Chapter IV

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4.0. Introduction

*Arrow of God* (1964) represents the struggle for power and authority between the African and the missionaries and within the Igbo clan. The title of the novel comes from an Igbo proverb in which an event or a person is said to represent the will of God. The identity issues are continued by Achebe as the sequel to the issues reflected in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) during the colonial power. He points out the continuity of African cultural disruption with the same insight and involvement in the 1920s after the arrival of the missionaries in Nigeria. The bygone Igbo culture is depicted through the appealing mode of narration with the diversified change in African culture due to new religion like Christianity, raising the issues of identity among Igbo community. The conflicts in the Igbo tradition and European culture evoke the identity issues. According to Franz Fanon;

“...The colonial world is a Manichean world... the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil’ Colonized society is not merely portrayed as a society without values.....The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of the values, but also the negation of values”(Fanon,1968:6).

The novel focuses on the characteristics of the individual’s belongings to the homogenous society that is trapped in the rapid spread of Christianity among Igbo people. The missionaries disintegrated the Igbo society by provoking hostility among them through lucrative trades, education, law and order and the taste of power. Achebe reveals the unpredicted change in the native culture by shattering that it is bound to the alien rules of the society. Customs as the part of cultural patterns identify the characteristics of British power in Nigerian Igbo tribe.

The question of ownership of the land between Umuaro and Okperi results into the conflicts between two tribes and it marked the issues of identity of the social order with a sense of belongingness. The obligations of traditional religious rituals among Igbo people during the colonial period haunted them into the disruption of culture with the prime issues of identity. On the other hand, Christianity invented by the missionaries caused the pacification among Igbo people. Achebe says;
“Colonialism in Africa disrupted many things, but it didn’t crate big political units where there were small scattered ones before.... of course there are areas of African where colonialism divided a single ethnic group among two or even three powers” (Achebe, 1966:19).

The power relationships among Igbo proved the limited impact in compare to the power of missionaries. Colonial power is identified as the main source of their disruption. *Arrow of God* (1960) is a novel about the observable fact of power and the urge for power is evident in the temperament and patterns of interface and dealings between the different forces, interests and entities in the story. The delineation of power forms the identity issues in the patterns and the structure of power. The conflicts between the missionaries and the traditional Igbo system are reflected from the representatives of them and their entities. The conflicts among Igbo tribe are penetrated through their internal identity elements. The two divert applications of the issues of identity are noticeable in the story in the nature of power and its dimensions to distinguish the social patterns and their relations with each other.

The conflicts in power between Ezeulu and the colonial authorities constitute the underlying factors responsible for emerging the issues of identity. The traditional Igbo society monitored by Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, the most powerful god of Umuaro. The Nigerian social and cultural system is represented through the ethnicity of the Igbo people. On the other hand, the pacification caused by the missionaries among Igbo people constitutes the arrow heads of the conflicts between Ezeulu and Mr. Winterbottom. The protagonist Ezeulu resembles Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) but he doesn’t suffer from inner conflicts and uncertainties. Achebe reflects the religious and social power in a representative community with irresistible forces of colonialism. G.D. Killam rightly says;

“*Arrow of God becomes the central volume in a trilogy of novel in which Achebe explores the colonial rule in one area of Nigeria*” (Killam, 1969:60).

The encounter proceeds from Ezeulu’s defence of his religious power and the traditional social identity. The social issues construct a complex and unifying dramatic treatment to display the combination of events which lead to tragic mode at both the individual and social levels. Killam points out;
“Ezeulu, the protagonist is compelled to defend his unique position as a priest of Ulu, the most powerful of the village deities against, on the one hand, reactionary forces within the tribe and, on the other, against European Culture and religion” (Killam, 1969:61).

