



**Naionhood and Nativization in *The River Between* By Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o.**

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**Abstract in English**

Literary texts are not primarily grounded within an individual consciousness alone but emerge out of different cultural and social influences. It is integral to fully understand a literary work while taking into account the cultural and societal contexts out of which it originally emerged. Revisiting history and interpreting memory through fiction unlock vast areas for discussion within literary studies.

This study aims at examining the themes of colonialism as well as the ideological conflict as described in *The River Between* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. This influential novel interrogates the colonial rule impact on traditional African societies as well as the tensions arisen between safeguarding cultural heritage and embracing social change in Kenya. Besides, the study aims to uncover the historical background of such conflicts, analyzing their consequences as reflected in the clash between indigenous customs and colonial forces. In addition, the discussion highlights the novel's nuanced insights into the necessity of societal development and maintain a deep respect for the African tradition richness. By bringing attention to the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, this study adds to the broader discourse on postcolonial literature as well as the intricate dynamics of cultural identity amid socio-political and historical transformations. The present study also draws on the novel to demonstrate the representation of the colonialism history in Kenya from a postcolonial lens and to reveal the emphasis on the enduring traumatic experience of imperial domination.

**Paper Info**

**Keywords**

*Colonization, hybridity, Conflict, tribal practices, Cultural heritage, identity.*

## 1. Introduction

The challenges of the new millennium, resulted from the post-colonialism and the clash of civilizations, have generated several literary works. Some of these are concerned with the historical background of modern-day conflicts while others exploring their aftermath. An example of these novels include *'The River Between'* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's which is very much immersed in its national histories to comprehend its own social constructs as well as their reflection of the overall developments in the world at large.

*The River Between* is one of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's most celebrated novels which is still widely read today due its insights into colonialism and also its impact on Gikuyu culture in colonial-era Kenya. The novel is also considered to be vitally significant as it affords its author the opportunity to examine the tension between modernity and traditional culture by shedding light on the tensions and conflicts between social change and progress and traditional cultures which are threatened by social change. This study investigates how colonialism undermines indigenous cultures and also scrutinizes the tensions between identity and progress.

Post-colonialism is the after effect of colonized societies. In general, post-colonialism may be referred to the time period after the age of imperialism and colonization. When we refer to this time we also look at the impact it has on the community. The concern that this discourse discuss is issues of cultural diversity, the ethnic, racial and cultural differences that are caused by the strive of power relations colonialism have imposed on to this community. The experience that this colonized community has gone through is part of their history and it still relevant to the present day. One of the media that communicates the experience is through literature.

The novel "*The River Between*" by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o captures all the significant conflicts and themes which are related to postcolonialism. To understand the themes of "*The River Between*", it is significant to take into consideration its broader historical context surrounding British colonialism in Kenya. A brief historical overview of colonialism covers the British expansion policies, processes followed during colonialism itself and its aftereffects on local community. Nevertheless, the Gikuyu experience deep-set cultural subjugation under colonialism in that the British impose Western customs and values on them. This study sheds light on how the Gikuyu are struggling to maintain their culture though they are pressured to integrate into Western society. The conflicts portrayed among characters regarding Waiyaki who try to integrate customary Gikuyu values and norms with Western education bring out the drastic consequences connected to imposing one's culture on others during colonialism.

Moreover, the setting up of colonial settlements contributes to the Gikuyu population displacement from their ancestral land and affect their economic and social base. Besides, this loss of land and livelihood means lead to unrest among the displaced inhabitants as described in the novel by Mugo's act of defiance against colonialism. The present study considers both the tangible and emotional impacts brought about by the land ownership displacement among the residents of Kitui's social setting.

