THE POLITICS OF DESTINY AND FATE: SPIRITUALITY, POWER AND IDEOLOGICAL NEGOTIATION IN FEMI ADEBAYO'S *SEVEN DOORS*

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Abstract

This study analyzes the Politics of Destiny and Fate: Spirituality, Power, and Ideological Negotiation in Femi Adebayo's *Seven Doors*, a Nigerian epic series that emphasizes traditional African cosmology within a royal political context. The research investigates how destiny, fate and spirituality function as central forces shaping leadership, governance and ideological conflict in the narrative. The study adopted Postcolonial Theory as its theoretical framework, offering a perspective on how *Seven Doors* contests Western secular concepts of leadership by emphasizing spirituality as a fundamental element of political authority. Through a qualitative content analysis of the six-episode series, it pays attention to dialogue, symbolism, mise-en-scène, character development and narrative structure The analysis reveals that *Seven Doors* portrays kingship as a divinely ordained and ancestrally encumbered institution, wherein the protagonist, King Adedunjoye, is obligated to contend with hereditary curses, divine mandates and societal expectations. Through narratives such as oracle consultations, ceremonial sacrifices, and ancestor revelations, the film illustrates that political authority is inextricably linked to metaphysical forces. The study emphasizes how fate acts as a generational burden, connecting current leadership ancestral actions, while spirituality serves as a legitimizing framework for government and moral order. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that the film depicts power as a place of ideological negotiation, where traditional beliefs, personal needs and modern ethical viewpoints are constantly in conflict. This tension mirrors larger socio-cultural trends in African nations, particularly the conflict between tradition and modernization. The study indicates that *Seven Doors* confirms indigenous African epistemologies by depicting leadership as a complex construct influenced by fate, spirituality and cultural responsibility.

Keywords: *Politics, Fate, Destiny, Spirituality, Power and Negotiation.*

Introduction

In Nigerian historical and epic narratives that heavily draw from indigenous cultural beliefs and philosophical worldviews, where traditional cosmologies frequently intersect with questions of leadership, authority, and social responsibility, the relationship between destiny, fate, spirituality and political power has remained a recurrent concern. Political authority is rarely seen as a strictly secular institution in many African societies; instead, it is viewed within a framework that recognizes the role of supernatural intervention, divine will, ancestral powers, and communal destiny. As a result, films that deal with kingship, governance and leadership usually examine how individuals balance their spiritual responsibilities with the dictates of fate while exercising political authority (Bakare Bakare and Adeboye Gbenga 5).

The concept of destiny occupies a central place in African philosophical thought. Among the Yoruba, destiny view destiny *(Àyànmọ́* or *Orí*) as a predetermined life path chosen prior to birth, however it can be impacted by individual decisions, rituals and supernatural intervention.

Determinism and free will are at odds as a result of this duality and this conflict is especially important in narratives about leadership and governance (Abimbola Adedapo 2). In *Seven Doors*, King Adedunjoye's ascent to power seems to have been determined more by divine selection and ancestry than by personal ambition. His initial resistance to ascending the throne is a reflection of his wish to retain his independence, but the events that follow imply that fate forces him into a path from which he cannot completely escape. As a result, the series poses significant questions about whether leadership is an expression of a greater cosmic design or a matter of personal preference.

Closely connected to destiny is the notion of fate, which functions in the series as an inherited burden transmitted across generations. The kingdom's troubles are traced to the actions of Adedunjoye's forefathers, whose moral transgressions create consequences that persist long after their deaths. This portrayal reflects traditional African beliefs concerning collective responsibility and ancestral influence, where the actions of previous generations can shape the fortunes of their descendants. Rather than portraying fate as an abstract idea, *Seven Doors* dramatizes fate through curses, rituals, predictions and supernatural demands that have a real impact on social stability and political leadership rather than portraying it as an abstract idea.

