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## **Reimagining Yorùbá Oral Tradition: An Exploratory Study of AI-Generated Storytelling**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the cultural authenticity, narrative fidelity, and epistemological implications of AI-generated stories reimagining Yorùbá oral traditions and mythology. With the rising adoption of artificial intelligence in creative domains, questions of cultural ownership, representation, and accuracy have become increasingly urgent, particularly for indigenous traditions grounded in spirituality, performance, and oral transmission. Employing an exploratory qualitative approach, the study conducts a comparative textual analysis of AI-generated stories against canonical Yorùbá myths, focusing on key narrative elements such as deities, cosmology, motifs, linguistic features, and thematic structure. The research interrogates how AI models interpret and reconstruct culturally significant symbols, characters, and settings, such as Òṣun's sacred grove, Šàngó's axe, and Qbátálá's staff, and examines the extent to which they preserve or distort the epistemic foundations of Yorùbá cosmology. Findings reveal that while AI storytelling exhibits creative potential and narrative coherence, it often fails to incorporate key cultural markers, religious structures, tonal language complexity, and indigenous knowledge systems.

The absence of community-led input and culturally competent frameworks results in narrative outputs that, although engaging, risk cultural dilution, misrepresentation, and appropriation. Furthermore, the study highlights the ethical and educational implications of promoting such narratives as representative of Yorùbá mythology. This research contributes to broader debates on the intersection of AI, heritage preservation, and decolonial knowledge practices. It offers recommendations for integrating indigenous expertise into AI training processes and for developing culturally responsive evaluation models that honour the integrity of traditional African storytelling systems.

**Keywords:** AI-generated, storytelling, mythology, authenticity, ownership, preservation

## **Introduction**

Oral tradition is the art, act, and practices accustomed to a particular race or community of people in various ways that express or communicate their beliefs, values, virtues and exceptions. It is a means of communication in world communities from past ages. It is interesting to note that researches across the six continents establish oral tradition's dominance as communicative means in the face of 21st century's advanced literacy (Foley, 2019). Orality is the major baseline of African literature's written-genre exploited to salvage the culture from the torrential ocean of colonialism (Ghouti, 2015). Nevertheless, there is great endangerment to African oral literature causing its decline in a subtle manner, almost unnoticed to many indigenous communities. Scheub, (2012) submits that much of the oral tradition of African cultures has been lost, and as African languages are in the process of dying each year, the traditions are gone forever.

Oral traditions are the backbone of many cultures, preserving history, values, and identities (Eichler 2021). Yorùbá mythology, with its rich narratives and symbolism, is a vital part of Nigeria's

cultural heritage. However, the increasing influence of technology and globalisation poses challenges to the preservation and transmission of these traditions. Recently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a potential tool for cultural storytelling, raising questions about authenticity, ownership, and cultural sensitivity. As a result, this study explores the convergence of AI-generated storytelling and Yorùbá oral traditions, investigating the cultural authenticity and ownership of AI-generated stories, based on Yorùbá mythology. Through a mixed-methods approach, this research evaluates the representation of cultural elements, motifs, and themes in AI-generated narratives, comparing them to their original counterparts.

The integration of AI in storytelling raises critical questions:

- Can AI algorithms accurately capture the nuances of Yorùbá mythology and cultural practices?
- Do AI-generated stories respect the cultural ownership and intellectual property of the Yorùbá people?
- How can AI-generated stories contribute to the preservation and transmission of Yorùbá cultural heritage?

This study addresses these concerns, providing insights into the capabilities and limitations of AI storytelling algorithms in generating culturally sensitive narratives. By examining the convergence of AI-generated storytelling and Yorùbá oral traditions, this study contributes to the understanding of cultural heritage preservation and transmission in the digital age.

## **Literature Review**

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and storytelling has attracted significant attention in recent years (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014; Swan, 2015). Researchers have explored AI-generated storytelling's potential applications in education (Worrell, 2017), creative writing (Liang et al., 2017), and cultural preservation (Krumhuber & Manovich, 2015).

Storytelling is a very important part of Yorùbá oral tradition connected to every other embodiment of the cultural heritage. The

Yorùbás exploit the opportunity of storytelling to teach, entertain, recite historical events, transmit cultural traditions which include rituals, mythology and folktales, proverbs and wise sayings, cultural values and identity, moral instruction and communal bonding (Olusesi, 2024). Notably, the utilitarian attributes of storytelling enliven the tradition from generation to generation; as every ceremony and communal gathering absolves the active presence or involvement of this unique cultural form. Ceremonies including rituals, marriage, funeral, group identity, occupational gatherings and installation of traditional rulers and chiefs, accommodate the benefits of storytelling.

The veracity of cultural heritage's preservation in the use of AI through digital storytelling has been ascertained (Gondola 2014). According to Ghaith, 2024, AI can facilitate efficiency and accuracy of preservative endeavours, in particular, cultural heritage. For instance, AI-generated narratives have been used to recreate historical events (Liu et al., 2018) and preserve endangered languages (Bird et al., 2018). Research on the potentials of AI technologies in preservation of cultural heritage, confirms images of monuments uploaded to a developed web, got annotated in few seconds, and fully recognised with text; bearing more information on the monuments. An experiment discovered that Long Shot-term memory (LSTM) unit and Gated Recurrent unit (GRU) models, have time-series prediction capabilities, while (LSTM) unit is an effective model to facilitate preventive conservation of cultural and heritage site (Lee & Lee 2019). Use of AI on the ruins of the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Italy for conservation and preservation is a living experience (Garozzo, Pino, Santagari & Spampinato, 2020).

