CHAPTER II

CHINUA ACHEBE’S NOVELS: THE COLONIAL PERIOD
Chinua Achebe’s Novels: The Colonial Period

Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God and No Longer at Ease by Chinua Achebe, famously known as ‘African trilogy’ are closely linked with the colonial development in Africa at the beginning of 20th century and the end of 19th century. These three novels are analyzed in this chapter in the light of cultural hegemony and colonial rule in Africa. Emphasis is given on how colonialism and cultural dominance perpetuate themselves through oppression and violence in native societies as depicted in these novels in the background of colonial period in Africa. Achebe’s novels principally center on the theme of colonial encounters and cultural conflicts between the traditional African societies and that of the colonial masters. They also represent a documentation of eastern Nigerian life and social condition in predominantly two different phases – the pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria. Achebe’s passionate hunger to dig deep into African tradition in his writings has set him apart as a novelist from the rest. Pallavi fittingly observes that Achebe “writes about Igbo life as an insider and dispassionately mirrors the strengths and weaknesses of the Igbo traditional society” (118) in his novels.

The novel Things Fall Apart narrates the colonial encounters that took place in the nineteenth century when Igbo people of eastern Nigeria came in direct contact with White Christian missionaries for the first time. It is a book that explores what happens when colonizers arrive in Igbo land first in the form of political power and then in the form of White missionaries and churches. The main plot of this novel revolves around the values that define the hero Okonkwo’s society and how these values, which Okonkwo has always struggled to sustain, collapse when confronted with the Western invasion. “The cultural hero who had defeated Amalinze the Cat in the first paragraph makes a regressive journey into exile and ultimate death” (Gikandi x). The novel Arrow of God elaborates how the native Igbo ethnic philosophy and traditions gradually fades away to pave the way for the Western alternatives imposed by the colonial forces. Achebe here tries to present the colonial encounter from an African viewpoint by using the language and narrative of the British colonial force. In Arrow of God Ezeulu, the chief priest of god Ulu of Umuaro village, wishes that the people of his clan will become his ardent followers and that he will earn reverence of the British colonial administrators. But he fails severely in the process and his wish to control both his clan and the impact of British colonizers on his society bring his
ultimate downfall in this novel. An individual’s wish ends up being merely a yearning against the will of his social institution. Mordaunt appositely puts forward the view that this novel “shows that men cannot fight societies' will and that the latter can bring a man to insanity” (153). Although, Ezeulu’s catastrophe in *Arrow of God* is not merely a personal tragedy, it is rather an unmitigated suppression of the Igbo social norms and traditions as the colonial influence steadily engulfs all strata of native identity and way of life. Obi Okonkwo, the hero of *No Longer at Ease*, is lost in the transition from native Igbo culture and customs to the new and seemingly fascinating Western way of life. Obi from this novel is the grandson of the main protagonist Okonkwo from *Things Fall Apart*. But he is a sharp contrast to his grandfather Okonkwo who always held his traditional beliefs above the colonial norms. But Obi, unlike his grandfather, is a product of Western education and subsequently succumbs to failure as he could neither leave his socio-cultural Igbo identity completely nor could he embrace and maintain the European customs and traditions. Obi’s tragedy showcases how colonial encounter has more often than not led the new generation of young Nigerians to ultimate letdowns. Abukar writes,

> The novel registers the clash of ideologies between the indigenous culture and the imperial culture; and to Achebe’s credit, the novel depicts from an African perspective the internal struggle of the indigenous culture and identity to survive under the imposing and usurping weight of colonial modernization and education” (1-2).

In addition to this novel, Achebe has shown his fineness in externalizing the internal conflict of his central characters in other two novels, too, namely, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*.

To analyze colonialism, cultural dominance and cultural conflict, and how colonial rules affected the people of Igbo as perceived by Chinua Achebe in these three novels *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*, one needs to reflect on the historical background of the colonial encounters in the Igbo region of Africa. Europeans first penetrated the Igbo land in 1830 (Ohadike xxxiv). Britain was the pioneer of slave trade in Africa for many years. But, after finding out that this was no longer much beneficial to them, the British traders and agents of government tried to bring a closure to it by the early 19th century. They wanted to substitute this trade
with the invasion of various resourceful regions of Africa to collect and export wealth and natural resources to England. They foresaw that African natural resources and wealth could be hugely profitable to them in comparison to slave trade. The closure of slave trade was not initiated to bring any good to the African people. It was rather a political move to penetrate this land and control it, so that they could transport natural resources in place of human resources from this region. They presented the idea of invading Africa to improve and enlighten the social, religious, cultural and economic conditions of the Igbo communities of these regions. This was merely a sort of veil to justify their move of establishing colonies in these areas. It was fundamentally a political and economic move to enrich the economy of their own country and establish a strong position among the European powers.

After experiencing the success of trade relations, Britain and private organizations sent further expeditions along the bank of the Niger River to establish contacts with local Africans to further strengthen their profits in these trades. Later on, Christian missionaries joined such expeditions to spread Christianity among the native people.

Trade relation and Subsequent Colonial Encounter

Initially, it was the European demand of palm oil and African fascination for the European goods that established a friendly trade relationship between these two continents. But this progressive relationship eventually failed when the European imposed economic control on the price of goods from both the regions. The charm of palm oil started losing its impact in Europe after 1875. It resulted into huge collapse in the price of palm oil. But Europeans did not reduce the price of their European goods in this region. The situation saw the deviation of flow of money in this trade from both ways to only one way and that was to Europeans, as they did not compromise with the price of their products. This aspect can be analyzed in detail in the context of Things Fall Apart. The reference to such trade relations is given in Chapter 21 of this novel. The Igbo people are offered good price initially for the production of palm oil and kernel and such a price rise for these products have never happened before in this region. Mr Brown, the White missionary, has built “a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much
money flowed into Umuofia” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 126). The White people tried to influence the Igbo to become financially dependent on the White men’s economic set up in this part of Africa. This economic colonization appears to be a well thought-out plan. Because the colonizers anticipated that once the natives could be forced to concentrate their farming mainly on products like palm oil and kernel, they had to be fully dependent on the market demand to sell their products; and the market here was essentially Europe. It can be noticed in the colonial history of this land that the colonizers gradually reduced the buying price of these products and the Africans had no option but to sell their products according to the price set by the colonial masters. Instances of such colonial dominance were very noticeable and prevalent during the British colonial period in Igbo region. The implementation of this colonial approach can be spotted in this novel, too. The initial good price is offered to encourage the Igbo to produce only those products, which the White man would buy and import to England. But these new trading activities affect the economic structure of the self-contained Umuofian clan (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* ch. 21).

Moreover, when European traders refused to pay several tolls and duties that they used to pay earlier to the local African chiefs for their protection, the situation turned out to be quite strained between these two communities. It eventually led to widespread looting and attacks on many European trading vessels and posts. Bloodshed and violation became very common during this period, which is often described as “gunboat diplomacy” (Ohadike xli). The frequency of violence gave the British government the reason to send military assistance to their traders along the Niger River. Captain Burr, who was authorized by the British war office, bombarded the town of Onitsha in October, 1879 for two days and his men smashed almost every object of this region with sophisticated war machineries. The warriors of Onitsha had no option but to crumble, as they were no match to this better armed British force (Ohadike xli).

Such military invasions became very common during the colonial period and British army destroyed several towns along the Niger River. They justified these actions by terming them defensive measures to protect the lives and possessions of their traders and Christian missionaries in this region. This was how the British government and traders started controlling all strata of native social settings in these
towns. It was the precedent of the start of indirect colonization of the Igbo people -
their society, economy, religion and their authority on their own people. Chapter 15 of
Things Fall Apart refers to the first physical encounter between the Igbo and British.

