



THE RITUAL OF SACRIFICE WITHIN THE CULTURAL BOUNDARIES IN WOLE SOYINKA'S "THE STRONG BREED"¹

WOLE SOYINKA'NIN "THE STRONG BREED" ESERİNDE
KÜLTÜREL SINIRLAR BAĞLAMINDA KURBAN VERME RİTÜELİ

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Abstract

Apart from actual geographic boundaries, a member of a culture faces the cultural boundaries of his/her society that is shaped by traditions and cultural practices. Among these practices is sacrifice which is as old as the existence of the human being and history itself. Through sacrifice, societies look for rejuvenation and purgation of the community. Such a purification rite is among the traditions of Yoruba people that Soyinka represents. The dramatic action revolves around Eman, who understands his role in relation to the ritual of sacrifice. This paper, first, aims to study cultural boundaries that limit one's liberty within Yoruba people, and second, to examine cultural identification and personal integrity as represented in *The Strong Breed* (1963). To this end, it is concluded that *The Strong Breed* represents that free will and destiny may be under the force of cultural boundaries, and that sacrifice leads to shape one's identity and belonging.

Öz

Fiziksel coğrafi sınırların dışında, bir kültürün bireyi gelenek ve kültürel uygulamalarla şekillenmiş olan toplumdaki kültürel sınırlamalarla karşılaşır. Bu uygulamalar arasında bulunan kurban verme, insanlığın var oluşu ve tarih kadar eskidir. Kurban verme yoluyla, toplumun canlanması ve arınması hedeflenir. Bu türden bir arınma töreni Soyinka'nın oyununda temsil ettiği Yoruba insanların gelenekleri arasında da mevcuttur. Kurban ritüeli ile ilişkili olarak rolünü algılayan Eman' in etrafında oyundaki dramatik eylem gelişir. Bu makale, ilk olarak, Yoruba kültürü içinde bireyin özgürlüğünü sınırlayan kültürel kısıtlamaları inceler, ikinci olarak, kültürel aynileştirme ve kişisel bütünleşmişlik durumlarını *The Strong Breed* (1963) adlı oyun özelinde analiz etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu bağlamda, *The Strong Breed* oyununun temsil ettiği sonuç şudur: kültürel sınırların gücü altında hür irade ve kader şekillenebilir ve de kurban sunumu bireyin kimlik ve aidiyetini şekillendirebilir.

Introduction

Any member of a culture may face problems of not only the actual geographic boundaries of his/her country but also the cultural boundaries of his/her society that is shaped by traditions and cultural practices. Among these practices is sacrifice which is as old as the existence of the human being and history itself. Through sacrifice, societies look for rejuvenation and purgation of the community. Such a purification rite is among the traditions of Yoruba people that Soyinka represents through his plays. *The Strong Breed* (1963) is no exception. Its dramatic action revolves around Eman, who understands his role in relation to the ritual of

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sacrifice, and other customs of African culture. The play addresses the problem of free will, and the intersections between free will and destiny under the force of cultural boundaries that lead to shape one's identity and belonging between Self and Other. This paper, first, aims to study cultural boundaries that limit one's liberty within Yoruba people, and second, to examine cultural identification and personal integrity as represented in *the Strong Breed* (1963).

Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka (1934-) writes of Africa in a satirical way in his plays, thanks to which he received the Nobel prize for literature in 1986. Professor Wole Soyinka was born on 13 July 1934, in Ibadan, Western Nigeria. His father Samuel Ayodele was an Anglican minister, his mother Grace Eniola was also Anglican. Religion and traditions have been influential in Wole Soyinka's life, and works. "*The roots of Soyinka's English are uncompromisingly Anglo-Saxon*" (Macebuh 208). However, as a dramaturgist, Soyinka worked at the Royal Court Theatre in 1959. He took his doctorate at the University of Leeds in 1973. Wole Soyinka is "*one of the Yorùbá elites who has always criticized the government, past and present... [Soyinka is] an advocate of good governance and democracy*" (Falola and Genova 292). As Akintoye has put it, "*Yoruba literature in English attained its highest peak in the work of Wole Soyinka*" (453). Yoruba people are among the largest ethnic groups in West Africa, Nigeria. They have a rich cultural, and traditional history that has developed for hundreds of years. Therefore, "*the postcolonial aim of writers like Soyinka is to turn back to the ancient culture of the Yoruba, as a rich source for stylistic and dramaturgical aspirations and as a rejuvenation to the native literature*" (Demirbaş 47). As Joel Adedeji has put it, Soyinka "*re-creates[s] from folklore*" (Adedeji 14).

