

Petals of blood

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Petals of Blood It is true that the concept of civilization became much complicated in the 20th century because of the differing opinions, ideologies and worldviews held by people from different parts of the world. It meant different things to the Africans, Europeans, Asians and Americans. Indeed, this is the major theme of discussion in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 1977 published *Petals of Blood* in which he uses a mixture of narrative and fiction to present a clear picture of the cultural antagonism in Kenya shortly, before, and after the attainment of political independence from the British imperialists.

By presenting Munira, Karega, Abdulla and Wanja as the main characters, the author manages to shed more light on the theme of cultural diversities in the small village of Ilmorong. The issue of cultural superiority is evidenced in the novel right from the beginning of the story. Having been set in the Kenyan context, the village has a blend of people who strongly believed in the traditional African cultural practices and those who believe in western culture. However, since no one was ready to let their culture go, they had to stick on them.

To the ordinary Ilmorong villagers, African culture was second to none. Therefore, they held the view that they should be left to continue practicing their cultural traditions that encompassed male chauvinism, domination of the women, rituals and other conservative practices that are transmitted from one generation to another (Ehret 28). However, the whites were more progressive people who believe in westernization. In their opinion, a good culture should embrace modern practices such as western education and Christianity. This is what was seen in the village especially after the coming of several progressives who wanted to establish schools so as to offer

Christianized education to the villagers.

The relationship between Munira, Karega, Abdulla and Wanja is a clear demonstration of the conflict that ensued in this village. Since these protagonists were from different backgrounds, they could not come into an agreement on the exact culture that should be considered as a more civilized one. Questions were raised whether it is the African or Western culture that is more superior to the other. To prove this, each of these people clung on theirs. According to Munira, people had to be progressive.

To achieve this, they needed to acquire modern education. This is why he took the bold step to relocate from the highly urbanized Nairobi to establish a modern school in the remote village of Ilmorong so as to civilize its people. However, this was fiercely opposed by the villagers who were not ready to adopt a new culture. In fact, they even went ahead to kill some of the people who wanted to force them into this new and strange culture (Mwangi 113). However, as the story continues, the interactions between these characters culminate into lots of changes. Despite the strong opposition, the villagers end up succumbing to the progressive western cultures (Gunewardene293). At the end of the story, Wanja and Abdulla become capitalists. Even the village “ transformed from a small cluster of mud huts to a new town of concrete, stone, glass, iron and neon lights.”

Works Cited

Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2002. Print.

Gunewardene, Huon. Exposure to Westernization and Dieting: A Cross-Cultural Study. *Int. J. Eat. Disord.* 29: 2001 pp. 289-293.

Mwangi, Rose. Kikuyu Folktales. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 2008. Print.