An analysis of the land issue as portrayed in selected novels by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

By

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University of Venda

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts degree in English Literature at the University of Venda

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DECLARATION

I, **Mondo Lysta**, hereby declare that this research report, submitted to the School of Human and Social Sciences at the University of Venda in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters Degree in English Literature, has not been submitted previously by me for a degree at this or any other University, that it is my own work in design and execution and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature..... Date..10/04/2015.....

Supervisor's
Signature..... Date..16/04/15.....

Co-supervisor's
Signature..... Date..16/04/2015.....

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DEDICATIONS

To my sons Tanaka and Akudziwe, daughters Ivy and Tadiwa who endured my absence from home during the course of my research.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a number of people for the success of this research study.

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the land issue in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's novels. It looks at four novels only, namely: *Weep Not Child* (1962), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), and *Petals of Blood* (1977), analyzing how Ngugi uses form to present land as a bone of contention between white settlers and Africans in Kenya and paying particular attention to how land appropriation affected African culture and tradition.

It is hoped that at the end it should be clear that land has great significance to Africans, a fact borne out by several critics cited in the study on the plight of Africans in relation to the land issue, particularly its usurpation by colonial powers and why loss of land is the cause of African nationalism as a counter to the colonial experience.

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Chapter one : Introduction and Background of the study

Introduction to the chapter

The study is basically an analysis of how Ngugi portrays land in his novels. This chapter will serve as an introductory frame of the dissertation on how Ngugi inflects the land concept in his novels. It is imperative to spell out how the study will explore Ngugi's handling of some burning issues on land, which are common in most African states.

In this chapter, the aims and objectives of the study will be outlined. In addition, this chapter will detail the rationale for the study. Part of the chapter will explain the methodology of and approach to the study. This will justify the researcher's choice to use this method at the expense of other possible methods of research.

The last section of this chapter will detail the conceptual framework of the research where views of other writers will be discussed. This section will inform the literature review of the research since it will be illuminated by ideas and views of other writers. These views will act as guides to the general views on land globally. This, however, does not imply that the study is limited to the views of these writers.

Aims and objectives of the study

The study seeks to investigate Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's portrayal of the land issue in his novels. The desire to look at how Ngugi portrays land emanates from the fact that most literary works look at Ngugi's ideological development as a writer concerned with the fatal impact of colonialism on the lives of Kenyan peasants. This development covers his works ranging from his novels to the latest writings. In his five novels, three plays, several critical papers, a number of short stories and two critical books, themes have been drawn from the historical development of his country, Kenya, which has offered him a wealth of material from which he picks his themes. In most of his works, reference is made to land, with a number

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of prominent writers having devoted their writings to Ngugi's handling of the land issue. For instance, Ogude J (1999: 47) posits that:

> Ngugi's restoration project is 'embodied by the land, the novel's larger-than-life character, which provides not only the physical context within which the lives of the other characters can be worked out, but also a force they can identify with'…

It is this prominence of the land theme in his narratives which has led to the present investigation into how Ngugi portrays land in his literary works.

Research methodology and approach

In the analysis of Ngugi's works of art, the researcher will use the Marxist literary theory to inform on the texts. Socialscience.arts.unsw.ed.au/tsw/marx.html defines the Marxist theory as,

> A theory on society that is an explanation of how society works, of how and why history has unfolded, and especially an account of the nature of capitalism. These are of great value for the task of describing what is going on in the world and for understanding the problems and directions of our society.

From the above, it is clear that Marx's concepts are very useful for the purpose of understanding our society. He condemns capitalism, has his own political values and his recommendations for political action.

Marx goes on to state that the key to understanding a society at any point in history is to focus on the mode of production. In feudal society, land was the crucial productive factor and the feudal lords owned and controlled it. This gave rise to a capitalist society, one in

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which capitalists own and control the productive resources (i.e. capital), workers own only their labour and work for capitalists, who then own the product and sell it.

The researcher considers this to be quite appropriate because the novels to be analyzed deal with discontent in the ownership of land as a means of production, which is a central concern of the Marxist literary theory. It is the researcher's opinion that no other theory seems to have the potential and capacity to illuminate an analysis of works of art which look at a capitalist economic, social and political organization of a society better than the Marxist theory. The theory seeks to harmonize the base and superstructure, an issue which Ngugi advocates in his novels. In this regard, Ngugi presents the ownership of land as being at the centre of the conflict between the African and the colonial masters. The Africans constitute the base as they toil on the land to produce for the whites who occupy the superstructure of society. The latter group benefits significantly from the produce generated by the sweat of the landless and often poverty-stricken Africans.

Since this research will be based on the analysis of novels as primary works, the research method will be qualitative. Literary prose will be the main corpus of research thus making the qualitative research method appropriate for the research.

In analyzing the portrayal of the land issue, the research will focus on four of Ngugi's novels; namely: *Weep Not Child* (1962), *The River Between* (1965) *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), and *Petals of Blood* (1977). Events which concern land will be analyzed paying attention on how the novels flow into each other, from the early ones to the latter ones. More focus will be on how Ngugi Wa Thiong'o portrays land as a bone of contention between the various groups of people in the said novels. The differing ideologies of the concerned groups on land will also be looked at. References will also be drawn from other works to support Ngugi's ideas.

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The researcher wants to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that although the novels *Weep Not Child, A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* were published in 1962, 1967 and 1977, in this research study the researcher has used and cited quotations from the 1981, 1984 and 1982 editions of these texts, hence what may appear, to the reader, to be different dates of publication.

Rationale for the study

By exploring Ngugi's portrayal of land in some of his works, the writer hopes to shed light on issues common in most African states. In these states, land has attained such immeasurable importance that it is the source of many disturbances. Land is the prime cause of the major chaos and conflicts in society and in the plots of the novels. These conflicts range from civil, between the local ethnic groups, to racial, between Africans and white European settlers. It has been observed for instance, that in Zimbabwe conflict and political disturbance came twenty-three years after independence as a result of the need to take control of land. This has made Zimbabwe the talk of the world. Another country in question is South Africa where discussion is going on about the need to reclaim land under the "willing buyer, willing seller" principle. The writer found it of immense interest to look at how literature reflects events such as those in the Southern part of the African continent; hence the study's focus on Ngugi's handling of the land issue in his novels.

Before and after independence, in most African countries, a lot of bitterness has been expressed on the inequitable distribution of land. It is against this background that one is prompted to focus on questions such as the significance of land and why it causes so much conflict and how Ngugi handles it in his novels.

Conceptual Framework

Land is of value to people regardless of colour or creed. The critic, Awoonor K (1975:281), argues that: "In political conception, land forms the major important solid

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source of power and its alienation is the basic cause of political conflict." Basically, Awoonor is implying in this observation that total control of land means political control and economic supremacy. So in the African and white men's conception, land has political, economic and social implications. This might explain why most whites wrote about land ownership with some justifying the African's position to reclaim land. These authors look at African nationalism as being mainly orchestrated by an unweaving desire to reclaim land which the colonial masters were willing to relinquish (Tainer, D. 2010).

A generally known aspect is that Africans and whites have divergent views on African land. Africans have spiritual attachments to their African land while whites would appear to have economic value for the same foreign asset though in their home country it has, arguably, more spiritual value. Besides this African creation myth, there is the mere fact that Africans are Africans and have always been in Africa. This stands as their justification to claim their land. On the other hand, the settlers claim to have distinctively fought for the land and "tamed it." They also do not subscribe to the African belief of communal ownership of land. More ostensibly, they do not have any mystical attachment to land besides the business-oriented one. All they believe in is that land has wealth to give them; material and not spiritual fulfillment. These settlers bring forth an alien culture that land can be bought and sold at will, with title deeds as authentic evidence of ownership. This capitalist individualism undermines communal ownership of land and organization among the Africans and effectively destroys it by taking and occupying the land on which tribal organization depends. In their quest for more land, the settlers have received support and assistance from the Christian religion which they imported to Africa. Gicaamba, a character in *I Will Marry When I Want,* underscores this when he opines that:

> Religion is not the same thing as God…
> When the British imperialists came here in 1895,
> All missionaries of all churches
> Held the Bible in the left hand,
> And the gun in the right hand.
> The white wanted us

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To be drunk with religion
While he
In the meantime,
Was mapping and grabbing our land
And starting factories and businesses
On our sweat. (Ngugi: 1982:56-7)

As suggested in the preceding extract, the European exploiters, oppressors and landgrabbers have used Christianity as a tool to pave the way for their colonial activities.

Kofi Awoonor (1975), has observed that the two groups, Africans and white settlers, all realize the social attachment, political and economic importance of land. Awoonor (1975:281) says: "... land forms the most important solid source of power and its alienation is the basic cause of political conflict." Gandhi L (2006) supports this in his comments about communities alienated from their land: "It is in such societies that land takes on the immense freight of meaning it acquires under circumstances of dispossession" (http://www.ailc-icla.org/files/RL_vol24.pdf). Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981:19), gave an African perception when he remarks: "Any man who had land was considered rich ..... (one who) had at least one acre of red earth was better than the man with money."

From the above, it can be deduced that land is arguably one of the most important economic resources the African has, in addition to livestock. Land is the only means with which the African has identified himself over innumerable generations. It is the only tangible meaningful inheritance he can pass on to the next generation spiritually, economically and socially. The African has inherited his religion from it and has gained succour from it. He has also been inseparable from his land. Any hardworking African is assured of food if he owns a few acres of land. This is a Marxist observation of a feudal society (Tainer D 2010). The African culture evolved in response to his activities on land which he definitely has to defend because it is the physical manifestation of his God's love for him. Makunike E (1998:41), in his play, *I Won't Call You Sir*, shares the same sentiment when he presents Chief Rekayi Tangwena saying: "I will

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not move from my ancestral home, and neither will I accept any bribes from the Smith Government; in money form or formal recognition of my Chieftainship."

