

Confluence of Kinship and Divinity in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*

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Abstract: Blood and affinal ties are central in any discourse on kinship. This paper grapples with representation of kinship ties within a spiritual matrix envisioned in the dramaturgy of Ola Rotimi and Sophocles. *The Gods Are Not to Blame* being an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* whose storyline is continued in *Oedipus at Colonus*, makes it possible for the article to explore the interplay between divinity and kinship in the milieus reflected in ancient Greek and African societies. Whereas previous scholars have majorly focused on consanguinity to make sense of kinship affiliations, this article examines how Greek and African notions of spirituality impact on affinal relationships depicted in Rotimi and Sophocles' drama. The interrogation is conducted by examining the effect of divinity on kinship from the dimension of in-laws and wives. The analysis of the three plays hinges on psychoanalytic literary theory. The paper concludes that while the involvement of the divine in human relationships enhances affinal ties, it also contributes to their disintegration when divine-centrism supersedes communitarian interests.

Keywords: Affinal, Communitarian, Divinity, Divine-centrism, Ola Rotimi, Sophocles

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Introduction

While scholarship on kinship has been of great scholarly interest to sociologists and anthropologists, writers have not shied away from illuminating notions of kinship in their literary corpus. Achebe (1958), speaking through Uchendu in *Things Fall Apart*, avers that we are

better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree but a man asks his kinsman to scratch him. This situation points to the centrality of kinship in human relations. Achebe (1958)'s seminal novel underscores the high premium bestowed on kinship in traditional Africa. An individual is better

of having meaningful ties with his kinsmen since they come handy at the hour of need.

Commenting on the communitarian dimension of kinship, Mbiti (1971) encapsulates the African conception of kinship: "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am" (108). This reveals that from an African ontological standpoint, one's individuality is a product of the ontology a given community subscribes to. Therefore, in crafting one's authentic self, the place of culture, religion and worldviews embraced by a community cannot be overlooked. It is on this basis that this paper took recourse to Greek and African conceptions of spirituality in its exploration of kinship ties in Rotimi and Sophocles' selected plays.

Mbiti's proposition that the delineation of communal ontology is integral in the conceptualisation of an individual's ties to a community is in tandem with Kanu's (2014, p. 2) assertion that "the concept of personhood within a kinship is not attained in isolation from the community. African philosophy accepts that personhood is something attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through performing various duties imposed on him or her by living in the community." This collectivist dimension of kinship espoused by Mbiti and Kanu is critical in exploring ties among family members and leaders in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*.

Kinship played a significant role in the social and political matrices of the community in ancient Greece. In most cases, apart from being viewed as ties among people sharing blood relationship, kinship was also assumed to have a mythological basis and it performed critical political functions. Lee (2010, p. 1) observes that "in ancient Greece, interstate relations such as in the formation of alliances, calls for assistance, exchange of citizenship and territorial conquest were often grounded in mythical kinship. In these cases, the common ancestor was most often a legendary figure whom both communities claimed descent." The mythological link of kinship is relevant to this paper which drew from Greek and African mythologies to examine human ties. Lee's assertions underline the didactic role of kinship to mobilize people using descent to prominent mythological figures.

Kinship denotes human relationships emanating from blood or associative ties. Whereas a biological link to parents is considered consanguineous, human existence is also defined by relationships occasioned by marriages and adoption of children. This demonstrates that kinship is a social construct subject to various interpretations. As Read (2001) avers, cultural rules of instantiation give kin terms genealogical reference, thereby the problem of presuming parenthood defined via reproduction as a universal basis for kinship is circumvented. From Read's observation, it is evident that cultural rules play a significant role in the conceptualization of kinship. Read's postulations demonstrate that kinship is also acquired through the process of association. This paper examined affinal ties occasioned by marriages to explore the confluence of kinship and spirituality in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* and Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* are set in the 5th century Greece. *Oedipus the King* chronicles the tragedy of a king who is prophesied to kill his father and marry his mother. Upon the fulfilment of the doomed prophecy, the city is afflicted with a terrible pestilence. This forces the king to send the former regent and his uncle, Creon, to enquire from Apollo about the solution to the problem. The gods decree that the kingdom must rid itself of a man responsible for the death of the former king, Laius. Through the intervention of a seer (Tiresias), King Oedipus is identified as the murderer of the former king and is excommunicated from his kingdom. *Oedipus at Colonus* chronicles troubles and tribulations of King Oedipus in exile to the time of his restoration by the gods at his mysterious death. *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, on the other hand, is an adaptation of *Oedipus the King*. Though Rotimi's play adopted the basic plot of the Sophoclean play, it incorporated aspects of Yoruba mythology, themes and structural variations to make the classical play relevant to the African context. Indeed, Rotimi's ingenious adaptation of an ancient Greek play is representative of the definitive phase in the twentieth century development of drama characterized by major playwrights' proclivity for adaptation of classical Greek drama. In this literary experiment, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* transposes Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* onto an African cultural landscape. The transposition of an ancient

