

## **Relationships, Polygamy and Love in Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*: A Critical Analysis**

### Abstract

This article focuses on marital relationships in Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. Set in a household where polygamy is practised, this article seeks to analyse Shoneyin's exploration of the traditional and modern aspects of marriage. It looks closely at the individual wives, their reasons for entering a plural marriage, and their relationships with their husband and co-wives. Through close analysis of the text, I attempt to show how Shoneyin invites one to consider relationships and marriage as she plays off the modern conception of marriage against a traditional one. I attempt to show that the secret in the household inevitably breaks down expectations of traditional marital roles as relationships are redefined in this post-colonial setting.

Key Words: Shoneyin, Polygamy, Marriage, Customary, Traditional, Modernity, Relationships, Women

### Polygamous and modern marriages in African societies

In many African and traditional societies, marriage has undergone change as a result of the influence of post-colonial modernity. On the one hand, women and men may marry because of custom and to fulfil cultural and customary obligations while, on the other, choice and the notion of what Smith terms a "love marriage" is on the rise (158). Modernity and Christian culture promote monogamous marriages, where men and women marry for love and companionship. Traditionally, many African countries allowed a man to have more than one wife. He would enter into what is termed a "polygamous" marriage. The word "polygamy" is "derived from the Late Greek word *polugamos*, which literally means 'often marrying'... [and] consists in the maintaining of conjugal relations by more than two persons" (Jonas 142). As Jonas explains:

From the early years, polygamy existed throughout Africa as an integral feature of family life, with culture or religion or both as its basis ... it is widely believed that polygamy ensures the stability and continuity of the family and clan [and that] polygamy provides economic and social security for women ... polygamy is considered to be the most efficient means of producing a large family in a given time period [and] in Africa, a large family is an economic asset. (143)

Traditional societies are often viewed as being non-progressive, and the value of polygamous marriages is not always understood in a modern setting. What research in Africa has found is that "young people across a wide range of socioeconomic statuses increasingly value choosing their own spouses, and individual choice is widely associated with the notion that marriage should be based on love" (Smith 161).

With conflicting ideas about marriage in African societies, tradition and modernity are played off against each other, creating many spheres in which marriage, relationships and individuals may roam. Lola Shoneyin writes *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* in this context of changing ideas about marriage. Her novel focuses on the Alao household, a polygamous family consisting of four wives and seven children. Her novel invites one to consider relationships and marriage as it plays off the modern conception of marriage against a customary one, inviting the reader to explore the challenges and benefits of both. The four wives do not enter the household because of love. Rather, customary practices allow for them to seek comfort in a household built by a caricatured man who displays grotesque arrogance and male pride. The dynamic that exists in the household is a complex combination of customary and modern marital practices. These marital practices and ideals are constantly shifting in the household, satirising the belief that modern ideals are progressive as value is also placed on customary marriage. Shoneyin depicts a household where the stereotypical ideas and expectations of marriage are broken down, showing that the modern within a customary setting presents challenges to both ideals. This essay will seek to uncover the satire present in Shoneyin's narrative. Through the analysis of spousal relationships, I will attempt to demonstrate how the novel uses the Alao household to comment on the stereotypes of modern and customary marital practices and how these ideals affect marriage and relationships.

Emecheta notes that “[modern] people think that polygamy is oppression” (176). The arguments in favour of this belief are that:

The practice of polygamy undermines the self-worth of women ... [because] usually, wives have no legal power or capacity to prevent their husbands from taking a second wife ... in addition polygamy objectifies women [and] contravenes a woman's right to equality with men ... [who can use] polygamy ... as a tool ... to whip women into toeing their line by threatening their wives that they will marry another wife [which can have] serious emotional and financial consequences for her and her dependants (Jonas 145-146).

Polygamous cultures have a history of male dominance, which may encourage these beliefs. The modern argument is that these traditions are out of date because they create female oppression. As noted in the introduction, there are many traditional benefits for women in these cultures. The criticism, one could argue, holds ground on the matter of freedom of choice and consent. If women are forced into polygamous marriages, they are oppressive; if women enter these plural marriages consensually, they may be considered fair and liberating.

