
Satirical Representation of Dictatorial Leadership and the Abuse of Power in Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*

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Abstract: *This study examines the intersection of satire, dictatorial leadership, and the abuse of political power in Kongi's Harvest by Wole Soyinka. Situating the play within the broader context of postcolonial African political realities, the paper explores how satire functions as both an artistic and political tool for critiquing authoritarian governance. Drawing on theoretical insights from Michel Foucault, Northrop Frye, and Frantz Fanon, the study interrogates the mechanisms through which power is constructed, maintained, and resisted in the play. The analysis reveals that Soyinka employs irony, exaggeration, symbolism, and ritual inversion to expose the contradictions of post-independence leadership, particularly the transformation of revolutionary ideals into authoritarian practices. The character of Kongi embodies the archetype of the postcolonial dictator who manipulates cultural institutions, controls political narratives, and suppresses opposition in order to consolidate power. Through the appropriation of the New Yam Festival, the play dramatizes the symbolic usurpation of both political and cultural authority. By focusing on the symbolic significance of ritual, leadership performance, and political theatre, the study contributes to ongoing debates on the relationship between literature and political authority in postcolonial African societies. Soyinka's plays, situated at the intersection of art and activism, exemplify how literature can serve as both artistic expression and moral intervention in contexts of political crisis.*

Keywords: satire, dictatorial leadership, abuse of power, postcolonial Nigeria, Wole Soyinka, Kongi's Harvest

INTRODUCTION

The question of leadership and the abuse of political power has remained one of the most persistent themes in postcolonial African literature. In the years following independence, many African nations experienced political instability, authoritarian governance, and the emergence of leaders who transformed revolutionary legitimacy into personal dictatorship. Across literary history,

critics and satirists have assumed the responsibility of interrogating human behavior, exposing moral inadequacies, and urging reform. From Aristophanes and Horace in classical era, to Geoffrey Chaucer in the medieval period, Miguel de Cervantes in the Renaissance, Ben Jonson and John Dryden in the Elizabethan age, and George Bernard Shaw in the modern era, satire has functioned as a corrective instrument, ridiculing social vices and follies in order to provoke reflection and change (Griffin, 1994; Knight, 2004). These writers exemplify the enduring role of literature as a moral compass, using wit, irony, and parody to critique the structures of power and the failings of human conduct.

In Nigeria, contemporary dramatists such as Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan continue this tradition, deploying satire to expose societal vices, particularly those related to politics and leadership (Jeyifo, 2002; Irele, 2001). Leadership has long been a central theme in history, political science, and social thought. From the inception of organized society, questions have persisted regarding who governs, on what basis authority is established, and how power should be exercised (Ake, 1996; Suberu, 2001). Leadership, therefore, is not merely an administrative function but a moral and social responsibility.

Daniel Katz defines leadership as “the process by which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the carrying out of group functions,” distinguishing political leadership as the exercise of authority in decisions concerning social policy and resource allocation (as cited in Okadigbo, 1987, p. 10). The *Dictionary of Sociology* further clarifies that leadership must be distinguished from domination, noting that while leadership implies collective interest and legitimacy, domination often arises from coercion, fear, or manipulation (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2006). A dictator may style himself as a “leader,” but his motives are typically egoistic, rooted in the pursuit of recognition, manipulation, or even sadism rather than altruistic or collective. This distinction is crucial in analyzing the failures of postcolonial African leadership, where authoritarian figures often masquerade as benevolent leaders while perpetuating corruption and repression (Osaghae, 1998; Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Within this context, Nigerian dramatists employ satire not only as an artistic device but also as a political strategy. Soyinka’s plays, for instance, dramatize the contradictions of leadership, exposing the hypocrisy of rulers and the complicity of intellectual elites. Osofisan similarly interrogates the failures of governance, using irony and parody to critique the misuse of power and the betrayal of collective ideals. In both cases, satire functions as a dramatic weapon, unveiling the moral bankruptcy of authoritarian regimes and reinforcing literature’s role as a vehicle for social critique.

