

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**



**RELIGION AND FEMALE CIRCUMCISION ISSUE IN
THE
*RIVER BETWEEN***

M.A Thesis

ELİF YEKTA VICİL

İstanbul, 2011

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ÖZET

***THE RIVER BETWEEN*'de DİN ve KADIN SÜNNETİ MESELESİ**

The River Between adlı kitapta, sömürgecilik döneminde Kenya'da yaşanan gerçek olaylara ve yazarın hayat hikâyesine ayna tutmayı amaçlayan bu tez, Hristiyanlığın karakterler ve olaylar üzerindeki etkisini inceler ve kadın sünnetine bağlı olarak, sömürgeci devletlerin psikolojik baskıları ve kısıtlamaları yüzünden oluşan bozuk toplumları konu alır. Bu kitapta Ngugi, sömürgecilik faaliyetleri yüzünden iki kabilenin, Makuyu ve Kameno, ve aynı toprakları paylaşıp, aynı şeylere inanan insanların ayrılışını anlatır. Bu çalışma, sömürgeciliğin başlangıcını ve Kenya yönetiminin sosyal ve politik yönünü şekillendiren etkilerini, arada kalmış insanları ve yaşantılarını ele alır. İlk kısım yazarın hayat hikâyesi hakkında bilgi verir. İkinci kısım din meselesini ve yazarın Hristiyanlıktan nasıl etkilendiğini ve bu düşünceleri kitaba nasıl yansıttığını tartışır. Üçüncü kısım kadın sünnetini genel olarak incelerken, konunun daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi için farklı görüşler sunar. Dördüncü kısım, yazarın ve ana karakterlerinin bakış açısından olayları detaylı bir şekilde ortaya koyar. Son kısım, sömürgeci ülkelerin etkilerini göz önünde bulundurarak, aynı deneyimlere sahip olan yazarları ve eserleri hakkında bilgi verir. Her şeyden önce bu tez, yazarın hayatını kitaba nasıl yansıttığını ve gün ışığına çıkarılması gereken gerçekler uğruna verdiği mücadeleyi vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır.

ABSTRACT

RELIGION AND FEMALE CIRCUMCISION ISSUE IN *THE RIVER BETWEEN*

This thesis aims to mirror author's life story and real events of the colonial period in Kenya in terms of religious aspects, which examine the impact of Christianity through characters, events and female circumcision issue which leads to the creation of corrupted societies due to psychological oppression and restriction of colonial states in the book *The River Between*. In this book, Ngugi deals with the separation of tribes, Kamenyo and Makuyu, due to colonial acts and people who used to share the same lands and believe in the same connotations once upon a time. This study explores the coming part of colonialism and its effects which shape social and political aspects of the Kenya government and people who are in between. First chapter presents author's life story. The second chapter discusses religion issue and how the author was influenced by Christianity and reflected his thoughts in the book. The third part deals with female circumcision in general and different perspectives are presented in order to have a better understanding on the issue. The fourth chapter presents a detailed outlook to the issues from the perspective of the author and his main characters. And the last chapter enlightens us about writers who have the same experiences considering the powerful effects of colonial states and it also exemplifies the works of these authors. Above all, this thesis aims to point out how Ngugi portrays his own life into his book and his struggle to indicate realities that should be unearthed.

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INTRODUCTION

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is one of the leading and celebrated figures among Kenyan writers. His difference lies with regard to his ideas about post-colonialism. His struggle to show the difficulties of colonialism deserves to be crowned. His simple but sincere narration fascinates readers. He puts emphasis on the cultural effects based on analysis of psychology. Marvellous descriptions of settings and also exact depiction of people in his novels attract readers' attention.

The thesis is based on how people who were the kids of the same neighbourhood and the children of the same culture turned out to be two different opposing groups as a result of missionary activities. The first group mentioned in the thesis converted to Christianity and their cultures are to some extent influenced by the aspects of Western cultures. Second group reacted to what missionaries brought and struggled to protect their culture and faith. In addition to these two conflicting groups, there is another group flourished which is very much affected by the doctrines of the missionaries and reconciles the ideas of the first two groups that are conformable to the expectations of it.

The issue of fractionation of the people in the same community due to religious views and the circumcision of female as a kind of ritual; the reactions and the results are the main points discussed in this work. In this thesis, the female circumcision reveals a contradictory point of view. The problems that the children are facing who are educated by the missionaries are reflected here since the female circumcision is considered a sin by the missionaries. It's observed that the kids are leading a traditional life at the same time displaying exactly different personalities in the school. The concept of love, as well, is very helpful to extract how this issue is important for both groups.

In the first part of the essay, the author's life has been narrated in detail, and in the second part religious aspects of the Kikuyu tribe is addressed. Also, it is discussed how the author made some biblical exemplifications in the book which he wrote at the time when he used to be Christian. The author puts some extracts from Bible both in the descriptions and in the characters he created.

In the third part, the importance given to the circumcision by the tribe and how this procedure is made are put into question with its results and the effects on both groups. Moreover, several research conducted on the issue and the current outlook on female circumcision are discussed. Additionally, the choice of the Christian girl who decided to be circumcised and the psychological impacts on her are debated. The recent statements about

the issue in the articles by the author are also referred and pros&cons of the procedure are objectively presented.

The forth part of the essay is generally focused on the character analysis and their developments in terms of religion and circumcision and it is mainly the comparison and the contrast of the protagonist in the book and the author himself.

The last part is more concerned with identical identities created by colonial states that promote terror and hatred to the masses erasing traditional lives.

In addition to this, the following issues have been discussed in this study: How colonial education was able to leave deep traces in author's life? In relation with these traces how lives have been changed like Ngugi's and how identities have been influenced by colonial education.



CHAPTER I

CUSTODIAN OF KIKUYU CULTURE AND TRADITION

1.1. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

“ I do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world.”

(Currey 177)

This quotation clearly expresses the essence of life of the author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who is one of the most eminent writers of the third world. As a defender of the cultural values and traditions, he is one of the leading voices of the postcolonial world. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in Kamiriithu, Limuru, Kenya, in 1938 (Currey xvii). As his parents divorced, he grew up in the care and under the responsibility of his mother (Currey 99). His mother sent Ngugi to school in a very difficult condition that sometimes left young Ngugi hungry at midday and expected him to be the best in everything:

“Promise me that you'll not bring shame to me by one day refusing to go to school because of hunger or other hardships?

“Yes, yes!”

“And that you will always try your best?” (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 60).

With this promise he started his education life and firstly he attended Church of Scotland Mission at Kamaandura, Limuru during 1947-48 (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 70). His mother's decisions, which have achieving results on Ngugi, guided author's education life inspite of the fact that sometimes Ngugi and his family had nothing to eat. Almost everybody in his family had to leave school because of the expensive tuition and unlike them, Ngugi was a very successful student who could move from the lowest grade to grade two in just one term at Kamandura School (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 64). Unfortunately, he had to leave Kamandura due to expensive tuition and started going to Manguo known as Gikuyu Independent School between years 1948- 55 and his writing adventure dates back to these years when he was introduced to European writers and many others such as Dickens and Stevenson: “It was Stevenson who provoked my first major literary dispute” (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 220). When he was a child, he wished to write perfect stories as they did. He says that this school was one of the schools

which “ belonged to people who had rebelled against missionary influence, so they wanted the kind of education that belonged to the people” (Currey 25).

Later, he went on his education at Alliance High School in the years between 1955-1959 and to deserve it he took a four-day exam and he was the only student who was accepted to Alliance High School from Limuru (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 243). His family could not afford the high tuition at that time and without Njairu “government-appointed headman” he would not have been able to go to Alliance High School. (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 244). He was very keen to read books as a student but sometimes it was hard for him to do at nights because of the paraffin which they could not afford to buy. “Nighttime frustrates me because I read by the light of an unreliable and coverless kerosene lantern. Paraffin means money and there are days when the lamp has no oil” (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 67). He was also interested in stories of Mau Mau and he was collecting torn pages of newspapers in order to read. Despite difficulties, he never gave up his desire for reading. His criticism on colonial acts was first appeared in a debate about the disadvantages of Western education at Alliance High School. He gave the example of a person “who comes and takes away food from your mouth and then gives you a fountain pen instead”. Then he states that he turned to the audience and asked: “Can you eat a fountain pen? Can you clothe yourself with a fountain pen or shelter yourself with it?” (Currey 102). Actually, what he meant was that needs in education should not be considered to be equal with the needs of the people who try to keep their lands and culture.

At Alliance High School he found the opportunity to read other writers, including racist ones, such as Rider Haggard, Captain W.E. Johns. His teachers made him meet the world famous writers like Tolstoy, Shakespeare as well as poets like Wordsworth, Longfellow, and Tennyson. His interest in writing has started when he was at school:

“R.L.Stevenson is the one who really set my imagination flying and I thought that one day I would like to write stories like those which he himself had written. For instance, Treasure Island had made a big impression on me and I thought that if ever I got enough education I would like to write a story like that one. That was around 1955” (Currey 2). His first effort on writing was an imitation of the American thriller writer Edgar Wallace. He sent this piece of writing to a magazine named Baraza in 1956, it was disapproved, though (Currey103).

He spent his childhood under the influence of peasant culture which means songs, stories around the fireside in the evenings. He thinks that missionary schools were founded to destroy the peasant way of life because of the fact that all their beliefs, values and cultural things were always exalted rather than theirs (Currey 101). As we can see, missionary schools

always showed them that even colonialism was for their benefits. On the contrary, national schools were a long path having no end that they had to use to the bitterness of life. He had the opportunity to attend both missionary schools and independent schools, that's how he could present us the differences between two.

Furthermore, at Makerere College (1959-64), he was introduced to three important writers with three enchanting books which paved the way of his literary career: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, and Peter Abraham's *Tell Freedom* (Currey 103). Ngugi informs us that he was so impressed by Peter Abrahams because of the title "Tell Freedom" and later he had more interest in all the books of Peter Abraham (Currey 103). Moreover, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* attracted his attention especially to search for more; West African writers and then literature and in addition to this, George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* dragged him to learn the literature of the African people in the Third World (Currey 103-4). Besides, he was writing his first novel *The River Between* which was in fact published as second when he was at Makerere College for a competition (Currey 47). Before *The River Between*, he published "Fig Tree" in the literary magazine of the English Department in 1960 (Currey xviii). He worked as a columnist for Sunday Post, Daily Nation and then Sunday Nation during 1961- 1964 and he was writing short stories and one of his writings was published in Sunday Post (Currey xviii). In addition to all these, he succeeded in winning Shell Exhibition, scholarship, with *The Rebels* in 1962 and then with *The Black Hermit* (play) in 1963. (Currey xviii). One year later he graduated from Makerere College and left his country and started studying at Leeds University for postgraduate study (Currey xviii).

On the other hand, at Leeds University, he was introduced to Franz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* which he describes this experience as enlightening (Currey 105). Leeds University is important for him for the fact that he discovered the importance of Marxist literature. "It made me aware of the radical literature that embraced the Third world: it made me aware of the radical literature that embraced the Third world as well as the socialist world" (Currey 104). As he is highly interested in the problems of his society, as well as solutions, he is affected by Engel's *Anti- Dühring* which expresses that there should be changes in nature, society of human and thought and in addition to it, he is also interested in imaginative literature writers like Gorky and Brecht and he advises Gorky's *Mother* to the ones who are in love with his lands, especially African people (Currey 105). He started writing *A Grain of Wheat* which has an important place in his life for the fact that he deals with colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism in this book. Meanwhile his first book

Weep Not, Child published in 1964 and then the second, *The River Between* (1965). Both two novels deal with the conflicts in the society because of the effects of Mau Mau uprising and independent schools in relation with the colonial settlers. In 1966, he was the first who won prize for anglophone novel with his book *Weep Not, Child* at first World Festival of Negro Arts at Dakar (Currey xix). His third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), which includes several stories, focuses on the struggle for independence in Kenya. After *A Grain of Wheat* he attracts attention to the language problem as he states “I have reached a point of crisis... The crisis arose out of the writing of *A Grain of Wheat*. I felt I dealt with the Kenyan or African institutions so intimately. Then I felt that people who fed the novel, that is the peasantry as it were, will not be in a position to read it. And this is very painful” (Currey 46).

From 1967 to 1969, he worked as a lecturer at University College in Nairobi; however, he left his job in order to object infringement of “academic freedom” (Currey xix). During this time, he gave lectures at Northwestern University, Rice University, University of Houston and Texas Southern, Texas and also he started writing *Petals of Blood* (1970-71) (Currey xx). *Homecoming* (1972) was published just before becoming the head of the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi and he was given “the Lotus Prize in literature at 5th Afro-Asian Writers Conference in Alma Ata, Khazakhstan in 1973” (Currey xx). His contemporary novel *Petals of Blood* was completed in 1975 in the Soviet Union by the invitation of the Soviet Writers’ Union: “Soviet Writers’ Union kindly gave me the use of their rest house at Yalta on the Black Sea to finish my novel *Petals of Blood*” (Currey 57). For this book, Ngugi implies that “it looks at the phenomenon of neo-colonialism rather than it looks at the phenomenon of post- independence, of postcolonial struggles in Africa” (Currey 68). It was published in the year of 1977 one year after the performance of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* at the Kenya National Theatre where he became the chairman of Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre’s cultural committee; at the same time, he became Associate Proffesor at University of Nairobi (Currey xxi). As James is the name belongs to the time when he used to be Christian, he gave up using this name legally due to seeing it as a part of the colonial naming system (Currey xxi). He uses his original name Ngugi wa Thiong’o given by his parents, meaning the son of Thiong’o. From that year up to now he is known as Ngugi wa Thiong’o.