### 1.1 Nationhood & Nativisation

"Literature does not see the individuals as something apart from the society, but considers him as a social unit, because his existence is dependent on the society as a whole. Taken a part from society he is mere cipher and non-entity" (Premchand, qtd in Ahmed2)

The notion of nationalism, which emerged to have a major impact on the political system development from the eighteenth century onwards, is regarded as one of the most significant determinants of violence and wars. It is also responsible for the death of millions of residents for whom “the struggle for one's 'fatherland' is treated as holy” (Özkırımlı, 2000, p. 1). Nationalism is considered as “a highly emotional but irrational ideology” which influence the lives of individuals “and their need to belong to something” (Triandafyllidou, 2000).

Smith (2001), in his book “Nationalism, offers a current interpretation of what constitutes “nationalism” today. “Nationalism, according to him, is a comparatively modern phenomenon: its meaning of something is constantly in evolution” (Smith 6). This sense of this term alters based on “the growth of the nation, individuals' realization of their own national identity and expressive language and culture” (Smith 6). Moreover, it is influenced by “socio-political movements speaking on behalf of the nation” as well as “various general and particular ideologies which continuously define and redefine the nation meaning” (Smith 6).

“A nation is a historically constituted stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” (1994, p.20)

Heywood (2003), in his book “For Heywood”, provides a more subjective definition of nationalism: “A psycho-political state: indeed, this is what nationalism is essentially.” Based on the stated definition, it might, therefore, be said to connote “a high self-awareness and strong feelings of attachment to one's soil.”

The ideas of nationhood and national identity are significant to postcolonial discourse, especially among nations such as Africans and Indians who suffered from territorial subjugation due to British colonialism. Many people within one nation might hail from another nation or place due to migrations and this makes it rather difficult to find out what makes up a nation or what constitutes one's own nationality. This is due to the fact that national identity and nationhood have become rather ambiguous notions to define at this point in time.

To perceive the meaning of the notion “national identity”, Miller (1995) claims that one must first have a clear understanding of what makes a nation. He argues that:

“The nations do not exist independently of the people's beliefs, but criteria which are much more complex than other things. In classing a group of people in a notion you are not only commenting on their physical characteristics or behaviors but also on how they view themselves” (p. 164)

Sukmar and Raju's study entitled “Nationalism and Identity in the early Indian Novelist's Novels” focused on the notions of national identity and nationalism in the Indian literature.

Postcolonial studies often examine the uncertainty facing individuals in their search for a unified identity. In this regard, Bhabha (1994) examines the struggles that postcolonial subjects faced while trying to negotiate and construct their own identities.

Hybridity has become one of the conceptual instruments employed for analysing the novel and has also been the significant conceptual framework for this analysis. Such conceptual frameworks have been chosen for analysis due to their relevance and significance to the analysis of this novel. The explanations of such notions utilize the ideas proposed by Bhabha stands out for his major role in founding postcolonial studies. This is because his concepts regarding hybridity and identity remain very effective for analysis.

The Mimicry which is defined as the “The assimilation between the Western culture and the colonized culture which is almost close the gap of the binary opposition of Selfhood and Other” (Siti Masitah Md Zin, Low Chan Mee, 2014: p184), furthermore, in his article Homi Bhabha (1994,p.122) “*Mimicry and Men*” which he defines the concept of the Mimetic process

“Colonial mimicry is the desire to be reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of the difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Homi Bhabha,1994: p129).

This concept is all about how the colonized or the individual is almost there but not quite there, the desire to be superior and the permission to be such required the selective choice of identity and culture and cutting the roots for the traditional being.

This notion revolves around the status of the colonized subject “almost the same but not quite” due to incomplete assimilation. The need to position oneself among the best or to at least seem like one demands a strategic borrowing of culture as well as identity while moving away from cultural origins and traditional roots.

The colonization experiences many dimensions regarding their physical environments and psychological status as they are treated like second-class citizens. As time progresses, the colonized person develops a deep sense of homelessness and alienation resulting from being exiled from their homelands or having their homelands appropriated by the colonizer. This is because they experience fear due to their alienation and homelessness and also have to struggle to rediscover their sense of identity and belonging as the colonizer tries to erase it. Consequently, alienation becomes intrinsic to the colonized subject and naturally exists as a result of the colonial experience.

