

## Culture and tradition in the selected works of Ngugi Wa Thiongo (Weep not child: The river between)

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### Abstract

Ngugi wa thiongo currently dsitingusihed professor of english and comparitive litrature at the university of california, irvine, was born in kenya in 1938 into a large peasant family. He was educiated at kamandura, magu and kingogori primary school all in kenya makerere university college leeds, britain he is recipient of seven honerary doctorate viz D litt (albright): Phd (roskilled) a Lift (leeds ). D litt and P hd (walter sisues university): phd (carstate): D litt (dilledard and D litt (auckla and university) he is also honorary member of american acadamy of letter. Many sided intelectual he is novelist. essayist, playwright, journlist editor, academic and social activist.

The kenya of his birth and he was a british settler colony (1895-1963) as an adolescent he lived through the mau mau war of independnace (1952-1962) the central histroical episode in the making of modren kenya early works.

“The Rive Between” is a famous novel written by Ngugi Wa Thiongo in 1965. This novel speaks about Kenyan culture and tradition and the story is about leadership, changes and Identity. It concentrate on social and political change at the onset of European invasion As a colonial literature the story set in the period where the Kikuyu highlands of Kameno and Makuyu was at its nascent stage of Christian European Inovation and it tells the story of civilization form apart by colonialism. Waiyaki is a young man who is sent to a mission school to be educated. He becomes a teacher and undergoes a mission to unite the Christian and non-Christians through education. Joshua is a former member of the tribe who has become a Christian preacher. His daughters Muthori and Nyambura have been raised to Christians. However Muthoni rejects circumcision. Her procedure complicates and she does not survive Joshua renovness his daughter for betrayin her religion and Joshua follow Christians. On the other side, villagers claim that muthone died because she ws a Christian. Her death more and two sides further apart Wiyaki become a local celebrity for this efforts to educate. He is beloved by almost everydody. He is worned that his name would be his downfall and Kabonyi and his son Kamau conspire to bring him down. Waiyaki is in love with Nyambor, buls they cannot be Nyamboro’s reticence towards circumcision result, from her Internalization of Christian beliefsand her subsequent deivowal of indigenous cultural practices. And yet female circumcision is also a fundamentally mosculinist system of oppression that maintains and legitimates the subjugation of women clearly the violence of circumssion for culsts somewhat the violence of women, clealyh the violence of circumcision is also a fundamentally, together because of Waiyala’s outh to purity and their tradition. This story is about the story of man who trappol by tradition and religion.

**Keywords:** culture, tradition, ngugi wa thiongo

### Introduction

Ngugi wa Thiongo originally named as james thiongo ngugi born to thiongo wa naducu and wanjika wa ngugi. ngugi is the fifth child among the third child of thingo’s four wives ngugi was born on January 5, 1938, in limuru, Kenya and was one of the few students from limuru to attend the elite alliance highschool. while at alliance, he participated in debate in which he contended that westerner educations were headmaster subsequently selected ngugi against becoming a political adiquator ngugi next attended markerere university of leeds in England, where he was exposed to west indian born social theorist frantz fanon’s the wretched of earth a highly controversial trailers in which the author maintains that political independence for oppressed people must won often violently before genuine social and economic change may be achieved. ngugi became influenced by the writings of karlmarx and friedrich Engles, developing an ardent opposition to colonialism, Christianity, and other non-Africa influences in Kenya. During this period, he also began to write plays and novels criticising Kenyan society and politics. In 1962 his first full length play the black hermit was performed at the Uganda national theatre in early 1960s he worked as a regular communist for Sunday

nation, ngugi wrote his first novel, weep not child while he was a student at makerere

Teacher in east African school s, 1964 - 70 university of nairobi, Kenya, lecture in English literature, in English literature, 1967-69 later became senior leacture and chair of literature deparment makerere university, creature writing fellow 1969-70 north western university,. Visting lecturer, 1970-71: new York university, new York city, professor of African and Caribbean litratures, theatre film and cultural theory, early 1990s

African culture and tradition word culture, which means cultivation. Culture is a modern concept based on term first used in classical antiquity by the roman orator cocero. Culture animi “cultivation of the soul. This nonagricultural use of the term. Culture re appeared modern europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century referring to the betterment or refinement of individuals. Especially through education. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century it came to refer more frequently to the common reference points of whole people. And discussion of the term was not often connected to national aspirations or ileasoileals. Some scientists such as Edward tylor used the term culture to a universal human capacity. 20<sup>th</sup> century. Culture emerged as an enteral concept in

anthropology encompassing the range of human phenomena that cannot be directly attributed to genetic inheritance. Specially the term culture in American anthropology.

