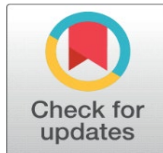


UGALI AND UBUNTU: A CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH BELONGING IN THE SELECT WORKS OF NGUGI WA THIONGO

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ABSTRACT

Ubuntu emphasises the value of interpersonal relationships, group accountability, and interdependence. Ubuntu essentially represents the ideas that a person's identity is shaped by their relationships with other people and that a community's health is a prerequisite for a person's personal health. It is a tenet that fosters compassion, empathy, and teamwork in order to advance social cohesiveness and peace. Ubuntu is a prominent African philosophical idea that has received international popularity, especially in relation to debates over social fairness, leadership, and how to resolve conflicts. Ngugi wa Thiong'o explores deep themes of identity, community, and belonging in her chosen works by deftly combining the ideas of Ugali and Ubuntu. A common dish in many African cultures, ugali signifies more than just sustenance, it is a symbol of community, nourishment, and the shared experiences of meals spent together. The African ideology of Ubuntu, which states, "I am because we are," emphasises the interconnectedness and shared humanity of communities. This culinary tradition symbolises this principle. In the context of Kenya's sociopolitical environment, Ngugi's stories explore the lives of people who struggle with colonial tyranny, cultural upheaval, and the desire for autonomy. Ngugi highlights the value of community values and solidarity as crucial for overcoming adversity and restoring cultural identity through his moving stories.

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"- African Proverb

Cooperativeness and group effort were essential to the survival and prosperity of many traditional African communities. The belief that long-term success and perseverance derive from working together was reinforced by the fact that jobs, from farming to building dwellings, were frequently completed together. Ugali is a staple diet in many African nations, especially in East Africa. Made with water and maize (corn) flour, it is baked until it resembles dough. Different names for it exist in different parts of the world: posho in Uganda, sadza in Zimbabwe, nshima in Zambia, and pap in Africa. Ugali is a staple of everyday meals, usually eaten as a side dish with meat, fish, or vegetables. Not only does it provide sustenance, but it also has cultural importance as a representation of shared experiences and community. Ubuntu is a Bantu phrase that means "I am because we are" or "humanity towards others." It emphasises respect, compassion, and community while embodying the notion that a person's humanity is inextricably linked to that of others.

Ubuntu emphasises the value of interpersonal relationships, group accountability, and interdependence. Ubuntu essentially represents the ideas that a person's identity is shaped by their relationships with other people and that a community's health is a prerequisite for a person's personal health. It is a tenet that fosters compassion, empathy, and teamwork in order to advance social cohesiveness and peace. Ubuntu is a prominent African philosophical idea that has received international popularity, especially in relation to debates over social fairness, leadership, and how to resolve conflicts. Ngugi wa Thiong'o explores deep themes of identity, community, and belonging in her chosen works by deftly combining the ideas of Ugali and Ubuntu. A common dish in many African cultures, ugali signifies more than just sustenance, it is a symbol of community, nourishment, and the shared experiences of meals spent together. The African ideology of Ubuntu, which states, "I am because we are," emphasises the interconnectedness and shared humanity of communities. This culinary tradition symbolises this principle. In the context of Kenya's sociopolitical environment, Ngugi's stories explore the lives of people who struggle with colonial tyranny, cultural upheaval, and the desire for autonomy. Ngugi highlights the value of community values and solidarity as crucial for overcoming adversity and restoring cultural identity through his moving stories. In Ngugi's writings, ugali frequently represents cultural resiliency and a connection to ancestry, giving characters a feeling of continuity and belonging in the midst of chaos. His characters share a common activity of eating Ugali, which serves as a means of connection between them and their heritage. This shared meal serves as a metaphor for Ubuntu, showing how essential community and support from one another are to the human experience. Ngugi's examination of these subjects goes beyond the individual to criticise larger social systems, urging a revival of communalism and group action as strategies for opposing colonial and neocolonial forces. Ugali and Ubuntu are more than just cultural icons in this gastronomic exploration of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's writings; they are essential to comprehending the dynamics of identity and belonging. They offer a prism through which to examine the challenges and achievements of African communities, demonstrating the close connections between philosophy, cuisine, and culture in the construction of resilient and cohesive societies. Ngugi highlights the continuing strength of community in creating a sense of belonging and maintaining cultural heritage in the face of outside challenges through this interplay.

