

Impediments to the Ban of Female Circumcision: Exploring the Contradictions in *The River Between* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

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Abstract: This article throws lights on the contrarities and contradictions which hinder the ban of female circumcision as depicted by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *The River Between*. The appraisal therefore lies on Muthoni's circumcision and the circumstances of her aftermath death. Through the semiotic reading of the novel, based on Algirdas Julien Greimas's narrative semiotics, it has been possible to identify and understand the source of the impediments to the ban of girl circumcision in Africa. At first, it appears that the meaning of circumcision is quite different from one cultural space to another. Secondly, Ngugi shows Muthoni's death not as an evident outcome but as a contrary effect of circumcision. At last, the analysis holds that the impediments to the practice are favoured by cultural factors and the incongruities around the cultural sources of the fight against it.

Key Words: contradictions, culture, death, female circumcision, impediments.

Resumé : Cet article fait la lumière sur les contrariétés et les contradictions qui entravent l'interdiction de l'excision telles que décrite par Ngugi wa Thiong'o dans *The River Between*. L'appréciation repose donc sur l'excision de Muthoni et les circonstances de sa mort consécutive. À travers la lecture sémiotique du roman, basée sur la sémiotique narrative d'Algirdas Julien Greimas, il a été possible d'identifier et de comprendre la source des entraves à l'interdiction de l'excision en Afrique. Au premier abord, il apparaît que le sens de l'excision est assez différent d'un espace culturel à l'autre. Deuxièmement, Ngugi montre la mort de Muthoni non pas comme un résultat évident mais comme un effet contraire de l'excision. Enfin, l'analyse soutient que les entraves à la pratique sont favorisées par des facteurs culturels et les incongruités autour des sources culturelles de la lutte contre celle-ci.

Mots clés : contradictions, culture, excision, entraves, mort.

Introduction

This paper investigates upon the different obstacles that have relented the ban of excision since the 1960s, basing on N’gugi wa Thiong’o’s *The River Between*. Previous investigations on the theme show that most African writers who published articles or essays on that theme have mitigated positions regarding the ban of female circumcision. In addition, African novelists including Nun Marie-André (*Femmes d’Afrique noire*, 1939), Amadou Hampaté Bâ, Flora Nwapa (*Efuru*, 1966), Alice Walker (*Possessing the Secret of Joy*, 1993) who write against female circumcision demonstrate how this practice had been criticized and fought across decades.

In “L’engagement littéraire féministe contre l’excision en Afrique: le cas de *Le couteau brulant* d’Hamitraoré, in *Journal of the African Literature Association*” (2017), Fatou Cissé depicts the cruelty of female circumcision still rampant in Africa. Oppositely, in “Circumcision in Boys and girls: Why the double Standard?”, an article written by Mihail E. (2011: 2), he raises this interrogation as a claim for equality between boys and girls about circumcision, “why can a Jewish woman speak openly to defend male circumcision and not a Somali man not defend female circumcision?”. Based on the observation that girl circumcision is shown as an illegal practice whereas boy circumcision is not perceived as such in most countries of the world, he advocates that both must undergo the same law. In the same vein, Ngugi wa Thiong’o presents the story of Muthoni’s circumcision with blend of textual and factual contradictions that plunder the reader into a doubt.

Facing such a literary atmosphere of ideological and factual contradictions in the story, my concern is to know to what extent the contradictions can undermine the fight against girl circumcision? This major question raises series of interrogations which will be successively explored through the dissertation: first, how is circumcision perceived by the different communities depending on their cultural belonging? Then, to what extent can Muthoni’s death constitute an obstacle to the interdiction of female circumcision? At last, what can be Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s viewpoint about female circumcision?