To provide an understanding of polygamy from an African woman's perspective, Embry and Bradley present a tale of a woman who grew up in a polygamous household. She said that “it was the only thing that she knew. Her parents had lived in polygamy and Father's parents had lived in polygamy” (100). In many instances, individuals who have been reared in a polygamous culture accept it as the norm. Therefore, it is important that criticism of polygamy takes people's understanding and way of life into consideration.

## Baba Segi, the patriarch

It would be helpful to look at the patriarch of the family, Baba Segi, named Ishola at birth and then, after the birth of his first child, Segi. This traditional ... Baba Segi is respected in his home and is referred to as “my lord” by his wives. This term shows respect and male dominance. He is portrayed as a possessive, arrogant man, who boasts about having four wives and seven children. Early in the novel, we are introduced to his mannerisms, when the narrator describes a visit to Teacher, a man who lived in the community and whose wisdom Baba Segi values: “It annoyed him that Bolanle was the reason he had come, when just two years before he had boasted of his conquest: how Bolanle was tight as a bottleneck, how he pounded her until she was cross-eyed; and how she took the length of his manhood on her back – splayed out and submissive” (Shoneyin 4).

This description indicates a man filled with pride, who boasts of his physical dominance and his wife’s submission to him. He is able to provide for his family, and his role as the head of the family is further asserted by his position in front of the television, his sharing of leftovers with his children and the assertion from his eldest son: “Yes Baba. I want to be just like you!” (Shoneyin 10). Furthermore, his dominance is solidified in typical male roles. Bolanle, his fourth wife, notes that: “In the two years I have been in Baba Segi’s house, he has never apologised for his mistakes. He makes peace his own way and it involves tattered brown envelopes bursting with 50 - Naira notes, thrust beneath doors at dawn” (Shoneyin 90). He is portrayed as a grotesque, uncivilised man who handles serious situations with bowel movements and who spits when disgusted. He is oblivious to his wife Iya Femi’s jealousy, in particular, and does not prioritise intimate communication with his wives. Baba Segi is concerned with his reputation, thus his marriages are “as much an economic, social, reproductive, and reputational project” (Smith 171). While his mother arranged his first marriage to Iya Segi, his choice to enter into more marriages is accounted for as follows: “I took a second wife, a peace offering from a desperate farmer. I took the third because she offered herself with humility. What kind of human being rejects the fullness of a woman? ... But I chose Bolanle, I cannot lie. I set my mind on her, the way a thirsty child sets his eyes on a cup spilling from a spout” (Shoneyin 201).

The women who marry because of their customary beliefs all betray Baba Segi, while the chosen wife is loyal. Choice may be tied to the modern idea of marriage, but it is also a modern practice for wives to leave their husbands, as Bolanle does.

This shows the complexity of both types of marriage. One may conclude, from these examples, that Shoneyin has constructed a view of Baba Segi that would make him unsympathetic to a critical eye. However, Shoneyin satirises these extreme portrayals of manhood through his wives’ secret. Baba Segi is unable to father children, which shatters the construction of pride and arrogance. Subtle irony is added to the narrative, for example when Baba Segi refers to Segi as “first fruit of my loins”, or when Bolanle remarks: “Baba Segi, they are the very image of you” (Shoneyin 159, 20). These moments in the narrative are not coincidental; rather, they break down the traditional praise offered to a man. One can say that it is the wom-

en in the narrative who display dominance through taking traditional expectations into their own hands. To clarify the male role, it is important to analyse the role that women play in the Alao household and to assess what extent they are bound by tradition.

### The empowerment of women: Baba Segi's four wives

Shoneyin explores the empowerment of women in polygamous marriages. It is assumed that: "African women do not speak but are spoken for, [they] do not choose but are chosen for" (Nnaemeka ??). It was shown in a study that, "once a woman is married, the ability to opt out – of either marriage or marital sex – is dramatically reduced" (Smith 173). Women are not seen to have agency, which subjects their marital role to Western feminist critique. However, Elizabeth Joseph, a plural wife, explains in an interview conducted to explore the lives of women in African, polygamist marriages: "[Y]ou would think that polygamy by definition would be oppressive to women ... in fact, a plural marriage is actually empowering" (Nnaemeka ??). Polygamous marriage may empower women in ways that range from freedom to bond with other women to shared child care and stability. Sexually, it is argued that women are empowered as they are not objectified. Rather, they are valued as bearers of children, who are an asset and source of pride in many African cultures. In her critique of Western feminism, Emecheta points out that