- To study the importance of food, particularly Ugali, a staple dish in East Africa, in preserving and expressing cultural identity.
- To explore how shared meals and communal dining practices reflect the principles of Ubuntu, fostering a sense of community and collective identity.
- To demonstrate how culinary practices can serve as tools of resistance and empowerment in the struggle for cultural and political liberation.
- To examine how food-related motifs and metaphors contribute to the narrative structure and thematic development of his stories.

Based on the background of the study and research focus, the researcher creates the research question that the researcher wants to be analysed the following questions:

- How does Ngugi wa Thiong'o utilize the depiction of Ugali to explore themes of cultural identity and belonging?
- In what ways do the communal dining practices in Ngugi wa Thiong'o reflect the principles of Ubuntu?
- How are food and communal eating depicted as acts of resistance and resilience in Ngugi wa Thiong'o?
- How do food-related symbols and metaphors enhance the narrative structure and thematic development in Ngugi wa Thiong'o?

The rich thematic content and stylistic inventiveness of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's works have been the subject of intense analysis, especially in regard to post-colonial African societies. Scholars have looked into a number of aspects of his writing, such as how he uses food to represent resistance and cultural identity.

A Reading of Ngugi WA Thiong'o's Stand Points on Food Security in Post-Independent Africa: A Case of Petals of blood, by Elizabeth Wekesa, Dr. Joseph Musungu Kibabii University, Kenya. This study looks at Ngugi wa Thiong'o's position on food security with a particular emphasis on how Ilmorog is portrayed in Petals of Blood. It addresses the effects of food shortages and highlights their origins, such as capitalist neo-colonialists' exploitation. The paper emphasizes Ngugi's support for public unity and collective action to fight food insecurity using Marxist theory.

The Importance of Oral Tradition in Ngugi WA Thiong'o's Writings: A Critical Analysis of the River between and Petals of Blood, by Henrietta Mary Eyison and Peter Awuah Darteh. This article seeks to critically examine the thematic and stylistic roles that aspects of oral tradition play in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood and The River Between. The study aims to show how myths, tales, songs, proverbs, and rituals contribute to the African identity of the works as well as their topics, ideologies, and the author's dedication to social problems. The study closes the knowledge gap on the deeper relevance of oral tradition beyond its cultural representation by emphasizing how crucial a part it plays in Ngugi's thematic development and narrative strategies.

It examines how Ngugi's works explore themes of identity and belonging through the interweaving of culinary elements and the Ubuntu philosophy. It does this by drawing on a variety of theories and concepts.

Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and other historians have developed postcolonial theory, which offers a strong framework for analysing how Ngugi uses culinary symbols to critique colonial and post-colonial socio-political situations. In addition to highlighting how the West shapes and controls the cultural identities of colonial peoples, Edward Said's idea of Orientalism also raises the possibility that culinary customs, like other cultural objects, might serve as both sites of resistance and control. Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the "third space" shed light on how food may be used as a tool for negotiating cultural identity by establishing a space where colonial influences and indigenous African culinary traditions converge and change. Prominent author of postcolonial literature Ngugi wa Thiong'o highlights the use of language and culture in defying colonial rule. His writings promote the return of indigenous languages and customs, emphasizing the role that food has in both cultural resistance and preservation. Ngugi's use of culinary symbolism in his works can be interpreted by these theorists as a purposeful act of cultural reclamation and defiance against the erasure of African identities, demonstrating the potency of food as a means of preserving cultural legacy and cultivating a sense of community in the face of the socio-political upheavals caused by colonialism and its aftermath.