Nigerian epic films often depict the interplay between the material and supernatural worlds through the presence of gods, ancestors, divination, rituals and mystical powers, thus rendering spirituality a major theme. These films preserve and reflect African cultural and religious worldviews by frequently referencing indigenous belief systems to explain human destiny, leadership, morality and communal well-being. Nigerian epic films highlight the importance of traditional religion as a driving force in society and a crucial component of social status through its portrayal of spiritual practices and cosmological beliefs (Uwah Innocent 81).

The significance of this study lies in its examination of how Femi Adebayo's *Seven Doors* represents and negotiates issues of fate, destiny, spirituality and political power. As scholars have noted, (Uwah 81; Tiamiyu Olalekan 6) African films often serve as cultural texts for interpreting and communicating society views, political realities and ideological disputes. This study contributes to the understanding of how Nollywood employs spiritual and metaphysical narratives to explain leadership, power and societal transformation. It also addresses a gap in existing scholarship, as earlier research has primarily concentrated on religion, culture and government in Nigerian films, with little consideration given to the convergence of fate, spirituality and political power in *Seven Doors*. As a result, the study sheds new light on the ideological underpinnings of contemporary Nigerian cinema.

Conceptualizing Destiny, Fate and Spirituality in African Worldviews

African philosophy and culture place a strong emphasis on spirituality, destiny, and fate. African societies typically have a holistic perspective on life that recognizes the interdependence of the material and spiritual worlds. As a result, ideas like fate, destiny, and spirituality are realities that affect social interactions, leadership, individual experiences and community life rather than just intellectual abstractions. The idea that the universe is made up of interconnected visible and invisible

worlds is the foundation of African spirituality. Mbiti John asserts that African peoples view reality as a network that includes God, spirits, ancestors, people and nature, and that spirituality transcends religious rites to impact morality, politics and social structure (4). Within this framework, fate and destiny are seen as expressions of a cosmic and divine order that governs human existence.

The Yoruba notion of *Orí* (meaning "head"), which refers to a person's spiritual essence and life destiny, is a crucial statement of fate in African thought. According to Idowu Bolaji, the Yoruba believe that each person chooses an *Orí* before the *Olódùmarè*, the supreme entity who determines the path of their life, prior to birth (5). While destiny is considered preordained before birth, it is not entirely fixed. African beliefs of destiny do not encourage absolute determinism; thus people can affect the achievement of their destiny through personal effort, moral living and spiritual activities prayer and divination. Molete Motsamai notes, people can overcome challenges and optimize the advantages of their destiny by making sacrifices, praying, using divination and leading a moral life (2). This viewpoint strikes a compromise between fate and free choice, implying that even while some aspects of life may be predestined, human beings remain active participants in shaping their future.

The idea of fate, which describes the situations and events that mold a person's life, frequently due to spiritual influences and ancestry, is closely tied to destiny. People are seen as having strong ties to their ancestors, family and communities in many African traditions. As a result, the decisions and actions made by previous generations may have an impact on the success or failure of their offspring. As Gyekye Kwame observes, African philosophy places a strong emphasis on community existence, viewing fate as both a personal experience and a social reality influenced by spiritual and historical factors African conceptions of fate and spirituality are further strengthened by the importance of ancestors (12). Ancestors are regarded as revered members of the spiritual world who influence the lives of the living. According to Mbiti, they serve as a bridge between God and humanity, providing direction, protection and moral oversight (6). Their impact on social harmony, leadership and prosperity shows the African conviction that human existence is interconnected with both previous and future generations.

Another significant thematic pillar of the series is spirituality. The film presents a worldview that holds that the material and spiritual worlds are intertwined. Deities, priests, ancestral spirits and customary rituals all act as mediators to influence social order and political outcomes. The kingdom’s crises cannot be redeemed solely through administrative competence or military strength; instead, they require spiritual consultation and ritual observance. Such portrayal is consistent with broader African ontological viewpoints, according to which the legitimacy of political authority is derived from both heavenly support and human institutions. *Seven Doors* uses this paradigm to show how spirituality serves as a tool for comprehending morality, justice, power and social well-being. Thus, by portraying leadership as a multifaceted institution functioning concurrently within the physical and metaphysical spheres, the series questions Western secular presumptions about governance.

