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ASSESSING COLONIAL EVIL THROUGH IGBO (AFRICAN) EXPERIENCE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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Abstract

The African past is predominantly characterized by the colonial episode. The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria shares equally in this unique experience. In his epochal novel Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe weaves a political critique of colonialism and colonial invasion in Igboland through their lethal effect on what should have been authentic Igbo cultural heritage. It is an experience that questions the motif of the colonizers, of bringing 'enlightenment' to the African peoples. Their coming, it is claimed, is meant to satisfy solely their imperial and capitalist intent. But the colonizers themselves argue that their motif is genuine, and that it is for the benefit of the found colonies. This is hotly contested as portrayed by Achebe in his Things Fall Apart; for he (Achebe) leaves no one in doubt that colonialism portends more evil than good in many respects. But what constitutes this evil? This article dares to name this a 'moral evil'. We argue that this is perceivable in the aftermath of cultural contact between the colonizers and Igbo nation in Things Fall Apart. We deployed the hermeneutical approach in navigating this colonial experience.

Introduction

Most philosophizing in the 17th and 18th centuries of Europe was predominantly ethnocentric. Ethno-philosophy is shaped by culture and anchored in the belief that one's culture is the only ideal in contrast to all others. As an ideal culture then all others either do not exist or are subservient to it. The basic attitude then is to become skeptical of others' identities: culturally and morally, socially and politically, economically and technologically. No doubts, ethno-philosophy supported colonialism.

Aristotle tinkers with the concept of *substance* and links its possessor to possessing the highest value of wisdom. When Aristotle defines man as a rational animal, implicitly, what he meant is that only male Greeks have privileged access to it. Slaves would have only passive knowledge and, still, others would be either ignorant of it or are irrational. Aristotle states clearly that the possessor of wisdom has the birthright to rule over others. The right to obey would fall on the one who lacks it. It is not out of place to read this sense into Plato also with regard to his 'philosopher king.' And the

West supposedly inherited this wisdom since it acknowledged their philosophy as originating from the Greeks. It is on this foundation that colonialism rests and draws its inspiration.

But what can justify this mode of thinking? Nothing! True, political opinions, propositions and policies can influence the running of the government and impact on society at large, but this does not give the individuals who make these contributions any privilege to rule. The colonizer believes that Africa has never seen light. This is contradicted by the light seen exuding from Ekwefi's hut in the reference made to 'impenetrable darkness' in *Things Fall Apart*. The reference is made to nullify all those misconceptions and prejudices of the Whiteman about the Igbo (African) culture. It is not true to say that Africans are not rational anymore than they do not possess wisdom. Rationality, it is argued, expresses itself in different logical ways of thinking that are available to all cultures without exception. Therefore a claim to rational superiority by any race is not defensible. By the same token, any claim to rational superiority by which a particular race forcefully exercises political authority over another rests on a false premise. The West ignorantly but selfishly assumes the role of a political godfather as well as universal benevolent benefactor to deliver 'Platonic goods' to the rest of the world.

What could possibly justify slavery, for instance? Is it part of their God-given enlightenment mission to the rest of the world? Evidently slave trade was part of the colonial project to register their superiority. For in slave trade African people were forced into exile. As was the case, they were made to forget the only available means of saying who they are by means of their native languages. Colonialism forms 'unholy' ally with imperialism, capitalism and neocolonialism. This is where the problem lies.

Our approach in this article will take the following sequence: 1) conceptual clarification, 2) Igbo colonial cultural experience crisis, 3) The evil of colonialism in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and then 4) Conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

First, we explain the concepts that reflect the cultural cum political atmosphere in Igbo cultural setup. Second, we clarify the cultural and political concepts that are in harmony with colonial principles. This will offer us a bird's eye view of the peculiarities of colonial and Igbo worlds. Now we begin with the first. The related concepts are: *umunna* and 'ohacracy' (*ohakarasi*), *communalism* and *communitarianism*, *egalitarianism*, *equalitarianism*, and *consensus democracy*.