The identity issues in the novel are projected into two different phases. The internal division between the tribe centred on the chief priest of Ulu and the principal supporter of God Idemili, one of the deities replaced by Ulu. The second phase is reflected through the relationship between Ezeulu and Captain Winterbottom, the head of the local colonial political administration. The psychologist, Eric Erikson points out:

“Identity connotes the resiliency of maintain essential patterns in the process of change. Thus, as a strange as it may seem, it takes a well-established identity to tolerate radical change, for the well-established identity has arranged itself around basic values which cultures have in common” (Erikson, 1964:95-96).

The social change among Igbo people makes them to accept the cultural change subsequently the social patterns. The clash between the villages like Umuaro and Okperi makes them to tolerate the radical change introduced by the colonial power. The well-established identity of the Igbo faces the social crisis and disruption of their culture by destroying the traditional obligations.

4.1. Issues of Identity in ‘Arrow of God’

The issues of identity in Arrow of God (1964) are mirrored with the clash between tribal beliefs and the colonial administration during the 1920s and before the sustained Igbo community in contact with Europeans. As a sequel to Things Fall Apart (1958), it portrays the significant change in the Nigerian villages after the arrival of the missionaries. The second novel No Longer at Ease (1960) is projected with the issues of identity and culture during the 1950s and 1960s in Nigeria. But in the third novel, Arrow of God (1964) Achebe goes back to reflect the Igbo village life on the threshold of the British arrival in Nigeria. The missionaries imposed their
administration upon the Igbos by the division of southern-eastern Nigeria into areas ruled by District Commissioners and appointed the Igbos as the chiefs, clerks and messengers to help them. Simon Gikandi rightly puts in;

“The conflicts in Umuaro are not a rivalry between two gods Ulu and idemili but actually a struggle between two conflicting ideological interests and authorities represented by Nwaka and Ezeulu” (Gikandi, 1987:153).

The disruptions of Nigerians traditional customs during the colonial power caused the issues of identity when Ezeulu refuses to become a ‘white man’s chief’. He wants to be an ‘Arrow of God’ (1960) to monitor the Igbo people in order to challenge the new faith Christianity. The resentment among the villagers about their beliefs is one of the responsible factors to raise the issues of identity. In the context, the change in the cultural patterns, customs and rituals result in the conflicts between the Nigerians and the British Christian missionaries. The identity issues of Igbo clan in Nigeria with social order, patriarchal aspects, religion and culture are reflected during colonial power.

Identity is a social construct and it projects the society with the change of cultural patterns. Stuart Hall points out;

“identities are about the questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or where we come from’........identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation” (Hall & Gay, 1996:4).

The relationship of Igbo people within the tribe and the colonial power represents the social identity, which is all about the positioning of subjects through the representations which are ideologically constructed the masculine identity, feminine identity, religious identity, cultural identity and the questions of belongingness through the novel.

It was difficult for the Igbo people in Nigeria to construct the unified identity during the colonial process. The indigenous identity of them is blended with the influence of the colonizer’s culture. Achebe tries to project that the culture of the missionaries’ cannot be completely abolished through the recollection of the past. The
resistance of Igbo people was not merely the rebellion against the disruption of the culture but also the necessity to get free from the clutches from the colonial influence. The persistent struggle of the native people to identify themselves as unified clan poses the questions of identity which was concerned with their desires, predicaments, aspirations and failures. Therefore, the issues of identity are visionary throughout the novel.

4.1.1 Identity of Igbo Clan in Nigeria.

Igbo identity in *Arrow of God* (1964) represents as the indigenous tribe with the relationship between the religious institutions and traditional beliefs. It portrays their perception to set the principles of their society with certain customs and social patterns. Ezeulu, the priest of *Ulu* is at the centre to give insight about to preserve the cultural patterns. The Igbo people in Nigeria believe in the supernatural things as a part of the superstitions of their clan. It portrays the illiteracy among them which makes them to follow the traditional beliefs. Before the arrival of the missionaries, they were known as the primitive tribe of Nigeria. Achebe points out the identity of the African people in the primitive society;

“African peoples did not hear of culture from the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity they must regain”(Achebe,1964:157).

