



Unlocking the land lock for women: A study of Lola's *The Lock on My Lips* (2014)



Review article



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Abstract

This article analyses land ownership and conflict in Pepertua Nkamayang Lola's *The Lock on My Lips*. It focuses on degendering stereotypes with regard to land ownership. The argument is that though the conservative traditional African society did not accommodate the idea of women owning land, the progressive and evolutionary African society warrants that with the changing roles of women, women should own and use the land for the growth and development of women in particular and society at large. Thus, for women to be able to engage in transformative processes that assure African futures with less gender inequalities and conflict, Lola in the play encourages equity in land ownership where women can feel comfortable to own and use land. In achieving this, female bonding will definitely play a significant role. Also, rather than pitting men against women in such conflict resolution endeavours, Lola advocates for dialogue between the two parties because there is a need to engage men since they are most of the time the perpetrators of actions against women. The postcolonial feminist theory is used for analysis. The paper concludes that women need to be recognised, acknowledged, and encouraged to own land which is a metaphor for property, and to use such land to positively transform society, especially without violence as violence only begets violence and the vicious cycle continues, leading to unstable societies.

Keywords: assertiveness, bonding, deconstruction, dialogue, patriarchy, tradition



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Public Interest Statement

This paper focuses on degendering stereotypes with regard to land conflicts in Pepertua N. Lola's *The Lock on My Lips*. The paper contributes to the global struggle for women to access land in a generally male-centred society. Though often denied, women's access to land is very important as it not only empowers them but contributes to stable societies. It also encourages equity in this area and women can feel more comfortable and able to use such land to improve themselves, their families and societies at large economically and socially. *The Lock on My Lips* is an accurate play that addresses conflicts on land issues and advocates for dialogue between men and women to peacefully resolve such conflicts rather than pitting women against men or employing Western radical feminist models which do not take African customs and traditions into consideration. Though a powerful play that addresses a major concern in African literature, it has received very little critical attention as I could only find postscripts and short reviews about it and thus, an in-depth study of the text in the form of an article was thought to be a worthy venture.

Introduction

Conservatism, as opposed to progressivity, seems to be a bone of contention in African feminist literature. While some feminists argue that it is essential to go back to the way life that was led in the past in order not to be consumed by foreign ideas and ideologies on women's emancipation, others argue that since it is vital to maintain the African culture in the quest for emancipation, there should be the understanding that society is evolving. Africa is part of that evolutionary process. Though there are cultures, traditions, and beliefs that make one unique, one must move with the changing times and adapt to it in an evolving global world. In the words of Achebe (1988, p. 67), "the world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place."

Gender inequalities exist in nearly all societies and have led to conflicts in various facets of life. However, our interest in this paper is not only in analyzing such conflicts in terms of land ownership and their causes but indicating the different ways in which such conflicts can be resolved for a sane society to come into being where both sexes will live in harmony. Women are generally blamed for making choices that challenge tradition, and writers seem to focus on this trend without considering the circumstances and contexts in which these women act. However, Laretta Ngcobo in "African Motherhood: Myth and Reality" posits that:

If writers took time to explore the circumstances, the pressures and the deprivations that their characters suffer, this would soften the social conscience and society's scales of justice would shift towards the correct balance. Punitive literature perpetuates the oppression of women; it denies

them justice. (p. 540)

Thus, if writers are to be meaningful in society, they must not victimize and marginalize women and portray them as stereotypes, but they must see how women are acting in context.

The central area of conflict in Perpetua Lola's *The Lock on My Lips* is land ownership, which is a significant preoccupation in many African societies. It is generally believed that land ownership is reserved for men. I agree with Fokou Leonard in "Metaphors of Hybridity in Nkamanyang Lola's *The Lock on My Lips*" who mentions that "land ownership by women is, the main bone of contention in the play; going against the tradition of the land" (n.p.) not because Mrs Ghamogha, the lead character, hates tradition but in the words of Leonard, "she just wants it to be readapted, taking women's rights into consideration as in other cultures" (n.p.). This paper focuses on traditional adaptability and women's land ownership rights, as observed in *The Lock on My Lips*.