Research on Yorùbá oral traditions highlights their significance in preserving cultural identity (Afolayan, 2015) and transmitting cultural values (Ògúndele, 2016). Digital storytelling has been recognised as a viable means of preserving Yorùbá oral traditions

(Adedeji, 2017). Nevertheless, authenticity and ownership of AI-generated stories have raised concerns (Gillespie, 2016; Striphas, 2016). Scholars argue that AI algorithms may not fully capture the cultural characteristics and context of traditional stories (Bender et al., 2017)

Furthermore, research emphasises the importance of cultural competency and sensitivity in AI-generated storytelling (Prunkl, 2021). Studies have shown that AI algorithms can perpetuate cultural stereotypes and biases if not properly designed (Hong 2022). If importance and appreciation of Yorùbá stories and cultural heritage as a whole would be sustained, deliberate efforts are needed to control the application of AI in this course of digital cultural heritage's preservation.

While existing research explores AI-generated storytelling and cultural heritage preservation, there is a need for studies specifically examining:

- The cultural authenticity and ownership of AI-generated stories based on Yorùbá mythology.
- The representation of Yorùbá cultural elements, motifs, and themes in AI-generated narratives.

This study addresses these gaps, investigating the convergence of AI-generated storytelling and Yorùbá oral traditions.

### **Objectives for the study**

The objectives of this research are:

1. To evaluate the authenticity and ownership of AI-generated stories based on Yorùbá mythology and oral traditions.
2. To assess the representation of Yorùbá cultural elements, motifs, and themes in AI-generated stories.
3. To compare the narrative structures, character development, and themes in AI-generated stories to their original counterparts.
4. To develop a framework for evaluating the cultural authenticity and ownership of AI-generated stories.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the cultural authenticity and ownership of AI-generated stories based on Yorùbá mythology and oral traditions. Four randomly selected AI-generated stories based on Yorùbá mythology using various AI storytelling algorithms and the original versions of the stories were selected. Content and comparative analysis of the AI-generated and original Yorùbá stories using qualitative metrics (narrative similarity and cultural element frequency) and thematic analysis were employed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored in an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that draws upon cultural hybridity, narratology, intertextuality, and the social construction of technology. These frameworks collectively provide the critical tools necessary to examine the reimagining of Yorùbá oral traditions through the outlook of artificial intelligence-generated storytelling.

At the core of this investigation is Homi Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity, which offers a useful focus for understanding the dynamic relationship between traditional Yorùbá mythological narratives and contemporary AI technologies. Bhabha's concept foregrounds the creation of new cultural expressions that emerge from the blending of distinct traditions; an idea that resonates strongly with the ways AI reconfigures Yorùbá stories. The theory allows for a critical examination of how AI storytelling simultaneously borrows from and alters Yorùbá mythological forms. It also raises questions about cultural ownership, representation, and the power imbalances embedded in the algorithmic production of indigenous narratives. The theory helps uncover how what appears to be creative hybridity may in fact reflect the dilution or misappropriation of deeply rooted cultural meanings.

The study also draws on narratology and intertextuality, particularly the works of Gérard Genette and Julia Kristeva. These theories guide the analysis of how narrative structures, motifs, and storytelling conventions are employed, or disrupted by AI systems in generating stories inspired by Yorùbá mythology. By examining characterisation, plot development, tone, and symbolic imagery, this framework helps reveal how AI stories differ from the episodic, performative, and orally transmitted nature of Yorùbá storytelling. The intertextual dimension highlights the extent to which AI-generated texts engage with, reinterpret, or fail to reference key mythological elements such as the role of Ọ̀sun, Ẓàngó, Ọ̀bàtálá, and sacred items like Ọ̀ya's necklace or Ẓàngó's axe. It draws attention to both the textual creativity and the cultural omissions embedded in these new narratives.

Finally, the study incorporates the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) theory developed by Pinch and Bijker. SCOT posits that technologies are not autonomous but are shaped by the social, cultural, and ideological values of those who design and use them. This theoretical view is particularly relevant in unpacking how AI storytelling platforms are influenced by dominant Western epistemologies, narrative norms, and ethical assumptions. SCOT enables the interrogation of how AI's outputs reflect broader sociocultural influences and institutional biases, often reproducing cultural forms that are unfamiliar with or inattentive to the intricacies of Yorùbá oral traditions. It also prompts reflection on the agency or lack thereof of indigenous voices in the creation and validation of these digital narratives.

Together, these theoretical perspectives enable a detailed and culturally grounded exploration of AI-generated stories. They help assess not only the aesthetic and narrative features of the texts but also the broader cultural, ethical, and epistemological implications of reimagining Yorùbá oral traditions through artificial intelligence

## Understanding Mythology and the Features of Yorùbá Mythology

**Mythology** refers to a collection of traditional stories or narratives used by a culture to explain the origins of the world, natural phenomena, human behavior, and spiritual beliefs. These stories often involve gods, supernatural beings, heroes, and symbolic events that shape a community's worldview and guide its moral and cultural values (Sangeeta 2021; Beier 2021). Mythology is more than fiction; it encodes the identity, cosmology, and history of a people. In many cultures, myths are passed down orally through storytelling, songs, rituals, and performance.

