

## Women Inheritance as a Paradigm of the Intersection between Modernity and Tradition in Francis Imbuga's Aminata

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### Abstract

This paper explores women inheritance as a cultural paradigm of the intersection between modernity and tradition in Francis Imbuga's Aminata. It pinpoints such intersection through the lens of post-colonialism. The Kenyan native tradition is influenced by the British imperial modernity. Therefore, it demonstrates the cultural dichotomy between modernity and traditions because the natives reject any foreign interference in their cultural affairs, which is not sufficiently tackled in previous studies. The native characters' opposition to women inheritance will be scrutinized to unravel Imbuga's depiction of the natives' rejection of the colonizers' modernity. The interpretation of tradition is going to be pursued as a derisory response to the postcolonial persecutory culture regarding women inheritance in the aboriginal Kenyan society. By opposing the postcolonial modernity, the native Kenyans could preserve their ancestors' cultural traditions i.e., their cultural identity is empowered by hindering women inheritance. The play approaches common themes regarding modernity and tradition; and it deals with the Kenyan aboriginal nations that were formed according to British cultural imperialism. As such, Imbuga offers a new literary insight on the drastic cultural changes in Kenyan in the ensuing years of post-colonialism. The study unravels his perception of the natives' rejection of the postcolonial modernity in order to accentuate the supremacy of the native traditions over the foreign culture. Thus, the significance of the study lies in its original reading of modernity and tradition and how they enhance the Kenyan natives' reaction to the emergence of women inheritance in their society.

**Keywords:** Identity; Imbuga; Kenya; Modernity; Post-colonialism; Tradition; Women Inheritance.

ميراث المرأة كنموذج للتداخل بين الأصالة والمعاصرة في مسرحية أميناتا لفرانسيس أمبوغا

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### ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على قضية ميراث المرأة كنموذج للتداخل بين الأصالة والمعاصرة في مسرحية أميناتا لفرانسيس أمبوغا). إذ يحاول فيها الباحث أن يكشف النقاب عن هذا التداخل في ضوء نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار. وبتعبير آخر، تركز هذه الدراسة على تأثير الأصالة في كينيا بالمعاصرة التي جلبها الاستعمار البريطاني للبلاد. فكان الهدف منها بيان مدى القطيعة الثقافية بين الأصالة والمعاصرة لدى مواطني كينيا الأصليين؛ لرفضهم التدخل الأجنبي في شؤونهم الثقافية، وهذا الأمر لم يناقش في الدراسات المسرحية السابقة إلا نادراً. وحللت هذه الدراسة الأصالة في هذه المسرحية عن طريق إبراز مواقف المواطنين الساخرة من ثقافة ما بعد الاستعمار التي تتميز بالاضطهاد عند ترويجها لقضية ميراث المرأة في الأوساط الاجتماعية في كينيا. وتناولت أيضاً رفض المواطنين الكينيين الأصليين للمعاصرة الاستعمارية، ومحافظتهم على تقاليدهم الثقافية الموروثة تعزيراً لهويتهم القومية، من خلال رفضهم قضية ميراث المرأة جملة وتفصيلاً. فهذه الدراسة تتناول المواضيع العامة المتعلقة بالأصالة والمعاصرة، وتحلل صورة المجتمعات المحلية في كينيا التي تشكلت على أسس السياسة الثقافية للاستعمار البريطاني. فأهمية الدراسة تكمن في قراءتها الجديدة للأصالة والمعاصرة؛ إذ يقدم أمبوغا بعداً أدبياً جديداً فيما يخص التغيرات الثقافية الجذرية في كينيا في السنوات التي أعقبت حقبة ما بعد الاستعمار، من خلال تصويره لرفض المواطنين الأصليين للمعاصرة في حقبة ما بعد الاستعمار، وتأكيداً لتفوق أصالهم الثقافية، وعلو كعبها على الثقافة الأجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، أمبوغا، كينيا، المعاصرة، ما بعد الاستعمار، الأصالة، ميراث المرأة

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## 1. Introduction

Post-colonialism posits the question of the relationship between modernity and native traditions. The presence of the colonizers on the colonized people's lands arouses a vital interrogation regarding power, culture, hegemony and so forth. In other words, the colonizers are hegemonic and powerful and, therefore, their power influences the colonized people cultural and ways of life to a great extent. In this case, the colonized people must cope with their colonizers in order to ensure peaceful and stable life. Modernity, which is the essence of othering, relates to the colonizers hegemonic power. Such power is used to subjugate and harness the colonized people's life. On the other hand, tradition exclusivity relates to the colonized people's inherited cultural conventions and their ancestors' traditions.