Theoretical Orientation

The primary theoretical orientation is Postcolonial Feminism with focus on Molaria Ogundipe Leslie, Loretta Ngcobo, Buchi Emecheta, to name these. With the many views and contradictions about Feminism, Ogundipe-Leslie is one of those who believe there is need for Feminism in Africa. She states:

...currently, in Nigeria, right wing women, most men and apolitical women, like to quip that African women do not need liberation or Feminism because they have never been in bondage. Progressive, political and left wing women, however, are saying that African women suffer subordination. That is the official position of Women in Nigeria (WIN), the organization with which I was involved in the founding. (p. 542)

It is absurd to believe that women have no issues to be redressed or looked into. Instead of shying away from the name 'feminism' as her other colleagues have done for fear of being considered as absurdists in their societies wanting to create disorder, she sees that they are all addressing issues related to women and they can be considered feminists since Feminism takes its etymological roots from the Latin Femina which insinuates "an ideology of woman; anybody of social philosophy about women" (p. 547). Examples of the writers she mentions include Buchi Emecheta who says she is not a feminist without advancing reasons for such a stance, Flora Nwapa who says she is not a feminist but rather a womanist and Bessie Head who sees Feminism not to be relevant in creativity and intellectualism which to Ogundipe-Leslie is a fallacy. Ogundipe-Leslie (2007, pp. 547-548) instead sees this as even a lesser issue

than those who believe that Feminism is unnecessary. She asks a series of rhetorical questions to authenticate her claim that Feminism is of relevance in an African context:

Are the opponents of Feminism willing to argue that indigenous African societies did not have avenues and strategies for correcting gender imbalance and injustice?... Are they saying that African women cannot see their situations and demand change without guidance from white women?

Therefore, instead of arguing that Feminism is foreign to Africa, one can instead look at the kinds of Feminisms in Africa. Thus, she argues that women have always had issues to be acknowledged. The progressive nature of society warrants that different strategies be employed because Fundamentalism is a world-wide movement and "affects attitudes towards women and the struggle for the progressive conditions of women" (p. 542).

There continues to be the phobia of being tagged as a feminist in our society. This researcher recently followed a debate by two of our postgraduate students, a male and female who reacted to a WhatsApp forum post. In brief, the post denounced girls who are daughters at home but play wifely duties in boys' rooms on university campuses. The post was biased because it demonized the girl and said nothing about the boy, insinuating that the boy was an angel in all these. When this female student raised the issue about the biased nature of the post, she was immediately derogatorily tagged as "feminist" by her male classmate, and other men jumped in to support him. However, interestingly, the girls on the forum were mute. I guess it is because they did not want to be tagged feminists. That is the struggle that most women are going through to expose their predicament, one of which is polygamy as a preferred form of marriage.

Going back to Ogundipe-Leslie, among the many definitions of what she says Feminism in an African context, it is not oppositional to men, neither is it a patriotism of Western women's rhetoric nor opposed to the African culture. She sees culture as evolving dynamically and therefore, not static. It should thus, not be immobilized in time to the advantage of men as most men in Africa will want. Consequently, the evolution of culture particularly warrants that the relationships between men and women be adapted to the prevailing circumstances to resolve gender inequalities and conflicts. These ideas and many more will be considered in the analysis of Lola's play in this paper to address among other issues, inequalities and conflicts in land ownership and the education of the girl child, especially in the hard sciences.

Femininity and Land Ownership: A Challenge to Patriarchy

Land ownership seems, generally, to be an exclusively male prerogative. This has not always been the case because practically in some African communities, the matriarchal system tilted

towards collective land ownership. Nevertheless, with society's evolution, some moving from matriarchal to patriarchal societies, land ownership became a private affair. Thus as Lauretta Ngcobo (2007) notes, "historically, we note that the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy was fraught with social struggles, with some Africans supporting private ownership of land under patriarchy and others supporting matriarchy and its communal ownership of land." Then, the shift towards patriarchy was compounded with the coming of the colonizers who supported private ownership of land which was going to be in their favour. Ngcobo states that "it was in the interest of the colonialists to support the patriarchal system which enabled them to acquire private ownership of land" (p. 535). Thus, colonialism reinforced patriarchy in Africa because of its exploitative tendencies, and this system has remained engraved in the African consciousness and what they generally refer to as tradition. The imbalance in land ownership is a cause for concern as it affects women in various ways. For instance, in a Food and Agricultural Organisation document: "Why is Gender an Issue with Access to Land" it is stated that:

In many countries, there is still a lack of adequate provisions for women to hold their husbands or male relatives' land rights independently. Statutory law often does not provide for women's independent rights, and when such legislation does exist, mechanisms to enforce it are often absent. In traditional or "customary" societies, women's direct access to land through purchase or inheritance is often limited, yet they may have greater management and use rights than men. (p. 535).