Coming next year would have been the worst times for him. He wrote the script of the play *I Will Marry When I Want* in 1976 with Ngugi wa Miri and the play was performed at Kamiriithu (Currey xxi). As the following quotation shows he comments on the performers and the importance of this play for his community:

The actors were all peasants and workers from Kamiriithu village, they designed and built an open-air stage in the centre of the village and they collaborated in the evolution of the script as well as in the directing. ...For the first time, the rural people could see themselves and their lives and their history portrayed in a positive manner. For the first time in their post-independence history a section of the peasantry had broken out of the cruel choice that was hitherto their lot: the Bar or the church (Thiong'o, *Writers* 47).

Later he was arrested and lost the position at University of Nairobi and explained why he was arrested with these words: "Kenyan government did not like very much the people speaking about their own problems in a play. They like to speak on behalf of the people instead of letting the people speak for themselves" (Currey 355). This arrestment might have been a warning to those who would like to follow his footsteps. He indicates that at Kamiti Maximum security prison he had harsh experiences because of knowing nothing about the outside world as a writer who actually writes by seeing, hearing and feeling it (Currey 169). He states that at first the guardians did not know that he was put into jail due to his "involvement with the collective work in the village" (Currey 170). Comparing himself with other detainees, who had stayed there more than eight or ten years, he described himself as "novice" (Currey 170). During this period he observed their experiences and the things they tried to overcome; therefore, he was able to write his book *Devil on the Cross* on a toilet paper without reading anything (Currey 169). He thinks that if one rules your land, that means he rules the land as well as the culture and its language (Currey 221-2). As a result, he believes that mother tongue was disregarded and seemed as a bad thing. Those who used their mother tongue at school were punished; in contrast, if he or she had been successful in using English they would have been appreciated and rewarded (Currey 222). In this way, using their mother tongues was torture, while using English was encouraged by the colonizers. When he was in jail, he realized the bad sides of using English and he turned his attention to Kikuyu language and the problems of his society:

It is simply that in 1977 I started working with peasants and workers at the town of Kamiriithu and it is through this involvement that I started writing in the Kikuyu language. And from that juncture I came to an appreciation that we cannot in fact continue writing in European languages and still claim to be talking to African masses.

So the whole question of writing in an African language in this case a Kenyan language, is very important for me because I think of languages as a key factor in the whole cultural struggle in Africa, which is part of the political and economic struggle (Currey 222).

Later he was released and about 400 academics wanted his remitter at University of Nairobi (Currey xxi). First studies in Gikuyu language *Caitaani Mutharaba-ini* (Devil on the Cross) and *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want) were published in 1980 (Currey xxii). Next year, *Caitaani Mutharaba-ini* gets “Special Commendation in Noma Award” due to its being published in Africa (Currey xxii). In 1981, *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary and Writers in Politics* were published. One year later, the government did not allow the performance of *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing for Me)* at the Kenyan National Theatre and after that, the government prohibited all the theatres in that region (Currey xxii). He started living in exile in London, whereas his family stayed in Limuru, Kenya. *Njamba Nene na Mbaathi i Mathagu (Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus)* was published in Africa and for that reason his work was given “Special Commendation in Noma Award” (Currey xxii). He also published *Barrel of a Pen* and started writing *Matigari ma Njiruungi (Matigari)* when he was in exile in London and in 1984, the play, *I Will Marry When I Want*, was performed in Japanese, Japan (Currey xxiii). He published *Bathitoora ya Njamba Nene (Njamba Nene’s Pistol)* in 1984 and apart from that he worked on a documentary about *Africa in Sweden* with two African students and he himself shot a twenty- minute film, *Blood-Grapes and Black Diamonds* from 1985 to 86 (Currey xxiii). He finished writing, *Matigari ma Njiruungi (Matigari)* and published it in 1986; however, it was seized by Kenya government (Currey xxiii). Meanwhile, he was busy with the publications of *Decolonising the Mind, Writing Against Neo-Colonialism and Njamba Nene na Cibu King’ ang’ i (Njamba Nene and the Cruel Chief)* as well as *The First Walter Rodney Memorial Lecture* (Currey xxiii). We see that having close relations with peasants and workers and experiencing the difficulties of prison made him aware of the needs of his community and he wrote his works in Gikuyu steadily. His academic career went on in United States as a visiting Professor at Yale University as well as Amherst and Smith Colleges during 1990-1992 and in 1993, he became appointed Professor of Comparative Literature and Performance Studies at New York University (Currey xxiv). He published *Moving the Centre: the Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* and was given the Zora Neale Hurston- Paul Robeson Award of the Council for Black Studies, Accra, Ghana in 1993 (Currey xxiv). Next year in 1994, he was given another award of “Contributor’s Arts of

Chicago State University's Gwendolyn Brooks Center" as well as the "Fonlon-Nichols Prize for Artistic Excellence and Human Rights" and "the Distinguished Africanist Award of the New York African Studies Association" in 1996 (Currey xxiv). He published *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State* in Africa in 1998 and became distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director, International Center for Writing and Translation at University of California, Irvine in 2001 (Currey xxv). Finally, he returned to Kenya after being in exile for twenty-two years, and his book *Wizard of Crow* was published in 2006. His last book *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010) shares his "childhood memoir" and is used as a great reference which sheds light on this study in terms of reflecting facts of the colonial period in Kenya.

Generally, Ngugi is concerned with the themes of religion, political issues, human relations and etc. There is no doubt that these themes are based on historical situations in Africa such as colonialism and struggle against colonialism. He uses specific details such as village for more extended meanings; from village to Kenya and beyond maybe whole Africa.

Ngugi is also interested in "orature" which means oral literature. "Orature" includes stories, which comprise current events, religious connotations, as well as "riddles, proverbs, poetry and drama" (Currey 239). He grew up in a society where people sit next to each other around the fire and tell stories and this has a very important place in their lives because it provides communication from one family to others (Currey 239). It also develops cultural communication so that people could keep this kind of literature forever. Firstly, he heard people telling stories and then he went to school and learnt how to read and write and he was engaged with literature at university and finally, all these combined this interest at a certain point. What he tries in his books is that he leaves some traces for people to follow to find the light and the power to overflow all the negative things. What he wants from his fellows is that they should unite their powers and lean on their own sources: "you cannot go to war with your eyes on the strength of your friends. That way lies slavery and domination" (Currey 107). As a writer he believes that "writing can be used as a weapon for people to fight against oppression and exploitation" (Currey 240) and "literature becomes even better weapon of struggle when a writer is aware or conscious of the struggling ideologies in the world" (Currey 246). For him, writers should be aware of the changes around and they should be in harmony with these changes. He questions the language issue by asking why "the liberation of African languages is central to the liberation of the general society" (Currey 285).

Literature like history carries the suffering of that society which was forced to accept the language, beliefs, values, and even education of others. With this fact, it seems that Ngugi

wants writers not to escape from taking a position in the social struggles. He wants people to know that about ninety percent of the population in Africa today speak only African languages (Currey 33). Language is a vital element in developing oneself; therefore, his aim is to be useful to his country by using its own language to reach people: “African languages can play a big role in Africa’s democratization, its spiritual awakening and enhancement” (Currey 392). Ngugi explains that although languages, which are spoken in Africa, have differences, they share the same experiences (Currey 225). As mentioned above, one of the leading factor why Ngugi is using his own language, is Obi Wali’s article *The Dead End of the African Literature* (Currey 234). He insists that if one would like to speak with his own community, he or she should write in the languages which belong to that community. The work written in the original language can be translated into other languages; hence, other audiences are able to read what is happening in that country and learn lots of things about the culture, values, traditions, and so on. If the people do not receive the messages he tries to give, he wonders why and to whom he is writing for (Currey 33). That’s why he wrote some of his novels in Kikuyu language in order to reach people in that community. It seems that he tries to raise the consciousness of the people suggesting that if people would like to learn African literature closely, they should experience the same things or at least there should be reforms in English Literature concerning the place of African Literature: “Literature should be completely African oriented. A start in that direction should be: (a) to make African literature compulsory in schools and universities; (b) to give Swahili its true role in East Africa; (c) and African traditions and songs should have their rightful place in the teaching” (Currey 38).

He states that when he writes in Gikuyu language, he can use cultural elements such as songs, riddles, proverbs, stories so that people could become more sensitive about their own cultures and struggle not to lose anything: “People rediscover their songs, they inject old forms with new content of anti-colonial struggle” (Currey 375).

As a writer Ngugi tries to do something for the people, or the society which needs to change; thus, he reminds us that one should engage in the problems of his country besides he shouldn’t infringe his ideas or suggestions upon writing. Unlike West writers, he says that he “has not time to write about space” (Currey 24). He also makes us remember that if a man is hungry he cannot think about entertainment (Currey 24). He only deals with social and political problems of Africa and what he wishes for his country is that there must be some changes but the question is how and he expects people to move, not to stand and wait for a miracle.

1.2. About *The River Between*

The River Between, known as *Black Messiah*, is the first book of Ngugi; however it was published as second (Currey 12). Ngugi points out that *The River Between* tells about

Kenyan community's initial encounter with colonialism, that community in historical reality and time speaks the Gikuyu language, and what they are thinking about-their land, the effect of colonialism- they are really thinking in the Gikuyu language. The characters are the products of their cultures and he makes them speak in English in order to capture their lives and thoughts, I must be translating- doing a mental translation. It is very true of all writers who are writing about one community, or about characters who are the product of one culture, in other language, I would say my novels- *The River Between*, *Weep not Child* are mental translations (Currey 403).

The theme of the novel is the conflict between Kikuyu community and the missionaries in 1930s owing to the circumcision of women. The title "river" symbolizes the combination of two ridges, Kameno and Makuyu, that oppose each other. The river is a factor which unites and separates them both: "It never dried: it seemed to possess a strong will to live scorning droughts and weather changes... Honia was the soul of Kameno and Makuyu ... It joined them. all men, cattle, wild beasts, and trees, were all united by this life-stream" (Thiong'o, *River* 1). Ngugi names the ridges as "sleeping lions" as if the ridges had been unaware of the fact that they are separated with white settlers. There are two groups of people; one who followed the way of missionaries and the other who rejected to follow it. That's why both have conflicts as well as conformities. Education was used as a symbol in this novel showing the fact that one of the ways of having a place among Europeans is to get education:

"The white man has conquered you and within a short space of forty years has brought buildings that scrape the sky, motor-cars, razor blades, needles, railways and other buildings that walk on water. "fear the white man" says the peasant. But at the same time he wonders: "how come the white man has achieved all this? Through education!" (Currey 27).

Like him, his character Waiyaki is very ambitious in education and becomes leader of his tribe. But he gets stuck in between two tribes. Ngugi states that *The River Between* "tended to be a bit more concerned with the cultural aspect of imperialism but to the near exclusion of economic and political aspects. This contributes to its weakness. The world-view

in the novel is idealistic. It does not see sufficiently that values are rooted in political and economic realities” (Currey 138).

In short, *The River Between* depicts the toddling part of colonialism and also looked at the past, the present and at the possibilities of the future briefly. The author is very much interested in the relationships that reflect the historical realities of the time period. He believes that he is attracted by “the strength of his people” and this “is really the most inspiring phenomenon” for him (Currey 364).



CHAPTER 2

RELIGIOUS PARALLELISM IN *THE RIVER BETWEEN*

2.1. Ngugi's Religious Background and The Roots of Kikuyu Religion

I am a writer. Some have even called me a religious writer. I write about people: *I am interested in their hidden lives*; their fears and hopes, their loves and hates, and how the very tension in their hearts affects their daily contact with other men: how, in other words, the emotional stream of the man interacts with the social reality (Thiong'o, *Homecoming* 31).

In his book *The River Between*, Ngugi presents us the conflicts during the period of colonialization and the religious aspects of the two different groups. One should not forget that these topics are interrelated; colonialization means Christianity which results in opposition between groups. While the first group converts and rejects its past, the others resist to protect traditional way of life. Actually, two groups form a new group and there becomes a third because neither the first nor the second group satisfies their needs and they typify the "river between". Like his character Waiyaki, the author grew up within Christian settlers and he was not a convert but then he decided to be a catholic and he was baptized and given the name "James" (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 176). However, he was always aware of his situation and he did not feel like a real Christian and followed the traditional way of life. For example, as a child he used to celebrate Christmas whether he was a Christian or not. Christmas meant paratha (baked bread) and curry to him before he converted. This process ended in 1969 and he returned to his earlier beliefs:

It is quite possible that we were merely following a fad...And so by the Christian rite of baptism by water, I became James Ngugi, the name under which years later I would publish my early journalism and fiction until 1969, when I reverted to Ngugi wa Thiong'o. I have always been conscious of the irony of my situation. ...I extended the irony: On Sundays I went to Kamandura for worship and spiritual communion; on weekdays to Manguo for a life of the mind (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 173-76).

Ngugi comes from Kikuyu origin; therefore, we can see the effects of this religion, too. When it comes to the roots of Kikuyu Religion, Jomo Kenyatta explains in his work *Facing Mount Kenya*:

The Kikuyu (Gikuyu) believes in one God, Ngai, the creator and giver of all things... He has no father, mother, or companion of any kind. His work is done in solitude...He loves or hates people according to their behaviour. The creator lives in the sky... but has temporary homes on earth, situated on mountains, where he may rest during his visits. The visits are made with a view to his carrying out a kind of general inspection... and to bring blessings and punishments to the people (Bell 9).