This clearly shows that the African vision of land imparts a spiritual dimension to land. The implication is that African dignity and humility is anchored on land, making alienation from it loss of spiritual identity and dignity. In this regard Ogude J (1999) asserts that: "if in the past national identity was inscribed in the land designated by the founders of the community, colonialism, in usurping the land, disrupts this identity." This perception is shared by Gandhi, L in an assessment of the literary works of Anand *(Coolie)* and Ngugi *(The River Between and Petals of Blood)*, wherein he says: "In the largely peasant communities from which both authors' protagonists originate, land is sacralized, as it is considered the source of identity and dignity" (http://www.ailc-icla.org/files/RL_vol24.pdf). Palmer E (1965), supports this when he says: "Land is not only to be of greater importance than money or cattle; it has spiritual associations." Africans thus view land as their link with their God since land enshrines the spirit of their ancestors as is evidenced by the traditional ritual of appeasing the dead which culminates in pouring beer on the ground, claiming that they are quenching the dead's thirst.

Among Africans, land is a common heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestors. It is the only means with which the Africans have identified themselves over countless generations. Makunike E (1998:3), attests to this when he c: remarks"... it (land) communally belonged to the people as a whole under the legal custody of their chief." This clearly shows the African social, political and economic organization in matters which concern land.

Fanon F (1963:44), supports this communal ownership of land when he comments:

> For a colonized people, the most essential value because the most essential is first and foremost land, the land which will bring them bread and

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> above all dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with the dignity of the human individual…

What Fanon is saying, if correctly interpreted, is that the African dignity has nothing to do with an individual possessing land but rather in the whole community claiming what is rightfully theirs and a common heritage to them. Christie P (2006:31), highlighted the Xhosa's resistance to trekboer penetration in the Cape when she explains:

> Before long, the trekboers met up with the Xhosa speaking people in the Eastern Cape. Both the boers and the Xhosa were pastoralists who needed land for their cattle. Soon the two groups were fighting over land and resources. The frontier wars in the Eastern Cape went on for nearly a hundred years (from 1779 to 1877).

The duration of the wars showed the white men's determination to colonize Africa at the expense of the Africans. Predictably, Africans fought for their sovereignty enshrined in land. In the light of these wars, one can then question the source of the trekboers' determination to usurp land in a foreign state.

Viewed in this perspective, for the Africans to reassert this dignity, they have to take up arms and overthrow whoever is barring them access to their land. The very fact that the liberation struggle was a communal act should give ballast to the argument that land is communal property. Makunike E (1998:3), illuminates this when he says: "---the liberation of Zimbabwe [Africa] was a mass determination by all the oppressed people from all walks of life to restore their human dignity from racial dehumanization ---"

One interesting observation from the above observation is the justification of war. Violence is viewed as a worthwhile option – the only escape. Ngugi W (1972:28), shares similar sentiments when he says: "Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal, and diminishes man….."

An interpretation of the two citations show that, after being subjected to dehumanizing lifestyles, Africans had to set themselves free by fighting the British

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imperialists who had taken over the African lands after the 1915 British Imperial Land Act which transferred official ownership of land from the Africans to the British Crown. Cook D and Okenimkmpe M (1983:3), make these comments in relation to this Act: "--- the governor (had) authority for its [land] disposal, a power widely exploited, especially in the highlands, so that most Gikuyu were left without any legal rights over the soil of their homeland."

Christie P (2006:31), comments on trekboer activities in the Cape thus:

> The Khoi Khoi and the San resisted the settlers who were taking their land, but in time, the settlers established control. Many of the Khoi San were killed or died of diseases; others moved away; and others stayed to become part of the new colony. Some of them were independent, but mostly they worked as servants and labourers for the settlers.

The scenario depicted above shows that Africans lost their identity and land, to the British who even gave themselves power to dispose of the land as they deemed fit. It is at this point that one questions the white men's interest in African soil.

One obvious truth is that whites view African land as an economic entity which can give them wealth. The settlers also believed that Africa was virgin. Gibbs P (1953), in *Stronger Than Armies* states that whites believed that Africa was empty, unexplored, uninhabited and waiting for the taking. This notion accounts for the manner in which they conducted the colonization of Africa as well as the granting of Charters and Land Apportionment Acts. All the luring attractions of land are as a result of Cecil John Rhodes' encouragement that the British Government should colonize the Eastern Coast of Africa so that he could create his dream rail-road from Cape to Cairo (*Ibid*). Another source of encouragement was the reports made by the explorers on the beauty and fertility of the land, especially the ridges. The British Government also put in place incentives for those who were prepared to go to Africa and start farming. This scheme mainly targeted veterans of the First World War who were given land free of charge at the expense of the native African population.

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The fact that white settlers obtained land at the expense of natives is a clear indication that settler activities contradict African ethics. This goes with the fact that the settlers do not subscribe to the African view of communal ownership of land. Instead they introduce an alien concept that land can be bought and sold at will. Makunike E (1998:23), comments on this issue by asserting that: "The African had never heard or known of title deeds or the very concept of buying or selling land. It was an altogether foreign concept because in the African tradition, land can never be bought or sold." The observation about communal ownership of land is re-affirmed in Head, B in her novel *When Rain Clouds Gather,* where the narrator contends that: "Fencing of tribal land was not allowed, as ownership of the land was vested in the tribe as a whole. No man could claim that he had purchased a plot of tribal land and anyone who asked was merely allocated a portion free of charge by the chief" (1969: 33). However, the colonizer's view on ownership of land and subsequent usurping of African land meant that African culture, and one might add dignity, is undermined as it is based on land, which, to him, has spiritual attachments.

The new development that the colonizers gave themselves land without considering Africans implies that Africans were dispossessed of their land. Cook D and Okenimkmpe M (1983:3), state that: "---a dispossessed peasant farmer forced (sic) to become a squatter on the estate of a well-to-do landowner." One wonders how one can be a squatter in his / her own country. Even the Africans themselves do not understand this. Mujajati G (1989:24) , in his play, *The Wretched Ones*, makes a good point on this when his characters comment on title deeds:

POLICEMAN : Title deeds are legal papers which prove that somebody owns a piece of land.

POVO'S MOTHER: Piece of paper! Now, what has this piece of paper of yours got to do with ownership of land? ***(PAUSE)*** Young man do you see that graveyard there ***(pointing)*** That is where we buried all our dead. That grave you see there to the left is my own husband's grave! What more evidence would you want to prove to you that we own this land! (sic). Do you think your little piece of paper,

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whatever you call it, is more important than those graves of our land? ***(PAUSE)***. Do you want me to leave my husband here alone?

The preceding dialogue evidently shows that the concept of land ownership through title deeds is alien to Africans. The undermining of African dignity by the whitemen is particularly highlighted in how the woman expresses African dignity through links with the ancestors. However, such a link is not recognized by whites when they demarcate farms, cutting across ethnic regions and even sacred places. This demonstrates how Africans were affected by foreign ideologies which brought with them a capitalist tendency which reduces Africans to slaves on their own land.

To assist the whites in their quest to annex the whole of Africa is the Christian religion. Lindfors B and Kathandaraman B (2001:145), comment on this when they remark: "The church is seen as a disruptive force in Ngugi's world; for it divides communities, pitting converts against traditionalists and planting seeds of serious culture conflicts."

If one interprets this statement correctly, the church paved the way for colonization by dividing Africans and making them fight each other before total colonization took place. Christie P. (2006:67-8), reinforces this view in comments on missionary activities:

> .... missionaries actually helped in the conquest of the African chiefdoms. They helped to break African culture, and they imposed Western culture and work patterns. They undermined the way of life of the African people .... the Bible and the gun went together in the defeat of the African chiefdoms.

Consequently, the churches were handsomely rewarded with farms where they continued with their activities. Makunike E(1998:2), makes these observations regarding the whiteman's church and the African land: "Some of the so-called European land was given to the various missionary denominations where mission schools, clinics and farming activities were carried out." It is thus quite evident that the missionaries were

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active participants in the colonization of Africa. Moreover, there is no way they could have discouraged land appropriation considering that some of the land was later passed on to them. Instead, they encouraged Africans to be calm and saintly, as a way of making them submissive while the settlers grabbed land.

Frantz Fanon (1963:52) postulates that:

> The colonist bourgeoisie is helped in its own work in calming down the natives by the inevitable religion. All those saints who have turned the other cheek, who have forgiven trespassers against them, and who have been spat on and insulted without shrinking are studied and held up as examples.

In the observation cited above, Fanon is suggesting that the Christian faith's main role in Africa was to blindfold the Africans and make them docile, while the settlers went about surveying and mapping farms for themselves, thereby pauperizing Africans, while giving rise to capitalist agriculture.

Maina Wa Kinyatti (1980:1-2) also comments on the role of the Christian church when he says:

> From the pulpit, the churchman urged the Kenyan population to their oppressed class position obediently, urguing that life and the development of society are the results of predestinations. 'Man proposes but God disposes' was the essence of their philosophy.

Christie P. (2006:68) ballasts this when she notes:

> There is a big difference between intentions and actions. The missionaries might have had good intentions. But this doesn't mean that what they did was always good. Often they did work hand in hand with the colonial government, which wasn't necessarily to the good of the blacks. And often, they did think in racialist terms, and practiced exploitation themselves.

Christie and Kinyatti thus share the same sentiments with Fanon on the role and contribution of the missionaries in the acquisition of land by the colonizers. The church served to make Africans accept their subservient position as well as persuading and ultimately convincing them to abandon their traditional religious customs and beliefs

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which it termed 'pagan.' Whatever good they had to do could not absolve them from being branded with the same imperialist tag.

Charity Wa Ciuma (1969:91), also highlights the manner in which the church actively participated in the appropriation of African land. She examines how the missionaries requested for land from one of her characters, Karuri Wa Gakure:

> The Catholic persuaded him they were different from the government, who were still forcing their way into the land with the gun. ---- what they wanted was land. Land which meant everything to the tribe ----, land, land, the precious land. The land of our forefathers.