Nativisation is considered as one of the linguistic features which addresses the language use in literary works and the linguistic devices being employed to convey meaning through language. Each literary work is embodied by language use, and writers use stylistic devices to convey meaning to their stories. In this respect, the emphasis of Brumfit and Carter (1986) is not just on what is being said but also on how it is being said. Nativisation involves several linguistic and literary devices, some of which include signs, which act as symbols in texts; expression, which is achieved by utilizing supernatural themes and folk tales to convey meaning, and survival, which provides a link to the land through language to establish nationhood (Ebi Yeibo, 2011).

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o as a writer and a scholar from Kenya, Wa Thiong’o is able to illuminate an understanding about the postcolonial experience of the people within his community. The story is set in between the ridges of Makuyu and Kameno following the river Honia. As the white man came to their land, they experience postcolonialism first hand that creates the rift between the people of the land. Through this paper, we will analyze the impact of postcolonialism on the people in this story. This paper will discuss the three aspects of postcolonialism in this text. First, we will be looking at the external conflict from the colonizer, then the internal conflict from inside the community itself. Lastly, we will be looking at the aspect of hybridity between the African and the western worldview.

## 2. Textual Analysis

### 2.1 The External Conflict (The Impact of Colonization on Native Traditions) :-

External conflict is associated with foreign domination. The external conflict in the novel *The River Between* can be sourced back from the beginning when the westerner or the white man first arrived in the native homeland. From the first chapter of the story,

presented the origin story of the land. The native in the land has long history and tradition with very intricate cultural practice. The moment the colonizer come to Siriana, the colonizer has evoked changes to the native daily lives.

Many stories ran around him. Some people said that he had the gift of magic. Others said that he was a seer and Murungu often spoke to him. And so they said that he could see visions of the future like Mugo wa Kibiro, who a long time back prophesied the invasion of the Gikuyu country by the white man. (Thiong'o, 1965,p.21)

Its worth mentioning that even before the arrival of the white man, the native had prophesies that the invasion would be inevitable. Their legend of heroes like Wachiori and seer like Mugo wa Kibiro are important figures in their culture. As a result of this external conflicts, the land of their sacred grove will soon be compromised. By introducing this local culture and legendary figure, we are able to be in the shoes of the natives. The fear is that their culture and tradition is being changed and dominated by this outside influences.

Difference in views regarding tribal practices bring discontentment and hostility in the tribe relationships as they are unable to understand and convince each other and this becomes the central conflict in the novel. Their views, ideologies which are totally contradictory to each result in weakening of their relationship in the Society. This is one of the postcolonial impacts on the Kenya's society being highlighted so realistically in the novel by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's novel *The River Between*.

Waiyaki, the main character of this story voice out his concern about issues of this external conflict brought by these foreigners. The boy also wanted to show his bravery by being part of the ritual, believing that even though Livingstone was knowledgeable and devout, his opposition to this ritual appeared rather erroneous to him in that Livingstone did not clearly understand its meaning to the tribe (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 42).

Here Waiyaki was talking about the circumcision or the second birth ceremony. During this ceremony, both young girls and young boys are circumcised so they are later recognized as a full-fledged member of the society as men and women of the tribe. Livingstone as one of the white man was against this ritual as he condemned it as genital mutilation. Waiyaki questions the reasoning behind Livingstone's criticism of the ritual when he doesn't understand the significance of the ritual for the tribe. The dichotomy of living in an essentially different environment with overarching shadows of indigenous tribal principles gets reflected through the external conflict is an evasive act of the foreigner upon the native people of the land. As people, the white man wanted to not only change this ritual but all in all, eliminate this practice as a whole.