This encounter between the Igbo society and White people has not turned out
to be very pleasant and there are reasons for it. Okonkwo, the main character of this
novel, goes to his mother’s village to serve his seven years of exile after accidentally
killing a fellow clansman. Obierika, Okonkwo’s good friend and a sympathizer, pays
a visit to Okonkwo in his mother’s village one year after Okonkwo has left his native
village. He comes here to give Okonkwo his profit from the sale of his yams. Obierika
also informs him that an entire village by the name of Abane has been wiped away as
a result of a deadly encounter with the colonizers. On one fine day people of Abane
see a White man approaching their village, riding on an iron horse, which is basically
an African reference to a bicycle. The Oracle of this village suggests that this White
man can be dangerous and shall ultimately destroy the whole clan. They eventually
kill the White man after consulting the Oracle. However, the Oracle has not asked
them to kill him. It merely warns them about the danger that the White man may
create. Later, White people come in large number and kill almost everyone in this
village by shooting them on a busy market day. Uchendu, Okonkwo’s uncle in
Mbanta village, points out that the killing of an unknown man is an act of foolishness.
Okonkwo reiterates his uncle’s views in this regard. Now Obierika fears that other
villages of Umuofia are going to face the same fate sooner or later (Achebe, Things
Fall Apart 100).

The fierce move by the colonizers in reprisal of the killing of their own fellow
man in Abane cannot be justified, as they essentially exterminate the entire village for
the killing of one man. Achebe here very noticeably tries to expose the domineering
and cruel traits of the White people who do not perceive the native Igbo people at
individual levels. The colonizers are effectually “ruthless and efficient” (Jha 18).
These European colonizers consider these people as a uniformed mass and that is why
they kill the mass as a whole instead of punishing those few individuals who killed
the White man. This incident marks the beginning of a strained relationship between
the White people and natives.
There is another instance from Chapter 24 in *Things fall Apart*. Okonkwo, with other five clansmen, is released from the prison once the fine has been paid. But he could not bear the insult he had received in the prison. He decides to continue resistance to save his ancestral religion and society from the gradual intrusion of colonial force in every strata of Igbo society. He is even ready to wage war against the White men alone if his village people settle for a peaceful solution for the insult of imprisoning six village elites by the colonizers (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 141).

After killing the court messenger, as narrated in chapter 24, Okonkwo realizes that his esteemed and cherished Umuofia village is on the verge of surrendering its cultural and religious identity to the colonial force. Things have started falling apart for Igbo society in general and for Okonkwo in particular. His realization forces him to take the extreme decision of committing suicide. He could not bear the sight of the Umuofia, surrendering its values, ethics, customs and courageousness to the colonial outsiders (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* ch. 25). “The following day, when men arrive to arrest him, they find he has preferred the shameful course of hanging himself, rather than submit to the White man’s justice” (Walder 14). Gikandi analyzes how colonial intrusion in Okonkwo’s life and society expedites his (Okonkwo) tragic fall as well as that of his very dear Igbo society.

Indeed, there is a close relationship in the novel between Okonkwo’s individual crisis - of authority and power – and the crisis of his community, which increasingly finds it defining characters (including notions of wealth, marriage worship, language and history) undermined and transplanted by the new colonial order. (x)

Okonkwo does not fail only because of his personal flaws as an individual, but the catastrophic fall of his character is somehow preordained, as the colonial domination in his society has dislocated the native ethics and customs that sustained him.

Examples of conflicts between the Westerners and Africans are found in *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*, too.

Conflicts and repeated clashes between these two communities seemed to be inexorable. Such conflicts were not only restricted between the natives and the colonizers. These eventually affected the unity within the Igbo social settings. “It is evident from Achebe's fiction that the encounter with the aggressive and
technologically advanced west in the form of colonial authority forms the corpus of his fiction generating intense conflicts within African societies” (Pallavi 118).

Missionary Invasion and Religious Colonization

The missionary factor further paved the way for formal colonization by conquering Igbo land later on. Christian missionaries came in larger number and ventured further inside the mainland of Igbo region, unlike the British traders who limited their business activities along the bank of river Niger. More than the objective of spreading enlightenment among this pagan native people, the missionaries immensely helped in indoctrinating the imperial ambition and domination of the British over the Igbo people. The agents of Church Missionary Society (CMS) first arrived at the town of Onitsha in 1857 and later established their missionary posts in several Igbo towns like Alenso and Asaba (Ohadike xli). Two different Roman Catholic Societies namely, The Holy Ghost Fathers and the priests of The Société des Mission Africains (SMA) later joined the CMS in Onitsha and Asaba areas (Ohadike xliii).

As can be seen in Chapter 16 of Things Fall Apart, the Christian missionaries have been slowly able to convert a handful of natives to Christianity. They have started this religious colonization very cautiously. They initially approach those Igbo people who are not very successful in their society. Such people are convinced easily, because they are told that they will be given equal positions like all other Christians. In local language, these people are termed as efulefu, which means worthless and empty men (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 101). Missionaries promise to fill the emptiness of their social status if they are converted into Christianity. Missionaries use the Christian hymns to touch the “silent and dusty chords in the heart of an Igbo man” (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 103). Some other people are also influenced by the advent of Christianity in this region for varied reasons. Here is another reference from Chapter 17 of this novel. The local people’s beliefs in the power of their local gods and ancestral spirits is heavily shaken when even after a gap of seven weeks nothing happens to the Christian missionaries and the converts who enter the nearby cursed forest according to native beliefs and start living there. They expect all missionaries to die in a span of four days once they enter this deadly forest, which they believe is
inhabited by evil spirits and sinister forces. But nothing of that sort happens which puzzles the village people immensely. Missionaries’ survival in the evil forest after building a church there, noticeably influences the locals to believe in the power of this new religion. The first three converts from this village are the outcomes of this influence.

The number of converts starts increasing as the faith in local religion has begun weakening significantly. The mother whose twin children have always been thrown in the forest to die converts into Christianity, as she considers this new religion a savior of her twins (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 107). People like her, outcastes of the native society and those without titles are the early converts who have been suffering from time immemorial because of native social customs and practices. These people are not happy with prejudiced practices in the Igbo society, and find solace and acceptance in this new religion, which says all men are equal. The best example of this is the eldest son of Okonkwo named Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart* and Isaac Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease*. He could neither accept the killing of Ikemefuna by his father to exalt local practices, nor could he accept the custom of leaving twins in the forest to die (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 104). Nwoye becomes a convert and later leaves his family as he considers Christianity a more rational and generous religion.

The religious flaws of the Igbo society initially helped Christianity make a great appeal to the downtrodden section of Igbo. It is worth mentioning Jha’s observation here to support this argument that Achebe “…makes the reader aware of the sad and cruel fact of how exactly the political and religious supremacy of the Whites became more firmly established mainly because of the divisions and dissentions among the local people themselves” (24). Missionaries did not only exploit the local religion and practices, but they also had a graver impact on social customs and traditions of these natives.

Primarily, Christian missionaries tried all sorts of things to convert the Igbo people into the new religion. But most of the natives turned a blind eye towards these religious encroachments in the beginning. These missionaries initiated religious colonization by preaching how Christianity considers all people as sons of God who is the Creator of the universe and all men and women in it. They tried to influence the
local people by pointing out how heathen people like them would suffer in hell after death. These missionaries portrayed themselves as the messengers of Christianity, sent by God to protect the natives from the fire of hell. It can be noticed here how these missionaries constantly tried to show their superiority of religion and culture over that of the Igbo people. It was a calculatedly thought-out plan to criticize the local practices to create doubts in the minds of the Igbo people. Such doubts in Igbo mindset further helped missionaries colonize the Igbo land religiously and culturally. The missionaries also promise to provide bicycles to the converts as a form of bribery to convert them (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 102). This shows the deliberation of the missionaries to colonize this land by any means.

The use of religion for colonization was initiated by attacking the religious institutions of the colonized nation or region and finding fault with them. Christianity was subsequently presented as a superior faith in contrast to native religious practices. Here is a reference from *Things Fall Apart* for such observation. The church in Mbanta gradually becomes stronger (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* Ch. 18), though the local people think that the church and their people are a separate entity. Initially, they seldom interfere with the life of village people. But slowly the missionaries try to influence these village people by confronting some of the native religious beliefs and practices. They try to prove that the local gods do not exist, or lack enough power.

They even try to burn the shrines of these gods (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 110). Christian missionaries and their native followers intentionally attack the venerable religious beliefs of Igbo society, as majority of them do not appear to be tolerant to other’s faith. This religious stubbornness is one of the tools of the colonizers to morally and psychologically enslave the clueless people of Igbo. Their native traditions are declared invalid and their beliefs outdated. This notably instigates hatred between the missionaries and local people. Some of the converts are also beaten in the village while trying to burn the shrines of the local gods (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 110). The vicious conflict between the local Igbo people and the Christian missionaries was an aftermath of missionary invasion further inland the Niger River and runs as one of the major motifs at the backdrop of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.
In *Arrow of God*, the missionaries step in to manipulate the situation, created after the chief priest Ezeulu’s refusal to announce the day of yam festival. Subsequently these missionaries take all advantages of a situation in the Igbo society that has already worsened. The missionaries encourage the Igbo to refuse Ezeulu’s verdict on harvesting new yam and come to the god of Christians with their offerings, so that they could start harvesting the new yam.