Greek plays insinuates that humans share remarkable similarities irrespective of prevailing geographical differences.

Examination of Affinal Kinship in Sophocles and Rotimi's Drama

Affinal kinship designates a relationship through marriage. The paper examines this type of kinship by making reference to marriages reflected in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* and Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. The examination of social bonds in affinal kinship and spirituality also extends to in-laws from the wife's side.

The mysterious death of King Laius in *Oedipus the King* hoists Creon who is Jocasta's brother to the throne. Creon reigns over Thebes until a strange Sphinx invades his kingdom and starts killing people who could not solve her riddle. Faced with this existential problem, Creon promises to surrender the throne and the Queen of the former King to any person who would overcome the dreaded Sphinx. Oedipus solves the Sphinx's riddle and is made the new king of Thebes and offered Jocasta as his wife. The kingdom experiences prosperity for a long time until it gets stricken by another pandemic connected to the killing of the former king. In unravelling the cause of the pandemic, the seer identifies King Oedipus to have slain the former king. This causes a rift between King Oedipus and Creon. Although the elders are eager to stand with their king in this confrontation, King Oedipus misconstrues the seer's prophetic pronouncement as a conspiracy between Creon and Tiresias to usurp power. Creon is King Oedipus' brother-in-law by virtue of his marriage to his sister, Jocasta, but at the same time, his maternal uncle since Jocasta is King Oedipus' biological mother. The conflict between the king and Creon manifest itself when Creon tells the Theban elders:

Good citizens, I hurry here shocked into your presence by a monstrous charge laid on me by Oedipus the King. If he thinks in all this turmoil of our times that any word or act of mine was ever down in malice, done to harm, I had rather end my life than live so wronged. For this is not a trifling calumny but still a full catastrophe to find myself called traitor; traitor to my town, to you and to my friends (Rotimi, 1975, p. 232)

Rather than being accused of having betrayed the town, elders and his friends, Creon is ready to commit suicide to spare himself the charge of deliberate connivance with the seer to tell lies. The strained relationship between King Oedipus and his brother-in-law or maternal uncle is a consequence of a divine curse which made Oedipus to murder the former king. Thus, it can be stated that spirituality contributes to the weakening of the affinal ties between an uncle and his nephew.

For King Oedipus, Creon is "the self-condemned filcher of his throne" (Sophocles 1912, p. 232). The cause of the strained ties between Creon and King Oedipus is attributable to the Delphi oracle and Tiresias' interpretation of the same. In this regard, it could be argued that divine intervention occasions the deterioration of the relationship between the king and his 'brother-in-law'. This is enshrined in King Oedipus' threat to Creon: "And if you really think a brother-in-law can get away with murder, you are not thinking at all" (233).