Thus, for a woman to own land was unheard of and quite unthinkable. The "thingification" of the woman contributed and still contributes to this kind of thought. How can a thing own a thing? A man was supposed to own everything, including the woman. The land is a symbol of authority, and authority is the man. In a preview in African Books Collective, the author herself states that "land and genre are gender markers. The land is definable through power and authority, constitutes the material with which masculinities are constructed, and this becomes a space where women are excluded" (n.p.). Thus, because women's ownership of property in general and land in particular, extends their capabilities, expands their negotiating power, and enhances their ability to address the vulnerability, women are often denied this right in patriarchal societies. Therefore, women in such societies do not have legitimate land claims and the benefits and products produced on that land. Therefore, men consider property and especially landed property as a male prerogative which they use to render women powerless, vulnerable, and silent in their different communities' affairs. Quoting Karol Boudreaux, in a World Bank Document entitled: "Women in Half the World Still Denied Land, Property Rights Despite Laws," it is said that:

For men and women alike, the land is the foundation for security, shelter, and livelihood, supports women's dignity and creates pathways to empowerment and economic opportunity... For women, the land truly is a gateway right – without it, efforts to improve all women's fundamental rights and well-being will continue to be hampered. (ibid)

Therefore, if women continue to be denied access to land, the well-being and development of women and society as a whole will be hampered.

It is important to note that society has evolved and undergone substantial changes with implications for land ownership. Industrialization and globalization, for instance, are increasingly forcing families to engage in more income-generating activities than on subsistence practices. Thus for women to economically empower themselves in such a society, they need access to land to form women collectives to learn about extensive agricultural practices and profit-generating skills to cope with the financially challenging societies. Thus, access to land will make women financially viable and psychologically balanced as they can partake in their families' financial obligations, thus assisting their families and their families in particular and society in general. It is probably in this light that, in a Food and Agricultural Organisation document: "Why is Gender an Issue with Access to Land" it is indicated that:

Gender differences in land tenure should be recognized if land objectives, such as increasing land productivity, providing affordable housing, or promoting sustainable resource management, are to be met. There is a need for land tenure policy frameworks that explicitly address gender-inclusive access to land.

Despite the views on the need for the non-discrimination in land access, some communities still view women's access to land pejoratively and at worse a taboo. As Lilian Lem Atanga sees it in a review of the play, *Lola*, using principally land ownership succeeds "in capturing the battles of many African women with characters such as the women she presents in the play"

Lola's actions in *The Lock on My Lips* represents this type of community where a 'real' man should own land, and a landless man is synonymous to being a woman. The implication here is that a woman should not own land if not, she becomes a man. This is the centre of conflict in Lola's *The Lock on My Lips*. She Ghamogha is seen as restless because he does not own a piece of land to refer to it as his. That is why in discussion with his sons about his past and how he sold his only piece of land to secure his freedom, he states with disappointment that: "staying in *Kibaaka* and without land constantly reminded me that I was a husband and a father but not a man...I am a husband and father but not a man. I am everything a man is

not" (pp. 3-5) meaning that a man meant that you owned land. However, this text's action and conflict do not just develop because he does not have land but because he discovers that his wife has purchased land in her name and cannot bring himself to such realizations. Shey Ghomogha tells his sons: "I discovered a land title in your mother's name" (p. 5). Curiously, thinking that the man will be happy because he just indicated to his sons that the family needs land as Fomu says: "You just said we need land " (p. 5), but the father's response is indicative of the fact that it is close to an abomination for a woman to own land and therefore, the land must be in his name:

Shey Ghamoga: Not when it bears a woman's name.

Bame: Is there any law that says a woman cannot own land?

Shey Ghamogha: *Mwerong* forbids a woman to have land in *Kibaaka*. (*Fomu nods*)

Bame: Why?

