MYTHS AND RITUALS
IN THE WORKS OF
FRANCIS D. IMBUGA

BY
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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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to

the youths of Kenya for
they shall find courage
and satisfaction in
the traditions of
their forefathers
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ABSTRACT

This study is a critical analysis of how myths and rituals function in the literary works of Francis D. Imbuga. The thesis combines both his drama texts and those of prose fiction. In total, the study focuses on eight books by the author.

Chapter One of the thesis basically deals with statement of the problem of the study, the literature review and research methodology. The basis of the discussion in the subsequent chapters is laid out here. In Chapter Two, the study notes that the author of the texts is employing myths and rituals to deliberate on cultural woes experienced on the African continent. The discussion further points out in the third chapter that myths and rituals also enable Imbuga to deliberate, from a sacred point of view, on some of the social and political changes the continent is witnessing. In Chapter Four, the analysis on the two works of prose fiction by the author corroborates the views in the second one.

The study concludes that myths and rituals are indeed a vital trope for a modern African writer in an endeavour to explain current issues in the society.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Ritual
It can be defined as purposeful social act whose import is understood by the community. Also, as a powerful social vehicle, ritual publicly confirms and reinforces appropriate moral, philosophical and social values.

Myth
This refers to an invented tale which describes the foundations of social behaviour. Often, its functional aspect, or value, abides within a social structure, mostly in connection with a ritual. In other words, myth is mostly held to be symbolic description of phenomena of nature. Like ritual, myth also provides cultural solutions to problems that human beings encounter in real life.

Manifest Meaning
In the context of this study, it has been employed mainly in reference to obvious, plain and literal meaning expressed either through ritual and myth or the works of art being studied.

Latent Meaning
As opposed to the above, this is the hidden and symbolic meaning conveyed through ritual or myth in the study. In normal cases it denotes the figurative implications of the coded message.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1:00 Background

Essentially, ritual is defined as a rite of passage. But ritual is in the actual sense more than that. It is indeed a powerful social vehicle which publicly confirms and reinforces appropriate moral, philosophical and social values in a given society. Its function is contained and expressed in its concomitant myths; and there exists a strong relationship between it and myth. Thus ritual may centre on customary observances marking various stages or passages of life. But myth is what validates and rationalizes its activity. Therefore to understand the importance attached to ritual in an African society, and how and why a modern African writer may want to employ it as a trope for exploration, attention must also be accorded to the mythologies that support ritual.

Such a relationship to ritual and its supporting myths is an important aspect of the socio-political and moral pre-occupation as well as the formal structures of Francis Davis Imbuga’s works. In most of Imbuga’s works rituals are like a kaleidoscopic world through which the writer plunges into socio-cultural, political and economic matters affecting post-independent African states. This study is an endeavour to examine how Imbuga, in his literary texts, has manipulated rituals in order to portray and question the realities of the contemporary African world in an artistic way.

Within a period of twenty-one years since his first publication appeared in 1972, Imbuga has to his credit ten published literary works. They include eight plays, a novella and

In 1985, Imbuga published a novella in the Lulogooli dialect of the Luhya language entitled *Lialuka Lia Vaana va Magomere* (*The Initiation of the Children of Magomere*). The book has since been translated into English and appeared in 1995 under the new title *Kagai and her Brothers*. In 1988 and 1989, respectively, he again published two plays: *Aminata* and *The Burning of Rags*. His latest work is a novel entitled *Shrine of Tears* (1993).

The emphasis of this study is on the specific rites contained in Imbuga’s literary books, such as circumcision, funeral/burial and wedding. Imbuga’s two earlier texts, *The Fourth Trial (Two Plays)* and *The Married Bachelor* are not examined in depth because the issues raised in connection with rituals have been more thoroughly explored in the later works. The following are the relevant texts that this study focuses on:

(a) *Betrayal in the City* (1976)

(b) *Game of Silence* (1977)

(c) *The Successor* (1979)

(d) *Man of Kafira* (1984)

(e) *Aminata* (1988)

(f) *The Burning of Rags* (1989)
1:01 Statement of the problem

Rituals have social, cultural and moral value for the communities that uphold them. Yet it is also possible that, as customary observances, rituals are nearly always embedded in supporting mythologies even though this may not be expressly stated. Besides, rituals and myths may be viewed to be those which articulate the foundations of social behaviour and in so doing provide cultural solutions to problems faced in a community. Thus the rituals and supporting myths of a community may represent its consensus on social behaviour and even of aspirations. But myth, on its own, is also open to several possible interpretations, and when a creative writer uses ritual either as a sociological material or as structure in a piece of work, several possibilities are open to him or her. How then may a creative writer’s use of ritual differ from the community’s? What would be the socio-political or moral implications when a creative writer affirms, ridicules or renders ambiguous the community’s rituals? If a writer uses rituals to structure his/her works, what would be the manifest and latent meaning of such an implication?

The study, therefore undertakes to raise all these questions in an exploration of the various dimensions in which rituals function in Imbuga’s works. In this exploration the study will demonstrate that rituals and the myths that support them may become a useful
vehicle for the contemporary writer as he/she looks at current issues in relation to age-old traditions.

1:02 Aims and objectives of the study
The main aim of this study is to find out whether Imbuga, in his works of art, presents rituals in various dimensions to reveal the socio-cultural, political and economic changes happening in today's African societies.

The specific objectives are:

(i) To explore the relationship between myth and literature.

(ii) To determine how a creative writer's perception of ritual and myth may differ from the community's and how it may also affirm what the society upholds.

(iii) To demonstrate how rituals may be used as trope or structure in a creative work.

(iv) To contribute to the development of myth criticism in African Literature.

An understanding of the issues raised in Imbuga's literary works can therefore best be grasped by concentrating on how the books treat rituals and their accompanying myths in relation to change in an African context.

1:03 Significance of the Study
The study sheds light on the central position/role that rituals occupy in Imbuga's writings. It is also a significant study because it enriches our knowledge concerning the relationship between oral and written literature. Besides, this study will contribute to our
understanding of how literature, as a discipline, responds to society's cultural, social, political, economic and historical matters.

1:04 Justification of the Study

There are certain salient factors which justify undertaking this study. Firstly, a ritual on its part, is not merely a rite of passage, that is, a period during which individuals graduate from one social status to the other. Rituals are in fact important social and cultural occasions among those communities or people who practise them. Besides, as prescribed formal behaviours (Victor Turner: 1952,19), rituals also operate as a kind of theatre through which vital issues concerning society in virtually all aspects of life are addressed. Since a ritual takes place within a prescribed temporal and spatial context, such issues are not only raised but also resolved.

Secondly, literature does not only demonstrate the conflicts existing in society but also shows how such opposing issues affect people and how they react to them. This in turn ensures that the entire discipline of literature makes individuals aware of the situations they exist in, as well as enabling society to contemplate necessary change. Ritual and myth are therefore part and parcel of a people's literature.

1:05 Research Assumptions:

The main research assumptions of this study are:

(a) That rituals by their nature can present the creative writer with a framework for social and moral criticism.
(b) That Imbuga, in his literary works, is implying that within contemporary African societies there is a growing opposition to traditional systems such as rituals.

(c) Because Imbuga operates in different genres (drama and the novel) his works provide evidence of how ritual and myth are fertile sources of inspiration for creative artists.

1:06 The Theoretical Framework of the Study

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, and to provide an exhaustive evaluation of the texts in this study, the myth criticism, the sociological and psychological models of literature have been deemed appropriate. The literary model of metaphors and symbols is also employed. These four models are applied throughout the study.

The tenets of the myth criticism employed here are those which have been propagated by David Bidney (1966), Clyde Kluckhohn (1966) and William Righter (1975). They have been selected because their study of myths applies to the evaluation and understanding of the meaning and role of rituals and literature as a whole.

As argued earlier, rituals and myths are indeed very closely related. Given that rituals are primarily those actions or observances that concern the socio-cultural and even political behaviour and organization of most communities who practise them, their rationalization and validation depends on their accompanying myths. Hence to decipher the true picture of rituals in Imbuga’s literary texts, one has to look to the myths associated with rites. Myths, like rituals, according to David Bidney in Myth and Literature edited by John B. Vickery (1966:9), have a function which “... is essentially practical and social, namely, to promote a feeling of unity or harmony with the whole of nature or life”. Besides, myth
criticism is quite relevant to the study because as Clyde Kluckhohn explains in the same book, “... both myths and rituals.... Provide cultural solutions to problems which all human beings face” (1966:41). Thus myths are, “at varying levels of consciousness and degrees of articulateness, a way of describing the foundations of social behavior” (Righter, 1975:11).

The sociological model of literature is important specifically as regards its tenets as explained by Wellek and Warren (1949), and Alan Merriam (1964). Wellek and Warren indicate that literature has a sociological function bordering on the social issues affecting mankind:

...... a large majority of the questions raised by literary study are, at least ultimately or by implication social questions: questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myths (1949:95).

In some of Imbuga’s works (for example, 1988 and 1993), social institutions are adequately addressed. More so, literature, for instance in Imbuga (1976 and 1988), functions as a reflection of society. That is, it emphasizes society’s socio-cultural values and ethics, either positively and integratively, or negatively and dis integratively. As such, literature operates as “... an excellent means of analysis” (Merriam, 1964: 208) of what happens in society. Linked to the above is that literature as it is revealed in Imbuga (1988 and 1989) is a kind of Post facto. In other words, literature refers to the past mainly to try and rectify the wrongs in the present society. This, as Merriam further notes in relation to oral material (which also includes rituals and myths), is another aspect
of the sociological model of literature that enables it to crystallise new demands for people (1973:207).

The psychological model is applicable to this study with reference to its tenets articulated specifically by E.M. Foster (1929) and Alan Merriam (1973). According to Foster, literature has a psychological function since it manages to reveal the hidden life, of a people by portraying their dreams, joys, sorrows and self-communing (1929:56). This is achieved because through literature people are able to comment on certain aspects of their daily life. Sometimes, like for instance in Imbuga (1976: 7-20) and (1988:1-31), the comments are about the experience that individuals undergo in real life. In other instances, such as in Imbuga (1979:1-2) and (1984: 1-14), what individuals express is what they expect should happen to them. Hence in this context, Foster (1929:76) further notes, literature also serves as a kind of psychological refuge in which people find a substitute to express their views regarding what they experience or imagine life should look like. Besides, Alan Merriam (1973:207) reveals that at the psychological level, literary material acts as a form of ".... Release mechanism". Meaning that as an artistic expression, literature has the license to comment on all types of issues occurring in human life, in any given manner, as is the case in Imbuga (1979 and 1984). This in turn, he clarifies, provides a form of psychological release and compensation to the individuals in order for them to mediate change for a new society.

The literary model of metaphors and symbols, mainly that propounded by Victor Turner (1968 and 1974), H.L. Moody (1971) and Robert Fraser (1989), is also useful in this
exercise As regards the tenets pertaining to metaphors, Victor Turner (1974) in reference to rituals explains that metaphors reveal how certain objects or issues which are usually structurally opposed are juxtaposed in order to give them meaning. This, he observes, is simply ".... A way of proceeding from the known to the unknown" (1974:24). Specifically, Imbuga's literary works present or employ metaphors in a very intriguing manner. In Imbuga (1976 and 1988), for example, Adika's grave and Pastor Ngoya's grave emerge as prominent metaphors. The two graves operate in such a way that they select, emphasise, suppress and even organise the main issues dealt with in the two texts. Deciphering the main ideas the books raise will require one to pay attention to what H.L. Moody (1971:51) calls the fairly slight clues of metaphors which hint at the actual meaning. In this manner, therefore, Imbuga, in his literary books, employs metaphors as an attempt to shape and mould individuals' opinions concerning what takes place in society.

Also, literature is an aggregate of symbols (Victor Turner, 1968:2). Hence rituals and myths as symbols in Imbuga's works are not merely signs representing known things; but they are powerful creations intended for the purpose of changing persons ".... for the better or in desired direction" (Ibid; 54). This is demonstrated in Imbuga (1989). Besides, symbols in Imbuga's texts also function in such a manner that they amount to what Robert Fraser (1989) calls motifs, in reference to the novels of Ayi Kweyi Armah. In Imbuga (1979), Zira's pregnancy is a good example. It looms throughout the play. In this way symbols are indeed functional.
Hence the above models will be employed simultaneously in this study because they are closely related.

1.07 Literature Review of the study:

The importance of rituals as social and cultural events has been acknowledged by many scholars. For example, Victor Turner in his books: The Forest of Symbols (1967), The Drums of Affliction (1968) and also in Dramas, Fields and Metaphors (1974). In all these three texts, Turner notes that rituals are a kind of social dramas which play a very paramount and significant role among the communities who practise them. With specific reference to the rituals observed by the Ndembu community of Zambia, Turner (1967: 1-58) and (1968: 1-51) clearly asserts that rituals have a truly striking importance and so to fully understand them, one has to pay attention to the manner in which ritual symbols function in the context in which they appear. That is in regard to their role in the total ritual system. Turner’s study of rituals concludes that as socio-cultural dramas, rituals are highly regarded by those who observe them in the sense that “.... they have effects upon the participants which influence their subsequent behaviour” (1968:6).

The above view is shared by Elizabeth Bott (in A.I. Richards, 1972), who also adds that rituals are indeed concerned with “.... Social norms and values which participants are consciously aware” (Ibid; 206). However, Bott does not really explain why rituals function in this manner. On his part, J.S. La Fontain (still in the same edition) argues that among the Bagisu of Uganda, rituals play a very vital role, particularly among women. He cites the marriage ritual as a significant occasion in the lives of Bagisu
women "... which indicates the social significance of the transition" (ibid;166) from youth to adulthood.

In his book Facing Mount Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta (1938), with regard to the practice of circumcision among the Agikuyu of Kenya, states that this was an important rite because of its didactic role in society. He adds that such education was vital because the rite was a "deciding factor in giving a boy or girl the status of manhood or womanhood in the Agikuyu community" (1938:33). Still on the same issue, John S. Mbiti (175:126), explains that "rituals generate a sense of certainty and familiarity. They provide continuity and unity among those who perform them". His observation is shared by D.D. Harrison in Lemuel, Bernadette, Russel and Hill-Lubin (182:14). He notes in relation to rituals among African societies that "the participatory nature of the event(s) reaffirms the social and philosophical values of the group lending a sense of well-being". Hence rituals are, and as M. Jane Young asserts (in Journal of American Folklore vol. 98, No. 387:42), vital to those who practice them because they "... can clearly serve to illuminate the present events occurring in society".

While it is true that rituals are treated as important socio-cultural events by those who uphold them, it is incorrect to assume that only one mood, that of seriousness and anxiety, is displayed at all times. In most instances, the people concerned also contradict the purposes of rituals by displaying a variety of moods. Gunter Wagner (1949) notes this with specific reference to the Kenyan Luhya wedding and circumcision rites. Wagner explains that during their wedding and circumcision ceremonies, the
Luhya openly conduct themselves in a manner which, on the surface level, appear unrelated to these social occasions (1949:145). This, as he elaborates, is revealed through the “contemptuous, haughty and abusive manner” (Ibid; 146) in which those attending the function conduct themselves. Wagner, however, does not really explain whether, at the latent level, this kind of conduct may be misconstrued unessential and unrelated to either the Luhya culture or the purposes of a ritual. His views are shared by Jane Nandwa in her M.A. thesis (1974: 219). Nandwa says that during wedding and circumcision ritual ceremonies among the Luhya, a lot of what happens is unrelated to the social occasions. She states that on these occasions, the Luhya “.... hurl all sorts of abuse” at each other.

At another level, some scholars, such as Nandwa, have also argued that rituals are essential to society because of certain reasons. With reference to the same Kenyan Luhya community rituals mentioned earlier, she argues that on such occasions the community seizes the opportunity to “...... criticise certain elements that are contrary to what society expects” (174:217). Her views are shared by Hugh Tracey (154), who in regard to the rituals of the Chopi people of Southern Africa, notes that such criticism is accepted since it tries to show people how to rectify their bad qualities. Similarly, Alan Merriam (1964:130) concludes that ritual occasions are also used to ensure that individuals conform to society’s social norms.

Ironically, also, is the element of humour that abides in rituals. This aspect is again revealed by Tracey (154), who argues that rituals are indeed moments that provide people with a guide to their sense of humour. Ivan Karp has also expressed similar
views, but with additional explanations. In an article on the marriage rites of the Kenya Iteso community, (in Journal of Folklore Research, vol. 25, Nos 1/2, 1988: 36-51) Karp observes that more humour is exhibited during these rites than seriousness. His contention is that the Iteso people employ humour during marriage rites profoundly due to the fact that humour functions as means of social control and also contributes to the entire aesthetics of the social occasion.

At the level of Imbuga’s works, particularly drama, John Ruganda (1992) has also noted the presence of an overwhelming element of humour. Ruganda’s main argument in regard to this is that the author (Imbuga) vastly employs humour as a form of shield that enables him to tell the truth without being victimised by the state. Laban Erapu (1979) has also indicated in reference to Imbuga’s Betrayal in the City that humour is a prominent feature. Erapu, however, does not delve into the real function that humour plays in the text. Other than this, Erapu further acknowledges the significance of rituals in the same play. In reference to the second burial rite for the deceased Adika in Betrayal in the City, Erapu observes:

The play opens with an eerie scene dominated by a lonely grave which has evidently been the object of some violation. The dramatist uses both vision and sound to paint a picture of desolation and establish a sorrowful mood before the characters come on the stage (1979:2).

There are also other scholars who have studied Imbuga’s works and pointed out certain aspects that the books deal with. A good example is Ciarunji Chesaina (1984 a and b) – a staff seminar paper and guide notes on Man of Kafira. In her staff seminar paper, Chesaina focuses on how, in his plays, Imbuga presents and treats women characters.
Her main observation is that in the books, women are presented as sketches rather than rounded characters. However, she also argues that there appears, in Imbuga's plays, little room for women to change their plight in society; but she hastens to add that this is indeed different in Man of Kafira where there is an element of appraisal of the development of strength among the women, especially as is revealed through the character of Regina. Thus, Chesaina's study successfully manages to explore how Imbuga's work portrays some of the gender issues in post-independent Africa. But she does not seem to have recognised the importance of rituals in Imbuga's texts or maybe she overlooked this significant area because it was not part of her main focus at the time.

In his M.A. thesis (1985), Makini Gachugu concentrates his study on Imbuga's earlier five plays. His study examines the various themes and stylistic devices of the plays. However, like Chesaina, Makini totally excludes an analysis of the rituals in Imbuga's plays. This omission is again unexplained by Makini. John Kyallo's (1972) study is indeed a very ambitious one, given that it is a combined analysis of the drama of Francis Imbuga and John Ruganda. As concerns Imbuga's works, Kyallo focuses on Betrayal in the City, Game of Silence, The Successor and Man of Kafira. His contention is that in these texts, the author exhibits his commitment as a sensitive writer because he exposes "..... The socio-political injustice suffered by the common man" (1992:20). What however emerges to be quite striking in Kyallo's study is his ability to discern the crucial role of rituals in Imbuga's plays. He observes, in reference to the second burial rite contained in Betrayal in the city:
Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City* is set against Adika’s death. The play opens with a vivid description of the grave and a clear illustration of the varied reactions to death. The sense of loss and doom exhibited by his parents cuts across the whole play. The dramatic activity is centred around his death. Adika represents the disillusionment that Kafirans are grappling with. He is the motivation of the revolutionary spirit and militancy of Jusper and Mosese. Although absent, he influences virtually all the events and episodes of the play (Ibid, 116).

As regards ritual and myth, Claude Levi-Strauss (1963) notes that the two are quite inter-related and that they still are applicable in contemporary societies. He further explains that myth is in fact that which has to be told in order for an action or event to be understood, and concludes:

> What gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future. This can be made clear through a comparison between myth and what appears to have largely replaced it in modern societies, namely, politics (1963:209).

His views are shared by Eric Gould (1981). Gould’s observations are that myth plays a fundamental role in the interpretation of what occurs in our lives. The role of myth, he adds, is evidently embedded in literature because “... Fictions aspire to the status of myth” (1981).

David Bidney in *Myth and Literature* edited by John B. Vickey (1966), explains that myth is functional in the sense that it validates rites and institutions, as well as being used as an instrument “... of policy and social control” (1966:12). His exploration of myths concludes that the positivity of myth in society and even to a student of literature,
borders on the fact that “myth like great art and dramatic literature ... have profound value.... because the plot or themes suggest to us universal patterns of motivation and conduct” (1966:13). This function of myth, therefore, can best be understood within what William Righter (1975) calls the cultural context because as he states, this function “... proceeds from the particular occasion or others like it” (1975:16).

The views above are also expressed by Wole Soyinka (1976), with specific reference to African literature. Soyinka asserts that one way of appreciating African literature and interpreting it satisfactorily is by paying attention to African myths. Myths, he further clarifies, are what make the African world unique, but still enables it to possess “...... in common with other cultures, the virtues of complementarity” (1976: xii). Soyinka summarises that myths are the cornerstone of African literature because they “.... arise from man’s attempt to externalise and communicate his inner institutions” (1976:3).

Writing about the drama of the Caribbean playwright, Derek Walcott, in the Pressures of the Text edited by Stewart Brown (1995), Nana Wilson - Tagoe acknowledges the kinship between myths and rituals. Her argument then proceeds to demonstrate that to a modern African and Diaspora writer, ritual and myth can serve as a relevant and significant trope for exploration in his/her writing. This, as she states, is because myth and ritual serve to energize”.... the imagination and ... perception” (1995:29) of the writer in the attempt to interpret and criticise contemporary society. Almost in a similar observation Isidore Okpewho (1983) argues that myth “.... is simply that quality of fancy which informs the creative or configurative powers of the human mind in varying
degrees of intensity" (1983:69). He conclusively states that “myths are oral narratives which explain the essence and sequences of ritual performances, thereby preserving the memory of these elements for posterity” (ibid:27). And as Clyde Kluckhohn puts it in Myth and Literature, edited by John B. Vickey “... myth and rituals tend to be intimately associated and to influence each other.” (1966:40). This, as he further explains is because while ritual is “... often a symbolic dramatization of the fundamental needs of society”, mythology, on the other hand, “... is the rationalization of the same needs” (Ibid; 44).

What in a nut-shell most of the above scholars have done emerges at two levels. On the one hand some of them have demonstrated the important role of rituals together with their concomitant myths to communities which practise and possess them. On the other hand, others have explained the various aspects examined in Imbuga’s plays. But they do not quite explain the various dimensions in which the texts treat rituals, as is going to be the case in this study.

1:08 Scope and Limitation of the study:

The scope of this study is on Imbuga’s literary texts in which rituals are explicitly handled. The texts include Betrayal in the City (1976), Game of Silence (1977), The Successor (1979), Man of Kafira (1984), Aminata (1988), The Burning of Rags (1989), Shrine of Tears (1993) and Kagai and her Brothers (1995). The area of study covers these texts not only because of the mere presence of rites themselves but primarily due to how and why the books treat the rituals in the manner in which they do.
Specifically, the study is limited by certain factors as indicated below:

(i) The field research was conducted among the Maragoli community who reside in Vihiga District of Western Kenya. This is the community from which the author originates and most of the raw material he utilizes seem to have been acquired from the same area.

(ii) The study is further limited to only those rituals which are the centre of focus in Imbuga’s literary texts.

(iii) Finally, the analysis of this study is based on the data obtained from both library and field research, with prominence being accorded to how the author’s texts treat the rituals they deal with.

1:09 Research Methodology

The study involved both library and field research.

The library research entailed consulting major libraries in the city of Nairobi both on published and unpublished works on rituals and myths, as well as those which deal with modern African literature. Those works which specifically examine Imbuga’s books were consulted. It was, essentially, a critical examination of this related literature in an attempt to obtain adequate and relevant material for analysis of the study.

Fieldwork research was conducted between June and October, 1997. This was a way of obtaining first-hand information about the importance attached to myths and rituals, especially those that Imbuga handles in his works. Priority was accorded to the Maragoli community who live in Vihiga District in the Western Province of Kenya (see Appendix I). The main reason being that Imbuga himself is a member of the same community and
may have been greatly influenced by the oral traditions of his people. Information obtained from the research has been incorporated in the analysis throughout the chapters.

During fieldwork research, purposeful sampling of data method was preferred to others, such as random sampling. In a nut-shell, purposeful sampling of data is a deliberate method of fieldwork research. It involves a researcher targeting the material he/she is looking for, as well as the informants and areas where data is to be collected from. Compared to the random one, purposeful sampling method is advantaged in many areas. Most significant one being that information obtained is reasonably accurate and clear.

To successfully accomplish my goals I had to conduct some interviews with different categories of informants in order to obtain a wide range of views. Four different categories of informants were interviewed. One of them was a group of elderly men and women aged above sixty years. I considered this category by virtue of their age. I regarded them not only to be still in touch with ritual practices such as traditional forms of circumcision and burial, but also to be knowledgeable in such matters. The twenty five informants interviewed were the ones who were willing to provide information according to the subject I was inquiring into. But after sampling the data gathered from fieldwork research only eight interviews were found to be useful in the analysis provided in the later chapters. They appear as Appendix II (a) to (h) in the thesis.
The second category of informants I interviewed was of individuals less than fifty years old, and above thirty years. Most members of this category are individuals who have attained formal education. Besides, they are also either formally or informally employed in public and private institutions. The purpose of interviewing this particular group was mainly because I wanted to compare and contrast their information with that of the first category whose members appeared to be more traditional. In total I managed to interview thirty informants. The interviews appearing in the thesis as Appendix III (a) to (e) constitute the information which was useful during the analysis in the later chapters.

The last category of informants I interviewed in the field was comprised mostly of youths in secondary schools. The schools where I conducted interviews include Vihiga Secondary School and Moi Madzu Girls High School on June 25th, 1997. On June 26th 1997, I also held another interview at Mbale High School. Other schools where I conducted interviews were as follows: Keveye Secondary school and Chavakali High School (July 5th, 1997). On July 8th 1997, I also conducted interviews at Moi Vokoli Girls and Busali Union Secondary Schools.

There are several reasons for choosing to conduct interviews with secondary school students. First and foremost, there was the advantage of interviewing as many as I could within a short period since they were already concentrated in respective compounds. Secondly, I needed to obtain their views as one way of understanding the future place and role of rituals and myths among the Maragoli.
The number of interviews I conducted varied from school to school. But out of a total of ten schools, I was able to carry out sixty interviews. On the average, it means that I held six interviews per school. This figure was in most cases determined by the time factor. But the figure is quite a good representational one, especially in terms of the nature of the data which has been incorporated in the analysis of this thesis. It is also representational because I consulted schools in both Vihiga and Sabatia constituencies occupied by Maragoli community. I have included ten interviews as Appendix IV (a) to (f), specifically because of the nature of their data which has been incorporated in the analysis of the study.