Waiyaki was still under the impact of the traditional beliefs of the ridges inhabitants, and nothing much had changed at Siriana Mission to transform such beliefs. His father had warned him against becoming like the white man because otherwise, his effect might corrupt Waiyaki himself. But Waiyaki himself questioned this warning all the time: was schooling itself corruption? (Thiong' o, 1965, p. 63). Where Waiyaki have been studying and going to school at Siriana with the white people. Waiyaki was open to the idea of being educated by those foreign people. However, deep down inside him, he fears that the education he had to achieve is slowly corrupting him. There is a dilemma that Waiyaki face, where he is confronted with the possibilities of this external factor taught by the white men are contaminating his position within his own cultural community. This means that the changes brought by the white man aren't always as clear-cut. Waiyaki believes the ideology of white man might be dispersed subtly through their teaching.

This was proven true as we follow the progress of the book and see subtle changes that have impacted the native cause by the external conflict brought by the white man.

The white man was slowly encroaching on people's land. He had corrupted the ways of the tribe. Things would now change. It may take years, but far, far into the unknown future things would become different. (Thiong'o, 1965,p.76)

The culture of the tribe including its tradition and ritual slowly deteriorate because of this external factor. The land that used to belong to the native become the victim of the white man encroachment. The changes that white men impose are not a sudden impact, but slowly and surely little by little the native will be displaced. Worst of all they will experience homeliness because of this encroachment.

Joshua is an example of a character that was affected differently by the arrival of the white man.

Joshua, Nyambura's father, was now a middle-aged man who always preached in sharp ringing tones that spoke of power and knowledge. He, along with a few others, had been the first to be converted to the new faith. He was then a young man who ran from the hills and went to live with the white man in the newly established Mission. He feared the revenge of the hills; the anger of his friends, betrayed. In Siriana he found a sanctuary and the white man's power and magic. He learned to read and write. The new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly. He renounced his tribe's magic, power, and ritual. He turned to and felt the deep presence of the one God. (Thiong'o, 1965,p. 34)

Joshua is effected in a way that he has become more like the white man than the native of the land. It was great to see his enlightenment through his conversion. However, through that process, Joshua slowly lost his root by not participating in cultural practices and ritual. At his worst he severs the tie between him and his own daughter, Muthoni. This is only because Muthoni wanted to be circumcised, and it was against his principle to condoned such act that was against his religion. It is like a double edge sword as it is a progressive action to not practice the act of genital mutilation, but it also resulted in Joshua renouncing his cultural heritage.

## **2.2 The Internal Conflict (Divisions within the Community):**

Moving on now at looking at the internal conflict. Internal relation concerns the communal sense of togetherness, it is all about the people within the community itself. Discussing internal conflict we must be wary of the issues of land and the displacement that they have to face between the aboriginal native in the community against the foreign settler. There is a need for this native community to uphold their traditional and cultural value that they have inherited despite the changes that are happening. It is important to note here that issues that are rooted in internal conflict often is amplified because of the impact of external conflict. Thus it is always a vicious cycle of the fight between internal and external forces.

In the beginning of the story, we were introduced to the tribal folklore. This reveals the African life and culture. We learn that they have great pride in their own particular tribe superiority. The external conflict of the white man was just the catalyst that starts the negative reaction of the tribes between this ridges.

“when the white man came, jealousy stood between Kameno and Makuyu. You would not come together. And you left the white man alone. Now, instead of learning his ways and coming together so that united we may drive him out, Kabonyi and a few

others cry for vengeance against Joshua and his followers. That is what I have come to tell you today. We are all children of Mumbi and we must fight together in one political movement, or else we perish and the white man will always be on our back. Can a house divided against itself stand?" (Thiong'o, 1965,p.111)

The conflict of jealousy between Kameno and Makuyu were there even before the arrival of the white man. The rift between these two tribes just got worst after the settlement of the white man. Instead of being able to unify, the two tribes internal conflict start to caught fire. Waiyaki persuades them to see his perspective on this subject during this speech. The problem he highlights is that there is no unity between both tribes. Without this unity and fighting their own native people like Joshua, will only divide them. Being divided will only weaken the native against the power struggle with the white man.