Murder is a capital offence whose sentence in most legal jurisdictions is death. King Oedipus seems to insinuate that Creon is the one who had slain King Laius. In his reasoning, King Oedipus thinks that Creon colludes with the seer, Tiresias, so as to extricate himself from the murder of the King. But Creon tries to vouch for his innocence by asking King Oedipus to verify veracity of his allegations of Creon's perceived complicity in the murder of the former King: "...Test me. Go to Delphi. Ask If I have brought back lies for prophecies. And do not stop, but if you find me plotting with a fortune-teller, take me, kill me, full-indicted on a double, not a single count: not yours alone but mine. Oh, do not judge me on a mere report, unheard! No justice brands the good and justifies the bad. Drive friendship out, I say, and you drive out life itself, one's sweetest bond" (234-235). Messengers of the gods are presumed to be truthful in ancient Greece. This explains why Creon is ready to put his life at risk in order to maintain his dignity. He does this by asking his King to go to Pythia to ascertain the truth from Apollo.

Passing judgement on the basis of a mere unsubstantiated report, according to Creon, is an injustice. Even modern judicial systems put a lot of premium on corroborating evidence before sentencing the accused. This is what Creon calls for because according to him, it is not fair that his

friendship with the king be ended on the basis of the king's suspicious mistrust of the oracle he delivers from Delphi. This turn of events demonstrates that the kinship ties are dependent on aspects of spirituality. To maintain ties with his 'brother-in-law, Creon requests the king to send someone to corroborate the veracity of his oracular message. King Oedipus, however, informs the elders that he does not only want to banish Creon from the kingdom, but he also wants him dead: 'Banishment? Great heavens, no! I want you dead: A lesson to all of how much envy's worth' (235). Before the King could harm Creon, Jocasta tells the elders that King Laius was killed by a gang and not one person as per the seer's pronouncement.

In as much as King Oedipus accuses Creon of connivance to overthrow him, it should be noted that it is the king who had sent Creon to Pythia to get divine assistance. When the people go to him demanding help to solve the pandemic afflicting them, King Oedipus tells them: "Mine is the treble anguish crying out for the city, for myself and for you. It was no man asleep you woke-ah, no!- But one in bitter tears and one Perplexed in thought, found wandering Who clutched the only remedy that came: to send the son of Menoeceus, Creon- My own Jocasta's brother- to the place Apollo haunts at Pythia to learn what act or covenant of mine could still redeem the state" (217). The sending of Creon to Pythia depicts a city in which gods and humans coexist. When people are unable to solve their problems, they invoke divine assistance. Whereas the king's subjects believe he has all solutions to the challenges facing them, King Oedipus recognizes finitude in his powers and human beings in general. This serves to illustrate Sophocles' suggestive proposal on the role of political leadership in solving societal problems; he advances an argument that sometimes citizens should be cognizant of the fact that a country's problems are unlikely be solely solved by politicians but rather, calls for concerted effort from the citizenry and if need be, divine intervention. In the case of *Oedipus the King*, King Oedipus' clarion call for divine help manifests itself when gods reveal the cause of a plague which had stricken his kingdom:

Creon: very well, then. This is what the god has said,
The Prince Apollo openly enjoins on us to
severe from the body politics a monstrous

growth that batters there: stop feeding that which festers.

Oedipus: By what purge? How diagnosed?

Creon: By banishment. Or blood for blood. The city frets with someone's blood.

Oedipus: Whose? Is the unhappy man not named?

Creon: Laius, sire. Him we had as King in days before you ruled?

Creon: Brigands, this man insists, attacked the king: not one but many, and they cut him down (218-219).

It should be noted that Oedipus' ascension to the Thebes throne is a divinely propelled act. It is the gods who had preordained that he was going to kill his father and marry his mother. This is contained in Tiresias' earlier prophecy that the son Laius bore with Jocasta was destined to kill him and marry his wife. Creon's message that the kingdom was undergoing suffering due to harboring killers of the former King makes King Oedipus to send for a seer to reveal the identity of the killers swearing that once identified, they will be put to death.