Following its independence from United Kingdom on October 1, 1960, Nigeria assumed responsibility for its political governance and the management of state power. Independence represented not only the transfer of sovereignty but also the beginning of a complex process in which Nigerians became accountable for the exercise, regulation, and potential abuse of political authority within the newly established nation-state. As several scholars of African politics observe, the postcolonial period across much of Africa was marked by intense struggles over political legitimacy, state formation, and leadership accountability (Ake; Falola and Heaton).

Nigeria's post-independence political trail illustrates these challenges vividly. The First Republic under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (October 1, 1960– January 15, 1966) ended abruptly with the military coup of January 1966, an event that ushered in a prolonged era of military intervention in governance. The subsequent regime of Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi (January 17, 1966 – July 29, 1966) was overthrown within months, paving the way for the government of General Yakubu Gowon (August 1, 1966–July 29, 1975), whose administration presided over the Nigerian Civil War. Later military administrations included those of General Murtala Muhammed (July 30, 1975–February 13, 1976) and General Olusegun Obasanjo (February 14, 1976–October 1, 1979), which eventually initiated a transition back to civilian rule.

The Second Republic under Alhaji Shehu Shagari (October 1, 1979–December 31, 1983) represented a renewed attempt at democratic governance but was again terminated by a military coup that brought Major General Muhammadu Buhari to power in 1983. Subsequent regimes, including that of Major General Ibrahim Babangida (August 27, 1985–August 27, 1993), further entrenched the military's influence in national politics, while the short-lived interim administration of Chief Ernest Shonekan (August 27, 1993 – November 17, 1993) gave way to the authoritarian regime of General Sani Abacha (November 17, 1993–June 8, 1998). Abacha's government, widely criticized for its repressive policies and human rights violations, represented one of the most authoritarian periods in Nigeria's political history. The transition program implemented by General Abdulsalami Abubakar (June 9, 1998–May 29, 1999) eventually restored civilian governance and inaugurated the Fourth Republic.

Since 1999, Nigeria has maintained an uninterrupted sequence of elected civilian governments beginning with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), followed by Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2010), Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015), Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), and the current administration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu (2023–). Despite the endurance of electoral democracy in the Fourth Republic, questions surrounding leadership ethics, corruption, and the abuse of political power remain persistent concerns in Nigeria's political discourse (Suberu; Osaghae).

Political theorists note that authoritarian regimes frequently operate as command systems in which state power is centralized within a dominant executive authority supported by military, bureaucratic, and political elites. In such systems, governance tends to be exercised in arbitrary and unpredictable ways, often undermining democratic accountability and institutional checks on power. As scholars such as Claude Ake have argued, the concentration of political authority within a narrow ruling elite frequently results in governance structures sustained by a combination of coercion and patronage. When coercive mechanisms become dominant, the military, police, and paramilitary institutions assume an increasingly decisive role in political life, thereby blurring the boundaries between civilian governance and authoritarian control.

This historical pattern of political instability, authoritarian governance, and contested legitimacy provides an essential socio-political context for understanding literary representations of power in Nigerian drama. In particular, *Kongi's Harvest* by Wole Soyinka offers a satirical dramatization of the dangers inherent in authoritarian leadership and the manipulation of cultural institutions for political legitimacy. By exposing the theatricality and contradictions of dictatorial power, Soyinka's play reflects and critiques the broader political realities that have shaped Nigeria's postcolonial experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Leadership and politics constitute central aspects of Nigerian society, yet they remain persistently marked by corruption, mismanagement, and moral decay. Since independence, Nigerian dramatists have assumed the role of the "moral eye" of the nation, interrogating the failures of governance and exposing the vices that undermine social progress. Their disenchantment with the postcolonial state manifested in depictions of bribery, corruption, poor leadership, and other malpractices underscores literature's enduring function as a tool of social criticism. Among these voices, Wole Soyinka stands out for his sustained engagement with political authority and his use of satire as a dramatic weapon to confront tyranny and injustice.

Scholarly engagement with Wole Soyinka's drama has consistently emphasized his dual role as an artist and a social critic. Early studies, such as Oyin Ogunba's *The Movement of Transition* (1975), foreground Soyinka's use of satire as a central artistic weapon, highlighting its function in exposing the crudities of Nigerian society and the failures of leadership. Ogunba's analysis situates Soyinka within a tradition of dramatists who deploy theatre as a moral lens, highlighting the immediacy of his themes in postcolonial contexts.

