

THE ROLE OF CIRCUMCISION IN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE OF THE KIKUYU IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *THE RIVER BETWEEN*

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ABSTRACT

During the pre-colonial period, traditional education was given to young people before they integrate the world of adults. With a slight difference, this kind of education is the same in all parts of Africa. It takes the form of initiation at every stage of life: babyhood, childhood, adulthood and old age. In *The River Between*, this initiation is rooted in a well-organised society to the point that it had become the determining factor of social and political ascension in the Kikuyu society. So, the initiation in the Kikuyu society involves a second birth which is the passage from babyhood to childhood, and circumcision which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. During the initiation from childhood to adulthood, the neophytes receive teachings on their culture and lessons of endurance and wisdom. Circumcision in the Kikuyu society gives access to social and political life. It is the source of spiritual and social cohesion and order, in spite of the risks involved in the way the surgery is done.

KEYWORDS: Kikuyu Society, Circumcision, Social and Political Life, Social Cohesion & Risks