Shey Ghamogha: We cannot question tradition. Besides, if we allow a woman to own land, what happens to the land when she gets married? The answer is obvious. She drags along her family heritage to another family, and the stranger's authority over that land will not be disputed. Bame, Fomu. What tradition dreads has happened under my roof. What will I tell the Elders? What will I tell Nwerong? (p. 6)

The above conversation points to the fact that tradition is used to deprive women of owning land. The fact that a woman cannot own land before marriage as she will be taking her family's property to another family, which is the husband, shows how women are marginalized as daughters and as wives in terms of land ownership even with the rapid societal changes. Though the society is evolving, men use tradition as a ruse to keep power and marginalize women. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation document, "Why is Gender an Issue in Access to Land," it is observed that: "traditional societies and religious based communities are not immune to the influence of social changes around them. Education of women and greater opportunities for employment and self-sufficiency affect many traditional communities" (Par 21). However, it is realized that in the fictional community of Kibaaka as seen in the text, the people claim ignorance about society's changes.

The belief in the permanent nature of man as a symbol of power and the ephemeral nature of woman as a societal construct is further portrayed by Shey Ghomogha when he says: "The head of the family owns the land. Land belongs to the man. Crops belong to the woman. (*Fomu nods*). Bame, the land is power. If you give land to a woman, you authorize her to share in the power" (6). If the land is a symbol of manhood and power, then the crops are symbolic

of a powerless, ephemeral woman, can be changed, off-rooted and replanted at any time at the discretion of the landowner – the man.

When we hear ability announcing an abomination thus: "a woman has bought land in her name" (p. 13) to the total surprise, confusion and embarrassment of the Elders, he and the Elders are insinuating that a woman should not buy land and if she were to buy land, no one should sell it to her, and if she must buy, it should be in a man's name. Different speakers re-echo the reference to Shey Ghamogha's wife buying land and the fact that it is an abomination. For instance, Nyuydze, one of the elders, says: "is it true that the wife of Shu-shey has bought land in her name? (p. 16)" Ability questions: "who sold the land to a woman?" (p. 16). All these questions testify to the desire for men to keep and wield power.

Instead of finding out why the woman had bought the land, their seeming narrow-mindedness of tradition and the pretentious lack of understanding that the world is evolving, clouds men's views and thinking, leading to a severe conflict. It is a result of the land title that Shey Ghamogha struggles to dispossess the wife of and probably other injustices against women that the women stage a rebellion against the menfolk and the leadership of the land is virtually male, led by Mrs Ghamogha. According to the Elders, the root of the problem can be traced to Weijing, which could mean Beijing, the famous Beijing Conference of 1995.

Taa Gheh: Command has put teeth into the mouth of fowls.

Shey Ghamogha: What?

Ability: Weijing has clad women with strange garments.

Shey Ghamoga: And?

Ability: The reputation of the clan is in tatters.

Taa Gheh: Shey, the taproots of Weijing are deeply planted in Kibaaka. (p. 10).

Putting teeth in somebody's mouth is a local expression that has to do with empowering someone. Thus, men see that women have been empowered. The cladding of women in strange robes simply means strange ideas as per the Kibaaka community where a woman can feel liberated to the extent of buying a piece of land. Then the image of the taproots signifies the deep rootedness of the Beijing influence on Kibaaka. Thus, it is interesting that the men know where the women are drawing their inspiration from but claim the women of *Kibaaka* should have remained indifferent to the "the strong wind surging through the land and trudging on seeds" (p. 17) as ability puts it. He mimics some of Mrs Ghamogha's utterances to the women who have taken up the position of a leader to free the women from the pangs of patriarchy: " 'fellow women, I attended a meeting in Weijing and brought good news for you. The light that Command and the headquarters said will shine on women has finally shone. The lid on our lips is unsealed. The rope with which the woman was tethered is untethered"

(p. 18). Tarhnteh seems to confirm this when he says "the women we saw are not the women we know" (p. 18). The women they have always known are the subjugated, docile, marginalized and silenced women. However, Beijing inspiration is undoubtedly overwhelming. So, it is obvious where women's power is coming from. Note that the Beijing Conference was not the first Conference of that magnitude about women's issues and injustices. However, the Fourth Conference marked a turning point for the global agenda for gender equality, especially when it comes to access to land and other natural resources and all forms of discrimination against women. According to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal No 5, there should be the achievement of Gender Equality and the empowerment of women and girls in various domains of life one of which is in the control of natural resources, land inclusive which is stated thus: "undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with the national laws" (FAO of the United Nations, 2018, 1)