In addition to this, Levi informs us about the Kikuyu God who decided to rest on a a mountain he called Kirinyaga (Mt. Kenya) when he visited the world he had made. While there he called a man named Gikuyu and showed him the beautiful land that he was giving him to settle in. Ngai told the Gikuyu to establish a home at Mukurwe wa Gathanga, and whenever he was in need of anything he should sacrifice and raise his hands towards Kirinyaga and Ngai would come to help him. With this settled they parted. On raching the plains, where Ngai told him to establish a home, Gikuyu found that Ngai had provided a beautiful wife named Mumbi. So Gikuyu and Mumbi lived together and had nine daughters (17).

In this book, Ngugi presents us the real events of the times when Kikuyu people were on the horns of the dilemma due to two different religions which led the division in society. Some of them were willing to accept Christian faith and one of the reasons was the idea that their God, Ngai, is only communicated through greet seers and Mugomo trees; that means, not a common man could do it without seers (Bell 19). Moreover, they decided not to maintain their relationship with Ngai and preferred to burn their trees (Bell 19). God in Christianity attracted their attention more because they thought that it would be the solution to the problems they have been facing so far and it would remain close to every human being no matter what happens:

“They had felt that Ngai was too distant to serve their everyday needs and many were troubled by this unresponsiveness to the late nineteenth century disasters of drought, famine and disease as well as to the recent European conquest that had claimed many lives” (Bell 19). As a result, they had close relationships with white people and this resulted in lack of

communication between other members of Kikuyu tribe and another important event which paved the way for the division in society was the translation of Bible into Kikuyu dialect in 1920s. With these translations, some of the converts were able to find out realities which showed that the Bible did not include things required by missionaries from these converts (Bell 21). All these reasons caused confusion, mistrust among Kikuyus against missionaries before female circumcision issue.

2.2. Religious Aspects of *The River Between*

“ I have also drawn from the Bible in the sense that the Bible was for a long time the only literature available to Kenyan people in their national languages” (Currey 88).

As the quotation indicates, Ngugi clearly expresses that while writing *the River Between (Black Messiah)* he used biblical connotations either for the descriptions of his characters or the setting. There are also parallels between the issues in book and the Bible. Robson addresses that Ngugi “adapts Christian myth to his own uses” and “since the novel partly deals with mission work and the spread of the Gospel, we would expect some preoccupation with Christianity (Anonby 21). By the same token, Ngugi reconciles the idea that Biblical figures are used in this book “ ...the Gikuyu society is somewhat lacking in mythological backround and the Bible conveniently provides one with a relevant framework.... The Gikuyu people have had similar experiences... to the Israelites” (Anonby 22).

According to Siundu and Wegesa;

The introduction of the geography of the physical setting in some ways alludes to the original Garden of Eden as captured in the book of Genesis in the Bible, but it also points out the way in which colonial regimes mapped or otherwise appropriated geographical spaces in order to configure their desired subjects (Siundu, Wegesa 5-6).

Both of the ridges are fed by the river Honia. However, Kameno is confronted by the colonialism and Christianity. They struggle for keeping their beliefs and traditions from the white missionaries. Other, Makuyu ridge, struggles for the education by missionaries to avoid

the misbehaviours of their ancestors such as female circumcision. The ridges cannot live without it; in this case, the river symbolizes both the unity and the separation.

Moreover, Anonby posits that this part of the book is reconciled with the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis and Honia river, the soul of the ridges, has similar features with the “ river (that) went out of Eden to water the garden (Genesis 2:10)” (24). What is far more important than this is that there is a striking resemblance between the description of “Eden the garden of God ... (and) the holy mountain of God in Ezekiel 28:13-14” and Ngugi’s description of the land:

It was before Agu; in the beginning of things. Murungu brought the man and the woman here and again showed them the whole vastness of the land. He gave the country to them and their children and the children of the children, tene na tene, world without end (Thiong’o, *River* 18).

His saying “ world without end (Isaiah 45:17)” carries an important message that the land and the people are holy in this respect. The great seers of Gikuyu history are presented in *The River Between* such as Mugo wa Kibiro, who could unfold the future and speak to this community beyond the hills, Murungu who “saves people in their hour of need”, Wachiori, “the glorious warrior”, Kamiri, “the powerful magician”(Thiong’o, *River* 2-3) and the disappearance of Mugo is similar to Moses:

So God buried him ... but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day (Deuteronomy 34:06)...It seems highly likely that Ngugi has drawn here upon the Exodus 3 account of Moses’ encounter with the Divine presence emanating from the burning bush; it was here on this “holy ground”, that Moses received his commission as a leader who would deliver his fellow Israelities from their bondage in Egypt (Anonby 25).

Similarly, Chege took his son, Waiyaki, to the ancient Mugomo tree to explain the secret prophecy there:

It was a huge tree, thick and mysterious. Bush grew and bowed reverently around it. And there the ancient tree stood, towering over the hill, watching, as it were the whole

country. It looked holy and awesome, dominating Waiyaki's soul so that he felt very small in the presence of a mighty power (Thiong'o, *River* 15).

Chege is a "traditionalist" from Kamenno ridge and as he gets older, he decides to leave his prophecy to Waiyaki. "Salvation shall come from the hills. From the blood that flows in me, I say from the same tree, a son shall rise. And his duty shall be to lead and save the people" (Thiong'o, *River* 20). Therefore, Siundu and Wegesa assert that Ngugi is affected by Jesus's role in Christianity while creating his character: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me" (John 14:6) (qtd. in Siundu, Wegesa 7). Waiyaki, who is born in Gikuyu lands, grows up within the ideas of saving his lands from the white settlers; however, he is sent to the Siriana missionary school to learn the wisdom of the others in order to resume prophecy. Waiyaki's duty is to be a perfect leader as well as learning the secrets of the missionaries. People believe that it is possible for Waiyaki to be a great saviour either for Kamenno and for Makuyu: "For many seasons they learned and worked hard. Waiyaki made quick progress and impressed the white missionaries who saw in him a possible brave Christian leader of the Church" (Thiong'o, *River* 21-2).

Anonby states that "Ngugi endows Waiyaki with far more imagistic and allusive connections to Christ, the biblical Messiah than any other character in the novel" (30). For instance, Waiyaki is depicted as the saviour "the one whose words touched the souls of the people... he was like a shepherd speaking to his flock" (Thiong'o, *River* 96). It is identical with the resonance from John 10: 14: 16 "I am the good Shepherd... and the sheep... hear my voice" (qtd. in Anonby 31).

Furthermore, Anonby maintains that it is so clear to find some parallels between Christ's coming to Jerusalem and Waiyaki's reception by the people shouting "The Teacher! The Teacher! We want the Teacher!... Our children must learn. Show us the way. We will follow" (Thiong'o, *River* 96-7). Besides, his friend Kinuthia is a character who always sweeps away the dust on his way. As Anonby exemplifies, Kinuthia and Peter are similar in this aspect (36). Kinuthia admires Waiyaki: "Kinuthia now almost worshipped Waiyaki. He felt he could serve him forever. This was an unusual man, he told the elders" (Thiong'o, *River* 117).

Waiyaki's mind is busy with uniting the ridges through education. During his struggle, he feels like losing his religion. He does not know where he belongs to. Waiyaki's road intersects with inseparable daughters, Nyambura and her sister Muthoni, who decides to be circumcised as a Christian. She dies due to being circumcised, she wants to see her sister,

Nyambura, for a last time before she dies; therefore, Waiyaki helps them see each other. He finds Nyambura drawing water from the Honia River. As soon as he tells Nyambura the situation she is in, Nyambura “immediately left her waterpot and went to see Muthoni” (Thiong’o, *River* 49). This scene is a revitalization of an allusion to “John 4: 28” which tells about the “Samaritan woman who encountered Jesus at the well, left her waterpot and went back into the city to announce that she had met the Christ... the Messiah (4:25:29).” (qtd. in Anonby 32).

Waiyaki tries to please both groups, converts and traditionalists, as if he had been multiple identities. During his education, his mind is mixed up with the things he has to carry on his shoulders to be the saviour of the tribe and a new experience at Siriana missionary school. Reverend Stone, the leader of the Missionary School, mounts an onslaught against Gikuyu paganism with the aim of teaching the principles of Christianity in order to make them aware of their blindness with his supporter Joshua. Reverend Livingstone is a man who sees himself above others and his attitude towards others is virulent. He wages war on the people who live in Kamenno believing that their traditions symbolize the barbarity of Gikuyu customs. He finds the Gikuyu people “immoral through and through” (Thiong’o, *River* 56). Siundu and Wegesa regret that “people like the Reverend Livingstone, are a part of the history of the early Christian church in Kenya and even more unfortunately, it is they and their racist vision that remain unforgettable because of their efforts to have their earlier converts to obliterate their African past” (8). In addition to this, Ngugi tells about the same people and their aims in his book: “Take Siriana Mission for example, the men of God came peacefully. They were given a place. Now see what has happened. They have invited their brothers to come and take all the land” (Thiong’o *River* 64). Joshua assumes Reverend’s duty and he is against the old beliefs and traditions:

He realized the ignorance of his people. He felt the depth of the darkness in which they lived. He saw the muddy water through which they waded unaware of the dirt and mud. His people worshipped Murungu, Mwenenyaga, Ngai...He became baptized and it was only then that he felt at peace and stopped trembling”(Thiong’o, *River* 29).

Joshua emerges as a perfect Christian figure and Ngugi gives him the duty of “his namesake, the Joshua of the Old Testament, who in his final challenge to the Israelities had affirmed, ‘as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ (Joshua 24:15)” (qtd. in Anonby 28). It is no

coincidence to encounter the same words in the book : “For me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Thiong’o, *River* 136).

We see that Waiyaki is affected by missionary education, but in the end he finds no way out to save his people and chooses another way, the river between. Unfortunately, his striving for the girl he is in love with and the duty he carries have no meeting point since each religion has its own rules and it does not allow someone to make his or her own choice. The two different religions set Waiyaki and Nyambura apart from their dreams of being together. As Siundu and Wegesa assert:

This is, perhaps, the point in G.D Killam’s earlier reading of Ngugi’s early novels, where “the author establishes a metaphoric framework for the first novel *The River Between* in which he traces the correspondence between the Kikuyu and Christian creation myths which see Mumbi on the one hand, and Adam and Eve on the other, as founding figures.” It is because of this that the novel also has characters like Waiyaki and Muthoni who try to straddle – though unsuccessfully – the two worlds of Christian beliefs and traditional values. We aver that the failure of Waiyaki, Muthoni and Nyambura to successfully harmonize Christian beliefs and traditional Gikuyu values does not signal the irreconcilability of the two (10).

Muthoni’s efforts should not be ignored as she feels incomplete with Christianity; on the other hand, she clearly indicates that she follows the way of his father except for one thing: circumcision. She rises against her father so that she fulfills her desires to be a woman.

Circumcision of women was not important as a physical operation. It was what it did inside a person. It could not be stopped overnight...If the White man’s region made you abandon a custom and then did not give you something else of equal value, you became lost (Thiong’o, *River* 142).

Siundu and Wegesa explain that “she sacrifices a relatively comfortable life in order to satisfy a spiritual yearning that captures the bigger dilemma of people whose entrenchment in one belief system only makes them more acutely aware of the deficiencies of adopting a unilinear approach to life” (11).

Unfortunately, these choices make families separated from each other such that for Joshua: “Muthoni ceased to exist for him, in his heart” (Thiong’o, *River* 36). Like Muthoni,

Nwoye is rejected by his father Okonkwo who is a traditionalist and wants him to keep traditions not to follow Christian faith. He is a character created by Achebe in his famous work *Things Fall Apart*. These characters do not refuse to accept what they believe once, they want to experience the things they want. They are ready for the results of what they desire as we can see Muthoni's actions bring about her death as well as Nwoye's. In this respect, Waiyaki tries to solve this problem through education with the hope of uniting the ridges. Muthoni's death causes him to question himself and religion he believes in.

A religion that took no count of people people's way of life, a religion that did not recognize spots of beauty and truths in their way of life, was useless. It would not satisfy. It would not be a living experience, source of life and vitality. It would only maim a man's soul, making him fanatically cling to whatever promised security, otherwise he would be lost (Thiong'o, *River* 141).