**Yorùbá mythology**, one of Africa's richest and most enduring oral traditions, embodies the spiritual, cosmological, and ethical systems of the Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria and the African diaspora. Its features reflect a profound engagement with nature, divinity, morality, and human destiny.

At its core is a **pantheon of deities called Òrìṣà**, each associated with specific aspects of life and the cosmos (Akande 2016). Olódumarè is the Supreme Being and source of all creation, while other òrìṣà, such as Ọ̀rúnmilà (wisdom and divination), Ẓàngó (thunder and justice), Ọ̀ya (wind and transformation), Ọ̀ṣun (fertility and love), and Ọ̀bàtálá (peace and purity), represent forces of nature and human virtues. These deities serve as intermediaries between humans and the divine, guiding destiny and justice.

**Oral tradition** plays a vital role in Yorùbá mythology. Myths are preserved and transmitted through folktales (*àlọ́*), praise poetry (*oríkì*), proverbs, and narrative storytelling (*ìtàn*). These forms are rich in metaphor, symbolism, and repetition, reflecting the communal and performative nature of Yorùbá cultural expression (David & Bhuvanewari 2022).

A central element of Yorùbá cosmology is the **duality of existence**: *Òrun* (the spiritual realm) and *Ayé* (the physical world). These realms are interconnected, with constant interaction through divination, ritual, prayer, and ancestral worship (Akande 2016; Agai 2020). The **Ifá divination system**, associated with *Òrúnmilà*, provides access to divine knowledge and mythic wisdom, guiding human decision-making and revealing personal destinies.

Yorùbá myths also explain the **creation of the world**. In one version, *Olódumarè* sends *Ọbàtálá* (or *Odùduwà*) to create the earth, using a chain to descend from the sky and spreading soil with the help of a chicken (Agai 2020; Lloyd 2021). Such myths not only explain origins but also legitimize cultural authority, land ownership, and spiritual order.

Yorùbá mythology is deeply **moral and didactic**, teaching values such as humility, justice, respect, and spiritual balance (Idowu & Adenle 2024). Each *òrìṣà* embodies ethical dimensions of life, offering models for human behavior. Myths often explore the themes of destiny (*àyànmọ*), fate, and divine justice. Importantly, Yorùbá mythology is **adaptive and transnational**. Across the African diaspora, it has merged with local beliefs to form syncretic religions such as *Santería*, *Candomblé*, and *Lucumí*, maintaining its core structure while evolving with context.

In summary, Yorùbá mythology is a vibrant, living tradition that combines cosmology, spirituality, ethics, and storytelling. It continues to shape identity, belief, and practice among Yorùbá people globally.

### **Critical Examination of AI generated Stories and Original Yorùbá Mythology**

#### **The full story of *The Tale of Alantakun (Spider)* and *The Lost Items* from Yorùbá folklore.**

*The Tale of Alantakun (Spider) and the Lost Items*

In the ancient days, Alantakun, the cunning spider, lived in a small village surrounded by lush forests. He was known for his wisdom, trickery, and shape-shifting abilities. One day, while wandering through the forest, Alantakun stumbled upon a hidden path he had never seen before. Curious, he followed the path and discovered a mysterious market. In the market, Alantakun found various lost items: Oya's lost necklace, Şàngó's missing axe, and Ọbàtálá's forgotten staff. Alantakun, seeing an opportunity, gathered the items and hid them in his web.

The owners of the lost items began to search for them. Oya, the goddess of storms, sent her winds to sweep the land. Şàngó, the god of thunder, thundered his drums. Ọbàtálá, the god of creation, crafted a new staff. Alantakun, realising the chaos he had caused, decided to return the items. However, he wanted to keep the reward for himself. Alántakùn visited Oya, claiming he had found her necklace in his web. Oya thanked him and offered a reward. Anansi accepted, but asked for a small test: to retrieve a lost item from the bottom of the river. Oya agreed and gave Anansi a magical shell. With the shell, Anansi dove into the river, retrieved the item, and returned it to Oya.

Şàngó and Ọbàtálá also sought Alántakùn's help, and he retrieved their lost items using his cunning and magical abilities. The gods, impressed with Alántakùn's skills, asked him to become their messenger. Alantakun accepted, and from that day forward, he carried messages between the gods and humans.

### **The full story of *The Island of Lost Things* as generated by AI Storyteller**

#### *The Island of Lost Things*

In the vast expanse of the ocean, where the sun dipped into the horizon and painted the sky with hues of crimson and gold, there

existed a mystical island. They called it the Island of Lost Things, a place where memories and treasures, once lost, reappeared.

The island was said to be hidden from the mortal world, visible only to those who sought it with a pure heart and a determined spirit. Many had attempted to find it, but none had succeeded. Until, Anansi the cunning spider, had lost his prized web, woven with precision and care. He had spent years perfecting its intricate patterns, and its loss was unbearable. Desperate to retrieve it, Anansi set out on a perilous journey to find the Island of Lost Things. After weeks at sea, Anansi's small canoe drifted onto the island's shores. The air was thick with an otherworldly energy, and the trees whispered secrets to the wind. A wise tortoise, ancient and knowing, greeted Anansi.

