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Racial Discrimination and Subjugation of African Native: A Postcolonial and Colonial Analysis of Weep not Child

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to explore both colonial and postcolonial themes in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Weep Not, Child*. Specifically, the research focuses on how racial discrimination functioned as a tool for the subjugation of native Kenyans during British colonial rule. By analyzing the binary opposition of "us" versus "them" imposed by the colonizers, this study highlights how the British failed to improve the lives of the indigenous population, instead serving the interests of imperial power. The research addresses a critical gap in existing literature by offering a dual lens—colonial and postcolonial—on the mechanisms of domination depicted in the novel. Employing postcolonial theory, which seeks to examine the cultural, political, and social impacts of European colonialism from the 18th to 20th centuries, the study situates the text within a broader historical context. This theoretical framework underscores the idea that the legacies of imperialism remain central to understanding global systems today. As Frantz Fanon observed, "For colonialism, this vast continent was the haunt of savages" (*On National Culture*), illustrating the dehumanizing perceptions held by colonizers. Ultimately, the research concludes that colonialism led to the psychological and social disenfranchisement of Kenyans, who lost hope for a better future due to the racialized structures embedded within colonial society.

Introduction

Weep Not, Child is Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's first novel, published in 1964 under the name James Ngugi. It was the first English novel to be published by an East African. Thiong'o's works deal with the relationship between Africans and the British colonists in Africa, and are heavily critical of British colonial rule. Specifically, *Weep Not, Child* deals with the Mau Mau Uprising, and "the bewildering dispossession of an entire people from their ancestral land." Ngugi wrote the novel while he was a student at Makerere University.

The book is split into 2 elements and eighteen chapters. Half one deals



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principally with the education of Njoroge, whereas half 2 deals with the rising revolutionary, anti-colonist turmoil in African country.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's 1964 novel *Weep Not, Child* explores the complex relationship between British colonial forces and the indigenous Kenyan population during the Mau Mau uprising—a protracted armed resistance that lasted for eight years in the 1950s. This historical conflict, set in colonial Kenya under British control, resulted in the deaths of an estimated 12,000 to 20,000 African fighters. The novel highlights the British Empire's reliance on the “divide and rule” strategy, an ancient political tactic originally employed by the Greeks, which effectively prevented unity among oppressed communities. Thiong'o's narrative conveys the deep emotional and psychological impact of British colonialism, particularly through the perspective of a young protagonist who embodies a powerful critique of imperial domination.

The Mau Mau uprising played a pivotal role in Kenya's journey toward independence. Kenya's abundance of natural resources and its strategic location made it an attractive target for colonial exploitation, leading many British settlers to seize control of large portions of fertile land. During this period, very few Africans were permitted to retain ownership of their ancestral lands, with a small settler population occupying the majority. For the Gikuyu—the largest ethnic group in Kenya—land held profound cultural and spiritual significance. As a result, colonial land policies generated deep resentment, especially among the Gikuyu and other indigenous communities. Frustration intensified when Kenyan men were conscripted to serve in the First and Second World Wars. In response to these injustices, Kenyan nationalists began organizing in 1944, eventually forming the Kenya African Study Union, which was later renamed the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1946 under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta. Mentioned frequently in *Weep Not, Child*, Kenyatta became a central figure in the anti-colonial movement. By 1952, the Mau Mau began targeting both European settlers and African collaborators. The British colonial government declared a State of Emergency that year, enforcing martial law and arresting Kenyatta along with other resistance leaders. The crackdown affected many innocent civilians as well, with young men often detained merely on suspicion of association with the Mau Mau.

Background of Story

Weep Not, Child is Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's first novel, published in 1964 under the name James Ngugi. It was the first English novel to be published by an East African. Thiong'o's works deal with the relationship between Africans and the British colonists in Africa, and are heavily critical of British colonial rule. Specifically, *Weep Not, Child* deals with the Mau Mau Uprising, and “the bewildering dispossession of an entire people from their ancestral land.” Ngugi wrote the novel while he was a student at Makerere University.

The book is split into 2 elements and eighteen chapters. Half one deals principally with the education of Njoroge, whereas half 2 deals with the rising revolutionary, anti-colonist turmoil in African country.