The Ubuntu ideology, which has its origins in African cultures, emphasizes the communal principles of interconnectivity, mutual support, and collective identity. Desmond Tutu, a notable proponent of Ubuntu, defines it as the conviction that "an individual's identity is shaped by their relationships with others." He stresses the interconnectedness of our humanity with that of others, asserting that genuine personal development and welfare can only be attained by prioritizing the welfare of the community. This interconnection promotes a feeling of shared fate and communal accountability. Mogobe B. Ramose, an influential advocate, further elaborates on this by placing Ubuntu within the context of African philosophy. He clarifies that Ubuntu is not solely a moral theory, but rather a comprehensive worldview that dictates social behavior and communal existence. According to Ramose, Ubuntu embodies the fundamental nature of human existence, marked by empathy, mutual exchange, and regard for every individual within the society. It advocates for the notion that communal bonds are essential for both individual identity and social harmony. By applying Ubuntu philosophy to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's narratives, community dining customs provide as a clear and tangible expression of these values. In literary masterpieces such as *Weep Not, Child*, *Devil on the Cross*, and *Petals of Blood*, community dinners serve as more than mere instances of consuming food. They signify the essence of social existence and the preservation of cultural heritage. The shared meals serve as a platform for characters to strengthen their communal connections, exchange their challenges and successes, and foster a feeling of belonging. The act of cooking and sharing food exemplifies the principles of Ubuntu by emphasizing mutual assistance, collaboration, and the nourishment of shared identity. Within these narratives, communal dining acts as a small-scale representation of the broader societal framework, demonstrating how the Ubuntu philosophy promotes solidarity, adaptability, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage in the face of the difficulties presented by colonial and post-colonial circumstances.

The significance of cultural identity and legacy in comprehending the symbolic role of food, specifically Ugali, in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's literary works cannot be overstated. Stuart Hall's theories of cultural identity provide an invaluable perspective for examining this symbolism. According to Hall, cultural identity is an evolving phenomenon that is always being created and reconstructed rather than a fixed essence. In his argument that social identity is about both being and becoming, it is anchored in the past but continuously changing in reaction to shifting socio-political contexts, he highlights the significance of history, culture, and power in forming identities. In his groundbreaking book *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o shares Hall's views by emphasizing the role that language and culture play in the fight against imperialism. According to Ngugi, the goal of colonialism was to eradicate native traditions and substitute European standards for them, depriving conquered peoples of their identity. In order to oppose colonial dominance and protect cultural legacy, he is an advocate for the restoration of indigenous languages and customs. In this sense, Ngugi's paintings use food, especially Ugali, as a potent emblem of cultural identity and legacy. A mainstay of many African diets, ugali is more than simply food; it is a cultural relic that reflects the customs, beliefs, and backgrounds of the communities that eat it. *Weep Not, Child*, *Devil on the Cross*, and *Petals of Blood* all use Ugali as a symbol of resistance to colonialism's forced cultural erasure as well as a link to the past and a reminder of cultural continuity.

In Ngugi's stories, characters declare and reinforce their cultural identity via the preparation and sharing of Ugali. By preserving these culinary customs, a sense of community and connection is strengthened. Ngugi emphasizes the value of Ugali and other traditional cuisines in order to demonstrate how resilient African civilizations are and how they can endure and adjust to outside influences. Hall argues that cultural identity is a dynamic process of discussion and

adaptability that is reactive to modern difficulties while being deeply established in historical and cultural settings. This dynamic interplay between food, culture, and identity exemplifies this theory.

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's writings, culinary tradition is a potent emblem of struggle and cultural distinctiveness. Food, especially Ugali, is more than just nourishment in books like *Weep Not, Child*, *Devil on the Cross*, and *Petals of Blood*, it's an essential component of cultural expression and continuity. Ugali embodies the community's ideals and legacy, serving as a link with conventional African rituals. Ngugi illustrates how food becomes a location of cultural resistance and survival by highlighting the effects of colonialism on indigenous cultures through culinary practices. Characters strengthen social ties, fight cultural erasure, and assert their cultural identity through shared meals. As a result, Ngugi's depiction of food highlights how important it is for maintaining cultural legacy and claiming one's identity in the face of obstacles brought on by colonial and post-colonial sociopolitical environments.