### **Culture of Africa**

The culture of Africa is varied and manifold it is a product the diverse populations that today enhance the continent of Africa and the African diaspora. Like much of the world it has been impacted upon both internal and external forces.

### **Historical overview**

Africa is divided into a great number of ethnic cultures the continent's cultural regeneration has also been an integral aspect of post-independence nation building on the continent. With a recognition of the need to harness cultural resources of Africa to enrich the process of education. Requiring the creation of an enabling environment in a number of ways. In recent times the call for a much greater emphasis on the cultural dimension in all aspects of development. Has become increasingly vocal. During colonialism in Africa. Europeans possessed attitude of superiority and a sense of mission. The French were able to accept an African as French if that person gave up their African culture and adopted French ways defined one as civilized Kenyan social commentator Mwangi Njiru argues that the future of Africa can only be forged from accepting and mending the socio cultural present. For Mwangi colonial cultural hangovers. Pervasive were eleven cultural inundation, and aid giving arm. Twisting donors are the gruees. He to stay and no amount of looking into Africa past will make them go away however, Maulana Kenya states our culture provides us with an ethno we must honor in both thought and practice by ethnics, we mean a peoples self-understanding as well as its self-presentation in the world through its thought and practice in the other areas of culture it is above all a cultural challenges. For culture is have defined as the totality of thought and practice by which a people create itself. Celebrates sustains and develops itself and introduces itself to history and humanity.

### **African arts and crafts**

Africa has rich tradition of art and crafts African arts and crafts find expression in a variety of wood carvings brags and leather art works African arts and crafts also includes sculpture. Pottery ceremonial and religious headgear and dress Maulana Karenga states that in African art the object was not as important as the soul force the creation of the object they also status that all art must be revolutionary and in being revolutionary it must be collective committing and functional this is echoed by Shahadah who states in Africa all art is socially functional.

### **Folklore and religions**

Like all human cultures African folklore and religion represents a variety of social facts of the various cultures in Africa. Like almost all civilization and culture flood my they have been circulating in different parts of Africa culture and religion share spaces and are dably intertwined in African cultures in Ethiopia Christianity and Islam from the core aspects of Ethiopian culture and inform dietary customs as well as rituals and rites according to a paygmy myth chamelecon hearing a strange noise in a tree cut openits trunks and water came out in a great flood that spread all over the land.

Folklores also play an important role in many African cultures

stories reflect a group cultural identity and preserving the stories of Africa will help preserves an entire culture story telling affirms pride and identity in a culture. In Africa stories are created by and for the ethnic groups telling them differnet ethnic groups in Africa have differnet ritualsor ceremonies for storytelling. Which creates ad sense of belonging to a cultural group. To outsiders hearing an ethnic groups stories it provides an insight into the community beleifs view and customs. For people with in the community it allows them to encompass their group's uniqueness. They shows the human diverse and fears of a groups. Such as love marriage and death. Folktales are seem as a tool for education and entrainment. They provide a way for children to understand the material and social environment every story has a moral to teach people such as good will prevail over evil for entertainment stories are set in fantastic.

### **Clothing**

Womens traditional cloths in Ethiopia are made from cloth called shemma and used to make habeshakemis. The latter garment is basically cotton cloth. 90cm wide woven. In long strips which are then sewn together sometimes shiny threads are woeven into fabric for an elgant effect. Man wear pants and a kness length shirt with white collar. And perhaps a seater mem often wear knee high socks while women might not wear socks at all men as well as women wear shoawls the netela.

### **African music**

Traditional sub Saharan African music is a diverse as the regions various population the common perception of sub Saharan African music is that it is rhythmic music centered around the drums and indeed a large part of sub Saharan music, mainly among speakers of niger congo and nilo Saharan languages is rhythmic and centred around the drum.

Sub saharam music is polyrhythmc. Suually consuiting of multiple rhythms in one composition, dance involves moving multiple bnody parts. These aspects of sub Saharan music were transferred to the new world by enslaved sub saharam Africans and can be seen in its influences on music forms as samba jazz. Rhythm and blues rock and Roll, salsa and rap music.