This book takes place throughout the Mau Mau conflict, an eight-year struggle in British-controlled colonial African country. Throughout this Fifties conflict, land killed somewhere between 12,000 and 20,000 African rebels. The success of land Empire is attributed to their “divide and rule” apply, a political maneuver 1st



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utilized by the traditional Greeks. This apply makes it troublesome or not possible for smaller teams of individuals to unify and revolt—and that's specifically what happened throughout the Mau Mau conflict.

The Mau Mau uprising played a crucial role in Kenya's struggle for independence. The region was rich in natural resources and attracted many European settlers who exploited these resources for their own benefit. During the colonial period, very few Africans were permitted to retain land ownership, while a small number of British settlers controlled vast tracts of Kenyan land. Land held deep cultural significance for the Gikuyu—the largest ethnic group in Kenya—making colonial land policies especially painful and unjust. Tensions escalated further when African men were conscripted to fight in both World War I and World War II. In response to ongoing oppression, Kenyan activists began organizing politically. This led to the formation of the Kenyan African Study Union, which was renamed the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1946 under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta—who is frequently mentioned in *Weep Not, Child*. By 1952, the Mau Mau movement had intensified, with violent acts targeting both European colonists and Africans perceived to be collaborators. In reaction, the colonial government declared a State of Emergency, which suspended civil liberties and allowed mass arrests, including that of Kenyatta and many others. The emergency measures deeply impacted the population, with many young men detained without evidence—simply on suspicion of supporting the Mau Mau rebellion.

The novel highlights how colonial policies—particularly land alienation and racial inequality—deeply affected the Gikuyu community, whose identity and livelihood were closely tied to land ownership. As British settlers seized vast areas of fertile land, many Africans, including Njoroge's family, were pushed into poverty and servitude. This displacement and disenfranchisement created a sense of collective injustice that fueled resistance movements like the Mau Mau. Through characters such as Ngotho and Boro, Ngũgĩ explores the psychological and emotional toll of colonial violence, as well as the generational divide between those who suffer silently and those who choose to rebel. The arrest of Jomo Kenyatta—referenced in the novel—and the declaration of the State of Emergency mirror the real-life suppression of African resistance. By portraying these events through the lens of one family's struggle, Ngũgĩ effectively humanizes the historical trauma of colonization and emphasizes how ordinary lives were shaped—and shattered—by imperial power.

Problem statement

All the major and minor characters of the novel are deeply affected by the racial discrimination and Postcolonialism which is imposed to them. This research will mainly focus on how native country Kenya was just breaking out from being under British rule. Following are the research questions:

1. How the British imposing a binary of us and them on the Kenyan people by racial discrimination?
2. How colonization fails to make the lives of the Kenyans better, but meet the goals of the Empire?

Significance of novel

Weep Not, child attracts its title from a flash late within the story, once Njoroge and



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writer Howlands discuss whether or not there's any hope left for Kenya's future. The novel's title refers to the hope that sustains its characters through the violence and suffering of the Mau Mau revolt. Njoroge argues that there's, and therefore the utterer comments that "hope of a higher day was the sole comfort he might provide to a weeping child" (121). The title is additionally mention to the Whiteman verse form "On the Beach in the dead of night," during which the speaker begs a baby to not cry over the unquiet storm, since it'll shortly pass, just like the kid on the beach, Njoroge above all tries to visualize not the tumult however he had the potential to calm the storm which he possessed due to oppression which he was facing. Though he eventually places this hope underneath scrutiny, Ngugi explores however love and family loyalty commit to endure even in the cruelest conditions.