Another significant part of African spirituality is the belief in supernatural intervention. Traditional African religions recognize deities, spirits and mystical powers that impact human events.

The Yoruba regard the *Òrìṣà* as channels of divine power, whereas divination techniques such as *Ifá* provide direction on life's obstacles and future events. As Idowu notes, divination helps people comprehend their fate and seek solutions to life's challenges, emphasizing the tight relationship between spirituality and ordinary decision-making in African communities (7). African conceptions of destiny and fate place a strong emphasis on morality since spiritual beliefs are intimately associated with moral principles including fairness, honesty, respect and social duty. While immoral behaviour may result in bad luck or spiritual repercussions, positive behaviour is said to attract positive outcomes. While Gyekye points out that African moral systems place a high value on social harmony (8), Kanu Ikechukwu notes that many Africans' interpretations of life events, including those in politics, leadership and popular culture like Nollywood films, are still influenced by beliefs in destiny, ancestral influence and supernatural causation (11).

Power, Kingship and Ideological Negotiation in African Cinema

In African cinema, power and royalty are significant that represent social, political and cultural reality. Leadership is often portrayed as a moral obligation connected to custom and the well-being of the community, rather than merely as a political position. Filmmakers examine how authority is acquired, used, and contested in many cultural contexts through these narratives. Kingship is seen as a holy institution in many African communities and the legitimacy of rulers is derived from spiritual acceptance, culture and ancestry. Mbiti describes leadership a moral obligation to uphold societal peace and fairness. In addition to emphasizing conflicts over succession, legitimacy and governance, African films often portray kings as custodians of both authority and tradition (5). As Haynes Jonathan notes, these films often examine corruption and leadership problems encouraging reflection on the effects of power (5).

The conflict between tradition and modernity, where rulers frequently strike a balance between ancestral customs and new realities, is a recurrent theme in African cinema. According to Diawara Manthia (3), “African films often depict tensions between traditional values and contemporary influences, transforming leadership into a forum for discussions about identity, government and cultural continuity”. As Ukadike Nwachukwu contends that African cinema both reflects and informs discussions on identity, authority, culture and development, ideology is equally crucial (15). Through storytelling, filmmakers challenge dominant ideas while preserving important cultural traditions. A significant part of African cinema is the relationship between spirituality and power. Kingship narratives are frequently shaped by rituals, prophesy, ancestors and divination. In many traditional African societies, political authority is perceived as originating from both human and spiritual sources. Nollywood epic films often show monarchs juggling their own ambitions, the demands of their communities and their spiritual duties. The intricacies of power and governance in African cultural contexts are revealed by these tales, which emphasize leadership as a negotiation of conflicting forces.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on Postcolonial Theory, which examines the political, cultural, and ideological effects of colonialism and its continued influence on formerly colonized societies. It examines how colonial forces influenced identities, cultures and institutions and emerged as a reaction to colonial dominance. The theory gained popularity through the works of scholars such as as Edward Said (5), Bhabha Homi (11) and Gayatri Spivak (18) who contend that colonialism encompassed dominance of knowledge, culture and representation in addition to political and economic control. According to Said Edward, colonial powers marginalized indigenous cultures and ideas by portraying non-Western societies as inferior in order to legitimize dominance. By recovering local histories, identities and knowledge systems, postcolonial theory contests these depictions (8). The conflict between tradition and modernity, which Bhabha refers to as "cultural hybridity" the blending of many influences to create new identities is a major issue (12). In Africa, the theory explains traditional institutions and beliefs in Africa continue to influence modern society despite colonial legacies.