The relationship between modernity and traditions is tackled in postcolonial critical perspectives. This is due to the fact that modernity and tradition have discrepant and different characteristics. Furthermore, the colonizers' culture differs from the colonized people's culture. As a result they exert substantial influences upon each other. Yet, the colonizers have suppressive power which enables them to be superior over the colonized people. For this reason, the discussion and scrutiny of the intersection between modernity and tradition is of utmost importance since it clarifies the cultural changes that occur as a result of this intersection. It illuminates how the foreign culture deeply affects the native culture.

The purpose of this study is to discover the ethnic differences between the colonial residuals of modernity and traditions in Francis Imbuga's *Aminata*. The study will focus on the representation of modernity and tradition as an exemplification of the intersection between the colonizers and the colonized people. The colonial residuals, or signs, will be discussed as the core of modernity; and the colonized people's devotion to their native rites, culture, and social customs will be accentuated as tradition which is contradicted and opposed by modernity. Before interpreting modernity and tradition in the selected works, I will briefly introduce them in the light of post-colonialism. As for the study's methodology, this study follows a qualitative study of the selected play. It will conduct a textual analysis of the play's characters, settings, and plots. Hence, a close reading of the ethnic peculiarities is going to be followed. The characters will be examined in terms of their racial features i.e., their color, identity, ethnicity, culture, and social background. As such, they will be analyzed from a postcolonial perspective. Being so, the notions of modernity and tradition are going to be utilized to demonstrate the differences among the characters i.e., how post-colonialism plays an essential role in oppressing the indigenous people; and consequently the traditional identity of the Kenyan society which resists this oppression. Thus, these characters will be interpreted to explore the sense of women inheritance and its pertinent issues portrayed in the course of the play's plots.

## 2. Modernity and Tradition: Postcolonial Insights

The second half of the twentieth century was a period of tremendous cultural changes. Modernity and tradition are blatant aspects of such changes as they have congruent relation to culture. It also was an era ethnic complication due to the rise of post-colonialism. Approximately after the 1950s, the majority of world countries gained their independence from their colonizers (Djagalov, 2020). Therefore, they began to develop their previously harassed national identity after the retreat of the colonizers from their homelands. Consequently, national identities were adopted a kind of amalgamation of modernity, brought by colonialism, and tradition, which relates to their inherited customs, traditions, beliefs, norms, conventions, cultures and so forth. In this sense, modernity and tradition is a discernable issue in recent postcolonial cultural critiques (Young, 2020). It posits discursive explication of the relationship between the natives of a certain land and foreign interferences.

Post-colonialism presents the contradiction between the colonizers and the colonized people (Thakur, 2020). There is no justifiable equilibrium between them, and, inevitably, they would never be equal or in good accord. Modernity and tradition are thoroughly tackled in this context (Abu Jweid, 2016). The colonizers exemplify the colonial agendas planned to persecute the colonized people. Hence, the colonized people initiate "anti-colonial" reaction to get rid of their colonizers oppression. In *Postcolonial Hauntologies: African Women's Discourses of the Female Body*, Ayo Coly (2019) discusses the contradictory peculiarities of modernity and tradition within post-colonialism. Coly (2019) argues that the "colonial and anticolonial narratives" are literary demonstration providing "statements about cultural values, modernity, tradition and progress" (p.4). Moreover, modernity and tradition have paradoxical conflicts in which they do not appeal to each other

(Abu Jweid, 2020b). The reason behind their antithetical relationship lies in the ethnic disparities between them; and they do not relate to each other in terms of morality and hegemonic affairs (Abu Jweid, 2020a). Accordingly, morality is one component of the irreconcilable homogeneity between modernity and tradition in post-colonial literary contexts.

In other cases, modernity and tradition are treated in the historical evolution of the colonized countries (Steer, 2020). They construct the entanglement trajectory which comprises the mutual influences between the colonizers and the colonized people. Jack Palmer (2018), in *Entanglements of Modernity, Colonialism and Genocide*, approaches the historical insights of modernity and tradition. He (2018) reinforces his discussion with post-colonialisms because it enhances his view of the reciprocal effect produced by the colonizers to subjugate the colonized people. He (2018) claims that the interconnectedness between modernity and tradition “appears in a variety of specific forms that are entangled both with one another and in transnational relations of power” (p.9). Modernity and tradition, in consequence, undergo the influence of power.

Power plays a substantial role in identifying the victory of modernity and tradition. The owner of that power would have decisive triumph (Abu Jweid, 2020c). On the one hand, modernity could have that power since it has the military arsenal to oppress the colonized people. On the other hand, the colonized people would have the counter power by their stout determination and will to preserve their identity regardless their colonizers well-prepared military power (Dinero, 2020). Helen Yitah and Helen Lauer (2019), in *Philosophical Foundations of the African Humanities Through Postcolonial Perspectives*, approach the power of modernity by means of technology. They contend that modernity has multiplicity of potentials that make it superior to tradition; Yitah and Lauer (2019) comment: “There is no single form of modernity based on a world system; rather, there are multiple or plural modernities and appropriate technologies” (p.123). Tradition, however, could not emulate the gigantic technological prosperity of modernity; and “tradition does not necessarily thwart development” (p.123). Yitah and Lauer (2019), here, refer to tradition’s disability to have equal power curb modernity’s power. As a result, modernity and tradition are in everlasting conflict which could not be paused except by enormous power (Panich, 2020).