Basing then on a methodic investigation, a semiotic reading of the story of Muthoni’s circumcision conducts to the assumption that the fight against girl circumcision is generally relented by the ambiguities around the concept of female circumcision, the understanding of its drawbacks on girls and the complexity of the religious origin (Christian) of the ban. To verify that assumption, the work leans on Algirdas Julien Greimas’s *On Meaning* to analyze the contradictions and transformations of meanings that successively occur in the story of

Muthoni's circumcision while exploring the concepts of knowing and believing, modalization and veridiction. In using this theory, In this theory, the conceptual and factual oppositions in the narrative are the reflection of the author's perplexity and the expression of cultural impediments to girl circumcision. The dissertation is developed in three major axes: "Muthoni's death as contrary effect of circumcision", "Muthoni's death as contrary effect of incompatibility" and "Jesus appearing to Muthoni: Expression of unexpected effect."

1. Contradictory Perceptions of Female Circumcision Based on the Concept of Believing

This part focuses especially on the variation of the understanding or meaning of the notion of circumcision from the traditional Gikuyu view to the modern Christianized people's approach. My readings show that while Muthoni tries to affirm or is certain that female circumcision a necessary practice, the Christians believe that it is a sinful rite that must be excluded. The scrutiny leans on the process of believing and knowing developed by Greimas A. (1987:169; 170) and charted as follows:

$$\frac{\text{To affirm}}{\text{To admit}} \text{ Vs } \frac{\text{To refuse}}{\text{To doubt}} \text{ (Believing) or } \frac{\text{Certitude}}{\text{Probability}} \text{ Vs } \frac{\text{Exclusion}}{\text{Uncertainty}} \text{ (knowing)}$$

Figure 1: Representation of the Process of Believing and Knowing

This schema demonstrates that the process of believing or knowing implies the binary oppositions between "to affirm Vs to refuse" or "certitude Vs exclusion." Building on these, I have noted that the subjects from each side, Gikuyus or Christians, struggle to assert their viewpoint while radically rejecting the other group's opinion. The analysis of that relation thus starts with the traditional view of circumcision.

1.1. Circumcision Seen as an Indispensable Rite in the Traditional Gikuyu View

Basing on the Greimasian premise on knowing and believing, I infer that the affirmation and certitude about the meaning and importance of girl circumcision in traditional African societies imply the denial and exclusion of modern and Christian view. While Kenyatta J. (1962: 153-154) refers to it as *irua* in the real Kikuyu tribe, (female) circumcision is designated in the imaginary Gikuyu tribe portrayed by Ngugi w. (1965), op. cit. p. 11 as "the biggest of all rituals" that determines personality and adulthood, contrarily to a mere surgical operation according to western opinion. It is a set of initiation rites designed to assure teenagers' social, cultural and intellectual training according to Blimi T. (2018: 106).

According to Droz Y. (1999: 154), circumcision confirms the Gikuyu adolescent's status as a person. He therefore posits that the Gikuyus refer to the uncircumcised people as *nyamo* (animal) or *indo* (object); but the initiated person turns from the status of non-person to that of *mundo* or *andò* (person). From Greimas A. (1987: 144), circumcision is seen as an object of value that is "indispensable" to the Gikuyus, otherwise, a "necessity", fictionalized by Ngugi through Waiyaki and Muthoni's insistence to be circumcised in the way of the tribe.

While circumcision would enable the male to hold the title of *Demi na Mathathi* (giant of the forest), able to fulfill deeds in the way of their ancestors, female circumcision aims at allowing the girl to grow into a woman knowing all the mysteries of womanhood and wifehood. For instance, when Waiyaki tells his mother, "I must be born again" (p. 11) Muthoni tells her sister Nyambura, "I want to be a woman. I want to be a real girl, a real woman, knowing all the ways of the hills and ridges" (*Id.*: 26). This statement justifies Thoraval J. and Milley Y. (1980: 118) who present circumcision as the expression of the readiness of the young Kikuyu lady to any responsibilities of women. Moreover, circumcision appears as a sign of maturity, femininity, and above all, loyalty to the tribe. But, this affirmation by Muthoni implies her refusal to obey her father who is drastically opposed to girl circumcision in accordance with his Christian faith. In addition, it is viewed by the traditional Gikuyu as a means of togetherness and unity of the tribe's people. Ngugi wa Thiong'o throws lights on this aspect by writing:

Circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept people together, bound the tribe. It was at the core of the social structure, and a something that gave meaning to a man's live.
End the custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe's cohesion and intervention would be no more. (Ngugi w., 1965: 68)

In this extract, Ngugi puts a particular focus on the importance of circumcision in the African society to the extent that the traditional Gikuyus in Kameno and Makuyu are so bound to the practice while scorning the colonial church that tends to forbid it. Actually, in *Facing Mount Kenya*, Jomo K. (1962: 2) insights that the Gikuyu girls and boys who undergo circumcision "act as one body in all tribal matters and have a very strong bond of brotherhood and sisterhood among themselves". More than being a simple rite, circumcision is basically admitted by the Gikuyus as the essence of the tribe's existence, the symbol of the individuals' membership and their tie to the land. Ngugi w. fictionalizes this idea by writing, "Blood trickled freely onto the ground, sinking into the soil. Henceforth a religious bond linked Waiyaki to the earth, as if his blood was an offering" (p. 52). It is thought by the

proponents as a means of unifying the tribe's men, and the visible world with the invisible world, through the ceremonies in Honia River and the initiation scene in the bush. Ngugi does not limit the presentation of female circumcision to the Gikuyus' view only, but he also sheds lights on the colonial Christianity's view of the rite.

1.2. Controversial Perception of Circumcision in Modern Scope

Founding on A. Greimas's analysis of the subject of competence and object of value relation developed in *On Meaning*, I infer that there is an antipathic relationship between the followers of the Christian doctrine embodied in Joshua and Reverend Livingstone and circumcision. In fact, they consider (female) circumcision as an offense against the individual himself as well as the colonial system and the catholic faith. First of all, from an Afrocentric stand, Livingston and Joshua work as the bearers of the colonial system --- a black man as a follower of the white missionary --- who reduce female circumcision to a simple mutilation of the female body while the traditional Gikuyu consider it as an overlapping concept which comprises training, socialization and maturing. From this standpoint, that far existing rite is presented as something uneven, malicious and barbarous, as it is affirmed by Reverend Livingstone, "and then this circumcision --- it was barbarous." Ngugi w. (1965), op. cit. p. 56. Even if that opinion can be seen as an external and doctrinal view, it is somehow evidenced by Muthoni's death after circumcision.

Joshua and Reverend Livingstone think and openly state that girl circumcision is sinful also and is a practice of darkness; therefore, Muthoni and Nyambura have been taught by their father that they should not even think of it neither practice it. In this same vein, Joshua goes forward to state that those who practice and undergo female circumcision are children of darkness. He consequently comes to repent for having married a circumcised woman as Miriamu. Building on the Greimassian principle about believing, which implies the opposition between "to affirm" and "to refuse", it appears that Livingstone and his followers who believe that "circumcision was wholly evil." Ngugi w. (1956) Op. cit., p. 59, subsequently prevent their church members from being connected with that rite. Given that circumcision is a cultural practice in Africa, their standpoint entails an antipathy against an African cultural practice. For example, Reverend Livingstone who rejects circumcision also qualifies several African rites as practices of blind customs.

In a context of affirmation Vs refusal or certitude Vs exclusion, the colonial church which holds that circumcision is evil also recommended that all the children, male and female, of non-Christian parents and those who are still connected to circumcision are denied

the access to the school unless they renounce it. To sum up, we must note that the variation of the meaning of female circumcision and the radicalization of the viewpoints in the novel constitute one of the problems around the ban of the practice. As a result, there is a drastic opposition of opinion and a fringe between the adepts of the keepers of the Gikuyu tradition and the guardians of the new faith. In this atmosphere of contradiction and opposition of opinions, Muthoni, who is a Gikuyu girl born into a Christian family, decides to be circumcised. But, this attempt unfortunately leads to the death of this young woman who believed in her commitment. In the following articulation, we therefore analyze the contradictions linked to this death.

