and resistance within their works.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This study is grounded in folkloric, a discipline that explores the study, interpretation, and cultural significance of folklore. Folkloric offers a framework for understanding how traditional oral and cultural expressions such as myths, proverbs, songs, dances, and storytelling serve as channels for transmitting cultural knowledge, reinforcing social values, and addressing societal concerns.

As the academic study of folklore, Folkloristics examines how traditional cultural expressions shape and reflect the identity, beliefs, and experiences of a community. It views folklore as both a repository of collective memory and a medium for expressing cultural identity. Rather than being a static collection of cultural artifacts, folklore is a dynamic and evolving process that enables communities to adapt to change while maintaining a connection to their traditions. By analyzing these expressions within their cultural, historical, and social contexts, Folklore provides insight into their meanings and functions within the societies that create them.

The foundations of folkloric as an academic discipline can be traced to Johann Gottfried Herder, an 18th-century German philosopher who emphasized folklore as a vital expression of a people's essence, capturing their identity and worldview. Inspired by Herder's ideas, the formal study of folklore emerged in the 19th century. In 1846, English antiquarian William Thoms coined the term "folklore" and advocated for its systematic study.

In the 20th century, scholars such as Alan Dundes expanded the field by introducing structural and functional approaches to folklore. Dundes argued that folklore should be examined as a living tradition that reflects social structures, values, and contemporary concerns rather than as a relic of the past. Other key contributors include Vladimir Propp, who analyzed the structural patterns of folktales, and Bronisław Malinowski, who explored the functional role of folklore in addressing social needs and conflicts.

Folklore is particularly relevant to this study as it provides a lens through which the folkloric elements in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* can be examined. Both plays incorporate traditional African folklore, utilizing oral traditions, myths, proverbs, songs, and storytelling techniques to engage with cultural, social, and political themes.

In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, Sutherland integrates Ghanaian storytelling techniques, particularly Ananse folktales, to create a narrative that is both engaging and culturally meaningful. The character of Ananse, a well-known trickster figure in Ghanaian folklore, represents themes of wit and social critique. By drawing on Ananse's characteristics, Sutherland not only entertains but also critiques societal norms and human behavior. The play's episodic structure mirrors traditional folktales, where each act unveils new narrative layers, maintaining audience engagement through familiar storytelling patterns. Additionally, the use of proverbs

and figurative language, which are integral to Ghanaian oral traditions, enriches dialogue and character interactions, showcasing the depth of the culture's oral heritage.

Similarly, Osofisan's *Morountodun* draws from Yoruba folklore, incorporating festival motifs and traditional rituals central to Yoruba culture. The play's setting and events are deeply rooted in Yoruba cultural practices, using these elements to explore themes of social justice, power struggles, and communal responsibility. Traditional music, dance, and masquerades are woven into the narrative, enhancing its aesthetic appeal while also serving as tools for conveying profound social and political messages. By embedding these folkloric elements, Osofisan ensures that the play resonates with the audience's cultural experiences, fostering a deeper connection to its themes and characters.

Both plays bridge traditional African cultural expressions with contemporary theatrical forms. While Sutherland's play focuses on the Ghanaian context by employing the Ananse folktale to critique social issues, Osofisan's work engages with Yoruba traditions to highlight themes of justice and collective responsibility. Despite their cultural differences, both playwrights rely on traditional storytelling techniques, character archetypes, and cultural motifs to engage audiences and deliver their messages. The incorporation of music, dance, and ritualistic elements in both plays underscores the significance of performance in African storytelling traditions, emphasizing theatre's communal nature and its role in preserving culture and addressing societal issues.

In conclusion, Folklore serves as a robust theoretical framework for analyzing the folkloric elements in *The Marriage of Anansewa* and *Morountodun*. By examining how Sutherland and Osofisan integrate and adapt folklore, this study highlights the continued relevance of oral traditions in African drama as tools for cultural preservation, social critique,

and resistance. Applying a Folkloristic perspective underscores the transformative power of folklore in shaping identity, culture, and modernity.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

With an emphasis on how playwrights such as Efua Sutherland and Femi Osofisan incorporate oral traditions, myths, and cultural expressions into their works, the review of related scholarship explores the body of literature on the use of folklore in African drama. Critical viewpoints on the roles and importance of folklore in upholding cultural identity, tackling social problems, and encouraging resistance to oppression are examined in this section. This review places the study within the larger conversation on African literature by discussing academic interpretations of *The Marriage of Anansewa* and *Morountodun*. It also identifies gaps in the literature and offers a starting point for examining the plays' folkloric elements.

First, the research by Adeleke (2011) focuses on how music is used as an aesthetic and cultural instrument in Femi Osofisan's plays, highlighting how it is used to dramatise Yoruba culture through customs like ancestral worship and rites of passage. Through the use of aesthetic theory, Adeleke's work explores how music both reflects and preserves cultural values while producing beauty. As both studies examine the use of traditional cultural expressions into theatre to transmit society norms, values, and identity, this is consistent with the current study on folkloric aspects in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*.

The current study takes a more comprehensive approach, examining several folkloric aspects, including proverbs, myths, and rituals, in the chosen plays, whereas Adeleke's study focuses on music as a particular folkloric element. In addition to using folklore for aesthetic purposes, Sutherland and Osofisan use it to address more general sociopolitical issues including

gender roles, resistance, and camaraderie within the community. In contrast to Adeleke's emphasis on Yoruba culture, the current research highlights the diversity and universality of African oral traditions by contrasting Yoruba customs in *Morountodun* with Akan folklore in *The Marriage of Anansewa*.