This paper, therefore, will analyze modernity and tradition portrayed in *Aminata* from postcolonial perspective. The conflicting relationship between modernity and tradition is going to be accentuated through the victory of the colonized people. The fictional characters are portrayed as powerful, not by technology or military power, but by determination and fortitude. Therefore, the paper’s purpose is to shed light on a cultural issue related to modernity and tradition, which is women inheritance in *Aminata*.

### **3. Literature Review**

Imbuga’s *Animata* is tackled in different fields. Eugene Erven (2005), in *Community Theatre: Global Perspectives*, studies Imbuga’s *Aminata*. Erven claims that Imbuga negligence of the ethical aspects of *Aminata* would obliterate the moral ramification. To support his argument, Erven (2005) scrutinizes the common understanding and analyses of the play. He (2005) finds that the majority of studies only focus on the play as a “parody” and imitation of contemporary colonial attitudes (p.181). Correspondingly, he (2005) concludes that the bulk of researchers interpret the latent colonial affairs in the play. In essence, Erven (2005) reviews these studies to demonstrate his own argument. He (2005) proves that the analysis of the play in the light of colonialism would not be sufficient since “intellectuals,” who perceive the play from a colonial perspective, study the play’s narrative simplicity and humorous modes. He (2005) assesses the play’s irony in the sense of “irreverence” (p.181); the weakly admired potentials of the play. This is the critical premise for Erven (2005) who emphasizes ethics in the first place.

Erven (2005) demonstrates how important the ethical side of Imbuga’s *Aminata* is. He (2005) says that morality in connected with the play in the thematic form. This utilization of colonial oppression by the democratic representative colonial government is the most essential ethical issue in the play. There should be disintegration between us and the “authorities” that legislate the standards of “right” and “wrong” in order to comprehend the ethical message of the play (p.181). As an author (Imbuga) who is profoundly concerned with colonialism, Imbuga interpolates some other writings in his play. Erven (2005) contends that the style of Imbuga’s *Aminata* has referential comments about the history of colonialism in Kenya. Most interestingly, Imbuga is concerned with this issue because it has insightful recounts about the process by which the

colonial oppression were first introduced to the Kenyan society in the early phases of African colonialism.

In *Aminata*, similarly, Imbuga recounts the events through the dramatis personae's narrative voices. In the initial dialogues, there is a narrative description of a book that portrays the end of the world. Erven (2005) affirms that the ethical message of Imbuga's *Aminata*; and the play does not allow space for the technical structure of the plot. It rather focuses on the thematic implications. As such, the most celebrated thematic issue in the play is the perception of colonials as supreme knowledge that results in progression for humanity.

Erven (2005) studies the play by applying traumatic critical insights to analyze slavery depicted in Imbuga's *Aminata*. Erven (2005) argues that the play is a significant African play that seriously tackles slavery regardless its complex narrative concerns. For the sake of having a comprehensive outlook at the play, Erven (2005) reviews the central previous studies that approach the play from other critical perspectives. Chief among these critical stances are post-colonialism, feminism, the grotesque, the fantastic, the sublime, magical realism and so forth. Erven (2005) claims that his study will be a mixture of these narrative elements, but in different critical approaches. Being so, Erven (2005) concentrates on these narrative facts but it highlights the authorial position and the play's poetic language to come up with new understanding of marvelous realism genre. Erven (2005) considers these critical components as the play's aesthetic quality that goes along with modernism's technique of narrative fragmentation. By analyzing the play's poetic language, Erven (2005) tries to explore trauma in the play caused by African slavery, especially in Kenya. Such narrative trauma, in turn, results in trauma for readers who are tracing the play's speaking subject.

Richard Juang and Noelle Morrisette (2012) study the unusual events in Imbuga's *Aminata* in *Africa and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History: a Multidisciplinary Encyclopedia*. They (2012) contend that Imbuga's *Aminata* celebrates many supernatural features. Being an African author, Imbuga tackles the Gothic themes by inserting the supernatural elements, such as frightening oppression that are real representations of Gothic fiction. Juang and Morrisette (2012) say that Imbuga approaches the Gothic elements in an avant-garde term for Gothic genre, namely, "the story of cultural haunting" that is present in African literature. Consequently, Juang and Morrisette (2012) justify the selection of the play for the analysis because Imbuga chooses the ghost as a link between the past and the present through her play. Juang and Morrisette (2012) apply magical realism to examine the relationship between the oppression and other main characters. Moreover, Juang and Morrisette (2012) use magical realism to interpret the relationship among the members of African communities. As such, Juang's and Morrisette's (2012) study focuses on the extent to which the ghost influences these charterers in terms of the "personal and collective levels" (p.600). In this way, Imbuga's *Aminata* is argued to be a symbolical presentation of the "private" and "collective past" that is an authentic embodiment of Imbuga's own conceptualization of the past. Just so, Juang and Morrisette (2012) maintain that the ghost provides a cultural remedial role to heal the African people from the traumatic experience caused by slavery.