Nigeria, on the other hand, gained its independence on 1 October 1960. Indeed, "*the Nigerian freedom struggle was a multifaceted political, cultural, and economic efforts of various Nigerian communities, popular classes, labor groups, youth, traders, market women and the intelligentsia ... [to] build a new nation state out of the various people*" (Iweriebor 81). Yet, as the country was colonized for over five hundred years, "*in many ways, it was a state without a nation*" (Falola 159). For the Nigerian independence celebrations, Soyinka formed his own acting company, and wrote *a Dance of the Forests* in 1960. There, Soyinka "*aims to reach a unified identity in the post-independence period through the exploration, primarily, of local myths*" (Varlı Karaarslan 29). As Soyinka returned to Nigeria, "*... he undertook empirical research into festivities of a different kind, which subsequently supplied a*

specific input into the ritualism of his early" (Wright 511). As regards Nigeria's Independence Day celebrations, Crow remarks, "*Soyinka seems to have been insisting that a truly humane modern state can only emerge from a collective recognition of the real historical inheritance and a visionary transformation of it, accomplished through the bringing together of past, present and future in a moment of ritual 'vision'*" (88). That is, Nigerians, for Soyinka, need to build a collective cultural memory that embraces past, present and future. This idea seems to be similar to that of the late 19th and early 20th century Irish Literary Revival, through which W. B. Yeats, Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory, and John Millington Synge aimed to strengthen Irish culture, and literature. His works seem to have been influenced by J. M. Synge.

Generally speaking, Soyinka satirizes the evils in the exercise, and abuse of power, as he compares the past and present of Africa to the extent that not much has changed since independence. Yoruba people, its culture, tradition, and myth are among the elements that penetrate to his plays. However, disappointment and disillusionment seem to be represented in *the Strong Breed* (1963), *the Road* (1965), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and *Zia, with Love* (1992). He thinks about a New Africa that may escape its colonial past to generate its own authentic identity. As he is aware of the fact that European imperialism, and colonial practices had a great impact on African society, Soyinka seems to attain a kind of shared cultural identity through communal renewal. Yet, his challenge to Nigerian authorities through his plays led him to be imprisoned for almost two years in 1967. However, Soyinka "*advocates traditional wisdom and its expression in ritual practice as the primary means by which to resist the deformation of African culture by colonialism and its post-colonial legacy*" (Crow and Banfield 89). Yet, this comes with a "*paradoxical relationship between tradition and the individual*" (Crow and Banfield 89).

Cultural Boundaries and Ritual of Sacrifice in *The Strong Breed*

"*To what extent are you 'your own person' and to what extent are you a product of your particular culture?*" are among the questions that the anthropologist Conrad Kottak asks, as he begins his definition of culture in his "Anthropology" book (26). Any culture may shape, contribute to, and/or affect one's behaviour and thought. Therefore, as Sir Edward Tylor proposes, "*Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*" (1).

The Strong Breed represents a need to change for the Nigerian postcolonial situation, African traditions and the ritual of sacrifice that limit, and put a cultural barrier on its way to construct its own identity. The origins of sacrifice are as old as the history of humanity, and it dates back to Ancient Greek, and its myths, as Plato remarks sacrifice as a gift to the gods. Similarly, a British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor states that sacrifice is a gift to the gods to minimize hostility among people and/or groups. Another example is that Prometheus deceives Zeus, and brings fat and bones of the sacrificial animal to the gods, and the flesh and internal organs to human; that is, presenting the bones to the supernatural is a sign of respect. Rituals of sacrifice may vary from one culture to another. In Ancient Greek, there were two kinds of sacrificing: (1) no part of the sacrificial animal is eaten by people, the whole is devoted to the gods (2) part of the animal is sacrificed to gods by burning it, and the rest was eaten by people (Erginer 85-86). As for the sacred divine religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, rituals of sacrifice are crucial, as even the Prophets David, Moses, and Jesus made a kind of deal with God, and they sacrificed animals to God (Erginer 91-92). As Şinasi Gündüz has put it, “*the basic purpose of sacrifice which is given a place in all belief systems as a religious exercise is to communicate with the divine...*” (65). Rituals of sacrifice may be performed on a day of birth, death, peace, and war. As William Robertson Smith has put it, “[f]rom an early date communal sacrifices began to be celebrated periodically, as well as on special occasions such as war” (Smith 33). Sacrifice is also defined “*as the communication of the individual’s inner spiritual state to God by means of material symbols*” (Gibson 748).