Most of these interviews were conducted outside the context of rituals. They were arranged interviews, structured alongside interview questions provided in Appendices II and III in the thesis. In most cases the interviews were targeted to specific people as a way of obtaining relevant information. Hence the main reason for employing purposeful sampling of data method.

I was able to attend two burial ceremonies. The first one was on June 8th, 1997 at Chango village in Vihiga constituency and the second burial took place on July 20th at Kegoye village, near Mbale Township. The former was a sixty-seven-year-old man, while the latter was a woman aged fifty two years. In both cases the dead were staunch Christians. The man had been a Church Elder of Chango Friends Yearly Meeting for as long as twenty years. While the woman had died serving as a Captain in her region.
Through observation, I was able to learn a great deal regarding the burial ritual among the Maragoli community. The community regard death with a lot of seriousness. They demonstrate this in many ways. The Maragoli for example, mourn their dead with a lot of grief. This is as a recognition that one of their own has physically departed from them. They also perform other activities to console the bereaved. It may take many forms including material assistance. But the most important observation I made during the two burials I attended in the area happen to be a religious one. The Maragoli community relate to death in a sacred manner. The Christian influence appears to have enhanced their traditional beliefs that the living and the dead interact in one way or another. It is for this reason that the community pays great respect to their dead.

I also attended the annual Maragoli Cultural Festival at Mbale Township in December 1997. This is a cultural event which takes place on every December 26th. The most important event on this particular one was the re-enactment of the Maragoli rite of initiation. Traditionally, the Maragoli practise male circumcision. The ritual is an important one for the community in many ways. Apart from serving as a rite of passage during which young boys graduate to adulthood status, I observed that the occasion which was being re-enacted has other social purposes for the community. The main issue I observed was that the rite is in itself a form of educational institution for the community’s youth. This is because during this particular time, many matters pertaining to the community’s social, historical and even political (leadership) were addressed. I also observed that the ritual serves as a platform where the community addresses cultural
matters affecting it. All these observations became useful in the discussions provided in the subsequent chapters.

Another enriching interview was held with Imbuga on January 11th 1998, as the author of the literary books being studied. The questions used and answers received during this interview appear as Appendix V in this work. The most salient issue that emerged from the interview was: the rituals and myths that are incorporated in Imbuga's books enable him to reveal the contradictions that abound in the African traditions and Western culture. Imbuga also admits that myths and rituals provide him with a framework for social and moral criticism. This is what this study has set out to establish.

1:10 Outline of the study

This work is organised into four main chapters and a conclusion. The second chapter centres on how and why Imbuga's literary texts present the issues of socio-cultural changes occurring in modern African societies. Greater attention is focused on those works which tackle these issues adequately, namely Aminata and The Burning of Rags. In this chapter, the discussion is that besides their surface level meaning, Imbuga employs the ritual ceremonies of burial and circumcision as relevant practices. These ritual ceremonies are used by the creative artist as a trope for elucidating the socio-cultural dynamisms that the African communities have been experiencing since their contact with Western culture.
Chapter Three focuses on the political and economic matters affecting post-independent African countries. A thorough examination of these issues is based on Betrayal in the City, Game of Silence, Man of Kafira and The Successor. Here, the analysis shows that, in his literary texts, Imbuga utilises the ritual of burial/funeral and wedding as a kind of kaleidoscopic world to examine what takes place on Africa's political and economic scene in order for him to make important social and moral statements.

In Chapter Four, the argument concentrates on the novella, Kagai and her Brothers, and the novel Shrine of Tears. The analysis shows that, through the genre of prose, Imbuga is still talking about change in society. In Shrine of Tears for example, he is obsessed with the death of traditional African culture.

Finally, a review of the main discussions carried out in the previous chapters is provided in the last chapter which comprises significant conclusions. There is also an attempt to make recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

SUBVERTING TRADITIONAL AFRICAN CULTURE

2:00 – Introduction

The discussion in this chapter centres on how and why, in Aminata (1988) and The Burning of Rags (1989), Imbuga has treated the theme of subversion of traditional African culture by the intruding Western culture. The analysis is carried out in two parts. Part one focuses on the play Aminata and the second part deals with the play The Burning of Rags.

2:01 – Cultural Battle in Aminata (1988)

Although Aminata was published in 1988, its first appearance on stage was on 16th July 1985 at the Kenya National Theatre in Nairobi. The book was written after the author “was commissioned by the steering committee of the United Nations Decade for Women Conference which was held in Nairobi, Kenya in July 1988” (Imbuga, 1988), to write a play marking that occasion.

The drama in Aminata is enacted through two antagonistic forces: the traditional African Culture of Membe community vis-a-vis the imposing Western one. As John Ruganda (1992) argues, the conflicts in Aminata

……. are informed more profoundly by the irreconcilably antagonistic ideological concerns conditioned by two authorities: one, traditional, mythically oriented, and espoused by Jumba; the other, materialistic, imperialistic shrouded in Christian ethnology and Western educational garb (Ruganda, 1992:74).
Thus while Jumba represents the local or traditional Membe cultural and ideological concerns, his niece, Aminata, is truly a symbol of the imperialistic Western culture and ideology. According to her own uncle, she is Membe’s black sheep “long recognized by those that would destroy the very foundation” of the community’s “ways of ages” (Imbuga, 1988:14). In the words of Dr. Mulemi, Jumba is to Aminata “a perfect mockery of enlightened tribal leadership on the continent” (Imbuga, 1988:40).

When the play opens, we witness a newly completed ritual occasion. It is the completion of the cementing or dressing of the late Pastor Ngoya’s grave. This important Membe ritual has been done in a virtually deserted and lonely ceremony. The late Pastor Ngoya is the man who paved the way for Christianity together with other accompanying values of Western culture, into Membe. To a large extent, the subsequent events unfolding in this drama are directly or indirectly influenced either by this particular ritual or that of Pastor Ngoya’s death itself. The importance of rituals and myths in Aminata is realized at the psychological and sociological levels among the characters concerned.

The burial and funeral rites of Pastor Ngoya are conducted within the precincts of the church compound. In a way, this demonstrates the triumph of the invading foreign culture over Membe’s traditional culture. Pastor Ngoya himself is an epitome of a successful Christian within Membe. He unswervingly stands by everything advocated by the new faith, while at the same time outrightly condemning “Membe’s laws of ages” (Imbuga, 1988:13). His outstanding performance as a servant of the church is noticeable even to the likes of Mama Rośina:

He was the first of our people
to join the Church. He grew up and served the Church without ever looking back. In return, they recognized his devotion to God and to the Church, and they rewarded him, made him Pastor. Pastor Eliakim Ngoya (Imbuga, 1988:2).

But this is not what the playwright is actually concerned with in the text. What Imbuga is vividly demonstrating is how this new culture represented by Pastor Ngoya is pregnant with dangerous viruses which eventually destroy the traditional African culture. He projects this through the chicken eating scene. The confusion, uncertainty, greed, and cut-throat competition atmosphere engulfing this scene are all symbols of this new culture:

He starts the song and is joined by other voices. Suddenly several women enter talking excitedly, each in her own language. They devour large chunks of chicken as they talk --- fighting desperately for a piece of chicken (Imbuga, 1988:21).

The above scene is indeed an illustrative picture of the epidemic nature the new culture portends. The new culture, as the playwright depicts, is obviously threatening to tear apart Membe’s moral stability and harmony. While he is not doubting the inevitability of change, Imbuga is definitely warning of its impending dangers. Unfortunately, not even its greatest disciples such as Pastor Ngoya is, can avert it.

By introducing Christian values into Membe, pastor Ngoya is actually defying the community’s long cherished traditions. The chicken eating event described above is indeed a good example. According to Membe’s traditions, chicken eating is a male
Pastor Ngoya interprets this to mean "... the taboos that have continually denied (women) the benefits of life" (Imbuga, 1988:20). As a result, he relentlessly goes ahead to eliminate such 'taboos' which also, according to him, belongs to "..... a barren tradition that imprisons the very souls that give birth to it" (Imbuga, 1988:21).

Seemingly, Pastor Ngoya does this as part and parcel of the gender scheme championed by Western culture. Besides other reasons, this particular one prompts him to allow his own daughter, Aminata, to play a pioneer's role: "Today Aminata becomes the first of Membe's womenfolk to taste the church's chicken soup, in public" (Imbuga, 1988:21).

In a way Pastor Ngoya's gender mission turns out to be quite ironical. A good example is the ensuing cultural conflict whereby women such as Aminata are now publicly challenging male cultural and moral harmony (Imbuga, 1988:34). Also, a psychological infliction is bred, especially among those men who are symbols of traditional Membe society, such as Jumba. Hence his scornful remarks: "Ngoya began that equality nonsense among our women folk. Now, they actually believe we are equal" (Imbuga, 1988:4). Jumba is equally insecure by these new developments in Membe. Therefore, his opposition to Aminata gender sensitiveness is part and parcel of his wider scheme to liberate Membe from foreign cultural domination initiated by the late Pastor Ngoya.

The adverse effects of this new culture are greatly witnessed in the performances of Membe's traditional rituals, such as those of burial and funeral rites. A good example is in the case of the late Pastor Ngoya. Among the traditionists such as Jumba, the manner
in which Pastor Ngoya’s burial rites are conducted is both a social and psychological humiliation to the community. Mainly because these rites are held in total contravention of Membe’s traditional ones. Jumba is critical of this because it kindles in him earlier injustices committed upon Membe’s traditional culture by the foreign one. That is why he regrets that his brother was not buried within his compound in accordance with Membe’s traditions:

We shall make no more mistakes in Nyarango’s family. We erred when we allowed Aminata and the church to bury Ngoya in this lonely ground instead of laying him in his own homestead (Imbuga, 1988:15).

Like among most African communities, the burial rite among the Membe people in Aminata is highly regarded. Specifically because within such a ritual, there abides certain functions fundamental to the concerned community. The social integrative one being of out-most importance. Victor Turner explains that within an African set-up

Ritual is a periodic restatement of the terms in which men of a particular culture must interact if there is to be any kind of a coherent social life (Turner, 1974:37).

This, and like Okot P’Bitek (1973:31) also argues, dictates participation of the community at large. Thus attesting to vitality of traditional culture of the concerned community, as well as ensuring and promoting its social and moral harmony and solidarity. Because Pastor Ngoya is buried in utter contravention of Membe’s traditional burial rites, these important aspects of the community’s traditional culture are not realized. Which is one reason why clan elder Nduruuru laments:
Yes, that is the truth itself. Ngoya was buried like a man without a home. Not even a calf was near to bless the clan with a shower of dust from his grave (Imbuga, 1988:15-16).

Ndururu’s other reason for lamenting is in relation to the current predicament facing Membe’s traditional culture: he is concerned that this culture is being forced into extinction by the foreign one.

Ngoya’s funeral rite is also a direct challenge to Membe’s patriarchal hegemony. Membe’s traditions require that only men of the deceased’s kin must be consulted or take charge during his burial. In Ngoya’s case, the church buries Ngoya in consultation with Aminata, his daughter. This means that Ababio, his eldest son, and Jumba, his own brother, are by-passed. Jumba is aggrieved that Membe’s traditional culture in which patriarchy ruled supreme is being overrun by the new foreign one. That is why he asserts that his late brother is at fault for “.... confiding in a daughter when he had a brother and sons” (Imbuga, 1988:5).

There is indeed a significant dramatic irony surrounding the death of Pastor Ngoya. Particularly as it concerns the cementing of his grave. His dying wishes are “.... that his grave should not be cemented” (Imbuga, 1988:4). But both Jumba and Ababio defy these wishes. The cementing of the grave is indeed part and parcel of the funeral rites.
Therefore, it is by all means in accordance with Membe traditions, required to be procedural. Especially in so far as the wishes of the dead are concerned.

By defying wishes of the dead, Jumba has actually acted just like Pastor Ngoya himself did when he over-ran Membe’s traditions and imposed foreign ones. In so far as Jumba’s case is concerned, his action is indeed traditionally a grave one. Basically because at mythological level, wishes of the dead among the Membe must be respected. This is because like other African communities, the Membe “believe that death is not an end of human life. A person continues to exist here-after” (John S. Mbiti, 1975:123). According to Membe’s myths, there are high chances that the late Pastor Ngoya may strike back at his brother in search of justice denied. It is partially for this reason that Mama Rosina reprimands Jumba: “Yes, take heed my husband, the dead see through walls. They see well beyond their graves” (Imbuga, 1988:6).

Other than this, Mama Rosina’s concern is also prompted by her husband’s current status as “.... the carrier of Membe’s stool of rule” (Imbuga, 1988:7). This means that Jumba is not just a political and administrative head of Membe community. By virtue of this position, he is also the chief guardian of the community’s social and cultural institutions. As it is at the moment, he is actually undermining the same institutions by defying the late Pastor Ngoya’s wishes not to cement his grave. Society’s disapproval of this act by a man who should be protecting their social and cultural institutions is not just echoed by Mama Rosina. Agege, regarded to be a village idiot, in a humorously critical mood, also does the same:
Headman, how do you see now?
Too much fire! That is what I say
cement proper, add water plus sand
basi. Koroga, Koroga, together all! Result?
Long lasting, permanganate grave, finish
(Imbuga, 1988:8).

Criticism levelled against Jumba for cementing Pastor Ngoya’s grave does indeed produce in him the desired results: Shock. Jumba now realizes that his action may have far reaching repercussions to the community of Membe. Precisely because instead of resorting to tradition to facilitate and promote cohesion of Membe community, his decision is actually exhilarating the already existing divisions. But rather than succumb to his critics, Jumba opts for the opposite. This in turn becomes a significant dramatic irony in the text. That is why he vehemently remarks to Mama Rosina: “... I will have you understand that there is more to this grave dressing than is fit for women ears” (Imbuga,. 1988:3).

This decision by Jumba is very purposeful. His contention is that Membe’s traditional culture is still endowed with admirable vitality. That is why he successfully manipulates his nephew, Ababio, “a good – for – nothing-drunk” (Imbuga, 1988:4) – to participate in the dressing of the late Pastor Ngoya’s grave. Besides, Jumba has seized on this opportunity in order to accomplish two other goals. The first one being to defy Christianity in retaliation for the sufferings he has experienced at the hands of the Church: “Mama Rosina, we sacrificed our blood and all in the name of Ngoya’s new religion” (Imbuga, 1988:5). The second reason is that Jumba wants to re-assert his
authority as Membe’s headman, and also as the chief custodian of the community’s social-cultural and moral ethics (Imbuga, 1988:7).

It is also for the reasons above that Imbuga manipulates this dramatic irony for the development of Jumba as a cultural partriot in Aminata.

Undoubtedly, the playwright has portrayed Jumba as a man with “.... unwavering fidelity to his cultural codes” (Ruganda, 1992:75). His loyalty to Membe’s cultural heritage, in the face of a devastating foreign culture, emanates from some historical experiences. Particularly those connected with the invasion of Membe’s traditional culture by the foreign one. His bitter lament about it attests to this:

It was Ngoya’s invitation of the city people which brought about our misfortune. Yes, it was his invitation of the city people which gave birth to the Aminatas of today. Women who rush into their bridal beds without a single four legged gift from their husband’s people .... if it had not been for Ngoya, those chanting parasites would never have found their way here. Now see how they shamelessly trample down the seeds of our ways of ages (Imbuga, 1988:18).

The settlement of the “chanting parasites” from the city into Membe has left Jumba with a psychological and physical trauma. It is the same consequences he has had from the encounter with the new ways of “the city people” which have turned Jumba into a strong-willed patriot of Membe’s traditional culture. He asserts this determination when he proclaims: “No, we shall stand firm and shield Membe from further shame” (Imbuga, 1988:22).
Jumba’s patriotic stance in defence of Membe’s traditional culture also arises from his guilt conscience. He is reported to have in the past associated with Christianity. Then he played a role of a cultural traitor because he was an agent of colonial or foreign culture. He attests:

When I think back, I curse myself for the part I played in welcoming the robed strangers here. I was a foolish young man, all ears and no brains. Attracted by the toy with the tag of God on it. But now, I am wiser (Imbuga, 1988:14).

This present war against “Aminataism” in a way, enables Jumba to exorcise the evil brought by Christianity. According to him, the “... church is evil” and “Aminata is evil too” (Imbuga, 1988:13-14).

In Aminata, Imbuga further presents the symbol of the church in a very paradoxical manner. Initially Christianity is introduced into Membe by foreigners led by Pastor Ngoya, using sugar-coated language (Imbuga, 1988:17). It is as a result of this that people of Membe become christianized. Jumba’s bitterness about it is revealed as he recalls this incident:

He blinded us and like moths, we all trooped towards the new light. The warmth of a single blanket and a bumpy ride around the village did it all (Imbuga, 1988:17).

Ironically, the same new faith which promises “new light” also carries alongside it both “evil” and a message of extinction” (Imbuga, 1988:17). Once again Jumba, as well as Membe’s traditional culture, become victims of the same foreign cultural forces which the church symbolizes in the text.
Jumba is presently hostile towards Christianity because of the loss he has incurred. We are told that all his children except one are dead. He attests: "In one fateful moment I sacrificed my all to religion and this new wisdom of change" (Imbuga, 1988:14). The death of Jumba's children has a mythological interpretation. Especially given the fact that the children are struck dead while sheltering under a sacred tree. According to Jumba, this is the same tree where most of Membe's traditional cultural practices were performed. Hence the tree stands out as Membe's Holy Shrine. Giving away the land where it stands to foreign practices amounts to the community forsaking both their gods and traditional culture. Therefore, according to Jumba, the children are struck down as a kind of punishment from Membe's fore-fathers to avenge the injustice committed by the community. It is for this reason that Jumba bitterly bemoans his children's death:

That tree was our ancestor's resting place. It was sacred because it grew at the very spot where Membe, the father of our clan, was circumcised. The stories that our master narrators tell were composed under that tree. What amount of tolerance then would stop the gone from taking revenge? (Imbuga, 1988:15).

Nonetheless, it is also these mythological reasons which enhance Jumba's cultural patriotism in the face of a stubborn and perpetuating foreign culture, represented by Aminata.

The detrimental role of foreign culture to Membe's traditional one is manifested further in other aspects. Particularly as it relates to Jumba's personal life. For example, the new idea of family planning lures Jumba into a vasectomy operation. As a result, he cannot
beget other children to replace the dead ones. His predicament is complicated further at the social level. This is in as far as Membe’s patriarchal hegemony is concerned. Within the traditional male dominated Membe society, a man’s social-cultural status is guaranteed mainly because he has able sons who will inherit his place and property. Jumba is disadvantaged in this regard.

In Aminata, the symbol of the knife, like most other symbols in the text, has been used paradoxically. For example, the traditional circumcision Jumba receives is a moral model in the sense that it ensures procreation and sustenance of human life within Membe community. John Ruganda, for example, also notes this:

Symbolically, the first knife is associated with procreativity, masculine courage and endurance, and unassailable friendship. It is an icon of life-giving and life-sustaining forces (Ruganda, 1992:76).

On the contrary, the vasectomy operation is, to Jumba as well as to Membe’s traditional culture, a symbol of death and extinction. Hence Jumba’s determination that foreign cultural practices such as family planning must be banned within Membe (Imbuga, 1988:17).

Jumba’s sentiments are shared by Kezia, Dr. Mulemi’s Paternal aunt. Dr. Mulemi is Aminata’s husband. Like Jumba, Kezia is also a patriot of traditional African culture. According to Kezia, her nephew’s modern family planning activities are immoral and fatalistic. As far as she is concerned, what Dr. Mulemi is involved in is equivalent to’’...
playing with the human body” (Imbuga, 1988:34). According to her, Dr. Mulemi has also joined hands to destroy indigenous culture. That is why she is shocked at her nephew’s excitement about striking bull’s eye (Imbuga, 1988:33). She even reprimands him, saying:

You have been married for twelve years! and what have you to show for it? Two children and a fat book on family planning! Son of my brother, we do not want you to be the laughing stock of your agemates ..... God put Adam and Hawa in the Garden of Eden and said, “Go ye and multiply”. He did not tell them to go ye and play darts (Imbuga, 1988:35-6).

The patriotic stance of Jumba and Kezia in defence of traditional culture is manifested further in other aspects. This time, it involves the issue of land inheritance among the Membe people. It concerns “a token three acres of .... land” (Imbuga, 1988:47) left for Aminata by her late father, Pastor Ngoya, as a gift. The conflict that ensues after Aminata demands to be given this land is threatening to tear apart not only the Nyarango family but also the entire Membe community.

Both Jumba and Kezia are opposed to Aminata inheriting land in Membe because of the community’s traditional culture. Her claim is, in as far as tradition is concerned, unique and unprocedural. As Kezia aptly puts it:

A man’s stool is not for women’s buttocks. Aminata should know that. Why is she fighting to inherit her father’s land? What has she gone back to Membe for? (Imbuga, 1988:34).
Kezia’s sentiments are shared by Jumba because Membe’s traditions stipulate that “… Ngoya’s land is Membe land and it belongs to his sons by tradition” (Imbuga, 1988:31).

Thus Membe’s tradition forbids a daughter from inheriting land. Aminata’s decision to contest for the land is indeed a direct affront of “Membe’s ways of ages” (Imbuga, 1988:17). According to Jumba and Kezia, Aminata is a tool being used by foreigners to champion a new and oppressive and destructive culture in Membe. Hence aunt Kezia’s remarks that Aminata has “…sold her womanhood to foreigners” (Imbuga, 1988:37). What she also means is that Aminata is a saboteur of Membe’s traditional culture.

In her self-defence against all the accusations levelled against her, Aminata ironically only manages to enumerate her materialistic success in Membe:

It is not me you want to wipe out of existence, no. You want to forget the water project, the tailoring business. You want to forget the school fees which I have been paying for your children (Imbuga, 1988:53).

As a matter of fact, what the above demonstrates is that Aminata is the one who is performing duties in her late father’s home. This is again contrary to Membe’s tradition, which reserve such roles to male children of the home. By implication, her materialistic success elevates her to male status. In turn, it contributes to psychological humiliation and social disillusionment for men. Jumba, for example, asks:

What charms has that woman used on us that even crazy heads sing her praises as they blindly walk away from our roots? Nuhu, what became of Membe’s sons? we once stood firm as men on our
two feet, erect, our heads held high,  
sniffing proudly at the passing wind for  
scent. What became of that blood of  
courage that once filled our veins  
(Imbuga, 1988:11).

The dangers associated with Aminata in Membe are not just at the level of materialistic provisions alone. Equally important are her attitudes towards Membe’s traditional culture. Aminata is a product of foreign educational and religious institutions. This has contributed to her referring to Membe’s traditional cultural values as “...... dried leaves of a rootless tree” (Imbuga, 1988:43). Dr. Mulemi also remarks that promoters of Membe’s traditional culture like Jumba, are “mongers in taboos and superstitions” (Imbuga, 1988:43). But according to Jumba, Aminata and her group are just “....like the egret that pulls ticks from a bull’s back and thinks it is eating the bull” (Imbuga 1988:16).

In a letter to Aminata’s father-in-law, Jumba threatens to curse Aminata if she does not relinquish her claim to own land in Membe. Membe’s myths hold it that “...the curse of a father, an uncle or an aunt runs right down the family tree for generations to come” (Imbuga, 12988:37). Aunt Kezia a Membe traditionalist like Jumba, is very conversant with this and alerts Dr. Mulemi, Aminata’s husband:

She better be wise and drop that claim  
over her father’s piece of land, otherwise  
she will not survive her uncle’s curse. The  
letter which Jumba wrote to your father...  
is not the kind to be ignored by people with  
brains. So stop her, lest the man raises a  
crippling curse upon her head (Imbuga,1988:37).

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Jumba's invocation of Membe's myths fulfills two issues. At one level, he validates why a rite should not be held to give Aminata the piece of land. Secondly, he is employing Membe's myths as an effective weapon of fighting foreign domination. That also explains why he is entreating Ababio:

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 (Imbuga, 1988:31).

Another obstacle confronting Jumba in his role as liberator of Membe's traditional culture is Ababio. Ababio's failure to be in full control of his father's (Pastor Ngoya's) funeral is seen as anti-culture within the Membe traditional context (Imbuga, 1988:25).

This role was expected of him since he was the eldest son. He is also expected to promote family unity and to act responsibly. His failure to adequately cater for his family prompts his wife Misia to desert him (Imbuga, 1988:25). This is not only a form of social disintegration. To an extent, it also demonstrates Ababio as a cultural saboteur.

Apparently, Jumba has learnt that Ababio's understanding of culture is very superficial. To Ababio, culture exists only in terms of land:

They can collect all the degrees in the world, if they want, but let nobody touch my land. For as long as I am still steady on my feet, no woman will touch my father's land because it is my land (Imbuga, 1988:23).
Eventually, Jumba dumps Ababio after he is convinced that his nephew is a worthless person in their endeavour to liberate Membe from foreign domination. "Get the money and remember that tradition protects only a man who defends it" (Imbuga, 1988:30).

When the elders desert Jumba in favour of Aminata, it is by implication that they are also abandoning Membe’s traditional culture. Consequently the elders are, in as far as Jumba is concerned, accepting that they are rootless. This decision by the elders to favour Aminata against Membe’s traditions also spurs Jumba into action to overwhelm all the foreign forces muzzling Membe’s traditional culture. It is in light of this that he opts to resign from his post as Membe’s headman:

Mama Rosina, I did not call you here to chew my words for me. (pause). So listen. By leaving a piece of land for Aminata, Ngoya defied our laws of ages. His action was a deliberate one because it has never happened in any of our neighbouring clans. Now I have made up my mind. The stool of rule is spittle in the sand without the support of all the elders. So now I have made up my mind. If the elders want to give that piece of land to Aminata, they can do so...... This is a battle of wits. Jumba against the rest... I am Jumba with or without the stool of rule.... So the soil can be handed over to Aminata without me. I will resign (Imbuga, 1988:66-7).

Ironically, by allowing Mama Rosina to succeed him, Jumba is actually violating Membe’s traditions which stipulate that “A man’s stool is not for women’s buttocks” (Imbuga, 1988:34). It is for this reason that his decision to resign in favour of mama Rosina is challenged. But Jumba is wiser than those opposed to his decision:

Aaah! There we are, at last! We have now come round to it, Tradition! (it is his turn to laugh.) The cobweb shakes, the fly is caught, and the patient spider will have his meal (Imbuga, 1988:69).
Jumba also knows that majority of Membe men will not easily accommodate the idea of having a woman as their head. Membe, in Jumba’s understanding, may have welcomed the city people. But its patriarchal tendencies still loom large. Fears of a woman leadership are prevalent among the majority. Nuhu explicitly puts it thus: “But a woman! I don’t trust women in such a position. She will urinate on our heads” (Imbuga, 1988:74).