This vividly shows that apart from making Africans docile to make way for colonization, the missionaries went as far as asking for land on their own. No matter what disguise they used to ingratiate themselves to the people, they are painted with the same brush as the other colonizers and as their agents in land grabbing.

It therefore sticks out clearly that the church assisted in the appropriation of land as well as in cutting off the African from their land by advocating the abolition of customs that are directly related to land. Such a move resulted in Africans changing their attitude towards land. The Africans' cultural values are all condemned by the Church's teachings which encourage capitalist individualism. The church thus was clearly linked to land grabbing in Africa.

A combination of the church's activities and the settlers' determination to own land clearly shows the white men's economic interest in land. They colonized Africa mainly seeking to transform surplus value into capital and seeking sources of raw materials and later new markets. This explains why they enlisted the help of the national state (for instance the British South Africa Company and Britain in Zimbabwe), to overtly usurp the sovereignty of an alien land for its own realization. This is colonialism, a particular stage of imperialism which is itself the highest stage of capitalism. Because of this, we find people fighting colonialism in African

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states not mainly for the love of war but for the sake of African sovereignty which is mainly embodied in land.

Freire P (1972:25), supports such type of fighting an unjust social order when he remarks:

> In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation they can transform.

Thus African nationalism, viewed from Freire's point of view, is the only way Africa can be Africa. This, in the opinion of the researcher, is the only Marxist perception worth upholding. Porter M, in Finn G (1983:242), also shares Freire's view when she states that: "Marxism is concerned with the inequalities of class and economic relations---."

From the arguments presented in the preceding sections in this chapter, it is therefore quite clear that land has social, political and economic connotations, making it a special entity regardless of race or colour of the people concerned. The significance of land is further accentuated in instances where people have been alienated from their land. Regardless of the factors behind such alienation, the reaction to the disruption of lifestyles which often results from this is likely to be marked by tensions between the encroaching and displaced parties respectively. With such a scenario, Ngugi's interest in land as a theme cannot be underestimated. It is this significance of land that the next two chapters will look at, drawing from observations made in this introductory chapter. The focus will be on land in Ngugi's novels as illuminated by other writers who also focused on land.

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Chapter two: The land issue in Ngugi's ea

Introduction to the chapter

This chapter looks at how Ngugi inflects the land issue in his early novels as the previous chapter has clearly shown how significant land was in feudal African society. The chapter looks specifically at his early novels: *Weep Not Child* (1962) and *The River Between* (1965). Special attention will be paid to how Ngugi portrays the land issue in his novels. Of interest is Ngugi's portrayal, in the early novels, of how land was viewed and valued before the advent of colonial rule. References will be drawn from other writings on land as well as current events in other African states. These events will be linked to Ngugi's works.

The theoretical context of Ngugi's depiction of land

Africans have a background that implants a deep-rooted spiritual attachment to land. This view is supported by Panyin E in *New African* (June 2001:50) who states that: " It's the land, mama's and papa's land! The land of our birth,..." According to Panyin, Africans view land as heritage they acquired from their forefathers and so this makes them give land spiritual value. On the contrary European settlers would appear to have an economic perception on it. It is for these reasons that the research looks at how Ngugi portrays land.

Africans in feudal African society believed in communal ownership of land since it is a common heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestors, referred to as father Gikuyu and mother Mumbi (*Weep Not Child.* 1981). Ngugi (1965:2) in *The River Between* supports this when he presents Murugu declaring: "This land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity." The land was fertile ..... Spiritual superiority and leadership had then been left there."

Even the former President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma in *New African* (May 2001: 15) shared the same sentiment when he said: "Did they (white farmers) come with any sand

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to this country? At which point of this country do they enter with sand in their bags to claim they own land?"

If correctly interpreted, Nujoma's stance is that African land is for Africans as they have always been in Africa. Africans draw land ownership from what Ngugi postulates when he presents Murugu making reference to how the African got land from his ancestors (*The River Between,* 1965). This lends weight to the African's tendency to own land communally under the custodian of their chief. This also attests the spiritual attachment to land. This African position is in stark contrast to the capitalist economic system of the whites which make them believe in private ownership of land with title deeds as authentic proof of ownership. Africans have no paper proof and do not subscribe to this paper proof ideology. Theirs is purely hereditary ownership as they acquired the land from their ancestors and are supposed to depend on it for survival.

Even Awoonor K (1975:283) reinforces this view in observing that:

> Land was not an economic commodity; it was most importantly a sacred entity. The earth represents in most African myths, the mother principle which is necessarily for the survival and continuity of the group. That is why land is still communally held in most parts of Africa and not regarded as a commodity that can be parceled out and sold at will. In the pantheon of the African gods, the Earth Goddess is an important benevolent spirit upon whom man depends for food and sustenance and to whom he, returns to in death .... But the earth of our native soil, of our village or town becomes the bond of the community's cohesiveness. It is the place where our umbilical cord is buried and our ancestors whom we buried.

From the above, one notes that land is something the African cherishes as much in life as in death regardless of the economic aspect of it. It is the African's lifeblood and mother. This explains why Herman Kwame Afele in *New African* (June 2001:6) argues that :

> It is a well-known fact that a nation cannot exist without land (both economically and spiritually). And without land, life and progress are restricted. The importance of land must not be underestimated because people are prepared to fight for the land that belongs to them.

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Afele thus adds to the pool of knowledge and view that argues that Africans value land for different reasons from those of Europeans. In a situation where Africans are removed from land, it resembles severing them from their source of life and heritage. An interesting observation is that the white settlers and Africans have quite strikingly interesting contrast when they view land. Of great interest is the basic difference primarily based on their cultural backgrounds. Africans have always been in Africa so they have, arguably, a more spiritual attachment to their land than the European settlers who came to Africa for commercial benefits.

Ngugi's inflection on land ownership in the early novels

A demonstration of the African's cosmic link with his land is provided in Ngotho's position in Ngugi's novel *Weep Not Child*. Ngotho vividly illustrates that land surpasses the economic entity it embodies and is a custodian of spiritual importance as well as a link with the ancestors. Ngotho says: "It (land) is yours to rule and till in serenity only to me, your God under my sacred tree…."(*Weep Not Child* 1981:24). Ngotho suffers the ignonimity of his ancestral land being confiscated by settlers for whom he then works for meager wages. He says: "We came back home worn out but very ready for whatever the British might give us as reward."(1981:25). It appears Ngotho has no choice , if he has any hope of keeping communion with his ancestors, but to make do with the humiliation of labouring on another man's land. He fears to lose his job at Mr Howard's farm and this makes him a timid leader of a workers' strike. Ngugi (1981:52) supports this when he remarks:

> He could not make up his mind about the strike. He doubted if the strike would be a success. If it failed then, he would lose his job and that would keep him away from the land of his ancestors. This was wrong, for the land was his. No-one could tend it as he could.

In the first instance, the manner in which Ngotho loses his ancestral land to the settlers is like that of any peasant in Kenya. They had to work on the farms of the colonial masters hoping to get remuneration to survive. Unfortunately, it is the

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white man's strategy of first weakening Africans in order to subjugate them. (*Weep Not Child* 1981: 25-6).

The ancestors referred to here are probably Gikuyu and Mumbi, for they were the first to be given the land by God, as the Kenyan story of creation goes, (*Weep Not Child* 1981:24). Land is the only solid covenant between Africans and God and Ngotho, (Ngugi's 1981:24) supports this when he says: "....God showed Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them, This land I hand to you. O man and woman. It's yours to rule and till in serenity sacrificing only to me, your God, under my sacred tree....."

As suggested in the preceding citation, for Africans there is no commercial value attached to land apart from owning land for land's sake as an inheritance from the ancestors, and for productive purposes in the form of food at a subsistence level. Spiritual reverence of land is also alluded to as the God instructs Gikuyu and Mumbi (1981:24) to worship him under the tree, probably as a token of appreciation for the valuable asset that the God has given them.

Despite being timid, Ngotho goes on with the strike and loses his job. He is subsequently evicted by Jacob on whose land he is a tenant, marking the onset of his estrangement from his ancestral land, something he has been in fear of for quite some time. Through the soil, as he claims, he had held communion with his ancestral spirits. Ngugi (1981:74) writes that:

> He (Ngotho) felt the loss of the land more than Boro, for him it was a spiritual loss. When a man was severed from the land of his ancestors where would he sacrifice to the creator? How could he come into communion with the founder of the tribe, Gikuyu and Mumbi?

Ngotho's reverential regard for land and the belief that the only way to keep in communion with his spirits is to hold on to his job is ironic. One wonders how he fails to glimpse the contradiction between his action and the creation myth. If correctly interpreted, the creator stated that it is expected that Ngotho's siblings should utilize the land for their own survival and not the white settlers. This

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explains why writers like Ekow Panyin in *New African* (June 2001:50) forcefully declares:

> Take every inch stolen by any means necessary! The land question must be paramount and uncompromising in the African resolve to recover the settler colonists' land grab in Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, etc.

The justification for such a stance is that there is a strong bond that exists between the Africans and their native soil. Land is not only a source of livelihood but has spiritual connotations to the African. It is his link with his creator and thus is held in high esteem. This mystical attachment to land makes the African hold it in great respect, making it a special entity in the African's life.

Ngugi (1965:7), in the *River Between*, shows this African link with the land when he comments on Chenge's personality saying: "The other elders feared and respected him. For he knew, more than any other person, the ways of the land and the hidden things of them tribe. He knew the meaning of every ritual and every sign."