So the news spread that anyone who did not want to wait and see all his harvest ruined could take his offering to the god of the Christians who claimed to have power to protect such a person from the anger of Ulu. Such a story at other times might have been treated with laughter. But there was no more laughter left in the people. (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 218)

Ezeulu’s egotism has triggered destruction, not only of himself and his community but also of the native religious and social uniqueness. In addition to the primary colonial motif of exporting wealth and resources from the colonies, the colonizers including the missionaries came to this land with the secondary objective of demolishing the existing Igbo customs and religious beliefs, and converting them to Christianity and all these three novels are testimonies of this colonial hunger.

The Igbo people did not directly go into clashes with the agents of Christian missionaries at the early stage of colonization, as the Igbo culture taught them to respect the spiritual views of other communities. “The Igbo usually listened patiently to the Christians and expected the missionaries to pay equal attention to their own viewpoints” (Ohadike xliii). Achebe narrates such instance in Chapter 21 of *Things Fall Apart*. The mutual respect for each other’s culture and religion is not all lost between the natives and the European settlers. The healthy interaction between ‘Akunna’, the elite village man and Mr Brown, the first White missionary in Umuofia is worth mentioning here from this chapter. Mr Brown calls on Akunna in his obi frequently and they peacefully discuss various aspects of both religions and cultures. Though, they repeatedly point out how one’s religion is more logical than the others, but they do not force each other to change their faiths. “Neither of them succeeded in converting the other but they learnt more about their different beliefs” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 126). Such mutual respect for each other should have been the
collective practice. It could have helped both the outsiders and the natives of this place to survive and live peacefully as neighbors.

Achebe depicts Christianity as counter-productive in his novels, which acts as a dividing power in native society. But it is observed that the novelist does not precisely illustrate the conflict between conventional cultural norms and modernity. For example, Isaac Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* converts to Christianity for individual causes. His conversion is prompted because of his disillusionment with his father Okonkwo’s (*Achebe, Things Fall Apart*) cultural practices, as it led to the killing of his adopted brother Ikemefuna. According to Achebe’s logic, Isaac in *No Longer at Ease*, after converting to Christianity, comes in direct confrontation with his fellow non-Christian community people who Achebe describes as heathens. He is subsequently considered a blinded new convert who is mystified with the White man’s religion by his fellow Igbo. The novelist blames Christianity for the abolition of the shared and harmonious lifestyle that has traditionally kept the natives in strong kinship. It can be assumed from the novel that before the advent of Christianity it was a normal practice for an Igbo to feed any child of the village as his own. However, after coming of the Christianity in this region when, “a neighbor [offered] a piece of yam to Obi...He shook his head like his older and wiser sisters, and then said: ‘we don’t eat heathen food’ (*Achebe, No Longer at Ease* 46-47). There is no hesitation to accept the fact that Christianity dramatically transformed Igbo social structure, but Achebe’s interpretation of this transformation of native society is a bit too presumptuous. In the colonial conflict many elements including religion were adopted and reinvented by the people who take them on. Although imported from the colonizing country, Christianity cannot be simply termed as an encroaching malice that led people to fight against each other. As discusses on numerous occasions in this thesis, religion has not been the only reason for the destruction of the colonized people and their cultures.

It would be sensible to present here Pratten’s criticism on religious invasion. He points out that social turmoil and communication gap between the elder generation and the Nigerian youth initiated the conversion ordeal in colonial Nigeria. Pre-colonial native community structure comprised of "societies" in which individuals were inducted into distinct societies at certain phases of their lives. The society of
elders formed a group that exercised legal and exclusive power in village governance. However, the younger generation along with the relegated people in each society, for example the mothers of twins, denied to be a part this social structure and chose the available substitute of Christianity. “Colonialism and Christianity had created a rift between youth and elders and between varied bases of political authority” (Pratten 93). Christianity offered an alternative model to the natives who were not contented anymore with the old traditions and cultural norms.

Native weaknesses and Cultural Othering

The weaknesses in their own culture and society, for example, their firm belief in the existence of supernatural powers in Igbo society and religion also made it easy for missionaries to convince the oppressed natives and spread Christianity in this region. Igbo community had its own spiritual crises and flaws much before the encroachment of the colonialists. The invaders only made use of such native crisis and flaws in imposing its customs and beliefs upon the colonized community. The killing of Ikemefuna (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 43) shows that Achebe does not glamorize the African past blindly and he questions its moral complexities and dualities from time to time in his writings. Gikandi believes that Achebe defines the Igbo culture and social practices by “ambivalence” and not as an “unquestioned authority” (xii). Achebe frequently presents limitations of Igbo society and his narrative is a conscious effort to tell readers that all was not well with the indigenous tradition of Igbo land. Achebe in his essay “Role of the Writer in a New Nation” acknowledges, “We cannot pretend that our past was one long, technicolour idyll. We have to admit that like other people's past ours had its good as well as its bad sides” (qtd. in Vempala 35). Anthony Daniels in an article in Spector points out that Achebe does not shy away from narrating the follies of Igbo society in his novels, too. “In spare prose of great elegance, without any technical distractions, he has been able to illuminate two emotionally irreconcilable facets of modern African life: the humiliations visited on Africans by colonialism, and the utter moral worthlessness of what replaced colonial rule” (31). Achebe neither idealizes the Igbo-life of the pre-colonial past, nor does he portray the contemporary colonial era as nasty and disappointing.
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No Longer at Ease narrates the cultural ‘othering’ of native people caused by the colonial invasion in Nigeria. The natives in Achebe’s tale are confronted by colonial way of life and they are somehow conscious of their position as objectified others in the eyes of colonial masters. Thus the people of Nigeria find themselves in an uneven association with the English hegemony that intimidates their cultural individuality. Once the British administration is in charge, it becomes excruciatingly evident that “greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large numbers of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the White man. And so we too have changed our tune” (Achebe, No Longer at Ease 43).

Achebe distinguishes two distinct worlds present in the colonial Africa- the White man’s world and that of the native. Through his novels Achebe tries to put forward his firm belief that the Igbo native has to navigate between these two worlds in order to stay relevant in his own society unlike the British who function from the superior hegemonic position. The novel No Longer at Ease is essentially about how Nigerians navigate the colonial space while concurrently being aware of their new identity as colonial cultural others in Western eyes.

The main premise of Chinua Achebe’s No Longer at Ease revolves around the numerous concerns of individual and cultural identity that ethnic people must contend with under European rule to survive in the colonial turmoil. Africa’s best-known novelist scrutinizes the colonial confrontation from the native African perspective. How has Obi’s allegiance to his European education helped him or put him in turmoil at the crossroads of native and European cultural encounter? Does a native African, in spite of social advancement, have any genuine support in a colonial backdrop?

Through the protagonist Obi Okonkwo, a European educated African with strong connections to Igbo village life, the Nigerian mêlée to reconcile the Western and native world is presented. And through Obi’s encounter with the African colonial setting after his return from England, one can unearth the idea of self in relation to Igbo society as a community.

In fact, his European education has triggered Obi to consider his own community people backward. He falsely maintains that corruption is an intrinsic part in the native culture and the old ignorant Igbos do not consider such practices immoral. He believes, “To him (the uneducated) the bribe is natural” (Achebe, No
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*Longer at Ease* 16). His views imply his adopted English predisposition to reject his fellow Black people based on constricted suppositions. In *Obi Okonkwo*, Achebe identifies Frantz Fanon’s petty bourgeois native middle class (Fanon 150-153) who, abhorring the native culture, tries to control over the rest of what he recognizes as the intellectually reduced populace. But later Obi realizes that he is still an outsider in the White Christian society, although he is a European educated Christian. That has been the plight of these newly created hybrid native people. According to Abukar,

Achebe juxtaposes Obi with the Eurocentric invention of the uneducated, backward African. The protagonist sees his education abroad as the saving grace that spares him from the disgraceful state of bribery and corruption. Obi’s concept of the Old African is the same literary trope that Conrad and Cary, amongst countless English authors, have used to other Africans as savages. (10)

Achebe vows to confront this representation of the Africans as ‘savages’ in the writings of Western authors by using the narrative and language of colonial powers.