Applied to *Seven Doors*, the theory highlights how the film elevates African beliefs in destiny, kingship, ancestry and spiritual power, opposing colonial notions that regarded African spirituality as illogical. It asserts traditional leadership and spiritual traditions as legitimate foundations for government, identity and social order. The film delves into difficulties between personal desire, ancestral responsibility and communal expectations through the experiences of King Adedunjoye, expressing postcolonial concerns about identity and cultural continuity and promoting cultural reclamation by recognizing African cosmology and indigenous worldviews.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design that integrates content analysis to examine how the series depicts the how the series constructs the relationship between supernatural belief systems and political authority. It also explores the ways in which destiny, fate and spirituality shape leadership practices, influence decision-making processes and create ideological tensions within the narrative. The six episodes of *Seven Doors* were the subject of data collection, with special attention given to scenes featuring the elements of the politics of fate, destiny, ritual elements and spiritual discussions. The first viewing established familiarity with the content, while subsequent viewings enabled in-depth analysis of the issues understudy.

Synopsis of *Seven Doors*

The Yoruba epic mytho-historical series *Seven Doors* is set in the ancient Ilara Kingdom and centers on King Adedunjoye, a humble man chosen by the oracle to become king. He reluctantly takes the throne out of obligation, but his reign quickly causes political and spiritual upheaval that results in fatalities throughout the realm. His ancestor Oba Adejuwon, whose pursuit of immortality through prohibited rituals upset the kingdom's moral and spiritual equilibrium, is thereafter blamed for the crises as a generational curse.

To restore balance, the chief priest instructs King Adedunjoye to "open the seven doors" by marrying six additional wives, making seven in total, make atonement for the misdeeds of his predecessors and appease the gods. This destabilizes royal life as rivalry and disorder arise among the wives and causes emotional strife, particularly with his wife Amaka, who sees it as a betrayal of their marriage. Stronger supernatural powers include the reappearance of *Èsúsú*, a terrible force connected to the kingdom's curse.

By the climax, Adedunjoye must face the spiritual ramifications of his lineage as well as the price of sacrifice, love, and leadership. In order to save his family and realm, the king must balance tradition, self-interest, and cosmic justice in the narrative's final confrontation between human activity and divine decree. *Seven Doors* explores how fate, power and cultural obligations impact human lives under Yoruba cosmology by fusing mythology, theology and politics. By the climax, Adedunjoye confronts the spiritual consequences of his ancestry as well as the costs of leadership, love, and sacrifice. In order to rescue his empire, he must strike a balance between tradition, desire and cosmic justice, which culminates in a conflict between human action and divine decision.

Destiny, Spiritual Determinism and the Burden of Kingship in *Seven Doors*

In Femi Adebayo's *Seven Doors*, kingship is inextricably linked to spirituality, destiny, and ancestral power. It places leadership in the context of a cosmological system in which authority is not only acquired politically but also allocated spiritually and historically. The crowning, in which priests and elders proclaim that "no king rules alone," emphasizes the boundaries of political power and reinforces the idea that the throne is a spiritual duty from the very beginning of Ilara Kingdom. As Tiamiyu notes, the film also reflects political processes such as lobbying among chiefs and kingmakers, further blending spirituality with governance (14).

In *Seven Doors*, the Chief Priest, Olojongbodu (Ganiu Nofiu), is a pivotal spiritual authority that connects the physical and metaphysical realms. He embraces ancient African spirituality and makes the connection between the challenges of the present and the knowledge of ancestors. His advice to King Adedunjoye to "open the seven doors" in order to face generational curses emphasizes his dual status as a guardian of cultural legacy and a conduit for divine will (Theophilus Adedokun and Gift Mheta 23).