When the playwright employs the play-within-a-play at the end of *Aminata*, he seems to confirm Jumba’s earlier observations “that the patient spider will have his meal” (Imbuga 1988:69). In this rehearsal scene, two significant issues occur. First, Mama Rosina’s first duties as the new village head are interrupted. This is an indication that the patriarchal Membe tradition is vibrant and ready to subvert all that is alien to it. Secondly, when Agege interrupts the handing-over rite with the news that Ababio is dead, “the soil-container falls from Mbaluto’s hands and breaks, scattering the soil all over” (Imbuga, 1988:81).

This seems to be a fulfilment of Jumba’s greatest desire not to “… let Membe enter the future as the only clan to have offered land inheritance to a woman” (Imbuga, 1988:29). From a mythological perspective, John Ruganda (1992:92), in reference to this particular incident, notes that it was a clear demonstration that “the ancestors have a mysterious way of revealing their wishes”.

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2:02 – Summary of Aminata (1988)

At the end of the rehearsal scene in Aminata, Jumba observes: “It is not yet too late to learn, yet what have we done?” (Imbuga, 1988:81). Jumba is reacting not just to what has immediately happened: Ababio’s death and the falling and breaking up of the soil-container. He is, as a matter-of-fact, responding to the scenario that has characterised Membe since its contact with foreigners. A scenario that was spearheaded by the late Pastor Ngoya, whom the playwright quotes in the epigraph as having said:

The time-tested ways of our people are best
yet oh, God, Lord, make us wise that we may accept change (Imbuga, 1988: III).

In Aminata, therefore, Imbuga acknowledges the inevitability of change in society. However, he does not condone suppression of traditional African cultures in the name of change. With the use of various Membe’s rituals and their concomitant myths, Imbuga has demonstrated the versatility of traditional African cultures. That is one reason why towards the end of the play, Jumba, having unwaveringly fought to defend “Membe’s ways of ages” (Imbuga, 1988:17), gleefully talks of his impending victory:

I will let the elders have their way in the matter of land but it will be I that shall have the final laugh. Yes I will outwit them at their own game (Imbuga, 1988:67).

He courageously stands out as a traditionalist within the context of the play.
The drama in *The Burning of Rags* like in *Aminata*, centres on cultural problems prevailing in modern African societies. But if in the former Imbuga tackles the issue of sabotaging traditional culture, then in the latter he dwells on a cultural renegade.

On the surface level, *The Burning of Rags* is about Denis’ failure to traditionally initiate his only son, Yona, into manhood. He fails to fulfill this despite numerous pleas from his own ageing father, Agala. Ironically Denis, is by profession a University Professor in Cultural Studies. His unbecoming behaviour subsequently leads to Agala’s sudden death.

In the play, traditional rituals as well as their concomitant myths, therefore reign supreme. The central rite of passage is Yona’s initiation. It is indeed the very component which shed a lot of light on the actual meaning that the drama contains. Also, it is upon this ritual that the conflict in the text is hinged.

The biggest question is whether Yona should be initiated in accordance with traditional demands or whether he should be circumcised in hospital. Linked to this is whether Denis should perform the final rite—"to burn (his) own son’s old clothes" (Imbuga, 1988:38)—or not. These conflicting demands are symbolized by the two drums we encounter at the beginning of the play: “Dark, two drums express conflict with each other” (Imbuga, 1988:1). The playwright is according Yona’s initiation significant metaphorical interpretation. Besides, this ritual is, in *The Burning of Rags*, a kind of
foregrounding that Imbuga employs to plunge deeper into psychological and sociological effects emanating from acculturation.

When the play opens, a dreaming "Agala gets off the bed and begins to grope about blindly" (Imbuga, 1988:2). Agala's dream is quite a crucial one. Not only because the person appearing to him in this dream is his son's late wife, Matilda. But especially due to the fact that the dream concerns his grandson, Yona, whose impending circumcision is the topic of discussion:

Matilda: A conveniently short memory you have, old man. (showing him) Look, this boy is fatherless. So I, a woman took him to the knife.

Agala: No, no, no. You would have to castrate me first! What did I hear you say?

Matilda: Your grandson is on the road to manhood. When you and your son failed him, I circumcised him myself. (shows a knife from under her clothes). With this

Agala: Oh! Abominable! Abhorrible! I am done! I am finished. (Breaks down and begins to cry:) the son of the chief will eat dust. I am done, I am finished, I am nothing. Give me the knife (Imbuga 1988:4)

Imbuga employs this dream motif for certain essential purposes in the text. On the one hand, the dream motif also functions as a kind of foregrounding for the social and cultural concerns the playwright is dealing with in The Burning of Rags. Denis for example is portrayed as a renegade of his traditional culture. On the other hand, Imbuga, is also employing the dream motif in this text as one way of psyching Agala as a defender and promoter of traditional African culture. This dream, for instance, enables him to grasp
the implications of Denis’ decision to have Yona circumcised in hospital. Agala’s view is that Yona must be initiated in accordance with his community’s cultural traditions:

Oh, he is mad. To a hospital indeed! Whose grandson will he take to a hospital? Elima, you wait and see if I don’t teach that son of yours. I will certainly teach him that … Yona will not be circumcised in any hospital while I live… the boy will be circumcised here. He will be circumcised by that same knife that worked on his forefathers. His warm blood shall trickle into the soil that now covers the bones of his ancestors. Yes, his blood will not be washed away from the floor of anybody’s hospital (Imbuga, 1989:10-1)

Agala’s denouncement of Denis’s stance reveals a great deal. For example, circumcision has an overwhelming cultural and religious meaning within certain African communities. Agala intends to ensure the continuity of his people’s cultural heritage. The rite will also enable Yona to identify himself with his community’s traditions. Thus the boy will have obtained a cultural identity, as well as a sense of belonging. Besides, Agala is also conversant with the religious implications the rite has to an African people. In its proper context, circumcision involves a practical transformation in the life of the concerned individual. This is symbolized by the blood the individual sheds. It is this which binds him to his environment and traditions. John Mbiti also attests to this:

…… the blood which is shed during the physical operation binds the person to the land and consequently to the departed members of his society. It says that the individual is alive, and that he or she now wishes to be tied to the community and people among whom he or she has been born as a child. This circumcision blood is like making a convenant, or a solemn agreement, between the individual and his people. Until the individual has gone through the operation, he is still an outsider. Once he has shed blood, he joins the stream of his people, he becomes truly one with them (Mbiti, 1975:93).
The fact that Denis finally succumbs to Agala’s demands by returning home (Imbuga, 1989:32) to have Yona circumcised traditionally does not qualify him to become a cultural patriot. As a matter of fact, his role as a deserter of his people’s traditional culture is further manifested. Especially when he fails to fulfill other obligatory practices of the circumcision rites to his son. His community’s traditions stipulate that a father must burn the rags of his son after the physical operation. Denis despises this vital cultural practice as “nonsense” (Imbuga, 1989:47), and absconds from performing it. This implies that Yona has not been fully initiated into manhood in accordance with the community’s traditions. Dr. Agbale, his colleague, draws his attention to it:

No, he doesn’t. Not until the final rite is performed by you. The burning of rags is a sacred rite. It is an important rite. Man’s final rite on the way to manhood (Imbuga, Ibid).

The significance of the rite of the burning of rags has credence in his society’s myths. One such myth is the one associated with procreation. Among Denis’ people it is traditionally believed that an initiated boy will only beget children if the father burns his own sons old clothes” (Imbuga, 1989:3). Denis’s failure to do this has certain implications. His action is both a violation of traditional myths as well as the intention to ruin the future of his own son. Agala, the child’s grandfather, is opposed to Denis’ decision. He knows the dangers this portends for the young boy and hastens to caution his son:

Is this not the same thing that happened to Kamadi? Kamadi was properly circumcised, but the final rite was left unperformed. Tell me, he has been married to three different women, hasn’t he? Does he have any children? Do you want Yona to be like him?
Agala’s defence of the rite of the burning of rags is also justified because of the experiences witnessed in the community. That is why he cites the case of Ogada’s son: “Ogada’s eldest son died soon after his uncle washed him instead of Ogada himself” (Imbuga, 1989:39). Agala’s fears are that the same could happen to Yona if Denis does not wash him. If it does occur then it will be of severe consequences to Agala as the head of his family. At the moment, Yona is his only grand-child. Bandi is not yet of marriageable age and Denis’ marital life is so far not yielding any more. Yona’s death would mean termination of Agala’s line. Afraid of such an eventuality, Agala remains firm that Yona’s initiation must be done according to custom:

You don’t know what you are talking about. Don’t the white men you teach ever ask you about your traditions and customs? What do you tell them? You will be there for tomorrow’s circumcision, and you will be there to burn your own son’s old clothes. Who do you think will do it for you? (Imbuga, 1989:38).

Though Agala rebukes Denis, he still hopes that his son will not reject traditional rituals and mythologies. That is why he hastens to implore: “I warn you Denis think like us. Let book learning fill your whole head, if you like, but leave a little space, just a little space, for thoughts of home” (Imbuga, 1989:39). Evidently, Agala’s concern has great moral teaching: the preservation of one’s essential customs. Babu, Agala’s age-mate, agrees with him fully. Hence his forceful rejoinder: “... Agala, Denis must be made to come and do his duty to his son. Even if it means dragging him here, Denis must be made to come” (Imbuga, 1939:16).
Denis, like Aminata and Dr. Mulemi in Aminata, belongs to the class of the educated elites. He is a product of Western Christian and educational institutions established in Africa during colonialism. During the schooling and christianizing process, the elites were imbibing Western values, as opposed to traditional ones. Culturally the elite class seems to owe its allegiance to the western culture. Thus, Denis' decision of wanting to have Yona circumcised in a hospital (Imbuga, 1989:10). Hence, Babu is justified in his criticism: "It is the fault of too much book learning. Book knowledge goes in through one ear and comes out through the other. A hospital?" (Imbuga, 1989:15).

Coupled with the above is the effect of Christianity, symbolized in the text by "... an unusually large crucifix tied around (Elima's) neck" (Imbuga, 1989:5). (Coincidentally, Elimia is a Christian and the only parent who speaks favourably of Denis.) The crucifix around Elimia’s neck has metaphorical implications. Essentially, Christianity’s initial aim was to liberate the African from their traditional customs and taboos, circumcision included. For other reasons also, many Africans did accept Christianity as a formal religion. By describing the crucifix won by Elimia as “unusually large” and that it is “tied around her neck”, the playwright is inviting us to have a glimpse at the other side of Christianity. That as a cultural agent, Christianity was not, in the true sense, a liberator. It was a tool used to suffocate traditional African cultures. By accepting it, the Africans were actually burdening themselves to an extent of abandoning their own traditional culture. Thus according to the playwright, Denis was defying traditional culture due to influences of Western education and Christianity. In Agala’s view,
Denis has abandoned his duties of looking after his immediate family, including his own son, Yona:

Ever since Yona’s mother died, Elima and I have taken care of him. At first, Denis sent us money, two hundred shillings a month. After a few months he stopped sending any money. Just stopped. Yona has only seen him twice since his mother’s death. I have fed him, bought him clothes bought him everything with the little money I got from selling quails. And now, the fool is brave enough to say, “I want my son to be circumcised in a hospital. ‘His son indeed! (Imbuga, 1989:17)

Related to this is Denis’ failure to also attend to his aging parents. He is, in behaviour and actions, a selfish and egoistic person. This is further confirmed by his decision to own a modern house in the city, but not in his home. Agala, disgustingly says:

Don’t talk to me about ....Denis..... look at your home. A grass thatched hut, and soot strands threatening to fall onto everything on the floor. And the walls? .... There is more space in those walls than in all the doors of the house combined... Instead of your brother building a house here, in his home, he goes and buys one at the centre of the city (Imbuga, 1989:8-9).

Hence, the reason why he is being strict with Bandi, his youngest son, to ensure that he grows up to uphold tradition:

Do you want to be like your brother, who is no good to come...from his home? Your brother has ignored us because he has a degree, while we have none. And now it is you. I have told you always that when I call, you have to drop everything and run (Imbuga, 1989:8).

Denis’ cultural alienation is also revealed in other aspects. He has been living with Hilda without formalizing their relationship. According to Agala, this is against the
community’s traditions. This therefore means that his son is morally degenerating. As a culturally alienated person, Denis is contended to keep Hilda as a “woman .. girlfriend” (Imbuga, 1989:20). Hence, his attempts to lie to his parents about it in a letter:

About the allegations that I am married, I want to make it quite clear that since Matilda’s death, I have not thought of marrying again. When I do, I will inform you. The woman you heard about is not a wife. She is my cook (Imbuga, 1989:11).

Denis’ simplistic approach towards cultural matters such as marriage, reduces him to a mere laughing stock among his people. Agala who is still very profoundly knowledgeable in traditional matters, refuses to accept his son’s blunt lies. His laughing at Denis’ claim that Hilda is his cook’ is also intelligently sarcastic:

I am laughing at you. Elima do you not see what a fool your son is making himself? He may have a degree. He may be professor, whatever that means, but he is a big fool. (Laughs). Whoever heard of an unmarried man employing an unmarried woman as a cook in his own house and not ever ….. (Imbuga, 1989:11-2).

The decision by Denis to stay informally with Hilda is an utter violation of the community’s moral code. Agala, justifiably, considers this relationship immoral and outrightly condemns it:

Have you ever understood me in all your life? Tell me, when it grows dark, where will you sleep? You have been working for several years now. Where is the house here that you can call your own? Are you earning money or stones? You only know how to feed harlots. You have buried all your money in harlots. You have buried all your children in harlots. Let me tell you now in broad daylight. For as long as you keep wrestling with harlots, you will never father another child (Imbuga, 1989:39).
Denis is not only inflicted with the viruses of moral decadence. He has also embraced corrupt practices. This is demonstrated through the means he employs to obtain a first class railway ticket to Kisumu. He has to involve a white person, Henries (Imbuga, 1989:25), in order to purchase the ticket. Henries’ earlier affair with Hilda, the current girlfriend to Denis, also attests to his immoral conduct (Imbuga, 1989:27-30). He further manifests this when he opts to abandon her after learning that she is with Denis’ child:

No, this is different now. I mean I... The way it is, may be you and Denis ought to get married... A child is a strong bond in marriage. And Denis will soon have that advantage too. I am sorry (Imbuga, 1989:67-8).

Through dramatic irony, the playwright is in the above context, challenging the African elites, such as Denis, to take the mantle and responsibility of remoulding and rejuvenating their traditional culture. In the case of Denis, he has to start by ensuring that his son, Yona, undergoes his “... final rite on the way to manhood” (Imbuga, 1989:47). But when we see him attempting to send Hilda away (Imbuga, 1989:62-5), it becomes evident that he is not yet ready to live up to such expectations.

Unlike Denis, Hilda is willing to account for her current cultural crisis. Hilda’s present cultural alienation is a result of her schooling, a fact she also admits (Imbuga, 1989:20). The western education system she went through ensured that she imbibed more foreign cultural values than traditional ones. Hence, she has become accustomed to appreciating foreign culture without being remorseful. This is why she defends herself
when Denis accuses her of ignoring African dances such as Sengenya, Ramogi and Sukuti.

Basically, Denis hires a dance troupe to demonstrate, among other things, his commitment to traditional cultural practices. His failure to return home for the final rite of the burning of the rags is indeed a paradox. It reveals his lack of commitment to his own traditions. Hilda notices this cultural dilemma in him and sarcastically comments:

That reminds me of what you treated me to on our first date: Blue Point Oysters with cocktail sauce, a large well-done steak with an equally large splatter of French fries, two pots of coffee, apple pie with ice cream, and an extra piece of mince pie for whoever finished the apple pie first (Imbuga, 1989:24).

Denis regards traditional culture very simplistically. This is because he is not just violating traditional demands. As a matter of fact, he is confirming his role as a cultural misfit. That is why he is less knowledgeable in matters concerning his traditional culture. He is psychologically and socially a devastated person. This is a dominant aspect of his life, which he ably demonstrates in his poem “From home with Bananas” (Imbuga, 1989:41). In the poem, he confesses that he is a victim of cultural alienation:

We left home with a bunch of bananas
And returned with her evil song
We left home with a pregnancy
And returned with a still-born

We left home and returned
With a dead song on our lips
Borrowed laughter from the past
For that was her song (Imbuga 1989:41 – 2)

What Denis is saying in this poem very much applies to what is happening to his traditional culture. By opting to embrace foreign culture, Denis is implicitly contributing
2:04 Summary of The Burning of Rags (1989)

In The Burning of Rags Imbuga’s concern that traditional African culture should not be extinct is indeed clearly demonstrated through two vivid incidents. The first one is Matilda’s apparition at the beginning of the play. The second one involves Agala’s arrival in the city to seek out his son, Denis, so that the latter can fulfill pressing cultural obligations (Imbuga, 1989:57 – 60).

Matilda’s apparition is a significant metaphor. The fact that she re-appears as if she is still alive puzzles Agala just as much as it does the reader. The playwright’s conviction is that traditional culture is a deeply rooted aspect of life. Imbuga compares traditional culture to the “long rope whose other end we cannot see” (Imbuga, 1989:1), being pulled by Matilda. Hence, when Agala arrives in the city, Denis is reminded that the rite of the burning of the rags has not been performed for Yona. The same tradition he has been dodging is still pursuing him for fulfillment. This is the reason why Agala and Babu are imploring him:

Agala: …..(Takes the bag from Babu and hands it to Enis.)
    Here take this medicine and follow us to the hospital.
    That boy must be washed properly with that medicine before this day ends.

Babu: And don’t forget the rags. Burn the rags together with the roots at the same time and keep the ashes in that tin. We shall carry it home after the boy has recovered.
Imbuga is not just re-asserting the vitality of one’s traditional culture. He is also emphasizing his convictions that it is almost practically impossible for an individual to utterly discard his own traditions.

Agala’s sudden death after arriving in the city has certain significance, especially to Denis. The dramatic irony here is that his father’s death puts new demands on him. He must now be re-initiated into his people’s traditional culture. This is a painful reality which has dawned on him: “I looked at myself, Hilda, through their eyes. And I saw that I am nothing but a rag. Just a rag to be burnt...” (Imbuga, 12989:69).

What the playwright is conveying at this juncture is very cogent. By embracing foreign culture, for example, Denis loses his cultural identity. He has, in all aspects, become alien to his people’s cultural practices, such as the rite of circumcision. With his father now dead, traditional cultural obligations have become more real than before. His people’s traditions demand that as the eldest son, he must now assume responsibilities as the head of his late father’s homestead. To accomplish this, Denis has to shed off foreign values and attitudes he has clothed himself in. He has to accept practising his people’s traditional culture. Agala’s death, therefore, is another form of ritual. It is, as a matter of fact, a necessary detergent that cleanses him psychologically and socially, as he attempts to be culturally free.
The next chapter will be an examination of African political matters dealt with in Imbuga’s other plays. They are discussed in the following order: Betrayal in the City (1976), Game of Silence (1977), The Successor (1979) and Man of Kafira (1984).

Chapter 1

Jeff Politicising a Metaphor in Betrayal in the City (1976)

When the play Betrayal in the City opens we encounter Adika, a leader in political struggle, but also a tax-payer with The police forces in the city. The game of politics.

Adika The subsequent events and occurrences in the drama are directly or indirectly related to Adika’s death and causes. This means that the play attempts to shed light on the central figure in the text.

What is the purpose for this centrality? And how does the explanation change to fit the overall message of the text?
RETURNING TO SANITY

3.0 Introduction

The analysis in this chapter is based on Imbuga’s four plays. Namely, Betrayal in the City (1976), Game of Silence (1977), The Successor (1979) and Man of Kafira (1984).

Basically, the analysis is an examination of how myths and rituals function as a kind of Kaleidoscopic for revealing, at a political level, the perpetration of evil and vice within an African set up. It will be done not only at the psychological and sociological levels, but also at the metaphorical and symbolical ones.

3:01 Politicising a Metaphor in Betrayal in the City (1996)

When the play Betrayal in the City opens we encounter a lonely red-soiled grave, which has also been tampered with. This is the grave of the slain University students’ leader, Adika. The subsequent events which unfold in the drama are directly or indirectly linked to Adika’s death and grave. This means that the playwright has accorded these two items significant centrality in the text.

What is the purpose for this centrality? And how does one explain their contributions to the entire overall message of the text?
At the manifest level, this would mean the following: that the playwright is merely contented with turning his eyes backward in time for purposes of hunting for forgotten gems in order to dazzle us.

Yet in latent terms, the meaning is quite the opposite. The representation of both Adika’s death and grave is of significant literary prominence. The two are a kind of valve, formal structure, which the author employs in order to penetrate into Kafira’s diabolical politics. Therefore, in Betrayal in the City, the dramatist has erected ritual in form of Adika’s death as vibrant metaphor. As a result of this rite of passage, he manages to illuminate some of the ills which colonialism and neo-colonialism has inflicted on Africa.

The latent meaning of Adika’s death and grave in Betrayal in the City is manifested in various ways. On the one hand it reveals the ruthless nature of the government in Kafira. Especially, when it resorts to force to disperse an unarmed demonstrating University students. It is as a result of this that Adika is murdered:

People say there were many of them, all marching in the same manner. Suddenly the shooting broke out. People fled in all directions, but my son’s lonely body lay in the middle of the street. Only four bullets were fired that day. Adika had four bullet wounds in his chest (Imbuga, 1976: 10).

This cold blooded manner in which Adika is murdered reveals how inhuman Kafira’s government is. Therefore, when the armed Jere and Mulili arrive to cancel the shaving ceremony, Doga has very plausible reasons for resisting. He sees in them as well as their mission, forces of injustice determined to invalidate all that stands for justice and truth in Kafira, such as traditional rituals.
A good example of colonial and neo-colonial effects in Kafira which is revealed in the text through Adika’s death is the disruption of traditional African set-up. This concerns conducting ritual practices, such as Adika’s shaving ceremony. Jere and Mulili as agents of the state demonstrate this very effectively. They interrupt Doga and Nina during the arrangements of the rite of the shaving ceremony for their departed son, Adika:

**Jere:** Old people, you waste your time. There is to be no ceremony.

**Mulili:** No ceremony! That the final. (Imbuga, 1976:14).

Doga courageously tries to have the ceremony proceed when he retorts “a shaving ceremony is no child’s play” (Imbuga, Ibid), but to no avail.

Doga insists to have the ceremony conducted because of the social significance his community attaches to traditional rituals. This importance is enhanced by the myths associated with the rite of the shaving ceremony. Doga himself echoes this myth when he remarks to Nina: “The ceremony must go on as planned. I do not want the spirits of the dead to turn wild with anger on account of a ceremony unperformed” (Imbuga, 1976:8 – 9).

Doga is psychologically scared because according to this traditional myths, the dead continue to abide among the living long after burial has taken place. The rites which are performed in their honour are intended to appease the spirit of the dead for positive
purposes in the community. According to the author, Adika’s shaving ceremony is therefore psychologically and socially justified.

The incident above again illuminates a lot about the play. Evidently the conflict between traditional Kafiran life and the neo-colonial one is vividly illustrated. Doga and Nina, symbols of the traditional order, are pitted against the invading brutal neo-colonial forces, whose agents are Jere and Mulili. Out of this struggle, the latter triumph because of ruthlessness and administrative manipulation. The shaving ceremony for Adika is subsequently cancelled for what Jere terms to be “...in the interest of peace” (Ibid).

Later on, we learn that it is Mulili, an agent of neo-colonialism in Kafira, who murders Doga and Nina (Imbuga, 1976:63).

In Betrayal in the City, the centrality of Adika’s shaving ceremony is used by the author in order for him to also contrast his characters. A good example is in the case of Mulili and Jere. Mulili emerges out at this particular juncture as an uncouth and uncultured person in traditional terms. This happens, when on realizing that the government will not let Adika’s shaving rite to take place, Nina (the late’s mother) threatens to strip herself naked:

You took our all, but you will not take the grave from us. If you do not go now, I shall strip and show you the poor naked bones you have left me. Do you want to be blinded by the nakedness of your gramother’s agemate? (Imbuga, 1976:14).
Among the playwright’s own Maragoli people, it is regarded as a taboo for a woman to strip in public. The Maragoli prohibit such an act because it is a disgrace to the community. In fact it is a violation of society’s moral values. Therefore, when Mulili urges Jere to let Nina go ahead with her threat (Imbuga, 1976: 15), we realize the level to which he has morally sank and degenerated.

Jere’s attitude, however, is in solidarity with Kafiran masses in their struggle for a just society: “That boy there died for Kafira’s progress. He was slaughtered like a goat and sacrificed for a non-existent peace and harmony, surely he deserves this ceremony” (Imbuga, 1976:19). Mulili is diametrically opposed to this. He depicts qualities of a callous, ruthless and selfish person:

Me count out. I doesn’t want to lost that farm.
Boss promise many acre of farm and grade cattles.
I doesn’t want to lost it because of primitive ceremony (Imbuga, 19976:18).

Mulili is also an epitome of nepotism and favouritism. Kafira’s leader (Boss), for example, is Mulili’s cousin (Imbuga, Ibid). Therefore, in post independent Kafira, acquisition of material gains is pegged not onto merit, but onto nepotism and favouritism. That is also the reason why Mulili, rather than Kabito, is awarded tender to supply milk to university:

Mulili: *(beaming happiness)* This time? You see,
Yesterday they termination my tender.

Tumbo: Tender, did you say?

Mulili: Yes, my tender for supply of milk to
University. They gives it to unknown small man.
Turnbo:
So this morning, I says okay, we see if University
authority know who man be head and neck of Kafira.
So I wakes up, I go to my cousin to explanation him.

Mulili:
You are sure you were with Boss?

One God! When I tells him, he takes a
Automatic direct telephone wire to University.
(acts out Boss) Hallo, that is catering university Manager?
Good, listen me. What happen to Mr. Mulili
tender of supply milk? What? You knows who speaking?
It is me, me Boss himself, no bloody vice-deputy.
Yes, alright cancel now. Tender Mulili’s. (burst out laughing)

Though he is ill-educated and a school drop-out, Mulili demonstrates that he wields more power than his colleagues. Boss himself attests to the fact that Mulili is both the adviser and executive arm of his regime: “I put you on the committee for obvious reasons and I expect you to report to me if something should seem to be going wrong” (Imbuga, 1976:61). Drunk with too much power, Mulili has become deadly and an insensitive person. He is a symbol of Kafira’s mediocre leadership. Having alienated themselves from the citizens, Kafira’s ruling elite resort to silencing both imaginary and would be real opponents. That is why Mulili murders the old couple, Doga and Nina (Imbuga, 1976:25) as well as eliminating Kabito (Imbuga, 1976:65).