Thus, natural resources ought to be redistributed to allow women to use them for their own upliftment and society. However, the Kibaaka society of Lola's text does not see it as such with the excuse that tradition cannot be dismantled. Consequently, the conflict between Shey Ghamogha and his wife is raised from a family affair to a communal affair somehow because tradition is at the verge of being dismantled. As a result, the women's revolution, which is reminiscent of Bole Butake's plays, is evoked. Ability explains that "immediately the women saw us advancing on the palace-like floodwaters, the anger that erupted shot voices five-mile high...Mother of children stood tall like a mountain right in the heart of the Land" (p. 17). The similes: "like flood of waters" and "like a mountain" and "anger that erupted" portrays the firmness of the women to "unlock the lock" on their lips, to have a voice and determine what is right for them.

The women's rebellion indicates that the women are angry with the men and express their anger and disagreement at the palace, which calls the "heart of the Land", a place reserved for the men and the elders. The simple fact that women dare to enter the palace is a strong indication that they need a change and a re-look at the tradition used to marginalize them. No doubt Shey Ghamogha says "the branch has challenged the trunk to a fight" (p. 10) and ability corroborates thus: "the arm of the land has challenged the centre" and Taa Gheh further complements: "rats are dancing in the presence of cats" (p. 11). The metaphors, branch as opposed to a tree, arm as opposed to the centre, and rats instead of a cat are all significant representations of women instead of men, women representing fragility, vulnerability, silence and marginalization. In contrast, men represent strength, agility, and the centre. According to these men, women are supposed to remain where tradition and society have placed them and not venture into male spaces, no doubt they are quite bitter that a woman has purchased land

in her name.

In addition to the Beijing sensitization of the roles and importance of women in society, there is the failure to understand that society is gradually evolving from a highly communal to a capitalistic society and money economy; a society where women's visible contribution as women is much needed for the growth of the family and society. It is imperative now for women not just to stay at home as housewives, but we increasingly see women occupying positions of prominence in leadership and otherwise. An asset such as land that was needed by Mrs Ghamogha, and her group to venture. Moreover, why should they be refused land because they are women? Maybe they should have been given some land just to carry out the project, but in this case, the land can go back to its owner when he deems it necessary since women must not own land. However, since Mrs Ghamogha knows the need to own and exploit such land for the betterment of women in particular and society, she must go-ahead to purchase a piece of land for the project hand.

As seen from the above, the failure to understand society's changing dynamics leads to the conflict in land ownership. While the men think that tradition must remain unchanged concerning land ownership which is generally reserved for men, women see that it is essential to acquire land to contribute positively to the development of themselves and society. The conflict, therefore, arises because of the lack of this understanding between the men and women of Kibaaka.

Bonding for Patriarchal Deconstruction

Having discussed women's silencing in land ownership, it is essential to consider how women's male oppressions are handled by Lola whose strategies are essentially non-violent to family and society. The first consideration here is family bonding. As an African feminist, Mrs Ghamogha believes that family must not be torn apart in the problem resolution. That is why she, instead of imposing, pleads that the methods of doing things be revised. She says: "Our fathers, we went to the palace to plead that society should try to regulate where there are excesses; irrespective of who is promoting the excesses...we only want to build marriages" (p. 131). Even when Regular, who is a prostitute and behaves more like Edna in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, who says marriage is the most painful thing on earth, rejecting marriage and advising the sister, Mrs Ghamogha to do same to save her land title, she tells Regular: "I cannot destroy what I am expected to build...My sister, Marriage is endurance...my marriage must survive" (p. 168), and Regular's response is: "The only husband I know is freedom. Maayuh. Can't you see that marriage takes a woman hostage? Can't you see that you are twice kidnapped? Maayuh! Release yourself from the clutches of the kidnapper called marriage" (p. 169) and the sister answers "Regular; we are a couple. If we do not disagree, we are not humans" (p. 169). We realize that while Regular can be classified under radical Feminism, Mrs

Ghamogha is more of a postcolonial feminist. Even when Shey Ghamogha is to be imprisoned because he has been found guilty of gender discrimination, human rights abuse, violence against women, among other crimes, it is his wife who cries out to the judge for his release for as she says, she would not want to imprison her marriage. Nforbin Gerald Niba in one of the Postscripts of the play posits that Lola's "...major strength lies in the even-handed handling of the central gender conflict between men/women or husband/wife. Mrs Ghamogha must have her civil rights as well as maintain her marriage" (p. 214). Apparently, in the end, Shey Ghamogha will understand that it is the influence of the wife that he was not imprisoned, thus showing how important a woman is and the fact that she denounces patriarchy, but not to the detriment of her marriage. So, Lola uses the land conflict to pit two categories of feminists: Regular on the one hand and Mrs Ghamogha, on the other hand, to denounce the former and valorize the latter which appeals more to the African woman, generally.