An interesting observation worth noting here is the personification of land as having unique features and ways not known by the ordinary man. Land has its own secrets known only to the selected few in African tradition. This is further supported by Ngugi (1965:7) when he remarks, "The white man cannot speak the language of the hills. And knows not the ways of the land." From the two citations, one sees a bond between the African land and the African man. This implies that the African and his land are one and can communicate in a language known between them but unknown to the foreign whites. This gives land a more mystical meaning than one can attach. The African and his land are one and at peace. Land is a source of inspiration to the people as exposed by Ngugi when he comments on Waiyaki's death. There is a strong bond that exists between the African and the African soil. Ngugi states that: "Then nobody noticed it, but looking back we can see that Waiyaki's blood contained within it a seed, a grain which gave

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birth to a political party whose main strength [illegible] sprang from a bond with the soil."

Even the people who are killed when the police shot at the protesting group which is denouncing the detention of Harry Thuku, are said to have "clutched soil in their fists." This shows a strong attachment of the African to his land. This has biblical connotations as in the bible it is stated that "dust to dust and ashes to ashes." So, in death as well as in life, the African is strongly attached to his land. Chenge, in *The River Between*, also illustrates the African's spiritual attachment to land. His manner of talking about land, the property of the tribe, and the need to jealously guard it from the grasp of the settlers is evidence of this strong bond.

On seeing the land, Waiyaki, Chenge's son, is overwhelmed by a strange force which we cannot comprehend. This is seen from Ngugi's description of Waiyaki when he is at the top of the sacred mountain surveying the land. Ngugi (1965:15) says:

> Waiyaki's heart gave a jump. He felt afraid and excited at the same time. A big Mugomo tree stood near the edge of the hill, watching as it were, over the whole country. It looked holy and awesome, dominating Waiyaki's soul so that he felt small and in the presence of a mighty power. This was a sacred tree ..... Waiyaki now on top of the hill, surveyed the land. And he felt as if his heart would stop beating, so overcome was he by the immensity of the land.

One clearly sees the unique sense of pride in the African when he views the only useful heritage left him by Gikuyu and Mumbi. Ngugi (1983:5) further expresses this cosmic link between land and the African people when he comments: "It (land) is more than the material. It is not because of its economic possibilities. It is something almost akin to spiritual, linking man to a cosmic pattern."

This clearly exposes the African's feel of grandeur of the land and that it is woven into the lives of the people as is the description of the two ridges,

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Kameno and Makuyu. Land describes the people and they secure their identity and dignity from it.

Conclusion

An interesting observation in this chapter is the contrasting values attached to land, the African and his land are one and the same, in the true African sense. No commercial tendency is attached to land. The African has a cosmic link with his land which emanates from the his creation. This makes him have a mystical attachment to land. The African holds his land in great communion and is prepared to reclaim it, which is in line with a Marxist position. Marxism is most geared towards resolving the inequalities in society. These inequalities begin when whites import foreign ideologies and policies which commercialize land.

Although European settlers have cosmic link with land, they also have an extra commercial one. Unfortunately, the capitalist tendency found space, roots and anchorage in other Africans as will be explored in the next chapter. Land, to these Africans, has a new identity which is an imported phenomenon.

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Chapter three: The land issue in Ngugi's later novels

Introduction to the chapter

Although Africans have a mystical attachment to land, elements of a changed perception came with the advent of colonialism. This chapter will explore how colonialism changed the African's view of land, and how the imported view affected communal tendencies. In exploring this new perception, the research will analyze *A Grain Of Wheat* (1984) and *Petals Of Blood* (1977) as Ngugi's later novels. References are to be made to other writings to illuminate the analysis. Developments in African states will also be looked at as they have a bearing on this imported view of land.

Ngugi's inflection on the concept of land in his later novels

It is a known fact that the African has great affinity for his land, and that it is woven into the lives of the African people. Land describes the people and they secure their humanity, identity and dignity from it (Awonoor K 1975). Mumbi in *A Grain Of Wheat* gives a striking illustration of the African's spiritual attachment to land. Her name recalls the very name of Mumbi the mother of the tribe (Okenimkpe 1983), making her a metaphor of the land. The vivid description of her love making with Gikonyo clearly shows that Mumbi is at one with the earth, as follows:

> .....Gikonyo found himself suspended in a void, he was near breaking point and as he swooned into the dark depth, he heard a moan escape Mumbi's parted lips. She held him tight to herself. Their breath was now one. The *earth moved* beneath their one body into a stillness. (*my emphasis*)

The fact that the earth moved as the act of procreation is in progress can be symbolic of the African Gods accepting the creation of an offspring closely linked to land. This makes African attachment to land more spiritual than anyone can explain.

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The fact that Mumbi is one with the soil is proven when Mugo , who has been looking for comfort and security in his Shamba (small field), turns to Mumbi for the same reasons when the former has failed. The name Mumbi is synonymous creation giving the name bearer some cosmic power which make her a creator. Mugo's case makes it appear that he is one of those Africans who see land as a kind of mother and relation as is justified by the way he turns to land when his aunt dies and then to Mumbi. He finds solace in working relentlessly on the land.

> Mugo missed his aunt. Whom could he now call a relation? ..... He turned to the soil. He would labour, sweat, and through success and wealth, force society to recognize him. There was for him solace in the very act of breaking the soil, to bury seeds and watch the green leaves thrust themselves out of the ground, to tend the plants to ripeness and then harvest, these were all part of the world he had created for himself which formed the background against which his dreams soared to the sky (*A Grain of Wheat,* 1984: 9).

Solace obtained from tilling the land brings a more spiritual attachment to land of the African as it is in the same soil in which he buries his ancestors. Mugo seems to symbolically reunite with his aunt when he tills the soil in which she is buried. It thus becomes his immortal relation in the place left void by his gone aunt.

Mugo appears bent on making the earth carve a new identity for him to avoid society continuously mocking him for his poor family background. This idea is so overwhelming that he betrays Kihika for coming into his life. This makes Mugo's love for land ironic since it is selfish and exclusive because it is confined to a small piece of earth and not the whole country. What matters to him is the small Shamba which is relevant to him. This attitude makes him a poor recruit of the war.

Mugo does not want actively to participate in the war, just like Ngotho and Chege , and his desire to stick to his Shamba makes him resemble Nganga and Jocobo in *Weep Not Child (1964)*. They have no trace of any cosmic link with the

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land they own as much as Ngotho and Chege. They view land as a symbol of status, thus according it material value. This materialistic value for land is foreign to Africans as it is an imported perception of land. Nganga's description cannot exonerate him from this group.

> Nganga was rich. He had land. Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor-cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich. A man who went around with tattered clothes but had at least one acre of red earth was better than the man with money (*Weep Not Child* 1981: 19).

Despite this observation, Nganga's attitude towards land is gradually changing considering that he is a carpenter by trade which is of great value and use to society. This trade makes him an individual apart and this indispensability can make him exploit people for his own ends. This is aggravated by the fact that he is not quite honest.

Of interest is the observation that in the above citation, two standards of reference are apparent, the Western and the African standards of value. There is the juxtaposition of cars and money on the one hand and land on the other. Jocobo is definitely a prologue of the later. His attitude towards land is purely materialistic since he owns a plantation the size of settler farms on which he grows pyrethrum. He is the only African allowed to grow the crop. It is also said that he stood in the way of permits being given to other people to grow pyrethrum. This is clear evidence that Jocobo is imbued with the same capitalist competitive spirit which preaches individualism. He is just like Gikonyo in *A Grain of Wheat* and both are traitors to their own people. Gikonyo confesses the oath of the war while Jocobo actually fights on the side of the settlers.

Even before the emergency, Gikonyo dreams of owning a farm, for which he works very hard in his carpentry shop. His means of accumulating enough money by hoarding scarce commodities and selling them at exorbitant prices to his own people presents him as a capitalist. Four years after his release from prison:

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> Gikonyo was one of the richest people in Thabai. He had recently *bought a five- acre plot*, he owned a shop – GIKONYO GENERAL STORES at Rungei, and only the other day he had acquired a lorry for trading. On top of this he was elected the Chairman of the local branch of the Party, a tribute, so people said, to his man's spirit which no detention could break (*A Grain of Wheat* 1984:18). (*my emphasis*)

The situation presented in the quotation above is ironic because Gikonyo betrays his people. Instead Jocobo and Gikonyo got their pieces of land by buying them, which is unAfrican because in doing so, they are aiding and abetting the same system that is the fulcrum of the dispossession of their fellow Africans from their lands.

What the above implies is that there is a shift in attitude towards land and the marked shift drives some Africans to the settler vision that land can be bought and sold at will with title deeds as proof of ownership and is not for communal ownership.

At this point it is now necessary to look at what Europeans think about Africa. It is a known fact that many myths circulated about Africa in Europe. Some considered it a dark continent, the land of savages and a dumping ground for one's unpleasant past (Gibbs P: 1953). Mr Howlands comes to bury his unpleasant past of the First World War and to make money (*A Grain Of Wheat* 1984:24). He wants money as is evidenced by his exploitative tendencies which consider bigger yields at the expense of the worker's status. He considers land to mean a lot economically:

> His mind was always directed towards the *Shamba* (small field). His life and soul were in the *Shamba.* Everything else with him counted only in so far as it was related to the *Shamba*. Even his wife mattered only in so far as she made it possible for him to work it more effectively without a worry about home (*A Grain of Wheat* 1984: 29). (*my emphasis*)

Mr Howlands' attachment is not as deep and spiritually meaningful as Ngotho's because for Ngotho land is full of history, his lineage, his culture stems from it and

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even his identity. Howlands' view of land differs all this. His is economical. Their difference is clearly presented when they walk across the land together.

> Both men admired this *Shamba*. For Ngotho, he felt responsible for whatever happened on this land. He owed it to the dead, the living, the unborn of his tribe, to keep guard over this *Shamba*. Mr Howlands always felt a kind of certain amount of victory whenever he walked through it all. He alone was responsible for taming this unoccupied wilderness *(A Grain of Wheat* 1984: 31).