Sacrifice, within various religions and groups of people, is regarded to be a way of creating communion, and fellowship among members of any group. A religious official and/or an opinion leader of any group is expected “*to perform on behalf of the community certain public ritual acts, especially sacrifices*” (Smith 20). Yet, as represented in the examined play, some may take advantage of such rituals for their own interests. That is, “*ritual may be manipulated by the powerful to shape the allegiances of society to their advantage*” (Oplinger 171). The powerful may create an atmosphere of danger and fears, as in the play. In this regard, Conrad Kottak states that religion may “*reduce anxiety and allay fears*” yet rituals may also “*create anxiety and a sense of insecurity and danger*” (496). The power-holder may use violence on the one who disobeys his rules. As René Girard has put it on the relation between violence and sacrifice, “*if left unappeased, violence will accumulate until it overflows its confines and floods the surrounding area. The role of sacrifice is*

to stem this rising tide of indiscriminate substitutions and redirect violence into ‘proper channels’ (10). Within the play, Eman becomes a “proper channel” to whom violence is redirected, as he crosses the cultural border as regards the ritual of sacrifice. In this regard, Girard defines sacrifice as “... *an instrument of prevention in the struggle against violence*” (17).

A member of the strong breed – a clan family who is believed to be the sin-carriers and the one who struggles against violence in their village – Eman abandons his village, as he feels sick of the traditions of his family and village. His family is dependent on customs, as even the family name brings Eman his duty; that is, his family name requires Eman to act against his free will. As a custom, “*the practice of naming*” becomes a kind of destiny that tells Eman what to do in the future: to be a sin-carrier for his group (Tylor 248). However, Eman “*withdraw[s] from the group and begin[s] moving from one place or status to another*” (Kottak 496). Eman withdraws from the role of strong breed, as he does not believe in the power of being a part of his clan. Then, he lives in Jaguna’s village, and he is with Jaguna’s daughter Sunma. There, Eman self-sacrifices himself for Ifada. To be free from such barriers, one challenges the cultural boundaries on his way to liberty. John Locke supposes that one is free as long as s/he is free with respect to his/her actions. He clarifies the point as such,

...the Idea of Liberty, is the Idea of a Power in any Agent to do or forbear any particular Action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferr’d to the other; where either of them is not in the Power of the Agent to be produced by him according to his Volition, there he is not at Liberty, that Agent is under Necessity. So that Liberty cannot be, where there is no Thought, no Volition, no Will; but there may be Thought, there may be Will, there may be Volition, where there is no Liberty (237-238).

Although volition, and will are necessary, they are not adequate for liberty. Eman’s actions are in accord with the determination and thought of his mind. Yet, he lives in a society whose rules, and norms are shaped, and reshaped by traditions such as sacrifice that limit one’s way of life. However, self-sacrifice may be regarded as a suicidal one (Smith and Doniger 191). As regards such a sacrifice, Jan C. Heesterman remarks, “*What emerges from the ritual and from ritualist speculation is that self- sacrifice as such is invalid*” (105). Heesterman further notes that “*Sacrifice... cannot be valid by immolating just any victim that presents itself. The*

person, animal, or substance that is immolated must be that part of the sacrificer that defines him as such, namely the goods of life he has acquired by risking his own life" (105). That is, Eman's sacrificial position seems to be a random one, as he was not the first selected sacrifice. Therefore, "[w]ithout this bond uniting the sacrificer and his victim, sacrifice would be as invalid as self-sacrifice is per se" (105). The tradition of sacrifice demands a chosen one in Jaguna's village.