The Chief Priest serves as a bridge between the physical and metaphysical realms, embodying what Oguntola-Laguda Danoye refers to as the dual position of spiritual adviser and communal leader (185). His role as a guardian of tradition is highlighted by his reliance on Ifa divination in the face of skepticism from contemporary rulers like Queen Amaka. He demonstrates the continuing significance of Ifa in tackling current socio-political issues through his rituals, chants and readings of sacred symbols. In order to confirm Adedunjoye as the new Onilara of Ilara Kingdom, the chorus "*K'órí kó ṣe ọ́ lọ́ba*" led by Akobi-Okoto, acts as a spiritual sanction from the ancestral realm, assisted by the *Alálẹ́.* (ancestors). The song is as follows:

"K'órí kó ṣe ọ́ lọ́ba o, k'órí kó ṣe ọ́ lọ́ba,
K'órí kó ṣe ọ́ lọ́ba o, k'órí kó ṣe ọ́ lọ́ba,

K'órí Adékọ́gbé sọ ọ́ d'órí àpèsín, k'órí
ó ṣe ọ́ lọ́ba!"

Translation

"May *Orí* crown you as king, may *Orí* crown you as king
May Adekogbe's *Orí* lead you to become he whom obeisance
must be paid to, may *Orí* crown you as king"

Orí, which is defined as "àyànmọ́", a destiny apportioned to an individual," is used in the discourse as a metaphor for the human journey through life. The three statues in the Oba-elect's dream; Ayantoye-Oniluola, Asun'kungb'ore, and Akobi-Okoto stand for Yoruba enculturation and transform into human figures during his initiation. As part of a ritual process that connects destiny, spirituality, and cultural identity, this scenario ivokes forth chanting, dancing and song. The Yoruba belief in the interconnectedness of the living and the dead is shown in this tableau. Ayantoye-Oniluola begins with drumming, Asunkungbore follows with the Oba-elect's *Oríkì*, and Akobi-Okoto completes the sequence with dance, creating a cohesive ancestral performance, (Tiamiyu 24).

Prior to Adedunjoye's coronation, the palace oracle's prophecy introduces the theme of fate. During an Ifa consultation, the diviner warns that "the crown carries the weight of unseen debts," suggesting a predetermined burden of kingship. African perceptions that àyànmọ́ is not entirely negotiable are reinforced by the king's hesitation and the elders' reminder that "the ancestors have chosen you," which portray leadership as required rather than voluntary. Fate becomes more complex as the film uses flashbacks to past rulers whose moral failures contribute to the present crisis. An elder notes that "what was buried in silence by our fathers has refused to remain in the ground," connecting unresolved ancestral actions to current pain. The discovery of royal relics confirms that fate is hereditary and cyclical.

The series depicts divination events led by the Chief Priest, which include casting the Opele and reciting sacred words to disclose buried realities regarding generational curses and ancestral moral failures. These curses, which stem from Oba Adejuwon's deeds, have a profound impact on King Adedunjoye, including the death of his daughter Fola, and serve as the story's focus on justice and accountability. This reflects Achebe Chinua's belief that unsolved historical injustices might influence current personal and societal issues (61).

Spirituality plays a central role in political decision-making in the film. The high priest gives Adedunjoye instructions to provide a purifying sacrifice in a crucial ritual scene, cautioning that "a king who ignores the spirits invites war into his palace." His pacing, stillness and eventual hesitant submission draw attention to the conflict between spiritual duty and administration. The concept that political stability depends on metaphysical compliance is reflected in the ritual space, which is full of symbolism, incense and chanting. The titular seven doors symbolize moral and spiritual thresholds that Adedunjoye must overcome in order to atone for the misdeeds of his ancestors. The Chief Priest's emphasis on their requirement for reestablishing equilibrium reinforces the motif, which examines fate, leadership, sacrifice and the conflict between duty and personal desire. A journey of sacrifice

and reconciliation with ancestral lineage is represented both literally and figuratively by the act of "opening seven doors," which is signified by marrying additional wives.