The prophet's revelation that King Oedipus was the murderer he was seeking, however, sours relationships in the kingdom. This is brought to the fore when Tiresias, a prophet, discloses that King Oedipus is the one who had murdered King Laius. The disclosure makes King Oedipus to allege that Creon, his brother in law, had conspired with the seer: "Oh wealth and sovereignty! Statecraft surpassing art! Oh life so pinnacle on fame! What ambushed envy dogs your trail..." (228). King Oedipus thinks that Tiresias' motive is to help Creon to ascend to kingship so that he could clinch for himself a position in Creon's government. In Freudian psychoanalysis, when one is faced with a threat, one uses one's defense mechanisms. In this case, King Oedipus' aggression towards Creon and Tiresias can be viewed as a form of displacement. The interpretation of the prophetic message which discloses the king as the murderer of the former king comes from the gods. Thus, the king's ire ought to be directed towards the gods. Instead, King Oedipus redirects his negative emotion from its original source to powerless recipients (Creon and the seer). The foregoing reveals how the oracle, prophecy and interpretation of the prophecy which are aspects of spirituality affect the ties between King Oedipus and Creon, his in-

law. Indeed, the hostility that arises between the two relatives is a consequence of divine interventions.

The sour relationship between King Oedipus and Creon is continued in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. Creon is again installed as a regent over Thebes following King Oedipus' banishment from Thebes. As a regent, Creon is expected to rule Thebes until King Oedipus' heir come of age. On the contrary, Creon who had been acting as regent in Thebes betrays the royal family by failing to relinquish power as expected of him. Instead, he seeks to become the king. Having been privy to Apollo's prophecy which had elevated the disposed king to the level of a talisman, he follows King Oedipus to exile in Athens to convince him to join his political side. But Creon's plea to King Oedipus to beseech him to return to Thebes is countered by King Oedipus' accusation:

Once agony I turned against myself
And cried aloud for banishment.
Then it did not fit your pleasure, did it?
To fit yourself and mine?
But when my over-brimming passion
had gone down
And home's four walls were sweet,
Then you had me routed out and cast
away.
Fine affection that for family ties!
And now again, the moment you
perceive
Me being welcomed by this kindly city
and her sons,
You want to wrench me away,
Your barbed designs wrapped up in
words of wool.
Who ever heard of friendliness by force?
(297)

The deposed king's response to Creon reveals that the ties between them are irretrievably broken due to the latter having banished him from Thebes. King Oedipus warns Creon against forcefully taking him to Thebes especially after having been accorded a warm reception by the city of Athens and its people. He further reminds Creon that friendship cannot be coerced upon someone. It should also be understood that Creon wants the former king back in Thebes in order to advance his selfish interests of ascending to the throne as evident in Apollo's oracle. Just like in *Oedipus the King*, aspects of spirituality such as Apollo's prophecy and King Oedipus' curses are

depicted as playing a greater role in the breakdown of kinship ties between Creon and his nephew. Therefore, affinal ties are revealed as being adversely affected by spirituality in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

The antagonism between Creon and King Oedipus is further intensified when Creon abducts both Antigone and Ismene in *Oedipus at Colonus* in order to force King Oedipus to return to Thebes to provide a bastion to ward off onslaught Attica will launch (298). All this is a consequence of Apollo's oracle which elevates King Oedipus to a talisman. In this respect, divine intervention affects the relationship between King Oedipus and Creon. The strained relationship between the former king and his uncle is also brought to the fore by King Oedipus' curse to Creon: "You scum! My devastated eyes, blank so long, saw through the eyes of this helpless girl and now you've plucked her from me. So, may Helios, all seeing God of sun, visit you and all your race with such dotage and decay, as matches mine" (301). Invoking of Helios (a god) in King Oedipus' curses towards Creon introduces a divine angle and shows that curses emanates from the spiritual realm. Hence, King Oedipus' curses hurled against his maternal uncle are indicative of the interplay between kinship and spirituality in Sophocles' play.

In Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, aspects of spirituality are portrayed as impacting on marital ties. When King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola beget their first child, they take it to the shrine of Ogun accompanied by the Ogun Priest. The narrator remarks: "It is their first baby. So they bring him for blessing to the shrine of Ogun the God of War, of Iron and the doctor of male children" (1). The Yoruba community reveres its gods. Unlike in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in which the royal family just receives prophecy about their son from a prophet without going to a shrine, King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola take their son to the Ogun shrine before the seer gives a divination on their child's future. Taking the first royal child to the Ogun shrine is a significant event. Among the Yoruba pantheon (Orisanla; sometimes called Obatala, Orunmila, Esu, Sango, Saponna, Ela etc.), Ogun occupies an important place and wields great power since he is held to be in control of everything that is made of iron (Olusegun, 2017, p. 3). King Adetusa, Odewale's father, could symbolically be equating siring of a child to hunting or foreshadowing Odewale's adoption by