A staple meal in Kenyan society, ugali serves as a significant cultural icon that is ingrained in the customs and identity of the nation. Ugali, which is made from maize flour and water, symbolizes communal ideals and cultural continuity in addition to being a source of sustenance. Its cooking and eating are essential components of family and social events, strengthening ties between people and their cultural history. A mainstay of Kenyan cuisines, ugali is frequently connected to customary feasts enjoyed by a variety of ethnic groups, such as the Kalenjin, Luo, and Kikuyu. Its central place in daily meals emphasizes how important it is to preserving culinary traditions and tying modern activities to historical origins. Ugali preparation and sharing are essential aspects of group life. It is frequently served at social events, family get-togethers, and community festivals as a symbol of harmony and solidarity. Sharing Ugali strengthens social ties by fostering a feeling of community and shared identity. Ugali is more than just food for a lot of Kenyans; it's a connection to their ancestry and customs. Its placement on the table serves as a symbol of identification that ties people to their ancestry and past, serving as an expression of ancestral ideals and cultural pride. In conclusion, ugali in Kenyan society is more than just food; it is a powerful emblem of cultural identity, group cohesion, and resiliency. Its importance and continued existence emphasize its contribution to the celebration and preservation of Kenyan heritage.

The food was ready, and the smell of the hot Ugali made the children's mouths water. It was a sign of home, of the land they had come from, and the land they would one day return to. (*Weep Not Child*) The passage "The food was ready, and the smell of the hot Ugali made the children's mouths water" appears in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's book *Weep Not, Child*. The statement, which beautifully emphasizes the close relationship between food and cultural identity, reads, "It was a sign of home, of the land they had come from, and the land they would one day return to." A mainstay of Kenyan cooking, ugali is more than just food; it's a representation of a strong connection to the children's culture and roots. Their emotional connections to their cultural heritage are strengthened by the scent's sensory experience, which arouses strong feelings of nostalgia and belonging. This culinary link symbolizes resiliency and continuity in the face of displacement, both as a reminder of their ancestral country and a source of hope for a future return. The quotation so demonstrates how customary dishes like ugali may elicit and maintain cultural identity as well as offer consolation and hope during turbulent times.

As they ate, they talked of the old times, of the days when Ugali was a symbol of unity and strength among their people. (*Weep not child*) The line, "As they ate, they talked of the old times, of the days when Ugali was a symbol of unity and strength among their people" from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* captures the important function that Ugali plays as a symbol of culture and community. This scene demonstrates how Ugali represents historical and communal significance for the characters, in addition to being a staple dish. Through talking about the "old times," the protagonists establish a link between their current situation and a treasured past in which Ugali stood for resilience and communal togetherness in addition to providing sustenance. Sharing Ugali and remembering its symbolic meaning highlights how important it is to building a sense of power and solidarity among their society. Even while the people deal with their present difficulties, this discussion helps to reinforce the cultural and emotional ties that Ugali represents. The quote so emphasizes how important food is to maintaining cultural memory and fostering community bonds in the face of changing circumstances.

The people gathered around, sharing the humble meal of Ugali, their voices rising in songs of resistance and hope. It was in this sharing that they found their strength, a strength that the oppressors could never take away. (*Devil on the cross*) The passage "The people gathered around, sharing the humble meal of Ugali, their voices rising in songs of resistance and hope" appears in *Devil on the Cross*. In the context of collective resistance and empowerment, this sharing gave them strength that the oppressors could never take away. This emphasizes the tremendous symbolic and practical value of Ugali. Sharing Ugali becomes more than just a means of subsistence; it is a powerful representation of solidarity and group power against injustice. The community dinner is a symbol of a time when people get together not only to feed one another but also to strengthen their resolve and resilience as a group. Their songs of optimism and resistance demonstrate how

these events create a feeling of shared identity and purpose, providing a potent narrative that challenges the powers of oppression. Because of our common traditions and encouragement of one another, we are able to forge a collective strength that the oppressors are powerless to undermine. The quotation thus emphasizes how cultural practices such as the sharing of Ugali are essential for maintaining resistance and building collective resilience in the face of systematic suffering.

