



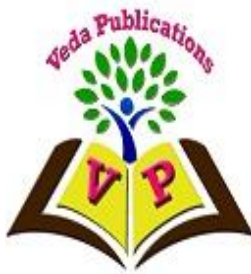
RESEARCH ARTICLE

**THE IMPACT OF COLONIZATION ON IGBO CULTURE**

Dr.Amal M .A. Ibrahim

*(Assistant Professor, English Department, Al Baha University College of Science & Art Almikhwa.)*Email: amal@bu.edu.sa ORCID Amal: 0000-0002-6263-9921DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9213>**ABSTRACT**

The study highlights the dramatic changes that have arisen in Igbo culture. The study displays some of the valuable dramatic changes carried through by white men or colonizers such as spreading and encouraging Christian religions, stopping the taking of the life of twins, and ending polygamy. The colonizer did good things for the Igbo such as opening schools and spreading education which helped the Igbo people to raise the level of their academic and cultural capabilities. The colonizers were smarter in altering the Igbo traditions. For instance, the system of the leadership of the clan or tribe has been stopped and the worship and sacrifice to unidentified gods were replaced by the Christian religion. According to the Igbo, the colonizer could not identify the valuable elements of the traditional Igbo culture that kept the Igbo living together in peace and security and have cooperation and loyalties to their tribe or clan and leadership. The study concludes that the colonizers have brought forth a lot of benefits for Igbo. Chinua, the author of the novel was awarded higher education and was turned into a Christian. On the other hand, Okonkwo symbolizes the Chinua who wishes to go back to the Igbo heritage but failed to withstand the colonizer's culture and attempted suicide.

Keywords : *Colonization, Igbo, Culture, Religion*



INTRODUCTION

Culture is meant a mass mode of life, beliefs, style, values, and symbols. (Taylor 1871) sees culture as that complex whole that includes many elements like knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, or any other abilities that are obtained by people. This definition captures the comprehensive real meaning of culture. The Anglo-Saxon sense, more anthropological, includes the style of living lifestyles, common knowledge, images, and myths. Culture is the totality of the way of life of a group of people that have been developed, shaped, and practiced over the years. The development of these civilized norms and practices are modeled by the environment and the needs of the people. Over the years as societies promote and modernize, these cultural practices undergo changes to mirror the changing times to better serve the needs of the people. This means that culture is not static. (Baffoe 2005) mentioned that culture is always tolerating development established on the changes in the environment in which it exists. People must confess, the term "culture" has been defined in many ways. (Hofstede 1980, Adler 1983) mentioned that one of the most modern working definitions is "Culture is the mass programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another the interactive synoptic of common features that affect a human group's response to its environment". People are seen as being from different cultures if their lifestyles of a group are obviously different. (Schein 1990) defined culture as, "a set of basic solutions – shared solutions to universal problems of external adaptation (how to survive) and internal integration (how to stay

together) which have evolved over time and are handed down from one generation to the next"

Culture is not an abstraction; it is a living open totality that develops by combing individual and mass choices that are taken in interaction with other, similar wholes. It expresses itself in various ways without being deficient in 'works'. Culture is the output of a synthesis legacy constantly submitted to browse and the need to foster stable care to achieve (Jean, 2002). That culture that is represented in particular identities should not prevent the quest for popular values. Each culture is the potential to reach the universal, but none can claim to have a monopoly on it. Universality is not equivalent to identification. No society could work without a system of representation and action common to the members that distinguish it from others. Relations between societies, either within a nation-state or at the extra-national level, begin with the representation one has of the other. According to (Idang, 2015) African culture is considered a powerful moral status. It has a system of various beliefs and customs which every individual must possess in order to live a good life and to avoid having curses on them and others. Illegal immoral behavior is strongly hindered, whenever, a suspected guilty person opposes a charge brought against him, and he would be taken take an oath for proof of innocence.

Basically, colonialism is the direct and comprehensive sovereignty of one country by another on state power by a foreign country (Stephen Ocheni, Basil C. Nwankwo 2013) (For example, the direct and overall domination of Nigeria by Britain between 1900-1960). The main purpose of colonialism is political domination, the second



purpose of a foreign power was opportunistic in the utilization of resources of the colonized countries.