He questions himself throughout the novel in relation to his experiences with missionary school, Muthoni's death, and his relationship with Nyambura. In fact, Ngugi presents us an objective view that Waiyaki sees Christianity not as bad as he thinks after being taught by missionaries. As a result, he believes that his religion should be reformed: "For Waiyaki knew that not all the ways of the white man were bad. *Even his religion was not essentially bad*. Some good, some truth shone through it. But the religion, the faith, needed washing" (Thiong'o, *River* 141). In this book, both Chege and Joshua are described as devoted religious figures who try to serve the people in their tribes. Chege sends Waiyaki to the missionary school to learn what they teach under the name of Christianity. Besides, Joshua appears to be a perfect Christian who avoids old tribal customs. Instead of love and mercy, his religious thoughts are pervaded by legalism. For example, he rejects his daughters because of the fact that one of his daughters, Muthoni, decides to be circumcised and the other, Nyambura, wants to get married with Waiyaki. At first sight, Nyambura remains to be an obedient daughter of Joshua. However she cannot resist the strong feeling of love and she declares her love to Waiyaki in front of her father: "she held Waiyaki's hand and said what no other girl at that time would have dared to say, ... you are brave and I love you" (Thiong'o, *River* 136). She thinks that he is the one who can guide her even though he belongs to a different religion. "She could only be saved through Waiyaki... her black Messiah, the promised one who could come and lead her into the light" (Thiong'o, *River*

103). Therefore, Waiyaki cannot understand Joshua's attitudes towards his daughters and the people since religious people should love, respect, and help each other for the sake of God. He shows no respect to the people who believe what he believes before. For instance, Muthoni's death shows no sign that Joshua relents. Actually, what Waiyaki looks for is to find a leader to show him which way to follow. As he acts alone, he feels lost. At the beginning, he believes that he is destined to protect the traditions of his tribe but after taking education in missionary school and falling in love with Nyambura, he begins to ignore the duties which are left by his father: "... with years the dream had grown less vivid and less real. He saw it mainly as an illusion, an old man's dream" (Thiong'o, *River* 39). He is also struck by Muthoni's last words which left a deep impact on him. "Waiyaki, tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman, Beautiful in the tribe..." (Thiong'o, *River* 53). These words make him question himself once again about the responsibility which is burdened by his father, Chege. In order to refresh his memory of the secret place, he visits there with the hope of feeling the same things once more. "Waiyaki stared at the country below him as if he were seeing nothing" (Thiong'o, *River* 140). In the end, he "wondered if he himself fitted anywhere. Did Kabonyi? Which of the two was the messiah, the man who was to bring hope in salvation to a troubled people? but how could a man be a saviour when he himself had already lost that contact with the past?" (Thiong'o, *River* 141-2).

The last chapter in the book depicts Waiyaki's situation in which he faces his fears and failure because of the oath he has to keep. Ngugi clearly presents Waiyaki's ideas before the final :

Even Waiyaki was affected by that great hush that fell over the land. He could hear his heart beat and he told himself: I must not fear. and he stood at a raised piece of ground and looked at the people; at their expectant faces and eyes. And he saw that many people had come and had filled up the initiation ground and the slopes of the hills... and he remembered Kerinyaga as he had seen it that great day with his father. I will look up into the hills from whence cometh my help. Waiyaki prayed that the cold fear that settled in his stomach be removed (Thiong'o, *River* 146).

The last part leaves many questions in the minds of the readers that Waiyaki is left alone with his decision and he is expected to explain the rumors. He never sees love as a betrayal factor. Kabonyi, who sees himself as a saviour of the tribe, brings Nyambura to the place to make Waiyaki face the public. When he sees Nyambura he tells himself: "... yet the

oath did not say that he should not love. And that was what he wanted to tell people” (Thiong’o, *River* 151). The crowd announces him as a traitor. Meanwhile, Waiyaki cannot listen to the things people tell him as his eyes look for his so-called faithful friend, Kinuthia. Kinuthia fails him with his wrong decisions by not informing Waiyaki about Nyambura, who is kidnapped by the Kiama, and also by leaving him alone and hiding himself among the crowd: “He looked beyond and saw the children he had helped in their thirst for learning; the teachers who were coming; Kinuthia... and he wondered “where is Kinuthia?” And then in doubt, a doubt that shocked him into a few minutes of agonized silence. Had Kinuthia betrayed him? Had Kinuthia been in league with Kabonyi?” (Thiong’o, *River* 151).

The final process of Waiyaki shows that he is aware of the facts which he could not see before: “All at once he felt more forcefully than he had ever felt before the shame of a people’s land being taken away, the shame of being forced to work on those same lands, the humiliation of paying taxes for a government that you knew nothing about” (Thiong’o, *River* 141).

To sum up, Waiyaki forgets what he stands for and this leads to failure in his messianic role and his death is inevitable. There appears two groups on the stage: traditionalists and Christian converts. First group tries to forget their pasts thinking that what they have been living so far is a sin like Joshua. The other group tries to keep their old beliefs and traditions in order not to lose what their ancestors leave them like Chege. Waiyaki does not fit himself within these two groups and steers a middle way as result. Education is the best way to learn how to struggle with missionaries but unfortunately he loses the game.

CHAPTER 3

FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

3.1. The History of Female Circumcision Issue in Kenya

European settlers' arrival in Kenya and missionary acts in Kikuyuland had first begun with the arrival of Portuguese in 16th century. Then Swahili people, who had been in touch with Arabs due to trade, were influenced by their religion and became Muslim and Arabs ruled the coastal part of the country in early 19th century (Bell 6). The British had appeared on stage in 1908 and had the control of southern half of Kenya (Bell 7). Missionaries had already been there and one of them was Ludwig Krapf as a "Christian pastor" and "the first white" in mid 1800s in the lands of Mount Kenya where one of the biggest tribes, Kikuyu, settled (Bell 7). Travelling around Africa, David Livingstone was to explore the work force of African people who had been used as slaves by Arabs so far and in his personal journal, he writes about slave trade: "The slave trade seems pushed into the very center of the continent from both sides. It must be profitable" (Bell 8). The discoveries of missionaries led the way for British to declare their authority firstly on the southern half of Kenya, and then the rest of it after the WWI. Controlling all parts of Kenya, the British had taken the lands and forced people to work for their own benefits. Increased taxes and other reasons created a huge gap between Europeans and Kikuyus. In order to suppress possible rebellious acts, British had founded missionary organizations which basically served in the field of medicine and education. The names of missionary organizations were stated below:

- Church Missionary Society (CMS)
- The Church of Scotland Mission (CSM)
- The African Inland Mission (AIM)
- The United Methodist Mission (UMM)
- The Consolata Fathers Roman Catholic Mission (Bell 9).

Bell states that they all formed the Alliance of Protestant Missions and among all CSM was the most influential owing to the fact that the first Kikuyu convert had been gained; however, it took 6 years to achieve it (10). The medical facilities were followed by missionary schools and the number of them mushroomed in 2 years up to 35 (Bell 13). But what is the relation of these historical facts with female circumcision? Dr. Arthur, who worked for both CSM and

government, was one of the leading voices of the government and he provoked a public outcry among Christian Kikuyus because he wanted them to stop practicing female circumcision. (Bell 15). In addition to this, he wanted people finish their relationships with churches and missionary schools unless they leave this rite. As a result, 20 people out of 53 left the schools as teachers and 16 elders, who worked for the churches, left their position at churches (Bell 15). The act of abolishing female circumcision led to a division in churches and missionary schools whether they converted to Christianity or not. It is clear that Kenyatta's decisions on this matter were important and Dr. Arthur tried to persuade him that female circumcision should be forbidden; meanwhile, Dr. Arthur was insisting to legalize female circumcision while Kenyatta suggested to improve health conditions in order to avoid illnesses caused by the circumciser (Bell 27). Kenyatta tried to compromise with the church suggesting that education would be the best solution instead of prohibiting it suddenly; however, Arthur and Kenyatta never reached a common ground that would help Kikuyus concerning female circumcision (Bell 27). For example, Kenyatta explains the times of dispute between Kikuyus and the Church on female circumcision in his work *Facing Mount Kenya*:

With such limited knowledge as they are able to acquire from their converts or from others, who invariably distort the reality of the *irua* in order to please them, these same missionaries pose as authorities on African customs. How often have we not heard such people saying: "We have lived in Africa for a number of years and we know the African mind well."? This, however, does not qualify them or entitle them to claim authority on sociological or anthropological questions. The African is in the best position properly to discuss and disclose the psychological background of tribal customs, such as *irua*, etc., and he should be given the opportunity to acquire the scientific training which will enable him to do so. This is a point which should be appreciated by well-meaning anthropologists who have had experience in the difficulties of field-work in various parts of the world (Bell 29).

After becoming the president of Kenya African Union, which aimed to show the unfair system of British government, Kenyatta gained the trust of his people and were ready to move against colonial government and he took an effective role in Mau Mau movement (Bell 29). 1963 was the year of freedom felt in the hearts of all people in Kenya with Kenyatta's representing the country as a prime minister and a year later as its president (Bell 31).

Kikuyus still could not find the answer why people are still obsessed with female circumcision like Fredrick Ndungu who is a Christian man having an orphanage in Kenya:

When the Romans were brought Christianity, they got to keep their culture. Likewise, when the Europeans were brought Christianity, they also got to keep their culture. If this is true, why were the Kikuyu people asked to forsake theirs? (Bell 32).

3.2.Irrevocable Rite: Circumcision

“From a social and cultural perspective, female circumcision is a practice of unknown origin, and although religion has been used to justify it, recent evidence suggests it pre-dates Christianity and Islam” (Kiiru 37).

This issue is subjected to many works and criticized by many people and even it became one of the biggest problems that hindered the relationships between governments and even churches. Two different opinions divided the Kikuyu tribe and even it affected the smallest part of the society. In general, this part expresses the meaning and the importance given to the issue.

Circumcision is a passage to adulthood and an end to childhood. It is the way to participate in the society both as a member and as an individual. It is the symbol of courage and second birth. Before this spiritual event, candidates should take a cold bath in the river in order not to suffer from the pain afterwards:

“To Waiyaki, bathing so early in the morning, the water seemed to cut his skin like a sharp knife. ... all along the banks the other initiates sat, waiting for the surgeon”(Thiong’o, *River* 49).

Circumcision starts with the sunrise. Boys are circumcised by men and girls by women. To do this one should have no sign of fear on his or her face. Because showing fear leads to reputation damage of a candidate among others. It can even affect the social status of a person who steps into adulthood to marry: “It was his boy’s ambition to test his courage at

the ceremony. All his life Waiyaki had waited for this day, for this very opportunity to reveal his courage like a man” (Thiong’o, *River* 39-45).

In order to celebrate this, all candidates gather and have fun by dancing and singing songs. “Everywhere candidates for the initiation were gathering. They went from house to house, singing and dancing the ritual songs, the same that had been sung from the old times, when Demi were on the land.” (Thiong’o, *River* 39).

Circumcision is a heavy process while concerning the psychology of the candidate. However, people are so willing to experience it due to celebrations which involves singing, dancing and tasting special food:

Girls...look forward to circumcision period because it is a time of joy, happiness and festivities both at home and in the community. There are many visitors feasting, dancing, freedom and abundance of good food. It is a time when requests are honored and promises kept. They are also given special treatment, showered with gifts and granted favours (Kiiru 40).

As an outsider, this ritual seems to be unnecessary especially for the women. However, one thing is obvious that the veins of the society are bounded by this rite. For centuries people, organizations and also governments have been trying to ban it. In contrast, people still today experience it one way or another knowing the negative effects of it.

3.3. Muthoni’s Death and Waiyaki’s Role

Circumcision is one of the central themes in *The River Between*. There are two ridges one of which tries to keep circumcision alive for the sake of their traditions and the other sees it as an unacceptable sin. For Kameno ridge, people go on their lives according to the traditions in the past. On the contrary, the people from Makuyu ridge convert into Christianity with the thought that circumcision is not acceptable. Nottingham and Rosberg point out:

...It was a bitter and enduring division between the forces of Kikuyu nationalism and the Protestant missions. The roots of the conflict are located in the Kikuyu challenge to the total cultural transformation demanded of them by the missionary church. The missions excluded any possibility of selective change, by which the Kikuyu might

absorb some elements of Western culture while rejecting others as unacceptable to their values or social institutions (105).

Joshua, the Christian leader of the Makuyu ridge even prays “God to forgive him for marrying a woman who had been circumcised” (Thiong’o, *River* 31). His daughters, Nyambura and Muthoni, grow up with the idea that their father “was against such initiation rites, especially the female circumcision, which was taking on a new significance in the relationship between Makuyu and Kamenno” (Thiong’o, *River* 30-1).

Circumcision issue appears at the beginning when Nyambura and Muthoni went to Honia River to draw water. Muthoni was thinking deeply since the rituals are close and she explains what she feels about it. Nyambura gets surprised when Muthoni says:

Why! Are we fools? Father and mother are circumcised. Are they not Christians? Circumcision did not prevent them from being Christians. I too have embraced the whiteman’s faith. However, I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood. You learn the ways of the tribe. Yes, the white man’s God does not satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here, in the hills that you and I know (Thiong’o, *River* 30-1).

She wants to feel what it means to be a woman through circumcision. She is aware of the fact that she cannot cut herself off the old ways of tribe. On the other hand, she agrees that she believes in Christ but the conflict here is that she also wants to experience the tribal customs like her parents. Other people get shocked when they hear such a striking decision as she is the daughter of a devout Christian, Joshua. For instance, Waiyaki asks her the reason why she wants to be circumcised in order to understand what factors can bring her into such a position:

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 could I be outside the tribe, when all the girls born with me at the same time have left me (Thiong’o, *River* 50-1).

Another idea that can express Muthoni’s choice is stated in Mbiti’s work, *African Religions and Philosophy* :

According to Gikuyu ways of thinking, nobody is an isolated individual. To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, ritual and festivals of that community (Kiiru 2).