[s]ex is important to us [African women]. But we do not make it the centre of our being ... few of our women go after sex *per se*. If they are with their husbands they feel that they are giving something out of duty, love or in order to have children ... but as soon as they start having children their loyalty is very much to them ... African feminism is free of the shackles of Western romantic illusions and tends to be much more pragmatic. We believe that we are here for many, many things, not just to cultivate ourselves, and make ourselves pretty for men. (Emecheta 176-177)

This observation is interesting in the Alao household, as the different women embody different ideals of the African feminism and sexual empowerment described above. As one explores this in greater detail, it can be said that the wives are indeed dutiful in their sexual relations with Baba Segi. None of them expresses sexual enjoyment, yet they do not reject him. The wives who have children seek to provide and make life easy for them and display a great deal of affection towards them. Iya Femi may be the only wife who incorporates the Western notion of making herself pretty for a man, but her motives are deep-rooted and she too shows a degree of sensibleness in her duties to her husband and family.

It is valuable to look closely at the women in Shoneyin's novel to explore their African feminism against the construction of Baba Segi.

#### *Iya Segi, first wife*

Iya Segi is Baba Segi's first wife. She does not marry him by choice, but to follow her money. In the chapter titled "Iya Segi", she reveals her motive and explains her feelings towards her husband and the other wives as follows:

My new husband turned to me. "I am pleased you are here with me, if only to fatten me up a little," he said. "I will follow you anywhere, my lord." I raised my buttocks and let him fill me again. I would follow my money anywhere ... When he brought home other wives, I did not complain. I did not say a word. I did not even show that I feared for my money. I just kept quiet and watched him. Who can tell what madness makes men go in search of things that puncture their pockets? Kruuk. But that was the path he chose and I accepted it. Women are my husband's weakness. He cannot resist them, especially when they are low and downcast like puppies prematurely snatched from their mothers' breasts. I do not blame the women either. They are too weakened by the prosperity he offers. Besides, apart from that Bolanle, whose nose is so high that it brushes the skies, the other wives do not offend me. (Shoneyin 103-104)

In the passage preceding this extract, Iya Segi describes her repulsion to a woman to whom she has previously been attracted. One can say that Iya Segi was in love with her money. This marriage cannot be considered a love marriage, but one of cooperation. While her response may be considered one of submission, it is worth noting that "some women ... make polygamy work for them" (Emecheta 176). It is important to note that "the importance of rank among co-wives is emphasised. The first wife, usually the oldest, enjoys undisputed authority over her co-wives; she is the only wife not chosen as a 'replacement'" (Nnaemeka ??). Iya Segi echoes this sentiment when she says: "It is important that the wives know their place in this house. They must know what they can and cannot do. They must remember that I am the one who tells them when to eat, sleep or even work" (Shoneyin 72). While Iya Segi exerts her authority over the other wives, it is implied that she was not consulted in her husband's choice of a second, third and fourth wife. Jonas explains that "[u]sually, wives have no legal power or capacity to prevent their husbands from taking a second wife" (145). Tension arises when Bolanle, the fourth wife, enters the home. The observation that she has her nose in the air may be accurate. Bolanle describes the wives as "uncouth ... need[ing] lessons in etiquette" (Shoneyin 20-22). The arrival of Bolanle allows the narrative to take on an interesting dynamic between modern and traditional; Bolanle's education sets her apart from the other wives, and their rejection of her is evident throughout the narrative.

While Iya Segi's anxiety around the sharing of resources is expressed, she leaves the burden to her husband. Her acceptance, it may be said, is so that she can remain with her money (although she later gives it up, along with her businesses, to maintain the dignity of the family). Baba Segi is the primary provider for the family and may enjoy the ability to provide because his "[m]asculinity, proven by [providing], foregrounds the connections between masculinity and money and between gender and economics" (Smith 170). Iya Segi's mother's view of men may have contributed to her desire for a woman and her love of money. "Only a foolish woman leans heavily on a man's promises" (Shoneyin 97) are the words of a scorned woman. When she discovers her daughter almost naked and covered in money, she decides to arrange a marriage, a traditional practice. Her mother's contradiction is shown when she gives the money to Ishola, Iya Segi's future husband. Iya Segi, however, soon persuades her husband to allow her to trade and make more money, showing that she has indeed gone back to her first love. Ironically, Iya Segi's mother, who encouraged her independence of men, fears that her daughter will not fulfil her role as a traditional woman. Ishola's mother quite accurately states: "Why would men mean anything to her when she's grown

up hearing you rip them to shreds!” (Shoneyin 100). Iya Segi does, however, learn the value of family, dignity and loyalty once her secret is revealed.