Nyong Udoeyop's *Wole Soyinka: A Critical Study* (1973) shifts attention to Soyinka's poetry but reinforces the argument that Soyinka's primary concern lies with African leaders' betrayal of their

societies rather than colonial legacies. This perspective aligns with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's broader criticism of postcolonial elites in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), where Ngũgĩ identifies Soyinka as a dramatist deeply dissatisfied with the hypocrisy of rulers and the apathy of intellectuals. Ngũgĩ's work highlights Soyinka's disillusionment with the impotence of the elite and the corruption of political institutions, themes that recur across Soyinka's dramatic work.

James Gibbs offers a multidimensional framework in *Wole Soyinka* (1980), presenting the playwright as simultaneously Yoruba intellectual, academic, theatre practitioner, political activist, and writer. Gibbs emphasizes Soyinka's versatility across genres—satire, comedy, melodrama, absurdism, and tragedy—while also recognizing his role as a “conscience of the nation.” This framing positions Soyinka's work at the intersection of arts and activism, a duality that has become central to subsequent scholarship.

Later critics, such as Biodun Jeyifo in *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics, and Postcolonialism* (2002), deepen the analysis of Soyinka's political drama by interrogating the contradictions inherent in revolutionary leadership that pass into authoritarianism. Jeyifo highlights Soyinka's dramatization of the tension between political power and moral responsibility, illustrating how leaders emerging from liberation struggles often reproduce oppressive systems. Abiola Irele, in *The African Imagination* (2001), similarly emphasizes Soyinka's engagement with African political realities, noting his assessment of the manipulation of cultural traditions and the fragile relationship between traditional institutions and modern political authority. Oghojafor (2024) *Satire and Its Sociological Imperatives in Wole Soyinka's Drama* argues that satire functions as a corrective social mechanism, exposing political excesses and moral decay and “ridicules abuses for the sake of remedying them.” In the same way, Ekevere et al. (2025) *Dictatorship and Resistance in Kongi's Harvest* shows how satire, irony, and ritual inversion destabilize the image of the dictator, interpreting Kongi as a symbol of postcolonial authoritarian paradox: modernization masking tyranny.

Soyinka's criticism of political authority is evident in several of his dramatic works. *The Road* critiques the moral bankruptcy of Nigerian society, depicting a world where corruption is ubiquitous, sparing only the disabled: the deaf, dumb, and lame. *A Play of Giants* parodies Africa's notorious dictators, including Idi Amin, Jean-Bédél Bokassa, Francisco Macías Nguema, and Mobutu Sese Seko, exposing the grotesque absurdities of authoritarian rule. Among Soyinka's politically engaged plays, *Kongi's Harvest* stands out as a powerful critique of authoritarian leadership in postcolonial Africa. *Kongi's Harvest* offers a penetrating commentary on political life in a modern African state, dramatizing the career of a dictator whose regime manipulates ritual and ideology to consolidate power

The first theoretical perspective informing this study is the theory of power articulated by Michel Foucault. Before Foucault, power was often understood in two dominant ways: first, Power is held by the ruling class and exercised through economic domination and ideological control - Marxist view and second, Weberian view: Power is the ability of individuals or groups to impose their will despite resistance, often institutionalized in bureaucracies. Foucault rejected these views, arguing that power is not something one possesses but something that circulates through social relations. He shifted focus from “who has power” to “how power operates.” In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examines how modern institutions control individuals through surveillance and normalization. This framework is particularly relevant to the analysis of Kongi’s regime in Soyinka’s play. Kongi’s authority is sustained not only through political control but also through symbolic acts designed to reinforce his legitimacy. Public ceremonies, ideological slogans, and institutional structures function as mechanisms through which power is normalized and reproduced.