"Welcome, little spider," the tortoise said. "I sense you've come for something precious. But first, prove yourself worthy."

Anansi agreed to the tortoise's trials.

The first trial was patience. Anansi waited for three days, watching a single leaf unfold from its stem. The second trial was courage; he faced his deepest fears in a mirrored labyrinth. The third trial was wisdom; he solved a riddle that had puzzled the island's wisest sages. With each trial, Anansi grew wiser and more humble. The tortoise revealed the island's secrets, leading him to a chamber filled with lost treasures. Among the treasures, Anansi found his web, radiant and intact. But to his surprise, it was not the only thing he sought. He discovered memories of his ancestors, their stories and struggles, and the wisdom of the ages.

As Anansi prepared to leave, the tortoise shared final words.

"The Island of Lost Things is not just a place; it's a state of mind. Remember, little spider, that true treasure lies within."

Anansi returned to his people, sharing the island's secrets and the wisdom he gained. From that day forward, his webs were woven not just with precision but with the threads of memory, tradition, and the knowledge that true treasure lies within.

## **Analysis**

The AI-generated story, *The Island of Lost Things*, exhibits significant originality when compared to the original tale, *Tale of Alántakùn and the Lost Items*. While both narratives centre on the character of Alántakùn, the cunning spider trickster, the AI's version introduces several new and distinct elements. These include the setting of the Island of Lost Things, which serves as a unique and imaginative backdrop; the introduction of a wise tortoise as a new and guiding character; and a narrative arc structured around trials of patience, courage, and wisdom, elements not present in the original tale.

In terms of authenticity, the AI-generated narrative retains some cultural features drawn from Yorùbá tradition. It preserves Alántakùn's trickster nature, including his cleverness and shape-shifting abilities, and reflects the value Yorùbá culture places on wisdom, tradition, and knowledge. However, the story falls short of fully capturing the depth of Yorùbá cosmology, notably omitting references to significant deities such as Oya, Şàngó, and Qbátálá, whose presence and symbolic items, Oya's necklace, Şàngó's axe, and Qbátálá's staff, play an essential role in the original story's cultural landscape.

Culturally, while the AI version integrates broader African diasporic themes such as reverence for ancestors and the idea that true treasure lies within, it overlooks the more specific Yorùbá cultural motifs. These include the spiritual and cosmological significance of divine artifacts and the explicit intervention of deities in mortal affairs, which are central to the original tale's cultural depth and spiritual resonance.

Despite these differences, both stories share certain thematic concerns. Alántakùn's cleverness and resourcefulness remain at the core, as does the value placed on wisdom and knowledge. However, the AI story diverges by placing greater emphasis on

personal growth, self-discovery, and the virtues of introspection and humility. This shift aligns with the AI narrative's deeper psychological focus.

In terms of characterisation, the AI-generated version offers a more emotionally subtle portrayal of Alántakùn. His internal journey and development are more pronounced, adding a layer of depth absent from the original. Structurally, the AI story adopts a linear narrative progression, which contrasts with the original tale's more episodic format. Finally, the language of the AI narrative is marked by a poetic style and a contemplative tone, setting it apart stylistically and thematically from the more oral, performative cadence of the traditional tale.

## **2. The full original story of *The Story of Òṣun and The Sacred Grove from Yorùbá mythology.***

### *The Story of Òṣun and The Sacred Grove*

In the ancient days, Òṣun, the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility, lived in the mystical realm of Aye. She possessed unparalleled beauty and kindness, radiating warmth and light.

One day, the great god Olódùmarè, creator of the universe, summoned Òṣun to his chambers. He entrusted her with a sacred task.

“Òṣun, I have created a magnificent grove, hidden from mortal eyes. Tend to it, and its secrets will nourish the world.”

Òṣun accepted the task and descended to the earthly realm. She discovered the Sacred Grove, nestled between two great rivers. The grove pulsed with vibrant energy, and its trees whispered ancient wisdom. As Òṣun explored the grove, she encountered various *òrìṣà* (deities), each representing aspects of nature:

Ọya, goddess of storms, stood guard at the grove's entrance.

Şàngó, god of thunder, rumble-drums echoed through the trees.

Obàtálá, god of creation, crafted delicate flowers.

Òşun communed with the orisas, learning their secrets and wisdom. She discovered the grove's heart: a magnificent tree with bark shimmering like the moon.

The tree spoke to Òşun.

"Your presence awakens my power. Together, we shall nurture life and harmony."

Òşun tended the grove, and its energy flourished. She shared its secrets with humanity, teaching them to respect and honour nature. As humans revered the grove, Òşun's power grew. She became the embodiment of love, beauty, and fertility, inspiring devotion and worship.

### **The full story of *The Secret Garden of Dreams* as generated by AI Storyteller**

#### *The Secret Garden of Dreams*

In the mystical realm of Aye, where the sun dipped into the horizon and painted the sky with hues of crimson and gold, there existed a hidden garden. This was the Secret Garden of Dreams, a place where the deepest desires and fears of the heart dwelled.

Òşun, a young priestess of the goddess Yemoja, stumbled upon the garden while searching for a rare herb to heal her ailing mother. As she wandered through the garden's winding paths, she discovered a majestic tree with bark that shimmered like the moon.