- i) *Umunna*: The Igbo word "umunna" when broken down gives *umu* and *nna*; they respectively mean children and father. This eventually means children of the same father. In this patrilineal framework every child must answer his father's name. Politically, it is a male dominated world. In the *umunna* politics, men steer the political ship of the society. The womenfolk can form association, but the outcome of their deliberations cannot dictate for men. But this way of looking at womanhood in the novel was constantly challenged by the exceptional feat achieved by (Ekwefi-Ezinma-Chinelo), in the manner of saying 'what a man can do a woman can do it also. But this shows the extent to which women can rise in a culturally male dominated world if given the chance.
- ii) *Ohacracy/Ohakarasi*: The two words mean exactly the same except that the first has English flavor, and the second is given Igbo accent. The operating word is *oha* – meaning people or community. In all, the onus or the power to rule belongs to the people. This power can be delegated, and, it is exclusively for men. The Igbo society is hierarchically structured beginning with elders, and spanning through chiefs, Ndi-Ichie to Ozo at the apex. But the hierarchy is at the service of the generality and does not lord it over the rank and file members of the society.
- iii) *Communalism*: *Communalism* believes in the one indivisible human family or community. It is embedded in *communalism's* idea that the individual, even though he is free and can do something; he may not attain his full potentials without support from the community. The community may not want to lord it over the individual. The community rather takes pride in investing on the individuals with special talents. No community can

survive without embarking on communalism's motif, which is to harness every resource of the community with the aim of developing individual potentials, such that, what is collectively owned could be profitably invested on individuals with exceptional talents (Onwubiko 18-19). Communalism incorporates the idea of divinity also. Divinity is a force to reckon with in defining both individual and collective identities of people (Okere 96). The Igbo community is oriented to the divine, and remains open to transcendence. Every Igbo community has a tutelary deity. Their abode serves as a center for worship, sacrifice and religious festivities. The idea of divinity communicates the sense of purpose and direction to human life. This embodies the message that man must align himself with divine will in order to actualize his destiny in life. As the Igbo, "Onye bute chi ya uzo ogbagbuo onwe ya no oso" (If a person goes against the will of his god, then he will face hard-times). The concept of chi in Igbo culture is significant. It is taken as part of the substantiality of the individual without which his identity remains void.

- iv) **Communitarianism:** Communitarianism bears striking similarities to communalism. However a major difference is that whereas communalism integrates the element of divinity, communitarianism focuses solely on the community. Its priority centers on the needs of community: communal solidarity and wellbeing. Thus a communitarian arrangement abhors atomic individuals. It is within the community that individuals receive most sincere support. There is high sense of collaboration, be it in communal labor or mutual support in times of misfortune as in sickness, or in case of death and loss of property. *Things Fall Apart* has rich examples: at one time it is either the age groups or *Umuada* (native but married daughters of the community) gather to discuss relevant matters, and at another, it is the entire community deciding for or against going to war. Okonkwo took refuge in her maternal home in Mbanta when he breached the week of peace. It was a welcoming community. The communal spirit is second to none in *Things Fall Apart* to the extent that it was deemed worth recommending to the youths (Irele 156). No human institution is perfect. There are shortcomings in a communitarian setup. *Things Fall Apart* records segregation against outcasts, taboo breakers, and those who gave birth to twins. But this reveals a human society in need of change, transformation, renewal and enlightenment. The clamor for this renewal could be seen in the number of those affected, and who now turn to the new religion to give them sense of belonging.
- v) **Egalitarianism:** Egalitarianism is a doctrine that advocates for the equality of all peoples, their rights and opportunities. Igbo society is egalitarian in nature. Although social status is highly coveted, the society does not discriminate against those who have not attained any. This is to say that Igbo personality does not hang on social status. Therefore, every person, rich or poor has a political voice. Not to have a political voice in a typical Igbo society is considered an impediment. Everybody has the power to elect and to be elected. It is never the exclusive right of any privileged few to govern a political community.
- vi) **Equalitarianism:** Egalitarianism believes that every individual is equal, and deserves equal rights and opportunities. The Igbo equalitarian spirit recognizes that there are men of titles; but those with titles do not have any special edge over those who may be without them. It is no surprise then that Igbo society is notorious for its framework of a decentralized political authority. Put in another way, equality cares for every individual: the enjoyment of equal opportunity and incentive, in recognition of the diversities in human capabilities and potentials, and the need to develop same, in view of serving individual identity and self-fulfillment. The consensus democracy, present in an inchoate form in *Things Fall Apart*, if developed, has the potential of delivering these equalitarian goals.
- vii) **Consensus democracy:** Consensus and democracy deserve our attention here. We begin first with democracy. The Greek word *demo-kratia* entrusts the governing power to the people. The art and manner of exercising this power could either be indirect through representatives or direct, which allows that citizens participate in democratic system of governance, in such a way that their

