

ODA OAK ORACLE¹ AND ARISTOTLE'S VIEW OF MIMESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to investigate how Oda Oak Oracle, an Ethiopian play in English, represents reality using the Aristotelian Model of Mimesis (Imitation) which gives greater importance to plot and character. And also since it is a tragic play, to investigate how it conforms to Aristotle's view of tragedy. Accordingly, plot structure/ structural/ analysis and character analysis using Aristotle's model of analyzing plot structure and character were conducted. The plot of Oda Oak oracle is developed by probability (necessity) causality, change of fortune, and emotions aroused in the audience. In terms of character portrayal, the hero (protagonist of the play) fulfills the four prescriptions. From the beginning to the end, the play is composed of elements of tragedy. Actions can be seen worthy of imitation, and the entire play representative of the real world.

Key Words: *Mimesis, imitation, Mimetic Theory, Oda Oak Oracle*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

1.1.1. The Concept of Aristotle's Mimesis(Imitation) and the Mimetic Theory of Art

The mimetic theory of arts is believed to have originated from Aristotle's concept of imitation which is based on the belief that art imitates life in the form of great and low actions. Great actions refer to tragedy, and low actions refer to comedy. This theory is also known as *Art as Imitation*. The word 'Mimetic' came from *Mimesis*, which is the Greek word for imitation. *Mimesis* had been used in the arts as a means to judge a work of art in relation to reality and its representation. The mimetic theory has been used by theorists of the renaissance and modern eras. The central idea of *Mimesis* is that art imitates reality. The aim of mimetic literary criticism is to determine how a work of literature connects to the real world. According to critics of the mimetic theory, art carries universal truths. They ask how well the work of art relates to the real world. Their analysis is based on the accuracy of literary

¹ *An Ethiopian Play in English by the late Poet -Laureate Tsegaye Gebr- Medhin*

work and its morality. For these critics, a literary work must show how people really act and whether or not it is correct.

Plato and Aristotle have their own views on imitation. Both of them argue that artists and poets imitate nature. However, their views differ when it comes to the function of imitation in art and literature. For Plato, imitation embodies a step away from truth (reality), producing an imperfect copy of the *form* or *essence* of a given entity. Poetry for him; thus, ranks lower than the world of appearances since it is obliged to copy or imitate those appearances. For Aristotle, who has an entirely different view of imitation, poetry is a basic human instinct. To imitate, for him, is not to produce a copy or a mirror reflection of some things, but it involves mediation of reality. In a great art or tragedy; for instance, he argues, writer imitates not people's characters, but their actions. Unlike Plato, Aristotle argues that the writer imitates things not as they are, but as they should be. The world is real, but incomplete. Therefore, the poet tries to make it complete through imitation. (Habib, 2005).

Aristotle believes that art imitates the reality found in human beings and around them. Drama, which is 'the most mimetic art' ; for example, imitates men in action. It imitates what really happens as opposed to poetry that tells what happens.

In contrast to Plato, Aristotle views imitation as a basic human instinct and takes it as a big way toward knowledge and truth. From child hood, he explains, men have an instinct for imitation. Man is distinguished from animals in that he is far more imitative. Human beings rely on imitation to learn. According to him, imitation is both mode of learning and associated with pleasure. The pleasure lies not on the object imitated, but on the process of imitation.

Aristotle argues that we imitate actions, not characters. The notion of action involves a number of elements: the cause of action is choice, and the cause of choice is " desire and reasoning directed to some end". Choice necessarily involves the exercise of intellect and a certain disposition of character. Action which conforms to virtue requires certain condition on the part of the agent: he must act with knowledge; he must deliberately choose the act; and the act must spring from " a fixed and permanent disposition of character". As such virtue results from the repeated performance of just and temperate actions.(Habib, 2005;Landa,2004)

Aristotle on Tragedy

Aristotle defines tragedy as " an imitation of an action, that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude". The language of tragedy must be decorated with all kinds of ornament. Tragedy represents men in action and does not use narration. And through pity and fear it arouses relief to these and similar emotions. For Aristotle, tragedy, like all poetry, is a kind of imitation (mimesis). It has a serious purpose and uses direct action to achieve its ends. The subject matter of tragedy is a

course of action which is morally serious. By *complete*, he means a situation which has reached its ends. A subject matter of tragedy is a course of action, not a separate action, and events including what the protagonist does, and what happens to him. A course of action which is morally serious, having a completed unity and occupies a certain magnitude.(Habib,2005)

The aim of tragedy, Aristotle, points out, is to bring about *catharsis* of the audience- to arouse pity and fear brought about by witnessing catastrophe or moving change in fortunes of the protagonist. The effect it may have on the audience (spectators) is part of the definition of tragedy.