Folkloristic' applicability as the theoretical framework for this study is demonstrated by its capacity to contextualize the cultural importance of the plays' folkloric features, much as Adeleke's use of aesthetic theory to connect music with Yoruba cultural practices. The current study, however, goes further into the symbolic, ideological, and narrative aspects of folklore in addressing social concerns like identity, resistance, and community harmony, whereas Adeleke's work largely praises the beauty and theatrical function of music.

In conclusion, the significance of cultural expressions in African drama is emphasized in both studies; however, the current study provides a more thorough examination of the various roles of folklore by contrasting its use in two different cultural and dramatic contexts, which expands our knowledge of how African playwrights employ traditional elements to preserve cultural heritage while addressing modern realities.

Additionally, J. Sunita Peacock's essay on *The Marriage of Anansewa* examines how colonialism affected Ghanaians' cultural identity, with a particular focus on the trickster figure of Ananse. The essay emphasizes the hybrid identity that arises in the postcolonial context, where African traditions, like Ananse folklore, are entwined with the legacy of colonialism. Peacock's analysis draws on Ghana's history of colonization, analyzing how the imposition of foreign values and systems led to the erasure of sacred sites and cultural practices, resulting in a loss of memory and identity among the colonized. This fusion of culture is also mirrored in the play of

the time, as indigenous forms of expression, like the Ananse figure, are altered to reflect modern postcolonial conditions.

In contrast, the current study of Sutherland's and Osofisan's plays *The Marriage of Anansewa* and *Morountodun*, which focuses on folkloric components, is on how these plays employ folklore to address social and postcolonial themes. The current study examines how these playwrights employ folklore as a means of resistance, adaptation, and preservation, whereas Peacock's article highlights the detrimental effects of colonialism on cultural memory and identity. The study will examine how Sutherland and Rotimi emphasize the adaptation and resiliency of African cultural practices in the face of colonial and postcolonial obstacles, while also using legendary figures and themes to critique current social concerns.

While Peacock's essay focuses more on the colonial erasure of culture, the current study will investigate how these folkloric elements are reimagined and reasserted in the plays as a form of resistance and a way to preserve cultural heritage. Both works examine the role of folklore in shaping the identity and social consciousness of the postcolonial subject. Therefore, the current research focuses on the active function of folklore in regaining cultural agency and identity, even if both pieces address the interaction between folklore and colonialism.

"Text and Performance Deviations in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Toyin Abiodun's *The Trials of Afonja*" is another research that examines the differences between African dramatic texts and their stage productions, with a particular focus on imaginative director adaptations. By examining the historical background and cultural forces that shape the written text and its performance, the study embraces New Historicism. In order to represent the practical realities of performance while preserving the essential elements of the original text, it

looks at how directors may change the order of occurrences, add or delete scenes, and incorporate songs.

While the reviewed scholarship highlights the distinction between text and performance, the current study will concentrate more on how folkloric elements (such as myths, proverbs, and oral traditions) are incorporated into the texts themselves rather than how they are changed during performances. The current research is concerned with identifying and analyzing these folkloric elements in the context of African drama, exploring their role in shaping the characters, themes, and cultural significance of the plays. In contrast, the current study on Folkloric Elements in *Sutherland's The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* employs folkloristic as its theoretical framework.

The main distinction is in the theoretical framework: Folkloristic in the current study will concentrate on the oral and cultural traditions incorporated into the texts, whereas New Historicism in the reviewed study examines the power relationships and historical background impacting the plays; though the current study is more focused on conserving and understanding the folkloric features as they exist in the written text than on analysing their variations in stage performances. Both studies nevertheless have an interest in African play and its cultural relevance.

However, the research by Effiok B. Uwatt in "Ritual Symbolism and Structural Significance in Femi Osofisan's Drama" highlights the African nature of ritual and its function in connecting traditional cultural practices to contemporary Nigerian theatre. Uwatt focuses on the symbolic and structural functions of ritual in Osofisan's plays, contending that it is not only a cultural expression but also a dramatic tool that helps in the structuring of time and action, foreshadowing, and the creation of conflict.

Conversely, the current study on *Folkloric Elements* in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* focuses on how African play exploits folklore as a form of cultural expression. The current study looks at how folklore—through myths, stories, and traditions—shapes the plot and character development in both plays, whereas Uwatt's research focuses on ritual as a symbolic and structural technique. In contrast to Uwatt's more focused study on ritual symbolism, the current research is more concerned with the larger category of folklore, which encompasses not only ritual but also storytelling, myths, and cultural symbols. Both studies acknowledge the significance of traditional cultural elements in forming the theatrical experience.

The current research attempts to investigate how folkloric components act as a medium for resistance and identity construction, examining how these aspects are employed to represent societal difficulties and cultural continuity, whereas Uwatt examines ritual in terms of its functional purpose in Osofisan's plays. Though their theoretical focuses are different—the current research is based on folkloristic rather than ritual studies—both studies recognize the importance of traditional aspects in forging a distinctive African identity in theatre.

Additionally, Idaevbor Bello's research on Sam Ukala's usage of African culture in his plays emphasizes how Ukala combined folklore with contemporary theatrical techniques to create a distinctive style known as "*folkism*." This method creates a unique dramatic experience by combining Western theatrical standards with the oral traditions of the Ika people. African cultural experiences are reflected in Ukala's works, which are intended to captivate audiences that are conversant in both Western performing forms and African oral traditions. One important aspect of his dramaturgy is the use of music, audience participation, and traditional performance components into his plays.

The current study of *Folkloric Elements* in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Osofisan's *Morountodun*, on the other hand, focuses on the ways in which African drama uses folklore to reflect societal values, norms, and conflicts. Although Ukala's works are based on the oral tradition of the Ika, Sutherland and Osofisan draw from more general African folklore, such as the Yoruba and Ananse myth, respectively. Both Sutherland and Rotimi incorporate folklore into their plays to address current social issues, but treat folklore differently in terms of the specific cultural contexts they draw from and the specific folklore elements they highlight.