Literature review

Isil Gachet is the Executive Secretary to the European Commission towards Racism and Intolerance (ERI). Mandated to fight racism and racial discrimination in Europe by shielding human rights most. Shahana Khanam worked on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Weep Not Child as An Ecocritical Study Adel El-Sayed Hassan worked on READING NGUGI'S WEEP NOT, CHILD ALONG WITH ALICE WALKER'S WOMANIS. Oxford academic journals labored on African affairs in weep now not child. The Paradox of Education in Weep Not, Child and Nervous Conditions This article will argue that in the novels Weep Not, Child and Nervous Conditions, education features as a paradoxical medium. Molly stroud is the contact author of this article

Sourav Kumar Nag worked on A Neo- ancient Reading of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Weep now not Child in his article. Kristen Willms worked on weep Not, Child: Through the Eyes of Postcolonialism but this research is about Racial Discrimination and Subjugation of African Native: A Postcolonial Analysis of Weep Not Child and this is research gap of this study. It is due to the education and also the spiritual beliefs that colonizers have pushed on the people of African nation that management might be established. people who were uneducated and continued the recent non secular practices, like Nguni, Kamau and Boro, were those to face and fight the system. In the end, they were all either eliminated or neutralized. On the opposite hand Njoroge, UN agency was a decent Christian associate degree had the advantage of an education, may either be used as associate degree instrument for the Empire or be therefore pessimistic he wouldn't carry a finger against it though' he became the later, as a tool he would be expendable as Jacobo did. Either manner it went, the migrator had obtained the management over the labor that they needed to accomplish.

The novel portrays the landless native's struggle against the white settlers in pre-colonial African nation. The dispossession of the poor man's land forms the most important theme during this novel. In express feelings Not, kid Ngugi relates the story of a community that crumbles due to exposure to the West.

Research methodology

Since the study is non pragmatic and Qualitative in nature, the researcher will try to use the deductive approach while drawing on textual analysis for the study of the selected novel. The researcher will fill the gap with textual references from the Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel "weep not child" that how colonization has affected the African natives during an uprising of Mau Mau movement in 1964. This research will revolve around racial discrimination and subjugation effected the



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African native physically and mentally and what were their causes and effects. This research will also be discussed about the white's supremacy and black's struggle to find their identity and lands. Both these primary and secondary sources will be employed to collect the data. Online websites of reputed papers, research articles, academic journals, using the keywords 'racial discrimination', 'power', 'politics and 'colonialism'

Interpretation: textual analysis

Weep Not, Child is a novel written by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in 1964. It was the first English -language novel published by an East African writer. Weep Not, Child is set during the Mau Mau uprising, an armed rebellion that lasted approximately eight years in British-colonial Kenya during the 1950s. During this period, the British colonial forces were responsible for the deaths of an estimated 12,000 to 20,000 African insurgents. The British Empire's ability to maintain control over its colonies often relied on its strategic use of "divide and rule" tactics—a method of governance that traces back to ancient empires. By fostering divisions among local communities, colonial powers made it difficult for unified resistance to emerge. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel sharply critiques these colonial strategies, capturing the psychological and societal damage inflicted by imperial rule. Through Weep Not, Child, Ngũgĩ gives voice to the silenced experiences of Kenyan families, reflecting both the personal and political toll of British oppression.

Aime Césaire, in Discourse on Colonialism, defines exploitation as "the baleful projected shadow of a style of civilization that, at a precise point in its history, finds itself compelled, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies." This statement reveals how colonial expansion was not merely about territorial conquest, but an economic necessity rooted in capitalist rivalry. Césaire presents colonization as a large-scale struggle for domination, where controlling more countries meant access to more resources, labor, and strategic power. He argues that the colonized nations and their peoples were reduced to mere instruments in this imperial game, summarized by the harsh equation: "colonization = thingification." In this process, human beings were stripped of agency and reduced to objects, serving the economic and political interests of colonial empires.

Weep Not, Child follows the journey of Njoroge, a young boy who aspires to gain an education in hopes of providing a better future for his family. Alongside his academic ambitions, he also strives to be a good Christian. Like the author himself, Njoroge has known only oppression and exploitation throughout his life. Through Njoroge's character, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o critically explores how colonial powers weaponized education and religion to exert control over the Kenyan people. By embedding these tools within the British political system, the colonizers sought not only to dominate materially but also to reshape the mindset of the colonized, making submission appear morally and socially acceptable.