Waiyaki speech and leadership were not always welcome within the community of the tribe. Kabonyi was one of the proponents who opposed Waiyaki manifesto. "I have not finished. That is the first thing you have done to the tribe. It is not a small thing. Then you were not a teacher, a person to whom we entrusted our children. But since you rose into the position in which you are, you have deliberately worked against the tribe. How many times have you been in Joshua's church?"(Thiong'o, 1965: 97)

The conflict between the tribes leads to divisions within the Gikuyu community. Those who embrace the changes brought about by colonialism are seen as traitors to their culture by the more conservative members. This creates tension and hostility, ultimately tearing the community apart.

Kabonyi, as an elder of the tribe question Waiyaki credibility as a leader and accused Waiyaki of being too influenced by the white man. Kabonyi mistrust of the white man leads him to mistrust Waiyaki as well. He, as many other people from the tribe, also believe that Waiyaki is here as a threat to their culture and tradition as much as the white man. Even though Waiyaki is a man of the tribe, their prejudice was strong just because of Waiyaki association with the white man.

The power struggle is not only the matter of political control. It is a threat to the tribe that was just as evasive. Joshua association with the white man is a threat to eliminate the tribe tradition and culture must not be left without apprehension. Thus the tribal community enforces their dominance through the act of burning people's house down.

Since then the rifts between the various factions had widened and the attempt by the Kiama to burn people's houses and their threat to Joshua and his followers were all an expression of that widened gulf (Thiong'o, 1965,p.106)

This offensive tactic was again to enforce power and dominance towards any form of threat to their own culture. By attacking those people who are associated with the white man, people like Kabonyi was able to retain power.

In his heart, Waiyaki knew that he would not have liked to be seen by Kabonyi standing with Joshua's daughter. He resented this and wondered if he too was becoming a slave to the tribe. His activities were being watched by everyone. His freedom was being curbed. (Thiong'o, 1965,p.69)

Waiyaki experience of this threat in various ways even before the open debate with the tribe. Waiyaki freedom was on the line that he needs to tiptoe. It is important here that, Waiyaki wasn't threatened by the foreigner, but was threatened by the people from his own community.

Listening to the concerns of the community members, especially Kabonyi, one can understand the apprehensions and fears regarding the impact of having the "white man" around. Kabonyi talked to them about their own "poverty," experienced in their land: "the country had had no rain for several months," and "they were very poor and very hungry," and "there was no relief expected for many months to come," because "the grain was failing."). He also talked to them about "the land which had already been taken away by the white men," and "a new tax imposed by 'the Government Post' among them," because of which "they could not pay their school fees to continue their children's education," and "their children".

Rather than rallying his people to take action against such pressing issues, Kabonyi charge, Waiyaki was worried about building additional buildings. Would this not put even further pressure on his community? This meant additional teachers; and did Western education really need to happen at all? Clearly, Kabonyi said, there had to be another way. It was much better to simply oust the white man from the hills altogether. Were his own people no longer brave enough to take action? Had his tribe run out of warriors? Kabonyi said that he himself would offer his own leadership for such a cause. This was why the new Kiama had been formed: to rid their land of foreign influence and to restore purity to his tribe by regaining their ancestral knowledge. "He challenged his audience," one historian wrote, "appealing to their pride, to their sense of manhood, to their love for and devotion to the very land itself" (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 77-78).

It was a matter of pride and preserving their cultural identity. The concern was surrounding the land itself and the bounty they were going to make will be subject to taxes to the white man. Of course this the truth of the unfair treatment by the white man. Kabonyi speech speaks to people of the tribe because they held strong loyalty to the soil. The problem though is they distrust the modernity and education that have been brought by the white man. Even though the education and development have been tailor suit for the tribe by Waiyaki, they still carry this distrust heavily in their heart. They fail to adapt to the new development and stuck with traditionalist view.