2. Contradictions about Muthoni's Death: Analyzing State Change and Incompatibility

In this second part of the work, my scrutiny relies on Greimas A.'s approach to changes in the state of Muthoni. Herein, I am focusing on the combination of the modalization of being (1987: 140) and the exploration of anger, *Ibid.*, p. 148-163, to accurately appraise the different changes that occur in Muthoni's state after her circumcision. I will deal consecutively with Muthoni's death as an expression of the incompatibility between tradition and Christianity after having developed her death as the modalization of the passionate subject.

2.1. Muthoni's Death: State Change as Modalization of the Passionate Subject

My point in this section is to analyze the change in Muthoni's state from life to death as the effect of her circumcision. Muthoni is presented as a subject strongly wanting something, a change in her life. I am particularly interested in showing her death as a contrary outcome of her passional action. However, Greimas A. (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 149 states that, "the original state from which the *passional story* of anger seems to unfold is not neutral; it is the strongly modalized subject". In this context, this modalized subject is embodied in Muthoni who, frustrated by her father's opposition to girl circumcision while almost all the females of the tribe are circumcised, including her mother, decides to challenge both Christianity and her father.

The author highlights the character's anguish for circumcision and even her anger against Joshua by putting forwards that "Nyambura became alarmed at the passion in Muthoni." Ngugi w. (1956), *op. cit.* p. 26. The state of anger so conducts to a kind of cultural martyrdom also designated by Greimas as a "passional loss," Greimas A., *Ibid.*, p. 163, that is

death resulted from her deviant decision. This occurrence is the opposite of the lady's ambition to become a true Gikuyu woman knowing all the ways of her tribe in spite of her engagement in Christianity. The author seems to justify that her death as an isolate occurrence since she was not the only female candidate, and the elders like Chege express their satisfaction beyond the inconvenience.

Contrarily to Waiyaki and the other candidates whose initiation allows them to effectively integrate the community, Muthoni encounters death instead of life. Her death so appears as the negation of the meaning of the rite. I may summarize this contrary effect of circumcision through the following square basing by Greimas A., *Ibid.*, p. p. 49; (1966: 139; 140) as follows:

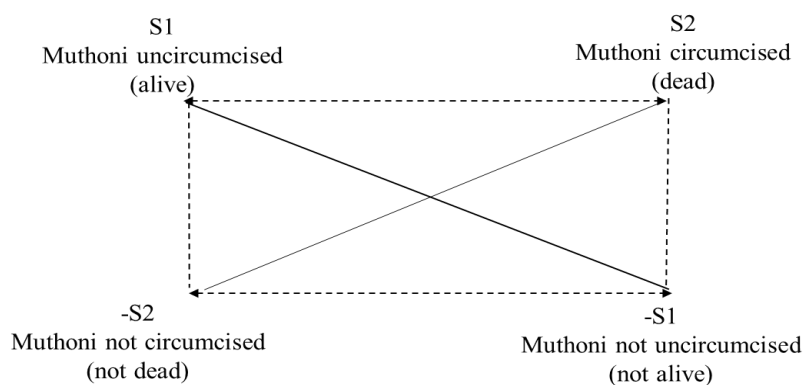


Figure 1: The Semiotic Square of the Contrary Effect of Circumcision

In the chart, there is a contradiction between S1 and S2, and -S1 and -S2. For instance, it seems that girls' circumcision means life in the Gikuyu cultural context. And subsequently a lady who is not circumcised is no longer culturally alive; she must be useless and even banned from the tribe. Actually, the relations between S1 and -S2, S2 and -S1, and the link between S1 and -S1, and S2 and -S2 show that Muthoni's state before circumcision is diametrically opposed to her state consecutive to the rite.