Eman may not identify himself with traditions; therefore, his personal integrity is at odds with the cultural boundaries. Thus, Eman, as *"the candidate for the sacrificial-carrier role express[es] strong aversion to it [and] ... the very communal values upon which such a role would be based are called into question"* (Quayson 80). In the end, Eman becomes a victim of traditions without seemingly any change for cultural boundaries. As regards the tradition of sacrifice, Smith and Doniger state,

Sacrifice has even been identified as the origin of civilization itself in the classical works of modern sociology and psychology by Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud, and there is a certain sense in which all life-human and nonhuman, cultural and natural-might be regarded as a series of deaths and rebirths, that is, as a continuous process of sacrifice. (189).

Sacrifice, therefore, is not only an issue of religion, but also of sociology, literature, and anthropology. Various traditions related to sacrifice exist within each culture; therefore, such are the ones that lead to the construction of group identities. The differences among the members of groups construct cultural boundaries. Such is an example of differences between Eman's village and Jaguna's village. In each village, the members try to act in accordance with their boundaries. Therefore, *"cultural boundaries ... can be viewed as demarcating the bodies of symbolic practices"* (Harrison 10). It is represented through the means of ideological transformation that Yoruba people require, as put forth by the dialogues and actions of the characters, especially those of Sunma and Eman.

Eman, the character, seeks ways to realize his true self, and, in a way, he finds himself in a quest for identity. As Biodun Jeyifo has put it, *"the search for a coherent, stable selfhood, a selfhood harmoniously integrated into the human and natural environment, is more applicable to ... The Strong Breed"* (22). Therefore, Eman becomes a character that has *"a complete consciousness"* put in a *"complex relationship between different beings"* (Cook 38). To illustrate, the teacher and

student scene in which Omae, Eman's lover, is sexually abused is a representation of the master-slave and/or, metaphorically, colonizer-colonized relation that is regulated by dominant imperialist ideology. There, Eman acts like a hero who turns against the forces and abuses of oppression so as to get out of political and cultural boundaries that are shaped by the power formation. The tutor-student relationship represents a traditional necessity to respect authority. However, Eman is anxious about such traditional norms that surround him within cultural boundaries. As Quayson remarks, Eman "*expresses uneasiness at all traditional ritual roles which are detached from questions of ethics and free will*" (80). Eman feels limited because of the manners of those who have authority.

The tutors' is such an authority that limits and puts a border on the way for one to construct his/her own identity. Like many other cultures, authority, traditions, rituals are among the organizing principles of society; therefore, one that questions the validity of such principles may become an "Other" to those norms of society because, as Erdem Ayyıldız argues, in a way, education enables colonized people to develop a critical perspective on the traditional bindings of their native culture and other oppressive forces they encounter (147-148). Within this context, Omae and Eman do not present blind dependence and obedience to authorial borders although the tutor supposes that they are socially located below him. Therefore, "*the tutor's repressed violence comes to the fore... He then uses his traditionally allotted power in an attempt to undermine the very morality that such power is supposed to engender and preserve*" (Msiska 192). The tutor threatens Omae and Eman "*If you don't come I shall disgrace whole family of Eman, and yours too*" (64). Thus, the tutor misuses power against the good of his students; that is, "*the tutor turns out to be lecherous and attempts to manipulate the situation to his advantage*" (Quayson 81). At this point, Eman becomes critical of the limitless power of the tutor and the ritual of sacrifice in Sunma and Jaguna's village. Yet, Omae and Ifada are chosen as victims, as they are the silent members of the community. As for the Yoruba people, through "*sacrifice, ...[one] become[s] a 'good-headed' man [as if a person with a good destiny]*" (Hallen 104). Therefore, Jaguna and such power-holders, group leaders sustain ritual of sacrifice so as to give themselves value, and to make themselves respectable.

Eman, however, challenges the master-slave-like relation, and aims to get rid of the abuses of cultural boundaries of traditions and system. As Simon Harrison has put it, "*the difference between Self and Other thus takes the form of a boundary*

drawn between one's own group's cultural identity symbols and those of other groups" (10). In other words, Eman feels alien to the traditions of his village and culture; therefore, he feels as the Other to his community. After Eman's tutor attempts to abuse Omae, Eman leaves his village for twelve years. Upon his return to the village, Omae dies soon after she gives birth to a son. As the baby is a member of the strong breed, the death of the mother is inevitable within the Yoruba belief. After Omae's death, Eman goes to another village- Jaguna's village- to be freed from the cultural boundaries of his culture; yet, he finds himself at the edge of another traditional border that brings his death through sacrifice.