The second theory underpinning this study is the satire theory, particularly the framework developed by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*. By 1957, in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye formalized his definition of satire as a mode of literature that articulates moral norms and critiques societal failings using wit, humour and imaginative fantasy. Satire operates by highlighting the disparity between societal ideals and actual practices, thereby revealing the moral contradictions embedded within social systems. In *Kongi’s Harvest*, satire functions as a critical tool that the playwright uses to attack the authority of the dictator. Through exaggerated characterization, ironic dialogue, and symbolic inversion, Soyinka reveals the absurdity and insecurity underlying Kongi’s political authority.

The third theoretical framework of this study draws on Frantz Fanon’s postcolonial theory of leadership. His theory of leadership centres on how newly independent nations must break from colonial mentalities to reach genuine liberation. Fanon criticised the local elites that take power after independence who often mimic colonial system by centralizing power, enriching themselves, and maintaining inequality instead of transforming society. Fanon warns that this class merely replaces colonial rulers without transforming economic or social structures, leading to corruption, dependency, and stagnation. True postcolonial leadership, he insists, must be revolutionary and people-centred. However, Fanon argues that many revolutionary leaders transform liberation movements into authoritarian regimes that concentrate political authority in the hands of a small elite. This perspective provides an important understanding of Wole Soyinka’s representation of Kongi. The character embodies the absurdity of revolutionary leadership that degenerates into dictatorship.

Taken together, these studies establish a robust scholarly foundation for examining Soyinka's drama as both artistic expression and political intervention. This article specifically examines how satire functions as a dramatic strategy to critique dictatorship and the abuse of power.

SATIRICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF DICTATORIAL LEADERSHIP AND THE ABUSE OF POWER IN *KONGI'S HARVEST*.

Leadership is a crucial issue in human civilization. The question of leadership is as important to a nation as mechanization is to industry. Just as mechanization can increase efficiency and productivity and indeed change the entire outlook of an industry, so can good leadership transform prospects of a nation. Where the leadership is ignorant, negative, narrow-minded, self centred, intellectually bankrupt, ethically and morally derelict, government policies become sterile, the economy stagnates and social life degenerates.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has ceaselessly struggled to have authentic leadership, but to no avail. Instead, she has always had the misfortune of falling into the hands of power megalomaniac who owing to sober incompetence and selfishness are incapable of satisfying the yearnings and aspirations of her people. Chinua Achebe asserts that the trouble with Nigeria is "simply and squarely a failure of leadership". According to him, "The Nigeria problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leadership to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership" (Achebe 1983). The problem of leadership has become very crucial in the life of the nation that it gives many concerned Nigerians especially dramatists sleepless nights. Nigeria writers responded to these political realities by using literature as a platform for social critique and political engagement. Among such writers, Wole Soyinka stands out for his fearless interrogation of political authority and his dramatic exploration of the complexities of power in postcolonial African societies. Soyinka's dramatic works frequently examine the tension between political authority and moral responsibility. Through satire, symbolism, and ritual performance, he exposes the contradictions inherent in political systems that claim legitimacy while simultaneously undermining democratic values and communal traditions. One of the most explicit representations of this critique appears in *Kongi's Harvest*.

Kongi's Harvest is a comment on the political life of a dictator in a modern Nigeria/African State. The emphasis is on how an individual handles power. At various stages of the play, we see different aspects of Kongi: dictator, authoritarian and megalomaniac. This is evident in his consuming lust for power and absolute control that pushes him to quench anything or body seen as an opposition. In the Hemlock, Danlola and his group who are branded reactionaries are already in detention and from their anthem we get to know of Kongi's one-sided government, a government that lacks the human touch. Kongi does not care for the people he is ruling, his interest is purely selfish: to

subdue his subjects and use them as he wants. His form of government is that of oppression, mass fear, sudden arrests and inhuman treatment of detainees.

In *Kongi's Harvest*, Soyinka explores two kinds of conflicts: cultural and political. The cultural conflict is between Oba Danlola, a traditional leader who represents the past and Kongi who represents the new times. The opening lines in the Hemlock show defiance: 'The pot that will eat fat, its bottom must be scorched. The Squirrel that will long crack nuts, its foot must be sore' (Soyinka 2002). Kongi, who feels he holds the power of life and death and is anxious to establish himself as the god of the land, usurps the cultural celebration of the new yam festival by Oba Danlola. This usurpation of ritual authority by a political leader creates a conflict in which both cultural and political stability are threatened. Kongi, thus becomes a potent threat to society at large by virtue of his arrogance, reckless use of power and authority. Soyinka employs satire as a powerful literary device to undermine the authority of the dictator.

