

Some Instances of African Oral Traditions in Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

LAWALI Maman Toukour

Maître-Assistant

Enseignant-Chercheur

Université André Salifou, Niger

Département d'Anglais

mmntoukour@gmail.com

Abstract: One of the African writers' particularities is their sense of promoting and preserving their traditions through their artistic works. This paper aims at tracing some instances of African oral traditions in Aidoo's play. Though she is seen as subversive regarding to certain social norms, Aidoo does not fail to reflect African oral traditions in her play. Based on a textual analysis of Aidoo's *the Dilemma of a Ghost*, the study qualitatively explores the main instances of oral traditions in the play. The work draws its theoretical underpinnings from the sociolinguistic approach, which establishes a correlation between language and society. The theory posits that language is constantly dynamic in accordance with the cultural context and social interactions. As a result, the paper reveals that drama like the other literary forms of literature draws its roots from oral traditions and African writers are mostly guided in their writings by those traditions. At the end, the paper demonstrates that oral traditions greatly influence African drama.

Key words: Proverbs, oral songs, drums, oral traditions, beliefs

Quelques aspects de la tradition orale africaine dans *The Dilemma of a Ghost* d'Ama Ata Aidoo

Résumé : L'une des particularités des écrivains africains réside dans leur engagement à promouvoir et à préserver leurs traditions à travers leurs œuvres artistiques. Cet article vise à illustrer de cet état de fait en identifiant quelques traces de traditions orales africaines dans la pièce d'Aidoo. Malgré qu'on la qualifie d'être subversive vis-à-vis de certaines normes sociales, elle ne manque pas de refléter les traditions orales africaines dans son livre. S'appuyant sur une analyse textuelle de sa pièce théâtrale, l'étude explore qualitativement les principaux exemples de traditions orales dans la pièce. L'étude puise ses fondements théoriques dans l'approche sociolinguistique, qui établit une corrélation entre la langue et la société. Cette théorie postule que la langue est en constante évolution, en fonction du contexte culturel et des interactions sociales. Par conséquent, l'article révèle que le théâtre, comme les autres formes littéraires, puise ses racines dans les traditions orales et que les écrivains africains s'inspirent principalement de ces traditions dans leurs écrits. Enfin, l'article démontre que les traditions orales influencent grandement le théâtre africain.

Mots clés : Proverbes, chants oraux, tambours, traditions orales, croyances

Introduction

Oral traditions constitute the pedestal of any literary work. It is in this sense that Ojaide states that:

Modern African literature is highly infused with folklore. The oral traditions of Africa originated from the earliest history of the people and have continued to evolve according to the conditions of the times. African folktales, myths, legends, and other forms of folklore developed over thousands of years and have been influenced by mass migrations (T. Ojaide, 2012, p. 11).

This quote illustrates the close relationship between oral traditions and African literature. Besides, an interface between them, the former serves as the reservoir and source for the latter where it draws insights, inspirations and forms for its survival and growth. That is why consciously or not, African writers incorporate oral traditions in their works. Whether in poetry (verse), in fiction (prose) or drama (dialogue, stage directions), they build their narratives and texts based on oral traditions. In this vein, Omotoso quotes Iyasere who states that “the modern African writer is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind.” (S. A. Omotoso, 2009, p. 107). In furtherance, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* does not escape from this reality. Ama Ata Aidoo’s first play has been exceptionally written with a very strong style and an exciting dynamism and commitment in challenging certain African views and perceptions. The play stands as seminal work in African postcolonial literature, weaving African oral traditions into dramatic performance to articulate cultural conflicts between two different worlds and the reconstruction of the African identity. Drawing from the Ghanaian fount of traditions, Aidoo creates a polyphonic text that revitalizes orality to address the Eurocentric views about Africa.