The identity of Igbo people in *Arrow of God* (1964) is projected with the religious the influence of the domestic forces and their nature, effect and manner. The ‘Ikenga’ is described the strength of a man’s right arm. The Igbo clan had the protective deities in the villages like Idemili, Ogugwu, Udo and other Gods of Umuaro and Ogba of Aninta. Individual life of the Igbo people was controlled by the spiritual forces. The relationship between a man and his ‘chi’ (personal God) fosters the communication with the ancestors. It regulates the traditional norms among the people to get control over the evils. The rituals and the festivals generate the social identity and unify them at the time of the crisis. The festival of ‘Pumpkin Leaves’ ‘provides an opportunity for them to cleanse the evils and sins, on the other hand, it
creates the sacred mood among all. The prayer of Ugoye to the God *Ulu* mirrors the religious beliefs among Igbo people.

“Great Ulu who kills and saves, I implore you to cleanse my household of all defilement If I have spoken it with my mouth or seen it with my eyes, or if I have heard with my ears or stepped on it with my foot or if it has come through my children or my friends or kinsfolk let it follow these leaves” (AOG: 73).

The identity of the Igbo clan reflects through the celebration of the festivals which gives the firm sacred dimension and the ritual reinforcement to unify them in the community. In addition to this central festival Igbo people, the prayers are performed to all the minor deities in the six villages. Achebe says that “it was the only assembly in Umuaro which a man might look to his right and find his neighbour and look to his left and see the God standing there” (AOG: 203). The social structure of the Igbo people is based on the religion and the leadership. But the confused leadership in Umuaro constitutes the issues of social identity in the clan on the issue of land ownership with Okperi. The different attitudes of Nwaka and Ezeulu, the chief priests of the deities Idemili and Ulu respectively, make the fertile ground for the missionaries to eradicate the religious beliefs of the Igbo people.

The cultural identity of the Igbo clan is changed by the intervention of the missionaries. The colonial administration averted the war between Umuaro and their neighbours, Okperi, The appointment of the warrant chiefs from the Igbo clan disrupted the social identity and the missionaries as the ‘breaker of the guns’ made a formidable appearance in the Igbo land as the ruler. It makes an evident that the Chief Priest of the Ulu, Ezeulu predicts the forthcoming catastrophe about the disharmony and the disintegration of the clan. He instructs his son, Oduche regarding the value of the Igbo cultural identity. “When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned to another thing… your people should know the custom of this land; if they don’t you must tell them” (AOG: 13). Ezeulu seeks social balance and coexistence between the indigenous tradition and the new colonial forces.

The missionaries were able to convince the Igbo people regarding the superstitious and bad customs of the clan and appealed them to join Christianity. “Mr Goodcountry told the converts of Umuaro about the early Christians of the Niger
Delta who fought the bad customs of their people, destroyed shrines and killed the sacred iguana” (AOG: 47). Oduche, the son of Ezeulu comes under influence of the missionaries and tries to harm the sacred royal python which is known as a symbol of ancestor worship. Oduche’s effort to put the snake into the box, made by a missionary carpenter, is symbolic of the efforts of the Christian forces to vanquish the traditional Igbo religious faith. Ezeulu defends his act and it intimates the indirect approval of the new force of the missionaries.

The issues of identity of the Igbo clan in Nigeria explore the dilemma of the Chief Priest Ezeulu including all the people, whose traditional roles had little to do with missionaries. The Igbo people were ritual experts or merely presided over councils of the elders with equal status. The critic Lugard comments that the dislocation of the Nigerian culture under British influence was crucial:

“to endeavour to find a man of influence as chief, and to group him under him as many villages or districts as possible...to support his authority, and to inculcate a sense of responsibility” (Lugard, 1968:70).

Achebe spins a detailed web of different issues which are the sources and the limitations exercised by Ezeulu. By the time, He sows the seeds of disorder and mistrust of power. But Ezeulu defied the clan averted the war with Okperi, which brought Winterbottom to break the guns. He testified in favour of Okperi, and against Umuaro, in the land dispute. It made Ezeulu to send his son to learn the knowledge of missionaries. It is interplay of the forces, domestic and remote. By taking into account, the pacification of Igbo people in Arrow of God (1964) relates the issues of identity of Igbo clan in Nigeria.