Suddenly, the tree spoke to Òşun, its voice echoing in her mind.

"Welcome, young one. I sense you've come seeking answers."

Òşun shared her mother's illness and her desire to heal her.

"I shall reveal the secrets of the garden," the tree said, "but first, confront your own fears."

Òşun agreed and ventured deeper into the garden. She encountered a dark pool reflecting her deepest fears: losing her mother, failing as a priestess, and being alone.

With each step, the pool's waters rippled, revealing hidden truths. Òşun realised her fears were rooted in her own doubts and insecurities. The tree reappeared, offering guidance.

"Your heart holds the power to heal. Listen to its whispers."

Ọ̀ṣun listened, and her heart revealed ancient wisdom passed down through her lineage. She discovered the herb she sought was within herself, hidden in her own dreams. With newfound understanding, Ọ̀ṣun returned to her mother and healed her. From that day forward, Ọ̀ṣun tended the Secret Garden of Dreams, nurturing her own heart and guiding others to do the same.

### **Analysis**

The AI-generated story, *The Secret Garden of Dreams*, differs considerably from the original *Story of Ọ̀ṣun and the Sacred Grove*. Although both narratives centre on the figure of Ọ̀ṣun, their portrayals differ substantially. In the AI version, Ọ̀ṣun is no longer depicted as a goddess but reimagined as a young priestess, embarking on a journey of personal growth and self-discovery. The story introduces an entirely new setting, the Secret Garden of Dreams which replaces the culturally significant Sacred Grove of the original. This shift in location and role reframes the narrative from a mythic exploration of divine power to a more introspective and individualised coming-of-age tale.

In terms of authenticity, the AI-generated story retains certain recognisable elements of Yorùbá culture. Ọ̀ṣun remains associated with themes of love, beauty, and fertility, and the story highlights the importance of nature and the pursuit of harmony, both central to Ọ̀ṣun's symbolic identity. Nevertheless, the narrative lacks key cultural and cosmological references that give the original story its depth and resonance. Specifically, it omits mention of Olódùmarè, the supreme creator in Yorùbá belief, the spiritual and historical significance of the Sacred Grove, and the roles of other central deities such as Oya, Şàngó, and Ọ̀bàtálá.

Culturally, while the AI story incorporates broad African diasporic motifs, particularly the reverence for nature and the value of

ancestral wisdom and lineage, it misses the specificity of Yorùbá cosmology. Notably absent are the Sacred Grove as a divine and symbolic space marking Òṣun's spiritual dominion, and the presence of the òrìṣàs, whose interactions traditionally maintain cosmic balance and social order within Yorùbá mythology.

Thematically, both stories explore Òṣun's deep connection to nature and fertility, as well as her journey toward personal insight. Yet, the AI version places stronger emphasis on overcoming internal fears, insecurities, and the importance of listening to one's heart and intuition. This thematic shift gives the story a more introspective and psychological tone, contrasting with the mythic and communal orientation of the original tale.

Regarding characterisation, the AI narrative reimagines Òṣun not as an immortal goddess, but as a mortal priestess whose personal development is foregrounded. This transformation allows for a more emotionally detailed exploration of her inner world, but distances the story from its divine mythological roots. Structurally, the AI story adopts a linear and inward-looking narrative, as opposed to the original's more layered and symbolic structure. Finally, the language and tone of the AI text are marked by a poetic sensibility and contemplative rhythm, reinforcing the introspective quality of the retelling and differentiating it from the performative, oral tone typical of traditional Yorùbá storytelling.

### **3. The full original *Story of Odùduwà* and the Founding of Ilé-Ifè from Yorùbá mythology.**

#### *The Story of Odùduwà and the Founding of Ilé-Ifè*

In the beginning, Olódùmarè, the Supreme God, created the world and its inhabitants. Desiring to establish order and sanctity on earth, he summoned his favourite son, Odùduwà, and commanded him to descend to the earth and establish a sacred city. Obedient to his father's will, Odùduwà set out on this divine mission, carrying with him a chain, a handful of earth, and a five-toed cockerel.

He descended from the heavens and landed upon the primordial waters that covered the earth. At that moment, he released the cockerel, which scattered the earth he had brought with him. As the cockerel scratched and spread the earth over the surface of the waters, solid land began to form. Odùduwà then used the chain to mark the boundaries of the city he was to build. While engaged in his sacred task, Odùduwà encountered Eri, an ancestral figure of great significance. Eri offered him a gift, a calabash containing the wisdom of the gods. Recognising the divine value of the offering, Odùduwà accepted the calabash and with it, he founded Ilé-Ifè, the sacred city. He became its first king, ruling with profound wisdom and unwavering justice.

Under Odùduwà's enlightened leadership, Ilé-Ifè flourished. Agriculture prospered, bringing sustenance and abundance to the people. The arts and crafts thrived, enriching the cultural life of the city. Ilé-Ifè became a revered centre of spiritual guidance, drawing seekers and sages alike. After Odùduwà, his descendants continued his legacy, expanding the city's influence and preserving its sacred heritage.

### **The full story of *The Lost City of Eldarath* as generated by AI Storyteller**

#### *The Lost City of Eldarath*

In the dawn of time, Odùduwà, the founder of Ilé-Ifè, sought a new home for his people. Guided by the gods, he ventured into the mystical forest of Okigbo.