Both the context of the work production and the author’s youth fervour, as she trusted it to Theo Vincent in an interview, “You know I wrote the play when I was a student.” (T. Vincent, 1981, p.6). to create a door to the abroad culture through the character of Eulalie, a young back Afro-American lady, do not submerged the play from its attributions of promoting African cultural values and the writer’s sense of belonging or what N’gugi Wa Thiong’o calls every writer is a writer in politics. In this vein, Aidoo thinks that one could not fail to evoke their History, namely that of black Africans living in the overseas though the conditions and status of their deportation were not honourable. That is when she puts that “I think personally that I am fascinated by our history.” (T. Vincent, 1981, p. 6).

Therefore, this study challenges those subversive views of African traditions attributed to Ama Ata Aidoo by certain analysts. Besides, the paper strongly advocates that *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is a reservoir of African oral tradition and a tool promoting its vitality.

1. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Oral Literature Theory and supported by Postcolonial Theory, both of which provide critical lenses for understanding the use and significance of African oral traditions in Ama Ata Aidoo’s *The Dilemma of a Ghost*.

Oral Literature Theory, advanced by scholars such as Ruth Finnegan, Isidore Okpewho, and Harold Scheub, emphasizes the aesthetic, social, and cultural functions of orally transmitted narratives in African societies. This theory holds that oral traditions—such as proverbs, songs, folktales, riddles, and communal performances—are not merely artistic expressions but repositories of indigenous knowledge, collective memory, and moral instruction. Using Oral Literature Theory allows the study

to identify and interpret oral forms embedded in the play (songs, chants, proverbs, storytelling devices) and demonstrate the continuity between precolonial oral expression and modern written literature. This theory is therefore useful for showing how Aidoo's text bridges traditional oral culture and contemporary African drama.

The study also employs Postcolonial Theory, informed by critics such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Homi Bhabha, and Frantz Fanon. Postcolonial Theory examines how African writers negotiate cultural identity, colonial legacy, and the tensions between indigenous traditions and Western influences. This framework helps the study to explore the conflict between African communal values (expressed through oral forms) and Western individualism represented by characters like Eulalie and Highlight how Aidoo uses oral forms to assert African epistemologies within a postcolonial context. The Postcolonial Theory therefore explains the ideological significance of oral traditions in negotiating identity and belonging.

2. Discussions

The analysis centered around three main findings, namely elements of language, elements of belief and elements of culture as discussed below.

2.1. Elements of Orality

Through her work, Ama Ata Aidoo infuses oral tradition forms not only to demonstrate the utility of orality or oral traditions to contemporary African drama, but also to show her strong attachment, as African writer, to African values specifically the Ghanaian culture. In this sense, our findings stress oral song and proverbs.

Also, Aidoo uses orality in the play to highlight cultural identity, generational tensions, and the clash between Africa and the Western World.

2.1.1. Oral Song

According to Asabe "A song is a poetic compositing adapted to be set to music and sung." (K. U., Asabe, p.89). Oral Song is one of the main forms of African oral traditions. It is deeply rooted in people's life in Africa. This is expressed not only through the multiple occasions such as marriage, naming ceremony, seasonal feasts, and rituals, at which oral song is performed, but also in the significance sense of song in African sociocultural values. Quarco puts that "Within the confines of Ghana are several musical types and forms. Generally, each ethnic group has characteristic songs for recreating, initiation, rites, all the rites of passage, funerals, religious practices, ritual and all ceremonies." (A. K., Quarco p.38).

That is why Aidoo has ingeniously interwoven the oral song in her prelude to show her deep respect to her own traditions. She mentions that just listen to their horn-blower:

We came from left
 'We came from right
 We came from left
 We came from right
 The twig shall not pierce our eyes
 Nor the rivers prevail o'ver us.
 We are f the vanguard

We are running forward, forward, forward ...' (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p.2).

Through these lines, Aidoo reminds her people of what they generally think about scholars who live abroad then the song sounds as a warning to young people not to be uprooted from their culture whatever the new milieu they find themselves. This is illustrated in the words of Esi: " Oh Esi! You have an unkind soul. We always hear of other women's sons going to the white man's country. Why should my own go and marry a white woman?" (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p.12).

girl:" let us sing 'The ghost '.