opinions carry more weight to influence government policies. A typical instance of direct exercise of democratic power obtains in Switzerland. Of course, there are elected representatives, but their power is highly limited given the direct participation of the people in governance. It is a political power that is regulated by a relativity principle. The relativity principle means that power is an instrument of humble service. How does this principle apply to the post of president? Elections produce seven potential presidents. At the end of the day the exercise of presidential authority becomes rotational: rotated on a yearly basis among the seven elected presidents. Democracy must reckon with the liberty of the political community. It must be partisan, where the politics of number paves the way to victory at the pooling booth. The Igbo brand of democracy is suitably called consensus democracy. It promotes a dialogic political atmosphere where

matters of public concerns are generally discussed at town meetings that are open to every male adult. Although the views of the titled men carry infinitely more weight at such public gatherings, yet, everyone who so desires can express his opinion. Eventually a consensus emerges through a reconciliation of the competing viewpoints; whereupon, the consensus becomes the view of the entire community and is, thereafter, expected to be implemented without dissent (Okafor 122).

The overriding aim is to emphasize dialogue and cooperation among members of a given political community. The working tools here are one's opinion and the ability to sale one's ideas through in a civil and convincing manner. Consensus democracy functions in a community considered prior to the individual, and where the needs of the community take precedence over those of the individual. It is a system governed by two operating principles of egalitarianism and equalitarianism. Unlike in a purely democratic setup, consensus democracy does not encourage party formation. J. B. Akam has a perfect description of an egalitarian society. He writes:

An egalitarian society where the common goods and wealth of nation are equally shared out to the citizens; a society in which young people can look forward to the future with optimism and hope; a society in which old people see a brighter future for the young, a society in which love and life are respected and are treated with utmost decorum; a society tribalism, nepotism and religious fanaticism have taken to their heels: a society where truth, justice and equity have occupied their rightful posts – Such is what Africans are most in need of (47).

Admittedly, consensus democracy is not a magic wand that offers solution to all societal problems. It does not even foreclose conflict. The satisfaction it offers derives from the fact that participants in the debate have sufficiently been heard out. Thus, dialogue may be the only option in a multifaceted society. Nigeria is a country of many nations, and this adds to its 'ungovernable' nature. The Igbo is highly disadvantaged politically. Their industry is often, but unfortunately mistaken for greed. This puts the Igbo race in an envious light. Their plight is further complicated by the fact of being a people who fought a lost war, coupled with their obvious lack of political tact and prudence. When it is sometimes said that the Igbo do not recognize kings (Igbo enwe eze), Achebe explains that such sentiment derives from the people's understanding of king as an enemy. He suggested that it was as a result of their sad past experience with their kings, and the latter's abysmal abuse of power that may have shaped this attitude (Achebe *There was a Country* 246). This could even be read into the story Achebe told about the Tortoise and the rest of the animals in a sky journey. It was a painful but a regrettable experience. The Tortoise had before the journey began asked the animals to choose identifiable names for the sky journey. He himself had already chosen the name 'Unudum,' meaning (All of you). But this name would permit the Tortoise (king of animals) to appropriate every favor that should accrue to the generality in the destined land on arrival. On spotting this deceit all the animals were forced to withdraw the support they gave to the Tortoise in form of wings. In Igbo culture human stories are often cast in animal characters. The story shows a people averse to autocracy; their choice of consensus democracy agrees well with her 'republican nature.'