Adika’s death also symbolises other severe and disastrous implications facing post – independent Kafiran society. The country has now buried an evidently peaceful, sane and moral system, in which human dignity reigned supreme. In its place, a chaotic, selfish, corrupt and immoral one has ascended. Hence, Mosese’s words: “It was better while we waited. Now we have nothing to look forward to. We have killed our past and are busy killing the future” (Imbuga, 1976: 31 – 2).
The immoralities characterizing post - independent Kafiran society are further manifested when Adika’s grave is tampered with:

Come, see for yourself. Smell Nina, smell. Does not the smell of petrol penetrate your nose? Look, it was no common earthquake that made this crack. This is the work of a stray clansman, one who thinks he has the strength to fight those who taught him how to hold a spear (Imbuga, 1976:8)

According to information gathered about Maragoli myths during fieldwork research in June – October 1997, tampering with a grave is a very serious offence. It implies violation and lack of respect for humanity and the super powers. This religious interpretation is mainly provided since the Maragoli believe that the dead are the intermediary between the living and their gods. Tampering with a grave is, therefore, viewed by them as an illegal ritual which can have dire consequences to the community because it could provoke the gods. Chagaga (Adika’s killer) is therefore an epitome of the new corrupt ways which have invaded post independent Kafira. His actions are equally immoral, inhuman and un-godly for he displays lack of respect for the dead and the gods of his society. He actually deserves to be punished. That is why Doga admonishes his late son’s spirit:

(Exit Nina. Doga picks up the money form the bow). Cold, cold money. Three cold silver coins. No warmth, no life. What a strange way to appease the dead. Adika, my son, do not let them deceive you with money. When you came into this world to search for your death, you found money here. Now you are silent, but money is still there. Do not let them tempt you (Imbuga, 1976: 9 – 10).
Laban Erapu concurs with the above views that Kafira’s contemporary status is dominantly characterized by immorality and corruption. Symbols of these vices being petrol and money:

The smell of petrol and the silver coins enhance, this intrusion and violation of the outside world which has literally disrupted the peacefulness of this rural setting (Erapu, 1979:28).

In Betrayal in the City, Imbuga leaves no doubt that post independent Kafira state is sickeningly corrupt. Kafiran leaders have estranged themselves from the people they lead in order to amass wealth.

Tumbo’s policy, for example, is one that promotes individualism as opposed to societal goals. Sandwiched in immense corruption, the likes of Tumbo have grown arrogant and indifferent. To them, “personal whims, rather than the welfare of the people, take precedence in national policies” (Kyallo, 1992:30). Tumbo’s personal appraisal illustrates this:

You students talk too much this country needs men of action. If I had depended on empty talk when I came from abroad two years ago, I would not be owning this block and that one. You were born alone, and when you die, you will die alone. Why then do you want to ruin your chances by pretending to talk for others (Imbuga, 1976:45)

Jusper’s timely rejoinder is that such attitudes among those in leadership “...is the surest way to build a man – eat – man society” (Imbuga, Ibid)
This also leads to moral degradation. For example, when Tumbo is asked to select a prize winning play, his affection for Regina prompts him to arbitrarily declare Jusper (Regina’s boyfriend) the winner. Apparently, it is because he intends to win Regina that Tumbo awards Jusper the prize:

Yes. A sum of money has been allocated for a play-writing in organizing a competition if we already know what play ought to be produced....now without wasting any more time, I pronounce you winner of the proposed play - writing competition (Imbuga, 1976:51)

The irony of the matter is that instead of allowing Jusper to keep all the prize money, Tumbo elects to receive most of it. This is a further manifestation of how corruption has eaten up Kafira’s moral fabric:

Good. Now of the six hundred pounds that was to finance the competition, I give one third to the two of you. The other two thirds will be used to put the records straight (Imbuga, 1976:52).

Coupled with this, is the fact that corrupt Kafiran leaders display a great element of unpatriotism. This is vividly demonstrated by members of the entertainment committee, particularly Kabito, Nicodemo and Tumbo. Rather than confining themselves to matters of national interest, they opt to channel their energies to advocate for pleasant compensation. To them, it is of little consequence whether or not the committee drafts a workable programme for the visitor. What is of immediate concern is the amount of allowances they should receive:
Nicodemo  Excuse me Mr. Turnbo, I think you are being a little too formal. It isn’t as if we are friends here. *(Nicodemo and Kabito laugh)*

Kabito  I agree with Nicodemo. Let’s drop the formality until Mulili comes. You see, you only joined us recently; so perhaps the way things are done here has escaped your eye. The tree-climber begins from the bottom, not the top. May we not be told our terms of service or are we being good citizens?.

Nicoderno  Yes, what size of potato per hour?

Tumbo  You will be paid per day, not per hour.

Nicoderno  How many working days do you think…?

Kabito  Of course it will be necessary for us to meet everyday until the visitor arrives. In fact, I think it will be necessary for us to meet after the visit for the purpose of review.

Nicoderno  You couldn’t be more correct. He is a visitor of great weight, not some flywhisk - waving Sub-headman. And remember also Mr. Chairman that the potato you get will be directly proportional to the potato we get *(Imbuga, 1976:56)*.

The Askari talks of “...selective breeding” *(Imbuga, 1976:31)* and Mosese says:

For years we waited for the kingdom, then they said it had come at last, but no it was all an illusion. How many of us have set eyes upon that Kingdom? What colour is it? *(Imbuga, 1976:31).*

From Adika’s death we are also able to learn other aspects of post-independent African states, especially about individual’s rights of freedom and association. Imbuga has demonstrated that such basic and essential aspects of human life are virtually non –
As a result of these events, Mosese elects to sit back and let matters sort themselves out:

“I prefer to wait and see. I will sit here and remain loyal to my principles” (Imbuga, Ibid).

However, Imbuga seems to indicate in the play that there is still hope for change. In other words, there are ways in which works of art can be used as instruments of social change. And in Okot P’ Bitek’s words published post-humously:

If there are two types of rulers in every society, that is those who use physical force to subdue men and those that employ beautiful things, sweet songs and funny stories, rhythm, shape and colour, to keep individuals and society sane and flourishing, then in my view, it is the artist who is the greater ruler (Okot, 1986:40).

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o also confirms this fundamental role of an artist when he says that

A writer’s subject matter is...

the process of man acting on nature and changing it and in so doing acting on and changing himself. The entire changing relations of production and hence the changing power relations consequent on mutable modes of production is a whole territory of a writer’s literary concern. Politics is hence part and parcel of this literary territory (Ngugi, 1981, 72).
In _Betrayal in the City_, Imbuga employs art to project his commitment to meaningful change in society. He does this by addressing maladies bedevilling post-independent African societies. He also creates a committed artist in the character of Jusper, whose imaginativeness brings about practical change in the text. Devastated by the brutal killings of his family members (Adika, Doga and Nina), Jusper resolves:

> I will never have rest.
> How can I ever rest with the
death of my entire family on my mind?
> Those brutes murdered my parents
> in exchange for my release.
> Gave me good treatment knowing well that
> I had nothing else to lean on except my
> student status. I will get my revenge some day,
even if it means going it alone
(Imbuga, 1976:37).

Jusper has already concluded that justice is absent in Kafira (Imbuga, 1976:11). In pursuit to restore order in this society, he murders Chagaga, Adika's killer (Imbuga, 1976:17). When presented with the opportunity to prove his worth as an artist, Jusper cunningly succeeds in accepting the offer. He takes up the task of writing a play to entertain the coming state official.

Jusper, as an artist, is well aware of state censorship with regard to works of art. Tumbo attests to this in his recommendations for the type of play Jusper should author. According to him, what is required is “a play that will outline (Kafira's) achievements in black and white and ignore the dark side of the picture” (Imbuga, 1976:51). Jusper, as an artist, interprets this intelligently. Fortunately for him, Tumbo mistakes his stance to imply real
support and proceeds to declare him a winner of the contest as revealed in the following
dialogue:

**Jusper:** You can't run short of them. The number of expatriate professionals has steadily increased over the years, signifying the full extent of our potential progress.

**Tumbo:** Good, I am glad you think in terms of progress. May I assure you now that your prize-winning play will be performed to the visitor (Imbuga, 1976:51).

Tumbo's utter ignorance in the arts is also illustrated when Jusper makes reference to Wole Soyinka (one of the most distinguished creative writers from Africa):

**Jusper:** If you think I lie, ask Soyinka.

**Tumbo:** Who is Soyinka? Oh... I see the Prime Minister of... oh I forget the country.

**Jusper:** The one I know is only an artist.

**Tumbo:** Only an artist? Are you sure? That is a politician's name (Imbuga, 1976:50).

As a prominent person in Kafira's government, one would expect Tumbo to project an image of a fairly well informed person. What he demonstrates above is the opposite. Although he is Chairman of the Entertainment Committee, Tumbo does not at all read Jusper's script. He does, in fact, confess to Jusper:

You know, I have not had the chance to go through the script... if he (Boss) should ask for the story of the play, I will point to you and say, "Your Excellency, the author of the play is better qualified to give that information" (Imbuga, 1976:6-8).
Even Boss, who is the President of Kafira, remains unaware of what exactly Jusper is up to. Instead, he tells him:

Drop the formality. We are all actors here. Boy, did you know I was once a good actor?... Only they almost always gave me bad roles. In four out of five cases, I had to die for little mistakes that were not my own (Imbuga, 1976:69).

The irony in these words is that Boss, as Kafira’s leader, has ever played ‘bad roles’ as we see in Betrayal in the City. This is soon confirmed when he volunteers to stand in for a missing actor. “We shouldn’t waste time. I will stand in for the moment. Give me that script” (Imbuga, 1976:73).

There is also dramatic irony in Boss’ decision because Jusper, Jere and Mosese grab the opportunity for a kind of coup d’etat against the current political leadership. When, for example, Jusper grabs a gun from Boss and shoots Mulili, the latter is left dumb – struck (Imbuga, 1976:77). It is here that the artist now beats the politician. Through the play within – a play, Jusper accomplishes a great deal: He manages to open Kafirans’ eyes to the harsh political realities in their society. By killing Mulili, for instance, Jusper rekindles our hope for the necessary social and political changes in Kafira.

3:02 Summary of Betrayal in the City (1976)

In Betrayal in the City Imbuga is actually suggesting that myths and rituals are in fact functional in real human life. For example, at the beginning of the text, Doga, the late
Adika's father, raises a curse on Mulili: "May you die the way Adika did!" (Imbuga, 1976:15). Doga's dramatic prophecy is fulfilled at the end of the play, when Jusper kills Mulili. Thus, in other words, within an African ritual context, spoken words are considered to be in fact more effective than the actions. Kamare and Mpesha explain thus: "One reason why each word must be weighted before it is uttered is because of the finality of the spoken word" (in Journal of Asian and African Studies, No. 41, 1991: 145-6).

Like Adika, Mulili also dies through a gun-shot. While it is a direct fulfillment of Doga's curse, it is also a punishment for his villainous actions in Kafira. Through it, Imbuga is re-asserting the role of ritual in society. That is, ritual is not just an occasion during which fundamental matters affecting society are raised. It is also an occasion for both short term and long term resolutions to conflicts within the community.

3:03 Mental Refuge in Game of Silence (1977):
This enigmatic play is set in protagonist Raja's mind. Its action is within the realm of his dream and sleep. What actually is happening in this play is that until we come towards the end of the text, the events we witness are either remembered or foreseen by Raja. The conflict in the play is basically a mental one.

The idea of setting Game of Silence in Raja's mind is strategic. This is to enable us to visualize matters at a psychological level in order to see the kind of forces that operate upon an individual. Raja has premonitions about his past, present and future. His fears
about his past and present strengthens the dilemma he also has about the future. This is quite mythical.

Raja’s mythical world reveals the evil world in which he lives in. This is a world where silence is prescribed as a way of life. According to Raja, this amounts to killing an individual. Mainly because individuals with a thinking mind like him become alienated and live as prisoners of their conscience. The biggest problem facing such people like Raja is how to get liberated and live a normal life.

The mythical aspects in Raja’s life provide severe psychological torture to him because his past doesn’t want to leave him alone. He is, for example, tortured by numbers, especially number five:

Every five years ever since
I was fifteen something terrible has
taken place but the whole village has
tried to hide the truth from me.... Only fifteen
and yet they chose to sit on it.

And do you know why?
Because they wanted me to sit for my
Last Biology paper.
They let me sit
In a lab, dissecting a frog,
While only thirty miles away my

Raja’s premonitions reveal a lot about the nature of the society in Game of Silence. It is a society whose environment is quite insensitive to human sufferings. Indeed, the situation is such that the entire society is buried in an atmosphere of callousness. Those in responsibility as well as the ordinary people all exhibit a high degree of insensitivity. His
family reveals this when they fail to let him know about the death and funeral of his mother. Bango, a symbol of the regime in *Game of Silence*, also demonstrates these qualities. Especially when he confesses to Raja that he is insensitive to the plight of the poor:

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**Raja:** There they are, can you hear them?

**Bango:** I hear nothing.

**Raja:** Nothing? Listen. (silence)

**Bango:** I hear silence. (pause)

**Raja:** It is all very loud and clear... Do you think they...

**Bango:** Think? No, my friend, I am not like you. I don’t think (Imbuga, 1977:1)

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Bango is at this juncture revealing certain issues regarding the establishment of the society in *Game of Silence*. Basically, they have alienated themselves from the people they rule. This has in turn ensured that the citizenry are abandoned to their fate to die like “hyenas” (Imbuga, 1977:13). It is also one way in which society silences its members.

From a mythological point of view, Raja is convinced that he is fated to lose a member of his family every other five years. That is why he is particularly obsessed by the idea that his only surviving child, Edna, is dead. Emma’s (his wife) decision not to send him their daughter’s latest photograph fails to abate his perplexities:

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Listen. Three months ago, I wrote her (Emma) and asked for the child’s latest picture. She wrote back and said that she would post it to me... I am still waiting... and yet she now insists that she did post it sometime back. Can you see that it’s only a way of putting a fullstop to the only way I may prove it all? My
sister Flora is no better. She too would keep me in the dark (Imbuga, 1977:5).

Raja's fears are further manifested when, in a dream on the eve of his departure for home, he sees a funeral procession of Edna. He also sees the guilt in Emma and Flora, his sister, as they both shy away from the funeral (Imbuga, 1977:13 - 21). Edna's imagined death alarms Raja because he is not informed. He condemns both his wife and sister for withholding information from him because they are acting like the establishment which hides the real truth from its citizens. Such betrayal on the side of his family prompts him to ask Emma: "For how long have we been opposite sides of the ladder?" (Imbuga, 1977:18).

The presumed death of Edna haunts Raja psychologically because of other reasons. Primarily, he is reminded of the death of his first daughter who was born outside wedlock. By being mentally convinced that Edna is actually dead, Raja also becomes psychologically tormented by the fact that his past cannot live him alone. The idea of losing his children through death appears to be a permanent feature in his life. Hence, the reason why he is bemoaning the death of his first daughter:

Emma had come to stay for weekend... when Sunday came, she took a bag and said she had to go and beg for some food from relatives. She left me with the little one... barely toddling... the kid was hungry so I gave her a piece of cassava that...
had been tucked away... took
a bite, that was all ... it got
lodged in her throat ... it was
then that the thought came to me
that ... she was going to die...
I rushed out and shouted for help.
People came. Someone went to call
a doctor. The rest just stood
there looking at her... as she lay
there dying ... in the open air,
a rich green field in front of my rented house.
Private property. Couldn’t even plant
vegetables there (Imbuga, 1977: 8 - 10).

Raja’s grief over the death of his first born also attest to some salient aspects in
the society of Game of silence, especially at the symbolical level. It symbolizes death of
innocence and lack of human care. Raja is disturbed that his society is inconsiderate to
promoting fairness and humanity. This results into the innocent suffering and dying, just
like his daughter does.

Raja’s grief also demonstrates that there exists class disparities in society. The suffering
and hardships people encounter are as a result of this. He is unable to provide proper
food for his daughter because he does not belong to the upper class:

The kid was hungry, well, we all were,
inspite of our education. The tragedy of coming
from the wrong womb. Have to start from the
very bottom and face the whole damn ladder
hoping to get to the top some day (Imbuga, 1977: 8 - 9).

Because of these class differences, dehumanization has become very prevalent. Those at
the top value their private property more than human life. It is for this reason that Raja is
forbidden from growing food crops because where he is staying is someone’s “private
property” (Imbuga, 1977:10). The consequences are severe to the poor and innocent
A good example is that of the death of Raja's first daughter. Raja is disillusioned that society should perpetuate such a dehumanizing system in which the less favoured ones are silenced. There also exists a dramatic irony in this. That is, sufferings and hardships are experienced amidst plenty. Raja's explanation of his daughter's death is unequivocal about this: "she lay there dying ....in front of me, in .... a rich green field ..." (Imbuga, Ibid).

This qualifies Raja's sentiments that in the society of Game of Silence, those at the top of the ladder are a privileged class, but not the ones at the bottom. He remarks to Bango: "I am talking of the height that pushed you right through school to where you are now" (Imbuga, 1977:8). This also produces some pitfalls, such as in the case of Flora. Those at the top have become callous because of their privileged position. They even eliminate those from the bottom who attempt to bridge the gap between the two opposite sides. Flora is poisoned by her sister in-law, Jennifer, because she chooses to marry Jimmy, the president's son, and yet she is a member of the lower class (Imbuga, 1977:37).

These class differences also have attendant negative effects of moral degeneration. Flora's marriage to Jimmy is a good example. According to Raja, by electing to marry Jimmy, Flora is "Attempting to bridge the gap by using the charm of the body, the desire of the flesh" (Imbuga, 1977:24). This is an erosion of society's morals. Raja is disdainful about this because it is another form of dehumanizing and silencing individuals in society.
There is yet another aspect of life revealed by Raja when he bemoans the death of his first daughter. That is, the state of apathy particularly among the ordinary citizens in the society of *Game of Silence*. Generally, there exists among the people a state of hopelessness and withdrawal. This results from their condition of long, endless suffering. Because of this, they are unable to know what to do in the face of similar conditions. Raja explains: “People came. Some went to call a doctor. The rest just stood there looking at her, then at me, as she lay there dying” (Imbuga, 1977:10).

This attitude of apathy among the masses has in turn made them very vulnerable and complacent. For example, Raja is greatly astounded that the villagers cannot rise up to resist his arrest by the authorities after he has beaten Jimmy. Instead, only his wife, Emma, put up some form of resistance:

> God, I have never known such weakness.  
> Such cowardice.  
> Two thin men came for me,  
> you see, and the whole village  
> was there but they only  
> watched from behind the  
> hedges. Only my wife raised her  
> voice as the two men led  
> me away from the rest of  
> the flock (Imbuga, 1977:46).

Evidently, the villagers have been intimidated into becoming passive watchers rather than active participants in shaping their destiny. Raja is dismayed because of what it amounts to: like his captors, they too are “only interested in one thing … their own stomachs …” (Imbuga, Ibid). This state of apathy among the villagers leads Raja to despair of the possibilities of changing the system. That is why he informs Bango: “I didn’t have to struggle, you see. There was nobody to struggle for” (Imbuga, Ibid).
The implications of this state of tyranny are to ensure that people's lives are sealed in silence. For one to escape being tyrannized, one must in turn tyrannize others. Zumaka is a good example. According to him, one must adopt "a hard heart" as "the only possible way to avoid being a victim" (Imbuga, 1977:28). But "the worst part of it", Zumaka further points out, "is that sometimes I have to pretend that I am pretending" (Imbuga, 1977:29). This is double alienation because one is alienated from his real self, and the alienation of the already distorted self.

The premonitions Raja is having about Edna's death are also symptomatic in other ways. They reveal a dehumanized society in which death has become the order of the day. Flora's remarks: "Death is not uncommon among us" (Imbuga, 1977:17), as well as when the 2nd spectator observes: "The point is that there are too many funerals down here" (Imbuga, 1977:14), attest to this. We are told by the author at the beginning of Act Two that prison walls are "covered with...pictures of sick people, starving people and beggars. Blood - stained bandages hanging down some of the walls make part of the decoration" (Imbuga, 1977:27). These are nothing but vivid symbols of a country in which people are being bathed in human blood.

The physical torture Raja undergoes following his arrest on his return from abroad, is also part and parcel of this tyranny. It is a calculated move by the state to utterly annihilate and dehumanize people. Consequently they become unable to surmount their energies to initiate better changes. Emma's rejoinder to Zumaka illustrates this:
(Pointing to the pictures.) Is this what you call the good of everyone? Beggars limping away to their death, pregnant mothers dying of starvation and an exhibition of bloody bandages to frighten people out of their wits? Is that what you call the good of everyone? (Imbuga, 1977:28)

Also, her words are echoing a state of disillusionment the state has created among the people. This again is an integral aspect of the culture of the game of silence in society.

There is yet another reason why Raja is existing in a mystical world. His fears psychologically torment him because of the society’s education system. Especially because of the fact that the education he has received makes him incapable of creating a better environment for his people. The irony of it is that while Raja is aware of this, members of his family are not. According to them, Raja’s university education should enable him to solve their social and economic problems. This, in as far as he is concerned, is another reason why they have decided not to keep him informed about events occurring back at home. Hence, his remarks in reference to Emma:

All she really cares for is the degree. The supreme chemical that separates the sheep from the goats. She doesn’t realize that it no longer works. Degrees no longer work because they have no blood. One by one we’ll just die of hunger, frustration and degrees will not prevent it (Ibid)
Raja's remarks about education also have other implications. On the one hand, he is disturbed that education rather than human life is valued by his people. This, according to him, is one way of disregarding humanity. On the other hand, Raja is concerned because education is used by a few in society to ascend to political and economic power. This leaves the majority languishing in poverty and hopelessness. That is why he sarcastically comments that education is "... The slippery ladder between the top and the bottom" (Imbuga, 1977:7).

The predicament Raja has got in as far as education is concerned is also buttressed in other ways. Particularly, according to how those in leadership treat the educated people. They dislike education because they regard it to be equivalent to mere "... toys to play with" (Imbuga, 1977:4). This is also one reason why they are keeping him abroad to study, ignorant of the events occurring back at home. He contests against it because he is afraid that it is not just another way of silencing him, but also of him being alienated physically and spiritually from his native land.

Raja is further intrigued by the fact that his place and role as an educated person is both undefined and insecure in society. Primarily because in the society of Game of Silence, according to Raja, the educated people are not just disregarded, but also mistrusted and hated. He alludes to this when he says to Bango:

I will not be a passenger
on that flight...not to
that land where they have
done me wrong... where they
play with life as a child
plays with a toy (Imbuga, 1977:23).
His fears regarding the mistrust the state has for the educated people are demonstrated in two ways. First, he is arrested and jailed because the state regards him to be a dangerous person. Zumaka explains to Emma thus:

Madam, your husband is a man of violent nature. He is anti-establishment and doesn’t even stop at that. He would have others follow in his foot – steps (Imbuga, 1977:32).

The second example is that of Zumaka. Though he is a qualified medical practitioner, he has been destroyed by the state, which now refers to him as a lunatic. Bango, a clear testimony of those in leadership in the society of Game of Silence, describes him as follows: “That man is sick. A mental case .... He was a medical doctor, but unfortunately, he was overeducated” (Imbuga, 1977:34). What this demonstrates is that in Raja’s society, the educated people are also victims of the culture of silence the state promotes.

Bango, Raja’s friend abroad, also intensifies his mental tortures because of the role he plays as a government spy. Raja retorts to Bango: “I don’t like tape recorders, spoiled or in sound condition”. (Imbuga, 1977:13). Thus, according to Raja, Bango’s role as a spy is, at all levels, anti-social and dehumanizing. Above all, it curtails the human right of freedom of expression.
The playwright is also uncomfortable with Bango’s activities, which he scorns at in form of satire. Imbuga seems to be positing that the training that Bango received has turned him into a caricature in terms of academic matters. Raja remarks to Bango: “Psychology has blocked your ears, man. You do not hear common noises. Only the unique, the uncommon. That’s what you hear” (Imbuga, 1977:2).

Raja’s sentiments echo the author’s main vision in the text. That is, in a society where absurdities abound in plenty such as the one in Game of Silence, there should be a strong desire among individuals for re-adjustment. This is one possible way in which they can be cured of total alienation. With this achieved, people can afford to play positive roles in society.

3:04 Summary of Game of Silence (1977)

The predicament facing Raja in Game of Silence is such that the evil forces pitted against him have also made him a prisoner - psychologically and socially. In order for him to rediscover himself, he has to be liberated. To accomplish this, the author redirects him to his past, his people. But Raja’s return journey is also symbolical in some ways. It is not just an individual’s endeavour to come to terms with himself. In fact, it also involves his society as well. This is because it is not just an individual (Raja) who alone is affected by the existing vices. The whole world in which Raja is living is indeed evil.
Raja’s return journey is marked through rituals. One such ritual is the death of his sister, Flora (Imbuga, 1977:37). The playwright has treated this death in form of dramatic irony at two levels. The first one concerns the effect this death has upon Raja. On learning that his sister died at the hands of those in leadership, Raja’s earlier decision not to fight because “There was nobody to struggle for” (Imbuga, 1977:46), alters completely. He demonstrates this when he fights Jimmy, Flora’s husband (Imbuga, 1977:42). The death of Flora, therefore, succeeds in arousing his senses not just to the evils that exist in society. But also to struggle in order to realize a better change. He confesses this when he says that he fought Jimmy because “.... I remembered the little girl (Edna), then I remembered her mother (Emma)” (Imbuga, 1977:46).

There is yet a second dramatic irony realized through Flora’s death. Particularly when Raja is, towards the end of the text, dreaming that he is being put on trial by the state. This trial does demonstrate the helplessness of the ordinary people in *Game of Silence*. Also, it is a farce, for Raja is already pronounced guilty before the case is heard. But the appearance of Flora’s apparition intervenes at the last moment to save Raja from the impending death. Jimmy, playing the role of the judge, reverses the verdict into “not guilty” (Imbuga, 1977:51).

This could also be interpreted at a mythological level. According to John. S. Mbiti (1975:123), in most African communities among them the Maragoli whom the playwright belongs to, life continues to exist hereafter death. The appearance of Flora’s apparition has great significance in the text, especially in the form of dramatic irony. It is
one way in which the playwright is replacing Raja’s despair and fears with hope, in as far as his society is concerned. The masses who are celebrating the coup d’état jolt him into wakefulness and a sense of some spiritual fulfilment.

Raja prophesies the coup d’état in an earlier dream. He attests to this during his talk with Bango: “Since the stars are too up to change the bottom... so the bottom must rise, you know, wake up. The top will never descend, so the bottom must rise” (Imbuga, 1975:25). What Raja is implying in this dream is that people who are over-tyrannized do not just become disillusioned. Inevitably, they also rise up against their oppressors to seek for change, like is the case with the coup d’état in Game of Silence.