Juang and Morrisette (2012) apply Michel Foucault's philosophical arguments to analyze Imbuga's *Aminata*. They (2012) say that Foucault has several philosophical ideas about history that emerged in the twentieth century. His theories cover many critical spaces in different fields, like sociology, philosophy and history. New Historicism is, therefore, one of those critical positions that had been deeply influenced by his theories. Accordingly, Juang and Morrisette (2012) claim that Imbuga's *Aminata* has been a subject for analysis in different critical fields. The play reflects Imbuga's obsession with racism and its relative issues. Yet, Juang and Morrisette (2012) tend not to approach the play in the context of racism, but they try to tackle it in the light of New Historicism. More precisely, their study intends to analyze the play by depending of Foucault's critical arguments. Juang and Morrisette (2012) attempt to explore the nature of truth presented in the play alongside the nature of history through exposing the ideas of "discursive discourses" and how it is connected to power. They (2012) analyze the play's discourse as a means of empowering black people who search for gaining power because they are silenced nations (p.601).

Similarly, Martin Banham (2008), in *A History of Theatre in Africa*, identifies Imbuga's narrative potential that renders the black nations, which are marginalized, that retell the loss of their history to prove themselves as being eligible to be part of the lost history in *Animata*. By retelling their lost history, the black nations also eliminate the white hegemonic ideological

supremacy. Although Banham (2008) depends on Foucault's denial of gaining complete liberty, the manifestations of struggle and survival dominate the play's narrative atmosphere. In this regard, Banham (2008) cites Foucault's ideas concerning the primary tenets of New Historicism. They chose special New Historical ideas from Foucault's arguments to discuss three prominent notions in the play, namely, resistance, survival and dominance that dominate the play's historical background.

The idea of slave and master relationship has been also discussed in Imbuga's *Aminata*. Banham (2008) looks into the critical reflections of slave-master relationship. Banham (2008) contends that Imbuga destructs the inherited hegemonic relationship between slaves and their masters. Banham (2008) traces slavery in the African slavery. He (2008) claims that Imbuga exposes the marginalized narrative speaking subjects about the slave-master relationship in the African history. Imbuga, therefore, pursues the meticulous historical background of slave-master relationship in the play. For this reason, Banham (2008) concentrates on the horror dominating the Middle Passage which, in turns, exemplifies the horror of slavery in the course of the African history. Banham (2008) alludes to some poetic excerpts that deal with the horror of the Middle Passage. However, he asserts Imbuga's *Aminata* is considered as one of the most serious literary works that approach the horror of the Middle Passage and the process of enslaving the Africans and people (p.229).

Banham (2008) further accentuates Imbuga's role in asserting the presence of the African people in the American literature by discussing the American history in Imbuga's *Aminata*. To explore this historical peculiarity, Banham (2008) refers to some of Imbuga's critiques of the presence of the African people in the global slavery. Furthermore, Imbuga considers the presence of African people in the international literature is very necessary. This presence must not be conveyed only through fictional imagination, but in the very essence of African literature as a whole. The play expresses slavery and its relevant issues in a painful recount which is delivered eloquently by Imbuga's structural intricacy (p.230). This structural feature is irrefutable for a specific cause.

This cause exemplifies the play's own structural elements and the "cultural reality" tackled in the text for the sake of exposing racism (Banham, 2008, p.230). Such racism takes place in contemporary Kenyan culture; and it is emphasized in different problems, such as rape, mugging and riots. As such, this cause relates to the historical roots of the African diaspora. In fact, the African diaspora is the Middle Passage per se. It is related to the slave trade that spans the time of the European expansion in the sixteenth century up to its peak in Africa in the late phases of the nineteenth century. Slavery resulted in demise, eradication and kidnapping many Africans who were abducted and transported by slave ships like animals; and they were sold at several sailing itinerary stops. Here, colonialism could be grasped as the most conspicuous token of the play. This is because it conveys Imbuga's obsession with colonial unjustified oppression.