There, Eman has an affair with Jaguna's daughter Sunma, who is aware and exhausted of traditions that make her feel stranger to her own culture. Eman is a stranger to this village just like the disabled child Ifada, who would be sacrificed that night for the arrival of the new year. Therefore, both Eman and Ifada are strangers to that culture and village. Yet, for Eman, Ifada is *"the unfortunate one who runs errands ... and doesn't hurt a soul"* (53). Sunma, however, is nervous because of the annual ritual that will take place that night. Sunma calls Ifada as *"idiot"*, and *"horrible insect"* (53). Eman, in the end, cannot understand why Sunma humiliates Ifada, and says *"it is almost as if you are forcing yourself to hate him"* (53).

Thereafter, *"a girl comes in view, dragging an effigy by a rope attached to one of its legs"* (53). The helpless effigy may stand for the powerless ones like the student, colonized ones, those oppressed by traditional customs and cultural boundaries. The effigy is like a symbol of sacrifice that is alienated, and persecuted by one of its legs so as to show its powerlessness, and its condition of otherness. Soyinka seems to put emphasis on the effigy, as Ifada *"becomes somewhat excited when he sees the effigy"* (53-4). Although the girl is a child, Sunma says that *"she is as evil as the rest of them"* (54). She does not believe in the healing power of sacrifice, as the girl says, *"I am unwell...my mother says it will take away my sickness with the old year...I am the one who will get well at midnight"* (54). Because of traditions, and cultural boundaries that construct a communal identity to the villagers, Sunma feels alienated from her community; therefore, she seeks to realize her true self. Sunma says *"I wonder if I really sprang from here. I know they are evil and I am not. From the oldest to the smallest child, they are nourished in evil and unwholesomeness in which I have no part"* (55). Eman has run away from the traditions of his villagers; therefore, he actively acts and turns against the

restrictive roles of his society. As seen *“in more fragmentary and oblique forms in Eman”*, *“the idea of a protagonist representing a visionary artistic or intellectual figure who goes into a period of seclusion to hone his spiritual and psychic powers had been expressed in”* the play (Jeyifo 241). Similar to him, Sunma is aware of the “evil” lurking deep in traditions that limit her. Yet, she is passive, and stays there, as she says *“once I could have run away. I would have gone and never looked back”* (55). Although she is aware of the dangers of the sacrifice, she offers Eman to leave the village for *“only two days”* (55); however, Eman does not grasp the dangers of being other, and he says *“I have no wish to go”* (55). Although Eman believes that he has “found peace” in Sunma’s village, Sunma is conscious of the *“cruelty...[of] the last night of the old year”* (55).

The sense and need of change to unseat traditional boundaries that limit one’s space, Sunma says, *“it is the time for making changes in one’s life...let’s breathe in the new year away from here”* (55). The ritual that awaits Ifada and Eman is like a line that marks the edges and limits one’s own identity; therefore, the ritual separates the evil of villagers – as Sunma calls them so – from the others, and strangers. Thus, the sacrificial ritual divides a permanent line. Sunma tries to warn Eman, as she says *“Have you not noticed how tightly we shut out strangers? Even if you lived here for a lifetime, you would remain a stranger”*, to which Eman says *“perhaps that is what I like. There is peace in being a stranger”* (56).

The disabled Ifada seeks refuge in Eman’s house; that is why Sunma asks the boy to leave. Yet, as soon as Eman realizes that Ifada is the carrier of sacrifice, he refuses to give up Ifada to the villagers. Therefore, Jaguna and Oroge order Eman to become a real human sacrifice, as he is already a stranger. Jaguna is the decision-maker because he is the *“one who has knowledge of the rites, one who knows the ethos and is able to speak with the ancestors”* (Falola and Childs 338). Eman feels restricted in so many ways that customs, and cultural boundaries urge him to undertake the above-mentioned actions so that he may achieve self-identification. By doing so, he may *“manage the immensity of his spatial awareness”* (Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* 41). A flashback uncloses Eman’s idea to flee from his village and its traditions. He talks to his father:

Old Man: Ours is a strong breed my son. It is only a strong breed that can take this boat to the river year after year ... I hoped you would follow me... Stay longer and you will answer the call of your blood. ...