Boy: " ghost... ghost... One early morning, when the moon was up, shining as the sun, I went Elmina Junction and there and there, I saw a wretched ghost going up and down singing to himself ' shall I go to Cape Coast or to Elmina I don't know, I can't tell, I don't know, I can't tell'. " (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 23, 24).

Aidoo employs this song to reflect on the crisis of identity, a critical reality lived by certain Africans. In African oral traditions, ghosts often represent people who have lost their place in the human community. Likewise, Ato, the main character, is in a transitional state, confused about his identity. Another important trait of African tradition used by Aidoo is proverb.

2.1.2. Proverbs and Wise Sayings

Proverbs and sayings constitute one of the main forms of oral traditions in Africa. As short and wise sayings encompassing ancestral and communal values. Mieder defines proverb as "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorization form and which is handed down from generation to generation." (W. Mieder, 1993, p.5).

Though her use of subversive young main characters (Ato and Eulalie) towards certain traditional norms, Aidoo succeeds in enriching her work with an intense use of proverbs through the characters of elders like Nana, Akroma, Petu, etc.

NANA : "do they not know that if the heavens withdraw their light, man must light his own way ? But no.

They will let us all lie in darkness. How will he find his way around this dark place should the ghost of one of our forbearers us a visit? But this is something one should not speak about.

NANA:" Esi Kom, leave that child alone, for no one knows what the man of fame and honour was like when he was child."

AKROMA : "but Old One, we can soon know the birth which will not do well, for his nest hangs by the wayside."

PETU: " you must all be quiet. One must take time to dissect an ant in order to discover its entrails" (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 9, 10).

The aforementioned proverbs and wise sayings collectively highlight the elders' concerns about the loss of traditional guidance, the unpredictability of youth, the early signs of trouble in Ato's choices, and the need for patience and careful understanding of the matter. Aidoo uses these proverbs and wise sayings to ground the play in Ghanaian oral tradition and to illustrate the generational and cultural tensions that define the central conflict. Another orality instance shaping Aidoo's work is drumming.

2.1.3. Drumming

Drum is a traditional musical instrument known deeply rooted in the African traditions. Omotoso puts that "The most important musical instrument of Africa is the drum...Drums accompany different forms of oral tradition, including storytelling, singing and dancing. They made for different purposes, among which are communicating and information, depending on the mood of the society" (S. A., Omotoso, 2009, p. 175).

Drumming is therefore very significant in the African people's life. Thus, the Ghanaians are highly attached to this tradition, which Aidoo has not failed to reflect in her work through Eulalie's and Ato's discussions below:

EULALIE: "Can't you hear the drum?"

ATO : " Don't be absurd, darling.

But I thought that one thing which attracted you about Africa was that there is a lot of drumming here." (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p.20).

Aidoo demonstrates that drumming is an African heritage and beauty that attracts even those who believes that are modernists and underestimate African traditions. Besides, its attracting rhythm in the ears of the listeners, drumming accompanies celebrations and ceremonies (marriage, naming ceremony, feast, enthroning), communal and seasonal festivities, and rituals. In furtherance, drumming communicates sense and meaning in African traditional society. It announces good news, summons and gather people to discuss important matters; it stimulates and motivate people during a communal work; and it relaxes individuals and provoke powerful feeling of winning in combatants. Besides, let us examine belief which is another prominent instance developed in the play.

2.2. Elements of Belief

The dilemma of a Ghost is a play anchored in beliefs and ancestral values. That is the reason why Aidoo build her message on traditional beliefs such as ancestral spirits and attachment to descent and origin.

2.2.1. Belief in Ancestral Spirits

One of the most fundamental African traditional beliefs is belief in ancestral spirit. The livings do not forget about the dead; instead, they are considered as members of the community and are venerated. Quoting Farmer, Idowu succinctly captures the African belief in ancestral spirits before showing the strong bond which exist between ancestral spirits and the livings.