Now, having described the socio-cultural cum political terminologies of Achebe's novel, we turn over to the terminologies of their colonial counterparts. It must be stated from the outset that

individualism characterized Western societies. What we intend to show is that these systems do agree with the Igbo republican nature. This further gives reasons for the colonial protest. Hereunder are those political concepts that are in clear harmony with colonial principles:

- i) Colonialism: Colonialism makes radical distinctions between races; it names one race superior and the other inferior, culturally, socially, economically and morally. Often this distinction is based on differences of physical standards of development in science and technology. A political ideology in the background may be responsible for this ontological differentiation among human beings. Another name for colonialism is exploitation.
- ii) Imperialism: The law of sufficient reason is at issue here. Colonialism drew its strength from the support it received from imperialism. The role of imperialism was to theoretically justify colonization as legitimate. James Snead says this about imperialism and its goals:

“Imperialism” is understood therefore as “... the accumulation of diverse ‘nations’ under a single flag. [It] may be seen as an almost semantic imperative; ‘force’ replaces ‘nature’ in forging alliances; selective assimilation, rather than aggressive exclusion, allows the national concept to survive, despite the relative distance between concept and reality. For instance, the more successful the British Empire became, the less it was racially and linguistically pure ‘British’” (Irele 267).

In short, imperialism must justify the forceful assemblage of “nations into a single flag.” The aim of such assemblage is to embark on economic exploitation. The scramble for Africa was central in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. In fact, human and natural resources were targeted: human resources in slave trade and natural resources in raw materials. These slaves carried out life threatening jobs, and suffered untold hardships.

- iii) Autocracy: An autocratic government comes to play when an individual assumes absolute power, and acts without reference to anyone. This shows up in the story of the Tortoise in *Things Fall Apart*. In that sky journey, the Tortoise fooled the rest of the animals by arrogating to himself on arrival all that was meant for all. Thus, he was demoted, abandoned, and stripped of his power.
- iv) Plutocracy: It concentrates power on the hands of men of rank and wealth. It is driven by a capitalist ideology that rejects ‘Philosopher Kings’ as ideal rulers. For in plutocracy, wealth overthrows wisdom. Achebe’s titled men in *Things Fall Apart* are men of wisdom and integrity and prestige but with little power. A chief chaired Achebe’s council of elders precisely as *Primus inter pares*.
- v) Oligarchy: It is a rule by a select few. This was never in the mind of men of Achebe’s time. But today, it is a constant temptation in Igbo extended family system for a select few to hijack power. The state governor may be driven by greed to install family members to succeed him in government. Employment opportunities suffer the same fate as when unfair preference to family relatives, friends and sycophants is made in place of others.
- vi) Totalitarianism: Totalitarianism reigns when power concentrates in a single person leading to abuse of power. As the saying goes: power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Okonkwo as the hero of the novel may have exhibited this tendency. But this makes him lack the discerning mind to know when to give up and choose the diplomatic way. Given the chance, he would brandish his power over entire community and show he is above culture and tradition. Indeed, Okonkwo’s predicament rests squarely on the difficulty of reconciling the ethical implications of the collective compact with the natural aspiration for the individual (Irele xiv).

Igbo (African) Colonial Cultural Experience Crisis

Culture is here taken in its simplest sense as the ensemble of the people's way of life. The dynamism of culture speaks of its inbuilt conscious need for renewal. *Things Fall Apart* depicts a clear index of cultural development. It reports that capital punishment was the case in some locality but not in some other. The author has a perfect answer to this. He explains that the practice of throwing away twins or those who may have died in the week of peace in evil forest without proper burial is due to ignorance (Irele 20-21). The main pillars of Igbo culture suffered grievous attack: communal structure, language and custom, politics, religion, justice, morality, ancestor cult, and life as a great value. Let us take the communal life for instance. There was the break up of the strong Igbo communal life. Achebe puts it beautifully: 'they put a knife on what holds us together and we have fallen apart.' Religion and education were seen as divisive forces. Education won the admiration of the young. The outcasts (Osus) and those persecuted because they bore twins were attracted to religion. The link between the young and old drastically weakened. Laws guarding against taboos were no longer respected as sacred pythons were desecrated with impunity. The community could no longer speak with one voice. This has serious implication for Igbo communitarian self. It means that the communitarian self with roots in communal morality (of which the ancestors are custodians) may likely lose its attractiveness. To be sure, people no longer make reference to their past, their collective identity is questioned. The people's justice system with Egwugwu masquerade as its dispensers was replaced by the justice system of the Queen of England. As it stands, the new justice system made no reference either to custom or tradition or Egwugwu masquerade. We flash back on the memorable way Egwugwu masquerade used to administer justice and deliver judgment. First, the matter is presented for hearing, second, there is call for witnesses, and third, there are consultations, and fourth, the judgment delivery proper (Irele 53-57). Unfortunately this was not to last. But what happened afterwards? The District Commissioner instituted a justice system setup by the Queen of England. It was tested on the imprisoned Umuofia elders to redress the killing of the Whiteman. Apart from the blatant disrespect for the elders that was glaring, they were not judged by any appeal to custom and tradition. The condition for releasing them was to make the community pay a high bail price of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries. This, the people cooperated without knowing that the fifty bags of cowries would go to the court messengers who actually increased the fine for that purpose (Irele 111).