### 2.3 The Hyprid Identity

Hybridity is the remedy for both this internal and external conflict. Hybridity can act as the bridge for connection between the traditional and the modernity that has become the turmoil in the tribe. Through the interaction between the white man and the native, some cultural aspects are intermingled and adapt to suit the progression of time. In fact, hybridity allows a multi-layered sense of culture. The manifestation of the hybridized culture is unique in its own way. The transformation through hybridization results in a different and personalized identity.

An example of this personalize identity can look at the character of Muthoni. Father and Mother are circumcised. Are they not Christians? Circumcision did not prevent them from being Christians. I too have embraced the white man'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 quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here, in the hills, that you and I know." She spoke now, looking beyond Nyambura as if to some other people. (Thiong'o, 1965,p. 33)

Mothoni is the youngest daughter of Joshua was baptized into Christianity, the religion of the white man. However, she wanted to preserve her identity as a woman of the tribe. That is why she decided to undergo the circumcision ritual. Up to that point, internal and external conflict have always dictated that the traditional culture must not be polluted by the white men's religion, and the white man religion was strict against the barbaric genital mutilation ritual. Muthoni was able to navigate between this two aspect of her identity that even though her life ended too soon, her last words were "tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman, beautiful in the tribe. . . ." this is the epitome of being able to balance both sides of her identity. It's interesting to note here that everytime Muthoni talks about the act of being initiated to womanhood, she always "looking beyond" as if to say that she is connecting back to the sacred spirit of the land.

Even with judgment from her parents who are pro-white man and criticism of the people of the tribe, Muthoni was strong enough to stand up for her beliefs and hold on to her hybridized identity. However, it wasn't as easy for the other members of the tribe to negotiate being in this state of in-between.

Kabonyi and Kiama were also pressuring him to take their side on his beliefs, they believed, which leads to the collapse of his whole mission for making Makuyu and Kameno reconcile and for bringing Joshua and the whole community closer to each other. This meant his whole mission for enlightenment through education would amount to nothing at all. No, as for Kabonyi's effect, he refused to give way to it in that if he did, all his efforts for so many years would go down the drain.

"I too am concerned with the purity of the tribe. I am also concerned with the growth and development of the ridges. We cannot do this through hatred. We must be united, Christians and non-Christians, Makuyu or Kameno. For salvation of the hills lies in our hands." (Thiong'o, 1965, p.98)

Kabonyi and the people of the tribe were set in stone in their view and were unable to adapt the progress that has come to their village. Joshua too was stubborn with his beliefs and unwilling to accommodate any of his cultural practice as it was against his principle. Waiyaki urges the tribe that a hybrid community between the Christian and non-Christian whether they were Makuyu or Kameno is the key to their unification.

Another instance of hybrid e identity is presented by Waiyaki as one of the most progressive leaders of the tribe. This is not just because of his education with the white man at Siriana, but also a result of his strong root to the land of his ancestor. Waiyaki was able to adopt a hybrid identity by understanding both sides of the conflict.

To Waiyaki the white man's education was an instrument of enlightenment and advance if only it could be used well. He still remembered his father's words, that long time ago, when they stood on a hill, the whole country before them "Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices." (Thiong'o, 1965,p.92)

The advice Waiyaki got from his father, he holds dearly in his heart that it had become part of his identity. He understood the power of education but was wary of the white man vice. Waiyaki openness to this really helps him to be more progressive. The connection with his father is in a way keep him rooted to the land and ensure him to be loyal to the land. This is the hybrid identity that Waiyaki uphold.

For Waiyaki knew that not all the ways of the white man were bad. Even his religion was not essentially bad. Some were good, some truth shone through it. But the religion, the faith, needed washing, cleaning away all the dirt, leaving only the eternal.