Therefore, Muthoni feels herself as a part of the Gikuyu tribe and as every member of the society affects each other one way or another she wants to experience the circumcision like other girls. Another example can be Charity Waciuma's her own situation in *The Daughter of Mumbi*. Whereas Muthoni decides to be circumcised without hesitation, Waciuma could not fulfill herself. When her parents kept her away from circumcision, she was alienated from her friends:

About this time, we lost many of our good friends when they went through the circumcision ceremony. Because we Christian girls had not been to the river, we were unclean. It was believed that a girl who was uncircumcised would cause the death of circumcised husband. Moreover, an uncircumcised woman would be barren (Bruner 89-90)

Concerning the struggle of people in Kenya against British rule, Charity Waciuma reveals her intention to female circumcision and its effect on the traditional life and uncircumcised girls who are isolated from the society because of their choices. *The River Between* and *Daughter of Mumbi* share a common point that both sisters are not able to explore excision due to their beliefs. It is an autobiographical novel which explores the experiences of a girl in a colonial world where people from the same region separated owing to having different religious beliefs.

Similar to *The River Between*, it is the story of people, who refuse to take sides as they are both carriers of their traditions and volunteer of education. As a result, they are in between like Waiyaki and Nyambura. Circumcision is not only a passage to adulthood but also taking a position in society. If you are not circumcised, you are "unclean" as Waciuma writes "...belief that no woman begin to grow up until she was circumcised" (Bruner 90). This shows how circumcision has a greater place in the core of the traditional life.

Another similar topic in her book is the desire to serve her country because of colonizer's despisement acts towards Kikuyus: "...become educated in the white man's ways and in his knowledge so that I could help in turning him out of my country" (Bruner 44). She

also gives close attention to Mau Mau movement: “Any day (she and her schoolmates) might be off to join the Kikuyu freedom struggle” (Bekers 49). Charity’s parents broke away from village life to attend mission school and married with the help of missionaries. Charity’s historical and traditional knowledge come from her grandfather who refuses Charity’s father because of being Christian. Her grandfather who is a strict follower of Kikuyu custom, wants them to be circumcised due to the fact that some of other Christian Kikuyus are allowed to be circumcised by their parents. Since circumcision means to be ready to handle the responsibilities of being woman, Charity and her sister were expelled from society for being uncircumcised. Moreover, the love story between an uncircumcised girl and a boy is addressed in this book like Nyambura and Waiyaki’s in *The River Between*. What are the results of such division in the society? Female circumcision issue will affect one’s position in the society where there are others permitted to be circumcised by their parents even though they are Christians. This will lead to alienation of these people even in their own societies. Families will break up because of this conflict as church never supports this ritual. As a result, lovers end their relationship in both novels.

We see that uncircumcised characters always feel sorry about the difficulties they have been facing because they are too distant from the enjoyment of these rituals. Circumcision makes people social as it includes dances, singing and teaching about traditional laws, family life, marriage community; being an husband or wife or even motherhood. Therefore, division of girls have caused escapes either from home or from church. We see that at that period, some of the girls wanted to keep traditional way of life and became circumcised and some rejected it because of physical pain or just because somebody decided it for them like missionaries. In the quote below you will find another face of circumcision and how missionaries have powerful control over the Christian girls:

According to Charity Waciama’s semi- autobiographical account of attending another Presbyterian boarding school in central Kenya during the 1950s, all school girls, upon returning from holidays were subjected to physical exams by a white doctor to determine if they had been excised over the break; if so, they were moved to a separate dormitory where “their lives made a misery and they became very withdrawn.” Waciama described such mission actions as “reversing” the situation in her rural home area, where the excised were privileged and the unexcised, chided (Thomas 82).

Likimani's *They Shall Be Chastised* is another story which shows how missionary acts put a lot of strain on the heart of natives (Bekers 49). In addition to this, female circumcision is again one of topics causing disagreement between "the traditionalists and the converts of the village of Wairingu in the decades leading up to Kenya's independence" (Bekers 49). Traditional people overplay the ritual practices to have an important position in the public and like Waiyaki's father, Kimori's father wants his son to become circumcised to have a respected place in the society:

"Who would ever recognize him in this community? Who would ever trust him with plans of the clan? Who would accept him as a brave man?" (Bekers 50).

Kimori's mother also considers female circumcision important especially when it comes to wifedom and motherhood of "her prospective daughter in law":

"She can never be mature unless she is circumcised. She has (to be) to be marry my son. She has (to be) to be regarded as a wife. She has to (be) to be anything." (Bekers 50)

Unlike his mother's decision for him, it does not matter for him to get married with a circumcised or uncircumcised girl because the only thing he considers is to have a "missionary wife" and he wishes to live like Christians who are "civilized, clean and educated" :

"I must get a missionary wife and I must lead a Christian way of life, civilized, clean and educated. And I will be known once more as "Zakariah" the name I laboured for" (Bekers 51).

Nwapa's novel *Efuru* also touches on the subject of female circumcision. According to Igbo Tradition, female circumcision is described as "bath" or "washed" with the words "iwu ahu" meaning "to wash the body" (Bekers 29).

When it comes to *The River Between*, Joshua cannot prevent Muthoni being circumcised despite the fact that he brings up their children with these strong beliefs. Unlike him, Muthoni rejects that circumcision is a curse which people should stay away:

“ Joshua heard the death of Muthoni without a sign of emotion on the face... Muthoni had ceased to exist on the very day that she had sold herself to the devil...Anything cursed here on earth would also be cursed in heaven.” (Thiong’o, *River* 53-4)

Joshua thinks that Muthoni’s disobedience brings about her death. Muthoni’s death never solves the problems of the two opponent groups. Instead, it makes them believe that this is a sign for Joshua and his followers. While Muthoni’s death is seen as a punishment due to her betrayal to Christianity, and for missionaries as barbaric, people from Kameno think that it is a curse on Joshua since he is converted by leaving old customs and traditions behind. Joshua does not let anyone, who is circumcised, to Christian churches; therefore, Waiyaki decides to set up independent schools. Joshua prays God to give him strength to endure the rituals of circumcision:

God, look at their preparation,

O, God, why don’t you descend on this wicked generation and finish their evil ways?

Circumcision is coming. Fight by me, oh Lord.

He felt like going out with a stick, punishing these people, forcing them on to their knees
(Thiong’o, *River* 37).

Waiyaki becomes a respected teacher as he works hard in order to set up new schools for all the children from all ridges. Setting up new schools is a needed for those who are circumcised and are not allowed to schools as we can see the importance of this fact when we analyse Ngugi’s own life. Aminu Abdullahi interviews with him on this important point and Ngugi says:

Some of the missionary churches would not allow boys and girls to go to their schools if their fathers had not renounced circumcision. So the Kikuyu, or a majority of the Kikuyus, sort of broke away from the churches and established their own churches and started their own independent schools run by the independent churches.”(Duerden, Pieterse 125).

While Waiyaki sees education as a tool for uniting both ridges, his people see it as a weapon against white man. As a result, circumcision is the major reason that hinders the unity of the ridges.

In 1929, a number of missionary societies in the Central Province- the Church of Scotland Mission led by Dr. Arthur; and the Gospel Missionary Society and the African Inland Mission, which had already condemned female circumcision as barbaric and unchristian- went further in their campaign against the practice and announced that all their African teachers and agents would have to sign a declaration solemnly swearing never to circumcise female children; never to become a member of the Kikuyu Central Association, the leading African political organization at the time; never to become a follower of Jomo Kenyatta, the KCA's general secretary, then in England as the organization's delegate; and never to join any part unless it was organized by the government or missionaries (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 111).

Ngugi's approach towards this significant event is ambivalent because of the two characters Muthoni, and Waiyaki. They want to stick to their beliefs tightly as well as embracing new cultures. While Muthoni wants to remain Christian, she also wants to experience circumcision. The conflict clearly appears after Muthoni's death. She is proud of herself that she becomes a woman by being circumcised. Besides her last words are: "Waiyaki, tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman, beautiful in the tribe..." (Thiong'o, *River* 53)

When it comes to Waiyaki, his father thinks that he is the one who can save the people in the tribe. For Chege, he is the expected saviour but throughout the story he always asks the same question to himself where he should stand. He goes to Siriana to learn the magic of the white man so that he could help the people learn the secrets. But with the death of Muthoni, his love to Nyambura and his education in the Siriana affect his thoughts. That's why, he is unaware of the fact that he follows the river between. Waiyaki, "attempts to chart a middle course between two antagonistic positions: a group which adheres to the cultural dictates of the intrusive doctrine of Christianity and a group which rejects all outside influences and demands a continuing allegiance to local Gikuyu tradition" (Cantalupo 232). His father, Chege, wants him to go to Siriana Missionary school to find out the possible threads that must be sorted out with the light of the belief in his heart that he is the one who can save their lands from the white hands. When Waiyaki comes back, he shows that he is still stick to their traditions by being circumcised. He struggles for his people and starts to build independent schools. He becomes the head of the Kiama. He tackles this difficult task, prophecy, through education. His target is to unite the ridges through education but he comes to a point that he, himself feels lost.

Was he that saviour? Was he the Promised One or had Chege's mind been roving? How would he save them? Chege had placed a burden on his shoulders, a burden hard to carry. A saviour did something big, something that had power to change the lives of the people. A saviour did something startling, a thing that happened so suddenly one night that nobody could resist its power. What had he himself done? (Thiong'o, *River* 119).

What Waiyaki desires for his people is to let them know the secret of white man and have their own vision of life. Waiyaki misses a point, which leads to his failure in the end, a point that one cannot follow the way in between. The problem roots in the colonial past, the outsiders had come, ruled and changed Gikuyu traditions. While the traditions especially circumcision is the way of life in Kameno, in Makuyu the initiation is seen as a sin which has to be banned after the death of Muthoni. At this point, Waiyaki is seen as a hope for the people who are willing to live united and peaceful. When the relationship between Waiyaki and Nyambura is no longer a secret, all the people turn their backs to them thinking that Waiyaki, "The Teacher", betrays them because of the fact that he is in love with a girl who is not circumcised.

3.4. Different Perspectives on Circumcision

This issue has been addressing from literature and media, to public health, history, science, law and psychology, etc. People who are against female circumcision includes creative writers such as Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivorian), Alice Walker (American), Calixthe Beyala (Camerounian), Mariama Barry (Senegalese/Guinean), Annor Nimako (Ghanaian), Fatou Keïta (Ivorian), Fatou Fanny Cissé (Ivorian), Osman Conteh (Sierra Leonean), Nuruddin Farah (Somali), Nura Abdi (Somali), Waris Dirie (Somali/Austrian), Khady (Senegalese), and Katoucha Niane (Guinean); filmmakers such as Ousmane Sembène (Senegalese) and Alice Walker (American); medical practitioners such as Chantal Patterson (Caribbean/ French), Patricia Akweongo (Ghanaian), and Olayinka Koso-Thomas (Nigerian); social scientists/university dons such as G.K. Nukunya (Ghanaian), Christopher Ukhun (Nigerian), Josephine Guidy Wandja (Ivorian), Roselyn Hellen Lung'Aho (Kenyan), Ayodele Ogundipe (Nigerian), Rebecca Y. Ganusah (Ghanaian), Cosme Zinsou Quenum (Beninois), and Isaac Olawole Albert (Nigerian); literary critics such as Rangira Beatrice Gallimore

(Rwandan) and Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana (Senegalese/German); Human Rights advocates such as Awa Thiam (Senegalese), Efua Torkenoo (Ghanaian), and Alice Walker (American); and NGOs/CVOS such as Centre-Djoliba in Mali and RASEBEF in Senegal (Asaah 11-2).

The point why they are against circumcision is due to its inconsistency with human rights and health. According to Article 5 of UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (Asaah 13).

In addition to this, Patterson states that circumcision causes “psychic, psychological, and psychiatric disorders, from hemorrhage to sterility and frigidity” (14). But he expostulates about using the word “barbaric” to explain FGM. Also the groups named here have tried to make this word less offensive for the others who are stick to their traditions and have right to experience circumcision: “Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, advocacy groups such as Mali’s Centre-Djoliba, Senegal’s Le Rassemblement sénégalais pour le bien-être de la femme (RASEBEF), the Inter-African Committee, and FORWARD (Foundation for Women’s Health, Research, and Development) (Asaah 15).

Furthermore, Asaah emphasizes that while criticizing the rituals people should not ignore “African humanity” and “African values” (14). In addition it, Asaah deals with the issue of female circumcision in Ngugi’s book *The River Between* for the fact that his attitude towards the issue is “ambivalent”:

While it is true that the latter Ngugi, more progressive—some would even say more doctrinaire—and more focused, has little difficulty demonstrating the courage of his convictions in unambiguous terms, his treatment of FGM in *The River Between*, as a young writer, is certainly ambivalent... To some degree, the novel itself encapsulates the breadth of the current debate on FGM: the abolitionist group (Christian missionaries, colonial conquerors/settlers and African converts,) syncretistic reformists (Muthoni, Waiyaki and perhaps Nyambura), apologists (Kabonyi, Kamau, and the Kiama), and wait-and-see ambivalent observers (Kinuthia). (2-3)

By the same token, Florence Dolphyne handles the issue in her book, *Feminism is for Everybody* and we see that and Dolphyne believes in the power of education. Dolphyne looks

at the issue with an objective perspective. While she points out that banning circumcision will make it more difficult for those, who are stick to their traditions, we should focus on the solutions of how to “make it possible for it to be performed under proper medical conditions in hospitals” (Asaah 18).