The ancestor is a departed spirit who stands in peculiarly close relation to the tribe or the family: the life of the latter has been derived from him, and because he is still in existence he is still in a sense one with it; his favour or disfavour has therefore a sharply focussed relation to it and is more urgently to sought or avoided. (E. B., Idowu, 1991, p.179).

That is why Aidoo insists not to violate the traditional norms of her people. This is explained in the reaction of Nana who contends Ato's hallucinations:

My spirit Mother ought to have come for me earlier.

Now what shall I tell them who are gone ? The daughter of slaves who come from the white man's land.

Someone should advice me on how to tell my story.
 My children, I am dreading my arrival there
 Where they will ask me news of home.
 Shall I tell them or shall I not ?
 Someone should lend me a tongue
 Light enough with which to tell
 My Royal Dead
 That one of their stock
 Has gone away and brought to their sacred precincts
 The wayfarer !
 They will ask me where I was
 When such thins were happening.
 O mighty God!
 Even when the unmentionable
 Came and carried off the children of the house
 in shoals like fish,
 Nana Kum kept his feet steadfast on the ground
 And refused to let any of his nephews
 Take a wife from a doubtful stock.
 If it is true that the last gets the best of everything
 Then what is this
 Which my soul has drawn out for me?" (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 14).

According to the African view, the livings are in direct connection to the ancestors and both are concerned with the communal life as Omoko mentions, "There is always an interaction between the living and the dead, who become ancestors and intervene in the affairs of the former." (P. E. Omoko, 2018, p.12). This has clearly been shown in Aidoo's work and firmly reflected in the worries of Nana.

Petu: We were to choose this day because, as you know, on this day we try to drive away all evil spirits, ill luck and unkind feelings, which might have invaded our house during the past year. You also know, that we invoke our sacred dead to bring us blessings. Therefore, we are asking you to tell us what is wrong with you and your wife so that first we will wash her stomach with this, then pour the libation to ask the dead to come and remove the spirit of the evil around you and pray them to bring you a child! (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 40).

Ama Ata Aidoo uses the belief in ancestral spirits not merely as a cultural background element, but as a central ideological theme that structures the worldview of the community and shapes the dramatic conflict of the play. The ancestral spirits operate on both a functional level within the narrative and a deeper ideological level that expresses the values, fears, and identity concerns of the Ghanaian society. It therefore, to address that issue of identity crisis that Aidoo submits to her people the attachment to descent and origin.

2.2.2. Attachment to Descent and Origin

Traditional African societies were constituted into corporate groups. The sense of belonging is highly developed and descent is strongly preserved. Aidoo has successfully depicted this heritage in her work. She vehemently expresses this attachment through the character of Nana, a custodian of the African traditions. The following captures are suitable illustrations:

NANA: she has no tribe ? The story you're telling to us is too sweet, my grand-child since I was born, I have not heard of a human being born out from the womb of a woman who has no tribe. Are there trees which never have any roots ?

AKYERE: But we thought that we too have found a treasure at last for our house. What have you done to us, my son? We do not know the ways of the white people. Will not people laugh at us?

ATO : Please, I beg you all , listen. Eulalie's ancestors were of our ancestors. But as you all know , the white people came and took some away in ships to be slaves...

NANA: Ato, do not talk with the foolishness of your generation

1st W : This is life. Some are going, while others are coming. That is the road to the life hereafter.

NANA : Yes, I'm sitting here. So you thought I was dead ? No, I am not. Go home good neighbours and save your tears for my funeral. It cannot be long now...go. No, do not go yet I need your tears. My grand-child has gone and brought home one offspring of slaves. A slave, I say. (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 11, 12, 13).

The aforementioned extracts demonstrate the prominence of having descent and be proud of. According to Ghanaian and certain African societies' traditions, a man should get marry to a woman whose descent is known. That is why Nana and other custodians protest and reject Ato's partner, Eulalie who despite Ato's efforts to explain to his family that her descents too are Africans; he wants them to understand that they have just been deported during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Unfortunately, Eulalie is considered as a stranger because of her unknown origin in Ato's society. This sense of descent preservation proves Aidoo's attachment to African traditions and culture.