Lola also seems to approve that female bonding is necessary to fight those aspects of tradition that impinge on women's liberty and the ways to improve their lives. It was done under the MANDJARA. Mrs Ghamogha, like her women of the group, believes that female bonding can play the trick, and it is for this reason, the group is formed to cater to their well-being. She brings all the women together to the palace to demonstrate against their oppression. The demonstration is reminiscent of that in Bole Butake's *And Palm Wine will Flow* where the women put themselves together and storm the palace to demonstrate their disapproval on patriarchal dominance. As the women say, "collective strength is victory" (p. 107). No doubt their activities are lodged in the MANDJARA Seed Sowing Association, and its objective is to "serve the families, the community, and those with no opinion of their own" (p. 107). So, their projects are intended not only to benefit the women but the entire community and the earlier the society appreciates it this way, the better for it, especially in terms of gender balancing and avoiding conflicts.

The exciting thing about the MANDJARA is that it has the backing of the government too. Mrs Ghamogha says: "We are celebrating like women who have found their voice and freedom in MANDJARA and the law" (p. 109). The law is seen in a decree which reads thus: "There shall be no form of distinction and discrimination against the woman..." (p. 110). Thus, the country-influenced by the Beijing calls is above Kibaaka and Kibaaka has to heed to this. However, if this decree is available and there is nobody to implement this, it remains invisible, and MANDJARA, therefore, steps in to materialize this in favour of the women and society's voiceless.

Dialogue: The Key to Conflict Resolution

The men's conservative nature does not allow them to understand society's progressive nature and accept even non-violent change. It is not surprising that the only person who can opt to

sell a piece of land to Mrs Ghamogha is Hon. S. Wirkitum, who seems to be the only progressive character among his conservative male counterparts. When the men are getting so worked up that a woman bought a piece of land and women are revolting in the palace, and the men are ready for no compromise, it is only Wirkitum who struggles to bring them to reason. He says "I have been listening silently but attentively. Dialogue is necessary when we disagree. We do not solve a problem with a problem. We have not heard from the women" (p. 22). According to the men, this is an extraordinary thing to say. They cannot imagine a woman talking and dialoguing with men. It implies that they are at the same level. No doubt Shey Ghamogha stands and fires back at Wirkitum, "Honourable Shey Wirkitum, if the time to relinquish your grip on the steering wheel of power (pointing his finger to the red feather on Shey Hon Wirkitum's cap) has sounded its departure bells, I am not ready to crash with you (*the elders nod*)" (p. 23). According to these conservative men, he who is at the steering is the one in control, that control and power cannot be shared.

Dialogue is a process where the participants commit to listen, reflect and question with a curious mindset to seek a shared understanding. Dialogue projects are essential instruments of the conflict resolution approach, primarily because the key objectives are the mutual clarification of perceptions and relations and communication improvements. Dialogue is therefore essential in conflict resolution, and if the men of Kibaaka cannot see it this way, they have a long way to go. In this play, Lola seems to propose a non-violent revolution and dialogue to alleviate women's oppressions. For instance, women take time, through Mrs Ghamogha to school the men on women's needs, aspirations and dreams. Thus, women think the dialogue between men and women can play the trick because women have had to talk to women about their plight and marginalization. However, it is high time they involved men in such discussions so that they are educated on what the women are going through, and consequently, they can themselves be agents of change, and there will be peace. Dialogue is essential for peacebuilding in order to have stable societies. Talking about the need for dialogue, Henrik Hammargren in the Foreword to *Dialogue in Peace Building* stipulates that:

dialogue is the key for promoting inclusivity, engaging women, youth, marginalized groups, diaspora and people who are typically not at the centre of negotiations or policymaking. Dialogue can provide means and opportunities for these groups to be heard and their rights, needs and priorities to be taken into account. (p. 6)

