



ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00
IJRE 2023; 5(1): 87-89
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 26-01-2023
Accepted: 28-02-2023

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International Journal of Research in English

Subjugative cultural transformation in Chinua Achebe's arrow of god

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2023.v5.i1b.79>

Abstract

Chinua Achebe's Post-Colonial novel, *Arrow of God*, was released in 1964. This novel is a component of the African Trilogy, which also includes two other novels – *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*. In *Arrow of God*, the astounding tale of a man's loss of faith and subsequent collapse in a community that colonialism has irrevocably altered is told. It serves as an example of the clash between indigenous customs and beliefs and the changes that the British intended to impose on colonial countries. This paper explores how colonialism, brought about by British imperialism, altered native African culture irrevocably. This demonstrates people's fragile psychological states since they are so quickly swayed by the new culture (Christianity). The combined effects of colonialism and psychology on humans as a result of cultural change are illustrated in this paper.

Keywords: Colonialism, culture, psychology, christianity

Introduction

Chinua Achebe was a Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic who is widely recognized as the most influential character in modern African literature. He is regarded as Father of African Literature. In his works, he always emphasizes the culture and traditions of Igbo people. *Arrow of God* was published in 1964, although the story takes place in the 1920s, when many countries of the world, including Nigeria, were dealing with comparable colonial challenges. Post-colonialism is the study of how colonialism has affected cultural traditions and society. It is interested in how third world cultures were subjugated and ruled by European countries, along with how those cultures have since reacted to and challenged such incursions. It is a well-known post-colonial novel that illustrates the fight between native people's inherent values and practices and the changes that the British intended to bring about in colonial countries. It also specifies the demise of a village chief at the hands of colonialism.

Igbo people's exposure to colonialism

Igbo people lived in two neighboring villages namely Okperi which worshiped the God, Idimeli and Umuaro which is comprised of six villages: Umuachala, Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwugwu, and Umuisizo. The devotion of a common God, Ulu, binds these six villages together. Igbo people were particular community in Africa. The chief priest of Ulu God was Ezeulu who control six villages and the chief priest of Idimeli was Ezidimili. Nwaka was a wealthy man from one of the six villages. He hated the priest Ezeulu and always against him. He was the friend of Ezidimili and he stimulated people of Umuaro for war with Okperi to claim a small land. This war is being undertaken against the advise of Ulu's chief priest, Ezeulu. The colonial authority intervenes to end by favoring the rules towards of Okperi after consulting with Ezeulu, the only guy in Umuaro who confess the truth that the small land belongs to Okperi.

Captain Winterbottom, a British colonial official who is in charge of the local station, destroyed and fired all the weapons in Umuaro. When Umuaro and its people refuse to convert to British ways, British general T.K. Winterbottom decides to hand over the property to the people of Okperi. This is also related to the road construction issue, because Winterbottom hires Umuaro residents whom he dislikes and who have insulted him in the press. After extracting labour from the people of Umuaro, Winterbottom refuses to pay their wages. Thus, he quenches his revenge.

Returning to the land, this is an example of colonials intruding in matters that should only be handled by natives. Winter bottom had no reason to position himself among two native tribes when they had come up with a plan to settle the issue, even if that plan was war. Meanwhile, the people of Umuaro were upset with Ezeulu because he did not take their side.

This shows that how the colonial British officers influence the people by enforcing power and take off their identity and freedom. The people are subjugated to colonial rules and adapt themselves to the colonial administration. On the other side, Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of the Ulu, discovered that his son, Oduche, had caught a royal python in a box which was an attempt to kill it. Ezeulu was shocked to know that his own son had attempted to kill such a revered animal. In truth, the colonials encouraged Oduche to kill the snake because, according to Ezeulu, he had made them illegal. This is another impact of colonialism reflected in the form of killing sacred Python which is one of their cultural beliefs that is to respect animals.