2.3. Elements of culture

Throughout the play, Aidoo reflects her society's culture, namely naming, marriage, childbearing, drumming, and snails as food that are under discussion.

2.3.1. Naming

Naming or a name is an identity given to every individual in the society. It is therefore an element of culture specific to a group of people or society. In African traditional society, naming is a communal property. That is why Théophile maintains, "[in Africa] a person's names are of a concern for the community and the society as a whole because an individual does not belong to their family alone but mainly to the whole community." (H. Théophile, 2002, p.50).

Advocating the prominence of naming in society, Théophile states "The importance of naming a person resides in the fact that names enable human beings to identify with more or less precision their fellows because, without a name, a person does not exist, neither for themselves nor for others." (H. Théophile, 2002, p.24). Conscious of that, Aidoo builds a strong opposition against alien names. The following captures illustrate the fact.

MONKA: " oh let us say, let us say that some of the names that are coming into the world are fearful."

ESI: " Ato you know that some of us did not hear the school bell when it rang. Therefore we will not be able to say this name.."

ESI: " But how is it, my child, that she comes from Amrika and she has this strange name ?
" (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 11, 12).

Naming functions as a powerful cultural marker that exposes the tensions between African tradition and Western modernity. The dispute over the name of Eulalie symbolizes a deeper conflict about identity, belonging, and continuity. For Aidoo, naming is not merely a label but a social act through which the community inscribes its values, history, and expectations onto the next generation. Then, let us examine marriage, another pivotal issue developed in the play.

2.3.2. Marriage

Marriage is a societal practice shared to all societies. It is in this sense that Perini "Marriage is a universal institution that has been practiced in various cultures and societies throughout history, serving as a foundation for family formation and social bonds." (L. Perini, 2022, p.5).

In Africa, marriage is the stone basis of the society. It is a sacred and societal union beyond two individuals. Perini puts that "In Africa, marriage not only marks a partnership between individuals but also cements a bond between families and clans. Traditional customs and practices are often involved in African weddings, emphasizing the importance of marriage as a unifying force within the larger social fabric." (L. Perini, 2022, p.5). This shows that, apart from being a cement of social ties in Africa, marriage is an important sociocultural practice embedding a large range of traditional aspects. Thus, the central issue raised in Aidoo's play is marriage. Moreover, one of her most important focus is the choice of the partner, means the girl to marry. Aidoo has successfully represented this Ghanaian tradition through Eulalie who project of marriage with Ato raises numerous interrogations from Ato's family. The following excerpts illustrate these worries:

1st W : Oh, he would have a good woman. I saw that girl when she came home last Christmas.
School has not spoilt her, I think.
2nd W: And that is the sad part of it, my sister. He has not taking the girl whom we all know
and like, but has gone for this black-white woman. A stranger and slave...
Eulalie : Ato isn't it time we start a family?
Ato : Heavens, women! They are always getting feelings. First you got the feeling you needed
a couple of years to settle down and now your you are obviously getting a contradictory
feeling. (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p. 17-18, 22).

Marriage is the central site where cultural conflict, identity negotiation, and generational tension unfold in the play. Aidoo uses the union between Ato and Eulalie to dramatize the clash between Western individualism and African communal values. Marriage, in the Ghanaian cultural setting, is not merely a private bond between two individuals but a social institution that links families, ancestors, and the wider community.

Through the couple's misunderstandings, Aidoo shows that marriage carries meanings related to lineage continuation, social cohesion, respect for tradition, and collective responsibility. Eulalie's unfamiliarity with these expectations reveals the fragility of cross-cultural unions when mutual understanding is lacking. At the same time, Ato's inability to mediate between his wife and his family exposes the tensions experienced by postcolonial Africans caught between modern education and traditional obligations. Furthermore, besides marriage, Aidoo extends the concern of family to childbearing.