The book begins with Njoroge speaking along with his birth mother, Nyokabi, concerning getting to college. He's said that he's to begin attending. He's the primary in his family, and also the just one of the 5 sons, to be ready to go. This is often one thing that he really desires, because it is seen as an excellent chance. It'll be a commitment which will need his social class family to investment cash



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for him to be there, as well as desperate to “buy a shirt and a combine of shorts” (Thiong’o 3). They’re therefore committed, that in a while once his ancestors run into financially misfortune, his brothers facilitate develop the price. The family is willing to try to save it, because it is people who have an education have the simplest probability of breaking out of economic condition, and probably having an opportunity to realize some style of authority and standing. Njoroge and his brother purpose this out of the village chief, Jacobo, World Health Organization is “as wealthy as mister. Howlands as a result of he got education” and his son, John, World Health Organization “because he has finished his learning in Republic of Kenya, he can currently go so much away” (Thiong’o 4).

As we tend to see through Njoroge’s father, Ngotho, this wasn’t continuously the case. The land he’s employed on for mister. Howlands belonged to their family for generation before Republic of Kenya became a part of a people Empire. Originally, it absolutely was through diligence of the land that the Kenyans might offer a decent life for themselves. Ngotho believes in a previous prophesy that the land can come back to the rightful house owners, therefore he “felt accountable for no matter happened to the current land. He owed it to the dead, the living, and also the unborn of this line, to stay guard” (Thiong’o 32). The distinction in views between the daddy and son shows the results of victimization on the newer generation; they’re willing to simply accept the colonizers’ customs wherever the previous ones would like to come back to their native ways.

In *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s Weep Not, Child*, language emerges as a tool of colonial dominance and social mobility. To succeed in colonial Kenya—particularly in dealings with the British—proficiency in English, the language of the colonizer, is essential. Although the novel is written in English, it subtly reveals that most impoverished and rural Kenyans primarily speak in their native Bantu languages. For instance, the protagonist Njoroge notes, “It was in Standard IV that they began to be taught English” (Thiong’o 47), marking his progression to that level as a significant personal and educational milestone. Characters like Jacobo, who collaborate with the colonial administration, are already fluent in English, which enables them to gain economic and political advantage. Similarly, Ngotho, though less fluent, must speak some English to work under Mr. Howlands, a British settler. Thiong’o uses this dynamic to show how the colonizers impose their language as a form of cultural indoctrination. By making English a prerequisite for opportunity and authority, the colonial system reinforces its power and subtly erodes indigenous identity.

In *Weep Not, Child*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o highlights the colonial imbalance in linguistic expectations: while Kenyans must learn English to access any form of progress, the British colonizers feel no obligation to learn local languages. This asymmetry reflects a broader ideology of superiority. Ngotho, for instance, is tasked with managing farm laborers on the shamba, but when a strike breaks out, the white landowners are unable to communicate directly with the workers and must rely on Jacobo to act as an interpreter (Thiong’o 31). This dependency on African intermediaries illustrates the colonizers’ disinterest in engaging with the culture or language of the people they rule. Frantz Fanon, in *On National Culture*, critiques this attitude by noting that for the colonizer, Africa was historically viewed as “the haunt of savages.” In the colonizers’ minds, there was no value in learning the language of those they deemed inferior. Instead, the imposition of the English language was seen as a civilizing mission—an attempt



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to “improve” the colonized by replacing their culture with that of the British. Ngũgĩ critiques this process as a form of cultural domination disguised as progress.

Njoroge's academic achievements in *Weep Not, Child* symbolize the collective aspirations of a colonized people seeking empowerment through education. He excels in the lower grades and eventually qualifies for high school—an extraordinary accomplishment in his village. Notably, even Mwihi, the daughter of the influential chief Jacobo, is only able to gain admission to a teacher training college (Thiong'o 115). Njoroge's success, despite his humble background, becomes a source of pride and hope for the entire community. The villagers, recognizing the potential he represents, come together to raise the funds necessary for his continued education. In their eyes, Njoroge transcends his individual identity and becomes a symbol of possibility in a society limited by colonial rule. As Thiong'o writes, “He was not the son of Ngotho but son of the land” (116), underscoring how deeply his success is tied to the collective dreams of liberation, dignity, and progress in the face of systemic oppression.