Selline Atieno Oketch (2014) studies the image of women in Imbuga's *Aminata*. Oketch (2014) argues that the play depicts women and their possible integration within society. The play exemplifies Imbuga's interest to exalt women's identity, self-fulfillment and integration in a world that seems to be prevailed by patriarchy. The play's patriarchal world is characterized by a male mainstream; whereby male supersede and dominate society rather than females. For this reason, the play highlights the life episodes of the heroine, Aminata, who embodies this feminist stance. Oketch (2014) says that the representation of patriarchy in the play goes through the image of God-the-father. The father is the source of Aminata's suppression and predicament. The father, who incarnates the notion of patriarchy, indirectly imposes harsh life upon Aminata when he leaves her a land to be inherited. The result of this life is that she becomes suppressed by her father male dominance at the hands of the whole tribe. In so doing, Aminata brings back the feminist archetype of females on the stage. This is because she experience a treble periods of love. She survives self-destruction as she is not destroyed by her three loves experiences throughout her life. Just so, the play recounts the story of a woman's determination to withstand the plight of her experiences to the sake of wholeness; and, consequently, she obtains the truth of life midst the temptation of self-autonomy and equality; Oketch (2014) writes: "the play explores women's liberation, gender equality, family planning, property and land inheritance, and other issues affecting women. These issues are championed initially by Aminata's father, Pastor Ngoya, and propagated later by Aminata herself" (p.61).

Waveney Olembo and Charles Kebaya (2013) approach women's gender bias and its physic influences upon their lives

in Imbuga's *Aminata*. The psychic wound left in Aminata's psyche widens due to the traditional society that vehemently opposes her. Her behaviors radically changes. The psychic sequences of the death of her father make her neurotic. Furthermore, she begins to loathe her father. From this moment; presumably, we can infer the psychic influence of the death of her father upon her behavior. She first became abhorrent of her gendered-biased society. As a matter of fact, the relationship between a girl and her father is ideal. But she loses this relationship since she loses her father; and she confronts as discriminatory society. Then, the death of her father negatively affects her personality. She develops a blatant neurosis. As such, her personality becomes different from before. Olembo and Kebaya (2013) try to shed light on the psychological complications of her life after the death of her father. Most interestingly, Aminata gets prone to social transformation because she is fully disappointed when she is marginalized by her compatriots. As such, her social transformation is the main cause of her neurosis and the hate of her father; Olembo and Kebaya (2013) comment: "Imbuga further foregrounds the gendered self's need to transform society as a key element in engaging and (re)configuring herself in the society. Aminata's development record speaks volumes. The playwright depicts her as the epitome of social transformation" (p.100).

The aforementioned studies only tackle colonial matters through textual analysis without relying on specific conceptual framework in studying Imbuga's *Aminata*. However, they do not have sufficient methodology to explore the influence of colonialism on the Kenyan society concerning the issue of modernity and tradition. Therefore, this study will provide an in-depth analysis of colonialism and its impact on the Kenyan society after independence. For this reason it will study the dichotomy between modernity and tradition by analyzing the issue of women inheritance depicted in the course of the selected play.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

Imbuga's *Aminata* concentrates on Aminata, the main protagonist in the plot. The eponymous implication of the title clearly unravels the life of Aminata. She lives with her father who leaves a great inheritance. The society's cultural traditions do not accept female inheritance. This makes her lead a miserable life. Shortly after the beginning of the play, Aminata's father, pastor Ngoya, dies; and she tries to inherit him. However, she is opposed by her uncle who insists on following traditions rather than allowing her to inherit father's properties. As such, the play's conflict is between her and her uncle, Jumba. The traditional society sides Jumba with his decision because all people do not accept this fact. They accuse Aminata's father of introducing women's rights to inherit their parents, while the society long believes that only men inherit. In this sense, the play addresses the theme of patriarchy and how it influences the lives and rights of women in masculine-dominated societies. This society lives in a fictional village called Membe.

Jumba leads a great campaign to deprive Aminata of her inheritance. The main inheritance is a piece of land. The late pastor Ngoya writes in his will that his daughter is lawful inheritor of his land. Being so, Imbuga seems to insert thought of modernization in the play. This is because women inheritance is not allowed in the traditional Kenyan society. Jumba's vehement opposition of his niece's inheritance increases when he asks the "Elders," or old people to convince other people not to let Aminata inherit the land. Furthermore, Jumba could also persuade his wife Rosina to oppose Aminata's inheritance. The conflict intensifies as Aminata does her best to thwart her uncle's attempts to prevent her from inheritance. She is disappointed when Jumba persuades her brother Ababio to oppose her rights of inheriting the land. First, Ababio and Jumba could make Aminata's efforts go in vain. Yet, she strenuously pursues her rights despite her society opposition. Later, people discover another wish written in Aminata father's will. The wish is that he asks people not to cement or cover his grave until they give Aminata the land. Otherwise, he would not rest in peace because they make his daughter's life harsh. However, Jumba and Ababio cement the grave neglecting the father's wish. In doing so, they believe that Aminata's father encourages new social norms, like women's inheritance and family planning that do not originally exist in their village, Membe. Jumba is a powerful leader in the village; and he convinces the "Elders" to deter Aminata's inheritance of the land and give it to her drunkard brother, Ababio. In this regard, he thinks that he follows his traditional way of male inheritance. At the end of the play, Jumba sees his brother's (pastor Ngoya's) ghost. The ghost asks him to give the land for Aminata. He consents; and he leaves the village leadership to his wife Rosina. Being disappointed with this sudden and unexpected decision, Ababio strongly protests and commits suicide; and Aminata inherits her father's land.