2.3.3. Childbearing

According to Esienumh et al. "Childbearing is a physiological process of procreation" (E. Esienumh et al, 2019, p. 2243). African traditional societies are mostly pro-natal; that means, childbearing is strongly encouraged. That is why fertility is honoured and barrenness or impotence is rejected and even banished among certain ethnic groups.

The Dilemma of a Ghost has critically depicted the representation of childbearing in Akan society. The play is highly centred on the aforementioned issue and has proved that infertility whether natural or artefact creation is vigorously condemned and rejected by the society. The extracts below are suitable illustrations:

2nd W :... some child bearing is profitable.

1st W : Child bearing is always profitable for were not our fathers wise who looked upon the motion of our lives and said, they ask for the people of the house and not the money in it? There is nothing that can be compare with being a parent, my sister.

I heard in the distance the cry of a child, that cry is meant for ear...

1st W :Oh , Eternal Mother Nature, Queen Mother of childbirth, how was it you went past my house without a pause, without a rest ? Mighty God, when shall the cry of an infant come into my ear; For the sun has journeyed far in my sky.

ATO : They would say that we are displeasing the spirits of our dead ancestors and the almighty God for controlling birth...

EULALIE :You knew all this , didn't you, my gallant black knight ? Now you dare not confess it before them, can you? Oh God! What an awful mess ! (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p.16, 18, 42).

From the above discussions, one can easily perceive the importance of the question of childbearing in African societies. The phenomenon is strongly encouraged that is why offsprings are highly welcome in African families. Aidoo has successfully reflected this African reality in her work. She categorically refuses its violation.

1st W:" Barren...

If it is real barrenness,

Then oh strange girl,

Whom I do not know,

I weep for you,

For I know what it is

To start a marriage with barrenness.

You ought to have kept quiet

And crouched by your mother's hearth

Wherever that is- Yes. With your machine that cook

And your machines that sweep.

They want people.

My people have a lusty desire

To see a tender skin

On top of a child's scalp

Rise and fall with human life.

Your machines, my stranger-girl,

Cannot go on an errand

They have no hands to dress you when you are dead...

But you have no machine to buy now

That which will weep for you, stranger-girl
 You need that most.
 For my world
 Which you have run to enter
 Is most unkind to the barren. (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p.35-36).

Childbearing functions as a key symbol through which Aidoo explores continuity, cultural identity, and communal expectations. Within the Ghanaian traditional context, having children is not only a personal desire but also a social duty tied to lineage preservation and ancestral continuity. The community sees childbearing as essential for honoring the ancestors and securing the future of the family.

Eulalie's rejection of immediate childbearing, shaped by her Western ideals and personal choices, clashes with the expectations of Ato's family, revealing the deep cultural gap that exists between individual autonomy and communal responsibility. Through this conflict, Aidoo shows how childbearing becomes a site of tension in intercultural marriages, highlighting misunderstandings about womanhood, marital roles, and the meaning of family. In Aidoo's work, Conflict is also represented through food.

2.3.4. Snails as food

Snails are eaten in certain African countries like Cameroun, Nigeria and Ghana. Tanyitiku states that "Snail meat is a source of food and livelihood for many inhabitants especially in Sub-Saharan Africa." (M. N. Tanyitiku, 2022, p.64).

As writers reflect the reality of their societies, they mostly depict their cultures through their artistic works. It is in the similar vein that Aidoo has not failed to reflect a type of food in her society, namely the snails which are greatly reflected in African writers' works. This exact below is an illustration:

Eulalie: What do you mean? What rubbish ? If you think I am going to sleep with those creatures, then you're kidding yourself.
 Ato : But how can you throw them away just like that ? Have you seen snails before?
 Eulalie : my dear did you see a single snails crawling on the streets of New York all the time you were in the states ? And anyway, seeing snails and eating them is entirely different things.
 Monka : Maami, Maami, Ato's morning sunshine has thrown away the snails you gave them.
 Esi : and what my son ? Do you not know how to eat them now ? What kind of man are you growing into ? Are your wife's taboos yours ? Rather your taboos should be hers.
 Esi : these days, the rains are scarce and so are snails. But the one or two I get for you, you throw away. (A. A., Aidoo, 1965, p.27, 28)