What we tend to see is that the British imposing a binary on the Kenyan people: us/them. To be expected, they need placed themselves within the superior position. In doing therefore, the native individuals of this country, these “others” area unit the other of everything they are: intelligent, civilized, moral, subtle. This can be what they felt gave them the proper to enforce their society on them, exploit in their wake a rustic “drained of their essence, cultures trodden underfoot, establishments undermined, lands taken, religions smashed, impressive inventive creations destroyed, extraordinary potentialities wiped out” whereas making a state of affairs “which flip the colonizing man into a room monitor, a military sergeant, a jail guard, a slave driver” to regulate and assimilate the colonized into their social order (Cesaire, *From Discourse on Colonialism*).

In the End, we have a tendency to see the failure of constitution to form the lives of the Kenyans higher, however meet the goals of the Empire. We have a tendency to solely have to be compelled to look to Njoroge. when the murder of Jacobo and Mr. Howlands by his brothers, he's ripped from the college and interrogated together with his father. His brothers square measure-tired jail, with Boro to be dead. His father dies from his injuries. He's left on their own to support his 2 mothers. By the tip of the book, he now not has any hope of ever having the ability to travel back to high school. With the loss of the one major dream he had, he sees no thanks to ever be able to bring the positive modification to his country he felt he was destined to. This, in turn, causes him to lose his religion in God. within the words of Fanon, “Perhaps colonialism isn't merely content to impose its rule upon this and also the future by a form of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the laden individuals, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it” (*On National Culture*). He finds himself at the purpose of double consciousness; not English, however not very Kenyan. it's due to this that we have a tendency to see what Njoroge is currently, associate degree empty shell of an individual.

In *Weep Not, Child*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o illustrates how colonial control in Kenya was maintained not only through physical violence but also through ideological tools such as education and religion. These systems were imposed strategically to produce obedient subjects rather than liberated individuals. Characters like



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Ngotho, Kamau, and Boro, who either lacked formal education or continued to uphold traditional beliefs, were the ones who directly resisted colonial authority. As a result, they were ultimately either destroyed or rendered powerless. In contrast, Njoroge, who is educated and shaped by Christian morality, represents the kind of colonial subject that can be easily manipulated or pacified. Although he does not become a direct agent of the Empire, his deep disillusionment renders him passive and ineffective in the face of injustice. Had he resisted, he might have been disposed of just as Jacobo was—used and then discarded. Thus, whether through active compliance or quiet submission, the colonial system succeeded in subduing the labor and will of the colonized population by co-opting their minds and beliefs.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* foregrounds the postcolonial theme of land dispossession as a central trauma inflicted by colonial rule. The novel depicts the anguish of landless native Kenyans who are uprooted by British settlers and relegated to laboring on what was once their ancestral land. For the Gikuyu people, land is not merely property but a vital source of identity, culture, and spiritual continuity. The loss of land, therefore, symbolizes the broader erasure of indigenous existence. From a postcolonial perspective, Ngũgĩ critiques the imperialist project not just for its physical violence but for its psychological domination—what Frantz Fanon terms “colonial alienation.” Through Western education, Christianization, and imposed social hierarchies, the colonizers succeed in fragmenting the communal structure, replacing indigenous values with colonial ideologies. The novel explores how this ideological infiltration creates internal conflict, as seen in Njoroge's disillusionment and the generational tensions within his family. Ultimately, *Weep Not, Child* exemplifies a postcolonial narrative that not only exposes the material consequences of colonization but also questions the lingering effects of imperialism on identity, culture, and resistance.

Conclusion

By the end of *Weep Not, Child*, Njoroge is stripped of his final hope—the dream of continuing his education. Once seen as a symbol of progress and potential, education had given him a sense of purpose and a belief that he could contribute to his nation's future. However, the combined weight of colonial oppression, racial discrimination, and personal loss ultimately crushes his aspirations. With his family shattered, his community destabilized, and his future denied, Njoroge is left in a state of despair and passivity. This reflects one of the most insidious effects of colonialism: the erosion of hope among the colonized. The British colonial system did not merely dominate land and labor; it systematically suppressed the dreams and agency of native Kenyans, particularly through institutionalized racism and economic inequality. Njoroge's personal downfall is emblematic of a broader collective experience, in which an entire generation finds itself powerless in the face of an unjust and dehumanizing system.

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