Inheritance is the core of the intersection between modernity and tradition in Imbuga's *Aminata*. It perceives women inheritance as a native norm depriving women from inheritance; while it shows modernity as a great advocate of women inheritance. Therefore, native tradition is vehemently against inheritance; and modernity reinforces it in an obvious way. The play is set in a village called Membe and its surrounding environs shortly after independence. The play's protagonist is Aminata, the daughter of the late pastor Ngoya. The father has a piece of land. Before he dies, pastor Ngoya writes his will in which he legally insists on his daughter to inherit the land. Hence, Aminata becomes the true heir of her father's piece of land. This leads to disapproval among her extended family members. Many people opposed pastor Ngoya's will. However, his brother Jumba is the most adamant person who strongly opposed the will. Aminata's uncle does not agree with the will because women, in Membe, are not permitted to inherit from their fathers. Only men inherit monetary or property legacy from their parents. Undoubtedly, this is a patriarchal view. It is a traditional look at women and their subordinate position in society. It is not necessarily, here, that preventing women from inheritance is a type of misogyny. Neither is it a patriarchal discrimination against women. Yet, it is a matter of modernity and tradition.

The traditional view adopted by uncle Jumba, who incites other people side his with his opposition of Aminata's inheritance. He strives for preserving his inherited social tradition regarding women's inheritance. In order to stop Aminata's determination to bequeath her father's land, Jumba stirs her biological brother, Ababio, and persuades him to avert his sister's inheritance. He does so to deter Aminata's lawful attempt to gain the piece of land. Consequently, Jumba represents tradition and its pertinent matters. There is another striking remark in the play concerning the issue of tradition. In his last will, pastor Ngoya asks his family not to cover his tomb with cement as it is traditionally done. In spite of this, Jumba, together with Ababio, cement the grave ignoring pastor Ngoya's wish. They do not comply with the will because it contradicts with Membe's traditional beliefs. This is because the late pastor Ngoyam was an illuminated man. He is influenced by the colonialism's modernity. He used to believe in new social and cultural conventions, such as family planning and women rights. According to Jumba and his inherited traditions, these issues are foreign; and they are created by the colonizers' modernity.

Jumba gets his power from old people who agree with his traditional beliefs. He is the main leader of the "Elders" who plan and decide the social affairs of Membe. He depends on old people to forbid Aminata from inheriting the land; and simultaneously, he wants to give it for her drunkard and reckless brother, Ababio. To his disappointment, he is haunted by the apparition of the late pastor Ngoya at the end of the play. He steps down and leaves the leadership of the "Elders" for his wife Mama Rosina. Being woman, Mama Rosina sympathizes with Aminata; and she helps her to inherit her father's piece of land. Ababio does not accept the inheritance; and, as a protest, he commits suicide. Therefore, the intersection between modernity and tradition appears in the characters of Aminata who represents modernity and Jumba who represents tradition. Each one has his followers from the same society which is torn between the nostalgic reliance on the past and the newly adopted social norms brought by the advent of colonialism in Membe.

The dichotomy between modernity and tradition, therefore, emerges from the contradictory social ranks of Aminata and Jumba. They follow discrepant socio-cultural beliefs that make them different. The intersection between modernity and tradition originates in their conflicting life styles which are either influenced by inherited tradition of colonial modernity. Imbuga's *Aminata* does not deal with events where there are decisive direct military confrontations between the colonizers and the colonized people. Instead, it distinctively depicts the lives of the colonized people and social conflicts among them after the departure of colonialism.

The clash between modernity and tradition begins when Jumba feels teased by his brother's will. He resents the will because it violates the cultural traditions of their country, Membe. He blames his dead brother for letting Aminata to inherit the piece of land. He considers the will as shame brought by his brother to the country; **Jumba**: "That is where my brother went wrong. But we shall not ourselves stumble and fall just because our brother stumbled and fell. No, we shall stand firm and shield Membe from further shame. But if the elders of the stool shy away from their responsibility, then I shall protect the wishes of our forefathers single handedly" (p.22). Ababio has the same traditional beliefs. He swears that he will not let his sister to bequeath the land; **Ababio**: For as long as I am still steady on my feet, no woman will touch my father's land

because that is my land” (p.23).