Howland's notion that the land is vacant and wild is the classical mistake made by all settlers. The land belongs to Africans but the problem is that the whites do not know the African tenure systems which made land planners leave certain areas vacant for ceremonial purposes. Some were left as salt licks, mineral springs, meeting places for the public and others left as sacred groves. Large woodlands were naturally left aside for building materials. This goes with the African's spiritual attachment to land which was misconstrued by settlers to mean that Africa was vacant and unexplored, an aspect which Ngugi is portraying as the African's justification to overtly reclaim his land.

Karega in *Petals Of Blood* (1982:29) observes that the whites have portioned the land and reserved the fertile areas for their own use. They even sell it.

> Land? There was no land – he was born into a landless home. But even those with land: how could it continue to be subdivided into plots and subplots so that each son could own a piece? Why anyway, should soil, any soil, which after all was what was Kenya, be owned by any individual? Kenya, the soil was the people's common Shamba, and there was no way it could be right for a few, or a section, or a single nationality, to inherit for their sole use what was communally, any more than it would be right for a few sons and daughters to own and monopolize their father or mother.

Such usurpation of tribal land should account for the weakening of the tribal unit itself since land was important in tribal organization, and was the most important factor in the social, political and religious life of the tribe. Monopolization of the land resource is passed on to fellow Africans by the colonial masters. Some

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become like the master himself in appropriating effectively destroying communal tendencies to own land. Land then assumes an economical value that never existed in African life, which is a foreign notion.

Conclusion

What is most disturbing is the capitalist tendency by white settlers, like Mr Howlands , to individually own land that was imported by the whites. Not only do the white settlers uphold capitalism in their lifestyle but they even plant it in some Africans who eventually become as egocentric as their colonial masters. African ethics as guided by land is distorted and even some Africans act as perpetrators of the colonial syndrome gripping Africa. People like Nganga, Jacobo and Gigonyo have become the epitomes of colonial life as they end up viewing land as a means to self-enrichment and so go about buying land in the quest to enrich themselves. It is quite clear that Jocobo and Gikonyo end up assisting the colonial master in taking over the whole of Kenya either by buying or selling what was traditionally a communal entity. Jocobo and Gikonyo end up becoming the true embodiments of capitalism. They go about establishing their own empires of riches at the expense of fellow Africans whom they rob of their land and exploit them as labour in their farms.

Another striking colonial feature of Ngugi's earlier and later novels is the Christian missionary role in the land issue. The next chapter sets out to investigate whether the Christian faith has settler attributes which it transfers onto the Africans just like the capitalist ideology. The next chapter sets out to establish whether much of this individualism seems to be a product of the church's teaching which works hand in hand with the colonialists. In essence, the next chapter looks at the role of the Christian religion in the African's loss of land.

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Chapter four: Religion, Land And Colonization In Ngugi's later novels

Introduction to the chapter

The previous chapter looked at the changing perception towards land as a result of colonialism, as demonstrated when the characters Nganga, Jocobo and Gikonyo act in the way they do, buying or selling land, traditionally a communal entity, thus promoting and participating in the white man's capitalist tendencies. This chapter considers the church's participation in dispossessing Africans of their land and how land appropriation has led to cultural and religious erosion and moral decadence among Africans. The present chapter explores the role played by the church as colonialism cuts off the African from his/her land by advocating the abolition of customs that are bound with belonging to a piece of land. The previous chapter has illustrated how the African and his/her land are closely linked as the African has mystical attachment to land.

The church's role in land, culture and religious decadence as represented in Ngugi's later novels

A well known fact is that the church did participate in colonization either directly or indirectly. The church actively participated in the abolition of customs that linked the African to his land. This is the main cause of a change of attitude towards land among Africans, where cultural values are undermined by the church's teachings. Ngugi cited by Awoonor K (1975:13) comments on this when he remarks :

> Its acceptance [Christianity], meant the outright rejection of all the African customs. It meant the rejection of those values and rituals that held us together. It meant the adoption of what in effect was a debated European middle class mode of living and behaviour. The European missionary had condemned the primitive rites of our people, had attacked our beautiful African dances, the images of our gods.

From the above, one can note that in numerous ways the church encouraged the erosion of African religious customs as well as pacifying the Africans. It also propagates capitalist individualism whose link with land grabbing whites is

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apparent. Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat* (19[illegible]) accurately narrates the role of the Christian church when he states that:

> We went to their church, Mubia, in white robes, opened the Bible. He said: Let us kneel down to pray. We knelt down. Mubia said: Lets us shut our eyes. We did. You know, his remained open so that he could read the word. When we opened our eyes, our land was gone and the sword of flames stood on guard. As for Mubia, he went on reading the word, beseeching us to lay our treasures in heaven where no moth would corrupt them. But he laid his on earth, our earth.

This accurately shows how the church worked to pacify the African in matters that concern land preaching of a life to come in heaven yet its followers take land for their own gains. A correct interpretation of Kihika's statement shows that the advent of the church marks the first phase of colonialism. This goes with how the first church establishes itself in Gikuyu. After being given temporary shelter, the missionary erects a church a few yards away and gains converts who immediately tread on African sacred places (*A Grain Of Wheat* 1984:33). When the people realize that he has acquired more land and built a permanent building, they protest as they see beyond the white man's face that there is a line of more white men now carrying the sword. The church thus paves the way for soldiers, making the church an instrument of colonization just like the traders and soldiers who came after it.

The Church, as the above quotation reveals made colonization easier by preaching the doctrine of pacification among natives so that they cannot fight for their land. Cook D and Okenimkpe M (1983:130) support this when they comment, "Christianity, then, becomes a facade for the unscrupulous and a narcotic for those who are suffering." This implies that the church pacified the African in the course of colonization. Jacobo's belief shows how the Christian virtues like humility and submission are used to serve the colonialist agenda of subjugating the native population. He believes that, "...it was his duty as a Christian to obey the Government , giving unto Ceaser the things that are Ceaser's and to God the things that are God's." (*A Grain of Wheat* 1984:36).

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Viewed in the above perception, the church is the most lethal weapon the colonizing power has at its disposal in deculturising the Africans. Its wide monopoly over colonial education and the catechists drives the belief that African culture is inferior to its Western counterparts. Converts like Ezekiel denigrate and view their African customs as pagan. He refuses to send his daughters to initiation schools as he views this practice as heathen when juxtaposed with the new Christian faith he has embraced (*Petals Of Blood* 1982:36). The church also condemns African religious practices as heathen, evil, especially polygamy and circumcision. New converts to the western religion like Ezekiel are the forerunners in condemning African customs. He directly keeps his daughters away from African cultural activities and ceremonies as, in his eyes, they are sinful (*Petals Of Blood* 1982:42) . These condemned values have a direct relationship with land, implying that much of the African's loss of dignity and identity of culture owes that to the church which promotes the adoption of alien western values while denigrating African standards of value which are based on land.

In Ngugi's novels, religious domination is viewed as another monstrous face of neo-colonialism in Africa. Ngugi shows the Bible (Christian religion) as a weapon of colonization manipulated by the white colonizer in the past to enslave the black man spiritually and physically, to condition him to accept oppression and exploitation as his divine predestination. A case in point is the preaching by people like Mubia. This is why in the novel Mubia advocates laying treasures in heaven (*A Grain Of Wheat* 1984: 33). Emenyonu rightly observes that: "What could not be achieved peacefully through religious brainwashing was accomplished through the colonizer's major weapon – the gun." (Emenyonu 1989:142). This view is further supported by Christie's (2006:67-8) remark that:

> .....missionaries actually helped in the conquest of African chiefdoms. They helped to break down African culture, and they imposed Western culture and work patterns. They undermined the way of life of the African people ..... the Bible and the gun went together in the defeat of the African chiefdoms.

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What the above remark implies is that the white man's religion is used as an oppression and exploitative tool in colonial and neo- colonial Africa. This is the same period in which Ngugi's novels under scrutiny are set. The novels are set in the colonial/ neo-colonial context of pre/post-independent Kenya. The oppressed workers are kept in their place as producers of the nation's wealth while the neo-colonial capitalists remain the disbursers of this wealth.

In *Petals of Blood* (1982), Munira's father, Ezekiel Waweru, and the Reverend Jerrod Brown are the epitome of egotism and corruption and are the counterparts of the economic power magnates in the religious sector. Emenyonu (1989:142) comments on the two characters when he remarks: "They represent the interests of Europe and are the instruments of religious domination of the masses to facilitate economic exploitation and political oppression "which is rooted in land." What Emenyonu implies is that the Bible and its doctrines become potent instruments for the acquisition of material wealth, power and influence, which is land, in the hands of egoistic and opportunistic church leaders like Ezekiel Waweru and Reverend Jerrod Brown. Emenyonu (1989:142) further labels them " economic maggots growing fat on the sweat of the poor and have no qualms trampling on the humanity of the peasants so far as it serves their material interest." It thus is clear that the church (religion) actively participates in land appropriation thereby undermining the culture and identity of the African, destroying his cosmic link with the land.

In *Petals of Blood* (1982),the church hampers Karega's desire to form a workers' union to fight for workers' rights. The new religion, which has diverted from the Christian church tells its followers: "Love was the only law they need to obey. They were to avoid the strife of this world. This world was a distorted image of the other world" (*Petals of Blood* 1982:43). The church thus discourages Africans from participating in politics. It tells them that participating in politics is dirty and that amassing wealth on earth is against God's wish yet it rewards Ezekiel with

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land and he amasses wealth by buying more land right under the nose of the Church since he is one of its converts (*Petals of Blood* 1982:43). In doing this, Ezekiel participates in land appropriation, as an agent of the church.