The Igbo people accused the Chief Priest for permitting his son to sin. Because of this priest lost his power over people and they slowly moved towards the western culture, Christianity. The colonials changed their culture and tradition followed by Igbo people. Igbo people are being compelled to adjust to the ways of the British. Throughout the novel, the Igbo people face issues such as roadwork, property disputes, and the attempting to kill the royal python which is considered as holy God by Igbo community. These events spark conflicts and controversies among Igbo people. It was the impact of colonialism among Igbo people because their cultural identity and basic rights of decision making were totally subjugated to the colonials.

Fragile mentality towards culture

Igbo community is rich in superstitious beliefs. The Feast of New Yam is celebrated by the Igbo people. The feast marks the conclusion of the old year and the start of the new harvest season. A man is not permitted to harvest any of his new yams before the feast. Every man in the village carries a huge yam to Ulu's temple and deposits it there during the feast. Ezeulu waits for the sign of the new moon every twelve months to eat twelve yams and set a harvest date. It is also the sole day of the year when the minor deities in each of the six villages receives tribute from those who have benefited from their assistance the previous year.

The lives of the people of Umuaro are controlled by traditions. Rituals mark the seasons, and the priests of the numerous deities connected to each town control the festivals. The main deity Ulu offers the significant rituals of purification and the feasts connected to the agricultural rhythms. The white men offer Ezeulu a job in their administration but Ezeulu refuses to it and the higher British officer order him to arrest. He was under the custody of British for several months and was unable to eat scared yams for three months. So, there arise a break in tradition and people are starving as the crops of the villagers are decaying in the field. Because as per their traditional norms they have to harvest the crops on a date fixed by Ezeulu. When the people of Umuaro face starvation because the head priest of Ulu refused to break tradition, the church's catechist grants protection so that the people can harvest their yams. People interpret the death of Ezeulu's son Obika as proof that Ulu

was punishing his priest. Umuaro seeks assistance from the Christian god now as Ezeulu's power has been broken.

This shows the fragile mentality of Igbo people on their culture. Because they believed that this tradition is the will of God. They trust that the ruin of crops and death of Ezeulu's son were symbol of traditional breakage. These two incidents make them psychologically weak and it creates advantage for white man, Mr. Goodcountry, to manipulate Igbo people to convert them to Christianity. They easily adapt western culture. The Igbo people started believing the Christian God. This evidences that they have subjugated their cultural values to British administration and serve Christian God. But the priest Ezeulu is the only person who did not convert to Christianity. When Ezeulu believes that he cannot ignore tradition in order to announce the New Yam Festival, it is his persistent pride that drives him to let his people suffer. He believed strongly in his own culture and belief.

The people followed on their tradition generation after generation but they easily converted to Christianity. Goodcountry took advantage over people's suffering to develop their church. The colonials not only interfere in their village issues but also in culture. Though they weaken the psychology of people to adopt new culture suddenly, they were unable to change the psychological belief of Ezeulu. The catechist can take benefit of Ezeulu's inability to act independently of his divinity. As an outcome, Christianity dominates over Umuaro religious doctrine. This shows that Igbo people were weak psychologically in their cultural belief. Their cultural beliefs are remain same, but it is based on another culture, which highlights the colonial impact on culture.

Conclusion

The impact of Colonialism manifests the Post-Colonial sufferings of the Igbo people. Culture is their part in their lives but they subjugated their culture to colonizers and by converting to the western culture completely. They not only underestimate their culture but also lost their identity, freedom, self-thinking, decision-making after colonization. Culture is always embedded with one's identity. Each culture has its own unique quality that shapes the thinking pattern, decision-making capacity and the other qualities on its people. As Igbo people have embarrassed the new culture their self-identity allied with their other qualities have been subjugated by the colonizers snatched their basic rights and freedom by changing their lifestyle which depends totally on the new culture. These are the effects of colonization among the Igbo community.

Post colonialism is concerned with the consequences of colonialism on cultures and societies. The novel recounts how colonialism undermined the power of Igbo gods and priests, allowing them to establish their own religion, governance, and culture in other people's lands. It also depicts how Christianity, as an ideological tool, has exploited the natives by the colonizers; European missionaries infiltrated Africa and wiped away African religion.

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