Ngugi’s views about education in the book are overlapped quite alot with Dolphyne’s: “...education helps to expose the fallacies in the justification for clitoridectomy, it constitutes an all-important tool in the healthy modification and eventual eradication of the operation” (Asaah 18). Also Kenyatta expects people to respect their deeply rooted traditions in his work *Facing Mount Kenya* :

The real argument lies not in the defence of the surgical operation or its details, but in the understanding of a very important fact in the tribal psychology of the Gikuyu- namely, that this institution which has enormous educational, social, moral, and religious implications, quite from the operation itself. For the present, it is impossible for a member of the tribe to imagine an initiation without clitoridectomy. Therefore the abolition of the surgical element in this custom means to the Gikuyu the abolition of the whole institution (Asaah 6).

In *The River Between* Ngugi simply tries to show that rituals, dances are all important to the spirit of tribe and some of the people’s aims are to protect these traditions from missionaries. Ngugi tries to give a social message that one should protect traditions and values despite being under the influence of others. Ngugi’s descriptions are ambivalent due to the fact that he both shows us the beautiful and ugly sides of circumcision. On the one hand, Muthoni is such a brave character that she chooses a way she never knows. She is brought up by a devout Christian but she prefers to be circumcised. She appears to be a strong and determined character. She has no fear and she does what she believes. But the problem is that she never leaves Christianity and the idea of being circumcised, either. All the preparations and frenzy dances draw a harmonous picture in the minds of the readers. However, her death presents us that circumcision of women can be dangerous. On the other hand, Waiyaki is brought up by Chege, who teaches him the secret ways of the ridges and leaves prophecy to him. In order to learn the secrets of the white missionaries, he wants his son to undertake a risky journey to Siriana. When he finishes his education, he becomes a man with the old ways of the tribe. After that he becomes a respected teacher, but he believes in the power of education and he

thinks that the ridges can be united through it. Sometimes he feels lost as he is educated by missionaries and he is in love with a girl who is not circumcised. That's why, the characters and their relations to circumcision seem to be all ambivalent.

3.5.The Results

Lyons maintains that "FGM" has been decreasing. An estimate by the WHO is:

Extensive work by local, national and international actors over the past two to three decades has resulted in progress on several fronts. The practice is internationally recognized as a violation of human rights, and many countries have put in place policies and legislation to ban it. The number of women from practising areas who do not want to continue the practice is increasing, and there are indications that the prevalence is declining in some countries, and that it is less prevalent in younger than in older age groups (Asaah 17).

Furthermore, according to report of the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey in 1998 "nearly 40% of Kenyan women have undergone some form of genital circumcision. In Kisii, a rural area southwest of Nairobi, that figure rises to 97%" (Wise 4). Daniel Arap Moi, the president of Kenya, banned circumcision in 2001 and of course it brought about some divisions in society. People, especially mothers, seek for new ways to make girls experience this traditional rite, at least to experience the feeling of it, and as a result, they have organised a group "Ntanira na Mugambo," which means "circumcision through words". The group began their performances first in 1996 and they have been still celebrating in this way. "Song, education, celebration, and a week of seclusion" take the place of circumcision (Wise 4).

Asaah concludes that in spite of all these improvements, the process is moving at its own pace. Therefore, he suggests that the process should be hastened in order to reach a great amount of people:

...a vast variety of interventions, some of which have proven very successful, suggest that it will be possible to significantly reduce the prevalence within one generation. This, combined with advocacy at the international level, has created a momentum suggesting that such a change is possible and that the willingness to invest the necessary resources can be achieved (Asaah 17).

The issue of female circumcision still remains as a disputable topic. There are still plans to put a ban on female circumcision such as Ministry of Health's National plan of action for the elimination of female genital mutilation in Kenya 1999-2019 (Bell 31). Bell states that "in 1998, 38 percent of women in Kenya from ages fifteen to forty nine had undergone the practice, according to the 1998 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey. Among the Kikuyus, the rate was 43 percent (31).

3.6. Ngugi's Latest Views about Circumcision

Ngugi thinks that his book *The River Between* never upholds the women circumcision. In order to prove this, he exemplifies Muthoni's painful death by saying that "When you read *The River Between*, Muthoni dies after undergoing female circumcision. This shows that this is not a good practice" (*Ngugi Comes Clear About Female Circumcision in Africa*). One should not criticize cultural elements, which played a very crucial role in African societies, by looking at the events from the eyes of the coloniser. Instead, one should look at the present not the past because culture takes shape with the society. If societies change, the cultural factors change relatedly. Ngugi adds that "One cannot say that African culture is walking and worshipping under trees (since we did not have buses to reach the places then). We must accept that culture changes, just as we have Maasai herding cattle we also have Maasai with degrees and wearing suits. We have huts and skyscrapers also. This is what comprises our culture. Any group that operates on the past has missed the point" (*Ngugi Comes Clear About Female Circumcision in Africa*).

CHAPTER 4

SETTLER COLONY VERSUS TRADITION

4.1. Local Cultures and Global Forces: Waiyaki in between Modern and Traditional Way of Life

Waiyaki is a young and brave teacher who struggles for the unity of his country where people are divided into groups. He is modest and trustworthy; therefore, Chege leaves prophecy to him, left by their ancestors:

“Chege had been young. Now he was growing old. However, he remembered something in his old age. A light shone in his eyes, a flicker of hope. He would guard it and divulge the knowledge to none but the right one” (Thiong’o, *River* 8).

All people respect Waiyaki and follow his advices like his father and grandfather who are prominent characters in his development as they are supposed to unfold the future and know the ways of the hills. Ngugi describes his eyes as a pair of burning lights which make someone feel ashamed if one catches his eyes.

...whenever he looked at someone, they seemed to burn bright. A light came from them, a light that appeared to pierce your body, seeing something beyond you, into your heart. Not a man knew what language the eyes spoke. Only if the boy gazed at you, you had to obey (Thiong’o, *River* 10).

One of his distinguished features is his scar on his left eye which symbolises his courage that defies even a goat:

He had a well-built athletic body. His hair was tough and dry with kinks that finished in a clear outline on the forehead. Just above the left eye was a slightly curved scar. He had got it from a wild goat...that was a long while ago. The wound had healed, leaving him a hero among the boys although he had run after the goat for sheer fun

and enjoyment of the scene. That, however, was not the sole reason why the other boys, young and old, promptly followed him (Thiong'o, *River* 6).

Chege plans to shoot the enemy with their own gun. As a result, he sends his son to learn the secrets which make people leave everything once and follow their way. It is worth pointing out that the only aim of Chege is to preserve the purity of the ridges by sending his son to learn the secrets of the missionaries so that they could fire their own bulletins in order to clear the ridges from the missionaries. Although Chege trusts his son, he keeps in his mind that Waiyaki can be affected by their "magic". He has no doubt after he undergoes circumcision which is one of the most important rites of his customs. The ceremonies bring about a newer clash between missionaries and the parents who send their children to take education in missionary school. After announcing such an important fact, Waiyaki and his friends such as Kamau and Kinuthia build their own schools which make people believe that they have a leader who will save them and give them and their children what they need. He is chosen as a leader to Kiama, the organization of keeping the tribe clean and safe. While Waiyaki's aim is to unite the ridges through education, people want to regain the control of their lands. It is not difficult to perceive that they have nothing to do with education but to repossess their own lands. While working so hard for the sake of his tribe, he falls in love with Nyambura unexpectedly. His relationship with Nyambura inverts everything and this leads to his decadence. His messianic role is ambivalent: from the beginning his father admits that he is the one to save people; he develops himself as a teacher. He is seen to be the saviour but in the end his messianic role is over due to Nyambura, uncircumcised Christian girl. It should be implied that Waiyaki forgets the main reason for the struggle; in contrast, focuses on education thinking that it would be the best way to reunite them. People desire to regain their lands which are left by the great seers to their ancestors. Their origins are rooted by the ancestors who "gave the country to them and their children and the children of the children, *tene na tene*, world without end...." (Thiong'o, *River* 18). The reason why Chege wants to believe that his son is the one who will be the saviour is Mugo's words: "Mugo often said you could not cut the butterflies with a panga. You could not spear them until you learnt and knew their ways and movement. Then you could trap, you could fight back" (Thiong'o, *River* 24).

Chege does not know "the ways of the white magic"; therefore, he does not know how to fight back. Instead, he wants his son to do this. It is obvious to see that both of them are not sure whether Waiyaki is the one to save people or not; what they do is to wait and see.

Orature has an important place in Ngugi's life and it is clear that myths and oaths are bases of tribal life. Ngugi reflects how oath is important for tribes. For example, after Waiyaki is circumcised, he becomes a real member of his society and by taking oath he attaches himself to the tribe not only mentally but also sincerely. Before he is left to the hands of Kiama, people make him remember the oath he is taken. Therefore, his resign from Kiama is a dead end for Waiyaki.

Waiyaki's leadership is shaped due to his father as well as his father's relations with great seer Mugo. Despite the fact that his aim is different, his failure is as a consequence of his engagement with missionaries who are devout Christians. He starts being aware of the insufficient sides of his religion, that's why he questions his position. The education he takes gives him strength as well as new perspectives; therefore, he tries to unite good parts of each religion:

His god, education guided him and showed him the light made him overcome personal frustrations and hardships...He had not yet stopped to think where all this was leading, whether the new awareness and enthusiasm he had helped to create would be quenched by education (Thiong'o, *River* 109).

His aim to be "saviour" and "The Teacher" to carry the light of the education fail due to his attend to Sunday rituals which are headed by Joshua. Firstly, the members of Kiama and the people from Kameno see him attending his rituals and this poses a threat to his position as a teacher. Second failure is caused by Muthoni's circumcision. He takes her to the hospital since her aunt cures her wound using herbal medicine. He keeps a protective eye on her and this leads to rumors which result in unexpected reactions from Kiama owing to the fact that Kabonyi imposes provoking ideas on Kiama claiming that Waiyaki uses his position not for the sake of his tribe but for enemies. The last but not least reason for his failure is due to his being "thahu" that is to touch a person who is not circumcised and unclean according to their beliefs. Nyambura is not circumcised and unless she is cleaned, they have no right to be in love with each other. Kabonyi inflames the members of Kiama so that he could carry the prophecy. He hates Waiyaki and his actions make Kabonyi's way easy to pass. The Kiama decides to set Joshua's house on fire but Waiyaki warns Joshua who is shocked by this event. However, Waiyaki is seen in front gate of Joshua's house after learning Kiama's actions and this ruins Waiyaki's whole life and leads to his death. He is not sure whether he can shoulder

prophecy like his father and his ancestors or not. He compares and contrasts pros and cons of his religion and that of Christians:

For Waiyaki knew that not all the ways of the white man were bad. Even his religion was not essentially bad. Some good, some truths shone through it. But the religion, the faith needed washing, cleaning away the dirt, leaving only the eternal. And that eternal was the truth had to be reconciled to the traditions of the people. A people's traditions could not be swept away overnight. That way laid disintegration. Such a tribe would have no roots, for a people's roots were in their traditions going back to the past, the very beginning (Thiong'o, *River* 141).

It seems that his failure is related with unexpected social identity which is given by his father Chege and his finding himself in the middle of the problems which must be solved immediately:

To Waiyaki whole experience seemed a dream. What had he, a mere boy, to do with a saviour? Was he to go about in the ridges crying "Listen! A leader shall come from the hills to save you...?" ... He felt a heaviness making him a man. In body, he was still a boy" (Thiong'o, *River* 21).

4.2.The Dead End: Nyambura and Waiyaki

Waiyaki takes a middle way to provide unity between two opponent groups and it seems that love is a supportive element of his actions. Nyambura thinks critically and takes a middle way like Waiyaki. Both Muthoni and Nyambura decide on their own and follow the way which will take them to the eternal happiness as we can see Muthoni's death. She dies happily feeling complete since her aim is to be a real woman.

Love is a unifying element in *The River Between* due to the fact that both Nyambura and Waiyaki are incomplete and lonely. Nyambura loses his inseparable sister Muthoni and Waiyaki is affected by her death since he is the messenger who is to tell Muthoni's last words to Nyambura. His loneliness deepens with the death of his father, Chege. Therefore, love between two is an expected action which carries the message that there should be unity between tribes. He feels empty and nothing resolves this feeling of obscurity. At the same time, the readers observe that Nyambura is facing the same feelings and the Honia River

seems to appeal to her inner thoughts with its serene flow. Love has a fulfilling role which stops the feeling of vast emptiness in their hearts:

In a blind moment of passion he took her into his arms and pressed her close to his breast while tears from her eyes fell on to his shoulder. Nyambura did not resist but allowed herself to be held by him, the only man who could save her from her misery. Neither spoke. They were one. Waiyaki thought his quest was over (Thiong'o, *River* 106-7).

4.3. Prejudiced Follower and Strict Christian: Joshua

“The white man cannot speak the language of the hills, and knows not the ways of the land. But the white man had come to Siriana and Joshua and Kabonyi had been converted. They had abandoned the ways of the ridges and followed the new faith” (Thiong'o, *River* 7-8).

Joshua is a strict, devout Christian leader, who cleans himself off the old ways and customs and prays for his destination to the Heaven not to Hell by not following the old rituals such as circumcision. He isolates himself from the rest of the society and follows the way that takes him to Jerusalem not to Egypt. Even his house is different from the other ones which stand in harmony:

There was a general uniformity between all the houses that lay scattered over this ridge. They consisted of round thatched huts standing in groups of three or four. A natural hedge surrounded each household. Joshua's house was different. His was a tin-roofed rectangular building standing quite distinctly by itself on the ridge. The tin roof was already decaying and let in rain freely so on the top of the roof could be seen little scraps of sacking that covered the very bad parts. The building standing so distinctly and defiantly, was perhaps an indication that the old isolation of Makuyu from the rest of the world was being broken down (Thiong'o, *River* 28).