*Iya Tope, second wife*

Iya Tope, the second wife, enters the Alao household as a peace offering and payment from her father to Baba Segi. After a bad harvest, an arrangement is made for Baba Segi to marry Iya Tope. Describing her discovery of the plans, she says:

Just when the sun began its journey to the tree tops my father summoned me. I was surprised to find him and Baba Segi sitting so close together, their arms touching as they drained the bottle of Schnapps that was normally only sipped at wedding and funerals. My father told me to bring the food in and I returned with a wide tray. But as I stooped at the doorframe, the men stopped talking. Baba Segi inspected me as I placed the plates on a low stool and fetched cool water from the earthen pot. He examined my face as I poured it into two plastic cups. My father watched him watching me. “She is not a great beauty,” I heard my father saying as I closed the door. His discretion had dwindled with the Schnapps. “But she is as strong as three donkeys. And thorough too. What she loses in wit, she gains in meticulousness. This is a great virtue in a woman. I have three wives so I speak from experience.” ... When we arrived at Baba Segi’s house, he pushed me towards Iya Segi and warned that I should show her great respect. He said I should be grateful I was in such good hands. Iya Segi smiled but I could see her chest thumping beneath her *buba*. (Shoneyin 81-82, 83)

Iya Tope is the quietest of the wives and even calls herself a “coward” (Shoneyin 56). Her role, while seemingly small, displays the submissive quality of a traditional second wife. She is the mother who turns her loyalty to her children and can be said to be “married to [her] children” (Smith 175). She is described by Bolanle as cordial and kind, which is shown in her demeanour. Iya Tope, it can be argued, represents a childlike womanhood. Still meticulous, she shows great admiration for her children and takes pride in braiding their hair. While this marriage, like that of Iya Segi, was arranged, Baba Segi, once again, did not pay a price, but received his wife as payment.

The relationship in the household is one of obedience to Iya Segi. She is seen to have little interaction with Baba Segi apart from their arranged nights together. Ironically, it is Iya Tope, the unattractive bride who was not chosen, who becomes Baba Segi’s favoured companion once the secret of his children’s fathering is revealed. Iya Tope, we know, grew up in a polygamous setting and can thus be said to have been trained for this arrangement. Iya Tope’s nature and her avoidance of conflict could be based on what Embry and Bradley have noted, that “[d]aughters who accepted polygamy had learned ways to interact as plural wives from their mothers’ examples ... [as it is often] the mothers in polygamous families who set the tone for relationships between families” (101). Unfortunately, the subtle example Iya Tope sets is seen as a weakness by Iya Segi and Iya Femi, resulting in Iya Tope being dominated, ridiculed and forced into silent submission. Her relationships in this household are seen through her interactions with the other women and children rather than her interaction with her husband. Iya Tope may thus be more traditional than the other wives in the Alao household in that she accepts her place in the home and in relation to Iya Segi.

Emecheta notes that “[w]omen are very quarrelsome and jealous” (178). This can be said to be true of Iya Femi, who offers herself as a wife to Baba Segi. She values herself over the other wives and is threatened when Bolanle takes her place as the newest wife. She is hostile and expects that she and her children should be favoured over others in the household. She is particularly resentful of Bolanle, who has acquired the education that she craved and was robbed of in her childhood. She loves material possessions and uses them to reignite the pampering she experienced as a child. After the slavery in Grandma’s house, she tells of her choice to marry Baba Segi:

There was a new house being built across the road and that was where I met Baba Segi. He was supplying the plumbing materials and he looked powerful yet kind in his yellow safety helmet. I offered him Grandma’s precious boiled water. He accepted it and thanked me. The next day he brought me a basket of oranges. It was Taju who delivered them. I didn’t waste time in telling Taju that I was looking for a man to marry me. I was desperate; I didn’t want Grandma to come back and find me there. “Baba Segi is the one who has enough money to marry many women,” Taju advised... “Then *make* him marry me. Convince him and put me in your debt for ever. I have no relatives so there is no one for him to pay homage to.” ... I don’t know what he told Baba Segi but he did his job well. Less than a week later, Taju came alone in the pick up and parked across the road. It was mid-morning and the house was empty so I had time to pack *everything* I wanted. Before I drove away with him, I rubbed shit into every pillow in the house except for Tunde’s. (Shoneyin 128-129)

She seeks to gain her self-worth through the Alao household, which provides luxury in comparison to her stay with Grandma. Contrary to Jonas’s argument of women’s objectification, she seeks to be objectified. Yet she shows respect and appreciation towards Baba Segi, revealing: “Don’t get me wrong. I don’t hate Baba Segi; on the contrary, I have several reasons to be thankful to him. He gave me a place of refuge ... You see, when the world owes you as much as it owes me, you need a base from which you can call in your debts. In return for kindness, I have worked tirelessly to make him happy. I cook his favourite meals” (Shoneyin 132-133).

One can say, then, that she shows gratitude as opposed to love for Bab Segi. Her vengeful spirit cannot allow her to love a husband as a wife should. Furthermore, her children are not disciplined as she does not want them to suffer as she did. Iya Femi does not emulate what most wives in polygamous marriages try to achieve. She does not, as Nnaemeka describes it, “capture the essence of the following notions: harmony, responsibility, fairness, honesty, equity, order, friendship, respect, satisfaction, sharing, bonding” (Nnaemeka ??). If anything, it can be said that Iya Femi tries to break down these ideals. Yet, apart from Bolanle, Iya Femi does not express a need to get rid of the other wives, perhaps because “[i]t gives her freedom from having to worry about her husband most of the time and each time he comes to her, he [she has to be sure that he] is in a good mood” (Emecheta 178-179). Iya Femi can thus be described as selfish in this polygamous setting. Her entry to the home sets her apart from the first two wives as she is the first wife to enter the household by choice. Her marriage is one of gratitude not love. Iya Femi can be said

to be married to vengeance and a spirit of discord, which becomes prevalent when Bolanle enters the Alao household.

*Bolanle, fourth wife*

Upon reflection of her time in the Alao household, Bolanle states: “I couldn’t tell him that I felt as if I’d woken up from a dream of unspeakable self-flagellation. It started a few days after Segi died. I’d walk through the house and feel as if I was in the midst of strangers, people from a different time in history, a different world. I didn’t feel soiled anymore” (Shoneyin 244). Her observation is tied to the fact that Bolanle was indeed modern in comparison to the other wives in the household. Her entrance into the polygamous marriage was curious given her university education. One would have expected her to enter a monogamous marriage, presumably for love. Of her choice to enter into the polygamous marriage with Baba Segi as his fourth wife, she says:

Somehow, it all made sense when I met Baba Segi. At last, I would be able to empty myself of sorrow. I would be with a man who accepted me, one who didn’t ask questions or find my quietness unsettling. I knew Baba Segi wouldn’t be like younger men who demanded explanations for the faraway look in my eye. Baba Segi was content when I said nothing. So, yes. I chose this home. Not for the monthly allowance, not for the lace skirt suits, and not for the coral bracelets. Those things mean nothing to me. I chose this family to regain my life, to heal in anonymity. And when you choose a family, you stay with them. You stay with your husband even though your friends call him a polygamist ogre. You stay with him when your mother says he’s an overfed orang-utan. You look at him in another light and see a large but kindly, generous soul. (Shoneyin 16-17)

After a traumatic rape and later an abortion, Bolanle describes herself as an empty shell. She chooses to marry Baba Segi in order to heal and find herself. As was the case with Iya Femi, a polygamous marriage gives women time and freedom, time which she needs away from the pressures of her mother and the modern world. Earlier it was mentioned that Baba Segi chose Bolanle; here she confesses to having chosen him. Their reasons may differ, but they are consensual marriage partners. Bolanle is educated and finds herself navigating “levels of oppression and ... stances on glorifying/denigrating traditions [in accordance with] class, background, level of education ... and commitment” (Latha 55).