Aristotle's view of tragedy makes the idea of action central since it underlies such components and features as plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle (scenic effect) and song(music). These components can be broadly categorized as: means of imitation (diction and song), manner of imitation (spectacle), and the objects of imitation (actions as arranged in the plot, the character and the thought of the actors)(Landa, 2004). However, Aristotle gives higher importance to plot and character. And in the plot the most important aspect is *unity*.

A tragedy must have structure of events or incidents to which the specific actions to which given characters contribute. The overall dramatic structure or the plot is the end at which tragedy aims. A plot must have organic unity. For Aristotle, tragedy presents an action that is whole and complete. A whole is something having a beginning, middle and end. (Landa, 2004)

The unity of the plot is viewed in terms of its formal structure and the emotions created in the audience. The formal structure includes probability, causality and change of fortune. A plot might be developed on probability or necessity. A character must act in accordance with human nature either through probability- i.e. what most people would do. Or through necessity-i.e. what we are forced to do. The unity of a plot is also based on the notion of causality. For causality to have its effect, as Habib quoting Aristotle puts it : "The beginning is not necessarily caused by something else. But itself causes something else. The middle must follow something else and must be followed by something else that it causes. And the end is necessarily what follows from something else but does not produce a further result."(2005,57)

Aristotelian plots are divided in to simple and complex. Simple plots show a continuous action, where as complex plots are characterized by their action which are marked by a movement through reversal, recognition and suffering. Aristotle divides the action in to two parts: the complication and the denouement. Complication includes all the events until the change in fortune. And denouement or unraveling includes events until the end. The change in fortune is placed at the center of a play. For Aristotle, complex plots are more preferable as they contain a process having reversal(a sudden change from good to bad or vice versa), recognition(change from ignorance to knowledge, producing

love or hatred between the persons destined to bad or good fortune) and suffering which evokes emotions of pity and fear which themselves contribute to the plot's unity. Pity and fear are aroused when the incidents are unexpected and one is the consequence of the other. (Landa,2004; Habib,2005)

When coming to characters in tragedy, Aristotle focuses on the major character/protagonist or tragic hero/, and discusses the other characters in their relation with the hero. The tragic hero is a man of noble birth and of virtue yet destined to a catastrophic end due to his flaw (tragic flaw) that he commits somewhere in the plot.

Aristotle on Character

Aristotle has four prescriptions in relation to of the portrayal of characters. The character must be "good". Character is revealed through dialogue and action. 'Good' stands for a character that is morally good, honest or worthy. Goodness of a character is relative. Any action of a character is not suitable for imitation. Actions which entail a moral dilemma are worthy of imitation. A character depicted should be appropriate. This literally means "a man should not act like a woman and vice versa". A character should be 'like'. This could mean "like reality", "resembling", "of the same rank or station". Or it could mean a character portrayed must be "true to life". Character must be "consistent".(Ibid,59)

The present study; therefore, aimed to investigate how the Ethiopian English play (Tsegaye's *Oda Oak Oracle*) represents reality through the Aristotelian model of imitation(mimesis) which is based on plot and character. And since it is a tragic play, to investigate how it conforms to the Aristotelian view of tragedy.

1.1.2. Ethiopian Literature in English

Ethiopian literature falls into three broad categories: classical literature, including historical narratives, heroic poetry, and works of philosophical reflection cast in an imaginative mode; romantic and political literature in Amharic, and, since the Second World War, the new literature in English. Ethiopian literature in English is a recent development, but it already includes some of the most significant works in African literature today, most notably the plays of Tsegaye Gebre-Mehdin. Moreover, as Nega Mezlekia's remarkable work demonstrates, it is a literature that remains in close touch with its roots in the literary and poetic tradition of the national community, as this community has evolved over millennia of a dramatic history.(Irele and Gikandi,2004)

Poetry is perhaps the oldest genre in Ethiopian writing in English dating back to 1940s.(Tewodros,2002). Ashenafi Kebede's *Confession*(1965), is claimed to be the first Ethiopian English novel. Wolde Haile wrote *Defend the Name* in 1969. Late 1960s and 70s witnessed a considerable outputs like *The Afersata*, *Warrior King*, *Firebrands* and *Shinega's Village* by Sahle

Silassie Birhane Mariam; *Defiance* by Abbe Gubanya and *The Thirteenth Sun* by Dagnachew Worku (Tewodros,2008).