**Some Progressive Aspects of Colonization**

Initially everything was not so dark and gloomy between the colonizers and the colonized when the British first entered to the African continent. The fiery encounters between these two entirely different sets of communities did not start from the day one. Numerous examples can be found in these three novels, which show that in the early phase of colonial invasion there are curiosities in both these peoples and exchange of ideas take place to understand each other better. In *Arrow of God* Ezeulu sends his son to the missionaries to understand and know more about this foreign religion and language. Ezeulu comes into conflict with his people for his role in leading his son to the Christian missionaries in the region. He is no doubt fascinated by the power of the White man; especially when the latter uses firearms to quash the civil war between Okperi and Ezeulu’s village Umuaro. He sends his son to these missionaries to find out if there is something worthwhile in the White man's religion and lifestyle that can be assimilated in local society. He tells his son “It was I who sent you to join those people because of my friendship to the White man, Wintabota. He asked me to send one of my children to learn the ways of his people and I agreed
to send you” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 13). Achebe gives another instance in Chapter 4 of the positive approach that Ezeulu has initially shown towards the colonial invasion to learn from the wisdom and culture of foreign societies.

The place where the Christians built their place of worship was not far from Ezeulu’s compound. As he sat in his obi thinking of the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves, he heard their bell: GOME, GOME, GOME, GOME, GOME. His mind turned from the festival to the new religion. He was not sure what to make of it. At first he had thought that since the white man had come with great power and conquest it was necessary that some people should learn the ways of his own deity. That was why he had agreed to send his son, Oduche, to learn the new ritual. He also wanted him to learn the white man’s wisdom, for Ezeulu knew from what he saw of Wintabota and the stories he heard about his people that the white man was very wise. (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 43)

But now, after observing the increasingly demeaning attitude of his missionary going son to the native culture and religion, Ezeulu cannot stay that positive about the colonial religion and its people anymore as he used to be in the beginning. “But now Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion was like a leper. Allow him a handshake and he wants an embrace. Ezeulu had already spoken strongly to his son who was becoming more strange every day” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 43).

It is because of the peaceful exchange of ideas that helps Mr Brown believe that violence could not be the means to settle down in this region and he comes to “…the conclusion that a frontal attack on it would not succeed” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 128). He tries to influence the natives by means of education and to bring them closure to colonial establishment. He believes that “…leaders of the land in the future would be men and women who had learnt to read and write” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 128). According to some apologist of colonization this progressive approach to colonization in terms of providing quality education becomes successful in Umuofia, as number of students in the Christian schools starts increasing with passing time. But were such developmental works meant merely to help the local people progress? Or were there some hidden agendas of the colonial institutions under the pretense of such progressive works? Many critics are of the opinion that English schools were set up in
this region primarily to prepare a section of native people who can help the colonizers administer this colony efficiently. Rodney illustrates this motif of the colonizers in the following lines:

The main purpose of colonial school system was to train Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole…Colonial education was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment.”

(263)

Other critics also support and reiterate Rodney’s observation:

European powers did not establish colonial states to carry out a programme of political development or changes but to erect efficient and effective administrative states for purposes of economic exploitation and every machinery was put in motion in ensuring that they realize their aim. In realizing their aim, Africa was on the receiving end. (Nwanosike and Liverpool 626)

Religious Intolerance

The violent zeal to prove one’s supremacy over the other suppresses the initial peaceful cultural interaction that is discussed earlier between Akunna and Mr Brown of Things Fall Apart. Mr Brown’s successor appears to prefer cultural dominance instead of mutual cultural respect (Achebe, Things Fall Apart ch. 22). The result is a violent colonial clash between these two communities as witnessed in last few chapters of this novel. James Smith, the successor of Mr Brown, is not a man who respects other’s religion and culture. For him Igbo religion and customs represent darkness, and the Christians being the children of light must put an end to such religions and customs. His approach is violent in comparison to Mr Brown’s non-violent way of dealing with the natives and their faith. Mr Smith’s ideology inspires the overzealous converts to a great deal and they resort to violent conflicts with the local clan. It is the result of Mr Smith’s stubborn guideline that instigates Enoch, a fanatical convert, to infuriate the whole Umuofian clan against the Christian community there. Enoch unmasks an Egwugwu, the masked ancestral spirit of Umuofia. This action is considered to be the greatest crime, a man could commit in
the Igbo land (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 130). Enoch is not an outsider but a native who is converted into Christianity recently. He stands in direct confrontation with clan which was once his own. Enoch’s zealotry is in fact a product of the religious fanaticism that the new converts have imbibed from Mr. Smith. It is the effect of this religious domination by the colonizers that spread wrath and violence among the new converts and traditional Igbo people, as very frequently seen in *Things Fall Apart*.

In *Arrow of God*, John Goodcountry, the native missionary who speaks the language of colonizers as if it is his mother tongue, motivates the new Igbo Christian converts to fight the so-called bad customs and practices present in the Igbo society, destroy the shrines of local religion and kill the sacred animals which are revered in Igbo land. It visibly means that these new converts are coached by the colonial setups to fight with their own people who were once their family before the colonial advancement in their land.

“If we are Christians, we must be ready to die for the faith,” he said. “You must be ready to kill the python as the people of the rivers killed the iguana. You address the python as Father. It is nothing but a snake, the snake that deceived our first mother, Eve. If you are afraid to kill it do not count yourself a Christian” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 48).

Such conflicts are created more to meet the broader colonial objectives of ruling the land peacefully and extracting wealth from here than to spread the light of Christianity and educate these native people.

**Resistance by Ostracizing**

The rise in number of converts and increasing power of Christian establishment in the Igbo region intensify the conflict between the two communities from bad to worse. For example, in Chapter 18, one of the new converts kills the royal python, the most revered animal in Mbanta (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 112). The native religious beliefs forbid the killing of Royal pythons. The new converts are also responsible to a significant extent for the increase in intolerance between these two communities. The new converts often mock at the local gods or try to violate some sacred traditions of the clan (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* ch. 18). Such incidents only help in mounting tension between the Christians and the people of Mbanta, and thus
upsetting the precarious balance between the church and the clan. This incident has almost incited these two communities to go into war, but finally they decide to ostracize the Christian people from their society. This is an example of religious, social and non-violent forms of resistance by the Igbo from the people of the new faith.

As a result of this banishment, the village people do not allow any Christians to come inside their clan. They are also asked not to use the village resources like, water, red earth, market place, to name a few. This sort of resistance from the Western culture and religion gradually becomes quite direct and is patronized by the village elders. In this same chapter the elders of Mbanta village warn young generation to stay away from this religion, as they believe that Christianity is an “abominable religion” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 118).

**Different Layers of Conflicts and Hostility against Each Other**

The social and cultural struggle has not been purely confined to the White men and native Igbo people in this novel. Colonizers and their practices further foster people to turn into enemies against their own people. Although the European colonizers had to suffer because of the violence and bloodshed, they were only few in numbers. But the majority of victims were the natives – be it new converts or the traditional Igbo. The violent event of Enoch’s unmasking of the *egwugwu* (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 130) and the subsequent destruction of his house and the community church by local people are the results of lack of respect for each other’s beliefs and customs. The shift from initial non-violent colonial encounter to the consequent vicious clashes between the colonizers and the colonized is reiterated in Walder’s word:

When Okonkwo returns, he finds that a court, mission-school and hospital have been established by a missionary who accepts that a head-on clash with Igbo ways will be fruitless. His mission is to convert people into Christianity by helping them with facilities like schools and hospitals. But this man is replaced by a narrow-minded type, who allows one of his more enthusiastic converts to commit the unpardonable crime of unmasking an egwugwu during a traditional ceremony, with inevitably explosive results: the mission-church is
burnt down, several leading citizens, including Okonkwo are detained, and the community fined heavily. (13).