The transformation of Muthoni's state from life to death is somehow justified or favoured by the sequences of contradictions surrounding her decision to be circumcised. On the one hand there is a consecutive shift from tradition to Christianity and from Christianity to tradition in her life. On the other hand, her decision is contested by her sister Nyambura, amazing to the eyes of Kameno people and rebellious towards her father and her religion. It is such a complex of "wanting-to-be" circumcised, "not-wanting-to-be" unlike the other girls of the tribe, that impulses her decision "having-to-be" circumcised Vs "not-having-to-[obey]"

the religious laws that the fundamental goal of Muthoni's expectation is visibly biased. This situation makes infer that there is a kind of incompatibility between (African) tradition and Christianity, to the extent that the acceptance and adoption of the one entails the denial of the other.

2.2. Muthoni's Death as an Expression of Incompatibility between Tradition and Christianity

Ngugi wa Thiong'o presents circumcision as a cultural prescription in the Gikuyu tribe, while female circumcision is conversely forbidden by Christianity. However, the Gikuyus from Kameno accept Christian girls such as Muthoni who desires to undergo the rite. In this context, I think that the author focuses on the optionality of life to the extent that God declares, "... I have set before you life and death, blessing and curses. Now, choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30: 19). Subsequently, Muthoni feels free to decide whether to abide by the Christian order or by the cultural prescription. I ascribe this sequence to a binary opposition of the type prescription Vs interdiction represented in the following chart of the modalizations of the subject and object; Greimas A. (1987: 129-130):

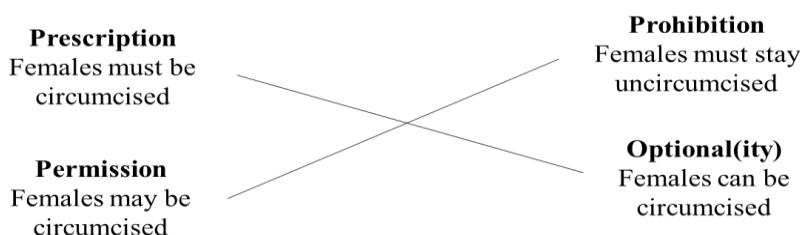


Figure 3: Scheme of the Disjunction of Gikuyu and Christianity Views of Female Circumcision

In the above actancial model, it is observed that there is an important gap between African tradition and Christianity in the context of girl circumcision. In the book I have remarked that while the Gikuyus ordain female circumcision and allow Christian girls to undergo it, the Christian community prohibits the rite and deny the access to the mission place to the circumcised children. In these circumstances, Muthoni's ambition to combine Christianity with tradition would naturally result in cultural shocks to the extent that she tells her sister Nyambura, "No one will understand. I say I am a Christian and my father and mother have followed the new faith. I have not run away from that. But I also want to be initiated into the ways of the tribe. How can I possibly remain as I am now?" Ngugi w. (1965: 43). I may thus infer that even if Muthoni's logic seems ambiguous and ascribed to

syncretism or betrayal, it is a step towards transculturality and religious tolerance also embraced by her mate Waiyaki. The attempt proves vicious to the extent that tradition and Christianity are sources of the antagonism of Kameno and Makuyu which are portrayed by the author as sleeping lions. I have tried to schematize the interactions basing on Greimas A.'s (1987: 133) concept of incompatibilities.

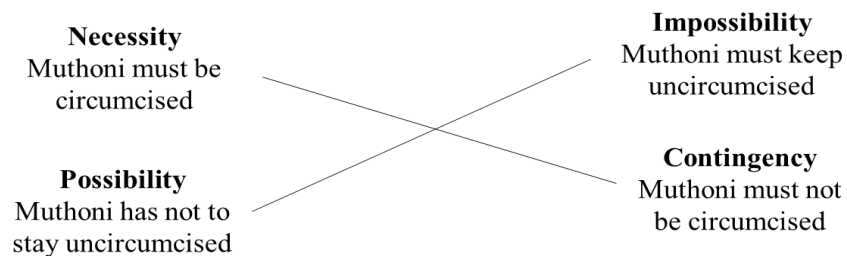


Figure 4: Incompatibility of Tradition and Christianity

Given that on each side people fight to preserve their values, Muthoni has to face at the same time the skepticism of her tribesmen, the vulnerability of her body submitted to Christianity and tradition, and to the adaptability of the natural medicines within a body nurtured by modernity. As a result, she dies contrarily to Waiyaki who has been able to resist to the operation. The fact that Muthoni is the only candidate who succumbed to the operation justifies the incompatibility between Christianity and tradition. Despite all, Muthoni remains bound as well to Christianity as to tradition; for instance, she says, “I am still a Christian, see, a Christian in the tribe. Look. I am a woman and will grow big and healthy in the tribe.” Ngugi w., op. cit., p. 53. Her aftermath death, which contradicts this apparent expectation, is subjected to speculations and controversies.