This tradition [of writing in English] seemed to have been buried in late 1970s (allegedly due to the Red Terror) only to flourish in the other side of the Atlantic Ocean with a new sub genre one might call 'Ethiopian Diaspora Literature' in the form of novels, autobiographies, memoirs and other pieces of literature. However, the genre is still characterized by dearth. Plays are most probably the scarcest of all other genres in English. Of the limited plays that the genre has, the famous plays of Laureate Tsegaye Gebre Medhin and Mengistu Lema come to the fore in the literary scene. Tsegaye wrote many plays both in Amharic and English including *Oda Oak Oracle* (1965), *Azmari* and *Tewodros* (both in 1965) and *The Collision of Your Altars* in (1971).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Probably due to its 'young age' and/or other contributing factors, Ethiopian Literature in English in general and plays in particular still suffer from a disappointing scarcity; so do investigative studies or analyses conducted on them. Even these limited works and their critical analyses cannot not be easily accessible.

Therefore, the present researcher believes that these plays and other genres of Ethiopian literature in general need to be exhaustively worked on.

Second, drama (play), which represents life mainly through dialogue and action of characters is said to be the most imitative (mimetic) genre of literature. Tragedy, a serious play, represents men in action as in real world. Mimetic (imitation) theory of literary criticism focuses on how a piece of literature connects to reality. *Oda Oak Oracle* is a serious play , i.e. play that ends unhappily for the protagonist. In other words, it is a tragedy. Therefore, through the Aristotelian model of mimesis, the present study aimed to investigate how the play connects to the real world. The analysis focused on the plot and the characters of the play with special emphasis to the central(major) character.

1.3. Research Questions

This study was expected to answer the following core research questions based on the data found in the play.

1. Does the work conform to Aristotelian view of tragedy? How ?
2. How does the work connect to reality as a work of literature in general or as a play at least?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objectives

The study was basically interested to :

1. Investigate how well the work conforms to the Aristotelian view of tragedy
2. Find out how this work of literature connects to the real world.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study was aimed to:

1. Assess whether the actions in the play are in the form of 'a course of action' or in the form of separate actions.
2. Find out whether the course of action, if any, is morally serious or not.
3. Analyze the plot structure of the play
4. Find out whether there is unity of plot in the play, and how that unity is achieved.
5. Determine whether the plot of the play is simple or complex.
6. Investigate whether the character in the play is good, appropriate, like reality and consistent.
7. Find out whether the actions of a character are based on moral choice, knowledge, and spring from a fixed and permanent disposition of character.

1.5. Methods and Procedures of the Study.

Methodologically, this study followed qualitative approach. This is because the data were in the form of excerpts from the play, and these cannot be quantified. The text was selected using a case study model. An in depth reading was conducted on the text through textual analysis. This includes plot structure/ structural/ analysis and character analysis using Aristotle's model of analyzing plot structure and character.

2. DISCUSSION- CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Structure and Unity of Plot in *Oda Oak Oracle*

The present critical analysis has centered the formal structure and fear and pity aroused in the audience.

Structurally, *Oda oak Oracle* is divided in to: a long prologue, a climax composed of two parts, and lengthy finale.

The Prologue

The prologue covers the two stages of dramatic plot structure: initial situation or inciting incident and rising action or complication. It is dominated by the dialogue of the two central characters, Shanka and Goaa, with each of them presenting long speeches making it very tiresome.

It starts by introducing Shanka, the strong son of the tribe, as he is set to hear a good news from Goaa who has just returned from the Oda Oak which he promised to visit in an effort to reverse the situation Shanka was in. Unfortunately, Goaa tells Shanka that the Wise Oracle is not interested to speak of his situation. Goaa, also tells Shanka that he has spoken of the wisdom of the strange ones only to get deaf ears and threatening gazes from the Oracle. He says he was afraid to go close to the Oracle assuming that his presence would disturb the peace of spirits that pervades the holy Oak.