The struggle, in terms of cultural and religious survival, is rather between those indigenous Igbo people who are keeping the native religion and practices alive, and the new Igbo Christians, from their own Igbo society. The new converts are given power by the White colonizers to dominate other native Igbo people who were once their family and friends. The Igbo people have to save their cultural identity more from the local new converts than from the very few colonial outsiders.

The colonial rulers implemented the ‘divide and conquer’ policy whenever required to colonize the African people. This Igbo land is not an exception. In Arrow of God the pride of the people of Umuaro is severely damage by the fact that the colonial administration forces them to work without getting paid, while the people of the adjacent region, Okperi (their foe) are compensated. This act arises many questions among the men of Umuaro. Following is the illustration of this incident.

…This white man thinks we are foolish; so we shall ask him one question. This was the question I had wanted to ask him this morning but he would not listen. We have a saying that a man may refuse to do what is asked of him but he may not refuse to be asked, but it seems the white man does not have that kind of saying where he comes from. Anyhow the question which we shall beg Unachukwu to ask him is why we are not paid for working on his road. I have heard that throughout Olu and Igbo, wherever people do this kind of work the white man pays them. Why should our own be different?" …

‘The message is not complete,’ said Nwoye Udora. ‘It is not enough to ask him why we are not paid. He knows why and we know why. He knows that in Okperi those who do this kind of work are paid. Therefore the question you should ask him is this: Others are paid for this work; why are we not paid? Or is our own different? It is important to ask whether our own is different.' This was agreed and the meeting broke up.

‘Your words were very good,’ someone said to Nwoye Udora as they left the market place. ‘Perhaps the white man will tell us whether we killed his father or his mother.’ (Achebe, Arrow of God 87-88)
The men of Umuaro do not understand why they are not paid for their work for road construction while men from their rival village Okperi got payments for the same work. But, as can be seen in the final question of the above passage, they also wonder if the colonizing force is doing it as an act of vengeance. But some veiled colonial motives behind such acts by the colonizers cannot be overruled, which were to divide natives and rule their land. Besides, these sorts of incidents could only instigate hatred and retribution among the men of these two villages, namely, Umuaro and Okperi, who do not enjoy good relation anymore. This kind of instability among native peoples only helped the colonial objectives of ruling the native masses with more ease and the colonial rulers understood this aspect very well during the era of colonization. Such instances can also be found in the fictions of Raja Rao, which are dealt in detail in other chapters of this thesis.

The violent clash between two native villages Umuaro and Okperi has been prompted because of the invasion and interference of colonial administration and Christian missionaries with local Igbo socio-cultural settings. Achebe narrates the episode and indicates the role of British government and missionaries:

Those guns have a long and interesting history. The people of Okperi and their neighbours, Umuaro, are great enemies. Or they were before I came into the story. A big savage war had broken out between them over a piece of land. This feud was made worse by the fact that Okperi welcomed missionaries and government while Umuaro, on the other hand, has remained backward.

(Achebe, Arrow of God 37-38)

The introduction of Christianity also worked as an element to divide the unity of the Igbo, so that the colonizers could rule and conquer without much difficulty.

The novel Arrow of God emphasizes more on Ezeulu’s personal sufferings and inner conflicts than various sorts of conflict prevalent in and around his native society after the advent of colonial administrators. Ezeulu is the chief priest of the most powerful god called Ulu of Umuaro village and, therefore, he enjoys a special prominence in his society. It is not easy to study him in depth by separating him from his cultural and social identity, as he embodies African Igbo nativity exclusively and is a true ambassador of it. Ezeulu represents his Igbo culture and it cannot be annulled that he genuinely suffers because of the struggle between him and his opponents in his
community. This novel details the clash between Ezeulu's spiritual power and the materialistic powers of some of his rivals from his society who do not want Ezeulu to enjoy religious authority.

Even the colonial setup of this region experiences a different kind of conflict. The frustration of the colonial administrator of this region Mr. Winterbotom with the higher colonial administration finds frequent mentions in this novel. One of them is worth noting here.

Captain T.K. Winterbottom stared at the memorandum before him with irritation and a certain amount of contempt. It came from the Lieutenant-Governor through the Resident through the Senior District Officer to him, the last two adding each his own comment before passing the buck down the line. Captain Winterbottom was particularly angry at the tone of the Senior District Officer's minute. It as virtually a reprimand for what he was pleased to describe as Winterbottom's stonewalling on the issue of the appointment of Paramount Chiefs. Perhaps if this minute had been written by any other person Captain Winterbottom would not have minded so much; but Watkinson had been his junior by three years and had been promoted over him.

‘Any fool can be promoted,’ Winterbottom always told himself and his assistant, ‘provided he does nothing but try. Those of us who have a job to do have no time to try.’ (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 56)

The colonial pride that Winterbottom enjoys is offended as he was neglected by his administration for promotion and another White man who used to work under him has got the promotion. He used to enjoy the superior position in the office over this White man who now reprimands him as his superior. Such conflicts between colonial representatives who work in native regions and those who work inside the comfort of office rooms are not very rarely depicted. Winterbottom further criticizes his higher authorities as can be seen in the following lines. “The great tragedy of British colonial administration was that the man on the spot who knew his African and knew what he was talking about, found himself being constantly overruled by starred-eyed fellows at headquarters” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 58).

But, as mentioned previously, this novel does not chiefly focus on inter-clan or colonial conflict; rather it is more about Ezeulu’s struggle with himself- the inner
religious tussle within himself. And all the external forces that affect his life are actually the objectifications of what is going on inside him. With such an opulent and multifaceted story, it is easy for the Western readers to get mystified with the forest of cultural padding and thus oversight the theme of the narrative. It cannot be refuted that there appears to be a predominant presence of village settings, but such settings are cleverly used to express and portray the characteristic traits of the principal figure of the *Arrow of God*.

**Colonization of the Native Judicial System**

It was not merely confined to religious or cultural colonization anymore. After establishing their colonies in these regions, the agents of British imperial government aimed at replacing the indigenous institutions with new legal structures that would suit their way of governance. They controlled the local police and also replaced the traditional judiciary systems with that of their own. Such changes contradicted the existing native norms radically and the Igbo could not immediately adjust themselves with the new social systems. The colonial force had slowly started controlling other facets of the Igbo society and *Things Fall Apart* presents glimpses of this relatively new endeavor of the colonizers. They have started what can be termed as judicial colonization in Umuofia and eventually hang an Igbo man for killing a missionary (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 110). They essentially consider Igbo society as primitive and evil. And they term their mission as an encounter between “light and darkness” (Ohadike xliii).

In Chapter 3 of *Arrow of God* there is a reference to British Judicial practice in this land when two native villages were fighting over the ownership of a piece of land. Captain Winterbottom narrates:

> I went into the question of the ownership of the piece of land which was the remote cause of all the unrest and found without any shade of doubt that it belonged to Okperi. I should mention that every witness who testified before me—from both sides without exception—perjured themselves” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 38-39).

Here Winterbottom, as a representative of colonial administration, essentially delivers a prejudiced judgment in favour of Okperi village, because it has welcomed the
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colonial force and the missionaries in its land while the people of Umuarvo village have not done the same yet. Although the colonial rulers brought their British judicial system to Nigeria, they misused their so-called nondiscriminatory European judiciary to suit the requirements and benefits of colonial objectives. Achebe cites such references of colonial judiciary systems in his colonial fictions.

Chapter 20 of Things Fall Apart further illustrates this aspect vividly. Many things have changed in Umuofia during Okonkwo’s years in exile. It is not the same clan anymore. The advent of colonial force is not any longer limited to Christian missionaries. The colonial force has begun going deep into the social settings of Umuofian people. There are many recently converted Christians in Umuofia now. The colonial force imposes social dominance over the heathen Igbo people with the help of these new converts. In addition to building the church and converting natives, the White men bring English governance in this region by establishing a court to judge natives who confront the Europeans or the new converts. They have built a prison and put people captive there who offend them. Even successful and men of titles from Umuofia are not spared, unlike the usual customs of local Igbo society. These men of titles meet such fates as a consequence of social colonization, imposed by the White men (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 123). Another example of judicial encroachment is narrated when Okonkwo faces colonial judiciary in this region. “Okonkwo’s punishment for manslaughter in Achebe’s novel- would now be tried by strangers” (Ohadike xlvii), instead of being judged by the lineage and village elders, as it used to be before the invasion of British rules. They tried to protest against such decisions, but generally their protests could not bring much outcome, as such protests resulted into vindictive expeditions. As in Arrow of God, Ezeulu’s denial to represent his folks and act as a spokesperson for his people brings him into conflict with the colonial administration. The colonial representative Winterbottom imprisons Ezeulu simply because of his refusal to act as a puppet of colonial government by accepting the role of the paramount chief.