For Chege the death of Muthoni is a double punishment from *Murungu* to the followers of the new faith as well as the tribe itself. The old man thinks that “it was a warning to all, to stick to the ways of the ridges, to the ancient wisdom of the land, to its ritual and song”, *Ibidem*, p. 54. Oppositely, Joshua is convinced that the death of his daughter is a punishment from God since for him, Muthoni had disobeyed him and had rebelled against God. He therefore argues that her death should “be a warning to those who rebelled against their parents and the laws of God” (*Idem*). The author wants to show, through the death of Muthoni the impossibility to blend Christianity and tradition, or even the impossibility to reconcile Kameno and Makuyu, two antagonizing ridges. Furthermore, Jesus appearing to the lady raises controversial interpretations that need to be explored to clearly identify the motivations of the ban of that practice.

3. Controversies about the Ban of Female Circumcision

In this section, I rely on the concept of modalities, Greimas A. (1987: 121), *op. cit.*, p. 121, which implies the competence and performance of different subjects involved in the story, in order to thoroughly grasp the deep causes that undermine the fight against female circumcision in the novel under consideration. Accordingly, Umberto E. (1989: 153) stipulates that “the work thus proposes itself as an open structure that reproduces the very ambiguity of our being-in-the-world, (...), a knot of complementary possibilities”¹. In this section, these possibilities may consist of the expression of the unexpected effect produced by Jesus’s appearance to Muthoni and the ambiguity about Ngugi’s view of female circumcision.

3.1. Jesus Appearing to Muthoni: Discussing the Unexpected Effect

I designate Jesus’s appearing as unexpected effect of Muthoni’s action because she no longer deserves to meet Jesus since she is believed to have disobeyed her father and rebelled against God. However, the author sheds lights on that aspect by writing, “Waiyaki, she turned to him, tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman, beautiful in the tribe.” Ngugi w. (1956), *op. cit.*, p. 53. In that pursuit of cultural integrity, Muthoni’s death is presented from the traditional stand as an unexpected event. Her death is naturally perceived at the first sight as the reward of her disobedience and rebellion against her father and God (Exodus 20:12; Romans 10: 3). But, against all odds, she sees Jesus at death instead of being punished. I have decided to analyze the situation at light of the Greimassian theory of the epistemic modalities which stipulates that “believing-to-be is a synonym (i.e. the syntactic definition) of the notion of certainty. It constitutes the positive term of the epistemic modal category and can be mapped onto the semiotic square,” Greimas A., (1987), p. 101:

¹ «l’œuvre se propose ainsi comme une structure ouverte qui reproduit l’ambiguïté même de notre être-dans-le-monde, tel que décrit par la science, la philosophie, la psychologie, la sociologie – tout comme notre relation avec l’automobile est une tension dialectique entre possession et aliénation, un nœud de possibilités complémentaires»