Satire is commonly understood as an artistic form primarily literary and dramatic through which human vices, follies, abuses, and social shortcomings are exposed and criticized through ridicule, irony, derision, or exaggeration. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica (Micropedia vol. 10.)*, satire is "an artistic form chiefly literary and dramatic in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses or shortcomings are held up for censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque or other methods with an intent to bring about improvement." The satirist therefore seeks not merely to entertain but to provoke reflection and reform. By attacking the audience's sense of moral integrity and exposing hypocrisy, satire jolts society into self-examination, often producing shame or discomfort that may inspire ethical and social change.

To achieve this effect, satirists employ a wide range of literary and rhetorical techniques. These may include the use of fables, dramatic incidents, fictional experiences, myths, and proverbs as structural elements of the narrative. In addition, satirists rely heavily on linguistic strategies such as irony, sarcasm, invective, parody, exaggeration, and mockery. Through the deliberate manipulation of these devices, the satirist renders the target of criticism ridiculous, thereby undermining the authority or legitimacy of the object being attacked.

Kongi's *Harvest* is a biting satire on political life in a modern African state and dramatizes the career of an authoritarian leader determined to dismantle traditional authority in favour of a centralized modern state. The play portrays the career of Kongi, an African dictator whose ambition is to reorganize his country, Isma, into what he imagines as an "efficient machine along Nazi lines." However, this ambition is not driven by patriotism or genuine national development but by an insatiable thirst for power. Through the character of Kongi, Wole Soyinka satirizes the

megalomaniacal tendencies, authoritarian and messianic poses that have often characterized African dictators.

Soyinka further exposes Kongi's totalitarian aspirations through the regime's so-called Five-Year Development Plan, which demands present sacrifice with the promise of future abundance: citizens are expected to starve today in order to "overfeed tomorrow." While the regime constantly invokes the rhetoric of "harmony," its actions contradict this declared objective. A significant symbol of Kongi's desire for absolute power is the ritual of the New Yam Festival. Traditionally, the ceremony involves the offering of the first yam to the gods and the community's ruler as a symbol of continuity between tradition, spirituality, and authority. In the play, however, Kongi insists that Oba Danlola publicly present the first yam to him. By eating the first yam, Kongi symbolically appropriates both political and cultural authority, thereby eliminating opposition and subordinating traditional institutions to his rule. As one of the Aweri elders remarks, the event represents "an inevitable stage in the process of power reversionism." Kongi's obsession with power even leads him to demand that the sacred ritual be performed in his honour rather than in reverence to the gods. In his conversation with his secretary, he repeatedly declares: "I am the spirit of the harvest," revealing his attempt to elevate himself to a quasi-divine status. Soyinka satirizes authoritarian control by showing how Kongi seizes the New Yam Festival, declaring that it "shall henceforth be presided over by His Excellency," thereby displacing communal participation with state dominance. The festival becomes a platform for state propaganda, filled with exaggerated praise such as "Kongi is the saviour of the nation, the enlightened guide, the visionary"

Through this characterization, Soyinka exposes a disturbing pattern in modern political leadership: the emergence of rulers whose lust for power far outweighs their commitment to national progress. Kongi, the President of Isma, embodies the authoritarian tendencies that have marked many political regimes. He is portrayed as a ruthless opportunist and a brutal egoist who has risen above the masses and remains disconnected from their realities. Intolerant of opposition, Kongi identifies Oba Danlola and his supporters as enemies of the state and employs every available instrument of repression to neutralize them. As revealed in the play, he removes the old Aweri council from power and detains Oba Danlola along with members of his faction.

Even Kongi's name carries symbolic significance. As noted by Oyin Ogunba, "Kongi" is a Yoruba cognomen suggesting a man of iron—unyielding, determined, and unshakeable: qualities that reinforce his dictatorial character. Kongi also controls the machinery of propaganda, including the radio, television, and the press, all of which function as instruments of the regime. Early in the play, Danlola and his retinue mock Kongi's "penny newspaper" and the government's reliance on radio broadcasts to communicate with citizens. To them, this mode of communication reflects the

impersonal and authoritarian nature of Kongi's government. It is a regime that speaks *at* the people rather than *with* them, issuing commands without regard for public opinion.