Eman: You do not understand. It is not grief alone... I was away twelve years. I changed much in that time...I am totally unfitted for your call. (61).

Eman underlines that he was away for twelve years. His father may not understand Eman, as Eman looked for ways to cross cultural borders so as to redefine himself through replacing mental barriers of Yoruba traditions. In Eman's words, *"twelve years I was a pilgrim, seeking the vain shrine of secret strength"* (66). His feeling of unbelonging to rituals of his community leads Eman to build tensions with Yoruba traditions, and borders of his ancestors. The generation gap presents the idea of change in Yoruba culture because the old man (Eman's father) is represented to be a devout man who respects traditional customs. As Barry Hallen has put it, *"a significant number of members of that culture are devout when it comes to such fundamentally important spiritual or supernatural beliefs"* (105). Yet, for Eman such supernatural beliefs are out of date, as they limit the construction of his own identity. Therefore, there comes the problem of mental borders that draw lines for one to go beyond cultural boundaries. Regarding such borders, Katarina Leppanen states that *"the idea of cultural borders forms imaginative and creative mental spaces for thinking about identity and otherness. Whether cultural borders are thought of as following linguistic, national, territorial or other officially drawn lines on political maps, or only as states of mind, their consequences and meanings are unpredictable"* (128). In the case of *The Strong Breed*, cultural borders affect Eman's mind to such an extent that violence brings more violence, although Eman's aim was just the opposite, as he desired to bring peace.

As for the violence of the power-holders, sacrifice comes to the fore. Regarding the relationship between violence and sacrifice, Rene Girard has put it, *"if left unappeased, violence will accumulate until it overflows its confines and floods the surrounding area. The role of sacrifice is to stem this rising tide of indiscriminate substitutions and redirect violence into 'proper channels'"* (10). That is, the power-holders with authority look for a victim at hand. However, in the case of Ifada's sacrificial position, Eman challenges the traditions, as he says *"but why did you pick on a helpless boy. Obviously he is not willing"*. To this, Jaguna is shocked *"What is the man talking about? Ifada is a godsend. Does he have to be willing?"* (59). Jaguna believes in the power of ethnic boundaries that may not be questioned. Therefore, *"cultural boundaries can be viewed essentially as rhetorical devices with which actors try...to convince others of the truth of their perceptions and definitions of ethnic boundaries"* (Harrison 10). That Jaguna may not hide his astonishment

through questions remarks on his use of traditions as a rhetorical device. Those with power believe that the powerless are to obey the rules of authority, and the powerless, in this case, may not get out of the cultural borders. In other words, *“official guardians and priestly functionaries on whom the legitimacy of cultural tradition depends are shown to be ruthless and petty-minded toward any questioning, any exposure of their compromised, self-serving manipulation of tradition”* (Jeyifo 43). Yet, Oroge, a villager who seems to be one of the opinion leaders seems to soften toward Ifada, as he says *“No one in his senses would do such a job. Why do you think we give refuge to idiots like him? We don’t know where he came from. One morning, he is simply there, just like that...there is purpose in that”* (59). Jaguna’s and Oroge’s explanations seek ways to rationalize the codes of ritual; yet the common point appears to be the idea that a stranger may not have power against the rules of authority; that is, loneliness may not fight against the power of a group, as represented in that village. However, Jaguna gets angry with Oroge: *“Have you changed masters now that you listen to what he [Eman] says”* (59).

Jaguna urges to reinforce the master-slave relationship by simply encoding the ritual through the idea of “godsend”. Regarding the relationship between leadership, authority and sacrifice, S. Adebajji Akintoye remarks, *“The group leader also kept and tended the group shrine, made the daily, periodic and seasonal rituals, and offered the sacrifices. His authority in trying and punishing offences was conceived of as flowing naturally from his religious authority and ritual powers. In modern political language, then, he was ruler, priest, judge and enforcement authority”* (44). The role of sacrifice, therefore, is traditionally assigned to the powerless who pays for social regeneration. Thus, the ritual forms a group solidarity; that is, a collective identity which has its boundaries that put the other/stranger out of the line.