In the heart of the village, the fire crackled, and Ugali was served as the children listened to the elders recount stories of old. The food was a reminder of who they were and where they came from...(Petals of Blood)

"In the heart of the village, the fire crackled and Ugali was served as the children listened to the elders recount stories of old," is a quotation from Petals of Blood. The statement "the food was a reminder of who they were and where they came from" demonstrates the community's strong cultural significance of Ugali. A strong bond between tradition and identity is symbolized by the elders' narrative and the ritual of serving Ugali in the center of the village. The children's sense of continuity in culture and belonging is strengthened by the food, which provides a material link to the past. Ugali serves as a live representation of their culture, bringing the ideals and recollections of their ancestors to life as the elders narrate historical tales. This image demonstrates how traditional meals like ugali serve as a way of cultural identity preservation and the transmission of collective memories in addition to being a source of sustenance. A ritual of remembering and affirming their origins, the shared meal serves as a rock solid foundation for the community's identity and sense of place in the face of changing circumstances.

The meal was simple, Ugali and vegetables, yet it was a feast compared to the empty plates of the city's elite. In the simplicity of Ugali, the villagers found their dignity and defiance. (Petals of Blood)

The passage "The meal was simple, Ugali and vegetables, yet it was a feast compared to the empty plates of the city's elite" appears in Petals of Blood. The statement "The villagers found their dignity and defiance in the simplicity of Ugali" emphasizes the symbolic role that food has in expressing resistance and identity. The discrepancy between the lives of the rich and the regular people is highlighted by the juxtaposition between the simple supper of Ugali and the empty plates of the elite. Despite its simplicity, Ugali is a symbol of the people's resiliency and self-worth in addition to providing food. The villagers' acceptance of their traditional cuisine becomes an act of rebellion against systematic tyranny and inequity, expressing their dignity and rejecting the ideals imposed by the elite. This image demonstrates how, in the face of social and economic hardships, customs and straightforward cuisine can act as potent symbols of resistance, fostering a sense of community pride and unity.

Through the use of basic foods like Ugali into his novels as symbols of resistance and cultural continuity, Ngugi wa Thiong'o employs culinary elements particularly African foods to explore and proclaim African identity. Against the backdrop of colonial and post-colonial struggles, Ugali stands for traditional values and social ties in books like Weep Not, Child, Devil on the Cross, and Petals of Blood. Ngugi emphasizes the value of culinary traditions in maintaining cultural identity and demonstrating resistance against outside forces and cultural erasure through her meticulous descriptions of eating customs.

The villagers moved in unison, their collective efforts a testament to the strength they found in each other. Each one contributed what they could, and through their combined labor, they ensured no one was left behind. (Weep not Child)

The statement "The villagers moved in unison, their collective efforts a testament to the strength they found in each other" appears in the book Weep Not, Child. The idea of group unity and assistance to one another is emphasized by the statement, "Everyone gave what they could, and through their combined labor, they ensured no one was left behind." This portrayal of the villagers cooperating shows the strength of group effort and the spirit of camaraderie that unites them. Their joint endeavors and reciprocal contributions underscore the significance of collective accountability and collaboration in surmounting obstacles. The villagers show a strong dedication to inclusivity and mutual aid by making sure that no one is left behind, exemplifying the resiliency and strength that come from a close-knit community. The concept that people can overcome adversity and gain greater strength via cooperation and mutual support is reinforced by this sense of unity and teamwork.