There is no doubt in the fact that the British in their motherland had an established system of governance, which was believed to be based on rationalism and not idealism like the Igbo. The District Commissioner in Chapter 23 says, “We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own
country under a great queen” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 137). The traditional practices of judiciary in the Igbo region are presented to be a misfit for the modern society. Moreover, elders who control native judicial system are not always unbiased, as mention by Obi Okonkwo on a few occasions in *No Longer at Ease*. Sometimes, their own whims and fancies or their own interests motivate their legal decisions. Some of these weaknesses in Igbo judicial system provided colonizers the excuse to replace the local institution of judiciary, which was expected to be welcomed by the oppressive and downtrodden section of the native society.

But the colonial judicial system that the British brought in Africa was fundamentally prejudiced and oppressive. It frequently took sides of colonizers when there had been legal cases between the White men and the natives. Chapter 23 of *Things Fall Apart* describes how the British manipulates colonial justice system in the Igbo land to safeguard the colonial outsiders and their new Igbo followers. In this Chapter of this novel, the District Commissioner makes a false promise of hearing both sides of the story after the destruction of the church. But he ultimately ignores clan leaders’ narration and jails them immediately (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 137). Colonial rulers usually justified such verdicts because they felt that they were doing great service to the humanity by enlightening the Igbo from darkness. This sort of justification is reflected in District Commissioner’s word, “We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 137).

**Cultural Conflict and Cultural Hegemony among the Native Society and its People**

The destruction of church in Umuofia is not the result of a clash between the White men and local people; it is rather sparked by the actions of Enoch, a converted clansman (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* ch. 21). This cultural crisis is echoed in Obierika’s voice while talking to Okonkwo. Obierika very subtly preserves the crux of this struggle of saving their culture from their own people in the following line:

…our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think that we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly peacefully
with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 124-125)

This sort of social dilemma is again witnessed in Chapter 24 of *Things Fall Apart*. There are now many new converts from their own clan. Okika, a village elder, rightly admits that they may have to “shed the blood” of their own clansmen (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 144) if the village decides to go to war against the colonizers. This dilemma and conflict inside the Igbo society is a result of the colonial encroachment in the self-sustaining lifestyle of the Igbo.

The novel *Arrow of God* opens with Ezeulu’s fear of slowly losing his eyesight. But he feels that in future “he would have to rely on someone else’s eyes as his grandfather had done when his sight failed” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 1). The allusion here suggests that this sightlessness is a hazard to his survival in the society, because if he fails to mark the movement of the moon, his religious authority will be questioned. It may further put his political accountability in danger in his society. The conventional customs and principles have, up till then, altered themselves to the changing situations. This transition has happened because the villages have, as a whole, decided as one voice what to do in order to face the changing situations. Ezeulu’s own greediness comes in direct conflict with his role as the chief priest that he has to execute in his society. It is because of this huge responsibility, given to him by his society, he should not indulge himself in individual benefits and wishes. It is only when Ezeulu decides and follows his own will, he crosses the limits laid there by his own society of which he is an integral part. His insistence to stay as an individualist in a collective social setting sets him apart. This is the fundamental conflict between him and the rest of the society and all other conflicts arise to justify and support this basic inner conflict so that the narrative could run smoothly. At the end of this novel he finds himself chasing his individual will and actions in the world of confusion and insanity, created after the invasion of the Igbo land by the colonizers.

Ezeulu’s conflict is multifaceted. On the one hand, he has to fight against the impending European culture and religion. On the other hand, he has to safeguard his
exclusive position of being the chief priest of the village god Ulu, against reactionary
powers within his clan. Nwaka, Ezeulu’s rival and a principal supporter of Ezidemili,
the chief priest of the god Idemili who was displaced by Ulu, represents the
reactionary powers in his society. This rivalry between Ezeulu and Nwaka promotes
internal division in the tribe (Killam 61). His society could not accept what he says at
the assembly of the elders regarding the impending war between Umuaro and Okperi
village over a piece of land. He fails to get the support of his own people who later
side with Nwaka and his outburst of Ezeulu's speech gains the approval of the village
people. “Nwaka inevitably becomes the voice of the tribe since the chief priest's
words no longer carry any weight” (Mordaunt 159).

One must understand that the route of "décollage" of the Igbo society is not
only due to entrance of the colonial powers. The early elements of the collapse lie
much innate within the native society itself. Ezeulu’s society has witnessed the tiff
between Ezeulu's god Ulu and other older deities much before the advent of colonial
force in this region. The people of Igbo land discard gods if they fail to earn their right
of subsistence within the community. An instance of this Igbo outlook is found in the
relationship between Ezeulu and his half-brother. Okeke Onenyi always maintained
that the cause for the cold relation between him and the present Ezeulu, his half-
brother, was Ezulu’s avoidance of dividing religious control between them. "He
forgets," states Okeke Onenyi, "that the knowledge of herbs and anwansi is something
inscribed in the lines of a man's palm. He thinks that our father deliberately took it
from him and gave it to me. Has he heard me complaining that the priesthood went to

Ezeulu cannot take action according to his wish and desire. His role is very
controlled within his society. The kinds of action that he can take are specific in range
within his social setting. One incident from Arrow of God is worth mentioning here.
When Ezeulu refuses to decide the day of the Yam festival, the elder people of his
society advises him:

‘No, you are Umuaro,’ said Ezeulu.

‘Yes, we are Umuaro. Therefore listen to what I am going to say. Umuaro
is now asking you to go and eat those remaining yams today and name the day
of the harvest. Do you hear me well? I said go and eat those yams today, not
tomorrow; and if Ulu says we have committed an abomination let it be on the heads of the ten of us here.’ (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 210)

It is not as much as the inner dilemma that causes Ezeulu’s ultimate ordeal, it is rather his refusal to accept the voice of the people that brings him to this ordeal. Cook pertinently observes that this the novel "searches into the limits of individual power in a system controlled by tradition," (18). It is Ezeulu’s internal breaking up of mental and psychological limits caused by external forces that forced him to lose control over his household and society alike. The ultimate destruction of the principal character of this novel is brilliantly summarized in the following lines:

> So in the end only Umuaro and its leaders saw the final outcome. To them the issue was simple. Their god had taken sides with them against his headstrong and ambitious priest and thus upheld the wisdom of their ancestors - that no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgement against his clan. (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 232)

Ezeulu's egotism has triggered destruction, not only of himself and his people but also of the native religious and social uniqueness.

Ezeulu's absence from the village because of his imprisonment by the colonial administration provides him a chance to get even with his village opponents by not announcing the right day for the harvest of yams. It is through the conflict of the native people with the colonial powers that Ezeulu clashes with his enemies in the society, but that conflict was already present there, even confined, before these occurrences. In his exile away from his society Ezeulu has the time to think of Umuaro as one unreceptive entity. But after coming back to his compound he could no longer comprehend the matter on simple terms.

> All these people who had left what they were doing or where they were going to say welcome to him could not be called enemies. Some of them—like Anosi—might be people of little consequence, ineffectual, perhaps fond of gossip and sometimes given to malice; but they were different from the enemy he had seen in his dream at Okperi. (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 188)

Ezeulu's strategy to take revenge with the people of Umuaro for their lack of backing in his struggle with the colonial administration does not result from an internal conflict between his spiritual and earthly side. This plan is relatively the simple
repercussion of his detention and the lack of support by his kinsman that push him to go against the wish of society to announce the day of Yam festival. “After a long period of silent preparation Ezeulu finally revealed that he intended to hit Umuaro at its most vulnerable point - the Feast of the New Yam” (Achebe, Arrow of God 204). Mordaunt’s observation in Ezeulu’s refusal to eat the sacred yam is worth citing here, “The apex of his conflict is reached when he refuses to eat the holy yams, thus bringing his vengeance upon all his people; even the innocent, those who are helpless, have to suffer” (158).