A more thorough analysis of the symbolic meanings ingrained in Sutherland and Osofisan's folklore, with an emphasis on how these components support the formation of identity, power, and resistance, is made possible by the theoretical foundation of folkloristic in the current study. The current study focuses on the preservation and modification of folklore within the framework of postcolonial African play, whereas Ukala's "folklorism" stresses the blending of oral tradition with contemporary performance. Both strategies stress how important it is for audiences to interact with traditional forms, but the current study focuses more on how folklore may be used to challenge colonial narratives and negotiate African identity in a postcolonial setting.

Conclusion: Using the theoretical framework of Folkloristics, the current study of *Folkloric Elements* in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* builds upon and expands on the scholarship reviewed, especially the works of Sam Ukala and other scholars who study the intersection of African oral traditions and modern dramaturgy. Ukala's work stresses the incorporation of folk materials into contemporary drama, but the current study focuses specifically on the ways in which these two plays use folkloric

elements—such as oral storytelling, myths, and traditional performance practices—to reflect African cultural identity, societal values, and resistance to colonial and postcolonial challenges.

This study focuses on particular folklore dramatizations in the chosen works of Sutherland and Osofisan, in contrast to Ukala's wide-ranging exploration of African folklore in his plays. It provides a targeted analysis of how these playwrights use African folktales and performance traditions to inform their characters, plot development, and social commentary. By examining the importance of these folkloric components in communicating intricate issues like identity, resistance, and cultural preservation in postcolonial African countries, the research further supports its methodology. As a result, the study not only supports the academic tradition of combining written and oral forms, but it also offers a thorough examination of how folklore continues to be an essential medium for social and political criticism in African theatre.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This study explores how folkloric elements in Efo Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* are used to express cultural values, convey traditional wisdom and enhance the overall aesthetic quality of the plays.

CHAPTER TWO

The Folklore and Folksongs in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*

Folklore and Folksongs in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* Folklore and Folksongs are fundamental components that enhance the story and deepen its cultural resonance; they are deeply woven into the play, reflecting the oral traditions, values, and communal spirit of Ghanaian society; folklore, through storytelling, proverbs, and the trickster figure of Ananse, provides a cultural framework that challenges social norms and celebrates African heritage; Folksongs add to the play's theatricality by providing commentary on the action, reaffirming communal values, and encouraging audience participation. This chapter examines the interaction between folklore and Folksongs in the play, investigating their thematic, cultural, and performative significance.

2.1 Folklore

Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* seamlessly weaves folklore into a modern theatrical framework, highlighting the depth of Ghanaian oral traditions. By incorporating elements of folklore, Sutherland merges traditional African storytelling with contemporary drama, producing a play that remains both culturally significant and widely accessible. The presence of folklore is evident through the use of proverbs, storytelling techniques, the trickster figure of Ananse, and cultural rituals, all of which convey moral lessons, critique social norms, and celebrate African traditions.

A central folkloric element in the play is the trickster figure, Ananse, a well-known character in Akan mythology. Traditionally depicted as a cunning spider, Ananse represents both human strengths and weaknesses. In the play, this character is adapted into the human form of Ananse, a shrewd and manipulative father who devises a clever scheme to secure a favorable marriage

proposal for his daughter, Anansewa. His strategies reflect the intelligence and resourcefulness typically associated with the Ananse figure in Ghanaian folklore.

For example, Ananse crafts elaborate letters to various suitors, portraying Anansewa in an idealized manner while subtly setting them in competition with one another. His actions illustrate his clever nature, a defining characteristic of the traditional trickster. However, Sutherland's use of this archetype extends beyond entertainment, as Ananse's behavior highlights broader social issues such as materialism and the transactional nature of marriage. His actions reflect the morally ambiguous nature of the trickster, who operates in a space between right and wrong to achieve personal goals.

Another significant folkloric aspect of the play is storytelling, which serves as a foundational element of African oral traditions. The structure of *The Marriage of Anansewa* closely resembles oral narratives, with characters frequently breaking the fourth wall to speak directly to the audience. This technique fosters a sense of communal engagement, mirroring the participatory nature of traditional storytelling.

For instance, the play opens with Ananse directly addressing the audience, establishing an interactive dynamic that continues throughout the performance. This approach reflects the role of storytellers in African oral traditions, who engage listeners through dialogue, songs, and reflections on moral themes. By employing this method, Sutherland not only honors Ghanaian folklore but also enhances the play's accessibility and engagement.

Additionally, proverbs, a key feature of African folklore, are integrated throughout the play's dialogue. These concise, wisdom-laden sayings reflect the values and beliefs of the Akan people while reinforcing the play's central themes. Ananse frequently relies on proverbs to

rationalize his actions or influence those around him, demonstrating the significance of language in shaping perspectives and interactions.

One notable example is when Ananse declares:

“A man who does not cultivate his farm will not eat.”

This proverb highlights the value of effort and strategic thinking, aligning with Ananse’s reasoning behind his elaborate plans. Through the incorporation of proverbs, Sutherland underscores the cultural relevance of oral wisdom while simultaneously using them as a tool for character development and thematic expression.

The presence of cultural rituals and traditional customs further reinforces the folkloric foundation of the play. Central to the narrative are the traditional marriage rites, which reflect the customs and values associated with marriage in Ghanaian society. Ananse’s meticulous arrangements for Anansewa’s “marriage” emphasize the communal nature of these ceremonies, where family and community members actively participate.