As Odùduwà wandered, the forest's ancient energies stirred. The trees whispered secrets, and the wind carried the whispers to Odùduwà's ears.

"Follow the river of life," the wind whispered.

Odùduwà followed the river, which flowed into a hidden valley. In the valley's heart stood the Lost City of Eldarath. Eldarath's gates shimmered with an otherworldly glow. Odùduwà entered, finding

a city of marvels: towers of crystal that hummed with sacred energy, streets paved with gold dust, and temples dedicated to the gods.

Odùduwà met the city's guardian, the wise and enigmatic Eri.

"Welcome, Odùduwà," Eri said. "Eldarath has awaited your arrival. Claim the city, and its secrets shall be yours."

Odùduwà accepted the challenge. Eri presented him with three trials: Retrieve the Sceptre of Light from the underworld; solve the Riddle of the Ancients; and Face the Mirror of Truth.

Odùduwà succeeded, and Eldarath's secrets were revealed: The city's ancient magic, The language of the gods, and The path to the afterlife. With Eldarath's knowledge, Odùduwà founded Ilé-Ifè, blending divine wisdom with human ingenuity.

### **Analysis**

The AI-generated story, *The Lost City of Eldarath*, marks a significant departure from the original *Story of Odùduwà and the Founding of Ilé-Ifè*. Although both narratives focus on the figure of Odùduwà, their focus and settings diverge considerably. In the AI version, the scene shifts from the foundational myth of Ilé-Ifè to a new and entirely imagined realm, the mystical forest of Okigbo and the fabled Lost City of Eldarath. Rather than chronicling the origins of a sacred city, the AI narrative focus on a journey of discovery, laden with fantastical features such as crystal towers, golden streets, and a series of mythic trials. This imaginative reimagining moves the story into the realm of speculative adventure rather than traditional myth.

Despite these innovations, the AI-generated story retains certain key elements from Yorùbá cosmology. Odùduwà remains a central figure, still recognised in his foundational role. The character of Eri is also preserved as an ancestral guide, and the story continues to emphasise the importance of divine direction in human affairs. However, the AI version omits several culturally vital aspects that

are foundational to the original myth. There is no mention of Olódùmarè, the Supreme God, whose role is pivotal in Yorùbá creation narratives. The symbolic items traditionally associated with Odùduwà's descent, such as the chain from heaven, the earth he carried in a calabash, and the five-toed cockerel, are entirely absent. Furthermore, the sacred significance of Ilé-Ifè as the spiritual and historical centre of the Yorùbá cosmos is replaced by the fictional and fantastical city of Eldarath.

The cultural motifs in the AI story reflect broader African diasporic concerns, particularly the enduring power of ancestral wisdom and the guiding force of prophecy. These elements resonate with the moral and spiritual dimensions of traditional storytelling. Also, the story misses the unique symbolic layers of the Yorùbá creation myth, particularly Odùduwà's descent from heaven and the mystical calabash believed to contain divine knowledge. These missing elements diminish the story's origin in Yorùbá spiritual and cosmological traditions.

Thematically, both stories emphasise Odùduwà's leadership and wisdom, as well as the guiding influence of the divine. However, the AI narrative differ by focusing more heavily on Odùduwà's personal development through a series of trials, highlighting his courage, determination, and capacity for growth. In doing so, the story foregrounds themes of individual challenge and the exhilaration of exploration, developing Odùduwà more as an archetypal hero than a divine founder.

In terms of characterisation, the AI story presents Odùduwà as a brave and determined leader whose journey is filled with obstacles and moral lessons. This portrayal lends him a more humanised, heroic profile, departing from his traditionally divine and ancestral status. Structurally, the AI tale unfolds in a more episodic and complex manner, with built-up challenges and turning points, unlike the more linear and symbolic structure of the original myth.

The language and tone of the story also differ: while the original carries the solemnity and sacred rhythm of oral tradition, the AI version adopts a more fantastical and adventurous tone, with richly descriptive and imaginative language that aligns with the story's mythopoeic reinvention.

#### **4. Original Full story of *The Legend of Ògún, the God of Iron* from Yorùbá mythology**

The Legend of Ògún, the God of Iron

In a world plagued by chaos, humans struggled to survive. The gods, led by Olódùmarè, convened to create a solution.

Ògún, the youngest god, volunteered to descend to earth and bring order. Olódùmarè gifted Ògún with a magical iron staff:

"With this staff, shape the world and bring harmony."

Ògún arrived on earth, finding humans scattered and disorganised. He used his staff to clear paths, forge tools, and build shelters. Ògún's staff transformed into various instruments: a hoe to cultivate the land, a hammer to shape iron, and a sword to protect the innocent. Humans marvelled at Ògún's creations and begged him to stay. Ògún accepted, becoming the god of iron, technology, and civilization. Ògún's intense energy sparked conflict with his brother, Şàngó, god of thunder. Olódùmarè intervened.

"Ògún, your strength must serve humanity. Şàngó, your thunder must protect the skies."

#### **The full story of "*The Clockwork Kingdom*" as generated by AI Storyteller**

*The Clockwork Kingdom*

In the mystical realm of Ògún, where gears ticked and steam hissed, the Clockwork Kingdom thrived. Ògún, the god of iron, forged innovative machines that powered the kingdom's intricate clockwork mechanisms.