Shanka; as a result, becomes sad and tells Goaa that he failed him. He talks about the worrying situation he is in, and his misfortune. He adds that he is receiving the same treatment from friends, ancestral sprits and enemies:

Is that why you failed me, friend Goaa?
Our elders say
A fallen trunk invites more axes
And I have attracted
Enough failures
From friend and foe alike:
Even the spirits of our ancestors
Have turned their backs on me.(Tsegaye, 2)

Despite Goaa's long and charming plead that Shanka should sleep with Ukutee, his betrothed, and 'worry of what comes when it comes', he(Shanka) prefers to remain stubborn and loyal to his words and moral principles.

Shanka is depicted in the play as the strongest and fearless of the tribe, and of 'the universe'. The extraordinarily strong quality of his is put in his own words as:

Strong, I am
The strong one of our people,
Of our rivers, of our great savannahs,
Of the dead silence of our valleys,
Of the fearful depth of our jungle,
Of the furnace of our sun,
Of the mountains of our clouds,
I am the strong one.(6)

However, he fears to sleep with Ukutee (despite the insistence of Goaa and of the temptation of his burning flesh), and sacrifice a new born, an innocent child.

....But now I fear,
I recoil from the warmth of my bride,
If I hold her in my arms, a child of sacrifice
Shall come forth.
A child long condemned
By our all-knowing oracle
To be a sacrifice of our dead
No,
Goaa, of the strangers' ways,
I shall not touch her.....(7)

The above lines depict the moral stand of Shanka. He is a man of strong moral standard. He is trying to avoid sleeping with his bride lest a child comes forth and gets sacrificed for some cause he (newborn) has no knowledge of.

Here, Shanka's defiance is not unnatural; any man in his place (and of a similar status with his) and who is morally strong would act (probability) or is forced to act (necessity) in the same way. This highly contributes to the unity of the plot. His actions are not arbitrary, but they are based on his knowledge and his choice.

The decision (action) of Shanka causes some incident (somewhere at the end of the long prologue) to happen which later adds to the tension of the plot (as in typical tragic plot) as Goaa falls to the temptation of Ukutee who appears to the stage for the first time. She has just come from a nearby river carrying a pot of water.

At the beginning of their dialogue, Goaa tries to deny attention to Ukutee's comely appearance and seductive speech as follows:

Enough said, woman
Take your pot of water
And away
Take this warm body away
Take this figure
Of life and temptation
Away. Take
These soft eyes

Away, Ukutee.(15)

Yet, as Ukutee tests his patience and his manliness, labeling both Shanka and him as slaves of fear, then, he wants to prove that he has no fear of the Oracle, or whatsoever, and succumbs to her temptations. Then he decides to steal her following her final question:

Ukutee: Would you dare, then,
To steal me, even
Against the will of our dead,
Goaa of strangers' wisdom?.....(Tsegaye, 16)

Goaa: O the wrath
That must follow!
But, I would, woman,
I would.(16-17)

Goaa, relates to Ukutee that he is well prepared not to grieve over his deeds, and then, he sleeps with her . This ends the long prologue of the play and leads to the first part of the climax.

Here, Shanka's refusal forces Ukutee to sleep with another man (Goaa) both for her lust of his flesh and for an offspring. Hence, incidents in the plot are connected with causality. Actions in the plot include what the character does and what happens to the character as well. Also, there is an element of probability in what Goaa does. Any man in his situation would do the same thing.

The Climax

Part I: This part of the climax presents Ukutee, who is carrying Goaa's baby in her womb, under labor since it is now nine moons after, and Goaa who has shouldered her from the village to the Oda Oak in an effort to repent their sin to the Oda- man(the all-knowing interpreter of winds).The time is early down. "Day break is blackened with wrath"(18). Goaa begs Ukutee to stand up, but instead she beseeches him to call for "the wise interpreter"(18) which Goaa refrains to do for he fears lest some frightening appearance " emerges from the worm eaten body of the trunk..." . He continues,

... We have wronged the spirits.
They shall have vengeance,
I fear. (19)

Ukutee pleaded with Goaa over and over to call for the wise interpreter telling him that it was only the warmth they shared that has turned in to a sin. She continues in the form of insulting him, but it ends

in vain as he prefers to stay away from the wrath. The tension between the two gets intensified as the dialogue takes its shape in the form of blaming each other. Ukutee blames Goaa first:

...What! Are you men
Never prepared
to pay the happiness
you take out of life....(20)

Goaa speaks in an attempt to defend himself:

You dare insist
On provoking the spirits?
You goaded me, Ukutee,
In to the sin you call real!...(20)

At last; however, considering Ukutee's situation (in which she is fighting with the baby who is in his way to come forth), Goaa calls for 'the interpreter of the heavy winds'. His untimely call angers the Oda man.