It is realized that women's needs and rights in the contemporary Kibaaka society, especially to land, leave much to be desired. Buchi Emecheta (2007, p. 557) argues that "working and achieving to great heights is nothing new to the African woman but there are still many

obstacles in her way" which can be seen in Lola's play in the creation of the MANDJARA and its conflicting agenda with tradition. However, Mrs Ghamogha thinks that dialogue with men should resolve the conflict with the men who seem not to understand them. The men seem to think that women want to take their place in society, but that is not the case because they are just demanding their space. To reveal that Mrs Ghamogha does not want to fight them, to make them understand their plight, we see Act IV Scene 1, where she stoops as tradition requires before addressing the men. She respectfully addresses them all through as "our fathers" "my husbands", and giving all explanations in the hope that they will understand her and the fact that the women are "not opposed to African culture and heritage... but that culture is dynamically evolving and certainly not static... (Ogundipe-Leslie, 2007).

Gruener Sigrid, Sarah Smith and Matilda Hald posit that "dialogue aims to increase mutual understanding both of one's own and others' positions" (p. 10). Nevertheless, it is realized that the men in the play do not seem or want to see from Mrs Ghamogha's perspective despite all her explanations and the explanation of the research activities she carried out to arrive at the conclusions which she did. Henning Melber, quoting Dag Hammarskjold in "Dag Hammarskjold on Dialogue" points out that "you can only hope to find a lasting solution to a conflict if you have learned to see the other objectively, but at the same time, to experience his difficulties subjectively" (p. 18). Nevertheless, the men do not want to be objective as they are blindly focusing only on tradition.

Despite her efforts to bring the men to an understanding to no avail, Mrs Ghamogha tells them: "Our fathers; the future of Kibaaka depends on the different choices we make today. I am very optimistic that the next generation will be thankful to MANDJARA for being the voice of those whose minds and lips have been chained for so long" (p. 155). It is based on the men's refusal to be objective that Mrs Ghamogha is instead charged for insulting the ways of the land, acting contrary to tradition in terms of land ownership and creating associations that help in the destruction of homes and break up of families. The drastic sanctions levied on her can only make her seek help somewhere else because dialogue has failed. When justice, in the end, shifts towards Mrs Ghamogha in the modern court where she has taken her case to, it is indicative that society has evolved, contexts have changed, and adaptations must be made. As the plaintiff puts it, Shey Ghamogha and those of his camp are "applying Kibaaka indigenous laws in a context where that does not apply" (p. 195). The Presiding Magistrate on his part says "...we live in an evolving society and should be receptive to changes" (p. 209). It is what the men of Kibaaka society oppose.

Mrs Ghamogha has been shown as an enlightened, dynamic and outgoing woman who will succumb neither to the non-adaptability of the Kibaaka tradition with societal evolution nor with radical Western implantation Feminism models on the African women and society which is most of the time ignorant of other cultures. She fights for women's empowerment

and emancipation as an African woman for as John Nkemngong Nkengasong in praise of Lola and play strongly posits in the play's "Foreword" that:

African Feminism seeks to institute women's rights without necessarily dismantling the cultural framework of which the woman is an important stakeholder...the problem today is to eradicate fossilized cultural practices that hinder women from effectively performing their roles. (viii-x)

Thus, the author's artistic vision, therefore, falls in line with context-bound meaningful education and adaptabilities for our societies' positive evolution and improvement.

Conclusion

African literature has witnessed shifts from "voiceless women", especially in literature produced by men in conservative societies to "outspoken women" in progressive, transformative societies standing against suppression and Lola's text falls in that category where she seems to argue for context-bound modes of assertion and adaptations that consider our cultures and the evolution of Africa and also the need to engage men in such processes since they are most of the time the perpetrators of such actions against women. With changing times, Lola advocates for transformative/progressive social and cultural practices against conservative approaches. She addresses inequalities and conflicts in land ownership, among other vices, which seems to be a property metaphor. The paper has used the postcolonial feminist theory to argue that women need to be recognized, acknowledged and encouraged to do what they can for better African futures. They need to be able to have access to land for their individual and collective development. From the analysis, it is seen that Lola advocates for literature that positively transforms society, mostly without violence as violence only begets violence and the vicious cycle continues, leading to unstable societies. She seems to see that female bonding, the preservation of the family, and dialogue to resolve family and community conflicts should be employed if stable and development-oriented societies must come into being.

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