The church discourages African participation in politics because it knows that the only thing that can set Africans dappling with politics is land since it is the poignant and pressing issue in the plot of the novel. The settlers are fully aware of the implications of loss of land to the Africans. It means handing power over to the "wrong people" and losing power in every essence and the only buffer between them and that unpleasant fate is the Christian church. The church thus uses Reverend Kigondu to denounce wealth and political affiliation. It therefore sticks out clear that his death at the hands of the guerillas (*Petals of Blood* 1982:124) is a sign of the guerillas' rejection of the church's hypocrisy and the realization that church people are as much agents of colonialism as the army.

The church condemns as pagan the African rituals, especially the circumcision ceremony, thus acting as arbiters of what is culturally correct. Unknown to the whites is the fact that circumcision is one of the most important of the tribe's rituals since the blood shed during the process marks a bond between the living and their soil, their ancestors and God (*Petals of Blood* 1982:45). Waiyaki's initiation serves as evidence.

> The knife produced a sharp pain as it cut through the flesh. The surgeon had done his work. Blood trickled on to the ground, sinking into the soil. Hence forth, a religious bond linked Waiyaki to the earth as if his blood was offering (*Petals of Blood* 193:45).

What the above shows is that the African's religion directs his attention to the land, a phenomenon which is concrete and here on earth unlike a promised heaven to come. Because of the spiritually attaching role of the circumcision as highlighted in Ngugi's explication above, abolishing something as deep-rooted as circumcision in the lives of the Africans represented by the characters of Ngugi's fiction peoples , the church alienates the Africans from their land. One wonders

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what the church wants the African to do which it condemns customs that are relevant to them, as the character Waiyaki indicates (*Petals of Blood* 1982:45).

The answer can only lie in Frantz Fanon's (1963:42) observation that: "The church in the colonies is the white people's church, the Foreigner's church. She does not call the African to God's ways but to the ways of the master, of the oppressor." From the above mentioned incidents in the novel, it is evident that the African is called away from his land to the towns to serve the white man without complaining. The church does this when it attacks his customs. By doing this, it is telling the African to forget whatever links he has with his land. In this way, the church is actively aiding land grabbing.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates that people who preach that no wealth should be accumulated on earth, actually go about doing exactly the opposite. People like Ezekiel and Mubia are true examples of this. The whites, who are the main associates of the church, live in luxury but black Africans are supposed to cherish their poverty because their joy is assured in a heaven to come. This is the teaching that Mubia gave them when he was preaching, telling the people to lay their treasures in heaven where no moth would corrupt them (*A Grain Of Wheat* 1984:33). This reinforces the view, expressed in the introduction to this chapter, that the church participated in land appropriation as it also benefited from the acquired land

It seems that in working very much in liaison with the forces that alienate African lands and negate African cultural values, the church is guilty of eroding the African's identity. We see this in the novel when Ezekiel directly attacks circumcision as pagan (*Petals Of Blood* 1982:26) . Even his daughters believe that it is a sin to be circumcised. The loss of these cultural values culminates in the birth of a new man, a man who has to seek his identity from somewhere – the city. This further alienates the African from his land. To counter the church's

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influence, the Mau Mau movement is borne (*Petals Of Blood* 1982:123). Where the church preaches pacification, the movement advocates violence and missionaries themselves are not immune from attack (*Petals Of Blood* 1982:94). The guerillas want the restoration of land because this would mean restoring the African's dignity and with the land, Africans can be masters of their own destinies. The next chapter looks at the depiction of the erosion of cultural identity in Ngugi's novels in the light of the loss of land suffered by Africans at the hands of colonialism.

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Chapter five : Ngugi's Portrayal of Collapsing of Cultural identity

Introduction to the chapter

The previous chapters looked at the portrayal of the value of land in the two different eras of Ngugi's novels as exposed in the early and late novels. This chapter is going to look at how the different novels discussed in the earlier chapters form a continuum in Ngugi's writing on land and cultural erosion. The chapter looks at how cultural identity is simultaneously destroyed with the loss of land under colonialism. This collapsing of cultural identity cannot be divorced from the political and economic tendencies that mushroomed in Kenya and Africa in general. An analysis and discussion of the qualitatively derived data will be given at the end of this chapter.

Ngugi's practical inception of the results of loss of land

Loss of land on the African's part can be devastating. Most of the Africans get spiritual and material needs from land. This is because the Africans have a background that implants a deep-rooted spiritual attachment to land. The Africans believed in communal ownership of land since it is a common heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestors. They view land as their link with their God. To the African land is an identity and owned communally under the custodian of the chief. There is no individual ownership of land. Ngotho in *Weep Not Child* (1981) represents this reverential regard for land, clearly demonstrating this spiritual link to land. There is a mystical attachment to land for the African. This makes land a bone of contention among black Kenyans even long after independence. This African predicament is compounded by the re-emergence of colonialism in new robes bearing the slightly different name neo-colonialism. Ngugi in Emenyonu (1989:138) defines neo-colonialism as:

> ...the continued economic exploitation of Africa's total resources (land) and of Africa's labour power by international monopoly capitalists through continued creation and encouragement of subservient weak economic structures, captained or overseered by a native ruling class.

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What the above definition implies is that the new leaders do not dismantle the same apparatus that gave rise to the Mau Mau campaign. The Africans continue to be alienated from land which they hope to hold onto for life. Ngugi depicts political domination as one of the prominent visages of neo-colonialism. During the struggle for independence and land, Africans fought to expel the colonial masters and replace them with educated Africans. They saw the takeover of the reign of power by fellow Africans as the dawn of a new era of freedom, equality and national development. But the people soon realized that their much admired elite were little more than imperialists and political stooges with black skins.

Emenyonu (1989:139) states that: "politically, it is obvious that the African masses have exchanged one form of colonialism for another where the overloads are their own black people." This remark implies that independence becomes a superficial attainment. It is true that the whites have physically evacuated Africa but their imported influence is more corrosively felt now that their new domination of Africa is through African leaders whose minds and consciences have been completely corrupted and colonized by the old masters, which implies the African leaders' loss of true African identity.

Identity disruption under the guise of development

It has been observed that the coming of the white men decimated the African mode of life and substituted it with new norms and standards of life. These standards took the form of new developments which were basically alien to the African. The white men had no respect for the shrines of the African as they went about mapping Africa to bring about "development." This development was in most cases to the disadvantage of the African.

A good illustration of the devastating effects of the loss of land on the poor peasants is Ilmorog village. The village changes over a period of ten years since the advent of "progress" into it. Karega in *Petals of Blood* (1982:302) makes this observation:

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> He thought how Ilmorog peasants had been displaced from the land; some had joined the army of workers, others were semi-workers with one foot in a plot of land, one foot in a factory while others became petty traders in hovels and shanties they did not even own, along the Trans-African road, or criminals and prostitutes who with their stolen guns and overused cunts eked a precious living from each and everybody.

The citation above best sums up the situation in the new Kenya. All these woes are a result of the European settler's need to annex land which results in a new breed of Africans who believe in Western ethics of individualism and Africans who prey on each other – the rich on the poor. The educated are responsible for this destruction of Ilmorog because they have introduced new ideals common in capitalist economies.

Ngugi best shows economic exploitation to be the foundation on which the entire superstructure of neo-colonialism is built and sustained. To the masses who fought for "uhuru", freedom means regaining ownership of the lost land. One will better appreciate the Gikuyu attachment to land when one realizes that it is the symbol of cultural identity rootedness of the people. This view is supported by Jomo Kenyatta, quoted in *Homecoming* (1972:11) when he asserts: "(Land) the material symbol that holds family and tribe together." This is the same sentiments expressed by Ngotho in his apprehension to go on strike as this may lead to loss of land. When, therefore, the colonialists and later the neo-colonialists, disposed the people of their land, it is like putting a knife on the thing that holds them together, resulting in their individual and collective disintegration. This is the situation in *Petals Of Blood* when the agents of neo-colonialism descend on new Ilmorog and, like vultures, pick it clean of any economic possibility for self- sustenance for the peasants. Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* (1982:280) notes:

> Within a year or so of the new Ilmorog shopping centre being completed, wheat fields and ranches sprung up all around the plains: the herdsmen had died or had been driven further afield into the drier parts, but a few had become workers on the wheat fields and ranches on the earth upon which they once roamed freely. The new owners, master-servants of bank power, money and cunning, came over at weekends.

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The above scenario epitomizes the new Kenya. In this new Kenya, it is the traitors of the people, betrayers of the Mau Mau cause – the Kimerias in *Petals Of Blood* that inherit the land for which peasants like Abdullah fought and sacrificed their better selves. Emenyonu (1989:141) comments on this when he says: "The economic world of neo-colonial Kenya is one in which .....the law eat or be eaten reigns supreme. It is a law that debases man and corrupts his better nature." This predatory hold of Europe on the economy of independent Africa is manifested in the multinational co-operations and giant finance houses of which African agents are managers. Those neo-colonial economic vampires – Chui, Mzigo and Kimeria in *Petals Of Blood* are the neo-slaves content to safeguard Europe's economic interests in return for shares in foreign-owned banks, companies and oil corporations. This in its way undermines the African cultural concept of communalism and replaces it with a neo-colonial structure.

Cultural rape of Africa as orchestrated by loss of land

In essence African men's culture was closely interwoven with his activities on land. His religion was a mixture of his worship for his ancestors and land which was basically an inheritance he acquired from his ancestors. African religious activities all took in land as the departure point of their cosmic link with their God and ancestors. When whites came with the bible, there was a paradigm shift in the African men's culture. This was basically because Christian activities tended to contradict African ethics and culture. This resulted in cultural imperialism.

Another deadly visage of neo-colonialism in Kenya and in Africa in general is what Ngugi calls "cultural imperialism", and the concomitant prostitution and commercialization of African culture" (Emenyonu (1989:143). This has taken the shape of lack of pride in African cultural heritage and an indiscriminate inculcation of Western values by the African elite. In Ngugi's novels' this cultural negation is initiated in the unAfrican content of the education given to Kenya or

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African children. This education is designed and executed to promote British imperialism and Western values at the expense of African ones. Though Chui in *Petals Of Blood* (1982) fought against this in his student days at Siriana, when he becomes principal of that school, he out- does the former European principal, Cambridge Fraudsham, in his complete Westernization of the school curricular. This reversal of values marks the neo-colonial mentality of the hybrid African middle class.