But sub Saharan music involves a lot of music with strings. Norms. And very little poly rhythms. Music from the earthen sahel and along the Nile. Among the in Saharan made extensive are of strings and horn in ancient times there was also extensive use of strings instruments among the afro asicatics dancing inovles swaying body movements and footwork most the music in Africa is sundi music among the khoisans extensive are of string instruments with emphasis on footwork.

### **Culture and tradition in novel 'the river between'**

Novel 'The River Between' written by Ngugi Wa Thiongo. The author set the scene by describing the River, surrounding ridges, and the Kikuyu creation story. The land becomes almost the main character of the Novel's opening. "These ancient hills and ridges. Were the heart and soul of the land? They kept the tribes magic and rituals, pure and intact". As the human creature introduces we know the interactions between generations and religions and social customs.

The story opens with an omniscient narrator who tells of Kikiyu creation; of how Murungu created Kikuyu and Mumbi, the first man and women.

The Narrator also tells about two ridges. And each ridges claims

leadership based on its own story. However, a common river, Honics, runs through the valley between the two ridges. And it is by this river that the ritual of circumcision is practised. The river also gives life to the people of both ridges.

Chege, a descendant of a line of prophets and seers most notably of whom was Mugo Wa Kibiro, led his son Waiyaki into a sacred grove to show him the secrets of the land and to tell him about the prophecy that would become Waiyaki's sole objective in life and his ruin for Chege believed that Waiyaki is the son in that prophecy.

Makuyu was home of Christians while Kameno remained the home of all that was beautiful in the tribe. Makuyu's leadership; is under Joshua and his fiery brand of Christianity where as Kameno's leadership is under Waiyaki. Things came to a head when Joshua's daughter, Muthuni, died after she ran away from to participate in the circumcision that would usher girls and boys into adulthood. To bring these two groups together, Waiyaki vowed to use education as the tool to keep the village's identity and to keep the white men at bay where as his detractor Kabonyi's himself an ex follower of Joshua vowed to use political force. When Joshua's second daughter, Nyambura, fails in love with Waiyaki, things spiraled out of control for both sides of the divide for Nyambura has not been circumcised and a Christian and Waiyaki has sworn an oath to protect the traditions and secrets of the people. This internal struggle and autophagy blurred Waiyaki's vision for he was a man who paid no particular attention to such traditions as circumcision.

#### **Culture and tradition in the novel 'weep not child'**

Ngugi Wa Thiongo's debut novel Weep Not Child is written in 1964. In the novel we can see Tradition and the culture of Kenya. The Story of the novel Narrated in Kenya. They gave importance to Native language Gikuyu. And to their Tribe. And In the Master of Tradition i.e in Gikuyu custom, the man Marry many times but first wife is favored in that customs. They gave importance to Mythology and storytelling through this they get religious values.

The novel's protagonist, Njoroge is a bright and talented student. The novel begins with his entering school, and throughout his academic career he will be at the top of his class, excelling because he's driven by a thirst for knowledge and by an obligation to succeed. Because, for him, education is a rare privilege. It's expensive, and not necessarily usual for a boy his age with his background to attend several schools and to learn English, and history and other things. It is no accident that Ngugi's novel begins with Njoroge's "Unspoken wish, his Undivulged dream" to have an education, to attend school. For Njoroge loves school, and he quickly cottons to religion, but at the same time, the world around him keeps reminding him of the limits of the world that learning and faith constructs. In a series of harsh little vignettes, Njoroge is shown the cruelty and brutality of political changes. Njoroge is entangled in, the conflicts arising from his place in his Society and his individuality and quest for personal knowledge and growth. The Country burns in the fire of Mau Mau rebellion. For Njoroge, the rebellion is doubly important additionally to whatever effects this may have on the country as a whole, members of his family are personally involved in the whole business. His father, a proud farmer, believes in prophecies and in fact that the Kenyan land will eventually be returned to its rightful owners, the Kenyan people.

Ngogho is an African steeped in local traditions and has two

wives Njeri and Nyokabe, Nyokabi and Jacobo, also an African. He owes his success to his collaboration with the white settlers, and he is the only African in the land that is allowed to grow cotton, a privilege enjoyed only the settlers. He has a large chunk of land on which Ngogho lives as tenant. He is further to Mwihiki, Njoroge's best friend. Because he is rich, he sends all his children to school. To the rest of Africans, he is a traitor. Finally there is Mr. Howlands, a white settler and Ngogho's employer. Although he's only a farm worker on Mr Howland's land, Ngogho tills the land like it was his own, because this is his ancestral land, on which his forefathers stayed. In Ngogho's family, only Ngogho attends the school. Njoroge's mother Nyokambi laments that if it was not because of poverty, she would have even sent her daughters to school. Despite their problem, the Ngogho's view education as the sure road to success.