He tries to hurdle the problems and never lets anyone to pull him back whether that person carries the same blood or not. Those who are willing to continue the old tribal life like his own daughter, Muthoni, have no place in his life. Joshua's second birth is given by the

white settlers as he rejects all the traditions and social norms of his origin; instead he believes what he is taught by the missionaries:

“He had clothed himself with a religion decorated smeared with everything white. He renounced his past and cut himself away from those life-giving traditions of the tribe” (Thiong’o, *River* 141).

Joshua is not aware of the fact that he forces people to suppress inner feelings and desires; that’s why his daughters do not obey his words anymore. For example, feeling incomplete, Muthoni aims to fulfill her desires and she completes her goal by being circumcised. Nyambura too listens to her feelings which sets her free and goes away with Waiyaki who tries to satisfy his feelings by choosing a way in between. This separates Muthoni and Waiyaki from other characters in the story since they both struggle for combining two contrary ideas, which have no possibility to be accepted by the people of both tribes, Kameno and Makuyu. While delirious, Muthoni dies by repeating Jesus’s name before her death. In this respect, Joshua fails to be adequate to the needs of his daughters as a father. He shows no effort to compensate for being separated by his daughters. On the contrary, he rejects both immediately after their disobedience to him.

On the other hand, what attracts readers attention about his way of life is that it is irreconcilable when we consider the lives of other devout who support that the love of people come from the love of God. Joshua puts no emphasis on mercy, or need for love in his rituals. He opposes to traditional way of life, especially circumcision which is the first to be abolished. Ngugi implies that Reverend Stone is the person who is strict about removing circumcision and imposes it on Joshua.

While Joshua acts as a strict Christian, Waiyaki is a flexible character who shoulders his father’s prophecy but respects the education which he takes from the missionaries.

4.4. Hybridized Characters: Ngugi and Waiyaki

Ngugi grew up during the times when people struggled for freedom in thought, in belief and the way of life which involves customs and traditions. He wages his encounter still today by writing in Gikuyu language. By reading his works, one can deduce that he wants people in Africa to stick to their customs and traditions not to make the same mistakes which

bring about new crisis. Therefore, Ngugi sought to solve problems, which have been conveyed by the settlers in order not to destroy cultural diversity. Ngugi's characters are combination of his life story which belongs to different parts and mirror realities based on colonial times. In order to explore in what ways the protagonist Waiyaki and the author share similarities and how differ from each other, one should know author's life story, the place where he spent his childhood, and how he was affected by missionaries. It is quite amazing to have witnessed how he depicts all these events in his book *The River Between* with his perfect characterization; Waiyaki, who is generated thanks to author's experiences.

It is not surprising that Ngugi imposes Waiyaki a duty which has a broader meaning being a teacher and a leader of his tribe. Because being teacher means to be a saviour as well. As a teacher and a scholar, Ngugi himself fights with a pen not a gun. For instance, Chege tries to protect his people and sends his son Waiyaki to take education from missionaries so that they would find out the "magic" and able to fight against them. Chege presents the idea that the best way to fight is to have same rights. His aim is to reach his people and guide them to win this war which never ends unless the settlers leave their lands. Ngugi exemplifies his old school days and desire for education successfully in his book. Actually, we see that he nourished his interest of education early in his childhood and it seems that this comes from his half brother, Kabae. He has a special place in his life for the fact that he attended KAF (King's African Rifles) during Second World War and he had good reputation as a typist in Limuru beginning his own secretarial services:

"This enhanced Kabae's reputation as among the most learned in the area. For us, the Thiong'o family, he was by far the best educated. This may have sparked my desire for learning, which I kept to myself" (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 44).

Therefore, young Ngugi imagined being a heroic figure like his brother Kabae who fought for King George VI in different parts of the world and became one of the fastest typists in Limuru (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 34). His education adventure starts with his mother's unexpected question. She would send him to school provided that he would do his best and go to school regularly and sometimes leaving him hungry at noon (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 59). The tuition of the schools was expensive, and even uniform he used to wear was hard to afford if one considers the hard times of famine (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 59). The author was dragged from Kamandura to Manguo, from Manguo to Kinyogori Intermediate School because of several reasons. Though education is a positive thing in general, it also has negative influences on

people like the experiences Ngugi and Waiyaki had. Children who were brought up within another culture may be affected by the negative influence of education which has also bad results on blood relations and traditional way of life. What is so dramatic about the memoirs of the author is that Ngugi was ashamed of his brother when he wore his school uniform and pretended not knowing his own brother (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 73). However, he realizes how education or uniform shapes his thoughts and decides to protect his family ties under no circumstances and completes his process in a positive way (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 74). The author is so conscious about his own development as well as the advantages&disadvantages of the education he took from missionaries:

“...I had lost touch with who I was and where I came from...More important it made me realize that education and lifestyle could influence judgement in a negative way and separate people” (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 201).

There is another point in my paper to which my attention has been directed here since Ngugi was a devout Christian when he wrote the book; therefore, he successfully exemplifies the religious connotations from the Bible. He deals with the conflict between people from different religion in terms of circumcision as one group believes that circumcision is totally wrong, and other tries to retain circumcision. Waiyaki straddles between two groups struggling to solve the problem. Ngugi was supposed to be ambivalent before declaring his latest views about it. He implies that he never supported circumcision by illustrating the situation with the death of Muthoni. He never stated that he was against it, though. What he supports is that one should stick to the traditions and customs and retain them in order to avoid cultural denigration. In his book *Dreams in a Time of War*, he writes about his own circumcision which shares similar memories that of Waiyaki's. Ngugi writes that before circumcision all the candidates wake up early to clean themselves; firstly candidates remove all the clothes and shave head and pubic hair, which should be buried so that they could leave childhood and travel through adulthood (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 199). All the candidates who are naked walk through the waters where they clean themselves and taking bath in the water makes the operation easier (Thiong'o, *Dreams* 199). During circumcision candidates are expected to stay calm with no emotion on their faces. The author declares his successfully completed task with these words: “It is over before I know it is happening. I do not feel the knife. The cold water numbed my skin. My guardian quickly covers me with a white cotton

cloth that extends from my shoulders to my feet; all the women are ululating with pride. I know I have come through” (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 200-1).

Then the candidates are taken to “healing shed” to recover for about three weeks with “mentors” who inform them about adulthood and explain what it means to be a man (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 202). This type of education helps teenage in his new step and makes them conscious about his role in the society as well. Ngugi still attracts the attention to the importance of education every field in societies where people have no rights in their own lands:

“Though the whole ritual of becoming a man leaves a deep impression on me, I emerge from it convinced more deeply that, for four times, education and learning, not a mark on the flesh, are the way to empower men and women” (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 203).

On the other hand, Ngugi and Waiyaki differ from each other when we consider the roles of the fathers in their development. The author’s father and Chege in *The River Between* share no similar points as Chege, Waiyaki’s father, always guides him and he is a good model who is respected by all the people in his tribe and tries to save the people from missionaries. Unlike Chege, Ngugi’s father is a strict character and goes through the motion as if he had been sharing no blood relations with Ngugi. Author’s banishment by his own father when his mother went away after having a quarrel with her husband would make one’s mind much more clear (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 96). In a way, he and his younger brother, Njinju, were disowned by their own father. While Chege protects his son, Ngugi’s father seems to have no close relations except having meals together. At this point, there is no similar aspect which can be shared by both fathers. Maybe what he despicts as a father in *The River Between* is the desired father figure in his mind. Ngugi feels no hatred for his father due to his banishment. For example, he returns to his father’s household before starting Alliance High School. He just wants to say good bye:

“I do not want to start a new life with resentment in my heart. My visit is my way of telling him that even though he has not asked for forgiveness, I still forgive him. Like my mother, I believe that anger and hatred corrode the heart” (Thiong’o, *Dreams* 249).

By reading *The River Between* one can have enough information about the form, and tradition of the Kikuyu society where there are divisions due to colonial acts. However, the story portrays the people and their struggle to take education in order to progress as a nation. In this case, the journey of both Ngugi and Waiyaki are same by steering a middle course.



CHAPTER 5

WITNESSES OF LIVES IN BETWEEN

5.1. Is the Destiny of All Culture Warriors Same?

Literature emerges from imaginary world of men mixed up with experiences in society and realities that no one is able to run away. Experiences and realities share a certain angle that every member of the world, no matter what nationality he belongs to, adds something to the literature. The man is the source of literature, so the author is the voice of that world. But what about the society whose soul is taken by others? Imagine that the world which belongs to you the day before is now in the hands of others. The other is someone you never met before and comes from unknown places and has no familiar beliefs or habits. He has a different skin and dares to destroy the lands and the order of the society in one day. And the men living in that society have no idea where these people come from and why they try to change the order. They force people to live under their control and they are also so willing to change everything even their beliefs. An author takes the pen and writes the story of the lost soul. In this story, the taken soul represents the countries which are destroyed by others selfishly and the author is the one who is brought up in colonized world and now he fights against these selfish people by learning their language and the ways of living in order to shot his enemy with his own gun. This short story is the summary of colonized societies and literature which is fed by these experiences. The author of the colonized society can be the voice of all. As a result, post-colonial writers deal with historical and political facts of the past and try to change what has been written or said or performed by colonizers or the prejudiced member of these empires. The base of post-colonial criticism is cultural difference which divides people into two groups that form another and this new group identifies people and their ambivalence as a result of experiencing totally two different groups. Many scholars of this criticism have been facing it and the names given below carry this fact in their life stories. For example, Said is known as the most influential thinker of post-colonial criticism and defines himself as “oriental” since he was born in Jerusalem and took education from British and American colonial schools in Cairo. He also went to Princeton University for B.A and Harward University for PhD studying comparative literature. Said is a mixture of East and

West culture and he synthesizes this experience into his influential work *Orientalism* “which is regarded as having established the field of post-colonial studies.” His work focuses particularly on imperialism and the interplay between the dominant West (the Occident) and the Middle and Far East (the Orient). Said clearly summarizes the act of all colonial states in his work *Orientalism*:

My point is that orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did. Out of that closeness whose dynamic is enormously productive even if it always demonstrates the comparatively greater strength of the Occident (British, French or American) comes the large body of texts I call Orientalist (Leitch and Finke 1993).

Before Said, there are of course other scholars who help to develop post-colonial theory; “Greece Chunder Dutt, J.E Casely Hayford, C.L.R. James and Marcus Clarke in cultures as different as India, Africa, The West Indies, and Australia (King 165). Some of other prestigious thinkers of post colonial culture are Fanon, Bhabha, Ngugi and Achebe whose works inspire the struggle against colonialism. Moreover, woman writers such as “Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Sara Suleri, and Gayatri Spivak in the USA, Dorothy Driver in South Africa, Vrinda Nabar in India, Jane Miller and Sarah Mills in the UK” have played important role in studying gender, race and class in relation with colonialism (Walder 80).

To start with, Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, written in 1963, concentrates on historical conditions and presents ways to struggle against colonialism and is a great work which is followed by other thinkers of the anti-colonial struggle such as Bhabha and Said (Leitch and Finke 1575). In “*Wretched of the Earth*” he summons thinkers and scholars to unite against colonialism and to form a national conscious, and he carefully identifies the missing points by saying “The consciousness of the self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is guarantee” (Leitch and Finke 1593). Even though having trained as a psychiatrist in France and worked for French government like a member of the country he found no place among whites. He published his first book “*Black Skin, White Masks*” in which he wrote about how he was

affected by racial prejudice against black people especially in the chapter of “*The Fact of Blackness*” (Leitch and Finke 1575). Generally, he both expresses the problematic sides of colonialism and presents solutions in his works. One thing also attracts readers’ attention that his approach to the problems is psychological as a result of having trained in this field. His calling was followed by other scholars such as Bhabha, who was born in India and got his university education at Bombay, went to England to attend Oxford University for M.A and PhD. Bhabha focused on the division of the “West and the Orient, the center and the periphery, the empire and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed, and the self and the other” (Leitch and Finke 2377).

His work *The Commitment to Theory* (1989) argues that hybridity is “new, neither the one nor the other, which emerges from a Third Space” (Leitch and Finke 2377). In this work, Bhabha concentrates on cultural diversity and cultural difference and tries to show how they differ from each other. According to Bhabha, cultural diversity is “the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs; held in time-frame of relativism it gives rise to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity and it is also the representation of a radical rhetoric of separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity”. When it comes to cultural difference, he describes it as “the focus on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation” (Leitch and Finke 2393-4).

He also informs us about the problems of multiculturalism which have important effects on different nations and their way of lives. Therefore, when different nations gather to be on the same land, they should be tolerant to each other and harmonize each difference to that new form of baby society. However, some societies are forced to live as strangers on their own land; in this case, this does not fit the idea of being tolerant to each other. Bhabha clearly shows us that the self is never lost and it will return to itself some time later because you cannot change things suddenly. Cultures are the same in this respect; they are shaped by people slowly.

Using the word “gadfly” for herself, Spivak is another post-colonial critic. Like Bhabha, she was born in India and she too received her MA and PhD from United States. Her best known essay is *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and her argument in this essay is based on limited rights and suppressed voices of women and those who are minorities and have no voice to speak.