4.1.2 Social Identity

The social identity of pre-colonial and colonial Igbo people is reflected through the conflicts between continuity and change in the social patterns. The resistance of Igbo to colonial power through their culture, customs and traditional patterns is the manifestation of the problematic relationship of two powers. The social identity of Igbo people is filtered through the belongingness and the different social layers of the customs. The dispute on the land ownership between Umuaro and Okperi reveals an internal crisis of the social and political knots of the tribe. Umuaro villagers
decide to send an emissary to Okperi to resolve the matter either by peace or war. Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of the Ulu resist them by saying; “I know”, He told them, “my father said this to me that when our village first came here to live the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi, who gave us a piece of their land to live in” (AOG: 15). But Nwaka, one of the ‘titled’ men of Umuaro convinces the people that the Okperi people were the wanderers and they were driven by the people of Umuofia, Abame and Aninta respectively.

The clash between Ezeulu and Nwaka to identify as the most respectable and powerful persons in Umuaro testifies the social identity of their belongingness of the land issue. The approvals and disapprovals of the leaders rest at the end to send an emissary to Okperia. It reminds the way to prove the social power through the war with Okperi. Akukalia goes to Okperi with three companions but fails to communicate properly and breaks the ‘ikenga’ of the town-crier, which is known as the strength of man’s right arm. As a result, the bullet from the Ebo’s gun pierced through the chest of Akukalia and the issues of social power to identify each other that take place by killing the people. The narrator states;

“The war was waged from one Afo to the next. On the day it began Umuaro killed two men of Okperi. The next day was Nkwo, and so there was no fighting. On the two following days, Eke and Oye, the fighting grew fierce. Umuaro killed four men and Okperi replied with three, one of the three being Akukalia’s brother, Okoye” (AOG: 27).

The fight between the two villages makes the fertile ground for the missionaries to take over the charge of the society. It is evident that the missionaries win the favour of Okperi by giving them the disputed land. It is from the views of Ezeulu, “white man should come from so far to tell them the truth they knew but hated to hear. It was an augury of the world’s ruin” (AOG: 7). He points out that the disintegration of Igbo social identity is caused by the missionaries. For Winterbottom, the issue of the land claim “was the remote cause of all the unrest and found without any shade of doubt that it belonged to Okperi” (AOG: 37). The colonial administration is prepared deliberately to misunderstand the origins of the Okperi-Umuaro rivalry. The narrator adds that “Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion was like a leper” (AOG: 42). It is all about to pacify the Igbo clan and to rule
the society. Ezeulu’s imprisonment in Okperi by the missionaries for thirty-two days prevented him to perform the ritual of eating the sacred yam as he was not at home. It was the time to announce the *New Yam Feast*, but Ezeulu couldn’t name the day of the *New Yam Feast*. It caused the hostility among the clan. The missionaries deliberately caused the crisis by taking Ezeulu away from Umuaro to prove that the God Ulu is a false God. As a result, the Igbo clan pacified from their beliefs and accepted the new religion.

The issues of social identity of the Igbo become the stepping stone for the missionaries to disrupt the traditional patterns of the society. Ezeulu sends his son Oduche as a spy to know the Christian ideology to protect the identity of the Umuaro Igbo people when he comes to know the possible results of the changing tribal social patterns. The missionaries disrupted the culture of the Igbo people by trade and converted some of them to Christianity. Achebe puts in the intention of Ezeulu:

“I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share” (AOG: 51).