This telescopes the corruption of the Nigerian judiciary, thanks to the Queen's judicial system that encouraged bribery to influence justice. The Queen's judicial system lacked a compensatory framework (as it merely punished offenders). In contrast, the traditional Igbo judicial system not only punished offenders, but also demanded for compensation. This is revealed as the people sought redress in the murder of the daughter of Umuofia in Mbaino. The Umuofia people decided to follow what they considered as the "normal course of action" by way of asking the Mbaino people to provide "a young man and a virgin as COMPENSATION".

The poverty of colonial values is the part of the reason for the stiff resistance in the colonial protest (anti-tax riots of 1927-1928), which reached its peak in the Aba women's riot of 1929. Today, there is much agitation against Western lifestyle in education, democracy, and civilization. Admittedly, Europe and America have Christian tradition. Christianity or Christian religion per se is exempt from blame, but the weakness of its members must not go unmentioned. The truth is that people have turned religion around to serve their selfish purposes. Hence, the lapses that form the basis of such agitation against the West are inherent in all human institutions. Sometimes religion is cowed to influence politics negatively, especially when there is no clear separation between the two; in that case it can be used as instrument of coercion to install the unqualified for governance. It is, therefore, irrational to spill innocent blood as a way of agitating against societal ills. It must be stressed that no true God can claim any legitimacy by demanding that a son or daughter of his be killed in his name for the purposes of fulfilling a religious obligation. This is not even the case with the sacrifice of Isaac. What happened in the case of Isaac was a dramatic irony of what was on the face value demanded, the life of Isaac. It was to stop the practice of human sacrifice prevalent at the time. Otherwise, how could one explain the eventual saving of Isaac, whose son Jacob was later to become the progenitor of the nation of Israel? So, it is the human element that constitutes a moral

blockade in society. It for this reason that blame is at times apportioned to missionaries as the first to venture inland, and who may have illicitly cooperated with the colonizers by giving them firsthand information (Ohadike 251).

The cultural experience so far x-rayed seems to be a disaster for Igbo culture in *Things Fall Apart*. The Whiteman made no attempt to speak Igbo Language. Human life drastically lost its high premium in the ethnic cleansing attempt on Abame village. This leaves us with the impression that violence heralded colonial invasion. Referring to part three of *Things Fall Apart*, Francis Abiola Irele notes that both Igbo society and its culture were traumatized, and that, this lends credence to the significance of the narrative, and justifies *Things Fall Apart* as a novel of colonial protest (Irele xviii).

To gain further insight into the cultural crisis generated by the colonial protest, we should look at the hero of the novel, Okonkwo. He emerged from nowhere and exhibited a total disregard for ritual and cultic recourse to the resolution of life's crisis (Onwubiko 109). Achebe could neither defend Christianity nor African traditional religion with its priesthood. The gods could be abandoned on pragmatic grounds. No sooner had the Whiteman set his foot on African soil than the land reverted to him; he hardly developed an inch of that land.