These rituals go beyond mere formalities, serving as a means to explore broader themes such as social standing, familial responsibilities, and the tension between tradition and modern influences. Ananse’s manipulation of the marriage proceedings highlights how traditional customs are evolving under contemporary pressures, including aspirations for financial success and upward social mobility.

Following the conventional role of folklore, *The Marriage of Anansewa* utilizes its folkloric components to convey moral lessons. While Ananse’s schemes initially appear effective, they eventually lead to complications that require him to face the repercussions of his actions.

The play’s resolution, where honesty and familial affection triumph, reinforces the significance of integrity and communal values.

For example, when Anansewa feigns illness to gauge the sincerity of her suitors, the one who expresses genuine concern ultimately emerges as the most suitable match. This outcome aligns with the moral teachings found in Akan folklore, where virtues such as sincerity and compassion are rewarded, while deceit and self-interest are ultimately revealed.

Through *The Marriage of Anansewa*, Sutherland skillfully integrates folklore to craft a play that both celebrates Ghanaian cultural heritage and examines societal issues. By incorporating the trickster figure of Ananse, storytelling conventions, proverbs, and cultural rituals, she showcases the richness of African oral traditions while addressing topics such as materialism, family dynamics, and the interplay between tradition and modernity. The use of folklore enhances the narrative while reinforcing the play's moral and instructional purpose, making it relevant to audiences both within and beyond Ghana. By drawing from the power of folklore, Sutherland creates a timeless work that connects historical traditions with contemporary realities, preserving Ghana's cultural legacy while engaging with present-day concerns.

2.2 Folksongs

The Marriage of Anansewa by Efua Sutherland is a classic example of African theatre that is based on oral storytelling traditions, in which traditional music are used extensively to enhance the tale. Folk songs are used into the play for a number of reasons, including increasing the drama's cultural authenticity, offering insight into the characters' circumstances, and encouraging audience participation. These songs, which are based on oral traditions from Ghana, are performed in Twi and English, demonstrating the country's bilingualism and bridging the gap between the past and the present.

The play opens with a theme song sung in Twi, setting the tone for the story:

“Anansewa, Anansewa,
 You have come of age,
 I will find a worthy man
 To marry you
 So the benefits would rub
 Off on me.”

The play's main conflict—Ananse's attempt to marry off his daughter Anansewa to a wealthy suitor for his own benefit—is summed up in this song. Ananse's materialistic goals are reflected in the song, which highlights his wish to utilise his daughter's marriage to raise his socioeconomic standing. Sung in Twi, the song, which is based on traditional melodies that honour life stages like marriage, places the play squarely inside Ghanaian culture. The song is memorable and reinforces its thematic relevance through the use of repetition and a straightforward melody.

Additionally, the song introduces the audience to Ananse's personality and goals, acting as a narrative element. Sutherland makes sure that the audience is emotionally involved in the drama as it develops by fusing narration with music.

Ananse's solo song, sung in English, provides a satirical commentary on his materialistic aspirations:

“Let alone some comfortable
 Chairs to sit in? A fridge in the
 Kitchen? A car in the garage?
 My name on invitation lists for
 State functions? Embassy parties?”

The song's use of English reflects Ananse's desire to align himself with the elite class, symbolising the tension between tradition and modernity. The song's rhythm and tone mimic traditional praise songs, but its content is purposefully exaggerated to emphasise the absurdity of Ananse's desires. This juxtaposition of form and content creates a satirical effect, encouraging the audience to reflect on the moral implications of Ananse's actions.

This song is both humorous and critical, highlighting Ananse's obsession with wealth and social status while also criticising the growing materialism in contemporary African society, where traditional values are frequently overshadowed by the pursuit of modern comforts.

The *Mbougo* songs, performed by the workmen, celebrate the value of labor and the communal spirit:

“Who doesn’t like work? Oh, I love work!

Work, work - Who doesn’t like work?

Oh, I love work! Work, work.

This work that I do - Yes, yes,

Supplies my clothing. Yes, yes.”

The songs' repetitive structure and rhythmic quality mirror the movements of the workers, creating a harmonious blend of music and action on stage. The communal nature of these songs reflects the interdependence of individuals in traditional African societies, and the workmen's synchronized singing and dancing symbolise unity and cooperation, in contrast to Ananse's self-centred schemes. By incorporating these songs, Sutherland highlights the dignity of labour, a recurring theme in African oral traditions, and criticises the breakdown of communal ties in modern society while celebrating traditional values.

Ananse's mock praise song, delivered in the style of an official praise-singer, reveals his cunning nature:

“O Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin
 Rooted in the shrine of deity!
 Countless branches in which
 Benighted wandering birds
 Are welcome to shelter.”

This song is a spoof of traditional praise poetry, which is typically used to honor leaders and deities. By taking on this shape, Ananse establishes his authority and demonstrates his capacity to use language in a way that serves his interests. The song's grandiose tone and excessive visuals highlight Ananse's hypocrisy because his acts are motivated more by self-interest than by true adoration.

Sutherland criticises the abuse of conventional forms for one's own benefit in this sarcastic praise song. A common subject in African oral traditions, the song also serves as a reminder of the influence language has on perception.

The *Mbougo* refrain, sung during moments of transition, reflects the changing circumstances of Ananse and his family:

“Oh, some time ago it was bad at home,
 But maybe now it's getting better.”

This song conveys both the optimism and uncertainty that accompany moments of change. Sung in Twi, it connects with the audience's shared experiences of resilience and hope amid challenges. The song also reflects the play's central theme of transformation, as Ananse's machinations gradually alter his family's circumstances.

With its straightforward structure and repeated lines, the song remains accessible, inviting audience participation while reinforcing its thematic significance. Through this refrain, Sutherland highlights the cyclical nature of life, where difficult periods eventually give way to renewal and progress.