Things Fall Apart is a novel by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. It was first published in 1958. The novel reflects pre-colonial life in the southeastern part of Nigeria and how the Europeans conquer this part during the late 19th century. It is considered to be one of the modern African novels in English, and one of the first to receive global critical acclaim. Achebe discusses to escape the colonial perspective that structured African literature at the time and was taken from the traditions of the Igbo people, Christian impacts, and the conflict of Western and African values to form a uniquely African voice. He wrote in and protected the use of English, describing it as a vehicle to reach a universal audience, especially readers of colonial nations. In 1975 he gave a controversial lecture, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness", which was a landmark in postcolonial debate. Published in *The Massachusetts Review*, it featured criticism of Albert Schweitzer and Joseph Conrad, who Achebe described as "a thoroughgoing racist. For this reason, the aim of the present study highlights the effect of colonization on Igbo people as described by Achebe who got benefits from colonization and deeply rooted values of the Igbo which was translated in the hero of the novel *Things Fall Apart*."

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the descriptive and analytical method to achieve the purpose of the study. The novel used in this study is *Things Fall Apart* By (Chinua Achebe Macmillan 2005)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study is going to give a short biography of the writer of the novel and also, is going to investigate how colonization has an impact on the Igbo people.

In our life, social factors structure our thoughts and behaviors. This study attempts to focus on the human inner truth and its response to special social factors. A psychic disaster will emerge if an individual received any sudden domination, interference, or oppression. The restrained feelings of the oppressed person expose himself if he has this chance. In a heterogeneous society (a society consisting of many different ethnic groups, social classes, languages, dialects, and cultural traditions [Palmer2011]) post-colonial writers usually try to reassign new ethnic and cultural meanings to the groups of people that are treated as inferior people by other people. I believe that the African people got a lot of benefits.

BIOGRAPHY OF CHINUA ACHEBE

Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria in 1930. He was raised in the large village of Ogidi. In 1944 Achebe enrolled a College in Umuahia and four years later, he entered the London-affiliated University College at Ibadan. He graduated from Ibadan in 1953 and published his first novel; "Things Fall Apart" (1958). He has many novels short stories, essays, and children's books. He wrote novels, "Arrow of God" (1964) won the New Statesman-- Jock Campbell Award, and "Anthills of the Savannah" (1987) was a finalist for the 1987 Booker Prize (Chinua Achebe, 1995: 5). Chinua Achebe was one of the founders of a Nigerian literary movement that depend on the traditional oral culture of its native people. In 1958, he published "Things Fall Apart" which reflects how



European people treat Africans as primitive and cultureless. He died after a short illness on 21 March 2013 in Boston, United States. (Abram Stillinger et al., 2000: 2616).

In *Things Fall Apart* the Igbo people are the genuine example of the primitive culture where natural and democratic society was in action peace. People can find culture is the same as in different parts of the world. The style of the values and ideals of the culture of the Igbo may be different from modern European cultures. But the essential ideas of African or European cultures are equally respectable and life-sustaining. The Igbo people form one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, most of them are living in Nigeria and a few live outside. Before the twentieth century, the Igbo was not a single village rather they were made up of over two hundred separate groups with their own traditions, customs, and languages clearly related. Each group could have been considered a separate society for such relations and it surrounded perhaps twenty or thirty villages into one group. Many realized that recognized languages were actually the different dialects of the same language and that all Igbo-speaking people had the same basic culture and sociopolitical organization among them as part of African culture. The notion of a common Igbo identity is a product of the twentieth century that is able to consort the differences in Igbo culture throughout Igbo. However, during the colonial period (1900-1960) many Igbo people face danger and were forced to leave home and accepted the civic centers the workplaces, and the institutions of higher education as the modern coming of modernity and evolution.

COLONIAL INFLUENCE ON AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES

No doubt that colonialism initialized positive and negative alterations in Africa. The most important thing about the colonial rule was a trick that caused a fatal strike on African culture that led to the fast results of the introduction to thick individualism, corruption, capitalism, and tyranny. The colonial rule has ruptured the traditional process of moral identity and its practice (Okoduwa 2008: 18). Colonial rulers advanced their economic and religious values. This is considered as an evidence in the economic and socio-religious verification that characterized the colonial period. Colonialism expressed. It was believed that the ethics and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized. This belief was accomplished through the changes that have undergone like the establishment of schools, in which curricula were changed to achieve the goals of the colonizer rather than help the colonized to be independent, and the missionary project, which helped a great deal in vitrifying the religious notion and slope of the colonized. This idea of colonized people formed two classes, one is the supererogatory and the other with a deliberate administrative structure that served the former. One result of this was the ruin of the values, culture, and religion of the colonized Ibo. The Ibo society became a victim of a strange creed which it has continued to struggle with little or no success. The Ibo people in "Things Fall Apart" experienced the colonized culture. The approval of this by the Africans has continued to have serious negative effects on postcolonial Africa and its values. . It is very important to say that African values were not at all times positively adhered to before the coming of the three incursive