Ezeulu realizes that the social status can only be obtained by performing well within the society. But the role that had given to him by the society was not the influential one. His desire to identify more influential makes him to send his one of the sons to join the missionaries. Nwaka’s active conviction in the society deteriorates Ezeulu’s power. As a result, he goes against the traditional ethics of the society. According to Fanon, “traditional authorities, sanctioned by the occupying power, feel threatened by the growing endeavours of the elite to infiltrate the rural masses” (Fanon, 2004:66). The social identity of the Igbo finds the disrupted due to the colonial impact. David Carroll points out:

“The authoritarian agent (Ezeulu) in seeking to escape from the uncertainties of the new situation identifies himself with the source of his power and resists involvement in an uncertain dialectic. Each man becomes vulnerable through the rigidity of his view; in demanding that the world conform to their premises they become the victims of the new contingency” (Carroll, 1980:117).
Ezeulu makes the people to believe in Ulu and then surrenders by the inexplicableness of the events. “It looked as though the Gods and the powers of event finding winterbottom handy had used him and left again in order as they found him” (AOG:229). The social identity of Igbo people is based on the gender equality. Achebe points out that “The Igbo sensibility has never been comfortable with anything so absolute and clear cut” as “man is boss” (Achebe, 1990:41). It is evident from the novel that the issues of social identity are explored through the internal and external conflicts in Nigeria.

4.1.3 Masculine Identity

The patriarchal Igbo clan is represented in *Arrow of God* (1964) by holding the rights to make the laws, control the economy, declare the fight wars and follow the social norms through customs. Masculine identity in Igbo clan has two facets; one is social order that to be maintained with the norms of the community and the other is to regulate the religious beliefs by performing the rituals to their deities. Ezeulu is powerful in the context of his status a chief priest of the God Ulu. He is the intermediary between the God and the clan. Yam crop is at the centre of it, which connects the God and the clan. There is a strong relationship between Yam and masculinities. Yam becomes the yardstick to measure the manliness. It is marked with the respect as the Igbo men deserve such kind of respect in the familial relations. The masculine identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria during the colonial period mirrors the issues of individuality and the status. Ezeulu struggles to continue his identity as a Chief Priest of the God Ulu, while Nwaka makes an impression as a great orator being ‘owner of Words’. Ezeulu declares the festival ‘Pumpkin Leaves’ by his priestly power. “If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival—no planting and no reaping” (AOG: 3). It is Ezeulu’s the dominant way of act among the Igbo people to hold the position as a Chief of the society. The leaders of the Umuaro decide to send an emissary with white clay to Okperi for peace or war. Ezeulu resists them by saying that the God of “Ulu would not fight an unjust war” (AOG: 15). The decision of the leaders of Umuaro and the Ezeulu’s prevention consist of the crisis of the masculine identity among Igbo tribe on the issue of land ownership.

Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to join Christianity though his wife opposed him. “Oduche’s mother, Ugoye, was not happy that her son should be chosen for sacrifice to the white man. She tried to reason with her husband, but he (Ezeulu) was impatient
with her” (AOG: 46). Ezeulu responded her by saying that she has no any concerns with the son’s fate. The narrator points out; “How does it concern you what I do with my sons?”(AOG: 46). It signifies the polygamy of the men in the house to decide all the things. It makes the women voiceless in certain decisions. The royal python is treated as the sacred animal by calling it ‘father’. The manliness is reflected through the belief. Mr. Goodcountry convinces the converts of Umuaro that the royal python is the deceiver who had deceived the first mother, Eve. He makes them to believe to go against the belief. He says, “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” (AOG: 47). The new faith Christianity also provokes them to divide the feminine and masculine acts.

The Igbo women are given the protection by the clan in the familial context. The disputes and revenge are based on them. On the other hand, they do not want to spoil the masculine identity of them in the society. When Obika’s sister returns after her husband’s beating, Obika beats Ibe (his brother-in-law) almost to the point of death as a part of revenge. Ezeulu states that it is not manliness, but it is an act of insulting the manhood subsequently the in-laws. Ezeulu says:

"We cannot say your son did wrong to fight for his sister. What we do not understand, however, is why a man with a penis between his legs should be carried away from his house and village. It is as if to say: You are nothing and your kinsmen can do nothing. This is the part we do not understand"(AOG: 12).