In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, folksongs play a crucial role in shaping both the narrative and thematic aspects of the play, enriching its cultural and dramatic elements. They offer insight into the characters' intentions, embody societal values, and foster a sense of shared cultural identity among the audience. By weaving traditional Ghanaian songs into a modern theatrical framework, Sutherland creates a production that remains deeply connected to African oral traditions while appealing to contemporary viewers.

The folksongs in the play illustrate the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity, celebrating the vibrancy of Ghanaian heritage while reflecting on its evolving social landscape. Through their rhythm, language, and themes, these songs capture the essence of African storytelling, ensuring that the play continues to resonate across different generations.

CHAPTER THREE

THE USE OF FOLKSONGS AND PROVERBS IN OSOFISAN'S *MOROUNTODUN*

Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* usage of folk songs and proverbs demonstrates the playwright's dedication to honouring and conserving African oral traditions while tackling current sociopolitical challenges. These components bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary storytelling by acting as instruments for audience participation, topic development, and cultural expression. Proverbs include wisdom, moral teachings, and cultural values that enhance the play's philosophical overtones, while folksongs give the story a rhythmic and community quality that reinforces themes of resistance, togetherness, and identity. When combined, they enhance *Morountodun*'s dramatic texture, giving it an African historical foundation while also making its message globally relatable.

3.1 The Use of Folksongs

In Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, folk songs play a crucial role in enhancing the play's dramatic power, cultural authenticity, and thematic depth. These songs honour Yoruba oral traditions while reflecting the sociopolitical reality of the Agbekoya insurrection. They help to bring the characters together, hold the audience's attention, and express the oppressed people's shared hardships. Osofisan breaks the boundaries between art and reality by fusing folk melodies, resulting in a collective experience that speaks to themes of solidarity, identity, and resistance.

As stated in the playwright's note: "The songs that follow were those used in my 1979 productions at the Arts Theatre, Ibadan," Osofisan expressly recognises the significance of these songs in the play's production. As is customary with my projects, Tunji Oyclana composed the most of them.

This focus on folk songs highlights their cultural value and contribution to the preservation of the play's Yoruba setting.

The tone of defiance and resistance is established by one of the opening songs, "Warderyi warder yi o, Inomba tere ku ntere." Sung in Yoruba, the repeated lyrics produce a cadence that reflects the oppressed people's cyclical struggles:

“Warderyi warder yi o
Inomba tere ku ntere
Ta lo n pe warder yi o?
Inomba...”

Similarly, the war song “Pabambari! Ko sohun toju o ri ri” encapsulates the revolutionary fervor of the farmers:

“Ko sohun toju o ri ri
Yanru yanmu loun agbe dide!
Pabambari!”

Another significant song, “*Moremi o e-e-e, O ku iya abiyamo*,” draws on Yoruba mythology to evoke the spirit of sacrifice:

“Moremi o e-e-e
O ku iya abiyamo
Iya tori omo faya rogun
Moremi o e-e-e.”

Finally, the reflective song “Be always like this day, Beside me. Wear hope like a jewel” provides a moment of introspection and optimism amidst the chaos:

“Be always like this day

Beside me. Wear hope like a jewel:

It never fades.”

As a rallying cry for resistance, the folksong "*Warderyi warder yi o*" highlights the farmers' resolve to oppose structural tyranny. While the group singing emphasises their solidarity, the repeating pattern reflects the tenacity of their difficulties. In addition to establishing the play's mood, this song draws the audience into the world of the characters and makes them sympathetic to their predicament.

The Agbekoya uprising's revolutionary spirit is encapsulated in the fight song "Pabambari! Ko sohun toju o ri ri." The song's violent images and tone convey the farmers' willingness to stand up to their captors. The song's cultural authenticity is maintained and the listener is drawn into the revolutionary fervour by the use of the Yoruba language, which grounds it in local customs.

The Yoruba heroine Moremi is invoked in the song "Moremi o e-e-e, O ku iya abiyamo," which compares her sacrifice to the hardships faced by the farmers. The song encourages the characters and listeners to embrace selflessness and resiliency by alluding to Moremi's bravery. The song's cultural and moral value is further enhanced by the use of proverbs, which provide eternal knowledge in a clear and memorable manner.

Finally, "*Be always like this day*," a contemplative song, provides a counterbalance to the chaos of the rebellion. Its upbeat tone encourages the protagonists to keep fighting for justice by reminding them that there may be a better future. The song's metaphor of hope as a gem highlights its timeless worth and exhorts listeners to maintain their optimism in the face of adversity.

In *Morountodun*, Femi Osofisan skilfully employs folk music to create a tapestry of cultural identity, group resistance, and emotional resonance. These songs function as a vehicle for cultural preservation and sociopolitical critique in addition to being a theatrical device. Through the use of folk music, Osofisan develops a theatrical experience that goes beyond simple amusement and strengthens the bond between the audience and the play's topics. The folk songs of *Morountodun* continue to serve as a testament to the ability of oral traditions to express and preserve a people's challenges and goals.

3.2 The Use of Proverbs

In Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, proverbs are an important literary device that enhances the play's cultural and thematic dimensions. They are derived from oral traditions in Yoruba and are used to express wisdom, reinforce themes, and highlight the values and worldview of the characters. Osofisan uses proverbs to bridge the gap between traditional and modern perspectives, highlighting the importance of cultural identity in navigating social and political struggles. By incorporating proverbs into the dialogue and narrative, he not only grounds the play in its Yoruba context but also offers deep insights into the motivations and conflicts of the characters.