forces of the slave trade, foreign religions, and colonialism.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes the history of Igbo; he described both the advantages and disadvantages of their culture and traditions that made them different from European cultures. For example, their beliefs in the power of ancestral god, the sacrifice of young boys, the killing of twins, and the oppression of women to name a few. Clearly, there were many advantages in the Igbo community, for example working together as one in any issue, if there is a dispute between two villages, the clan leaders listen to each one of them and decide who the one who committed a crime is. Then, he must apply the sentence given to him by the community leaders in the novel, the reader is also made aware of the arrival of white missionaries or colonized people in Umuofia as well as the reactions of Igbo to this arrival. Although the arrival of the missionaries or colonized people had some benefits to Igbo, there were a number of challenges that faced the future of the Igbo. Through literature, people understand the primary focus of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a novel written by a person who grew up under colonial rule in response to the effects of colonialism on his culture. A colonized individual is usually forced to follow the culture of their colony regardless if they are against it or not. Post-colonial writers usually try to write about how their rich native cultures were destroyed under the power of imperialism. The white missionaries or colonized people have some objectives for the African countries. Although according to the Igbo people their cultures were destroyed by imperialism the missionaries have some benefits they stopped bad habits and bring the

Christian religion to the people, they opened schools etc.

Finding the deficiencies and the strengths of Igbo culture these deficiencies participated in knocking down their culture as Achebe displays. At the onset, we launched to recognize the social dissonance between valued cultural principles and individual manners. A patriarchal sovereignty system affects the psychology of the villagers negatively or positively accordingly based on the structure of the individual's manner. The important reason for the collapse of the Igbo was caused by their inability and unwillingness to learn English because they believed that it is not their native language and they will never have to apply it in their lives. The missionaries or colonized were stronger than the Igbo because civilized and equipped with modern things in life and education, they have a stronger influence and controlling power over Igbo and their land. The missionaries used a militant way in taking over the ruling powers of Igbo land from its natives by using their influence to spread their holy Christian book and wiping out Igbo traditional customs and beliefs. Therefore the missionaries were superior to Igbo.

Things Fall Apart story can be interpreted in a tragic way. The story presented Okonkwo's suicide is consider as an idea of refusal instead of shame and insult. Okonkwo's suicide is a positive thing rather than a collapse and fall. From the onset, it is clear to recognize the main reason for Okonkwo's fall. By the arrival of British colonizers in Umuofia, the clan had fallen and Okonkwo commit suicide. It is right that there are faults and conflicts in Umuofia clan customs that give rise to personal stress, throwing away of twins, privileging of masculine, warrior-like qualities



and Okonkwo's seven-year banishment from the clan seems an overly harsh sanction for an unwitting crime.

What is behind the suicide of Okonkwo is it to show how he sacrificed to his people or he mourned the death of the Igbo people. The dramatic change of the Igbo people from satisfied and self-dependent to "improved and modern models."

CONCLUSION

The novel "Things Fall Apart" presents two persona, Okonkwo symbolizes the first persona who respects and appreciates the customs and traditions of his culture and believed that the British colonized people came to tear up their societies and their culture so he tried hard to bring an end to this colonization, but because of his status of his banishing he could not be successful in stopping the colonization so he made suicide. The second persona was the modern Igbo character who gets benefits from the colonization as we all know that there are a lot of benefits gained from the colonizers to all African countries, not only Nigeria. The colonizers have made a big change in the Igbo people they stopped the bad habits like throwing twins or oppressing women and applying the Christian Religion in the Igbo people. This helped the modern Igbo people to be educated and benefited from the colonizers in many things like civilization, education application of the English language. In addition that one of the most important benefits is that writers who realized the colonizers period started writing their novels in English in order to reflect their experience with the British colonizers to the whole world in the English Language. One scholar has suggested that although most countries have gained independence from their colonizers,

they are still indirectly subjected in one way or another to the forms of neo-colonial domination (Ashcroft 2003).

I believe that one of the several objectives of civilized education which brought by colonizers is to induct people into good, responsible citizenship that is well knowledgeable and intellectual. It is also to impart citizen responsibilities, roles, rights, and obligations through education. Citizens can learn both their rights and raise awareness about the system of government they have. People can learn how to boost their standards of living and build a good system for their lives. In my view, we have to appreciate the colonizers because all good things are the product of colonization. Not only Igbo but also all African countries have been benefitted

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