Game of Silence ends on an optimistic note. This is demonstrated by the playwright when he comments: “Raja now wakes up from his dream and sleep” (Imbuga, 1977:51). Imbuga is announcing the moment of Raja’s self-realization. From now henceforth, he is no longer going to remain the dreamer paralysed into inaction. He is assuming a new role of a pragmatic visionary. Physically, socially and psychologically, it is a form of homecoming for Raja. The stage directions the author provides in the text attest to this. They indicate that “women ululate” and some dancers carry placards of “WELCOME BROTHER” (Imbuga, 1977:37) and “THE BOTTOM SHALL RISE” (Imbuga, 1977:38). Thus the masses are now considering him not just as being part and parcel of them, but also as their visionary and pragmatic leader.
The positive note on which the play ends is also revealed in other ways. This time, through ritual observation. When Raja wakes up, he is joined by the masses in a "...dance to Flora's grave" (Imbuga, 1977:54). There is an ironic sense in this dance, baptized "DANCE OF THE FUTURE" (Imbuga, Ibid). It is dedicated to the future but not to the dead Flora. In other words, the author treats the death of Flora as the birth of the communal aspect in the society of Game of Silence. This is because the dance does not just provide Raja with the mental therapy he has been needing all the time. It also celebrates Rajas' recovery from a self-imposed exile into a physical and a social reunion with his people.

3:05 - Sanctification in The Successor (1979)

In The Successor, Francis Imbuga is tackling a political problem but within a traditional set up. This is because of his intention to show that myths and rituals can be a vital tool in the interpretation of real political issues and events in the society. Thus, in this text, the secular has been placed along-side the religious.

The main plot in the play revolves around a successor to the current leader of the Empire of Masero, Emperor Chonda. According to Chief Oriomra, the Emperor "...must name his successor not later than now" (Imbuga, 1979:11). Oriomra is not only emphasizing the urgency of the issue of succession. He is also setting into motion the dramatic events unfolding in the text.
The playwright treats the subsequent tragic events arising out of this pressing secular matter within a mythical realm. Particularly, in as far as symbolism in the text is concerned. In *The Successor*, therefore, the myths the author is employing also emerge out as symbols in their own way. In its own nature, myth is also symbolic. In fact myth does not just validate and perpetuate what takes place in a people’s daily lives. According to David Bidney, “...mythical imagination and intuition imply a belief in the reality of its object” (in John B. Vickery (Ed), 1966:11). In other words, the events human beings perform are a fulfillment of the beliefs they hold. Hence, to comprehensively explore the issue of succession in *The Successor*, an examination of symbols as well as of myths in the text must be carried out.

There are many ways in which these symbolic myths are revealed and function in the text. For example, the hooting of an owl as Zira is approaching the Shrine. The author explains in the stage directions:

The singing resumes and continues until it is interrupted by the hooting of an owl, then it stops suddenly and all is quiet for a while. Now Zira, water-pot on her head, enters and moves nervously towards the Shrine (Imbuga, 1979:1).

Zira’s arrival at the Shrine is also engulfed in fear. Her nervous movement attests to this. Basically, this happens because of the religious status of the place. Among the Masero people, it is highly valued as a holy place. The stage direction given by the author illustrates this:

The Diviner, draped in a highly colourful robe, stands a little distance away from the Shrine and gazes past the rising sun.
into the future. His hands are raised high in supplication for wisdom from the infant sun (Imbuga, *Ibid*)

This means that as a holy place, the Shrine is also a venue where individuals go to seek for atonement, either at personal or societal levels. The hooting of an owl announcing Zira’s arrival at the Shrine is symbolic. It is actually a premonition of a bad omen associated with her as a person, or of the tragic events that the Empire of Masero is yet to witness.

Apparently, she has transgressed against her society’s traditions and moral code. She has conceived outside wedlock. Dr. See Through reprimands: “You have defiled the Holy ground of the God of Peace and you knew it before you came here” (Imbuga, 1979:3).

The Diviner is disturbed because what Zira has done is a total transgression of Masero’s traditions. Like most African communities, the people of Masero do not approve of conception outside official marriage. Such an act is disapproved because the society does not also encourage promiscuous activities. This is tantamount to legalising immorality.

There are other reasons why Dr. See Through is uncomfortable with Zira’s pregnancy. He explains:

Are you not Zira, daughter of Pamalika .... The same one who sang and danced with skill and grace, at our Emperor’s coronation Ceremony?... The tongues of all present pronounced you fit only for a chief... Why then have you sank so low. That the owl of night himself welcomes you here instead of some other bird of sweeter song? (Imbuga, 1979:2).
Zira’s intentions are to get married to Sasia so that she can become Empress when he ascends to the throne (Imbuga, 1979:16-17). According to Dr. See Through, such motivating factors contribute to the degrading of society’s morals.

The dramatic prophecy Dr. See Through makes in The Successor does indeed come true. Especially in as far as Oriomra’s scheme of succession is concerned. Oriomra foreshadows this in his soliloquy:

The wheel of time turns and turns again bringing us closer to the result. If the eye of the future be true to his word a deserving successor will soon be named. So hurry, Emperor Chonda, hurry to the Shrine of the God of Peace where human blood is still blood. Hurry, Emperor Chonda, hurry to the Shrine of the God of Peace (Imbuga, 1979:29).

Zira’s pregnancy provides Oriomra with an opportunity to put his machinations into practice so that he can ascend to the throne in Masero. He plots to eliminate Jandi and Sasia because the two are his political opponents. This is why he convinces Sasia to persuade Zira to concoct an infidelity relationship with Jandi. Her confession (Imbuga, 1979:41-2) during the trial attests to this. Consequently, Jandi is banished from Masero (Imbuga, 1979:45) on the grounds that he has committed incest (Imbuga, 1979:27). This is taboo according to the traditions of the land.

According to Masero traditional rules, sexual matters among relatives are forbidden. Oriomra and Sasia explain:

**Oriomra:** Of the coming child *(pause)* I am only supposing, mind you. Suppose the, that Jandi was responsible, what would it be according to the tradition which
the Emperor so cherishes?

Sasia: Incest! Yes, it would be incest.

Oriomra: Correct. One hundred percent correct. It would be incest. A serious crime from which banishment is the minimum sentence. It is the chance of a lifetime and a knockout against Jandi. Everyone will want to spit in his face, and not even the Emperor himself will want to set his eyes on him (Imbuga, Ibid).

Jandi has therefore disqualified himself from becoming Masero’s Emperor. His banishment ensures that Oriomra’s chances of becoming the future Emperor of Masero are boosted.

Masero’s traditions further stipulate that the child which Zira is carrying cannot live. Traditional rules of the land demand that such a child is unholy and must therefore die.

Her discussion with Sasia confirms:

Zira: Child! Child! Child! What child? Are you so sooty in the head that you cannot realize what we have done to ourselves and to the child?

Sasia: What? What have we done to him?

Zira: The child’s future is dead. Have you forgotten what they do in such cases? Or are you so pre-occupied with the chair that you cannot see what we overlooked?


These latest developments create a dilemma in Zira’s life. As a mother to be, the love she has for the child prompts her to want to confess in order to save it:
I will do it at the palace, where I told the lie. I will go to the palace and confess to the Emperor himself. The sooner I am relieved of this burden, the better (Imbuga, 1979:50).

Apparently, Zira’s present life is being controlled by fate. Sasia ironically opts to eliminate her, instead of supporting her confession mission. From the stage directions we get the following information:

She goes to pick her gourd. As she bends over, Sasia pulls out a knife and stabs her — Sasia turns to run off but is confronted by Oriomra who emerges from behind a shrub (Imbuga, 1979:51).

Sasia is eager to eliminate Zira because he is psychologically being tortured by his guilt. He is an ally to Oriomra’s ambitious and greedy scheme of succession which leads to the banishment of innocent Jandi. This makes Sasia afraid and nervous. Mainly because if Zira were to proceed with her confession, it will mean that he is to be tried as Oriomra’s accomplice.

In The Successor, the issue of fate is not just restricted to Zira alone. Sasia too is equally associated with it. Memories of the death of his wife during child-birth still haunt him. He confirms this after killing a pregnant rabbit.

Sasia: Fantastic! Fast class shot [He puts the gun down, dashes off and returns with the dead rabbit in his arms] that was a good job. Pretty fat too. (suddenly lets go) Pregnant! Oh God, no! Jesus! What shall I do? I am sorry God, I am sorry. I didn’t know that she was responsible for another life. I didn’t know she was pregnant. You see. But why? Why this particular one of all other rabbits? Yes I know now. What else can it mean except that the past has caught up with me? Yes,
my wife, then Zira and now the rabbit! Good God, what a day! [Zira enters] (Imbuga, 1979:13).

According to the above episode, Masero is rampant with the destruction of human life. Also, the killing of the pregnant rabbit is some kind of a premonition.

There is great paradox involved in the plot between Oriomra and Sasia. The scheme is based on ethnicity as opposed to the country’s traditions or the sense of nationalism. That is why they discredit Jandi whom they brand to be a non-Masero because he was not born in Masero (Imbuga, 1979:24-5).

Also, Sasia commits a criminal offence by attempting to murder Zira. But the most paradoxical one is the shooting of Sasia by his ally, Oriomra. Oriomra’s motives for doing this are sinister. In his soliloquy he says:

The path is clear and the journey short. The wheel of time turns and turns again. Bringing us closer to the throne. I must now hurry to the palace (Imbuga, 1979:52)

What Oriomra actually means is that the turn of events now favours him to become the successor in Masero.

Imbuga also seems to be positing in The Successor that in life human beings are tied to their past in certain ways. For example, the ghost of Emperor Chonda’s late father cannot give him peace of mind. It is always appearing to him in his dreams. Emperor Chonda explains:
Yes, it was my father's head. It is as if he is displeased about something I have done. I can no longer bear this unkind slumbers. It comes alone, with no neck and no shoulders. Just a head with a brow marked with wrinkles of dejection. A pitiful sight (Imbuga, 1979:33).

Emperor Chonda is frightened by this dream because the dead are still talking to him. Imbuga is trying to show that among African communities, the dead do not just go away for ever. They tend to influence events in the lives of the living in certain aspects.

There is yet another latent meaning for the dream motif in *The Successor*. The author is employing it as a foreshadowing and symbol of the predicament and dilemma facing Emperor Chonda.

Basically, Emperor Chonda is presented in the text as a condemned and cursed person with regard to Masero's traditional power structure. The tradition of Masero demands that Emperor Chonda must be succeeded by his own son. Unfortunately, the Emperor does not have one. He explains:

> I will do as he wishes, but it will take time. Had my father lived, he would have no trouble naming his successor as I was his only son. But my case is different since I have no son (Imbuga, 1979:38).

The absence of a son to succeed Emperor Chonda puts him in a great dilemma. His predicament is complicated further since he is advancing in age. Hence, the chances of begetting a son as a successor are limited. Inevitably therefore, the power lineage in Masero does not favour him. This means that he has to make a decision as to whom among his chiefs should become heir.
But according to the playwright, the dilemma facing Emperor Chonda in *The Successor* is not a personal one like Oriomra thinks (Imbuga, 1979:9). As a matter of fact, the predicament is equally that of Masero as a nation. The matter has to be resolved also with the influence of the gods. In *The Successor*, the gods of Masero people are believed to reside and offer their reparation at the Shrine. Hence, it is for this reason that characters such as Zira, Emperor Chonda and Jandi go there to seek for atonement and refuge.

3:06 - Summary of *The Successor* (1979)

In *The Successor*, the Shrine is the Symbol of God of Peace. For example, individuals who are proponents of evil and political greed such as Oriomra meet the chief priest of the God of Peace, Diviner See Through, outside the Shrine. Similarly, even the damning "lie" (Imbuga, 1979:6) which Oriomra implores the Diviner to tell is hatched outside the Shrine, as indeed all the villain’s plots. Imbuga is here positing that such individuals are distanced symbolically from the Shrine’s embryonic interior.

In an ironic sense, those who advocate for sincerity, justice, truth and peace are allowed to take refuge inside the protective precincts of the Shrine, away from the evil forces. A good example is Jandi. The lie that he has died through drowning (Imbuga, 1979:61) is conceived and carried out within the Shrine by the Diviner himself. Through this, therefore, the author succeeds in elevating the Shrine to the status of an institution in which agents of truth and good are accepted and protected. This is also a dramatic
reversal because while Jandi somersaults back to a state of virtue, Oriomra does not. As an agent of evil, he is relegated beyond the walls of the Shrine. Kaisia proverbially says: “The earthworm may be cut in two, but it lives still. And the river bed knows no thirst while the river flows still” (Imbuga, 1979:60). At this juncture, Imbuga is also contending that virtue will always triumph over vice in society.

It can also be argued that the Diviner’s mystified language assuages the dilemma facing Masero in The Successor. For example, he cautions Emperor Chonda:

Go but be wise in your choice. And beware of your advisers. They so crowd around their Emperor that they blind him. You cannot see beyond them so what you know about your people is what they choose to tell you … . You are a solitary ruler … . So beware of darkness in light (Imbuga, 1979:38-9).

Basically, the Shrine conceals and protects the intractable truth. The Diviner is indirectly blackmailed into deceiving his benefactor, Emperor Chonda, because he is a refugee in Masero (Imbuga, 1979:7). But he, knowing the truth more than anybody else, decides to formulate another lie concerning Jandi’s death in order to promote truth and justice in Masero. This is also because Emperor Chonda fails to demonstrate judicial impartiality during the trial of Jandi. Kaisia affirms this by imploring the Emperor: “No. Omwami, do not take sides too soon. Remember that if a king urinates in the bush, even squirrels may see his manhood” (Imbuga, 1979:45). It is therefore appropriate to suggest that Dr. See Through’s mystified language does not just end at subverting Oriomra’s evil scheme of succession in Masero. In fact, it is through such language that the playwright’s concern for truth and justice in society is conveyed.
In *The Successor*, Imbuga is treating Jandi’s return from banishment as a kind of re-birth or resurrection in two ways. The first one is at the level of Jandi as an individual. Zira’s confession that “Oriomra made me tell the lie that led to Jandi’s banishment” (Imbuga, 1979:59), ensures that Jandi is innocent. It also exposes Oriomra as the guilty one. Zira confirms this further when she “spits in his face”, during which Oriomra “bends over to hide his shock and shame” (Imbuga, 1979:65). Symbolically, what she does is also another way in which she succeeds in cleansing herself, on top of contributing to the resurrection of Jandi. Hence, Emperor Chonda’s decision to pardon and re-allow him within the family realm of Masero (Imbuga, Ibid).

At a symbolical level, the author is also presenting Jandi’s return from banishment in another different way. He returns as an invigorated person, now committed to propagating truth and justice for the sake of peace and tranquility in Masero. Vunami’s words appear to epitomize this new mood in the text: “It is the desire to forgive and be forgiven that has brought us here” (Imbuga, 1979:58).

As the play ends, the entire cast is heading for a meeting at the Shrine. This is also quite symbolic. The playwright’s vision that there is hope for reconciliation within a traditional African set-up for a better future on the continent, is reaffirmed.


*Man of Kafira* is a sequel to *Betrayal in the City* (1976) also by Francis Imbuga. Basically, both plays are dealing with the question of political power in post
independent Africa. The events unfolding in *Man of Kafira* are located both in Abiara, where Boss is now exiled and Kafira, where he was a head of state.

According to John Ruganda, Imbuga in *Man of Kafira*, "is fascinated by the psychological effects of exile on a deposed head of state and those with whom he comes in contact" (1992:x;). The play, therefore, has a political setting. It is specifically about succession and exile.

Like in the other texts previously dealt with in this chapter, Imbuga is again resorting to rituals and myths in *Man of Kafira*. The pattern of events in the text is framed between two deaths. The death in the rehearsal play at the beginning of the text and Boss' death at the end of it. This ritual together with its concomitant myths bear a lot to what transpires in the play. Imbuga has also employed a number of dramatic devices, such as a -play-within-a-play, contrast, symbolism and dramatic irony, in order to achieve effective communication in the text. But to properly grasp what Imbuga is grappling with in *Man of Kafira*, the play has also to be looked at in terms of its psychological as well as sociological dimensions.

The problems that Imbuga is grappling with in *Man of Kafira* are actually focused on Boss. He has forecast this in the scene involving the -play-within-a -play.

According to Imbuga, Boss is living in a dreamy and illusionary world, in which he continues to see himself as Kafira's president even while in exile: "I am president still, am I not, Mercedes? I mean, legally" (Imbuga, 1984:25). Thus Boss is in this context, a
person not only refusing to see reality, but also unaware of the predicament awaiting him.

But Osman’s words tend to illustrate the current predicament facing Boss in Man of Kafría: “And remember that the cup that is clean on the outside and dirty inside is the most dangerous of drinking cups” (Imbuga, 1984:9). His words do not just imply that Boss is bound to facilitate his own self-destruction. As a matter of fact, Osman is expressing his fears that Boss could also cause the destruction of society unless something worthwhile is done to avert it. It can therefore be argued that the author confines Boss in utter ignorance deliberately as one way of letting the dilemma be resolved in theatrical terms.

In the section of the play-within-a-play, Imbuga also manages to demonstrate why Boss’s regeneration is not bound to be possible. The playwright does this in a sequence of three rituals. They are the rituals of marriage, death and birth. In all of them, he juxtaposes life and death (Imbuga, 1984:1-6). This is because the playwright is attempting to solicit our consideration of Boss not just as a sadist and callous person, but also as a guilty one.

There is another latent explanation to the juxtaposition of life and death in terms of ghosts in mythological terms. At this juncture, it appears that Imbuga is positing that Boss is like a living ghost forever floating “... on the waters of this turbulent” (Imbuga, 1984:6) life. Helna, referring to Boss, says:
They actually say that his head is not straight. Spirits from the other world. He sees things, animals and strange insects, in his dreams. Evil creatures with more legs than a thousand spiders! Yes, he sees evil creatures that have breasts for eyes (Imbuga, 1984:11)

Boss seems to be psychologically tormented by his own deeds as a leader in Kafira. Also, he appears to be morally and humanly a disintegrated person.

However, Helna’s lullaby “our men don’t die” (Imbuga, 1984:6) appears to epitomize the playwright’s optimism. The lullaby becomes Regina’s war cry in her quest for regeneration in Kafira. She explains: “Our men don’t die, they live on for ever” (Imbuga, 1984:21). John Ruganda (1992:25), also argues that in this way Imbuga, is through dramatic irony and prophecy, re asserting a people’s “unassailable spirit of resistance in the face of oppression”. Helna and Desi give “birth to two spirits” (Imbuga, 1984:6) as a symbol of the impeding resurrection of life in Kafira.

The irony facing the Kafiran society because of Boss’s type of leadership is also presented in a humorous but cynical tone through Bin-Bin who describes Boss’s bed in the following terms:

Pure gold, no imitation. As for the cost of making it, don’t ask me. I would grow grey hair calling out the figures. It was all paid for in foreign currency by our leader, President Gafi (Imbuga, 1984:24).

Boss’s opulence is immoral in the sense that it breeds class divisions and conflicts in society. In this context, therefore, those in political leadership such as Boss continue to
benefit materially but not the ordinary people as demonstrated by Drunk who even commits suicide (Imbuga, 1984:49).

LUM-LUM is therefore justified to question: “What made you forsake your flock? To forsake your people is to sacrifice your peace of mind” (Imbuga, 1984:49). Thus, according to Imbuga, what Boss has done is not merely tantamount to betrayal. In fact, it is also immoral because it contributes to human suffering. Indeed, Boss has never been at peace with himself since he went into exile. Hence, the following observation:

When the mind is troubled beds of feathers bring no rest.
When the heart is in haste beds of gold are no place for rest
So why live with all this waste. Why endure a mind so troubled?
(Imbuga, 1984:46).

Boss has socially and psychologically plummeted as a result of exile and alienation from Kafira. He has also become a burden to his wives. They have to “help him into bed” and also “sing a lullaby that sends him to sleep” (Imbuga, 1984:38). Regina’s words also seem to epitomize this situation in the play:

Yes, but for how long? For how long will this peace prevail. For how long shall we continue to sing him to sleep? Children wail in their loneliness just because we are here, putting their father to bed. Boss has become a sick child in his middle age. I cannot stand him any longer. No, I have endured enough and I am now fed up!(Imbuga, 1984:40).

Boss is simply being haunted by his own guilt-conscience.

The essence of the spirit world in *Man of Kafira* has been mentioned earlier in this section during the analysis of the scene of the - play – within – a – play. But later in the actual play we also encounter Boss being haunted by ghosts in his dreams. For example,
Lum – Lum’s spirit appears to Boss through a dream. This also means that in the play, the dream motif is playing a central role. During this dream, Boss wakes up from sleep and begins to talk to Lum- Lum’s apparition (Imbuga, 184:45:50).

In Man of Kafira, Lum – Lum is not just a representative of religion in society. He is also one of the people that Boss murdered in Kafira. His apparition confirms:

Yes, I died, but now
I am back. Over my
death, your hands are
unclean. Stand up and
tell the world why
you denied the people
my life (Imbuga, 1984:45)

Imbuga is using this interaction between the living (Boss) and the dead (Lum – Lum) to project a certain world – view. As a religious man, Lum – Lum is an epitome of morality in society. His apparition is intended to remind Boss that in order for him to regain a sense of direction into the future, he needs to address the moral values in society. Lum-Lum indirectly referring to Boss, makes the following sarcastic remarks: “There are those with ears, yet they hear not------- There are those with eyes, yet they see not” (Imbuga, 1984:47). In turn, this puts Boss in an extremely obnoxious situation in the face of his current predicament.

In Man of Kafira, Imbuga also reveals beyond doubt that Boss is morally a degenerated person. His obsession with the eating of the organs of life attests:

Who, in this world, has lived
on more special diet than I?
now you name it, liver, tongue,
lungs, kidneys, spleen and all, I

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have fed on them. Who else but I can boast of having fed on the breast of a brown gorilla? (Imbuga, 1984:26)

Imbuga projects this aspect of Boss’s life to demonstrate the effects of violating and destroying human life. The playwright seems to be implying that the likes of Boss who pride in destroying human life also become inhuman creatures. They become in Osman’s words, “half human and half beasts” (Imbuga, 1984:8).

The stay of Boss in exile does not seem to have altered his quest for absolute power. There are other ways in which he demonstrates this. He says for example:

Strange what exile does to a man’s mind. It gives you time to look back, to reflect and see where you went wrong. Yes it gives you time to read and to write from a new perspective. But above all it maddens a man. Yes, I am mad. So mad that I could even mastermind the third world war if I chose to (Imbuga, 1984:31-2).

Boss’ assertion that exile gives one “time to read and write from a new perspective” is quite ironical. His outlook on life does not seem to have changed. He is still very much one of the “uniformed stones” that Helna refers to during the play-within-a-play (1984:4). In other words, Boss still cherishes the destructive military mentality as indicated here below:

Yes, I will need an Army. An army of men…. I will need an army of strong men with a vision for Kafira’s future. Men who will be prepared to destroy life in order to give meaning to it. Men who will kill ten in order to save the lives of one hundred. Yes, I will need strong willed men (Imbuga, 1984:29).

Boss’s wish to return to Kafira is certainly not a popular idea. For Example, the witty and highly sensitive Jusper exclaims: “stop him someone, stop him before he returns us to
the dark days. Oh, I see blood, I see blood in every Kafiran homestead” (Imbuga, 1984:70)


Regina’s lamenting remarks attest to some of the evils Boss’ regime brought unto Kafira:

The graves of my mother, father and my brother. They are dead to me. I had friends too, close friends. And I love my country. Yes I still love Kafira inspite of the dark coffin that it has been turned into. One great coffin in which the advocates of truth lie. But it hurts to be kept away, even from those. The innocent have become criminals in their own land, while the criminals sit at table and laugh dry laughter over delicacies that they do not deserve. (Imbuga, 1984:40-1).

Regina is essentially trying to explain her moral conscience. But the irony is that, presently, she is in a relationship with a man already condemned to be a criminal by Kafirians. Therefore, her concern at this crucial moment is to exonerate herself from him. It is this which eventually enables her to pursue a noble moral cause in Kafira.

The return of Boss indeed does spell doom for Kafirans. Jusper explains:

We fought and freed Kafira from the claws of hyena. But now, even as we talk, that same hyena is back among us, having been welcomed with both hands (Imbuga, 1984:62).

When Regina finally stabs and kills Boss (Imbuga, 1984: 70), there is a carthasis because his is indeed a deserved punishment.

Boss’s death is ironical in the sense that it comes soon after he has boasted: “it will have to be a grenade, a powerful bomb…. “ (Imbuga, 1984:25) to kill him. Boss is
engrossed in his own self-image, and he even seems to ignore the role of gods in the lives of human beings. In other words, the playwright appears to be saying that no man holds his own destiny no matter whatever absolute power he may wield.

The death of Boss is indeed a powerful and necessary social detergent in Imbuga’s *Man of Kafira*. This is both at the level of Regina as an individual and also at the wider societal one. Jusper’s words appear to epitomize this:

> Our hands are dirty. We want to clean them once and for all. The Chairman’s hands are unclean too. Tell him to open the seal and let the well of life flow. Tell him to wash his hands and give the people their man (Imbuga, 1984:61)

There are certain conclusions to be drawn from Jusper’s remarks. At an individual level, Regina kills Boss as one way of cleansing and exonerating herself from his past criminal activities in Kafira. What she does is also an act of her rebirth. Hence, she now belongs to the world of morality, as opposed to Boss who seems to be condemned to immorality and criminality. This incident again has wider societal implications. Boss’s death is also a form of ritual for Kafira. Symbolically, it is a kind of salvation/redemption for the Kafiran society or for mankind within the context of the play.

3:09- Summary on Chapter Three:

The discussion in this chapter has been carried out on four plays of Francis Imbuga. They include, *Betrayal in the City, Game of Silence, The Successor* and *Man of Kafira*. Basically, the discussion has shown how Imbuga responds to some of the political, social and economic problems prevalent among post-independent African states. It has also
been argued that his employment of myths and rituals as artistic vehicles for exploration does assist rather than hinder our knowledge of the intention he has in these texts.

The next chapter concentrates on the works of prose by Imbuga. Primarily, the discussion also attempts to show how myths and rituals are still operating as a key trope for Imbuga in his examination of some of the social and cultural problems in Africa.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE CULTURAL CRUSADER

4:00 – Introduction

The discussion in this chapter focuses on Francis Imbuga’s two works of prose fiction. They are the novel, Shrine of Tears (1993) and the novella, Kagai and her Brothers (1995). Part of the discussion is based on the novella because it was the first one to be published (1985) in the Luloogili dialect of the Luhya language as Lialuka lia Vaana va Magomere. The English version being studied here is a translation.