King Odùduwà, founder of the kingdom, sought to modernize his realm. He commissioned Ògún to create an extraordinary clockwork device:

"A device that harmonizes technology and nature,"  
Odùduwà requested.

Ògún crafted the Chronos Engine, a marvel of clockwork ingenuity. The engine synchronized the kingdom's gears, pistons, and pendulums, optimizing efficiency.

However, as the Chronos Engine hummed to life, the kingdom's natural balance began to falter. Rivers slowed, plants withered, and the skies grew dull. Òrúnmìlà, the wise babaláwo (priest), sensed the disruption:

"Ògún, your creation has upset the harmony. The  
kingdom's heartbeat must synchronize with nature's  
rhythm."

Ògún realised his mistake and collaborated with Òrúnmìlà to recalibrate the Chronos Engine. Together, they infused the device with sacred Ifá energy.

The revised engine resonated with the kingdom's natural pulse.

Rivers flowed freely, plants flourished, and the skies cleared.

King Odùduwà praised Ògún and Òrúnmìlà

"Your synergy has saved our kingdom. The Clockwork  
Kingdom shall thrive, harmonizing technology and nature."

## **Analysis**

The AI-generated story, *The Clockwork Kingdom*, represents a substantial departure from the original *Legend of Ògún, the God of Iron*. While both narratives feature the central figure of Ògún, the AI version reimagines the setting entirely, placing the story within a mystical realm filled with gears, steam, and intricate clockwork mechanisms. This imaginative landscape shifts the narrative focus from the traditional Yorùbá themes of creation and cosmic order to a more futuristic exploration of technology, innovation, and balance. With fantastical inventions such as the Chronos Engine and a realm governed by mechanical harmony, the AI story clearly

leans into steampunk aesthetics rather than mythological cosmology.

Despite these differences, the AI story retains certain core elements of Yorùbá cultural identity. Ògún is still portrayed as the god of iron, and Òrúnmìlà's presence reinforces the value of wisdom and the spiritual connection to Ifá divination. These cultural characteristics give the story some measure of authenticity. However, the narrative omits key aspects essential to the traditional legend. There is no reference to Olódùmarè, the Supreme God in Yorùbá cosmology, nor is there mention of Ògún's magical iron staff, a significant emblem of his divine power. Additionally, the profound conflict between Ògún and Šàngó, an important narrative thread in many versions of the myth, is entirely absent from this retelling.

In terms of cultural motifs, the AI story aligns more closely with general African diasporic concerns, such as the importance of technology, innovation, and maintaining harmony between human creations and the natural world. While these are meaningful in their own right, the story overlooks specific Yorùbá motifs tied to divine creation, order, and the role of deities in the advancement of human civilization. The absence of divine intervention and symbolic progression weakens its connection to the deeper cosmological themes traditionally associated with Ògún.

Both the original legend and the AI-generated version share foundational themes, particularly Ògún's strength, ingenuity, and the necessity of divine guidance. However, the AI narrative places stronger emphasis on contemporary concerns such as technological harmony, synchronicity, collaboration, and the balance between innovation and nature. Ògún's character is accordingly reinterpreted: rather than simply being a strong and creative protector, he emerges as an innovative, problem-solving figure who thrives on cooperation and synergy. This characterisation

aligns him more with the archetype of a visionary engineer than a fierce warrior deity.

The narrative structure of the AI story is notably linear and Western in style, relying on a clear sequence of events and character development arcs. In contrast, the original legend unfolds in an episodic, mythological format that reflects the oral traditions from which it originates. The storytelling mode is thus transformed from a sacred, symbolic transmission of cosmological knowledge to an adventure-driven tale with a modern sensibility.

The language and tone further differentiate the two versions. The AI story employs modern, descriptive, and adventurous language that complements its speculative and imaginative setting. The original, however, is rich in poetic imagery and symbolism, reflecting the performative and ritualistic dimensions of oral storytelling in Yorùbá culture.

Ultimately, *The Clockwork Kingdom* showcases creative reinterpretation and narrative flair, but its departure from traditional Yorùbá mythology is marked. While it retains some cultural details, it sacrifices many of the specific deities, motifs, and ritual practices that give the original legend its spiritual and cultural gravitas.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The study reveals several key findings that underscore the tensions between creativity and cultural authenticity in AI-generated storytelling. AI-generated stories substantially deviated from traditional Yorùbá myths, introducing new settings, characters, and narrative arcs. These deviations included the emergence of entirely novel environments, such as *the mystical Island of Lost Things*, *the Secret Garden of Dreams*, and *the Clockwork Kingdom*, as well as the invention of new figures and trial-based narrative structures not

present in original Yorùbá oral traditions. While these stories retained some Yorùbá cultural characteristics, such as the cleverness of Aláńtakùn, the association of Òṣun with fertility and beauty, or Ògún's role as a creator and inventor, they lacked specific references to key deities like Olódùmarè, Ṣàngó, Ọbàtálá, and Ọya. Similarly, they omitted symbolic cultural motifs and significant events foundational to Yorùbá cosmology, such as Odùduwà's descent with the calabash and iron chain, or the symbolic objects like Ọya's necklace, Ṣàngó's axe, and Ọbàtálá's staff. This absence contributes to cultural dilution and represents a substantial shift away from the deeply embedded spiritual, historical, and cosmological elements of traditional Yorùbá myth.