In any patriarchal society, women are considered as a part of the masculine act and power. Berger observes conventionally ‘men act and women appear’ (Berger, 1972:47) Masculine identity in such a system of signification is associated with the incorporation and the exercise of power. Man’s act, in other words, is related to the power conferred on them by social norms. The power relations among Igbo people have reflected the masculine identity in which social norms are executed directly or indirectly. The narrator points out the power relations of Igbo people. He says;

“Perhaps it was deliberate, perhaps accidental. But Ebo had just said the one thing that nobody should ever have told Akukalia who was impotent and
whose two wives were secretly given to other men to bear his children” (AOG: 23).

The Igbo clan permits the incest act as a part of the power relation to hiding the weakness of the Akukalia, who himself is (un)known of the fact. Since, it is worst thing for Igbo people being impotent. As a result, two wives of Akukalia are exploited sexually in order to preserve the manliness of Akukalia. The guilt of drinking excess palm wine by Obika is the part of the masculine act and it is deliberately ignored by the clan even his father Ezeulu.

According to Bristor and Eileen; gender identity “is a pervasive filter through which individuals experience their social world, consumption activities are fundamentally gendered”. (Bristor and Fischer, 1993:519) The social restrictions for manly acts are always in the favour of the patriarchy. It is observed in the Arrow of God (1964). The Igbo women didn’t make a hue and cry over the guilt of Obika. “The women ignored him and went on with their own interrupted meal. It was clear he had drunk too much palm wine again” (AOG: 10). The colonial power of the missionaries disrupted the masculine identity of the tribe when Obika was whipped by the missionaries for being late to the road-work due to drinking excessive palm-wine. Ezeulu responds to it by saying:

“I think he was late in going. But the white man would not whip a grown man who is also my son for that. He would be asked to pay a fine to his age group for being late; he would not be whipped. Or perhaps he hit the white man first…” (AOG: 88).

The polygamy of masculinity through religious power is lessened by Christianity who succeeded to convince the Igbo people about the false Igbo Gods. Mr. Goodcountry told; “If Ulu who is a false god can eat one yam the living God who owns the whole world should be entitled to eat more than one” (AOG: 215-216). The Igbo people believed that the Christianity has the power to protect them from the anger of Ulu. As a result, Ezeulu loses his position as a Chief Priest of the God, Ulu. Subsequently the issues of masculine identity occur with the new faith like Christianity. Ezeulu reacts helplessly by saying; “If any man in Umuaro forgets
himself so far as to join them let him carry on” (AOG: 220). It is a kind of confession about the pacification of the Igbo community.

4.1.4 Feminine Identity

The identity of women in *Arrow of God* (1964) reflects the traditional gender manifestations with an imbalance of the female principles. The negative side of the women is revealed through some instances in the novel. In the opening slot of the novel, the image of Igbo women is described as a cruel foster-mother. The narrator says, “The moon he saw that day was as thin as an orphan fed grudgingly by a cruel foster mother” (AOG: 2). The identity of the women in such a way is exposed in a form of the rank in a social order.

The marriage system in Umuaro among Igbo people flashes the light on the inequality and imbalance between men and women. Men are allowed to marry with several women as portrayed in the novel *Things Fall Apart*. (1958) Akuekdued has a couple of wives. Nwaka, one of the local leaders of the village has the five wives. Ezeulu, the chief priest has three wives, the younger wife Ugoye, is of the equal age of his first daughter. The custom of marriages about having more wives is continued in the colonial period in Nigeria. The bride price issue reminds the selling of women by their fathers to the families of the bridegrooms. The women in *Arrow of God* (1964) are forbidden to share the property of their fathers after marriages. In short, they have to bear the burden of their husbands meekly without leaving their husband’s house. The regular beatings of the women are the stereotype identity in the society. Achebe puts in the conversation among them regarding the married Akueke;

“They said the man ill-treated her, But Ojiugo’s mother said it was a lie and that Akueke was headstrong and proud. “When a woman marries a husband she should forget how big her father’s compound was,” she always said. “A woman does not carry her father’s obi to her husband” (AOG: 10).