Basically, the analysis in these two texts is an endeavour to demonstrate how the author employs certain African myths and rituals, not only to reveal some of Africa’s cultural and social problems, but to show how he is able to portray that African culture is indeed dynamic and capable of regeneration for its future survival. A further examination, for example, of how symbolism functions in the context of these two books, is again undertaken in order to explain how the author anchors his social vision in Africa’s cultural liberation.
4:01 – In search for cultural space in Kagai and her Brothers (1995)

In Kagai and her Brothers, Imbufa is addressing the problem of how cultures can tolerate each other in the phase of the new changes in African societies. In this respect, it is a text in which pertinent cultural matters are addressed.

In this novella, the author employs the initiation rite of Magomere’s sons, Asembe and Asena, as a vibrant metaphor. It is this rite that provides him with valid weapons to censure the Africans who opt to desert their culture for foreign ones.

The problem of cultural conflict is indeed upper-most in Kagai and her Brothers. According to the author, Africans who opt for western cultural values will inevitably be in direct conflict with traditional ones. This conflict is, in the text, well illustrated through the imagery of the two fighting rams being watched by Asembe and Asena:

Asembe and Asena were thrilled to see the two rams fighting. The two moved closer to where the animals were. Asena selected one of them and began to cheer it. Asembe cheered the other. It was a very interesting fight indeed. Each animal would move several yards back and then charge forward at full speed, colliding head-on with the other. After that, the rams would move back again in order to repeat the charge (Imbuga, 1995-27).

The humorous tone in which Imbufa paints this ram-fighting scene serves two purposes. First, it underscores the aesthetic structure of the story. But most important is the second one. Through humour, the writer is able to manifest the extent to which African societies are engulfed in a cultural conflict. Africans tend to desert their traditional culture in favour of the western one. This seems to be the case with Magomere, who prefers to circumcise his sons in a hospital rather than in the traditional way (Imbuga,
Grandma Alili saw the rams fighting and screamed at the top of her voice, “Oh! My rams are killing each other!” When Magomere heard his mother screaming, he picked a stick, and went to separate the animals (Imbuga, 1995:27).

Basically, the purpose of Magomere’s homecoming is to fulfill his father’s wish that according to tradition, the children must be “initiated together with the others who have been circumcised traditionally in the village” (Imbuga, 1995:3). The significance of this rite of passage does not seem to dawn on him until on the occasion of ram-fighting and his mother’s cry. Alili’s cry serves as a kind of re-awakening. Given her age and social status in society, Alili’s cry is a reaction against the existing cultural conflict. It is threatening to tear apart not just her family, but also the community in general. Magomere’s action of separating the fighting rams is symbolic. He is not merely saving the animals from “killing each other”. As a matter of fact, he is performing a role of a cultural saviour and defender. Subsequently, Magomere goes on to fulfill both the initiation rite for his children and other relevant cultural obligations.

Imbuga’s other major concern in Kagai and her Brother’s is to demonstrate how cultural conflict is promoted and perpetuated in African society. He does this by focusing on some of the agents of cultural conflict: Christianity and Western formal education.

In this novella, Imbuga is condemning the negative image the two have inflicted upon traditional culture. Christianity’s role as an agent of cultural conflict is clearly illustrated on the occasion of the initiation of Magomere’s children. For example, Inisi, a member of Wenyange Church, rebukes and censors Nadoso and Zug-Zug for performing a traditional circumcision song:
What is wrong with you two? Are you drunk on tea or what?
Can you not see that you are seated among Christians? We all agreed that Magomere’s children would be initiated in a Christian way. So why are you bringing in the white hen? (Imbuga, 1995:38).

Ironically, Inisi freely embarks on “singing a Christian song called “it is a day of happiness” (Imbuga, 1995:39). What this reveals is how Christianity has spear-headed inception of the conflict between traditional and western culture.

Nadoso and Zug-Zug’s song is a treasured one among the Maragoli people that the author is writing about. It is a song which symbolizes the essence of the rite of initiation to the new initiates and the community at large. The song underscores the educative role of the occasion in society through the participation of all present. We are told: “The boys were disappointed. They had liked the song of the white chicken and they were hoping to hear it again” (Imbuga, 1995:40), but they could not due to the interference of Christianity. Zug-Zug attributes such a negative attitude to egotism: “I think it is selfishness … Inisi stopped us from singing the song of the white chicken. Why did she do it?” (Imbuga, 1995:39).

Urbanization and western formal education, according to Imbuga in Kagai and her Brothers, has also dealt a devastating blow to Magomere’s children. He is actually concerned that these two are alienating the country’s youth from virtually all aspects of life. For example, Kagai refers to donkeys as zebras (Imbuga, 1995:15) and sheep as stones (Imbuga, 1995:18); Asena mistakes lake Naivasha for Lake Victoria (Imbuga, 1995:17); and Asembe does not know that there are no sugar factories in Nairobi because
sugarcane is not grown there (Imbuga, 1995:20-1). But the most humorous one is when Asena refers to termites as mosquitoes:

After walking around the market for some time, Asena saw a strange thing. He saw some insects crawling out of an old woman’s bag and flying off. Suddenly, Asena pulled his father’s hand and said, “Daddy, look over there, that old woman is selling mosquitoes.” Magomere saw what she was selling and began to laugh. When Magomere stopped laughing, he turned to Asena and said, “Oh boy! You nearly killed me with laughter. These are not mosquitoes, they are called termites. Some people eat them raw. But they taste better when fried. Do you want us to buy some?” The two boys shook their heads and told their father not to buy the insects (Imbuga, 1995:22).

Implicitly, the children are rebelling against their traditional/cultural background. But who is to blame for this kind of cultural ignorance? The evidence in Kagai and her Brothers seems to imply that urbanization, Western formal education and Magomere himself have contributed to the children’s attitude. In other words, Magomere’s children are now torn between two worlds: the western world (of Christianity and formal education) and the African world (of traditional cultural values.) Such predicament leaves the children without a definite identity, given the fact that they have not fully graduated to being of either world. Hence they are similar to the spider that Asembe is watching and which is trying to make “a home where two walls met the ceiling” (Imbuga, 1995:4).

The initiation of Asembe and Asena in Kagai and her Brothers is a mandatory cultural obligation which must be observed. The main conflict in the text hinges on this. Hence
the significance of comparing it to the unavoidable mumps disease that has afflicted the sub-chief:

“Our sub-chief is unwell. He was to have been the guest of honour, but now he is unwell. He is suffering from mumps?” Magomere could not believe his ears. In spite of himself, he started to laugh. “What are you talking about?” Magomere asked his father. He was still laughing. “How can a grown-up man suffer from mumps?” Don’t laugh, you child, Nyabali told Magomere. “What I am telling you is the truth. You see, right from when he was born, our sub-chief has never suffered from mumps. It is only now in his old age that the disease has caught up with him (Imbuga, 1995:33).

In this context, it is possible to argue that Imbuga is validating the existence of traditional African culture because it serves certain important functions in society.

The journey from the city to Wenyange village becomes a significant motif in the text. The author employs it not merely to develop his characters. He also uses this journey to organise and emphasise the various themes in the story. Here is where Asena’s song “Going home ehee!” becomes the source of cultural identity in Kagai and her Brothers:

Going home ehee!
To Maragoli ehee!
Going home ehee!
To Maragoli ehee!

Asena’s song plainly reveals the author’s commitment to cultural patriotism among Africans.

The journey has yet another latent significance in the book, especially as it concerns Kagai. In the text, Kagai is an allegory to the traditional culture. In fact, she represents
a traditional culture subjected to a number of misinterpretations. Therefore the journey stands out to represent traditional culture searching for a place just like Kagai is searching for her identity and which at the moment is only associated with her two brothers. In this way, the journey from the city to Wenyange village is also symbolic. It is a ritual intended to demystify myths which have been advanced against traditional culture, which Kagai symbolizes. The author, therefore, intends the young to develop a sense of belonging to a traditional society that is still recognized, but not merely a modern one devoid of substantive cultural meaning.

The author employs another myth to buttress his social vision in the text. It is illustrated through Alili’s decision not to slaughter likukuvale chicken for her city visitors:

She called one of the big village boys and gave him the maize cob, saying. “Do you see those chickens lying there by the granary?” “Yes” the boy answered. “Catch the brown one and the black one and bring them to me”.... No sooner had the boy started running after the chickens than Asembe and Asena joined in the chase... During the chase, Asena came across a small chicken with very rough feathers .... like uncombed hair on a person’s head... It was called likukuvale. Alili saw Asena and Asembe chasing the likukuvale and told them to leave it alone (Imbuga, 1995:30-1).

Traditionally, among the Maragoli, likukuvale chicken is considered symbolic of alienation. Some of the information gathered during fieldwork research carried out in the area that attest to this is found in appendix II within this thesis. The community invented a myth that given the nature of its “feathers which look like uncombed hair”, such chicken cannot be slaughtered for visitors. If this is done, then chances are that the visitor will never return. Because of her status and age in society, Grandma Alili appears
to be very conversant with and knowledgeable with about her people’s myths. Already, she is perturbed that Magomere has been away from home for a long time (Imbuga, 1995:26). The decision not to slaughter this type of chicken is another way in which the author is cautioning those who embrace the western life-style to also appreciate their traditional one.

This indeed appears to be Imbuga’s main social vision in *Kagai and her Brothers*. There are a number of examples in the text which can support this. Magomere’s decision to take his children to the village to be traditionally initiated after having circumcised them in hospital (Imbuga, 1995:3) is one of them. The decision to conduct a small initiation ceremony for his children in order to enable him to return to his employment in Nairobi, is also another one. In this way, Imbuga seems to be saying that traditional African culture is not static. As a matter of fact, it is a dynamic culture which can also accept changes from time to time, thereby regenerating itself.

But Imbuga also seems to be arguing that traditional African culture is equally good and should be allowed to coexist with others. The following quotation about Pastor Stephen appears to epitomize this stance in the text:

Stephen ----- talked about many things ----- Finally he told the boys not to forget their traditions.
The pastor ended his speech by repeating an old saying to the children, “He who never saw his mother while she was young may say, “Father wasted his cattle” (Imbuga, 1995:40).
In other words, the pastor’s speech is not merely an indication that a Christian can uphold some of the traditional values with minor alterations. It also illustrates that Imbuga admits in *Kagai and her Brothers* that cultures have to tolerate each other.

4:02 – Tribute to a cultural Icon in Shrine of Tears (1993)

*Shrine of Tears* is so far the only other work of prose by Francis Imbuga, after *Lialuka lia Vaana va Magomere*. In this novel the author is not merely concerned with cultural problems which have been imposed on the traditional African culture for a long time. The novelist is also paying tribute to an icon of traditional African culture, namely Kanaya. Thus the death of Kanaya in the context of the text as well as that of the Kiliman society at large, is symbolic.

The novelist also utilizes Kanaya’s death in an ironic manner. That is, rather than being an indication of pessimism, her death in fact turns out to be a source of optimism in the book.

At the time when she dies, Kanaya is not just a final year student of engineering at Kilima National University. She is also an agent of cultural liberation in her own country in the sense that she is an excellent performer and actress. Imbuga extols this in Billy Kanzika’s authentic remarks:

> He (Jay Boge) didn’t have to go on. As soon as he mentioned the name of his girlfriend I immediately remembered where I had seen her face. Luta Kanaya was now a household name among Kiliman theatregoers. She had won several acting and directing awards during her high school days, including an unprecedented three times in a row as winner.
of the best actress trophy in the annual schools drama festival (Imbuga, 1995:17).

In this context, Kanaya’s death is, indeed, a symbol in Shrine of Tears. The author utilizes it in implicit terms. He is alluding to the death of traditional African culture. We are told in the text, for example, that Kilima lacks a cultural policy (Imbuga, 1993:29).

Even earlier efforts made by some Kilimans to establish a cultural policy have been frustrated. Kanaya bemoans this during the disclosure she is making to Boge, Kanzika and Kamonya: “After the Rinyet document was edited, retyped and well-bound ... it was taken and placed on one of the most powerful desks in the land, for a legal passover. It is there that the document met its untimely death. Kanaya concluded” (Imbuga, 1995:32).

It is therefore as a result of this that Kilima’s culture has remained tainted and dented. In Headmaster’s terse words to Boge, people of Kilima are now like the pitiable picture of the graceful giraffe, but with an ineffective short tail:

I am saying that Kilima is beautiful, but its beauty is like that of a giraffe, its head held gracefully above the crowns of savannah shrubs on the African plains, its thin legs defying the pull of gravity while its starved tail slaps impotently this way and that, in a desperate attempt to dislodge greedy lavatory flies from the sores on its otherwise magnificent skin (Imbuga, 1995:185).
The mental picture created by the words "lavatory flies" and "sores on its otherwise magnificent skin", seems to epitomize Kilima's current cultural predicament. The culture of Kilima is not just a polluted one. It is also sickly.

Also, the arrival of Silverspoon, the whiteman, in Hell's Gate Bar and Restaurant, is described in similar symbolic terms:

As soon as the group entered, the atmosphere of the entire Hell's Gate Bar and Restaurant changed dramatically. All the waitresses simultaneously clapped their hands as they ran excitedly to embrace or kiss the white man. Our own bald-headed man, whose attempt to curse his enemies with the baring of his bottoms has sent him to sleep, now woke up and immediately joined the welcoming party. Although the greetings and the general excitement were also extended to the five girls and their other male companion, that was really nothing compared to the warmth with which Silverspoon, as they called the white man, was received. Within seconds, several tables were dragged together to form one large high table for the new arrivals and those who had welcomed them. There was momentary confusion as each of the now efficient waitresses attempted to take the table's order for drinks (Imbuga, 1993:78).

In this particular context, the author appears to be demonstrating how the African is ever eager to welcome those who symbolise Western culture. The waitresses, for example, give the whiteman more attention than they have ever given non-whites.

Paulo Freire (1972:121) attests to this as follows:

Cultural invasion, which like divisive tactics and manipulation also serves the ends of conquest, the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, and they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression. In cultural invasion, the invaders are authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are objects. The invaders mould; those they invaded
This, in a way, does appear to correspond to the cultural predicament in *Shrine of Tears*, especially in terms of theatre events and productions. For example, Kilima National Shrine gives prominence to foreign plays as opposed to local ones. The number of posters of foreign plays decorating the walls of the shrine attest to this. Billy Kanzika observes:

As I sat there waiting... my eyes were attracted by the numerous posters... of past productions at Kilima National Shrine ... yielding the following list of titles: *How the Other Half Loves, Kiss Me Kate, Fiddler on the Roof, Romeo and Juliet, The King and I, Othello, The Crucible, The Government Inspector, Much Ado About Nothing, Jesus Christ Superstar, Measure For Measure, Hullo Dolly, Mother Courage, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, As You Like It, West Side Story, A Flea In My Ear, A Voyage Around My Father, A Comedy of Errors, My Fair Lady, The Merchant of Venice, How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying, Antigone, Blood Wedding, The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Phantom of The Opera, The Taming of the Shrew, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf, the Three Penny Opera, Joseph and his Technicolor Dream Coat*, and seemingly lost among them was *Nakupenda Lakini*. (Imbuga, 1993:11).

In the context of the text and even the larger societal one, such dependence on foreign cultural activities tends to have certain negative implications. For example, it can contribute to cultural decadence and bankruptcy in any nation.

There is also an ironic sense in which the novelist is handling this phenomenon, especially in terms of moral uprightness. It is demonstrated as Boge is looking at naked tourists at a newly opened hotel:

He gazed at the marble-paved lobby and saw...
bodies of tourists abandon on long multi-coloured divans, reading magazines and looking at the equally naked pictures in them. Other bodies merely lay there, like tired alligators upon a sanely beach---- He smiled briefly at the thought of people traveling so many miles in order to undress and expose their nakedness to God and His children (Imbuga, 1993:72).

Thus, through Boge, the author is able to satirize western values. It is apparent that some of its values promote immoral behaviour.

This again appears to be one of the reasons behind Boge's incredulous reaction to the pornographic pictures of school girls:

As Mwikali swung her hand in a gesture of special appeal, several photographs fell from under her left armpit. "What are those?" Boge asked as the waitress struggled to get to the photographs on the floor ... Boge decided to help her. He picked up the photographs, glanced at each one of them quickly and began to shake his head in utter disbelief (Imbuga, 1993:85).

Our discussion in Chapter Three on The Successor revealed that among the Maragoli, for example, a shrine symbolises atonement, sacredness and peace. However, in the context of Shrine of Tears, it appears that the National Shrine is associated with other meanings:

The Kilima National Shrine is the nerve centre of white, and more recently Asian cultural activities. The black Kiliman Cultural groups are effectively kept off by the prohibitively exorbitant hire charges of the premises (Imbuga 1993:3).

The irony here is that the Kilima National Shrine is in fact the centre for racial discrimination against the Africans.
There are other ways in which racism is promoted in Kilima through activities such as commercial advertisements. Luta Kanaya, Kilima's leading actress, readily becomes its prey. This is revealed when she is hired to play a leading role in the advertisement for a lotion called “SKINO” (Imbuga, 1993:59). The idea behind this advertisement is quite explicit: to affirm the 'superiority' of Western culture. The more that one applies this lotion on her face, the whiter and cleaner it becomes! We are told, for example that:

The commercial started off with many black women whose faces had been cleverly made white, marching in one great multitude towards a tall white building on a hill. A lone figure, that of Kanaya, walked hesitantly in the opposite direction towards thick black smoke which was billowing from a burning grass-thatched hut. Suddenly, her face turns jet black as all the women in the multitude, their faces now distinctly white, turn to look at her with genuinely horrified eyes. In an instant, two great hands from the white house on the hill toss a long rope which winds itself around Kanaya's neck. Greatly relieved, the multitude of women now rushes towards the rope and pulls the black-faced Kanaya away from the burning hut. And as she is pulled further and further away, her face becomes lighter and lighter until it is finally as white as the faces of the other women. (Imbuga, Ibid)

What is repulsive about this advertisement is the idea that the message it conveys is racist. That is, whatever is associated with the white race is supposedly ‘superior’ to all others. The resultant effect of this is cultural alienation. Kanaya's refusal to continue appearing in the commercial advertisement does therefore symbolise some degree of cultural liberation.

This decision represents the moral conscience which acknowledges African culture as being equally valuable. A vivid illustration is the behaviour of the youths that Billy
Kanzika encounters in Seboa during Kanaya’s burial. They demonstrate through traditional performances that they are equally innovative and creative. Consequently, Kanzika observes:

Earlier on, I had left Headmaster at the fireplace and gone to watch the group of dancing youths. They were great fun to watch and listen to, although once in a while their antics threatened to degenerate into a fight between rival groups. As I stood there watching this group, I remember wondering what excuse the Kilima Broadcasting Corporation had for not tapping such rich talent for their local radio and television programs. Here were youths whose imagination and power of improvisation was as rich and varied as could be found anywhere in the world, and yet no one bothered to nurture it. Why? Was it our own lack of understanding, our own careless attitude, our lack of curiosity, that was responsible for this cultural waste...? (Imbuga, 1993: 136)

Imbuga’s other concern in Shrine of Tears is that in most post-independent African countries, artists are very poorly rewarded or little appreciated. The sense of disillusionment experienced by the local artists in Kilima is clearly brought out through the comment on page 3 (Imbuga, 1993):

The Kilima National Shrine is the nerve centre of white, and more recently, Asian cultural activites. The black Kiliman cultural groups are effectively kept off by the prohibitively exorbitant hire charges of the premises. But the bar upstairs is the undisputed headquarters of local artists and scholars. Broadcasters, actors and actresses, musicians, newspaper journalists, secretaries, lecturers and students from the University come here to quench the upper layers of their thirst, the thirst of the throat. But for other kinds of thirst, especially cultural thirst, they have to look elsewhere, each man or woman for himself or herself---

It is this state of hopelessness which heightens the local artists’ anxiety about some involvement in the film, “gorillas at war”. The title itself seems to be an indirect ridicule of the Africans. But the artists are still eager to be given some role in the film:
They surveyed each other’s faces and silently calculated one another’s chances of being offered speaking parts. They tried to suppress the single question that kept ringing inside their heads. —— Some of them actually confronted the question and answered it in a hurry —— Anything! Just anything! Any line or even a word. Just a word. Nothing. We are nothing. Yes, even that we are nothing! Or, I am nothing, just a gorilla. I am a gorilla. (Imbuga; 1993: 23–4).

This is certainly a rather self–defeatist view of themselves. Jay Boge comes out more philosophically when he comments on this whole process of cultural dehumanization:

“What do you expect? Boge asked rhetorically, and then went on as expected. “These people come here because we are cheap labour”. Without a clear policy on the shooting of films in this country, without a clear cultural policy, Kilima provides the cheapest, most convenient personnel for mob scenes in white films on demand. And we have the necessary infrastructure too, good high class hotels, a fairly efficient communication network, peaceful and friendly people, even when they are on the receiving end of a bad interracial relationship, and carefree officials. I mean. What more can they ask for?” (Imbuga, 1993:28).

There is also a section of local artists in Shrine of Tears who are the antithesis of indigenous artistic development. Soita and Dora are such artists. For example, Soita’s hypocritical behaviour is utterly loathsome, especially during the performance of Farewell to Ogres in honour of the late Kanaya:

Soita, who had been drinking heavily at the bar lounge before the play started, now staggered to the corner where the cast was seated. He shook hands with several actors and actresses and told them in between hiccups that he had thoroughly enjoyed the play. He didn’t fool any of them since he was well-known for having enjoyed shows he had
not even seen. Soita was an artist in his own right!
(Imbuga, 19993:265).

Here, the author employs cynicism to ridicule people who are pretentious about art.

The theme of betrayal in Shrine of Tears is also illustrated through Dora. She is another artist in the text lacking commitment to her profession. Basically, Dora is presented in the book as an evil-minded character. She is determined to destroy everything that the likes of Jay Boge stand for. For example, the case of the performance of Farewell to Orges clearly illustrates the latter’s position:

“I had hoped that since nothing can be beautiful alone in isolation of everything else, that we could turn our hollowness into something beautiful through art, through theatre and specifically through this play. But I was obviously grossly mistaken. In Kilima it seems, what has germinated has germinated and there is little hope for change. Yes, we are our own slaves. Slaves who cannot rise above what we have been told we are. Drunkards masquerading as scholars and artists. People wrapped up in mere words and practically killing the thing for which we pretend to fight. That is us. Yes, we are the diseased giraffe of the African plains whose magnificent skin rots gradually as the animal moves slowly towards its inevitable death. We are sick. Sick because we cannot be united long enough to prove our worth, to prove that WE ARE...” (Imbuga, 1993:188).

But Dora manipulates matters to ensure that the performance of the play does not succeed. She is actually playing the role of a saboteur of artistic and cultural activities in her own country.

Dora’s evil mindedness also makes her jealous, especially of Kanaya. She wants to marry Jay Boge by employing all sorts of wiles. For example, she removes all the
artifacts put on the walls in Boge’s house by the late Kanaya to make sure that he forgets her. Boge is evidently affected by Dora’s insensitive act:

Under other circumstances, he would easily have consumed two platefuls of food. But Dora had done something that immediately robbed him of his appetite as soon as he noticed it. While the food was cooking, she had stripped the sitting room of all the artifacts and packed them in a carton. The room now looked like a night runner surprised by a sudden day – break. Boge was scandalized (Imbuga, 1993:155 – 6).

It would appear that Dora has no respect for the dead and whatever values they may have left behind as legacies. Her action is an attempt to kill Kilima’s traditional culture in the same way as Kanaya’s demise.

Kilima’s cultural predicament is further illustrated through Hon. Gasia, the Director of Culture, who funds the Mbalala Cultural Festival (Imbuga, 1993:35-41). He would like to be seen as a cultural patriot and yet there is a heavy presence of whites during the festival. He readily agrees to be Guest of Honour at the performance of Joseph and His Technicolour Dreamcoat (Imbuga, 1993:212), yet he fails to turn-up for the opening of Farewell to Ogres in honour of the late Kanaya (Imbuga, 1993:205).

Hon. Gasia’s short-comings in as far as his country’s culture is concerned, is also revealed in an interview he has with Boge:

**Boge:** Thank you, Sir, Sir Humphrey, who will foot the bill for the accommodation of the ....

**Gasia:** Shieel My brother, your are joking, my friend. You see, you are dealing with the brotherhood or ministries. It is a question of scratch mine and I will scratch yours. First of all, where did these people get the licences for their hotels from? Tell me.
Vie gave them the licences, didn’t we? Anyway, we have funds for culture like this festival. We have funds. (Hon Gasia paused a little) And let me tell you something else. Tonight, all the people of the ministry will eat at my house. Their supper is there, cooking right now. Goats and goats. Ha!Ha!Ha!Ha! So you see, all the three hundred of them are my guests. And you also, because you now qualify. Ha!Ha!Ha!

Boge: Otherwise I should come out in the open and declare my interest (vented Boge).

Gasia: Correct, my friend, correct! (Hon Gasia was so pleased with Boge’s sense of humour that he reached out and actually embraced him with genuine warmth) (Imbuga, 19993: 39).

The humorous manner in which Boge conducts the interview is intended to be a mockery. We laugh at Hon. Gasia because he does not appear to be serious about life. In fact, he is a cynic. In this way, therefore, it is possible to conclude that Hon. Gasia is a cultural caricature.

Equally significant is the role played by Hon. Mbagaya, Kilima’s Director of Broadcasting and Member of Parliament for Seboa, Kanaya’s rural home. What he does during the mourning and burial of Kanaya betrays his status. It is apparent from the text that Hon. Mbagaya exploits the sufferings of his constituents through the National Broadcasting Corporation (Imbuga, 1993:19). A good example is when he orders for “...an hourly announcement of Kanaya’s death over the radio” (Imbuga, (1993:100). Actually, Hon. Mbagaya has an ulterior motive. He is using Kanaya’s death for self-promotion.

Hon. Mbagaya’s contribution to the predicament facing Kilima’s traditional culture is presented in Shrine of Tears from another perspective. The manner in which he...
conduces himself on arrival at Kanaya’s burial illustrates the fact that he is against the traditional cultural demands of his community. We are told, for example:

The pastor had hardly finished those words when Hon. Mbagaya Director of Broadcasting and Member of Parliament for Seboa, arrived with his entourage. He was tall, black and hefty. Not fat, just big. Like the bigness of a warthog among rabbits. As he walked towards the front of the congregation, Mbagaya waved a red handkerchief in the air, the symbol of the blood which he had presumably lost during the violent struggle for Kilima’s independence. Hon. Mbagaya greeted some of the people by shaking their hands, while he merely waved to the rest. When he got to where the pastor who was delivering the sermon was standing, he shook the preacherman’s hand very warmly, and misconstrued the pastor’s standing position for a respectful offer of his own chair to him. A few churchmen sitting in front of the congregation gave up their own seats for members of the “Director’s entourage. For quite some time, confusion reigned supreme as Hon. Mbagaya took the centre stage (Imbuga, 1993: 143).