King Ogundele who is a great hunter. Hunters in the Yoruba community are expected to pay homage to the shrine of Ogun before and after successful hunting expeditions. This is a way of expressing their humility to Ogun for blessing them with their hunting prowess. This line of argument is buttressed by Idowu's (1962, p. 85) assertion that Ogun is a deity who descended from heaven by a 'spider's thread upon the primordial marshy waste for his hunting expedition. Moreover, the fact that the couple takes their first-born together to the shrine shows strong social bonds in their marriage. It can be averred that the element of Yoruba spirituality requiring them to dedicate their child to the Ogun shrine plays a role in strengthening their marital union.

It should also be noted that besides being a deity of war, Ogun is associated with creation of humankind. According to Oladipo (1998), Ogun is believed to have 'put finishing touches to the creation of man; he put human bones and assembled them and therefore, completed Orisanla's job by the cutting or carving of legs and hands to the shapes' (89). The article advances the view that Ogun's creation role makes King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola to take their first-born to the shrine. In conformity with the Yoruba traditional religious beliefs which require that a Priest of Ifa is called to divine the child's future once a baby is dedicated to the Ogun shrine, a seer is called. In the case of King Adetusa's first son, it is Baba Fakunle, a purblind old man who divines a strange future for the child: 'What is it that the child has brought as a duty to this earth from the gods?' (2). The seer's role to divine the royal child's future points to a Yoruba society which recognises existence of gods, ancestors, the unborn and the living in its universe. This establishes communion between Yoruba gods and humans. The bridge of the abyss between the physical and spiritual planes of existence is an unborn child who is presumed to originate from the spirit world. Baba Fakunle tells the king, 'this boy will kill his own father and then marry his own mother' (3). In this instance, Baba Fakunle's prophetic pronouncement upsets emotional disposition of both the King and the Queen and to some extent, their future plans.

The impact of Baba Fakunle's divination on the royal child's destiny can be said to destabilise the relationship between Queen Ojuola and King

Adetusa. This is portrayed when the narrator says: "Mother weeps, father weeps. The future is not happy, but to resign oneself to it is to be crippled fast man must struggle" (3). In a clear sign of contesting with gods, the narrator avers that man must never embrace a defeatist attitude in tackling life challenges even if it involves spiritual entities. This informs the couple's decision to kill the ill-fated child as a way of averting the fulfilment of the prophecy. But this plunges Queen Ojuola into depths of inconsolable sorrow due to the supposed untimely demise of her seed (son): "Mother sinks to the ground, in sorrow for the seed that life must crush so soon! Father consoles her, in his own grief! (3). There is a sense in which the divine intervention in form of a doomed child from the world of spirit disrupts the peace, joy and to some extent, self-fulfilment in the marriage between King Adetusa and his wife. Both the Queen and the King are stricken by grief partly because of losing their child and also an heir to the throne.

The royal family's grief can also be attributed to the ensuing guilt emanating from the inhuman treatment the doomed child is subjected to: "Priest of Ogun ties boy's feet with a string of cowries meaning sacrifice to the gods who have sent the boy down to this earth" (3). The baby is handed to Gbonka, the King's special messenger, to throw it into the evil bush and possibly abandon it there to die. But two years later, Obatala (Yoruba god of creation) blesses King Adetusa and his wife with another son (Aderopo). This is in stark contrast to what happens in *Oedipus the King* in which King Laius and Queen Jocasta do not get blessed with another son by the gods. The import of this is that the gods intervene to restore joy and happiness in King Adetusa's family and at the same time provide an heir to the throne. In the traditional African political system, it is inconceivable for a King's brother-in-law to ascend to the throne like Creon does in Thebes. This portrays the gods to be both stabilising and destabilising forces in marital unions. There is a possibility of this act strengthening the ties between King Adetusa and his wife. As the narrator observes, apart from being a source of consolation, the birth of Aderopo is also meant to fill the void left by the supposed death of King Adetusa's first son. This in a way, then, helps to imbue their lives with a sense of meaning and purpose. Hence, it can be argued that spirituality is depicted as stifling and

enhancing filial ties between King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola's marriage.