Jumba persuades Ababio to prevent Aminata from inheriting the land. She will bring disgrace for Membe. He describes her as a demon that will change the tradition of Membe; **Jumba**: “There are no buts you eunuch! Aminata shall not own land in Membe. So drunk or sober, you will have to help me to save Membe from that demon of a child” (p.29). Jumba is afraid that if the will is achieved, it will change the future of Membe. The natives’ tradition, therefore, will disappear. So, women should not inherit; and he insists on this because he wants to keep his clan’s tradition; **Jumba**: “That is nothing compared with what is in her heart. Even if she was an ordinary woman, I would not let Membe enter the future as the only clan to have offered land inheritance to a woman” (p.29). Ababio agrees with his uncle; and he supports his camping to prevent Aminata from getting the will achieved; **Ababio**: “No, no, no, no. That should not be allowed to happen. In any case, the battle is already won” (p.30).

Jumba’s attempt to deter the will needs financial support from Ababio. He needs money to sustain his ancestors’ tradition. He believes that tradition is more important than money. As such, he should defend his tradition since it equally defends its sincere adherents. For this reason, he tries to expel Aminata from the village as she is a bad omen. Her inheritance spoils Membe’s tradition. On that account, he gets the money from Ababio to reinforce his plans to hinder Aminata’s inheritance; **Jumba**: “Get the money and remember that tradition protects only the man who defends it. It shall not be said that it was during my time that a daughter of the village came back to settle among us. No, never” (p.30). Ababio does not naïvely support his uncle; either does he want to disappoint his sister. He is only obsessed with the land. Inheriting the land exemplifies his fidelity to traditions i.e., male are only allowed to inherit, not women. Being so, inheritance is his rights; **Ababio says**: “That piece of land is mine by right” (p.30).

As a response to Ababio’s determination, Jumba promises him to make their native people to side them. He will convince them that lands should be inherited by male sons, while daughters are deprived of such privilege. Ababio appears submissive and obedient to his uncle’s campaign. He meticulously follows his orders. He does so to gain his inheritance right. Jumba relates the inheritance to tradition. In other words, sons could proclaim their father’s legacy by tradition because their tribal custom stipulates on the inheritance of males rather than females. Here, Jumba’s attitude is ascribed to tradition, which is the lurking impetus of his campaign to prevent Aminata’s inheritance:

**Jumba**: “You and I will have to talk to members of the land circle individually. We have to convince them that will or no will, Ngoya’s land is Membe’s land and it belongs to his sons by tradition. (*Pause.*) Have you heard me well?”

**Ababio**: Yes Uncle, I have heard you. (p.31)

Jumba and Ababio embody the strict sense of tradition that opposes modernity. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez (2019), in *Visions of the Emerald City*, argues that the natives, or inhabitants of a certain postcolonial nation, pervert their tradition with regard to gender, family and national considerations: “a powerful symbol of the unresolved tension between tradition and modernity as city inhabitants redefined it as an integral aspect of the construction of gender, class, the family and the nation” (p.100). This is because modernity copes with unprecedented socio-cultural changes (Abu Jweid, 2020d). In Imbiba’s *Aminata*, similarly, Jumba and Ababio preserve their tradition on the basis of gender. Women are not traditionally allowed to inherit. This is, indeed, a patriarchal attitude. The natives, led by Jumba, do not allow Aminata to inherit because the traditional family specifies inheritance to men. This is inevitably a national traditional issue that is often addressed with modernity.

Modernity, consequently, is primarily the problem of Aminata’s inheritance. She discusses her deprivation of inheritance with her husband, Mulemi. She tells him that she went to Membe to ask people to help her formally get the land; **Aminata**: “You know I did not go to Membe to make anyone see sense. No, I merely went there to formally receive my gift of soil” (p.39). Then, Mulemi asks her if she could proclaim the land; **Mulemi**: And did you formally receive it? (p.39). Yet, she becomes depressed. She failed to get the piece of land. Jumba could cunningly persuade the natives to deter her effort. Such effort is the core of the sense of modernity approached in the play. When colonialism arrived in Membe, the Christian beliefs were adopted. In these beliefs, women could inherit. However, when colonialism ended, the natives resorted to their inherited



tradition and prevented women from inheritance. She tells her husband how Jumba and Ababio might impede her inheritance:

**Aminata:** No. It looks like it will have to be a court case. Jumba is a fox, I tell you. Now they have a fantastic story about the grave and why they had to cement it in a hurry. According to them, our late father died after he had changed his mind about the cementing of his grave. The old man is supposed to have called the two of them, Ababio and my uncle, to his bedside two days before he died. That is when he supposedly talked to them about the burial arrangements. Ababio is even ready to swear by the grave that this is the absolute truth. (p.39)