Here, Hon. Mbaaya is being satirized.

Imbuga is tackling Africa’s cultural predicament in Shrine of Tears also from a mythological point of view. This is mainly demonstrated in the character of Jay Boge. He is for example, psychologically tormented and haunted by number thirteen. According to him, the number is responsible for the fatal incidents which have dominated his life. A vivid illustration is the attempt he makes to commit suicide after his graduation at Kilima National University (Imbuga, 1993: 69-70). According to him, Kilima’s education system promotes cultural alienation among the youth. The emptiness he encounters at Liberty Hall (Imbuga, 1993: 68) indicates this predicament. He is reminded that after graduating through a Western oriented system of education, he has now become culturally rootless.
Boge also loathes Kilima’s system of education because of its over-dependence on the English language. Despite the fact that this language has contributed to the country’s cultural alienation.

Boge further associates number thirteen in *Shrine of Tears* with Kanaya’s death. We are told that Kanaya’s parents live in house number thirteen at Hospital Hill Estate (Imbuga, 1993:63). Kanaya herself dies at thirteen hours GMT (Imbuga, 1993:86).

Therefore according to Boge, fate is responsible for this calamity:

> Involuntarily, Boge turned his head and stared at the snoring Silverspoon at the high table. This was a new kind of influence in Kilima, this malevolent belief about the number of thirteen. Silverspoon’s people were responsible for the importation of this superstition to Kilima, and now some busy local spirit had got hooked on to the evil idea and was playing havoc with that number. Kiliman architects and planners had followed suit and exclude the number from their numbering system! That is why no skyscraper in Kilima’s capital and elsewhere in the country had a floor number thirteen! (Imbuga, 1993: 6).

In *Shrine of Tears* Boge is further tormented by the dream of a “lone menacing finger:”

> A lone hand pointing a menacing finger at him. The finger becomes larger and larger, against the background of the voice of a huge, badly cracked drum. The finger becomes larger still ---- sending a cold chill down the length of his spine. Then about to totally obscure his vision, the finger stops just outside his face. And as if to ape the finger’s action, the cracked drum shuts its big mouth----- (Imbuga, 1993:20)

This has immense symbolism, especially in the words “forefinger” and “cracked drum”.

Traditionally, among most African communities, a drum is very useful and highly valued
in cultural performances. Such a drum is even accorded a religious status culturally. The drum Boge is dreaming about is reported not to be in good condition. It is cracked. By implication, this also means that Kilima’s traditional culture is ruined. Hence the significance of the text’s title, ‘Shrine of Tears’.

The forefinger that is pointing at Boge is also symbolic in a traditional context. It is used in most African communities during moments of an apparent danger. In Boge’s case, the danger is the cultural predicament in Kilima. As an artist, Boge is described in the text as one person involved in restoring art to its traditionally valued place in society. It is therefore possible to argue that the forefinger that is pointing at Boge is one way in which the author is trying to awaken his artistic sensitivity to achieve this goal.

Symbolism and ritual within Kanaya’s funeral in Shrine of Tears is also portrayed through mythology. A clear evidence is when the funeral procession gets stuck in the mud. Minayo, a sister to Kanaya’s grandmother admonishes her spirit so that the procession can proceed to the burial home:

“Kanaya, grand daughter of my eldest sister, it is me, Minayo speaking to you” Minayo spoke softly but with a grave firmness in her voice. “It is me and no one else speaking to you. People are beginning to wonder whether it is you we are carrying or someone else. Where we have come from is far, but where we are going is just here. Release the wheels of the bus and let it take you to your grandmother who must now be tired of waiting. She has been waiting for you since four days ago when you left us. Kanaya, it is me, Minayo, talking to you. Do not let me beg you a second time. Release the legs of the bus and leave your borrowed shyness here. What is it you are fearing at your father’s home? Or do you want the eye of the sky to stir and find us here? Remember, our daughter, that your grandmother is now tired

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of waiting.” (Imbuga 1993:121-2).

Minayo’s admonitions demonstrate certain attributes of Kanaya. In particular, she is believed to have possessed some supernatural powers which can still be relied upon by the living ones to alter or influence the direction of events in a positive manner. This seems to be corroborated when the burial procession finally goes through the mud and arrives at the home of Kanaya’s parents (Imbuga, 1993:124).

There are other ways in which Kanaya’s death positively illuminates Kilima’s traditional culture. The ceremonies which are performed during the funeral/burial rite are vivid illustrations. We are, for instance, told of fire having been lit at both homes of Kanaya’s father after her death (Imbuga, 1993:92, 125 and 136).

Traditionally, this is quite a significant cultural event/activity among some African communities during a funeral occasion. Among the author’s own Maragoli people, for example, the event is referred to as ‘amagenga’. (See appendix II.) According to information gathered during fieldwork research in the area as mentioned earlier, the community considers it taboo for near-by relatives, neighbours and even friends not to honour it. People also sit at the fire during the night to seek for atonement from the gods and even the spirit of the dead. The ‘amagenga’ is also a focal point for the storyteller (Imbuga, 1993:92).

There is yet more irony in Shrine of Tears that attests to the fact that Kanaya is also an epitome of the new culture that is dawning on Kilima. It concerns the manner in which
the author demystifies the burial myths of Kanaya’s community. According to the text, the community has different burial sites for men and women. We are told:

On the event of Kanaya’s burial, a heated argument developed between some village elders and members of her immediate family. The two groups were disputing over the exact place where Kanaya would be buried. The village elders wanted the grave to be dug next to a mango tree about fifteen yards away and to the left of the front door of the main family house. According to them, that was the most traditionally appropriate position for the grave of an unmarried woman who was not the eldest child in the family. Kanaya’s family, on the other hand, led by Michael Luta, her father, wanted the grave to be dug under a mugumo tree next to the grave of Kanaya’s late brother who had been killed in a swimming accident six years back. The mugumo tree was to the right of the front door of the main family house, the general area traditionally reserved for male members of the family (Imbuga, 1993: 134).

It is apparent that the myth being advanced by the village elders discriminates against women in favour of men in this society. Luta’s success “... to bury his daughter under the Mugumo tree” (Imbuga, 1993: 135), is also another way of affirming that African culture is equally dynamic and accommodating.

4.03 – Summary of Shrine of Tears (1993)

Shrine of Tears ends on an optimistic note. The dream that Boge has after returning from the burial of Kanaya in Seboa seems to illustrate this:

“And exactly where have we come from?”
“We came from yesterday. That is where we got today’s energies from. Yes, what we are now is what we were yesterday. To deny it is to deceive ourselves. If you remove yesterday from under our feet, what then is left of us?“But Kanaya, why are you talking like this? You talk as if you want to abandon this production.”
"No, never, it is not in me to abandon things. Not anything that I have put my heart into. I am like you, you see. Your counterpart. An All-weather woman. So will you or will you not continue the fight?" "The fight? What fight?" "The fight for yesterday. We must continue to fight and hope that one day there will be enough leaders here with their hearts where hearts were meant to be. That is when we shall bury the whiteness in our hearts and dance once more to the throbbing drums of yesteryears, insuring our survival through the years ahead" (Imbuga, 1993: 153-4).

According to the beliefs of most African communities, such as the Maragoli ones appearing in appendix II of this thesis, there exists the power of 'the living dead' which can have some amount of influence over those that are still alive. This seems to be the reason why Boge is affected by this dream that he is inspired into action as a cultural crusader. The words by Kanaya’s apparition: “We came from yesterday” ably symbolize the new role that Boge is being called upon to play.

The statement: “that is when we shall bury the whiteness in our hearts and dance once more to the throbbing drums of yesteryears, insuring our survival through the years ahead” appear to actually epitomize this new optimistic mood in the text. Boge also demonstrates this by restoring all the artifacts that Kanaya had put on walls and which Dora had previously removed (Imbuga, 1993:156).

The optimistic mood in Shrine of Tears is again witnessed at another level. The decision by Dora to desert the rehearsals of 'Farewell To Ogres' at the eleventh hour appears to be a form of betrayal in terms of Kilima’s struggle for cultural liberation. But ironically, instead of her decision defeating the process, the opposite happens. Kamonya’s decision to continue with her sister’s artistic work (Imbuga, 1993: 197) is to ensure that
Kanaya’s unfinished work in theatre is continued to its logical end. Boge’s reaction to it is indicative of this:

Boge’s face lit up as tears of joy and gratitude welled up in his eyes. Kamonya saw it and was equally moved. Her own eyes filled with tears too and, without being fully aware of it, they found themselves in each others arms. It was the first time that the two had got that close to each other. It was a beautiful moment for both. (Imbuga, Ibid).

The decision by Kamonya elates Boge spiritually for other reasons. She is actually sacrificing her post-graduate studies in Law abroad in order to devote her energies to artistic work in Kilima. This means that her decision is a well intended one. For she, like Boge, is determined to restore dignity to a culture that has for a long time been defiled.

This is further corroborated by the image of Kilima and also that of Headmaster’s diseased giraffe. We are told:

Boge sat there with the cast, listening to their excited chatter. So they thought, but he wasn’t really with them at all. His mind had stolen out of his body and left it seated in their midst, next to Kamonya, and gone off in search of more beauty and charm in ordinary things. Suddenly the beauty of Kilima, his dear motherland, came to parade itself before his bewildered eyes. Even the image of Headmaster’s diseased giraffe was elevated into a thing of profound beauty so that the sores on its skin were no longer as revolting as before. He saw the gleaming faces of little Kiliman children returning home from their first day at school and felt that the future was safe (Imbuga, 1993: 206).

The symbol of the giraffe is presented here differently as opposed to when we first encounter it (Imbuga, 1993: 185). But in both aspects, it actually appears that it
symbolizes Kilima’s cultural status. In the above context, it can be explained from three perspectives. The first one is the giraffe in its natural, health-giving environment. At this stage it symbolizes Kilima’s traditional culture before it was invaded by the foreign one. Hence a soreless giraffe’s back. Secondly, the giraffe as seen when the sores afflict it represents Kilima’s traditional culture which has been defiled and polluted through cultural invasion.

Thirdly, Boge is visualizing a cultural re-birth in Kilima. For example, Headmaster’s diseased giraffe has been “elevated into a thing of profound beauty so that the sores on its skin were no longer as revolting as before”. Also, the image of Kilima is now beautiful and like a dear mother to him. We are again told: “He saw the gleaming faces of little Kiliman children returning home from their first day at school and felt that the future was safe.”

The overwhelming sense of optimism in Shrine of Tears is finally attained as follows:

Boge thought he heard the sound of music, as of wedding songs lingering in the tired ears of an exhausted bridegroom. She was there, yes, there beside him, in the dark womb of that mechanical crab (Imbuga, 1993,207).

According to the context of the text, Boge is in the above quotation actually being mythological. He is prophesying the birth of a new culture in Kilima. We are told that “wedding songs lingering,” “bridegroom” and “the bride” were “there beside him.” This means that though Kanaya is dead, Kilima is now undergoing another ritual which will subsequently give birth to this culture. Among most African communities, there is
a belief that there will always be a re-birth wherever there has been a death. Data collected in the field that is contained in appendix II corroborates this. The expected culture is reported to be still “in the dark womb” maturing to be born.

This does clearly reflect the new mood of optimism upon which Imuga’s *Shrine of Tears* ends.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study set out to inquire into the reasons as to why Francis Imbuga has incorporated myths and rituals in his literary texts. But the study did not merely intend to show the role and function of myths and rituals in his books. As a matter of fact, the study also aimed at revealing the importance that the author attaches to myths and rituals in artistic terms.

It has been argued, especially in Chapter Two, that myths and rituals are a kind of trope which the author employs to address problems of cultural conflict among African communities. This is demonstrated in *Aminata*. The death of Pastor Ngoya and the cementing of his grave vividly brings out the issue of cultural conflict in *Membe*. This is further confirmed in *The Burning of Rags* when Agala disagrees with Denis over the circumcision of Yona.

It is further argued in the same chapter that the playwright employs myths and rituals to strongly advocate for traditional African culture. Basically, this is because, the author is of the opinion that this culture is as good as any other and should be accorded its rightful place in society. The ending of both plays epitomizes this stance. Accordingly, the discussion in the second chapter is significant because it demonstrates the author's commitment to traditional African culture.
The discussion in Chapter Three has established the author’s vision in relation to social and political matters in post-independent Africa. Significantly, the discussion contends that by use of myths and rituals, the playwright does not merely expose the various social and political vices in society. He is also censuring them in one way or another. The killing of Mulili, who is a symbol of evil and vice in Betrayal in the City, illustrates.

In the same chapter, the discussion further reveals how the playwright treats the dilemma of an individual in a seemingly harsh political environment. It is quite evident in Game of Silence that forces of evil are bound to be defeated. This will in turn lead to a regeneration of both the individual and the society at large. The dance of the future being undertaken at the end of the text is very symbolic in this context.

Another issue that arises in the discussion of in the same chapter is that regarding the place and role of the gods in the lives of the living. According to the playwright (in The Successor,) the gods can greatly influence political trends in society. The Shrine and Dr. See Through in the text actually symbolize the gods in Masero. Apparently, these two aspects do not seem to restore sanity and order in Masero. But they do ensure that truth and justice are upheld as cornerstones of a democratically viable society.

In Chapter Three, the discussion again clearly demonstrates what the playwright thinks of the perpetrators of evil and human suffering in society. In Man of Kafira, Imbuga is using myths and rituals to suggest that one’s mistakes on earth may never go unpunished. This is foregrounded in the scene of the play-within-a-play. It is also
corroborated by the psychological and social suffering and humiliation that Boss experiences while he is in exile in Abiara. The death he finally meets at the hands of Regina tends to enhance the author’s view that perpetrators of evil and human suffering deserve punishment.

The discussion in Chapter Three is therefore important because, other than exposing evil and vice in society, it also points out how individuals can map out change for a better future.

Finally, the analysis in Chapter Four centres on the search for a space for traditional African culture. It is argued, in Kagai and her Brothers for example, that there is a possibility of African culture co-existing alongside others. For instance, Magomere demonstrates this when he circumcises his children in a hospital and later takes them to his rural home to be traditionally initiated. Another vivid demonstration is by the pastor who goes ahead to tell the people of Wenyange not to forget their traditions in spite of the fact that he himself is Christianized.

It is again disclosed in the fourth chapter that the author is actually envisaging the re-birth of a new African culture. His contention in Shrine of Tears appears to be that if Western culture has suffocated traditional African culture for too long, then chances are that the latter can actually experience a cultural re-birth. He is able to demonstrate this in the text through the death of Kanaya. Instead of total apathy for artistic/cultural
activities in Kilima, the death actually spurs the patriots, such as Jay Boge and Headmaster, to positive action.

In a nutshell, therefore, this study has demonstrated that it is not just the presence of myths and rituals in Imbuga’s literary texts that matters. It is also their symbolic functions as literary tropes that provide real meaning of what is contained in these texts. In other words, it is at the latent level rather than the manifest one that the myths and rituals attain their significance in Imbuga’s artistic works.
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APPENDIX II

TRANSLATED INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH PEOPLE ABOVE 65 YEARS OLD IN MARAGOLI AREA

a) INTERVIEWER: OLIL0
INFORMANT: DORIS AFANDI
AGE: 66 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: PEASANT FARMER
CONTEXT: INFORMAL – AT HER HOME IN IKUMBA VILLAGE
DATE: JUNE 6TH 1997

Q: Are you familiar with any myths and rituals existing among your people?

A: Maragoli traditions are many ---- These are matter about our old life……
It is not possible to count all of them ---- There have been changes and some of
them cannot be remembered ---- But we even still have male circumcision and
marriages ---- I mean weddings, though they are at the moment not done the way
it used to be in the past-------

Q: What exactly do you mean by saying that myths and rituals are Maragoli
traditions?

A: You see, long-long time ago, our people - older generations - had a way of
conducting their affairs. So these traditions explained or one would say, showed
why they did them-------

Q: Therefore what you are saying is that these traditions provided meaning to your
people's lives?

A: Yes. They did in certain ways ---------

Q: Can you cite an example?

A: One day my late mother told me a story about a girl who refused to heed her
parent's advice that she should not play about, especially with her male relatives,
before marriage. You see, it turned out that when she came to marriageable age,
there were no suitors for her. The reason? She was rumoured not to be a decent
girl ---- and they even claimed that she had misbehaved with her male relatives.
In the end she ended up an unmarried woman.

Q: When you say, there have been changes, what exactly are you implying?
A: You see, today's world is not what it used to be in the past------ Now we have too many foreign ways being followed---- Even our sons are circumcised in hospitals unlike in the past--- The way my mother said she was wedded is different from what I see today.

b) INTERVIEWER: OLILLO
INFORMANT: JAIRO KOBE
AGE: 75 YEARS
GENDER: MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: PETTY-TRADER
CONTEXT: INFORMAL - AT HIS HOME IN LOTEGO VILLAGE
DATE: JUNE 20TH, 1994

Q: Do the Maragoli practice any circumcision?
A: Yes, we do------ It is a necessary condition that all Maragoli men have to be circumcised.

Q: So the Maragoli do not practice female circumcision?
A: Never. We don't do that to our women------- It is the responsibility of older women to provide informal education to the young ones regarding what they ought to be in marriage life-------- Circumcision is only for men.

Q: Why do the Maragoli circumcise only males but not females?
A: You see, we the Maragoli believe that our creator made man first ------- he created To ensure that man remained loyal and enduring to him (creator), he made man undergo circumcision. That is why we circumcise only men.

Q: Do you have other reasons why the Maragoli have made male circumcision a traditional event?
A: There are other numerous reasons ---- circumcision among us, is, you see, like being born again----- it is, in fact, about teaching younger generations about society and also their future----- Reasons for circumcision are many. When I was taken for circumcision, I was in fact told that I could not marry unless I was circumcised------- Whose daughter would you have approached if you were uncircumcised? Not here --- Therefore to become circumcised is also to get to know your people, tribe, very well.

Q: In what duration do your people conduct this exercise?
You see, it varies a lot. Especially these days--- Long-long ago, one will get circumcised when he was a big person--- 15,16 or even 17 years. Because then you were nearing marriage. But presently, we circumcise even young boys at the age of six, seven, or eight years. To be circumcised at 10,11,12 years these days, is not bad-------- We actually don’t have a specific duration--- this depends on other many factors--- Today they do it after every four or there about years.

Q: Does this mean that among your people all those who get circumcised do it in a traditional manner?

A: No. Not quite, young man. Things have changed ------ There are schools, hospitals, towns and even churches---- And so you find that the Maragoli in big towns such as Mombasa, Nakuru, Nairobi can have their children operated on there. Then they are brought here for initiation--- Even some among us here take their children to modern surgeons or hospitals to be circumcised instead of the traditional river.

Q: Is there any fine imposed on those who do not circumcise their children at the traditional river?

A: I cannot be specific about that. In today’s life individuals rather than the tribe decide what to do with their own children ---- Whatever happens, at the end of the day, we are all happy that our children have been circumcised and that is why we even initiate them together.

Q: Can you briefly explain the differences between ‘circumcision” and “initiation”? Is there one which is less important than the other?

A: “Circumcision” actually involves one being operated upon; and “initiation” is what we call “Lialuka”. It is done after those who have been circumcised have healed--- That is when we dress them in new clothes but not the old ones---- This also indicates that the newly initiates now belong to a different generation – That they are no longer kids---

In fact, it is like telling them that they are now adults------ The name we give to their generation acts as another bond among them ---- Always they will have to remember they were circumcised together ---Both events are equally important---One gives birth to the other---They are inseparable.

Q: Have there been some cases whereby some members of your community have evaded circumcision? How has your community treated such cases?

A: It is quite true that there have been such cases ------ There was Mulogo, not far from here ---- But now he is dead. Then there was Anduvate. Him it was discovered while he was dead----The clan-I mean his Basweta clan- Had to call a Baraza before deciding on when to bury him. I was told that in the end, they (clan) decided to circumcise him though he was dead--- It was argued that it is a
taboo to bury a man who has sired children before being circumcised— There are some whom we don't even know— Usually, when the clan gets to know that you have never been circumcised, they may even plot to ambush you so that you are circumcised forcefully— Because among us it is a very big taboo not to be circumcised. You are considered to be a contaminated person— They forcefully circumcise you as a way of cleansing you.

Q: Do you think you must continue circumcising your boys in a traditional manner during the current threat of death brought by Aids?

A: That is difficult to tell. But you see, it is not bad to go to a modern hospital. As I said earlier, most of our people are doing it and many more are going to join them— We may end up using hospitals all of us in order to save our future generations. But it is important that we teach them about tradition during initiation.

INTERVIEWER:  OLILO
INFORMANT:  SHEM OSWARA
AGE:  80 YEARS
GENDER:  MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION:  NONE
CONTEXT:  INFORMAL:  AT HIS HOME IN IGUNGA VILLAGE
DATE:  JULY, 16 TH, 1997

Q: What views or beliefs do the Maragoli people hold about death?

A: Death is a very painful thing — like the rest of the people, we fear it because it is the end of human life.

Q: Does that mean that the Maragoli see death merely in terms of an end to human life alone?

A: Yes— But that is not all— Infact, the Maragoli have for a long time believed that those who die go to join the ancestors somewhere — you can say very far, but we believe it is somewhere.

Q: Do those who die have anything to do with the living?

A: We name our children after those who died because we believe that the dead are still our people, though they may be dead.

Q: May be you can elaborate on that one further?

A: Among the Maragoli, there has always been a belief that the spirit of a human being is very important — You see, someone may die, but his spirit will continue to live somehow — Somewhere among us the living.
Q: Regarding burial rite, is it correct to say that your community conducts it presently in the same way it was done in the past?

A: That is quite obvious. The way we do it these days is not how it used to be done in the past. Presently, the dead are buried according to Christian teachings. Long ago, a dead old man, for example, would be buried mainly by his agemates. Then there were no coffins to be buried in. Such an old man would be wrapped in a skin of a bull which had just been slaughtered, and then he would be lowered in his final house to rest. The animal would be shared by his agemates. And then there would be dancing and busaa drinking for his agemates. But these things don’t happen in today’s society.

Q: What were the reasons for doing all these things, for example, the ceremony after burial?

A: It was mainly to appease the spirit of the dead — to make him not feel lonely because he had been deserted in his death.

d) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: PAUL ANZIGARE
AGE: 65 YEARS
GENDER: MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: CAPTAIN IN THE SALVATION ARMY CHURCH
CONTEXT: FORMAL — BURIAL RITE AT KEGOYE VILLAGE

Q: You have just concluded on conducting a burial ceremony for the departed woman, what are your views about death?

A: Death is a glorious thing. Especially in the case of a believer like the one we have just buried. She has been called to Heaven by the Almighty.

Q: Do you consider the manner in which you conducted today’s burial to be different from the way it used to be done in the past?

A: Absolutely correct. Ours is a Christian burial. We believe in Jesus and that is why we sing holy hymns and read from the Bible during burial times. In fact, it is the best way of escorting those of us who believe in Christ. Then they will bury in a traditional and anti-Christ manner.

Q: Captain, in view of your Christian teaching, do you also believe in life after death?
You see, the Bible says that the body shall die, but not the spirit. As Christians, we believe that the believers who are dead shall rise when Jesus returns. They will regain their bodies again. But the spirit never dies, especially if you are a believer.

I realized that after burial, the mourners gathered again to eat. Do you consider this to be pro or anti-Christian?

This is an age-old habit. Our people have always practiced it. It is like we are saying that some among us may die, but life continues to be there. But one can also say that it is one way of re-affirming the bond between the living and the dead. Some how, it can not be avoided.

INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: DORIS M'MBONE
AGE: 65 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/occupation: PETTY-TRADER
CONTEXT: FORMAL - BURIAL RITE AT KEGOYE
DATE: 22ND JULY, 1997

The other day, your community gathered hear for a burial rite. Today, you are also present to attend a funeral rite. Is there any difference between the two?

Yes, there is. First, we were burying the body and today we have come to witness the resurrection. You see, as Christians, we believe that the spirit goes to heaven on the third day after burial. I believe that is the main reason why we are here today.

Are you saying that a funeral rite is a much recent event among your people?

Not exactly - I believe it used to be there even in the old days - but it was different from the one we conduct presently. Then they called it ekelemba. It was mostly done for old people who had also been famous in one way or the other. I cannot exactly remember its details.

How is the one performed presently different from that one which used to be done in the past.

This is done in a Christian manner. A pastor as well as members of the church must be there. Like you have seen today, to conduct it. This never happened in the past.
Q: I noticed that some members belonging to the deceased family had their hair shaved in a specific manner. Is this a recent practice or not and why does it take place?

A: Not quite. Shaving of the hair among members of the family of the deceased is a long tradition — It is done for several reasons. But normally it is in form of respect for the dead — And it is done so that the public can identify those who have been bereaved — In our society, tradition demands that the bereaved ones must be pitied and assisted in one way or the other.

Q: Is it true to say that christianity has completely changed most of the beliefs which were traditionally associated with death?

A: In many ways, yes. But there are some deaths which cannot just be treated to be normal — You see, deaths such as murder and suicide. Our people do not condone either of them——

Q: Why?

A: Take, for example, death in form of some one who has been murdered. We consider it to be a grave issue—— To kill some body is a taboo among us. We highly respect human life and when you kill we condemn it.

Q: Is that all?

A: Probably not. Long time ago, a murderer would be banished from our community. The same thing would happen to a rapist or a person who commits incest. But these are different days.

Q: I have read from some books that there has been a habit of burning or tampering with the grave of the dead among your people. Why did this take place and does it still happen?

A: It is not as common as it used to be in past years —— Such incidents have been reported to have taken place in our society—— But it is an evil act—— It is believed that those who do it are in one way or the other associated with the death of the deceased. So they do it to stop the spirit of the dead from haunting them.

Q: Is that true?

A: This is a traditional belief ————
Q: Are there specific rules governing marriage institution in your community?
A: Yes, there are plenty of them because marriage is a central institution among us.

Q: Can you mention and explain some of them?
A: According to our people a man and woman should only live together if they are properly married. That is when we actually say they are husband and wife.

Q: Among your people, what actually symbolizes a proper marriage?
A: Dowry—Dowry is an important element of marriage among us. It is not permitted for a man to take and live with some one’s daughter without paying dowry.

Q: Supposing a man and woman lived together and they begot children without having been dowry payment, what would happen?
A: It is bad under such circumstances—Very bad for all the parties involved. If, for example, the woman dies, her people will not allow the man to bury her until the dowry issue is settled. You know, there have been cases where the body of a dead woman is taken away from her man due to lack of dowry payment—Some people even snatch the children from the man.