Ngugi uses the commercialization of African culture as a symbol of Europe's cultural rape of Africa. In *Petals of Blood*, the oath that served as a solemn binding force among the Mau Mau freedom fighters in the pre-independence days is "debased into an 'oath of national betrayal" as a political weapon to exploit and suppress the masses in post- independent Kenya" [*Petals of Blood* (1989:106)]. The oath is now adopted to protect private property by making people vow not to revolt against the exploitative elite.

As Old Ilmorog gives way to New Ilmorog, the symbols of traditional ethics and culture are destroyed and in their place are erected symbols of neo-colonialist exploitation. The advent of capitalist interests in Ilmorog has resulted in changes in the cultural values of the community. For example, this new economic system has turned every cultural activity and ritual into a means to generate income for the new elite. The traditional Thenget'a drink, for example, has lost its ritual role. As Nyakinywa explains, it had been used in fertility rites, the celebration of a good harvest, and circumcision ceremonies. It also served as a source of inspiration for poets, singers and seers:

> Thenget'a. It is a dream. It is a wish. It gives you sight, and for those favoured by God, it can make them cross rivers of time and talk with their ancestors. It has given seers their tongues, and it has made barren women mothers of many children. Only you must take it with faith and purity in your hearts (*Petals of Blood* 1982: 210).

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In post-independent Kenya however, this traditional drink is now brewed for commercial reasons and with the aim to intoxicate and destroy the individual's ability to think. An interesting development is that a brewery is built to brew the traditionally inspiring drink which is then adulterated and commercialized thereby "depreciating it into a cheap narcotic that can afford the user nothing more than an illusory escape from the harsh realities of a stunted existence." (Emenyonu E.W 1989:143). Another interesting observation is that even though the Thenget'a brewery is owned by Anglo-American International corporation, Chui, Mzigo, and Kimeria become the local directors and shareholders. This was to enrich themselves at the expense of their culture which is a first class level of collapsing of the African culture resulting from loss of land.

Kiguunda in *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977: 3-4) gives a true African peasant's perspective. His attachment to land echoes the sentiments of a great number of peasants in Ilmorog who obtain title deeds for their lands. Wangeci, his wife, asks him why he keeps on looking at his title deed, and he answers:

> These one and half acres?
> These are worth more to me.
> Than all the lands that belong to Ahab wa Kanoru,
> Not borrowed robes
> Said to tire the wearer.
> A man brags about his penis,
> However tiny.

The intimacy between Kiguunda and his land is driven home by the symbol of the penis. If a man loses his sex organ, he literary loses his identity and dignity, and Kiguunda's land is a source of pride. One wonders what happens to those peasants displaced by Ahab wa Kanoru. Obviously they head for Nairobi and other sprouting urban centres where new cultures develop and take them hostage.

Mwathi's hut in *Petals Of Blood*, the visible symbol of the traditional order, is razed and in its place is erected the religious institution of exploitation – the All Saints Church – led by an equally corrupt man, Reverend Jerrod Brown. The

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cultural centre becomes a place for the [illegible] of a cosmetic culture and the despoliation of African girls by foreign old tourists who attribute a temporary return of virility to the sexual prowess of young "sweet sixteens". The traditional worth of a woman, her honour, gives way to the amorality of the whorehouse where "women's thighs are tables on which contracts are signed .....(and) modern problems are solved," (*Devil On The Cross* 1982:19). This explains why Wanja turns into a prostitute after losing her land. She is just a case of a thousand others. Some girls as young as the one whom Mwaura picks up with a tourist on one occasion are in a position similar to Wanja's. It is most likely that behind the girl, whom Mwaura suspects to being a school girl, is a story of alienation and subsequent drift into town.

Ngugi also demonstrates how capitalist values have permeated every sphere of Kenyan life. Human relations are commercialized. For example, when Wanja realizes that in the new Ilmorog there was nothing for free, she adopted the maxim, "you eat or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or some sits on you" (*Petals of Blood* 1982: 291). This awareness has led to the construction of her house of prostitution, the Sunshine Lodge, where anybody who had money could get access to a woman's body. In order to emphasize this exploitative and moral degradation of this type of business on the Kenyan community, Ngugi offers examples of organized prostitution controlled by people in high positions in different parts of the country. He also asserts that some women were even shipped to European countries by local businessmen and their foreign counterparts for purposes of prostitution. This clearly portrays collapse of African identity, humility and dignity as a result of land dispossession.

Another striking exposure of cultural destruction is the Trans-Africa highway that passes through Ilmorog. As it did so, it took up some of the farmlands and necessitated the destruction of homes. Such physical alteration foretold the basic change in the cultural and economic structure of the African community. These new developments transformed land tenure among the Ilmorogians from the

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traditionally collective system of land ownership to privately-owned plots. It also divided members of the community into two classes: the rich and the destitute. The destitute lived in hovels with dilapidated living conditions that foreshadowed the new regenerated world that was going to be brought about by the struggles of the workers and peasants in their effort to gain an equitable distribution of resources as stipulated by the Marxist principles.

Conclusion

It is quite clear that what whites termed development was in essence destruction to the peasants who lost their cultural identity, values and esteem when they were displaced from their land. They were forced to go and work in the city where there is no way they could keep worshipping their ancestors. On the other hand, the rich similarly do not retain their identity by owning land. They have been assimilated into the mainstream of capitalism and white culture, a fact Gatuiria in *Devil On The Cross* (58-59) laments.

> Cultural imperialism is mother of the slavery of the mind and body. It is cultural imperialism that gives birth to the mental blindness and deafness that persuades people to allow foreigners to do anything in their own country. Where are the books written in the alphabets of our national language? Where is our literature now? Where is the wisdom and knowledge of our forefathers now? Where is the philosophy of our fathers now.... A child without parents to counsel him .... what is to prevent him from mistaking foreign sheet for a delicious national dish? Our stories, our riddles, our songs, our customs, our traditions, everything about our national heritage has been lost to us.

Gatuiria's observation above best sums up the consequences of settler operations in land appropriation. It states clearly the results of a very long process which begin with settler arrival in Africa. When land is appropriated, the people's traditions and customs go away with it. Their cultural values, dignity and esteem is eroded. This is because of exposure to colonial discourse which glorifies western civilization, giving rise to the many problems Africa is currently experiencing since those in positions, the affluent people, have assumed roles vacated by the masters.

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Another key observation is that the neo-colonial economic structure is a capitalist one in which the rich grow richer by fattening on the sweat of the poor and the poor get poorer and are reduced to human machines which are expected to produce and never show any discontent even when their humanity, which is based on land, is abused. As Ngugi clearly states in Marxist terms, it requires a brave few like the indefatigable trade unionist, Karega in *Petals Of Blood* (1982), to harness the consciousness and strength of the discontented workers plus peasants to effect a revolution. Emonyonu (1989:142) supports this when he remarks: "If need be, "guns and clubs" in fact, violence should be employed to dethrone capitalism, the monster of neo-colonial exploitation in Kenya." The justification of war is an interesting standpoint if people are willing to restore their humility and land ownership. It is a justified course to restore identity because independence without proper and equitable distribution of land is a mere paper tiger. Independence without land is purely flag independence which leaves the African without his true culture and identity. The African's attachment to land symbolizes cultural identity and rootedness of people.

It is against this background that land has become the source of many disturbances in African society if one traces the changing perceptions on land that has gripped Africans. The chaos and conflict that characterize society today are driven by a desire to control or reclaim lost land which is, in essence, lost cultural identity on the part of Africans. This cultural identity is deeply rooted in land ownership. The various facets of the European's tactics to own and control land act as the trigger of the African's fighting spirit to reclaim what rightfully belongs to them.

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Chapter six: Conclusion

Introduction to the chapter

From close analysis of Ngugi's four novels, the present study can come up with a number of conclusions concerning land as portrayed in Ngugi's novels. The portrayal of land as an entity can be traced in the two time frames forming a continuum in as far as land and cultural erosion are concerned. This chapter sums up ways in which Ngugi's novels demonstrate how cultural identity is destroyed with the loss of land under colonialism. Such a collapsing of cultural identity cannot be looked at divorced from political and economic tendencies that obtained in Kenya and Africa as a whole. An analysis of the qualitatively derived data is given in this chapter of the study.

Land ownership in the early novels

There is great contrast in value of land. Africans have a cosmic link to land which is grounded in them being one with their land. This mystical attachment to land has no primary economic drive. Africans hold land in great communion and are keen to reclaim it. This can be explained from a Marxist perspective as a position that seeks to resolve inequalities. Porter M (in Finn G 1983:242) assets: "Marxism is concerned with the inequalities of class and economic relation." These inequalities are demonstrated by Ngugi's novels as having been imported by whites when they came to Africa and commercialized land.

Contrary to the African view of land is the European settler's view that has been shaped by foreign ideologies which commercialize land. All they see in land is the wealth that they can exploit for their own benefit. This is the motive that made them import concepts that directly displace African communalism with capitalism. This capitalist tendency is unknown to Africans. Ngotho in *Weep Not Child* (1981:25-6) clearly shows this when he comments:

> We came back home worn out but very ready for whatever the British might give us as reward. But more than this, we wanted to go

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> back to the soil to court it to yield. They destroy but Ng'o! the land was gone. My father and many others had been removed from our ancestral lands. He died a lonely poor man waiting for the white men to go....