The Oda- man tries to call for the spirits only to get raging responses which attempt to "uproot the Oda Oak" among others(25). He wants to know why they have angered the dead and what they have done. Goaa tells him he has sinned because he was tempted. Ukutee responds that she has sinned because her man, Shanka, refused to know of her warmth.(25-26). The beat of the Oda-man falls hard on Goaa who defied, the Oda-man reasons, the wisdom of his by-gone fathers and aroused their curse upon all because of his inhibition of the strange ways(26),

The conflict between the Oda-man and Goaa gets sharper while Ukutee still remains under a ceaseless labor. The Oda man pronounces that Goaa dies and gets expelled from the world of their dead. This part of the climax ends with the Oda-man insulting Ukutee and pronouncing the baby in her womb unworthy of life.(29-30).

What happened (actions) in the prologue caused the first climax to take place. Hence, causality connects the incidents in this part of the plot. What have happened till this part are highly connected Shanka's defiance.

In typical tragic plays, the incidents in this part add further tension in the plot creating a situation one might call complication. What makes this part of the plot seem a climax is that it has sealed the fate of Goaa, one of the central characters in the play.

Part II. It is now almost noon. But light is still not seen. Shanka enters with the elders of the valley. He is asked by them to reflect on the situation they are in. The entire dialogue starts with the Oda-man reflecting on the day which remains gloomy as a result of ‘the defilement’, welcoming the elders to the Oda Oak, and thanking the good spirits for having protected all of them through many nights and many summers. The Oda man asks them about the reason of their coming. The First Elder and the Second Elder (chorus in classical tragedy) relate that they have come “to let forth the sun... To let peace rain”, following the Oda-man’s supplication of the dead(31). Shanka grieves over the sun, life giver of every breathing thing, which has refused to come out due to the defilement:

Our cattle low
For the sight of the sun
Our young cry for the noon,
And our eyes for light
The seeds in our soil
Shall not sprout
Without the warmth of the sun.(31-32)

With this speech of his, Shanka invites blaming words from his bride, Ukutee. She blames him since he turned a cold back on her warmth:

.....on me, your woman.
[groans with pain]
On me, your bride,
Elect- of –oracle....(32)

Shanka defends his decision presenting the same reasoning- he ignored his tempting flesh and the warmth of the bride in order to avoid the sacrificing of the new born, child of innocence, for the satisfaction of the spirits. The Oda-man and the three elders condemn him of his defiance relating to him that the living do not possess the power to defy the demands of the dead. The conflict gets tense when Goaa enters and curses Shanka, making him a scapegoat for what he himself has done.

Awake, and what, Shanka?
The bitter seed you sowed
I reaped. My child
Is the one condemned unborn.
Mine is pronounced even unworthy for the sacrifice.....(35)

Still, Shanka firmly defends his judgment which unfortunately ends in futility as the Third Elder pronounces Shanka's banishment, and the Second Elder death.(37)

Here, occurs reversal or change of fortune in the life of Shanka, 'strong man of the tribe' who suddenly becomes helpless. Earlier incidents dramatically led to this part of the plot. Also pity and fear, the element in the unity of the plot, of the audience are aroused through element of surprise.

Later, the Oda-man suspends the banishment and the death penalty in favor of a physical fight to take place between Shanka and Goaa. Then, follows an imminent clash between the two as Goaa grows furious against his friend, Shanka, and brings to light that he has slept with Ukutee countless times. However, Shanka prefers not to exchange blows with someone who is more than a brother. Goaa attacks. Shanka defends. The elders make commentaries of the match. In an attempt to protect himself, Shanka gives deadly blows to Goaa who ultimately falls to the ground and dies(40-41).

The peace of the spirits, that has left the surrounding, takes over now. The elders are told to go back to the village with the news that the defilement is finally purified. Shanka is pronounced to shoulder the dead and vanish in to the land of the strange ones.(42).Ukutee is ordered by the Oda-man to flog Shanka with a scourge , yet she is not morally prepared to hit 'her man'. She faints.

Also occurs in this part such unifying elements as *recognition* which occurs when Shanka knows the consequences his defiance has caused, especially Goaa's affair with Ukutee.

The Finale

Ukutee defies the Oda-man's command to flog Shanka. The Oda-man (and even Shanka himself) tells her to stand strong and act so as to fulfill the pronouncement. This part of the play is longer. The Oda-man tells Ukutee that the death of Goaa and the flogging and banishment of Shanka would lift the curse(44). However, Ukutee's decision seems to be sound. In real life, one does not have a courage to strike his/her fiance in a similar circumstance.