Osofisan incorporates proverbs to illustrate the junction of ancient knowledge with modern difficulties, reflecting the socio-political and cultural themes of the play. For example, during a dialogue between Mama Kayode and Titubi, the former emphasises resilience by quoting a Yoruba proverb:

“The snail may crawl slowly, but it will eventually reach its destination.”

This highlights the importance of perseverance, a recurring theme in the play.

One example of a proverb in *Morountodun* is:

“A tree does not make a forest.”

Another proverb emphasizes the consequences of actions:

> “The lizard that ruins the wall will pay the price of its recklessness.”

In a moment of reflection, a character declares:

“When the bush burns, the snake loses its hiding place.”

Finally, Osofisan uses a proverb to underscore the need for collective action:

“If the broomsticks are tied together, they cannot be broken easily.”

The proverb “*A tree does not make a forest*” emphasizes the importance of unity and collective effort in the pursuit of justice. It aligns with the broader theme of solidarity among the oppressed farmers during the Agbekoya uprising, reinforcing the idea that individual contributions, while valuable, must be supported by communal action to bring about meaningful change.

The proverb “The lizard that ruins the wall will pay the price of its recklessness” conveys the theme of accountability. It implies that those who disrupt societal harmony or exploit others will inevitably face the consequences of their actions. This idea is particularly relevant to the play’s critique of corrupt leadership and oppressive systems, underscoring the certainty of justice. The saying “When the bush burns, the snake loses its hiding place” serves as a metaphor for the displacement caused by societal upheaval. It illustrates how revolutions, while often necessary, can have unintended consequences for everyone, including those who benefit from the existing system. This proverb highlights the complexities of change and the sacrifices required to achieve it.

Similarly, the proverb “If the broomsticks are tied together, they cannot be broken easily” represents the strength of unity. It underscores the farmers’ collective resistance against oppression, illustrating that solidarity is key to overcoming challenges. By incorporating this

proverb, Osofisan underscores the power of communal bonds in fighting societal injustices and encourages cooperation over individualism.

In *Morountodun*, proverbs serve as more than just stylistic elements; they act as vehicles for cultural wisdom, moral instruction, and thematic emphasis. Osofisan uses them to connect the characters and audience to Yoruba traditions while addressing universal themes of justice, resilience, and unity. Through these proverbs, the play extends beyond its historical setting, offering enduring lessons on human struggles and the fight for equity. By integrating these expressions, Osofisan ensures that Yoruba cultural heritage remains a central part of the play's message.

3.3 Conclusion

Chapter Three examined the role of folksongs and proverbs in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, emphasizing their significance in shaping the play's cultural and thematic structure. Folksongs act as a vibrant tool for expressing the emotional and political currents of the narrative, linking the audience to the historical struggles of the Agbekoya farmers while preserving Yoruba cultural traditions. Likewise, proverbs enrich the dialogue by adding depth, offering wisdom, moral insight, and reflections on the socio-political realities of the characters.

Osofisan's intentional use of these traditional elements firmly situates the play within its Yoruba setting while also conveying a universal message of resistance, unity, and justice. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of folksongs fosters a sense of communal strength and perseverance, whereas the proverbs offer philosophical reflections, encouraging the audience to consider themes of responsibility, collective effort, and the complexities of societal transformation.

By merging oral traditions with contemporary theatrical methods, Osofisan bridges the divide between past and present, tradition and modernity. This fusion highlights the continued relevance of indigenous knowledge in addressing present-day challenges, positioning *Morountodun* as a compelling example of how cultural heritage can be harnessed in the fight for social justice.

CHAPTER FOUR

MYTHS AND LEGENDS IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S MOROUNTODUN

In Chapter Four, "*Myths and Legends in Morountodun*," Femi Osofisan explores how Yoruba myths and historical legends are incorporated into her play. This chapter looks at how these cultural narratives are remade to reflect the sociopolitical realities of the Agbekoya uprising, highlighting their significance in addressing themes of resistance, sacrifice, and collective identity. In addition to honouring Yoruba culture, Osofisan challenges and adapts myths like the story of Moremi Ajasoro to inspire contemporary audiences. The chapter highlights the relationship between mythic tradition and modern storytelling, demonstrating how Osofisan uses these elements to create a powerful allegory for social change.

4.1 Myths

Myths in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*

With a strong foundation in Yoruba mythology, Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* uses myths to address historical, cultural, and sociopolitical issues. The play uses myths not just as ornaments but as allegorical devices to examine themes of sacrifice, resistance, and collective identity. Through his use of myths, especially the tale of Moremi Ajasoro, Osofisan is able to retell classic tales in light of current events, fusing the past and present to spur social change.

Moremi Ajasoro, a renowned Yoruba heroine renowned for her courage and selflessness, is the main character in *Morountodun*. According to Yoruba mythology, Moremi sacrificed herself to the enemy in order to learn their secrets and free her people from oppression. Titubi, a privileged young woman who infiltrates the Agbekoya rebellion to learn about the peasants' complaints, is how Osofisan adapts this myth. Osofisan reinterprets the idea of heroism by

drawing comparisons between Titubi's and Moremi's journeys, placing more emphasis on empathy, self-awareness, and transformation than on sheer physical bravery.

When the rebels liken Titubi to the mythical heroine, they are alluding directly to the Moremi myth. For instance, the Storyteller declares:

"Moremi gave herself for her people, but you, Titubi, what will you give?"

This sentence exhorts Titubi to put aside her self-interest and support the group effort. Titubi's role is to bridge the divide between the oppressed and the elite, emphasising the necessity of unity in combating systemic injustices, whereas Moremi's sacrifice was to protect her community from outside threats.