The principles of African land tenure system also gave way for the 'individualist principle of private property' (Chinwizu 77-78). It is a devaluation of everything African. The Igbo values soon gave way for the exotic ones. The crippling effect is obvious, as people now prefer foreign made goods to local ones. With this, there is no need then to develop the economy or technology. This has resulted to poor attitude to work as well as poor work ethic in the Nigeria workforce. Against this backdrop, the White predators have the leeway to exploit the natural resources. Chinweizu has noted that infrastructural development as in railways, waterways, and telecommunication networks/services merely served the greed and exploitative tendencies of the colonizers (170-171). While in possession of absolute power, so to speak, the colonizer dictated everything. In place of trade by barter, the people were given paper money. The one who gives the paper money has the power to devalue the currency. Thus, one could allege, that the so-called G8 and the International Economic Summits are partly designed to render African economy perpetually underdeveloped. That African currencies still measure either against euro or dollar in terms of worth may be part of this design. It raised big eyebrows when the late Gadhafi of Libya came up with a common currency for all Africans. Think of Western nations who have few oil deposits in comparison to oil rich nations, and yet, they control prices of petroleum products and OPEC decisions. Does this embody the idea of international justice? The colonial master has long perfected ways to circumvent the biblical injunction: thou shall not steal. This sums up the colonial evil.

The evil of colonialism in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

The colonizers, willy-nilly, claimed to be wise philosophers and the direct heirs to Greek wisdom in order to somewhat give legitimacy to their mission of bringing the Platonic goods to Africa by way of colonial rule. Civilization of Africa is often brought forward as reason to justify colonial activity in Africa. But what is civilization? Western civilization has technical tools for the manipulation of nature and human beings. It uses analysis and, therefore, has impersonal relationship with nature. African civilization relates to nature in a personal manner, and therefore, aims to achieve harmony. It is characterized by sympathy and intuition in seeking social guidance. It is erroneous to think that technology does exhaust the import of civilization. Though technology has brought a lot of good; it lends itself as an instrument of war and annihilation of mankind. Authentic civilization must be one of love and one that sees communal morality as its pride. Social or communal morality has one advantage of ensuring correspondence between individual's private moral lifestyle to the public one, in one indivisible personality. Because Western morality is private it does not care for the correspondence between these two aspects of life. Private morality even glorifies vices and converts them into lucrative ventures. Nader characterizes Western individualist morality thus:

The road that begins in individualism and self-reliance travels surely and directly to the totalitarian state . . . Paradoxical though it seems to be, the present direction of Western society is proof enough of its validity. In pursuing self-reliance, the individualist societies

undermine kingship and community ties, prevent intimacy among human beings except in the marital sphere, consciously attack all customs and traditions, and glorify instability and change . . . If no direction is provided by custom and tradition, there is the demagogue to point the way. If instability and change leave us without anchorage, the police state is ready to assign us a place and a number in the scheme of things. If, in sum, we do not “belong,” if we are purposeless and insecure, Big Brother is ready to admit us to his society, solve our problems for us, and otherwise provide us with what we desire. He grants us the opportunity for emotional release in gigantic parades, monstrous rallies, and organized violence . . . (and with) one price to pay... the surrender of personal freedom (208).

Individualist morality is unlike communal morality because it does not care for public decency. Among the Igbos of Chinua Achebe, love and human sexuality have their meaning within the familial context of conjugal or marital love. They are not to be exploited or experimented, but serve the demand for procreation and perpetuation of ancestral lineage. The ‘soup culture’ of the West introduced prostitution in *Things Fall Apart*, and was part of the reason for the Aba women’s riot of 1929. This is why civilization must follow a gradual process. Otherwise there will be ‘unholy romance’ among the good, the bad and the ugly. Mahatma Gandhi applauds the marvels of technology, but decries its negative consequences, such as institutionalizing the culture of death, human enslavement under the guise of work, the proliferation of diseases, irreligion and immorality and the reckless pursuits of bodily comforts. Thus, he identifies a failed society as one that has fallen morally (Gandhi 322-323). Technology is in many respects the panacea to solving Africa’s myriads of problems. But there is little hope of achieving this end, given neo-colonialism. In the fifteenth Chapter of her book, *The West and the Rest of us*, Chinweizu laments that African Universities are modeled after Anglo-Saxon Universities, thereby replicating foreign university’s systems in admissions, examinations and standards, and that, these are systematically packaged and monitored by foreign professionals and educational experts (322-323). The result, one fears, is that the so-called African universities would never promote true African cultural elements. These foreign universities have done little to help lift Africa from her backwardness in technology. To buttress this, she cites the ingenuity and the success recorded by the indigenous Biafran scientists vis à vis the poor performance on the Nigerian British supported side during the war times. She identifies lack of local demands for technological advances, lack of patronage by both colonial government and local business bourgeoisie as factors impeding development on the continent (Chinwizu 328). Certain factors on the local scene seem not to be in favor of promoting science and technology culture, the available huge natural and human resources notwithstanding. This may partly be blamed on the politics of ethnicity that fails to recognize and develop talents irrespective of the place of origin of its possessor.