The above conversations reveal that eating snails is something new to Eulalie and her rejection of snails as food. Ato's family, who sees it as a scorn to their culture and tradition does not tolerate this attitude. Food is part of a people's culture. Thus, snails appear as a symbolic marker of cultural identity and the clash between African and African-American experiences. When Eulalie buys snails, considered taboo and unclean in Ato's family, the incident exposes her lack of knowledge about Ghanaian customs and highlights the cultural gap between her and her in-laws.

Aidoo employs a metaphorical misunderstanding, displacement, and the difficulty of integrating into a new cultural environment through food which constitutes another point of tension between individual preferences and communal expectations.

Conclusion

Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* stands as a remarkable example of how African oral traditions continue to shape modern African literature. Through the use of proverbs, songs, folktales, drumming, traditional beliefs, and communal dialogue, Aidoo bridges the gap between the oral and the written and the traditional and the modern worlds. These oral elements not only authenticate the play's cultural context but also serve as vehicles for moral instruction, social commentary, and the preservation of African collective memory. By embedding traditional instances within a modern dramatic structure, Aidoo reclaims African modes of expression that were once marginalized under colonial influence. Ultimately, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* illustrates that African literature cannot be divorced from its oral roots; rather, it thrives through the creative fusion of ancestral voices and contemporary realities. Aidoo's work therefore reinforces the enduring vitality of oral tradition as a living, dynamic force in articulating African identity and experience.

References

- AIDOO Ama Ata, 1965, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, London: Longman Group.
- ASABE Kabir Usman, 2019, "Oral Literary Genres as Tool for Socialization of Children: The rôle of women", *Nigerian eJournal of Oral Literatures*, Number 6, pp. 84 – 99.
- ESIENUMH Ekpoanwan, et al. 2019, "Cultural Meaning of Chilbearing among Women f a Rura Community in Nigeria" in *International Journal of Science and Research*, Vol. 6 June, pp. 2237 – 2245.
- HOUNDJO Théophile, 2022, "Exploring the Issue of Naming in some Ethnic Groups with Reference to Selected Achebe's and Armah's Works" in *Revue Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée, de Littérature et d'Education*, Volume 5 Numéro 2 – Juin, pp. 23 – 51.
- IDOWU E. Bolaji., 1991, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Ibadan: Fountain Publications.
- MIEDER Wolfgang., 1993, *African Proverbs Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography*, Burlington: Queen City Printers Inc.
- PERINI Lorenza, 2002, "Africa's Traditions and Culture of Marriage: a Look at the Role that African Woman Plays" University of Padua Department of Political Science, Law, and International Studies.
- OJAIDE Tanure, 2012, *Contemporary African Literature: New Approach*, Carolina: Carolina Academic Press,
- OMOKO Peter E., 2018, "Metaphor of Death and Afterlife in Urhobo Poetry" in *Nigerian Journal of Oral Literatures*, Number 5, August, pp. 10 – 26.
- OMOTOSO Sharon Adetutu, 2009, "The problems of Relativity in African Oral Tradition" in *Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture*, Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, p. 173 – 181.

QUARCO A. K., 1986, "Black Civilization and the Arts" in *The Arts and Civilization of Black and African Peoples* Vol.1, Lagos: Black and African Arts and Civilization.

TANYITIKU Mary Nkongho, 2022, "Nutritious food and health risks: a review on the edible land snails of Africa" *Journal of Food Safety and Hygiene*, Vol 8 No. 2 Spring, pp. 64 – 77.

VINCENT Theo, 1981, *Seventeen Black and African Writers on Literature and Life*, Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.

Processus d'évaluation de cet article:

- **Date de soumission: 28 octobre 2025**
- ✓ **Date d'acceptation: 20 novembre 2025**
- ✓ **Date de validation: 15 décembre 2025**