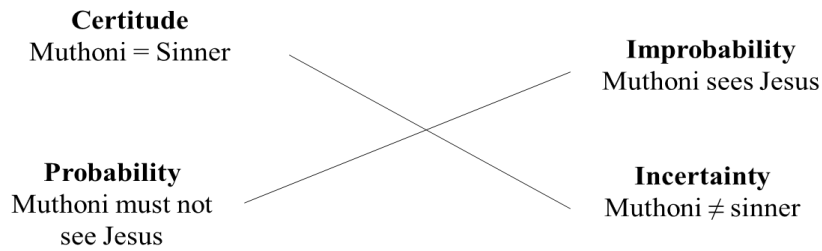


Figure 5: Semiotic representation of the unexpected outcome of Muthoni’s Death

In this diagram I have displayed four levels of modalization of Muthoni’s status in connection with her relation to Christianity. At the first sight, she is thought to be a sinner for having disobeyed her father and transgressed God’s law. Nonetheless, as a backslidden Christian, the author uses her supposed encounter with Jesus to question the biblical origin of female circumcision. Actually, there is no biblical text that clearly forbids or mentions it as properly as male circumcision is recommended to the Jews (Genesis 17: 9-24). Even in the new alliance, circumcision or uncircumcision do no longer matter, but only faith in Jesus (1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; 6:15). Consequently, Ngugi sees Muthoni’s death not as a spiritual loss, but as a social loss; because it has split Joshua’s family, widen the gap between Kamenno and Makuyu and caused cultural clash. All these details would contribute to unmask Ngugi’s ideology about female circumcision.

3.2. The River Between: Anti-Excision Commitment or Afrocentric Struggle

This subsection leans on Greimas A.’s (1987: 125) veridictory modalities to explore the move from the explicit to the implicit, otherwise from the apparent meaning to the deep meaning of the story. It also resorts to a conversion, which “designates the entire set of procedures that account for the passage (of the transcription) of a semiotic unit situated at the deep level to a unit belonging to the surface structure,” *Ibid.*, p. 141. I have tried to schematize this veridiction as follows:

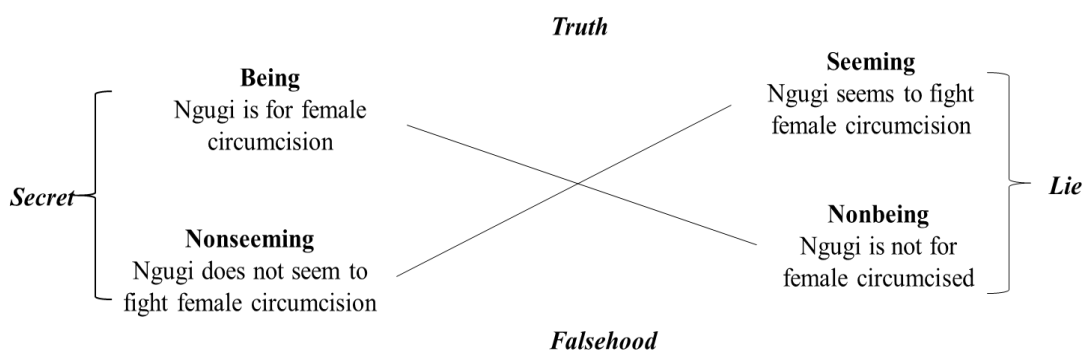


Figure 6: Representation of the Veridiction of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Ideology about Female Circumcision

On this chart insinuates that the author's ideology about female circumcision can be seized through the deduction either from the positive truth or the negative truth. It comes out that on the one hand, Ngugi appears as a defender or at least a justifier of the rite, because he provides Muthoni and Kameno people with enough competence to convince the reader about the necessity of the rite. On the other hand, he seems to demonstrate through Muthoni's suffering and death, that the operation can also result in a tragedy. What is true is that both sides are verifiable straight in the story. However, Ngugi's true perception of the issue remains a secret that must be uncovered, while the opposite premise consists of false information.

From the previous lines, I infer the apparent anti-clitoridectomist aspect of Ngugi's story has been nourished by Muthoni's suffering and death. according to Kadiatu K. (1998: 111), excision is a true physiological and social threat against females, including HIV/AIDS spread, subordination and oppression. Though Waiyaki recognizes these dangers, he thinks that "Girls had been initiated before. But even the one or two who died never aroused such ill-will between the people," Ngugi w. (1965), op. cit. p. 59. On the other side, Reverend Livingstone argues that "circumcision had to be rooted out ...," Ngugi w., *Ibid.*, p. 56. Indeed, unlike the Jews for whom circumcision was a means of maintaining their alliance with God, the Gikuyus regard it as the consolidation of their tie to their land and their culture.