Spiritual authority consistently challenges power in *Seven Doors*, In the council chamber, chiefs instruct the king to take additional wives to fulfil a spiritual injunction tied to the kingdom's survival, declaring that "tradition is older than your emotions" and "the throne demands sacrifice, not preference." The event is a crucial point of ideological confrontation between tradition, spirituality and modern ethics because of the king's troubled response, which exposes the conflict between personal morality and spiritual obligation. This ideological framework is complicated by the queen's character. In a private confrontation, Queen Amaka questions the spiritual demands on her marriage, asking, "must destiny destroy what love has built?" Her opposition creates conflict between gender, power and spirituality by introducing a contemporary viewpoint that questions unquestioned tradition. Bhabha's concept of "transcultural negotiation," in which identities are formed by conflicting values, is reflected in her emergence as a voice of emotional reason inside a strict conventional system (162).

The limitations of human agency in the face of fate are highlighted in the film. The kingdom experiences instability, disease, and political strain when Adedunjoye defies spiritual instruction. After one refusal, an elder warns that "you cannot silence what the ancestors have spoken," reinforcing the idea that resisting fate intensifies its effects. Through competing religious identities, *Seven Doors* also emphasizes the challenges of balancing tradition and modernity. This battle is exemplified by King Adedunjoye's journey from reluctance to reluctant acceptance of his hereditary duty. King Adedunjoye and *Ẹ̀súsú's* pivotal encounter is a cathartic moment that represents healing over division. It stands for a larger cultural yearning for harmony in the face of diversity. However, the King's initial hesitance is evident when he marries six wives but later dismisses them due to their disrespect toward his first wife, Queen Amaka. Their cunning actions culminate in a violent attack, where they pour cooking oil (palm oil) on Queen Amaka to prevent her from accompanying the King on an outing, further highlighting the complexities of navigating tradition and personal values. The potential for harmony between historical legacies and modern realities is highlighted by King Adedunjoye's transition from a reluctant king to one who accepts his fate, destiny, and responsibilities.

By using symbolic contrasts to break up political scenes with chants, oracle messages, or environmental disasters during royal disobedience, the film visually emphasizes its philosophy. These moments highlight the fact that authority is continuously negotiated with spiritual, unseen entities rather than being solely human. In *Seven Doors*, kingship is shown as a continuous ideological conflict in which spirituality, fate, and destiny influence political power. The king is neither fully free nor fully controlled but must negotiate between ancestral expectations, spiritual laws and human emotion. This friction emphasizes the film's core theme: authority in African culture is relational, contested, and spiritually ingrained. Through Adedunjoye's path, the film depicts ideological negotiation as a lived reality defined by sacrifice, conflict and emotional turmoil. Kingship becomes a burden of interpretation rather than authority, with each decision balanced

against unforeseeable repercussions. *Seven Doors* thus investigates how African spirituality conceptualizes governance as a balance of human action and cosmic order.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how deeply rooted African ideas of leadership are in metaphysical and spiritual frameworks. The film portrays fate and destiny as living realities that actively influence human experience and political power rather than as abstract intellectual concepts. Through the narrative of King Adedunjoye, *Seven Doors* reveals that kingship is inseparable from ancestral histories, spiritual injunctions and communal expectations, all of which position leadership as a burden of both governance and spiritual accountability. The analysis further highlights how conflicting ideological forces, especially the conflict between tradition and contemporary consciousness, continuously undermine power in the film. Characters are often torn between upholding their ancestors' duties and reacting to their own moral convictions, demonstrating that power is always negotiated rather than absolute. Spirituality is crucial to this process because it challenges the ruler's authority and influences political decisions through rituals, divination and ancestral demands. This demonstrates the African worldview, which holds that community belief systems and metaphysical truths are inextricably linked to governance.

The study concludes that *Seven Doors* serves as a significant cultural work that critically engages with the complexity of identity and leadership while reaffirming indigenous African epistemologies. It illustrates that destiny and fate function as organizing principles through which power is understood, contested, and legitimized within African traditional settings. By fusing spirituality, ideology and political authority, Femi Adebayo's narrative contributes to broader discussions on African cinema, providing insight into how modern film continues to reflect and reinterpret long-standing cultural ideas of existence, governance, and human agency.

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