As they came together, their voices rose in unison, a powerful declaration of their shared resolve. They were bound not only by their common struggle but by the deep-seated belief in their collective strength. (Devil on the cross) The statement "The villagers moved in unison, their collective efforts a testament to the strength they found in each other" appears in the book Weep Not, Child. The idea of group unity and assistance to one another is emphasized by the statement, "Everyone gave what they could, and through their combined labor, they ensured no one was left behind." This portrayal of the villagers cooperating shows the strength of group effort and the spirit of camaraderie that unites them. Their joint endeavors and reciprocal contributions underscore the significance of collective accountability and collaboration in surmounting obstacles. The villagers show a strong dedication to inclusivity and mutual aid by making sure that no one is

left behind, exemplifying the resiliency and strength that come from a close-knit community. The concept that people can overcome adversity and gain greater strength via cooperation and mutual support is reinforced by this sense of unity and teamwork.

In the heart of the village, where every member was both giver and receiver, the strength of their interdependence was palpable. The challenges they faced were met with a collective spirit that made them formidable against any adversary. (Petals of Blood)

The line "The strength of their interdependence was palpable in the heart of the village, where every member was both giver and receiver" appears in *Petals of Blood*. The strong theme of communal interdependence and solidarity is shown by the way they tackled the problems they faced with a collective spirit that made them formidable against any foe. Every member of the community is shown as both a donor and a receiver, emphasizing the reciprocal relationships that are essential to their way of life. The villagers' strong, cohesive tie is fostered by their interdependence, which makes their collective strength palpable. The quote's description of the group spirit denotes a unity that transcends individual endeavors and turns their group interactions into a powerful force. Together, the villagers overcome obstacles that could be impossible for any one person by utilizing their resources, abilities, and fortitude when faced with hardships. The idea that true power comes from cooperation and mutual support rather than from isolated efforts is reinforced by this representation of unity and shared responsibility. The quotation supports how the village's interconnectedness fosters a strong community that can withstand and repel outside challenges, echoing the larger themes of resistance and resilience found throughout Ngugi wa Thiongo's writing. Key scenes of shared meals and events, which emphasize the concepts of interconnectivity and mutual assistance, clearly depict Ubuntu in Ngugi wa Thiongo's works. In *Weep Not, Child*, for example, scenes of family and village get-togethers around foods like Ugali highlight the ties that bind the protagonists together and their collective fortitude as they weather socio-political upheavals. Similar to this, in *Devil on the Cross*, the act of sharing food at resistance meetings represents the oppressed people's solidarity and unity, strengthening their resolve to oppose injustice and exploitation. In *Petals of Blood*, characters rely on one another for survival and resilience despite social and economic problems. Collective labor and shared meals inside the hamlet demonstrate this strong feeling of connection. These scenes highlight the fundamental qualities of Ubuntu by showing group meals and get-togethers as essential rituals that represent and uphold the spirit of cooperation and solidarity.

In addition to providing nourishment, foods like ugali function as cultural markers that uphold and affirm indigenous identity. Keeping up traditional eating customs becomes a form of resistance against attempts to eradicate cultural legacy during colonial oppression. Gatherings over communal meals provide an opportunity for individuals to support and exchange experiences. These get-togethers strengthen social cohesiveness and group resistance to colonial forces in Ngugi's stories. Sharing food is a symbol of unity and support for one another, which is important when planning group activities. Ngugi emphasizes connectivity and mutual support while reflecting the ideals of Ubuntu through group meals and get-togethers. The communal dinners in *Weep Not, Child* stand for the village's unity and strength as a whole, preserving its traditional identity in the face of outside influences. *Devil on the Cross* shows how food may be used as a weapon for social and political resistance by portraying group dining as a protest against neocolonial exploitation. Similar to this, in *Petals of Blood*, group work projects and mealtime gatherings underscore the village's interdependence and joint resistance to socioeconomic challenges. These gastronomic components are essential to the story's examination of resistance and belonging; they are not just incidental facts. They highlight how tenacious African communities are in preserving their unity and cultural integrity. Ngugi celebrates the lasting spirit of Ubuntu by presenting a nuanced picture of how customs are essential to claiming identity and resisting injustice, all while emphasizing food and communal values.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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None

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