Like any new phenomenon, the capitalist tendency finds space, roots and anchorage in other Africans. In *Petals Of Blood* (1982), Munira's father, Ezekiel Waweru is a true epitome of egotism and corruption and a counterpart of the economic magnates in the religious sector. He grows fat on the sweat of the poor and has no feeling of pity as he tramples on the humanity of the peasants who work on his land which he gets from the church. This is in great contrast to the African view and attachment to land as exemplified by Mumbi in *A Grain Of Wheat* (1984) in her lovemaking with Gikonyo.

> ...Gikonyo found himself suspended in a void he was near breaking point and as he swooned into the dark depth, he heard a moan escape Mumbi's parted lips. She held him tight to herself. Their breath was one. The *earth moved* beneath their one body into a stillness.

Land defines the African people and it is their cradle. This is in great contrast to the European view of land which is purely economic. This contrast is best shown in *A Grain Of Wheat* (1984:31) between Howlands and Ngotho.

> Both men admired this shamba. For Ngotho, he felt responsible for whatever happened on this land. He owed it to the dead, the living, the unborn of his tribe, to keep guard over this shamba. Mr Howlands always felt a kind of certain amount of victory whenever he walked through it all. He alone was responsible for taming this unoccupied wilderness. (*my own emphasis*)

This contrast best shows the changing perception on land that characterizes Ngugi's novels. The European settlers give land a new identity which most of the Africans cannot fully comprehend. The theme of land ownership in the later novels is basically perceived after the advent of the notion of colonialism.

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The concept of land ownership in Ngugi's novels

The white settlers bring a capitalist tendency that believes in individual ownership of land. This capitalist lifestyle is implanted in the Africans who become egocentric like the settlers. This generally cuts across communal tribal organization in the social, political and religious life of the African tribe. Africans at the end view land as an entity for enriching themselves individually thereby totally distorting African views of land. In *A Grain of Wheat* (1984:18), Gikonyo epitomizes this new African. Four years after his release from prison:

> Gikonyo was one of the richest men in Thabai. He had bought a five – acre plot,he owned a shop – GIKONYO GENERAL STORES at Rungei, and only the other day he had acquired a lorry for trading. On top of this he was elected chairman of the local branch of the Party, a tribute, so people said, to his man's spirit which no detention could break.

The phenomenon of buying land, as depicted above, is unAfrican. When Africans start buying land they are aiding and abetting the same system that is the fulcrum of the dispossession of their fellow Africans from their lands.

The Africans end up either actively participating in land appropriation for their own gain or assisting the whites by buying or selling land which was traditionally a communal entity. In doing this destructive act, the Christian faith and the missionary act as active agents as shown both in the early and later novels. The Christian faith makes Africans adopt capitalist ideologies by embracing its teachings of preparing for life after death, minus the need for riches on earth.

The church's role in devaluing land resulting in cultural and religious decadence

The advent of western Christianity in Africa paved the way for colonialism. Fanon F (1963:52) supports this in the observation:

> The colonist bourgeoisie is helped in its work calming down the natives by the inevitable religion. All those saints who have turned the other cheek, who have forgiven trespassers against them, and who have

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been spat on and insulted without fighting are studied and held up as examples.

From the above it is clear that the Christian faith worked in liaison with the forces that alienate African land and negate the African's identity thereby creating a new African who seeks identity elsewhere, probably in the city. Fanon F (1963:42) points to this when he remarks: "The church in the colonies is the white people's church, the Foreigner's church. She does not call the African to God's ways but to the ways of the master, of the oppressor." It is evident that the African is called away from his land to the towns to serve the white man without complaining.

Moving to the city forces the African to drift from land that is his identity and the epitome of his religion. Karega in *Petals of Blood* (1982:302) makes this observation:

> He thought how Ilmorog peasants had been *displaced from the land*; some had joined the army of workers, others were semi-workers with one foot in a plot of land, one foot in a factory while others became petty traders *in hovels and shanties they did not even own*, along the Trans-African road ,or *criminals* and *prostitutes* who with their stolen guns and overused cunts eked a precious living from each and everybody.

This best sums up the situation in the new Kenya. All these woes are a result of the European settler's control. This justifies why missionaries are not immune to attack by counter movements like the Mau Mau that seek to restore land as a way of restoring the African's identity. In *Petals Of Blood* (1982) Reverend Jerrod Brown hampers Karega's desire to form a worker's union in order to fight for workers' rights. The new religion which has diverted from the Christian church tells its followers: "Love was the only law they need to obey. They were to avoid the strife of this world. This world was a distorted image of the other world" (*Petals of Blood* 1982: 43). As much as the church wants to make Africans forget about land, the church itself negates this by rewarding Ezekiel with land and does nothing when he amasses more wealth by buying more land right under the nose of the church

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since he is one of its converts (*Petals of Blood* 1982). In doing this, Ezekiel participates in land appropriation, as an agent of the church.

It is true that when Africans restore land ownership, they are able to be masters of their own destiny. This explains why in chapter four of the study movements like the Mau Mau advocate violence where the church preaches pacification.

Ngugi's indication of the results of loss of land

Under the guise of development, peasants lost their cultural identity, values and esteem. This forced them to be physically moved as they throng the cities for work to earn a living. This displacement practically cut them from worshipping their ancestors who are enshrined in land.

Such a scenario exists in Ngugi's novels as chapter three of the research study demonstrates. It is evident that the African is called away from his land to the city to serve the white man. Even the affluent Africans are not at all exonerated from this decay as they end up assimilated into the mainstream of capitalism and white culture. An example of such Africans is Ezekiel in *Petals of Blood* (1982) who ends up buying land to enrich himself and displace fellow Africans. Ezekiel's actions clearly show capitalist individualism imported into Africa by whites.

When whites came into Africa, they took land and as they appropriated land, the people's traditions and customs went away with it. The African's cultural values, dignity, and identity were eroded. This is as a result of exposure to white propaganda which undermines African culture and glorifies western civilization. Gatuira in *Devil on The Cross* (1982:58-59) manifests this

> Cultural imperialism is mother of the slavery of the mind and body. It is cultural imperialism that gives birth to the mental blindness and deafness that persuades people to allow foreigners to do in their own country .... Where are the books written in the alphabets of our national language? Where is our own literature now. Where is the wisdom and knowledge of our forefathers now? Where is the philosophy of our

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> forefathers now..... A child without stories to counsel him....what is to prevent him from mistaking foreign shit for a delicious national dish? Our stories, our riddles, our songs, our customs, our traditions, everything about our national heritage has been lost to us.

This scenario gives voice to the many problems Africa is currently facing. This is mainly due to the adoption of a culture the African cannot fully understand.

With the loss of land a new economic structure is born. As indicated earlier, people like Gikonyo in *A Grain of Wheat* (1984) are a clear example of this new economic structure as they embark on individual enrichment at the expense of fellow Africans. Another example is Ezekiel in *Petals of Blood* (1982). The two go on land acquisition sprees at the expense of fellow Africans. Loss of land gives rise to capitalism which is a neo-colonial economic structure. In this structure , the rich become richer by fattening on the sweat of the poor who become poorer and turn into human machines whose humanity is abused. Karega in *Petals of Blood* (1982:302) reflects on this in the observation that:

> He thought how Ilmorog peasants had been displaced from the land; some had joined the army of workers, others were semi-workers with one foot in a plot of land, one foot in a factory while others became petty traders in hovels and shanties they did not even own, along the Trans- African road, or criminals and prostitutes who with their stolen guns and overused cunts eked a precious living from each and everybody. (*my emphasis*)

The village changes and a breed of new Africans emerges. These Africans believe in western ethics of individualism. These Africans prey on each other – the rich on the poor. The African's humanity is based on land. Nganga in *Weep Not Child* (1981:19) shows such a cosmic attachment to land:

> Nganga was rich. He had land. Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor-cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich. A man who went around with tattered clothes but had at least one acre of red earth was better than the man with money.

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This status quo then calls upon the intelligentsia trade unionists to harness the consciousness and strength of the discontented workers and peasants to effect a revolution. This was the only way to restore their human dignity and reverse their dehumanization. As I stated in chapter one of this study, Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1972:28) supports this communist view in his statement:

> Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal, and diminishes man....

Marilyn Porter in Geraldin Finn (1983:242) supports this when she says, "Marxism is concerned with the inequalities of class and economic relations...."War is justified as a method to restore humanity through land ownership. It becomes a true and justified course to restore identity since independence without proper and equitable distribution of land is just flag independence which leaves the African without his true culture and identity. Such a true culture and identity are symbolized by Waiyaki's initiation in *Petals of Blood* (1983:45).

> The knife produced a sharp pain as it cut through the flesh. The surgeon had done his work. Blood trickled on to the ground, sinking into the soil. Henceforth, a religious bond linked Waiyaki to the earth as if his blood was offering.

The African's attachment to land symbolizes cultural identity and rootedness of a people. Ngotho's reverence for land as demonstrated in chapter three of this study clearly shows this identity. "For Ngotho, he felt responsible for whatever happened on this land. He owed it to the dead, the living, the unborn of his tribe, to keep guard over the shamba" (*A Grain of Wheat* 1984:13). These examples reveal how intense the sense of loss is on the part of Africans who lose their identity with land as a result of land dispossession and cultural assimilation.

Conclusion

The research has clearly shown that in Ngugi's novels land has social, political and economic connotations. Chapter one of the research shows clearly how

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Africans value land and its mythical link with. Such a link is displaced when whites colonize Africa and put in place new modes of land ownership signified by alien cultural indices like title deeds. The whites do not recognize African political set ups as they demarcate farms cutting across ethnic regions and even sacred places. The colonial status quo makes land a specific entity designed to advance their economic interests at the expense of the African's inherited status. The study thus shows how Ngugi's novels considered within its scope illustrate how land has great significance to the Africans.

Ngugi's earlier novels have been shown to dwell on the Africans' bond to land, not so much from the colonized's vantage point. It is in the later novels that such attachment to land is painted to contrast with the effects of colonization and land dispossession on the thinking of the Africans.

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