The rape, incest and the molestation of women among Igbo people are evident of the insecure identity of the women. The Igbo people in Umuaro want to increase the numbers of male children to protect their clan from the molesting the daughters of their villages. Ezeulu the chief priest says;
“Why do we pray to Ulu and to our ancestors to increase our numbers if not for this very things?” said the leader, “No one eats numbers. But if we are many nobody will dare to molest us and our daughters will be able to hold their heads up in their husbands’ houses” (AOG: 12).

The virginity of the women before marriages is questioned by the Igbo customs. Okuata’s relaxation after finding herself virgin is pointed out in the novel as a part of insecurity of them to prove them virgins. Achebe writes that “She (Okuata) felt greatly relieved for although she had always known she was a virgin” (AOG: 122). It is a matter of pride for her that her husband Obika had decided to present as goat to his in-laws. The writer says; “Obika had already chosen an enormous goat as a present for his mother-in-law should his wife to be a virgin” (AOG: 118). Actually, Okuata was at the risk to lose her virginity when she came in contact with Obiora. It is the matter that made her worried about her virginity. The narrator says;

“It was the thought of the moonlight play when Obiora had put his penis between her thighs. True, he had only succeeded in playing at the entrance but she couldn’t be too sure” (AOG: 118).

It makes a point that the virginity of the Igbo girls is seen at the risks of their beliefs. The identity of Igbo women is dominated by the male-oriented customs. The women are expected to consider their husbands’ guilt if they beg a favour of their wives secretly. Ezeulu says in this context;

“It our custom a man is not expected to go down on his knees and knock his forehead on the ground to his wife to ask her forgiveness or beg a favour. But, a wise man knows that between him and his wife there may arise the need for him to say to her in secret; ‘I Beg you.’ When such a thing happens nobody else must know of it, and that woman if she has any sense will never boast about it or even open her mouth and speak of it. If she does it the earth on which the man brought herself low will destroy her entirely” (AOG: 172).
The male dominance of the Igbo people to treat the women in a social and judicial manner is revealed in the novel as a part of the patriarchal society. The women were not given the importance in the social meetings, sharing and the spiritual practices. Ezeulu’s return to the village in Umuaro is marked by the elders and the men of the society excluding women. The narrator says that “In the course of the second day, he counted fifty seven visitors excluding women” (AOG: 187). The females in Igbo society are not given any kind of importance in the decision makings and the well-beings. But it is strange to point out that the different deities are given the names of the women and the social aspects are monitored by the orders of them. The deities such as Ulu, Eru, Esdemili, Chukew are known as the highest Gods of the male gender. The social image of the female is considered as the place of a mother before marriages that occurs in the context by saying the ‘son of our daughter’. The people belong to the same village are considered the ‘son of the village’. According to the Igbo historian Felix Ekechi,

“Woman was seen as subordinate to the male” in traditional Igbo society is an “enduring stereotype of male-female relations (Which) needs modification so as to reflect the African reality” (Felix, 1995:41).

The proverb ‘A man does not speak a lie to his son.’(AOG: 93) is a discourse about the feminine identity that a woman, who teaches their children to speak a lie. The masculine identity overshadows the feminine qualities and the aspects related in the social framework. The narrator reveals the words ‘my father’ throughout the story which are associated with all the remedies, past knowledge, customs, moralities, justice and ethical values. Ezeulu decides the fate of his son, Oduche by asking him to join the Christianity. Ugoye, Ezeulu’s wife tries to resist him but it was in vain when the Ezeulu replies, “I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there……How does it concern you what I do with my sons?” (AOG: 46). In the patriarchal Igbo society, The Igbo women were deprived of the decisive power and they had no any right to share their opinions in the familial and social arena.