Osofisan challenges conventional hero-worship with this reinterpretation, arguing that real heroism is not about glorifying individuals but rather about comprehending and resolving the underlying causes of social problems. The metamorphosis of Titubi from a selfish young lady to a devoted champion of justice reflects the general awakening Osofisan hopes to evoke in his audience.

In addition to celebrating Yoruba culture, Osofisan challenges its rigidity through the use of myths. Myths serve as frameworks for comprehending resistance in *Morountodun*. The play mythologises the Agbekoya uprising, a historical farmers' revolt, making the peasant struggle on par with epic battles in Yoruba folklore. Osofisan contextualises their cause within a broader narrative of resistance against oppression and legitimises it in this way.

In one of the play's climactic moments, the rebels chant:

"We are the children of Ogun, the god of war! We will resist giving in to the oppressors"

The rebels' struggle is linked to the mythic tradition of bravery and tenacity through this invocation of Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and war. Osofisan gives the peasants' struggle a

divine meaning by connecting the Agbekoya revolt with Ogun's legendary heritage, thereby bolstering their moral authority and igniting their bravery.

Osofisan does not, however, romanticise myths without question. He also draws attention to the destructive power of violence by having the rebels invoke Ogun, which compels the audience to think about the repercussions of war. Osofisan's nuanced approach to mythology that used as a source of inspiration and a lens for critical reflection is reflected in this duality.

Osofisan challenges patriarchal and elitist interpretations by subverting Yoruba myths, even though he heavily draws from them. Traditionally praised for its depiction of feminine sacrifice, the myth of Moremi is recast in *Morountodun* to highlight agency and reciprocal accountability. Titubi's path is one of active confrontation with the realities of oppression rather than passive sacrifice. This new interpretation is consistent with Osofisan's larger goal of utilising art as a vehicle for social criticism and change.

When Titubi declares,

"I will no longer be a mere daughter of privilege. I will stand with the people,"

She embodies a redefinition of the Moremi myth. Her choice to side with the peasants illustrates a change from individual bravery to group action, implying that everyone must participate in societal change, regardless of gender or class.

In his depiction of the gods, Osofisan also subverts myths. The gods in *Morountodun* are representations of the people's hopes and hardships rather than all-powerful beings who control human fate. This mythological humanisation emphasises how people and communities have the power to influence their own destiny.

Myths are used by Osofisan in *Morountodun* to transform the audience as well as the story teller. He encourages a reevaluation of cultural heritage in light of current realities by

reimagining myths like that of Moremi Ajasoro, bridging the gap between traditional values and modern challenges. The play's myths are dynamic instruments that stimulate discussion and action rather than being static artefacts from the past.

The Storyteller, a central figure in the play, frequently reminds the audience of the fluid nature of myths:

"What you see here is not the whole truth. Myths change, as do the people who tell them."

Osofisan's belief in the ability of storytelling to change with the times is reflected in this recognition of the dynamic nature of myths. He challenges his audience to think critically about conventional narratives and how they might be applied to modern problems by reinterpreting myths.

A key component of Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* is the play's examination of sacrifice, resistance, and social change through the use of myths. Osofisan crafts a rich tapestry that ties the past and present together by reimagining the myth of Moremi Ajasoro and incorporating other aspects of Yoruba mythology. His thoughtful treatment of mythology, which both acknowledges and critiques its limitations and celebrates its inspirational potential, demonstrates his dedication to using art as a force for positive change. Osofisan shows through *Morountodun* that myths are living narratives that can inspire and direct current struggles for equality and justice rather than just being historical accounts.

4.2 Legends

Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* is a potent work that explores themes of social justice, sacrifice, and resistance by fusing historical events with mythical tales. Although myths are a major part of the play, legends also contribute significantly to its cultural resonance and thematic depth.

Osofisan uses legends, which are semi-historical accounts of extraordinary people or events, to help us understand the hardships and victories of common people by bridging the gap between history and imagination. Yoruba cultural legends, especially the tale of Moremi Ajasoro, are reimagined in *Morountodun* to uplift modern audiences and question established social mores.

Morountodun revolves around the mythical tale of Moremi Ajasoro, a Yoruba heroine who gave her life to free her people. The play is interwoven with Moremi's story, which serves as its thematic and structural underpinning. According to Yoruba legend, Moremi defeated the Igbo warriors by sneaking into their camp and discovering their secrets while they were terrorising her people, the Ile-Ife community. She is a symbol of sacrifice and resistance in Yoruba culture because of her bravery and selflessness.

Through the character of Titubi, a wealthy young woman sent to infiltrate the Agbekoya rebels under the pretence of assisting the government, Osofisan reinterprets this legend. Similar to Moremi, Titubi experiences a metamorphosis; however, her purpose is to comprehend the rebels' predicament and eventually support their cause rather than betray them.

When the rebels compare Titubi to the fabled heroine, the play specifically invokes the Moremi legend. For instance, the Storyteller says:

"Like Moremi, she crossed the river into the enemy ' s camp. But will she return as a traitor or a savior?"

In addition to placing Titubi within the context of Yoruba heroism, this comparison challenges conventional ideas of loyalty and treachery. In contrast to the first Moremi, who acted primarily to save her people, Titubi's journey is one of ideological awakening and self-discovery. Through the legend, Osofisan questions the audience's conception of heroism and makes the argument that genuine resistance entails compassion, unity, and a readiness to face structural oppression.

In *Morountodun*, legends serve as a repository of cultural identity and collective memory. Osofisan links the Agbekoya uprising, a historical farmers' revolt in Nigeria, to a larger tradition of resistance against injustice by drawing on Yoruba legends. The play's legends serve as a reminder to the audience of their common history and the timeless value of traditional principles in the face of modern hardships.