Here, Shanka seems to be accepting the consequence of his defiance, and his suffering as a cure for the new born. This creates the element of *suffering* in the unity of the plot:

I stand prepared, Ukutee
to be banished
in order that a child
May live. Ukutee, I stand burdened,
Though prepared.(45)

Battling with her ceaseless labor, Ukutee tries her best to strike Shanka. But she faints and dies. The baby is born.

Once more the elders get angry because the baby turns out to be female which is 'unworthy of sacrifice'. The tribe grow furious and march toward Shanka to seal his end and of the new born.

The elements of suffering, Catharsis and purgation occur in this part of the plot. In typical tragedies, this long finale can be in the form of falling action and resolution.

Character Portrayal in *Oda Oak Oracle*

The present analysis has been conducted in terms of the four Aristotelian prescriptions of character-goodness, appropriateness, consistency and representativeness(like reality).

The analysis and interpretation discusses the character of Shanka in relation to other characters. Shanka, the strong son of the tribe, is depicted as a hero with the required qualities. He is good, morally good. He chooses his actions. He prefers to stay firm and defiant against the ancestral commands. This quality of his could be taken as his tragic flaw. He stands strong against his bodily temptation lest the satisfaction of his desire brings forth a child that is predestined for sacrifice. He is honest and worthy. Goodness is a relative term. Goaa, his best friend, who succumbs to the temptation of Ukutee, Shanka's bride, is no match for Shanka in this respect. Hence, Shanka's character is worthy of imitation.

Shanka's character is appropriate. Throughout the play, he acts like a man- a strong man, as opposed to Goaa, who is depicted weak, shallow and unprepared to accept the consequence of his actions. He is even weaker than Ukutee, who is determined to pay for the offence she did against the spirits.

Shanka is depicted as a life like character. His decision, actions and love are natural qualities Which make him typical of a chosen, strong, dependable and unwavering man in the real world.

Shanka is consistent throughout the play, where as all the other characters remain inconsistent including the three elders.

The Oda-man is an influential figure in decisions against the fate of Shanka, Goaa, Ukutee and the new born. The three elders play a commenting role (like the chorus in classical Greek tragedy) and decision making role.

3. CONCLUSION

The plot of Oda Oak oracle is developed by probability (necessity) causality, change of fortune, and emotions aroused in the audience. The plot of the play is divided in to three parts: lengthy prologue, a two part climax and a long finale. This structure appears to be contrary to the structure of classical tragedy. However, it ends in catastrophe as in typical tragedy. Finally, there comes the untying of the knot or unraveling when peace prevails. In terms of character portrayal, the hero (protagonist of the play) fulfills the four prescriptions. Subject matter of tragedy is serious , morally serious, so is the subject matter of *Oda Oak Oracle*. The dialogue and action of characters (especially Shanka's), from the beginning to the end of the play, are composed of the elements of tragedy, hence, they be seen worthy of imitation. And the entire play connects to the real world.

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APPENDIX- PLOT SUMMARY AND DRAMATIS PERSONAE OF *ODA OAK ORACLE*

Plot Summary

Ukutee, who is engaged to Shanka, the strong son of the tribe, is under a curse interpreted by the Oracle of the Sacred Oak. This means that their first born male child should be presented as a sacrifice to the spirits of the dead ancestors. Shanka does not dare to marry and thereby remain guilty of defiance. Shanka's best friend, Goaa, who has visited the strangers' wisdom and come back equipped with an enlightened thinking, promises to approach the Oracle in an effort to reverse the judgment and to prove the strength of his new wisdom. Yet he feels frightened to put his words in to practice. He succumbs to the temptation of Ukutee , and becomes the father of her child.

The above situation arouses conflicts that pervade the play. The conflicts ended in the powerfully dramatic scene where the two central characters, Shanka and Goaa and the tribal elders face the Oracle of the Oda Oak under the thundering sky.

Dramatis Personae (Characters)

Shanka: the strong son of the Valley tribe for whom Ukutee is chosen.

Goaa: the one inhibited by the strangers' wisdom, and Shanka's best friend.

Ukutee: the bride betrothed by the oracle to Shanka

Oda-man: the Wise interpreter of Winds (The Oracle of the Oda Oak Valley)

First Elder

Second Elder

Third Elder.