Eman may not integrate, first, with his family, and then the Yoruba people in Jaguna’s village. The process of enculturation does not work for him, as he is against the learnings, outcomes, and expectations of his culture. Enculturation is a process through which a member of a group learns his/her culture (Kottak 27). One reason why Eman is out of enculturation may be that members of the two villages *“attribute to themselves in seeking to differentiate themselves from each other”* (Harrison 10). Therefore, Eman is silenced, as he belongs to none of these groups; that is, he is out of the cultural boundaries of the two villages. At the end of the play, *“there is a sound of twigs breaking, of a sudden trembling in the branches.*

Then silence" (67; italics by Soyinka). The sound of twigs may stand for Eman's struggle with cultural boundaries; yet, he is dead as "silence" may represent. As *"the effigy is hanging from the sheaves...IFADA appears to go mad, rushes at the object and tears it down"* (67). The effigy as mentioned before stands for the powerless stranger, who is silenced by the authorities of the village. *The Strong Breed* ends *"with the light fading slowly on a tableau in which Sunma represents what is clearly a raised but estranged and traumatized consciousness"* (Johnson 354). However, Ifada and the Girl become *"impassive"* (Johnson 354). They are silenced, as they encounter the harsh conditions of traditions.

Conclusion

To conclude, traditional customs put a barrier, and draw a border for those who seek to realize their own identities. Wole Soyinka represents universal themes through the portrayal of an individual's struggle against the norms, traditions of groups, and people. *"Soyinka has long been recognized as a writer who probes particular situations in terms of universal human themes"* (Bishop 68). Concordantly, one becomes a product of his/her culture, as realized in *the Strong Breed* through Eman's fight against rituals, and traditions. That is, Eman challenges to become a product of his culture. He is after finding out himself. Therefore, cultural identity and belonging do not fit with his way of thinking. Personally, Eman may not integrate with the expectations of the ritual of sacrifice. Through free will, Eman, in a way, sets against cultural boundaries and destiny; he aims to create his own identity, not a cultural one. As regards cultural identity, the ritual of sacrifice comprises a huge place in any culture. Sacrifice takes on crucial functions within a given culture (Erginer 16). That is, sacrifice is a part of traditions that shapes and reshapes the identity of any member of a group of people who sacrifice for various reasons such as thanksgiving, wishing, and making a vow (Erginer 16-17). Cultural boundaries, as represented by the Yoruba traditions, claim fixed identities to strengthen the positions of power-holders. Ritual of sacrifice is one of the structuring forces of society in Yoruba culture. Therefore, the ritual of sacrifice constructs such a traditional power that the powerless Ifada, Sunma, Omae and Eman bump into the harsh borders of authoritarianism. Eman challenges the oppressive system which is formed by traditional rituals, and sacrifice for spiritual cleansing, as *"sacrifices to the gods [are] for the common welfare of all the settlements"* (Akintoye 66).

As a member of the strong breed, Eman has the inborn task to perform the ritual of purification. This presents the idea of superiority that is similar to the western idea of claiming hegemony over Africans. Eman struggles and challenges these borders throughout his life: (1) he turns against the abusive authority of his tutor, (2) he urges to flee from his prearranged role as a member of the strong breed in his father's clan, (3) he challenges cultural borders that come with the ritual ceremony in Jaguna's village. Jaguna's, Oroge's and even Eman's father's actions "show how people's experience is structured by a system of categories which has its roots in culture" (Mantovani 5). However, Eman deritualizes the practice of sacrifice, and the norm of authority through challenging cultural boundaries. Eman seeks ways to make cultural shifts whose borders have been reinforced for hundreds of years within the Yoruba culture. Yet, he may not find a way out of those borders. He substitutes himself for the preservation of an "other's" life. The idea of and need for change to attain a better future for such cultures are observed to be proposed by the writer whose work represents that cultural borders shape and trap individual and group identities. As for constructing a group identity, rituals, in a way, train, breed and reform members so as to generate a group bond because through rituals, members of a given culture are desired to be gathered together (Erginer 47). Yet, Eman challenges such an idea, as he is a representation of one who may achieve his-self though opposing the system. He opposes to the doctrines of not only his family but also his society. As in the play, members of such cultures are aimed to be made puppet-like so that the power-holders may go on generating the power of their authority. In a way, the play represents that power-holders may take advantage of such rituals, and traditions.

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