How best then do we conclude on the question of colonial evil in *Things Fall Apart*? C. B. Okolo opines that one must look at the aims or fruits of colonialism. He names colonialism “evil for it is a political, social, economic oppression and exploitation of another; domination of the weak by the strong, the poor by the rich, the developing by the developed nations.” For him, colonialism establishes “radical inequality between the colonizer and the colonized” (Okolo 106). I see in slave trade the ensemble and the peak of colonial evil. Through it the whole of Africa went into slavery. What a humiliation and degradation? The black man has lost himself and his public image, and appears today as a second-class citizen in the global human community. It is unfortunate; for many things have fallen apart with the African man.

Conclusion

Assessing the colonial evil through Igbo (African) experience in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* has been quite insightful and revealing. It is revealing in the sense that it uncovers the hidden motif of the colonizers. It is an adventure with a purpose as the Berlin Conference of 1884 shows. The novel aptly described the invasion of the colonizers as a ‘swarming locust’ that has come to devour the land. But this underscores the violent nature of the invasion. It unleashed a bombshell of trauma on both the society and its culture.

The novel spotlighted Igbo culture. Culture is the mirrors of the people's history, identity and destiny. To traumatize any given culture is to disequilibrate its stronghold. Our conceptual clarification did well to capture the tensed cultural cum political situations created by the two antagonistic cultures. But what is the after effect of all this? It may not be an exaggeration to say that political violence in Nigeria has a bearing on the violent colonial style of governance. First, it was the Nigeria-Biafra war. Second, it was the ugly experience of coups upon coups, thus occasioning political tension and instability. *Things Fall Apart* depicts Igbo culture as one that places much premium on human life. Also, crystal clear are her communal values of solidarity, collaboration, hard work, sympathy, unity, peace, honesty, justice, dialogue, respect for life and elders, and hospitality. Interestingly, colonialism could not destroy these values. Igbo personality proved as well inaccessible and indestructible. But regrettably, consensus democracy could not develop to maturity. On a happy note, the Igbo's republican nature remained untouchable. Colonialism justified its action by appealing to imperialism. But imperialism has its roots in capitalism. Capitalism maximizes profit and does not care for public interest or good. This is why we hold colonialism responsible for the most ills perpetrated on the African continent, especially slavery and human trafficking. The justification of colonialism is not acceptable. It is not acceptable, even on the ground of the supposed enlightenment it gave the people. We must say that the introduction of education is a great value. At least the people could read and write. It equally promoted a literary documentary culture that was never there before. However, we should not gloss over the hidden plan of education, which was to train local personnel to actualize the colonial intent. It further helped to make colonial rule appeal to the people; most people believed it would offer them the opportunity to be wise as the Whiteman, and perhaps fetch them a better life.

No doubts, colonialism brought civilization to Africa. But civilization must be strictly defined. It must take a gradual process to properly sift the wheat from the chaff of what should constitute civilization worth the name. What is civilization if it fails to respect and defend the value of life? Civilization would count as nothing if it devalues life, and if it promotes a life of materialism and consumerism. That would eclipse the people's sense of transcendence, and plunge them in the blind and reckless pursuit of vanity. What else is worth saying? The world would be at crossroads in the pervasion of justice in human and economic relations. Africa must reject every Grecian gift packaged in guise of humanitarian gestures to further exploit and enslave her people. Regrettably, the evil is already committed. What may be called forth now is reparation and restitution.

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