To encourage bravery and solidarity, the rebels regularly invoke legendary people and occasions. As an example, one of the characters says:

"We are the descendants of Oranmiyan, the great warrior king! We will not bow to the oppressors!"

The rebels' sense of identity and legitimacy is strengthened by this invocation of Oranmiyan, a mythical Yoruba king renowned for his power and leadership. The rebels present their fight as a part of a broader, historical narrative of resistance by tying it to the fabled exploits of their forebears. In addition to raising their spirits, this association with legendary people highlights how oppression and resistance have been cyclical throughout human history.

In addition to recounting Yoruba legends, Osofisan reinterprets them to speak to current events. The story of Moremi is reimagined in *Morountodun* to question gender norms, class distinctions, and the difficulties of political conflict. Though there are notable differences that reflect the play's contemporary setting, Titubi's journey is similar to Moremi's. Titubi's metamorphosis emphasises the necessity of interclass solidarity and a greater comprehension of systemic oppression, whereas Moremi's actions were motivated by her devotion to her community.

Titubi's initial intentions are self-centred and contemptuous of the peasants' complaints. She agrees to infiltrate their camp because she wants to show that she is better than the rebels,

who she considers to be nothing more than troublemakers. However, she experiences a significant shift in perspective as a result of witnessing their adversity and tenacity. This transformation is encapsulated in her declaration:

"I have seen the truth, and I can no longer stand on the side of oppression."

Through Titubi's journey, Osofisan reinterprets Moremi's legend, highlighting the value of empathy and self-awareness in the pursuit of justice. The collective fight for freedom now dominates the legend rather than individual bravery.

In *Morountodun*, Osofisan employs legends to both honour and critique Yoruba heritage's shortcomings. The play challenges elitist and patriarchal interpretations of legends, arguing that they can be recast to embody modern ideals of inclusivity and equality. Osofisan asks the audience to think critically about conventional narratives and the ways in which legends can motivate social change through Titubi's journey.

One of the play's main characters, the Storyteller, frequently considers the nature of legends and how they influence social values. Eventually, he says:

"Legends are not carved in stone. They grow and change, like the people who tell them."

It is consistent with Osofisan's larger artistic vision to acknowledge the fluidity of legends. He shows how cultural narratives can change to meet the issues of contemporary society by reinterpreting myths like the Moremi legend. This innovative approach to legends highlights their potential as teaching, motivating, and critical tools.

Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* revolves around legends, which act as a link between tradition and innovation, the past and the present. Osofisan examines themes of social justice, sacrifice, and resistance through the story of Moremi Ajasoro and other allusions to Yoruba

cultural heritage. His retelling of legends questions conventional ideas of bravery and allegiance, highlighting the value of compassion, unity, and group effort in the struggle against injustice. Osofisan not only honours Yoruba culture but also reimagines it as a vibrant and transformative force for social change by fusing mythical stories with current concerns.

4.3 Conclusion

Femi Osofisan uses myths and legends in *Morountodun* to further explore resistance, sacrifice, and societal renewal, as Chapter Four has shown. Osofisan emphasises the importance of reinterpreting the myth of Ogun and the legend of Moremi Ajasoro in order to address social injustice by bridging traditional narratives with modern struggles. These cultural components deepen the play's thematic depth by highlighting the interconnectedness of the past and present in the fight for social change. Uh uni

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The study Folkloric Elements in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* examines the intricate relationship between drama and folklore, showing how the two plays' cultural, thematic, and artistic aspects are improved by the incorporation of folkloric elements. This study, which is based on the theoretical framework of folkloristics, emphasises the timeless significance of oral traditions, myths, proverbs, songs, and legends in forming the stories and meanings of these works and their critical role in maintaining and passing down cultural values.

Ghanaian folklore, especially the Ananse myth, is deftly woven into *The Marriage of Anansewa* by Efua Sutherland, who uses it to tell a story that captures the moral and social dynamics of her society. The play is a prime example of how folklore can be modified to speak to modern concerns like gender norms, expectations from family, and the commercialisation of marriage. Sutherland challenges social mores while honouring the humour and tenacity ingrained in Ghanaian oral traditions through the persona of Ananse and his crafty plots. Songs, proverbs, and group participation are examples of folkloric devices that enhance the story and make it more relatable while also reflecting the audience's collective identity.

Similar to this, Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* uses folkloric elements to connect the past and present. It contextualises the Agbekoya uprising and its socio-political ramifications by referencing Yoruba myths, legends, and songs. Osofisan employs folklore as a tool for resistance and change in addition to cultural preservation. The incorporation of myths and legends, like the Moremi story, emphasises themes of bravery, sacrifice, and group struggle. The play's link to

Yoruba cultural heritage is further strengthened by the incorporation of traditional songs and proverbs, which also act as a platform for criticism and introspection on current events.

This study emphasises how crucial folklore is to African literature, especially drama, as a way to express cultural identity, tackle social issues, and promote a feeling of community. As Sutherland and Osofisan both show, folklore is not just a thing of the past but a living, breathing force that still shapes and influences contemporary narrative. These playwrights tackle universal themes while crafting works that are firmly anchored in their cultural contexts by fusing traditional elements with contemporary theatrical techniques.

This study concludes by reaffirming the importance of folklore in African drama as a medium for artistic innovation, social commentary, and cultural expression. The examination of folkloric components in *Morountodun* and *The Marriage of Anansewa* shows how these plays function as both social change agents and archives of cultural memory. Sutherland and Osofisan's imaginative use of folklore serves as a reminder of the ability of storytelling to foster critical thinking, bridge the gap between the past and present, and imagine a better future for African societies. This study adds to the larger conversation about folklore's place in literature and emphasises its ongoing importance in the maintenance and development of cultural heritage.

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