Another key finding is that the AI-generated narratives emphasised personal growth, self-discovery, harmony, and balance, shifting the thematic focus away from the original myths' preoccupation with creation, cosmic order, divine intervention, and the founding of human civilisation. Themes such as introspection, overcoming fear, technological harmony, and emotional development permeate the AI narratives, thus transforming divine figures into relatable characters with modern existential dilemmas. The reimagining of Yorùbá deities in more modern, Westernised contexts, such as Òṣun as a young priestess or Ògún as a visionary engineer in a steampunk kingdom, raises concerns about the potential alteration of their cultural significance and the risk of perpetuating cultural appropriation. Furthermore, AI-generated stories adopt linear, narrative-driven structures that reflect Western storytelling traditions, thereby differing from the episodic, cyclical, and symbolic formats characteristic of traditional Yorùbá myths, which were historically preserved through oral transmission, communal performance, and ritualised language.

Additionally, it was found that AI cannot tone-mark or generate Yorùbá folktales in the original language due to the complexity of Yorùbá tonology and orthography. This technical limitation not

only hinders the accurate reproduction of Yorùbá oral narratives but also distances the AI outputs from the linguistic richness and performative aesthetics that define the original folktale tradition. The tonal system of the Yorùbá language is integral to meaning-making, cultural memory, and mythological expression, dimensions that remain largely inaccessible to current AI models.

These findings suggest that while AI-generated stories are undoubtedly creative and engaging, they may compromise the cultural integrity and authenticity of traditional Yorùbá mythology. This raises concerns that signal grave implications, particularly in areas such as cultural preservation, representation, authenticity, and education. The dilution of cultural motifs and significant events may lead to the erosion of Yorùbá cultural heritage, a view consistent with the assertion of Oyinlade (2024), who argues that the use of technology has negatively impacted Yorùbá moral values. Moreover, the reimagining of Yorùbá deities in modern, Westernised contexts may contribute to the commodification and misrepresentation of sacred cultural knowledge, bordering on cultural appropriation.

The lack of involvement from Yorùbá scholars, elders, or cultural custodians in the generation of these narratives further compounds the issue. It removes narrative authority from the community of origin and undermines the legitimacy and accuracy of these AI-produced texts. This concern is echoed in Gaith (2024), who raises alarm about the ethical and ontological risks that accompany AI's encroachment into cultural domains. Hong (2022) practically explored ethical dilemmas inherent in the application of AI technologies to heritage conservation, showing how easily cultural knowledge can be manipulated, decontextualised, or trivialised. In a similar vein, Prunkl (2021) identifies authenticity, authorship, and epistemic reliability as crucial parameters often undermined by uncritical deployment of AI in storytelling.

The educational implications of these findings are equally profound. The dissemination of AI-generated stories as representative of Yorùbá mythology may misinform both local and global audiences, perpetuating cultural misconceptions and distorting the epistemological foundations upon which these myths are based. Without cultural grounding, such stories risk becoming polished simulations that carry little of the ethical, metaphysical, and historical substance of the originals. These concerns are further supported by Benford (2015), who critiques the moral instability introduced by digital heritage reconstructions, as well as Baihakki and Mohamed (2023), who caution against the unchecked adoption of AI in educational and cultural settings. Kooli (2022) also critically warns that AI models often operate with questionable standards when applied to indigenous or sacred traditions, and that these standards must be rigorously interrogated and ethically managed.

The convergence of these scholarly positions affirms the importance of safeguarding cultural epistemologies from technological overreach. By acknowledging these findings and implementing context-sensitive recommendations, it is possible to harness the creative potential of AI storytelling without compromising the cultural integrity and authenticity of traditional Yorùbá mythology. Central to this effort is the necessity of collaboration with Yorùbá scholars, language experts, spiritual custodians, and cultural historians, to ensure that AI-generated outputs are culturally informed, ethically grounded, and epistemologically respectful.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and Yorùbá mythology, analysing AI-generated stories based on traditional Yorùbá myths. The findings highlight significant deviations from the original myths, raising concerns about cultural preservation, authenticity, and representation.

The study demonstrates that AI-generated stories, while creative and engaging, may compromise the cultural integrity and authenticity of traditional Yorùbá mythology. The lack of involvement from Yorùbá scholars, elders, or cultural authorities in AI storytelling undermines the legitimacy of these stories.

Therefore, the following recommendations are suggested:

*Collaborative Storytelling:* Involve Yorùbá scholars, elders, and cultural authorities in AI storytelling to ensure authenticity and cultural accuracy.

*Cultural Sensitivity Training:* Develop AI systems that recognize and respect cultural nuances, motifs, and significant events.

*Contextual Education:* Provide educational frameworks that contextualize AI-generated stories within traditional Yorùbá mythology.

*Critical Evaluation:* Encourage critical evaluation of AI-generated stories, acknowledging their creative potential while recognizing cultural limitations.

As AI storytelling continues to evolve, it is crucial to prioritise cultural preservation, authenticity, and representation. By embracing collaborative storytelling, cultural sensitivity training, and contextual education, we can harness AI's creative potential while respecting the cultural heritage of Yorùbá mythology.

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