Kongi's relationship with the Aweri council further illustrates the authoritarian structure of his administration. Rather than functioning as advisors or ministers, the Aweri elders are treated as mere tools whose purpose is to legitimize Kongi's decisions. They are denied any genuine initiative and reduced to the status of subordinates who merely perform ceremonial functions. Their fearful reaction whenever Kongi enters the room reveals the imbalance of power: the relationship resembles that of a lord and his serfs rather than a head of state and his cabinet.

As Kongi's obsession with control intensifies, he begins to display signs of paranoia and cruelty. His violent temperament is exposed when he reacts with uncontrollable rage to the escape of a prisoner scheduled for execution, even suffering an epileptic fit in response. Such behaviour reveals the tyrannical psychology underlying his rule: he is not merely a political leader but a predatory figure prepared to devour his own subjects. His desire for immortality is also reflected in the proliferation of institutions bearing his name: Kongi Terminus, Kongi University, Kongi Dam, and Kongi Airport, symbolizing the self-glorification typical of many dictators.

The themes explored in *Kongi's Harvest* resonate strongly with political developments in Nigeria's post-independence history. From independence to the present, the Nigerian political landscape has often been shaped by authoritarian tendencies and military rule. Leaders such as Yakubu Gowon, who assumed power in 1966, presided over a military regime that increasingly centralized authority. According to Chuba Okadigbo (1987), Gowon became "strangely isolated not only from the general public but even from his immediate lieutenants."

Similarly, the regime of Muhammadu Buhari, which came to power through a coup d'état on December 31, 1983, ushered in a period widely criticized for its restrictions on civil liberties. Together with his Chief of Staff, Tunde Idiagbon, the regime consolidated authority within a narrow circle of power. The duo hijacked even the supreme military council. Decisions taken collectively were increasingly manipulated to suit the whims of the duo rulers. Subsequent administrations also displayed authoritarian characteristics, including that of Ibrahim Babangida and later the notoriously repressive rule of Sani Abacha.

Reflecting on this history, Soyinka himself lamented the persistent cycle of political abuse in Nigeria. In his critique of Abacha's regime in *Open Sores of a Continent*, Soyinka argued that the brutality inflicted on the nation surpassed even the excesses of previous regimes, including those of Babangida and the Buhari–Idiagbon administration, as well as the failures of the civilian government of Shehu Shagari. In Soyinka's words (1996):

No one be that person a Nigerian or an alien visiting from outer space, no one, I am convinced can proffer a more plausible explanation for the heedless assaults that have been mounted in recent time under General Sani Abacha... assaults that exceed even the worst inhumanities that were unleashed on the nation by Ibrahim Babaginda in his final desperate years or by that hypocritical, self-proclaimed salvationist duo, Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon (1983 - 1985), or indeed the state atrocities of the last desperate years of the civilian regime of Shehu Shagari.

Even in Nigeria's democratic era, concerns about leadership style, accountability, and concentration of power continue to shape public discourse. Civilian administrations from that of Olusegun Obasanjo to more recent leaders such as Muhammadu Buhari and Bola Ahmed Tinubu have faced ongoing scrutiny regarding governance, institutional transparency, and responsiveness to citizens' needs. While democratic structures now exist, critics often argue that authoritarian political culture remain embedded in governance practices, including centralized decision-making, patronage politics, and lack of political accountability.

Ultimately, *Kongi's Harvest* remains a powerful and enduring critique of authoritarianism. Through satire, Soyinka exposes the dangers of political power when it becomes detached from democratic accountability, cultural sensitivity, and moral responsibility. The play continues to resonate in contemporary political discourse, reminding readers and audiences that the abuse of power and the suppression of opposition as is currently happening in Nigeria remain persistent threats to democratic governance.