And that eternal that 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 lay disintegration. Such a tribe would have no roots, for a peoples' roots were in their traditions going back to the past, the very beginning, Gikuyu, and Mumbi. A religion that took no count of 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, a 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, 1965,p.106-107)

A small parts Waiyaki of hybrid identity creates its own fragments and hybrid character just as everything around him. In the very end of the story, we see Waiyaki reflecting both sides of his identity. Being educated by the white man he was able to observe the enlightenment of the Christian religion. Being brought up by the tribe, Waiyaki was able to see beauty and importance of their cultural heritage. He believes that one shouldn't exist without the other. If they were to obsess with the white man progression, their culture would be swept away like what had happened to Joshua. Yet if they are unable to adapt, they will stun the progress of the village. By being able to find the balance at the sweet spot between (self of the old self and the future self), the hybridity of African and western worldview is incredibly beautiful and unique.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

"*The River Between*" is a profound exploration of colonial consequences in a complex perspective in such narrow narrative. Issues like internaal and external conflicts in addition to alienation and displacement go under the hardship to achieve the goal of independence and to fight for independence and individuality. The paper investigated the postcolonial issues of preserving the land of indigenou, within the characterization and the social structure of the literary text. It explored the social and ideological turmoil which is experienced by society during and after the British occupation. The use of the author's fiction brings to fore colourful vignettes of setting and character and thus makes sure to place his telling of the story firmly within its Kenyan setting and his own postcolonial weltanschauung related to the rich and complex manifestations of tribal culture.

Furthermore, this paper highlighted how in this a small world where the characters fight for their culture and identity conservation. Although some attempt to develop their own experience and identity, others form of normalcy and unity through peace. This novel brings to life all the complexities related to the identity and struggle to retain culture and customs through its very rich characters and intricate plotlines to demonstrate just how powerful colonialism is to indigenou cultures and identity and how identity continues to struggle to retain its culture against modernism. This is one major literary novel whose contributions to the perception of identity and its struggle to coexist between past and future cannot go unnoticed.

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Abstract in Arabic

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الهوية الوطنية والتجنيس في النهر بين بين بقلم نجوي وا ثيونغو

عبير علي دينار

كلية الإمام الكاظم الجامعة: بغداد، العراق.

**المستخلص**

لا تتبع النصوص الأدبية في المقام الأول من الوعي الفردي فحسب، بل تنشأ من تأثيرات ثقافية واجتماعية متنوعة. ومن الضروري فهم العمل الأدبي فهمًا كاملاً مع مراعاة السياقات الثقافية والاجتماعية التي نشأ فيها. إن إعادة النظر في التاريخ وتفسير الذاكرة من خلال الأدب يفتح آفاقاً واسعة للنقاش في الدراسات الأدبية.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث موضوعات الاستعمار والصراع الأيديولوجي كما ورد في رواية "النهر بيننا" للكاتب نجوي وا ثيونغو. تتناول هذه الرواية المؤثرة تأثير الحكم الاستعماري على المجتمعات الأفريقية التقليدية، فضلاً عن التوترات الناجمة عن التناقض بين الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي ومواكبة التغيير الاجتماعي في كينيا. إضافةً إلى ذلك، تسعى الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الخلفية التاريخية لهذه الصراعات، وتحليل نتائجها كما تتجلى في الصدام بين العادات المحلية والقوى الاستعمارية. كما تُسلط المناقشة الضوء على رؤى الرواية الدقيقة حول ضرورة التنمية المجتمعية والحفاظ على احترام عميق لثراء التراث الأفريقي. من خلال تسليط الضوء على أعمال نجوي وا ثيونغو، تُسهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء النقاش الأوسع حول أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، فضلاً عن ديناميكيات الهوية الثقافية المعقدة في خضم التحولات الاجتماعية والسياسية والتاريخية. كما تستند هذه الدراسة إلى الرواية لتوضيح تصوير تاريخ الاستعمار في كينيا من منظور ما بعد الاستعمار، وللكشف عن التركيز على التجربة المؤلمة والمستمرة للهيمنة الإمبريالية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الاستعمار، والتهجين، والصراع، والممارسات القبلية، والتراث الثقافي، والهوية.

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