I think that the story of Muthoni's circumcision is, beyond a mere description of cultural clash, a significant contribution to the preservation and improvement of African culture faced with the challenges of (inter)cultural (ex)changes. In this vein, he despises the political involvement of the colonial churches, such as the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) and other missionary churches, that engaged in anti-*irua* actions by the 30s, Droz Y. (1999: 149). This struggle may also be inspired from Jomo K. (1962: 153-154) who deplors the involvement of some converted Gikuyus who work as "agents of the European domination," Blimi T. (2020: 367), embodied in Joshua, while Livingstone represents the colonizer. Moreover, the reconversion of the Gikuyu Christians conveys the rules of gravity, according to which every body tends to naturally return to its origin. This anguish to keep in touch with the African culture is expressed as much by words as by the voice like Waiyaki's students' who sing in these terms:

... the children sang on, voicing the cry of many, speaking aloud the silent cry of generations everywhere, generations that feel their end is near unless there are changes. Were they mourning for a dead glory? Were they sorrowing over a tribe's destruction or were they hailing the changes that had yet to come? Sorrow or yearning was in their eyes. And they could see this reflected in the glittering eyes of the savior. (Ngugi w., 1965: 94)

This song expresses people's fear of cultural loss, their fear of being dispossessed of their social values, and beyond the call for the Gikuyus' unity --- males and females regardless of the internal divisions --- to efficaciously resist the threat against their customs. In this same scope, Waiyaki who is appointed as the local colonial school leader envisions getting rid of the settlers and the missionaries in order to perpetuate their traditional practices and activities. This combination of tradition and modernity attempted by Muthoni, Waiyaki who are joined later by Nyambura expresses Ngugi predisposition to prepare his people to the ideals of transculturality or the notion of cultural and religious tolerance in order to effectively perpetuate the promotion of African cultural value in the realm of modernity and beyond, globalization.

Conclusion

This work has allowed us learning that analyzing the impediments to the ban of female circumcision supposes the understanding of the oppositions between the different subjects depending on their relative cultural belongings. Provided that Ngugi wa Thiong'o's narrative on female circumcision in *The River Between* involves ideological and factual contradictions, I have relied on Greimas A.'s concepts of believing, modalization and veridiction to uncover the underside of the Ngugian narrative on female circumcision in fictional community ever characterized by perpetual clashes between tradition and Christianity, Makuyu and Kameno.

The investigations allow concluding that the impediments to the prohibition of female circumcision include three major directions including the controversial perceptions of female circumcision, contradictions about Muthoni's death and the author's dualist narrative about the sources of the ban of the practice. First of all, I have identified diversified perceptions of the concept of circumcision depending on the convictions and the categorical position of the characters of the two sides. You can see that it is a matter of choice. Provided that one cannot choose something and its opposite at the same time, the proponents of a specific view of female circumcision tend to reject systematically the other side.

It comes that the contradictions around Muthoni's death raise suspicions, misleading assertions, cultural and religious intolerance that deepen the cleavage between Makuyu and Kameno. I think that these oppositions would constitute serious problems that can prevent or

relent Livingstone's project of putting an end to the practice. On top of that, the concession between African culture and the European based-religious view of female circumcision advocate by Ngugi wa Thiong'o through the Muthoni's quest for soft religious fanaticism and her aspiration for intercultural education also adopted later by Waiyaki and Nyambura.

As a conclusion, I can state that the story of Muthoni's circumcision conveys the author's dilemma about the advent of multiculturalism and the challenge of African social, cultural and political integrity facing the influence of foreign cultures. Beyond, Ngugi conscious of the ever existing influence of new ways of seeing and believing on the traditionally accepted customs seems to advocate cultural inclusion and the demarcation of the Christian prescription from social shaped principle assimilated to religious dogmas in order to effectively bring change to far existing traditional practices in the image of Reverend Livingston who adopts soft methods.

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