#### **Conclusion**

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the prophecy that would become Waiyaki sole objective in life and his rain for chege believed that people of both ridges. Makuyu and Kameno still antagonized each other. Makuyu was now home of Christian while Kameno remained the home of all the beautiful in the tribe. With leadership under different personalities. Mayuku's leadership is under Joshua and his fiery brand of Christianity whereas Kameno's leadership is under Waiyaki. Things came to a head when Joshua's daughter, Muthoni died after she ran away from home to participate in the circumcision that would usher girls and boys into adulthood. Charged to bring these two groups together. Waiyaki vowed to use education as the tool to keep village's identity and to keep the white man at bay whereas his detractor Kabonyi, himself an ex follower of Joshua vowed to be political force. When Joshua's second daughter Nyambura, falls in love with Waiyaki things spiralled out of control for both sides of the divide for Nyambura, falls in love with Waiyaki, things spiralled out of control for both sides of the divide for Nyambura has not been circumcised and a Christian and Waiyaki has sworn an oath to protect the tradition and secrets of the people. This internal struggle and autophagy blurred Waiyaki's vision for he was man who paid no particular attention to such traditions. In Kenya at a time when white missionaries have obtained a strong foothold and traditional tribal beliefs one being seen as evil many find themselves torn between long Christian beliefs of ancestors and the new promises of a better life, like after death, but with little promise of a better life while living. The main characters of Waiyaki find himself torn between oaths he took in becoming a man in bring his people now. His struggle to bring their ideals together prove that 'no good turn goes unpunished'.

The role of female circumcision becomes the focus of story but it is always in background. This is story of what happens when the fundamentalist of a society shift. It is a story of sadness, respect, fear, love, In Kameno regard and see circumcision as an integral part of their existence. The importance is such that no one would marry an uncircumcised girl, circumcision is central rite in Kikuyu way of life. The two ridges, two world i.e traditional and Christians and the two ridges separates and unites people because people fetch water from it and in this novel we see people share their customs and culture. And they celebrate cultural practice like ceremonies, female circumcision. This group is represented by Joshua and his family Kameno has remained wholly unchanged and thus become strong represented by chege family. Thus there is they gave importance to education also and we can find secret organization. The Kiama whose goal is to insure the purity of Tribe and they give importance to second birth, circumcisions, and harvest rituals thus in the novel 'The River Between' we can see culture and tradition.

This is the powerful and memorable novel my only criticism would be that it rushes too quickly through so many events, telling a story in fewer than small. When Njoroge and Stephen Howlands discuss whether there is any hope left to Kenya's future. Njoroge argues that there is, the narrator comments that "hope of a better day was the only comfort he could give to a weeping child" the speaker begs the child not to cry over the tumultuous storm, the novel little refers to hope that sustains its character through the violence and suffering of the Mau Mau revolt and the Ngugi explores how love and family loyalty attempts to endure in even the cruellest conditions so in the novel Weep Not Child we can find Tradition and culture of

Kenya through the story which narrated in Kenya. They gave importance to native language Gikuyu and to their Tribe and in the matter of Tradition i.e in Gikuyu custom, the man marry many times but first wife is favoured in that custom and they gave importance to both Christian teachings with traditional Gikuyu values. They gave importance to Mythology and storytelling through this they put religious values Throughout the Weep Not Child religious faith provides a source of strength to characters like Njoroge and Isaka, However the religious character skirt this issue by integrating their faith with traditional Gikuyu Mythology and values. And we can see the Kenyan culture and tradition in this novel Ngugi suggest that deviation that keep people oppressed are not always unnaturally placed upon them outside but in fact some time come within. Suggesting an inherent human tendency towards prejudice. Thus in both novels "Weep Not Child" and "The River Between" we can see the African tradition and culture they follow native Gikuyu custom and also gave importance to colonial impact which resulted in Foreign language. Christianity and they strictly follows the tradition and customs of Africa because their goal is to ensure the purity of the Tribe.

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