Her modern experience of university makes her time in a home with uneducated, traditional women challenging. Prized by her husband, she is the one who opens the door for truth in the household. She rejects the modern world because it has scarred her. Western feminists may argue that tradition has caused her to think that polygamy is a solution when, according to them, it is a different kind of oppressive trap. Her mother cannot accept her decision because she has worked hard to educate her girls in the hope of a good, modern future. Against these Western ideals, Nnaemeka argues that: “[A]frican women who are in polygamous marriages are not morons or powerless, exploited, downtrodden victims. Many of these women are intelligent, highly educated, successful, independent women who *choose* polygymous marriage as what is good for them” (??). Ironically, it is not Bolanle’s husband who has victimised and exploited her, but rather men whom she had met prior to her marriage. Iya Segi too is successful and independent, adding



to the above sentiment. Even though Bolanle entered the marriage for personal reasons, she is serious about her role as a wife and tries to bear children to gain womanly respect in the home. In a household that has practised tolerance, Bolanle is a source of conflict, even though she hides her disdain for Iya Segi and Iya Femi, and tries to be cooperative. The wives do not emulate what Embry and Bradley describe of polygamous wives when it concerns Bolanle; they are not cooperative nor do they build a bond with her because of her inability to conceive. They keep her from the secret of conception in an attempt to drive her out and to keep their children away from her (104).

Tension exists between Bolanle and Baba Segi because she cannot conceive a child. The secret in the Alao household allows the tension to build, because at no point is it considered that he may be the cause of their struggle. Furthermore, his male ego struggles under the weight of infertility and the pressure to seek modern help. Through the course of their marriage, Bolanle remains humble and submissive to Baba Segi and his wives. When she leaves, Baba Segi is saddened and offers always to be there for her, showing the affection he has for her.

### Redefining marriage

The Alao household is filled with partners for Baba Segi. His pride lives in his family and tradition. His wives, however, have different reasons for and ideas about marriage. The narrative is a carefully written one; it not only plays with the secret, but also allows the characters to share intimate details about their lives in their own voice. Shoneyin has created a narrative that plays off modern and traditional ideals in a complex manner. Baba Segi may behave like a strong, bold African man, but he is unable to produce children, the essence of an African man. Iya Segi, who follows her money and encourages two of the wives to be unfaithful so that they can bear children, gives up her money to maintain the dignity of the family. Iya Tope, the ugly wife who cannot speak up for herself, ultimately commands most of Baba Segi's affection. Iya Femi's vengeful spirit leads to a breakdown of family.

She has to learn to live harmoniously with the remaining wives after Bolanle's departure. Bolanle chooses an extreme form of hiding, a place where she can disappear to recapture her soul. None of these portrayals show the modern notion of romantic love. Rather, the narrative shows that conflict arises when the old tries to take on the new. More so, the narrative shows that tradition is not easily lost or forgotten, and that it may serve as a place of refuge. The novel shows that family is the core of one's existence, always receptive when turned to in times of desperation, violence and extreme measures. If anything, the narrative may satirise the belief that modern ideas are progressive because it has found value in the traditional.

The change from first to third-person narration affords the reader both subjective and objective views of the narrative, allowing an interactive, thoughtful reading process. The Alao household is able to provide security for these women, a modern and traditional need. Iya Femi and Bolanle's choice of marriage is modern, against the traditional marriages of Iya Segi and Iya Tope. Curiously, the reader may wonder why

the women who have chosen polygamous marriage would choose a grotesque, uncivilised man, whose ways are as outdated as the setting. One soon learns that marriage is liberating for the women, particularly Bolanle. Furthermore, the household holds the traditional value of children. Yet there are tensions between the modern and the traditional. Bolanle leaves her husband, a modern ideal. There is an assumption that tradition allows one to grow as an individual within the sphere of customary values, while the modern allows for discovery. Many of these ideals overlap in the novel, implying that the modern in a traditional setting, and vice versa, is not a simple obstacle to navigate. Where traditional is sometimes viewed as a weakness in their relationships, it is important to acknowledge that the narrative breaks down many stereotypical ideas of marriage and spousal roles. Perhaps a dynamic assertion in the narrative is the fact that the traditional, grotesque man is, in fact, a generous, caring individual, a construction of a male that is often denied. Shoneyin's narrative shows the complexities, not only of marriage and relationships, but also of the conflicts present within both tradition and modernity.

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