The destiny of Ezeulu is a tragic one. Tragic in the sense that he is not allowed to live his life according to his own wishes and desires. The community sets out his life and it is the community who governs the behavior of Ulu. Whether he likes it or not, the god is the creation of his society and power is given to the people of this society to abandon their god again if needs be. Once Ezeulu ignores this, he is doomed to face a tragic end. “Paradoxically,” as Palmer fittingly explains, "Ezeulu, who should have been the champion of his people's faith, becomes the agent of destruction” (98).

**Colonial Supremacy and Perception of Enlightenment**

It was not easy for the colonizers to interact and mingle with the native people informally, as it was against the principal colonial objective of the Europeans to rule these people and their society as masters. It was, that is why, against their position and status quo to mingle with the natives even if they wished to. Achebe illustrates the deep and firm sense of supremacy of the colonial outsiders over the African natives through the character of the Captain Winterbottom in Arrow of God. It would be worthy to mention here one of the conversations between Winterbottom and his servant John to prove this aspect of colonial pride:

…”He let the dust blow into his eyes and for once envied the native children running around naked and singing to the coming rain.

‘What are they saying?’ he asked John, who is now carrying in the deck-chairs.

‘Dem talk say make rain come quick quick.’
Four other children ran in from the direction of the boys’ quarters to join the rest on Winterbottom’s lawn which was the only space big enough for their play.

‘Are all these your pickin, john?’ There was something like envy in his voice. (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 31-32)

Winterbottom could not help but envy his servant, as his servant can easily enjoy interactions with these native kids, but he cannot do the same as he represents the colonial administration. The colonial administrators did not establish any other forms of relations with the colonized but that of the oppressors and the oppressed.

Achebe also portrays the District Commissioner in *Things Fall Apart* as an agent of colonial beliefs and outlooks towards Black Africans. The Commissioner is planning to write a book on his experience as a messenger of light in African native darkness. The Commissioner thinks that he is sent as a compassionate emissary of the so-called civilized Western world for the ‘primitive’ natives. He takes immense pride in himself as he thinks that he is a pioneer in bringing “civilization to the different parts of Africa” (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 147). The title that he has decided for his book is very colonial in nature - *The Pacification of Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 148). His perception of the Igbo as primitive is a reflection of British views in general. Umuofia had a complex system of society, customs, religion, medicine and judiciary, and the native people were contented with such lifestyle. All these fell apart after the advent of British colonial force in this part of the world. Alimi observes that *Things Fall Apart* is a symbolic narration of “disintegration, breaking into pieces, disorderliness and disruption” (121) of conventional Igbo ethnicity that suffers at the hand of the Western invasion in Umuofia along with its new religion.

It is nevertheless incongruous that colonizers’ techniques of ‘pacification’ are usually accomplished through violence and suppression as depicted in this novel. It is in fact the very implementation of such techniques of accomplishing British colonial objectives that appears to be primitive in nature. Colonizers penetrated their colonies and controlled every stratum of native way of life through domination and violence to essentially ease the process of utilization and exportation of the natural and human resources of the colonized populace. Jean Paul Sartre, the French philosopher and
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writer, in his introduction to The Colonizer and the Colonized fittingly reasons that “Oppression means, first of all the oppressor’s hatred for the oppressed” that generates a “petrified ideology that devotes itself to regarding human beings as talking beasts” (qtd. in Memmi xxxvii). Achebe in Things Fall Apart intends to awaken his people and infuse the “sense of identity with their past and pride in it” (Vempala 44). This novel, according to Vempala,

...was also intended to make the rest of the world know about Africa’s rich culture and heritage. The book puts across, in convincing and authentic fictional terms, that the African societies had a great culture of their own… The novel unfolds the systematic process of destruction wrought upon the African societies by the anarchic forces in the native and alien cultures alike. (44)

The New Middle Class, the Identity Crisis of the Native Converts and Concept of Hybridity

A new class among the natives emerged who were employed by the colonialists to help enforce their policies on the natives of Africa. In Things Fall Apart, the court messengers are the representatives of this social class (Things Fall Apart 137) and they enjoy a better financial and social status, but often indulge into corruption. The District commissioner announces that the village should pay two hundred bags of cowries as compensation to release the clan leaders from the prison (Achebe, Things Fall Apart 137). But the court messengers add fifty more bags of cowries to the fine that they would keep to themselves. Achebe in one of his essays reiterates the existence of such superior class in colonial Africa from his personal experience.

When I was growing up I remember we tended to look down on the others. We were called "the people of the church" or "the association of God." The others we called, with the conceit appropriate to followers of the true religion, the heathen or even "the people of nothing… We lived at the crossroads of cultures. (Achebe, “Named for Victoria” 119)

These people were trained by the colonizers to look down upon the fellow native people and their practices, and to romanticize everything that was Western.
In *Arrow of God* this native middle class are shown as the most powerful among the Igbo who exploit other native people and can go to any extent for their personal benefits. In Chapter 5 of this novel Chief James Ikedi, a representative of colonial administration, teams up with a native road overseer, a representative of newly emerged native middle class, for road construction through Umuaro village. This overseer forcefully starts taking money from the villagers to keep their compounds away from the road construction. He later demolishes the compounds of three villagers who are slow in paying the demanded money (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 59). The native villagers are helpless in front of this representative of the native middle class. This middle class was fundamentally the creation of the colonial forces to make their administration smooth and stress-free in this native land. Even the Westerner Winterbottom finds it surprising how a man could destroy his fellow countrymen and their houses just because he was not able to extract some illegal money from them.

But what excuse could one offer for a man who was their blood brother and chief? Captain Winterbottom could only put it down to cruelty of a kind which Africa alone produced. It was this elemental cruelty in the psychological makeup of the native that the starry-eyed European found so difficult to understand. (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 59)

The British colonizers created a powerful and cruel section among the local Igbo. The people of the new social class believed that they were more privileged than the rest of the people in their society since they worked under the colonial government. “This was what British administration was doing among the Ibos, making a dozen mushroom kings grow where there was none before” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 60).

The colonial administration tried to apply a different form of governance called Indirect Rule to acquire more control over the natives and their land. The British government wanted to assign paramount chiefs or priests who should act on behalf of the colonial administration. It was a cautious political measure implemented to convince the Africans as well as to beat the linguistic, social and cultural obstacles. So, the responsibility of these pawn priests in each districts were to function as negotiators between the colonial masters and the natives. But such priests were not allowed to implement anything more than the White man’s agenda. Ezeulu has been
chosen by Winterbottom to be the paramount chief of the colonial administration because Ezeulu has maintained his support for the colonial government during the Okperi-Umuaro land dispute. The colonial administrator is least bothered to investigate whether Ezeulu is the appropriate choice for this job. Even Ezeulu's authority in his society of being the chief priest does not make significant difference to the colonial administration. Clearly, his authority is not of much interest to the British. Their main and only concern is to execute their colonial duties smoothly for colonial benefits. The commonality of the Igbo village people means nothing to them providing the natives do not fight with each other and thus jeopardize the benefits of the colonial establishments in Europe.

Marx aptly states “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (qtd. in Fälth 10). One cannot fully shrug off his/her social and religious practices all of a sudden after accepting a new set of customs or faiths. The result is often a person’s implicit mental conflict at an unconscious level. In *Things Fall Apart* the *osu* or the outcasts approach the missionaries, so that could be also converted to Christianity. Initially, other local converts could not accept them as their fellow Christians (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 111). Although the early converts have changed their religious faith, but they are yet to completely dismiss their inbuilt Igbo beliefs of considering the outcasts unacceptable in the native society. The cultural residues of their former social identities come here in direct confrontation with their new and apparently open social and religious identities that they are now a part of.

The socio-cultural impact of colonization not only influenced the native people and society, but also formed a generation that believed in mimicry and assimilation of Western culture. The shrewd divisive and political strategies used by the colonial powers were the actual causes behind the creation of a ‘hybrid’ generation in this region that ethnically lacked a unifying ideology and attitude, and thus suffered from rootlessness. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* Achebe tactfully represents how Christian missionaries use varied means to convert the natives into Christianity in the Igbo land. Was the impact of this invasion only limited to religious conflict among the native people? The answer is no, as this invasion
disturbed the entire cultural and social balance of the native society to a great extent, too. A hybrid class was created among the new converts who belonged neither to their new Christian identity nor to their indigenous religion and its cultural setup. They represented that unique section of their society, which was native in colour and blood, but Western and Christian in education, philosophy and in attitude to their lifestyle. These converts occasionally denounced some of the cultural practices and conventions of the native society. But at times, even after changing the religious identity and studying the new religion, certain native values, beliefs and rituals, went across from generations to generations and prevailed in their mental framework. When issues regarding such values and beliefs emerged, their native attitude and spirit also rose up. They tussled between their new identity and past residues, and eventually found themselves in no man’s land.