Mulemi gets very surprised by Jumba's illegal compang; **Mulemi:** "Your uncle is a perfect mockery of enlightened tribal leadership on the continent" (p.40). He is shocked by Jumba's sly plans. But Aminata tells him that Jumba is supported by old people who believe that she must not inherit; **Aminata:** "That is precisely why I am asking, no, demanding that my Uncle and his circle of elders tell me what is wrong with being a woman. I want them to tell me what is wrong with me!" (p.43). Mulemi, therefore, describes Jumba and Ababio as "Mongers in taboos and superstitions" (p.43) that distorted the natives minds and make them be their supporters. Aminata, similarly, says that people, including Ababio, are victims of their ignorance. They became ignorant by Jumba who drives them backward instead of modernity and progress; **Aminata:** Their taboos are the dried leaves of a rootless tree..... His union with Ababio is based on nothing but mutual ignorance" (p.43). Jumba, Ababio, and the natives are merely disturbing her lawful right to inherit her father's land. She says that she formerly refused to inherit the land because it will bring her troubles. But her father insisted to give her the land. Accordingly, she will continue claiming the land as her own right. In doing so, she feels that she could fulfill her father's wish; **Aminata:** "I wish they knew how persistently I tried to resist that offer of soil. But the old man [her father] was so determined to give it to me that it was no use arguing with him anymore. That is why I don't want to disappoint him by giving up the fight for it" (p.43).

Aminata's strong determination to inherit the land is an act of modernity. She is influenced by Christian beliefs that women could inherit like men. Christianity is brought by colonialism per se. However, there is another minor indication of Aminata's modern disposition. She and Mulemi decide to beget two children. This is a form of family planning brought by colonialism. In the traditional families of Membe, men try to have as many children as they can. However, modernity opposes this. There must be a limited number of children in the family. Aminata and Mulemi were influenced by modernity; and they decide to follow family planning schedule. In the quotation below, Mulemi tells his aunt, Kezia, about his intention to have a very little family with his wife:

**Mulemi:** Auntie [Kezia], I will not exchange words with you on this issue. Family planning is a topic that is dear to my heart. It is my now and my tomorrow. I have spent a lot of time finding answers to a lot of questions in this field. A healthy future, a healthy nation for our children and their children, that has always been my concern. The fact that Aminata's father was equally concerned with this same dynamite is purely coincidental. This is why we must leave Amintata out of the debate. We planned for two children and we are happy. Happy because the children's future well-being is guaranteed by their member. (p.36)

To sum up, Jumba and Ababio are determinant to stick to their tradition, while Aminata follow modernity. Their incompatible attitudes represent the intersection between modernity and tradition. The adopters of modernity, like Aminata and Mulemi, try to "reorient modernity and construct new possibilities for a different communal life" (Tomba, 2019, p.27). On the other hand, the supporters of tradition, namely, Jumba and Ababio oppose them. This is the basis of the cultural dichotomy between them that is constructed due to the fact that tradition meets new diverse challenges; and, in this regard "the vitality of a tradition lies in its ability to change to meet new challenges" (p.188). Thus, the archetypal intersection between modernity and tradition is a matter of challenges succeeding each other midst colonial circumstances (*Ginsburgh, 2020*). There is not tangible compromise between them (Fonseca-Chávez, 2020). Similarly, in the play, they try continuously to exclude and refuse the other one on the grounds of stout beliefs which are either inherited from ancestors or adopted from the colonizers.

## 5. Conclusions

The core of this paper has been to accentuate the discrepant relationship between modernity and tradition in Imbuga's *Aminata*. As a matter of fact, the relation between modernity and tradition is never reconciled since there is a sense of severe aversion between the natives, who are deprived of their human rights, and the colonizers, who attempt to oppress and

persecute the natives. In this respect, the discussion of such impassable reconciliation has been revealed through the natives' stout belief in their ancestors' cultural tradition and colonial adamant insistence on change. In this manner, change is the key factor of the nature of the intersection between modernity and tradition. In the course of the plot, foreign colonialism is depicted as onerous cultural brutality against the native people.

This comes through the arbitrary arrests and the impediment of peaceful demonstration led by the natives. At this point, the relationship between the natives and the colonizers seems to be contradictory. The analysis of this relationship provides critical insights of how Imbuga's perceived colonialism and its residuals in his homelands. Moreover, it enhances the play's colonial realistic recounts of modernity that could not obliterate the search for freedom midst socio-cultural changes. This has been achieved by dint of approaching a demanding cultural issue, namely, women inheritance. The study has tackled these issues in the light of colonial influence presented in Imbuga's *Aminata*. In other words, colonial influence, in some cases, directly interferes with the natives affairs by means of, for example, preventing women inheritance.

In other cases, however, colonial interference does not directly hamper the natives' attempts to liberate their culture from postcolonial modernity. It interferes through the colonial representatives, like officers, who embody the colonial covetous culture on the native people's homeland. In this respect, some natives follow the path of their colonizers, just like *Aminata*. They execute the colonial avaricious procedures to spread colonial cultural predominance. For this reason, the study has tended to deduce the colonial power which seeks to transform the natives' culture and how it fails to do so due to the natives' strong will to maintain their inherited traditions. That is, they show vehement opposition to postcolonial modernity. Thus, the current study has identified the natives' contravention of modernity which seems to eliminate their conventional traditions regarding women inheritance depicted in Imbuga's *Aminata*.

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