Kongi's Harvest is also an attack on political sycophancy in modern Africa. The Organising Secretary and the Aweri are kongi's rubber stamp, they are there just to foster and establish Kongi's messianic image firmly. We see the Aweris disputing to find an image that will help to create an aura of divine mystery round their leader. This is clear in the fourth Aweri's statement that, "Magi is more dignified. We hold after all the position of the wise ones. From the recognition of us as the magi, it is one step to his inevitable apotheosis. (Soyinka 2002) It is strongly believed that one of causes of Gowon's failure as a leader is that he lost his head in the deluge of flattery by sycophantic subordinates and uninformed or hired foreign correspondents. Examples are, on the occasion of the last National day, the London Newspaper carried a #8,000 advertisement by the Nigeria government describing Gowon as 'Lincoln of Nigeria'. Again, on an official visit to the Mid-West State, he was greeted by the government of that state with a banner carrying the inscription "Gowon forever" (Okadigbo, 1987).

The playwright through the recognition of the first Aweri of some of the values of tradition namely the style, impersonality and the remoteness of the old Aweri satirizes what the Aweri philosophers,

Kongi and the so-called modern politicians are doing, which in most cases is merely re-naming old institution, white washing ancient structures and pretending they are new. For instance, All Progressives Congress (APC) party slogan from Next Level to Renewed Hope; National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) to Electricity Distribution Company (EDC); Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) to National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), etc.

CONCLUSION

This study has analysed the various aspects of politics and political behavior that contemporary Nigeria dramatists censure, as well the values which they consider as best suited to ensure social integration and the happiness of the people. *Kongi's Harvest* offers a powerful dramatic exploration of authoritarian leadership and the abuse of political power in postcolonial Africa. Through the satirical portrayal of Kongi's regime using irony, exaggeration, etc., Wole Soyinka through the activities of Kongi, the Aweri and the Organising Secretary exposes the contradictions inherent in political systems that claim revolutionary legitimacy while at the same time suppressing democratic values and communal traditions. Political leaders wield power for self and against others. The compelling need to assert self, authority and to dominate often overshoots bounds of civility, human dignity and overrides public welfare. In Nigeria today, political leaders have brutalized the sensibilities of the populace so much that it is no longer a secret that they have lost legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. The masses are openly expressing their dissatisfaction with the operations of the government as is the case in *Kongi's Harvest*. Examples: *End SARS; Bring Back our Girls; Occupy Nigeria, etc.* protests.

Soyinka's portrayal of Kongi undermines the image of the powerful dictator through satire. The exaggerated seriousness with which Kongi treats symbolic gestures reveals the insecurity underlying his authority. His insistence on controlling every aspect of the festival exposes the fragile foundation of his political power. Rather than appearing as a confident ruler, Kongi emerges as a leader who relies on spectacle and propaganda to sustain the illusion of legitimacy.

From a theoretical perspective, Michel Foucault's conception of power as embedded in institutions, rituals, and discourses resonates with Soyinka's depiction of Kongi's regime, which legitimizes itself through orchestrated ceremonies and ideological narratives. Drawing on Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), critics highlight Soyinka's use of irony, parody, and exaggeration to expose the absurdities of dictatorial leadership. Through satire, Soyinka criticizes leaders who struggle to control power by all means and ultimately reveals the instability of such power structures. The disruption of the Harvest Festival symbolizes the collapse of the dictator's carefully constructed political spectacle, suggesting that authoritarian regimes remain vulnerable to the very social forces they attempt to control.

There are clear and persistent crises within the Nigerian polity and these pose a serious threat to the nation's path toward sustainable development and stability. For meaningful political, social, and economic progress to occur, good governance must be firmly entrenched and consistently practiced by those in positions of authority.

What Nigeria needs, as a developing nation, is a new generation of leaders guided by democratic values and a genuine commitment to public service. This includes a shift in political culture: from secrecy and irresponsibility to transparency and accountability and a movement away from excessive centralization toward more inclusive and decentralized governance structures. Above all, the country must move beyond directionless and authoritarian leadership that mirrors the excesses of Kongi, where power is used to dominate rather than serve. Such leadership stifles democratic growth and limits the nation's potential. Only through responsible, people-centered governance can Nigeria begin to realize its aspirations for progress and development.

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