Q: How do the Maragoli conduct their marriages?
A: Some people hold weddings. They go to church or even I hear some go to the D.C these days——They say that it is another modern wedding——But even those who elope are considered to be married——So long as the issue or dowry has been addressed.
Q: Are you implying that there does not exist a traditional wedding ceremony among your people?

A: That was during older years. But at the moment nobody weds like that any more-----Like I have already said, most people are doing it the modern way. Some even hold their wedding ceremonies in the big towns where they are working. Like my last born. Ambani-----He wedded in Nairobi and I only went a day before it happened. ----But we still accept it that way.

Q: Is virginity still considered a pre-requisite for a girl to get married?

A: Not so much these days. In the past it was almost a taboo to be married if you were not a virgin. But these days nobody follows such matters. Things have really changed---You may even find a woman with one, two or so children being married by a young man, you see.

Q: In that case, do you mean to say that your community is no longer strict about morals?

A: That is not true-------We are very concerned about our morals. I have already told you that we consider it a sin for a man to live with someone's daughter without formalizing it by paying dowry. In fact, we don't want to hear of the two living together without the knowledge of their parents. Every marriage ought to be made public.

Q: Is that all?

A: And during marriage, the law requires that the two must remain faithful to one another-------Intercourse outside marriage may happen, but it is not socially approved----It is bad, sinful----

e) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: LABAN ISIGI
AGE: 76 YEARS
GENDER: MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: FORMER TEACHER
CONTEXT: INFORMAL -AT HIS HOME IN STAND KISA VILLAGE
DATE: 18TH SEPTEMBER, 1997

Q: Are there any myths relating to the significance of mushrooms among your people?

A: Mushrooms are a traditional foodstuff. They exist in different types----There are those which are not edible---The big white ones -- because it is believed that they can make one to become mad------In most cases, the edible ones are those
that are brown in colour and grow when the heavy rains pour— As a foodstuff, people eat them because they are a kind of delicacies. Your see, mushrooms kind of symbolize our traditions—they grow from dead matter and seem to remind us that nothing goes away for ever.

Q: There is this myth about the bird, owl, being associated with bad omen. Does it exist among your people?

A: Very much. Our elders used to tell us that something bad will always happen whenever that bird would hoot. It is a bad bird. Nowadays, it is only us old people who still think about it. I don’t think the young ones can remember such things.

Q: Is there a form of action your community would take in case of a child being born through incest?

A: Incest is considered to be a taboo. The community has always discouraged it. A child born as a result of this is always considered to be a sinful and an unclean one. Our ancestors would not permit it to live within the tribe. Hence, the reason why they sold it or gave it away to foreigners— the Luo or Nandi—.

Q: Do dreams have any impact in an individual’s life among your people?

A: Dreams are a way in which some information is passed to an individual. You see, some dreams are good others are bad. It all depends on who is dreaming what and why. But in most cases, dreams have for a long time been viewed to mean a lot among our people. I cannot for sure tell you what they are, but they are there.

Q: I have some information that the Maragoli once used to have a shrine for worshipping and doing other related matters. Is this true and where in particular was it located?

A: Yes, it is true. I am reliably told that it was somewhere within the present area of Maragoli forest. They called it Mugimba. The Seer would go there to talk to the ancestors during harsh periods, such as drought, hunger, diseases etc. But I myself have never been to that place.

Q: How do you rate traditional Maragoli myths and rituals in today’s life?

A: I am not sure. As you can see, things are really changing fast. One cannot be able to tell the future. But tradition is tradition. Some things change others don’t. Change as you know, is always there.
Q: When did the Maragoli start holding this particular festival?
A: The festival is not a new event among us. Traditionally, this event used to take place, but at the regional levels only. For example, we in the south would hold it at Kindundu; those in the north met either at Wodanga center, or at Chavakali market. There was also a similar one here at Mbale. Therefore, the Maragoli have traditionally been holding events which deal with their cultural life. The present one was inaugurated by the late minister, Hon Moses Mudavadi in 1983. The following year we also invited President Daniel Moi as the chief guest. Now it is an annual event.

Q: Is there a specific reason given for conducting this event?
A: This is a very useful event to us. In fact, we look at it as one of the factors that unite us. The event deals with the traditional ways of life of the Maragoli people. In a way, one would say that we are using it to remind ourselves, particularly our youths, about the ways of life of the Maragoli people.

Q: Why the youths, in particular?
A: As you are aware, today's life is not what used to be there before. At the moment a lot of matters are done according to modern ways. Some of what we call modern is not really good in terms of the growing up generations. Some bad behaviours are taught to our youths and the youths copy them without knowing. Many youths get spoilt by them. What we are doing at this festival is to teach our youths about our traditional ways of life. We want them to know that the Maragoli have always had some ways about life. You know, they should know how to behave, conduct themselves, and even about matters of the community.

Q: Are you suggesting that present Maragoli youths should be living life as it used to be in the past?
A: I think you have mistaken what I said --- I mean, that is not the way I put it --- life cannot be lived in the same way throughout --- yesterday and today are different days, but there ought to be a way in which things are done --- So, we are only trying to tell and show them how best and moral they should live life.

Q: Do you mean to say that traditional Maragoli ways of life possess some positive teachings?

A: Precisely. Matters such as relationships between the old and the youth, among the youths themselves and even those issues which have a lot to do with social responsibilities and roles, even morality ---- Our traditions teach about them in a far much much better way---------

Q: What about Western education? Don’t you think it has replaced traditional forms of education?

A: Western education came and is here with us. You see, most of us have actually gone through it---We all want our children to get this kind of education---As you know, today’s world is very competitive in many ways. But everything about life is not taught there ---- Some important issues about life can still be found in our traditions---------

Q: As a former chief, would you think the government is doing enough to promote African traditional cultures in Kenya?

A: I think it is trying very much. You have today seen that all the administration in Maragoli from Headman to the DC is present here---They are all here. This is a good sign--- Yes, the government is doing its best--------

Q: How do the Maragoli manage to sponsor this occasion in terms of finances?

A: I cannot tell exactly how it is done. All I know is that there are several committees assigned to organize it. My own committee normally deals with administrative duties--- Another committee is the one of Nairobi and I think, let me say that it is the one that deals with money matters----- Some money is raised through harambee----- In some instances well wishers make donations etc. But it is purely a people’s own initiative and drive. There are individuals who even participate voluntarily.

Q: You have already said that today’s world is very competitive. To what extent do you think the Maragoli traditional culture can manage to compete against modern ways?

A: It is difficult------ Modern ways are too sophisticated and our youths go for them indiscriminately----but we are trying, although what we are doing is not really for the purposes of competition --- You see, we want our children to learn and
also remember our ways. They should know that they are African people and they also belong somewhere-----

Q: I am told that during a funeral the Maragoli light a fire they call “Fire of Amagenga”. Can you briefly explain on its significance?

A: “Fire of Amagenga” is traditionally very important. Yes, it manages to keep the people warm during those cold nights. But you see, it is considered immoral for a relative or a neighbour to spend the night in his bedroom during a funeral. It is at this particular fire place that the community is able to gauge those who bend society’s rules. Also, the community is able to reflect upon some of the cultural and social, even current political problems facing it. Death is very significant among us and cannot be down looked upon. At this fire place we are as a community also appeasing the spirit of the dead and again seeking for reassurance from our forefathers that life will be guaranted.
APPENDIX III

TRANSLATED INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH PEOPLE AGED 30 AND 50 YEARS OLD

a) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: WILLIAM AGESA
AGE: 47 YEARS
GENDER: MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: GOVERNMENT CLERK AT VIHIGA
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 29TH, JULY 1997

Q: Are you familiar with any myths and rituals of the Maragoli people?
A: I am not really conversant with most Maragoli myths. But I am aware of rituals because some of them such as death happen here very frequently.

Q: Why are you not conversant with most Maragoli myths?
A: Among us, myths are basically a form of traditional beliefs—they are those things our people used to believe in long time back----

Q: Are you suggesting that there are no myths in today's Maragoli society?
A: They could still be there, mainly among the older generations. It is not easy for us to remember or adhere to them in the same way the old people do it------

Q: Why not?
A: This is because to us, our generation, we do things differently ---Our great grandfathers will employ myths to explain why some things occur the way they do, or why certain issues should not be carried out--- I would think we ourselves cannot do that any more---- we prefer to look at issues from a modern point of view----

Q: What is your opinion about some of the rituals which take place among you people?
A: Most of them are not done like it used to be in traditional ways. Take, for example, the burial rite. It is presently being done in a very christian manner, unlike the way it used to be in the past. Even circumcision---- we prefer to use a modern surgeon than a traditional circumciser---- You see, with the threat of
diseases such as Aids, one cannot afford to take chances. Besides, the children have to heal early enough in order to resume their schooling.

b) INTERVIEWER: OLILIB
INFORMANT: RHODA IMBULANI
AGE: 50 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: SCHOOL TEACHER, KIDINYE PR.SHOOL
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 12ST SEPTEMBER, 1997

Q: What are some of the views the Maragoli have about death?
A: Death is a very sad moment, I believe, to all people. Our people also believe that it is a great loss----very irreversible.

Q: Do you mean to say that the Maragoli believe that death is the end of everything?
A: In a way, yes. But you see, it is not just that way. We believe according to christian teachings that one does not die for ever----The body may die, but the spirit lives on.

Q: Is it different from the traditional belief(s)?
A: In some ways. This is a christian one which also stresses on resurrection for the believers when the Lord shall return. But the traditional one merely talked about the spirit of the dead living amidst.

Q: From your own understanding, do you think there is a relationship between the living and the dead?
A: To a certain extent, yes. The dead do influence events of the living in one way or the other------In fact, most of the burial and funeral rites our people perform are intended to appease the spirit of the dead so that it can rest in peace----

Q: What will happen if such rites are not performed?
A: Our people say that this may annoy the spirit of the dead and inevitably, some bad omen may occur to members of his/her family.

Q: Are you aware of any such incident?
A: I am not sure------But people say such things happen

Q: Even the Christians?

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A: Christianity may have become part and parcel of us, but such matters are never taken lightly — the spirit of the dead must be appeased in one way or the other — there is no short-cut to it.

c) INTERVIEWER: OLILLO
INFORMANT: GRACE ASEYO
AGE: 53 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: CHURCH LEADER, VOKOLI FRIENDS CHURCH
DATE: 20TH SEPTEMBER, 1997

Q: I believe you understand what myths and rituals are?
A: I would think I do. Yes, they are about traditions.

Q: Do you think that they are today still important among your people?
A: We in the church do not subscribe to that — we try our best to teach our people to forget about traditional beliefs and practices because such matters belong to the past days — in fact, they are not needed in today’s life.

Q: Why do you say so?
A: You see, as church people, we follow what the bible says — it tells us to believe in one God and the teachings of Christ. Traditional matters are anti-Christ and should be disregarded all together.

Q: As a matter of fact, are you saying that the Maragoli traditional life is incompatible with modern times?
A: Absolutely. We cannot afford to go back to the old ways — we must take our children to schools so that they can become professionals in modern ways — and there also is the church for our moral and spiritual guidance — tradition is actually a stumbling block to development and progress.

Q: you are not afraid that your future generations might be considered to be a lost people because they would not know anything about Maragoli traditions?
A: I don’t think that is a correct thing to say — today’s life is very different from the one of old days. One is supposed to know God, go to church for guidance — and the children should go to school. That is the way things are today — not to know about tradition.
Q: Do you consider rituals such as circumcision to be still important among your people?

A: Yes. Circumcision is still very much in existence among us. We consider it a taboo not to be circumcised.

Q: What transpires during the circumcision rite?

A: Traditionally, the rite was more than the physical operation act-----Then the newly initiates would be schooled in various matters about male responsibilities and the history of the community. But today, this hardly happens----

Q: What do you consider to be reasons for such changes?

A: In traditional days, boys were circumcised together in one group and they remained like that until they healed. Later, they will together be initiated before departing for their individual homes. At the moment this does not happen. Most boys are circumcised individually-----

Q: Does this mean that your people at the moment do not observe strict traditional circumcision rules of the community?

A: Yes. In fact, most people do---the educated ones, christians and even those who live in big towns. The way they circumcise is not exactly according to tradition.

Q: What exactly do you have in mind?

A: According to tradition, there are some rites to be performed after circumcision. For example, the rites of the burning of rags belonging to the newly initiates, as well as them being washed by their fathers with water treated with traditional herbs. Most people have forgotten them; and yet they are very important rites.

Q: How important are they?

A: These rites are meant for the father to bless his son--- It is like the father is telling his son that you are now man enough therefore you may now go ahead with male duties.
Q: Is there a problem if the two rites are not performed?

A: In traditional terms, yes. Our people traditionally believed that one could end up not being man enough if the two rites are over-looked—— But times have changed and people just do things differently——

Q: How far are you conversant with traditional myths and rituals of your people?

A: I am not really sure that I can know—— I mean they are things about the old days and ways of life.

Q: Does that mean that you don’t regard the past to be important?

A: Sometimes I do —But I am lost when it concerns what our people used to believe in and do in ancient days.

Q: Are you married?

A: No. I am not—— Marriage does not hold water any more—— You see, these days what matters is that someone is happy; and you don’t have to be married to be happy——

Q: Traditionally, the Maragoli are said to have laid a lot of concern on promiscuous sexual behaviour. Do you know why they did it and would you say it is still applicable presently?

A: I know that that was there in those days—— Then one was to remain intact till she is married—— Some people say it was good manners in so far as women are concerned—— Others say it was for her own good reputation. But it is very difficult to know such matters in the present society—— It is forbidden, yes, yet some people just live their own life—— In fact, it is very difficult to control people due to the modern ways of life—— There are so many children being born outside wedlock, but society just accept them.

Q: If you were to get married one day, would you prefer to be wedded or to be eloped?
A: It will depend on many issues. There is the man I will be marrying--- His economic status will decide it all. But I think, a wedding is okay.

Q: Why do you think so?

A: A wedding is an official way to get married. When you are eloped, it is like you have been cheated into marriage.

Q: Would you prefer that dowry is paid for your marriage?

A: Yes. There is no doubt about that--- It may not be possible for him to know that he has married me---- And my people have to be acknowledged. Therefore there have to be payment of dowry----
APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 18-25 YEARS IN MARAGOLI, VIHIGA DISTRICT

a) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: MARTIN NGUSALE
AGE: 18 YEARS
GENDER: MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: FOURTH FORMER, VIHIGA SEC.SCHOOL
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 19TH JUNE, 1997

Q: How many myths and rituals of the Maragoli people do you know?
A: I am not sure if I know any myths. There are some rituals which I have witnessed in my area of Madira. I have, for example, attended some burial ceremonies--- I think I have also witnessed some wedding occasions.

Q: Are you aware why burial rites are conducted in the manner in which they occur?
A: I really cannot explain that. But I think it is because when someone dies, he or she has to be given a decent burial.

Q: Why do you think the dead should be buried decently?
A: It is true that a dead person is a corpse---But you see, he was one of us human beings. That is why I say that the dead should be honoured.

Q: Do you think anything could happen if the dead are not buried decently.
A: I am not very sure about that--- But I consider it a shame to the living if they do not respect their dead-----

c) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: GRACE M'BOGA
AGE: 18 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: THIRD FORMER AT MOI MADZU GIRLS
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 25TH JUNE, 1997

Q: Have you ever attended a wedding occasion?
A: Yes: In fact I was one of the maids in my sister wedding at Mahanga village last December.

Q: Is there any interesting aspect you noticed there?

A: I think so---But there were so many issues happening during that occasion. For example, the manner in which we the ladies were singing.

Q: What about it?

A: You see, we were singing in praise of the bride and at the same time we were ridiculing the bride-groom.

Q: Why do you call it interesting?

A: This is because the bride-groom never got displeased ---We would call him an ugly and stupid man. Someone even said that he shits and urinates in his trousers. But the man just continued smiling back. At one moment he also danced and gave us some money.---

Q: Were you told why this happens in a wedding occasion?

A: Not quite. But some girls said it is just a way of being happy. Later when I asked my mother she said that that should teach our in-law a lesson that he had married someone's daughter and not a nobody.

Q: And what do you think yourself?

A: It was great fun. I just enjoyed everything we were doing---I would love to have it again.

e) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: KAREN SANDALE
AGE: 19 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: FOURTH FORM STUDENT AT KEVEYE GIRLS
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1997

Q: Have you been told of any myths of the Maragoli people?

A: Are you talking about some Maragoli traditions? If that it the case, then it is true I have heard about them.
Q: Can you name one of them?

A: There is one which talks about not eating a specific type of chicken—The one we call in vernacular Likukulale----- This particular chicken has got rough feathers. My grandmother once told me that such chicken is never slaughtered for visitors.

Q: Did she tell you the reason why?

A: She did. She said that if visitors eat such chicken then they will never come back again.

Q: Do you think it is true?

A: I am not really sure. But even now you cannot feed such chicken to your guests--- Everybody here knows that.

Q: Is there a second myth you know?

A: I have also been told that it is very bad for a young person to be cursed by an elderly person.

Q: In what ways is it bad say, for example, if you yourself were to be cursed by your grandmother?

A: That will be a very bad omen for me---- I may end up having numerous problems in my life--- Problems such as of bareness or losing my children or even living a miserable unmarried life---Things like that could happen to me.

Q: Are you aware of this having happened to anyone in particular?

A: I am not aware-----But they say that such things happen ---And when you hear it you get scared and that is why no young girl wants to be cursed by her older women relatives.

e) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: GIDEON INDUSA
AGE: 20 YEARS
GENDER: MALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: FOURTH FORMER AT BUSALI SEC. SCHOOL
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 5TH JULY, 1997

Q: Have you been circumcised?
A: Yes. I was circumcised in 1990.

Q: Were you circumcised at the river or in a hospital?

A: I was circumcised in hospital, at Kaimos Hospital.

Q: Who decided that you should be circumcised in a hospital?

A: I think my father did---- my parents said I should get ready to go to hospital. When I told them that I was not sick, my father just laughed and said that it was not because of sickness that I was being taken to hospital. He said that it was a high time I got circumcised.

Q: How do you feel being circumcised in hospital as opposed to the river?

A: I don’t think I feel anything. In fact, most of my friends were also circumcised there-----

Q: How do you relate with those who were circumcised at the river?

A: Very well---We are all good friends.

Q: Would you prefer the Maragoli to have their sons circumcised at the river or in hospital?

A: I think it is better at the hospital. It is in fact, very safe and less painful----- things, I am told, are quite rough at the river-----

e) INTERVIEWER: OLILO
INFORMANT: MARGARET KAVETSA
AGE: 18 YEARS
GENDER: FEMALE
STATUS/OCCUPATION: FOURTH FORMER, MOI VOKOLI GIRLS
CONTEXT: INFORMAL
DATE: 8TH JULY, 1997

Q: Given traditional life and modern one, which one would you prefer?

A: I think I like modern life. The traditional ones---- such as new languages and even television and movies ---- There is even modern food-stuffs.

Q: Can you name some of those new languages you are talking about?
A: There is, for example, English and French languages. We are being taught these two here in school.

Q: Is Kiswahili not a new language?

A: In away, it is a new one----But not in the same way like the other two----They are very marketable---Our teachers say French in particular is necessary when you have it as a second foreign language.

Q: What do you think yourself? Is it important that you must learn foreign languages?

A: I think it is important. I will have a wider market when I go to look for a job.

Q: What language do you comfortably communicate in?

A: English and French. I enjoy speaking the two languages.

Q: And what about your Lulogoli dialect?

A: I speak it. Especially to some older people. But I don’t feel at ease---- You see, my Dad also speaks good French and we both like it.

Q: What exactly do you have in mind when you say that modern life is good because of television and things like movies?

A: These are modern channels of entertainment and information---There were no such things in the past.

Q: Therefore you prefer television and movies to traditional dances such as Sukuti?

A: Yes, I do. Traditional dances are actually backward in a way -Some people like it. But I am at home watching television or movies-----Especially when I go to Nairobi. And as you know, these days we also have videos.

Q: Are you a student of English/Literature?
A: Yes, I am.

Q: What books of Literature do you read or like?

A: I have not really read many books. Therefore I cannot say which ones I like or don't like.

Q: Have you come across any book written by African writers, for example, Achebe, Ngugi or Imbuga?

A: Yes. I have managed to read Things Fall Apart by Achebe --- I have also read Imbuga's Betrayal in the City--- In fact, I have not read much.

Q: What is your opinion about those two books that you have mentioned?

A: In my opinion, they are good books--- In Things Fall Apart I like the way in which Achebe uses African proverbs. The story is also set within an African context and this reminds me of our own rural setting --- But it is sad that Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna- Very sad indeed.

Q: Do you have anything to say about Imbuga's Betrayal in the City?

A: The book is a good work of drama---- I think it is talking about our modern society.

Q: What are the particular issues which tell you that the book is dealing with our modern society?

A: There is the death of this University student who is shot by the police--- His name is Adika --- It is just the way we see it happening today. His parents are told not to carry out the shaving ceremony ---There are many issues in the book which resemble what we witness at the moment.

Q: Is there anything else you can say about this particular book?

A: Yes. I think I like the way it ends. Jusper is a good character ------ you see, he kills Mulili. Mulili does so many bad things.------ You get relieved when Jusper kills him--------
INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS IMBUGA HELD ON JANUARY 11TH, 1998 AT KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI, KENYA.

OLILO: When did you start writing?

IMBUGA: I developed interest in writing when I joined Alliance High School. But my first script entitled Omolo was ready in 1968, and in 1969 it was entered for the Kenya National Schools’ Drama Festival—the play did not go beyond the provincial level, although it managed to put me into the world of acting. It is quite unfortunate that I lost this particular script. But since then, I have managed to write and publish a lot of books.

OLILO: What exactly inspired you into writing?

IMBUGA: I was actually inspired into writing by a play I saw way back when I was doing my primary education at Chavakali Intermediate Primary School. I think I was in class 2 or 3 and the play was being performed by Secondary School students from Friends School Kamusinga. I am not sure but I think it was a Shakespearean play----- It was about someone being killed and put in a coffin ----this act totally upset me until I realized later that the man had not died----- I am sure that that is when I resolved that one day I was going to write something like that.

OLILO: Your books have a large element of rituals and myths. Can you explain why this is the case in your books?

IMBUGA: For along period we have lived with the opinion that what is expoused through Western literary tradition is nothing but absolute truth. This opinion has actually down played some important aspects of the African oral tradition --- Both rituals and myths are, to me, very significant elements in our folklore --- We cannot afford to ignore them Basically because they are just not part and parcel of our folklore’s treasure. But also because they are a vital trope for any modern African writer who is grappling with the numerous complexities and forces our societies are presently embroidered in.

OLILO: It is apparent to the readers of your books that at one point you seem to condemn ritual practices and mythological beliefs and yet at another level, you are actually praising them. Why does such ambivalences exist?

IMBUGA: Like I have said earlier, traditional African folklore material can form a crucial basis for us modern African writers----- In fact, as literary tropes, these materials enable a writer to expose some of the contradictions and
dilemmas individuals are faced with in their real daily lives—- I am of
the opinion that no single culture offers all the satisfaction people desire
for. What I am trying to do in my works is simply this: life is not
homogeneous ---- Reality is after all made up by the heterogeneities of
life. And rituals and myths are, in traditional context, about human
realities.

OLILO: So you are actually saying that the myths held and the rituals practiced by
your community have influenced you in your writing throughout?

IMBUGA: To a very large extent, yes---- It is indeed true that the European writers I
encountered in my formal schooling did also play a role in my writing
and some of the ideas I hold---- But if you carefully examine my works,
you will definitely notice that a lot of what I say, and even how I say it ,
somehow, comes from my oral tradition---- The narratives I was told by
my old people, together with the beliefs and practices of my people----
they are all part of my writing------ But of course, I am particularly not
tied to the oral tradition. I am a writer and I use it consciously --- I
believe my books show this in varied forms.

OLILO: What relationship do you envisage between traditional African material
and modern African literature?

IMBUGA: As forms of African Literature , one would say that both are actually
very much African----They are very much concerned about cultural
problems and other socially related ones the continent experiences ----
Their historical differences in terms of existence may not actually
diminish this important aspect they both are concerned with----But it is
also possible that a modern writer's social and cultural concerns are more
complex, in fact, very challenging given the nature of the society he/she is
dealing with --- But the very fact that most modern African writers
resort to traditional folklore to communicate about modern challenges
also indicate that the two are quite inseparable --They will always be
valued for articulating Africa's cultural, social and even political
concerns.

OLILO: You began writing as a playwright. At the moment you are writing
novels. What is the reason behind this change?

IMBUGA: I do not think there is any big reason as such. What I can perhaps say is
that the issues I deal with in my literary texts are all about human life----
Only that in a situation such as that of novel writing, a writer is much
more free according to the manner of expressing his views---- Let us
put it this way. In my novel Shrine of Fears (1993) I, for example, have
an expansive period within which I create and develop my characters
and ideas, than say as is the case in most of my plays. Also I believe
that my readers grasp my message in this particular novel better than they probably do in the plays -- my characters are perhaps judged less harshly and are treated sympathetically--- I think the novel as a genre of literature has a unique sense of appeal to the novelist as well as to the readers.

OLILO: What do you consider to be the role of a committed African writer?

IMBUGA: In our own African context, a writer cannot afford but to be committed to his profession. That is what I try to grapple with in most of my books---- but I think very evidently in Betrayal in the City --- I also think in Man of Kafira -- And much recently, in Shrine of Tears. But commitment is not equivalent to propaganda ---We must guard against propagandist literature because it dilutes our (African) Literature --- In my understanding commitment calls for objectivity in our art --- Dedication to our work is also important. But our literature must always aspire not just to expose the wickedness that abide amidst us. In fact, it should also, positively and strongly, articulate the African spirit, but within a wider context of the human race.

OLILO: Finally, professor, how do you visualize the future of African literature?

IMBUGA: Our literature has grown from strength to strength, despite the many hurdles facing it. In the colonial period, for example, it was virtually ( I mean the oral one) outlawed and labelled anathema---- some of our post-independence leaders have treated it in similar ways. But the determination of the African artist and some enthusiastic audience has kept the spirit burning ---- I believe that with these two still in existence, our literature can still flourish marvelously --- But we still need to do a lot. For example, we should give more prominence to our writers; our poems, plays and novels not only in Universities, but also in primary and secondary schools--- Isn't it amazing that most of our Kenyan Secondary school students for example, have never heard about my Betrayal in the City or Shrine of Tears ---- We as writers also need to have a new sense of commitment to our work and discover new forms of expressions--- we should not pay lip service to it----