In another related incident touching on the nexus between kinship and spirituality, a mother (Ojuola) is forced to choose between her son and her husband (36). The conflict between King Odewale and Aderopo widens the chasm between Aderopo and his mother. Torn between the two, Ojuola chooses to side with her husband, King Odewale. In this regard, the disintegration of the royal family can be attributed to divine agencies. Indeed, the king seems to widen the simmering tensions in the family when he approves what Ojuola does: "She is a foolish wife who sides with her son against her own husband [*Gestures her to sit on the stool next to the throne*]. A son is a son: a husband is a husband. A woman cannot love both equally. Everything has its own place" (38). The choice Ojuola is presented with is a tricky one since it requires her to disown her biological son. In choosing her husband, Ojuola severs ties with her son. The choice Ojuola makes is a result of Baba Fakunle's divination that Odewale is the one who had killed King Adetusa. Therefore, Queen Ojuola's siding with King Odewale instead of her son shows how spirituality serves to enhance marital ties between her and her husband.

It is after securing his wife's pledge of loyalty and support that King Odewale finally reveals that he had slain the former king at Ede where three footpaths meet. He claims that he had killed him for trespassing on a big farm he had bought at Ede from Kakalus, son of Atiki for five bags of cowries (45). The outcome of this patricide is a strange illness which leads to some deaths affecting familial ties in Kutuje:

Iya Aburo: [*Kneeling deferentially*]. He will come, your highness. I...I told him, the gods bear me witness... [*Tearfully*]. I told him, and he was...coming too.

First Chief [*Whispering to Odewale*]. It was her husband killed by the sickness two days ago, my lord.

Iya Aburo: I thank you, your highness... He said so, I swear... [*Laughs loudly*]. He was coming, he was coming, then he went and got all dressed up and went directly to the farm, not looking right, not looking left. (15-16).

The mysterious deaths and insanity caused by the strange illness can be attributed to the god's vengeance directed at King Odewale ostensibly

for committing parricide and incest. It is significant to note that as a result of the divine punishment, the death of Iya Aburo's husband makes her to lose her mind. Iya Aburo's mental derangement caused by the illness sent by the gods can be linked to Iya Aburo's inability to accept loss of her husband. As Eagleton (1996) indicates in his reading of Freudian psychoanalysis, 'much more difficult to cope with, however, is the condition of psychosis, in which the ego, unable as in neurosis partly to repress the unconscious desire, actually comes under its sway. If this happens, the link between the ego and the external world is ruptured and the unconscious begins to build up an alternative, delusional reality' (138). Manifestation of Iya Aburo's degeneration into a delusionary plane of existence is evident when she starts hallucinating as if she were communicating with her dead husband. Iya Aburo's insanity makes it impossible for her to look after her child, a factor which informs King Odewale's decision to have the child taken from her. In this instance, it can be argued that apart from causing deaths in families, divine punishment triggers separation between spouses. The consequence of the foregoing is that the child taken forcefully from Iya Aburo misses parental love of its dead father and mentally deranged mother. This underscores the place of spirituality in disintegrating filial ties.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The foregoing exploration of the Greek and African plays has brought to the fore the impact of divinity on affinal kinship. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, it has been demonstrated that King Oedipus' relationship with his 'uncle' and brother are irretrievably broken down as a result of the Delphi oracle and prophetic interpretation of the oracle from the gods. In Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, however, King Odewale's relationship with his wife is strengthened as a result of aspects of divinity. Indeed, when presented with a choice between her biological son and her husband, Queen Ojuola chooses King Odewale. The disownment which ensues reveals that in Queen Ojuola's contestation of the prophetic interpretation by Baba Fakunle, divinity fosters ties between the royal couple. In view of this, it can be averred that aspects of divinity have a dual effect on affinal kinship: they stifle and enhance such ties.

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