After accepting Christianity the natives tried to mimic the Western way of life and their culture. The transition to the new religion was not smooth and a sudden deviation from the indigenous traditions was a natural aftermath. But, as mentioned earlier, some inborn character traits of the new converts lingered on and they could not determine where they belonged to and what they were. This is an extreme example of cultural hybridity, which was an after-effect of the missionary invasion in this native land. The word ‘hybrid’ as put forward by theorists like Homi Bhabha, refers to the theory of hybridity, which is an important notion in post-colonial theory. Bhabha defines,

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority) … It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once
disciplinary and disseminatory —or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency. (159-160)

It refers to the assimilation (or, intermingling) of the colonizing masters and the colonized subjects in terms of cultural practices and signs. The assimilation and integration of cultural practices, the synthesis of cultures, can be perceived as positive, inspiring, and dynamic, but it can also be oppressive.

Achebe presents several instances in the novel *Arrow of God* of such hybridized behaviour of the new converts when they could not help but defend native rituals. One such example is Moses Unachukwu, the respected native member of the Umuaro church. He debates and eventually announces revolt against the White missionary Mr. Goodcountry. He counters the catechist’s proposition that the native Christians should strike down the royal python, which is revered immensely in the Igbo religion and among its people. He asks Mr. Goodcountry not to interfere with the locally revered royal python, as its significance in the native religion still exists in his mental make-up.

Ezeulu asks his church going son Oduche to acquire the acumen of the White men. He sees a White man writing with his left hand in the White man’s office. “The first thought that came to Ezeulu on seeing him was to wonder whether any black man could ever achieve the same mastery over book as to write it with the left hand” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 174). He asks his son to learn how to write using the left hand. Generally in colonial Africa those natives who worked for the White men and came closer to them tried to mimic their Western conducts and by doing so, considered themselves privileged than the other fellow natives.

In *No Longer at Ease* the hero Obi Okonkwo, the grandson of the protagonist Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, is a perfect example of this hybridity. Like Achebe, Obi dwells on the crossroads of Western and indigenous cultures and finds it quite difficult to accomplish a cultural identity of his own. When he comes back from England after completing his education, his father Isaac Okonkwo enquires if he managed to read Bible during his stay in England. Obi did not read it but he lies to his father and tells him that he read it occasionally. It is interesting to see how such foreign educated natives, like Obi in this case, change their standpoints when any issues or incidents regarding their personal lives turns up.
The hero Obi enjoys a passionate love affair with Clara (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*). Although he does not believe in god, he represents the native Christians who are products of Western education system. Since his parents are also Christians and ardently follow Christian practices, he is very confident that they will accept his love affair and easily grant him permission to marry her. But Clara is an *osu*, a sect of marginalized people in the native culture. The people of Igbo land considered *osus* as outcasts who were forced to stay away from native social and cultural practices from generations to generations. But Christianity includes even *osus* in their religion and tries to bring them to the fore. Obi’s father Isaac Okonkwo, being a devoted Christian and catechist is an expert of Christian scholarship and well experienced in the principles of the new religion. When he is in the company of other non-Christian natives, he preaches the doctrines of Christianity and discusses them boastfully. He refuses to practice the native social custom of breaking a cola nut as an offering to the Igbo idol to mark his son Obi’s return from England. “This is a Christian house,” replied Obi’s father…'Kola nut is eaten here,' replied Mr Okonkwo, 'but not sacrificed to idols'' (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* 41). But the same Isaac refrains from practicing all those so-called liberating practices that Christianity has taught him when it comes down to allowing his son marrying Clara, an *osu* girl, and maintains a viewpoint that is embedded in Igbo indigenous culture. As discussed earlier, *osus* had been devalued from time immemorial as outcasts in the indigenous society. And Isaac cannot let his son marry a girl who is an outcast. The president of the Umuofia Progressive Union and even Obi’s friend Joseph reiterate the same attitude like his father:

‘You cannot marry the girl,’ he said quite simply.

‘Eh?’

‘I said you cannot marry the girl.’

‘But why, Father?’

‘Why? I shall tell you why. But first tell me this. Did you find out or try to find out anything about this girl?’

‘Yes.’

‘What did you find out?’

‘That they are *osu*.’
'You mean to tell me that you knew, and you ask me why?'

'I don't think it matters. We are Christians.' This had some effect, nothing startling though. Only a little pause and a slightly softer tone.

'We are Christians,' he said. 'But that is no reason to marry an osu.'

'The Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free.'

'My son,' said Okonkwo, 'I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think.' (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* 106)

The problem is not that simple as observed by Isaac, because it is deeply rooted in the social and cultural upbringing of the native people.

Though Obi does not follow Christianity, he uses the Christian doctrines when it comes down to personal issues. He uses expressions like, “the light of the Gospel” (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* 106) to support his case when his desire of marriage with the osu girl is out rightly overruled by his Igbo parents. He tries to prove that Christianity has the light of civilization in Nigeria and has liberated Africans from heathen darkness (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* ch. 14). Such forms of complexities in individualities and conflict of identities were the byproducts of hybrid culture, which had put the new generation of Africa in a grave cultural and intellectual turmoil. To put in Mr. Anand P, a research scholar’s word, the representatives of this hybrid culture-

… adapt themselves to the necessities and the opportunities of more or less oppressive or invasive cultural impositions, live into alien cultural patterns through their own structures of understanding, thus producing something familiar but new. The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as oppressive. (461)

He further touches upon the crisis of individuality of this Hybrid natives:

A new generation thus turned their back towards native cultural systems and endorsed the new religion. Nigerians who still possess the indigenous clan oriented division are either Christians or Muslims – but at heart neither of these – ‘spiritually cut off’ from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy set in a materialist society – mere Hybrids. (462)
It can be concluded that these three novels, *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *No longer at Ease*, are Chinua Achebe’s conscious effort to present African culture and social identity from an African perspective. The colonized people were depicted by the Western writers as a mass and not individuals, as objects of someone else’s narratives before Achebe presents contrasting pictures of native cultures and societies in his novels. *Things Fall Apart* is a rejection of Western assumption of African people and reclamation of their identity by telling the stories of these marginalized people during colonial rule. Walder very rightly says that this novel is a “…deliberate step towards overturning the assumptions of cultural and racial inferiority imposed by the colonizers and accepted by the colonized, a step towards showing that the African words, their languages, their ways of life, have their own integrity” (11). Captain Winterbottom in *Arrow of God* perceives Africa as a land of darkness all around. It is nothing but the “old land of waking nightmares” (Achebe, *Arrow of God* 31) to him. Achebe, therefore, presents Igbo culture and history by negating the given cultural history of Africa in Western writings and closely inspecting the established European colonialist texts on Africa. The numerous instances of celebration of local cultures and practices, predominantly in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, are illustrated to show the Western world that African people are not simply the primitive chaos or mysteries as depicted in Western literature. For example, Marlow in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* depicts the village life in Congo as:

…a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy… It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it--this suspicion of their not being inhuman. (37)

Edward Said further explains in his acclaimed book *Orientalism* this narrow mindset of the European writers in the way they have treated non-Western characters and societies in their writings. He says that the West draws the picture of the Orient (third world countries) to suit their desires and perceptions:
Additionally, the imaginative examination of things oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by batteries of desires, repressions, investments, and projections. (7)

Achebe tries to break this stereotype in these novels by celebrating Igbo culture as an individual identity and Igbo people as humans. A conscious effort is made in Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God and No Longer at Ease to show the world that his people’s past was not one extended night of primitiveness and barbarism, in need of the authoritarian control and governance of the enlightened West. Rather, these novels record how self-dependent and self-reliant native Africans and African identity are browbeaten and subjugated through various layers of conflicts with the Western colonial force and its cultural invasion under the shroud of enlightenment from so-called ‘primitive darkness’.


Chapter-2 Chinua Achebe’s Novels: The Colonial Period


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