Another cultural warrior is Achebe whose concern is the insiders of his community. He is an anti-colonial actor criticizing especially Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which includes racial issues. The most important work of the author is *Things Fall Apart* which has opened a new perspective in African literature. It is written by a voice which belongs to that society and it is the first novel which is added as a part of the syllabus for African secondary schools where people speak English except south part of the continent.

Things Fall Apart is a story of a strong man who seeks ways to keep his small society away from missionary acts and resists the pressure of change in their nature. It is an anti-colonial work telling the story of an honorable man who kills himself instead of living with whites and being judged by them. Ngugi comments on Achebe's novels including *Things Fall Apart* and says:

Chinua Achebe's characters, shaped by a different social climate, do not have to assert their humanity. This is assumed. They have a vital relationship with their social and economic landscape. We can see, and feel, how his characters, their world view, their very inspirations, have been shaped by a particular environment in a particular historical phase. They live in history- yet are not mere cogs in the machine- because they (the Okonkwos and Ezeulus) (Achebe's characters) are the makers of history. He has succeeded in giving human dignity to his characters, whether living in their traditional communal life or resisting European colonialism. Achebe, in fact, is very explicit about his intentions as a writer. He sees his task as helping society to regain its belief in itself and to put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-denigration. His four novels- *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *No Longer At Ease*, *A Man of the People*- are a brave and successful attempt to recreate the dynamic spirit of a living community (Thiong'o *Homecoming* 44).

Another experienced author on colonialism, Ngugi, who was brought up under the shadow of wars between colonized and colonizer, underpins post-colonial studies and is a strict follower of Fanon and his ideas. According to Ngugi, European colonialism evokes the same feelings for an African or Asian or any nation that exists in the world:

The African has always fought for a better political and economic position in his own country. The Asian has always struggled to achieve political parity with the European. And the European has all the time tried to preserve and perpetuate his dominant

political and economic position at the top of the pyramid. Up to 1920, the battle was between the Asian and the European, the subject of the struggle being representation in the Legislative Council, in which the Asian wanted equal representation. He argued that he was a British subject and was an immigrant just as much as European. He also argued that he had contributed much to country's social and economic growth. On the basis of the output, had he not then a right to political equality? The Asian lost the battle. Then the African came on the scene... The battle then became three-cornered (Thiong'o *Homecoming* 23).

Ngugi is an important witness of Kenyan colonial history against Europeans. While some members of his family were known to take active role in the struggle against Europeans, some worked for them. For instance, his brother Wallace was a member of Kenya Land and Freedom Army and fought as a Mau Mau guerilla whose aim was to clear away the Europeans and get the lands back for peasants who worked for Europeans on their own lands. But his half brother, Kamau, fought for King George VI and was a member of the KAR (King's African Rifles) formed in 1902. According to Ngugi, the aim of this organization was to use "natives of one region to fight the natives of another region, and in each community, to use the chiefs, traditional or created, to suppress their own people on the behalf of the British Crown; the other brother" (Thiong'o *Dreams* 34-211).

The guerillas were known to take oaths and became heroes in the eyes of Kenyan people. They also fought for Jomo Kenyatta who first imprisoned by colonial government and then released from prison and became the prime minister of the new independent government and then the president in 1964 (*Homecoming* 29). Mau Mau movement was the sign that people were ready to fight for their country. They armed against colonial government and many of them died and this event was recorded as a bloody event in Kenyan history but it is the victory of Kenyans, who worked under the control of colonial government for so long. This movement is depicted in Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child* in which the author shares his childhood memoir and tells the story of a farmer, Ngotho, who works for white man on his own land. His family divides into two as a result of Mau Mau movement and Ngotho is not sure whether to join or support it. However, his son Boro fights "as a leader of the Freedom Fighters" (Thiong'o *Weep* 63). Ngugi names his character here as Boro, in fact, Boro represents his brother, "Good Wallace". Ngugi must have been deeply affected by the events of his childhood that the story deals with real events and characters. For example, he shares

the fearful moments of his childhood when he was questioned by white military officers about his brother Wallace:

The following day, he was questioned by two European officers.

...

“Have you taken the oath?”

“No oaths, sir, none. I am a school boy.”

....

“Do you know Boro?”

“He’s my brother.”

“Where is he?”

“I... dont... know...”

...

“Bloody Mau Mau! one of the men shouted.

“Take him out!” (Thiong’o *Weep* 117).

It is clear that Ngugi’s childhood experiences and his family members are reflected in this story one by one.

Not only Ngugi but also George Lamming travels back the time when he spends his childhood and adolescence in Barbados, a small island which is “the oldest and least adulterated of British colonies”(Lamming 25). Written in 1970, *In the Castle of My Skin*, retells Lamming’s childhood experinces in a colonial world where natives have simple mode of living until the colonizers discover the places and start dominating them. It is the same story in *Things Fall Apart* and in *The River Between* or many others. Natives are made to assimilate to a new religion and language. They are not only forced to forget their own traditions and cultures, but also serve as servants on their own lands. Children of these societies are raised within old traditions and new way of life which is controlled by missionaries. G., the main character, in Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin* grows up in Barbados without a father and throughout the novel his observation is presented on history and social backround of society, and also on school life where we see how they are treated by colonizers clearly. In the book, the history which is taught at school is the only history of Britain and that of Queen. They learn nothing about the truth of their past and slavery.

“They had read about the Battle of Hastings and William the Conqueror. That happened so many hundred years ago. And slavery was thousands of years before that. It was too far back anyone to worry about teaching it as history. That’s really why it wasn’t taught” (Lamming 52).

Normally, many questions raise in children’s minds about slavery and freedom and they try to understand blurred part of past by asking questions and maybe getting contradictory answers especially from those who follow Christianity and are a part of western culture. As an example, one of the boys, whose mother was a Sunday school teacher, tells them the story of Lucifer, the devil, and the angels which free themselves out of heaven to earth and start fighting on the earth because of missing the garden where they used to live. However, they have no chance to go back unless they want God to forgive them. According to the boy’s mother, some of them are slaves of their prides, that’s why they are imprisoned on earth and live as a slave of their decisions. Finally, the boy connects the story with the situation of the blacks and notes that angels were

...slaves and they made us slaves too. The queen freed some of us because she made us feel that the empire was bigger than the garden...God save the king who will help us to see the garden again. That’s all we have to think of now. The empire and the garden...We are slaves. We are slaves to these two. The empire and the garden...and we are happy to be slaves...My mother who is a Sunday school teacher has explained it well...We’re all going to the garden again, and especially those who here on earth belonged to the empire. We’ll be free again. Others will perish (Lamming 71-2).

After listening to such a story the boys have decided not to ask more because “they were all very poor and moreover the empire made them put on things like parades. They enjoyed the parades and the flags and the speeches. It made them feel a little more important than they were...They would choose the empire and the garden. There was nothing wrong with them and they had everything in their favour. Flowers.Flags.Pennies” (Lamming 72).

In addition, a common element in most post-colonial authors’ work is that the white settler, missionary, or landlord dominate the people and shape the cultural and traditional way of society. It is the same story with different characters and settings maybe from a part of

Africa or Australia or a very close neighbour of these colonial powers. Lamming makes a perfect precis of this situation:

“In the desolate, frozen heart of London, at the age of twenty three I tried to reconstruct the world of my childhood and early adolescence. It was also the world of a whole Caribbean reality” (Lamming ix).

The reality is not the reality of Caribbean, but the reality of all countries which face colonialism and its effects. Books like *Things Fall Apart*, *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*, and so many others carry the elements of fiction. However, it is not so surprising that the authors benefit from their experiences and social background of the society they were living in and observations of the colonizer and the colonized relationships. As an example, Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Olunde, internalizes the western way of life as a medical student in the United Kingdom and besides he protects Yoruba tradition. All the characters created by authors are not able to stand outside tradition as well as change. For example, in *Our Sister Killjoy*, Sissie uses English for her aims which are centered towards criticism of westernization. Though taking western education, she neither supports western actions nor the ones who follow the ways of colonizers for their benefits. Another character in *Nervous Conditions*, is an example of a curious tracker of western life style. Firstly, she appears to be a strict character who hates her brother for having rejected his own descent. On the contrary, she starts to adapt herself to western way of life. Late in the novel, she becomes more conscious and questions herself and the situation she has been facing so far and finally she seeks the right way for herself and her family and this process is depicted as: “It was a long and painful process for me” (Dangarembga 204).

Post-colonial critics write back since most of the works were written by European writers. As a result, they turn their focus on the ones which are culpable while presenting people and their way of life. Post-colonial criticism underscores that the works should be reinterpreted by its own native such as Africa by African, Australia by Australian, India by Indian and maybe tribes by its own people because tribes can differ from each other in many ways such as language, law of tradition, etc. For instance, Achebe criticizes Conrad due to his racial views in his classical work *Heart of Darkness* and raises the question of why it has such an important place in English literature:

Whatever Conrad's problems were, you might say he is now safely dead. Quite true. Unfortunately, his heart of darkness plagues us still. Which is why an offensive and deplorable book can be described by a serious scholar as "among the half dozen greatest short novels in the English literature." And why it is today perhaps the most commonly prescribed novel in the twentieth century literature courses in English departments of American universities... I am talking about a book which parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many ways and many places today. I am talking about a story in which the very humanity of black people is called in question (Leitch and Finke 1791).

Presenting us an against view of imperialism, Conrad's all black characters are delineated ugly "having grotesque masks" and "black shadows of disease and starvation" or "savage" such as Marlow's firesman, or slaves, who are paid by only "three pieces of brass wire". They are also depicted so wild that their desires to eat human flesh reach at the highest level:

"Catch 'im, he snapped, with a bloodshot widening of his eyes and a flash of sharp teeth-
"catch 'im. Give im to us." "To you, eh?" I asked; "what would you do with them?" "Eat 'im!" he said curtly (Conrad 110).

To sum up, Conrad creates a setting as "prehistoric" and "unearthly" in Congo, Africa, where white people never act as servants and are highly disdainful of anything to do with works but use black people as stunt actors...

It is not surprising to find out why many different races unite against colonialism and move together to change the course of history and shade the light on the the parts which should have been replaced with truths that may relieve the broken hearts a little. Nevertheless, the colonizers had come, ruled, destroyed, disdained and went away but what about the marks they left behind? Maybe black people will keep it fresh somehow and never let it fade away for the people who suffered a lot and for the next generations to show what has been done to their history.

CONCLUSION

The boy, who is thought to be the saviour of his tribe, fails in his duty due to being in love with the daughter of a devout Christian. The story is not only portrait of a child who is expected to be the messiah but also the portrait of Africa which travels to the darker sides of the unknown places with the guidance of the foreigner. The existence of missionaries is felt slowly but surely and Waiyaki sacrifices himself and his love while trying to unite the tribes, Kameno and Makuyu. Set in 1920s and 1930s, *The River Between* delineates the difficulties of Kikuyu community with the coming of missionaries and the plot is centered on unity of ridges through education. On the other hand, the sub-plot deals with the clash between tribes because of female circumcision. The setting of the novel is ambivalent: Honia River is the “source of life” to Gikuyu land which is home to Kameno and Makuyu. However the story depicts the separation of both ridges. While Kameno tries to keep the traditional way of life, Makuyu follows a new faith and rejects its past. The separation is mainly because of female circumcision which is needed either to protect women or to continue and preserve cultural norms. The bodies of women become the core of the problem and this problem becomes one of the contentious issues of the political agenda and the churches, some of which strictly oppose female circumcision. *The River Between* is a sample of this conflict of 1920s and 1930s and the story is based on real events. In this thesis, I have explored the defects of colonialism which created corrupted societies and made people of the same region enemies to each other. It is just a simple fact that colonizer looks for a new land to control and new power to work for it. Language, education and religion are adapted to the lives of colonized people so easily that they are not aware of the fact that the lands have been taken and traditional lives have been destroyed. Colonizer simply tries to make destinies to be accepted by colonized and it is like a huge baby who is never full but wants to be fed more and more. Once he starts, he never stops; therefore, people always sought ways to stop him by setting up independent schools and keeping the traditional way of life but these are not adequate to stop it. Consequently, this study aims to show the conflicts which are created by colonial powers such as division in families, destruction in traditional laws, destroyed relationships among people from same region, identity crisis, alienation within home, destroyed friendships and unfinished love affairs.

Apart from the division in every part of the society, it is observed that missionary acts have positive effects on Kikuyus, as well. It played an important role that people have become

aware of the need to be independent and set themselves free from these organizations. The conflict of female circumcision showed that colonial countries, which had no experience with tradition in Kenya, limited their identities as well as traditions and led division in thought, society, and the way of life in *The River Between*. The only positive effect of colonialism on behalf of African people is that it created a society which is self-assured and ready to fight for freedom. Mau Mau movement was the first attempt to unite against missionaries. It is clear to understand why Africans write back and try to defend their rights still today. As a human, we need to externalize our feelings and thoughts. To externalize is to show that we exist. To exist we need to communicate people through writing. It is the records of experiences and the sign that we share the world. Writing is a need for all; a bridge between words and worlds of different people. People always discover that other people experience the same things through reading. In this thesis, the same experiences of the authors not only from Africa but also from different parts of the world are reflected in order to shed light on the historical facts of the colonial past. But if somebody wants to learn the history of a society, he or she should read the works of the authors who belong to that society so that he could reach exact information. In this study, I have looked at the world of Africa from author's perspective knowing that he is the one who knows the needs of his society best.

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