4.1.5 Beliefs and Judicial System

Igbo religion portrays the beliefs of the Igbo people subsequently the judicious system that evokes the issues of the social identity as far as individual roles concerned
with the cultural patterns of the clan. The town crier’s instrument ‘ikenga’ is considered as the most effective ‘tool’ of the tribe to inform everyone about the different issues of the clan. Akukalia, as an emissary of the Umuaro, goes to Okperi to settle the land issue, but is not treated politely and provoked to break the ‘ikenga’ of the town crier. It leads to the murder of him by Ebo from Okperi and it was the justice made by the Okperi clan to initiate the war between two villages. According to the clan, it is believed that the breaking of ‘ikenga’ is an inauspicious act and the concerned person and the village is an enemy. It is a strange belief and the judicial system of the clan to decide the social power of them.

The beliefs of the clan may be termed as the ‘superstitions’ about the wicked medicine man like Otakekpeli, who provides the strong medicines to the clan to drive away the evil spirits from the bodies of sick people by booming the gunshots as the healing process. The Igbo people follow the instructions of the medicine man to keep the clan away from the evil spirits. Obika challenges the power of Otakekpeli and throws him away into the bush during mask dancing spirits. The narrator says;

“Obika had dropped his matchet, rushed forward and in one movement lifted Otakekpeli off the ground and thrown him into the near-by bush in a shower of sand.......Otakekpeli struggled powerlessly to his feet pointing an impotent finger at Obika who had already turned his back on him......The Mask arrived appropriately on the crest of the excitement. The crowd scattered in real or half-real terror” (AOG: 198).

According to the clan, it was an abomination against the God of Ulu because the power of the cruel medicine man doesn’t allow Ezeulu to declare the New Yam Festival and the elders pass the order about the death of Obika, who is killed as a kind of sacrifice to the God, Ulu instead of a goat or a cow. The belief of the clan to scarify the clansman to the God is a heart-wrenching one which poses the issues of their judicious system. It may be called the victory of the Idemilli over God, Ulu. The clash between Ezeulu and Nwaka grapples in the terms of ‘power’ in the clan as the issues of individual identities to regulate the social order.

Both the beliefs among Igbo people fall them apart from each other. The foremost carries out the division between the villages like Umuaro and the later made them to accept the Christianity due to the delay in declaration of the festival by
Ezeulu. Firstly, it can be noted that the war between the villages was imposed by Nwaka’s decision which made possible for the missionaries to rule over there by finding out the kind of source to execute their power. Secondly, the ‘excessive pride’ of Ezeulu regarding the declaration of festival results with an encroachment of missionaries in the religious issue which convinced the people about Christianity is more powerful than the God Ulu to protect them, which fall them apart.

4.1.6 Religious Identity

The religion of any society regulates the social order and cultural patterns as the cohesive force to bound people together with certain values of traditional aspects. The rituals and the ceremonies activate the reciprocal relations between the people as a bond of the religious identity. The downfall of the Igbo religion by the missionaries through the religious power of Christianity is a responsible factor in posing the questions of the issues of religious identity. The chief priest of the god Ulu, Ezeulu performs the religious rituals, offer prayers and sacrifices to the deity on behalf of the Igbo people of Umuaro. The festival of the Pumpkin Leaves marks the end of the old year and the arrival of the New Year He is considered as the man of religious power among Igbo people. “Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real” (AOG: 3). The Igbo people follow the instructions of Ezeulu to celebrate the festival of purification, which is known as the New Yam Year. Achebe puts in the religious identity of Ezeulu as;

“It was true he (Ezeulu) names the day for feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam Feast; but he did not choose the day. He was merely a watchman. His power was no more than the power of the child over a goat that was said to be his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know who the real owner was. No! the Chief Priest of Ulu was more than that, must be more than that. If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival- no planting, no reaping. But could he refuse? No Chief Priest had ever refused. So it could not be done. He would not dare” (AOG: 3).
The religious power of Ezeulu is the superficial one which cannot be exercised. On the other hand, as a man of thoughts, he executes his equation with his deity, Ulu. The Igbo people believe that they are protected by the power of Ulu. The belief constitutes unity among them in the six villages. According to Satyanarain Singh;

“God in the novel is de-mystified and brought right into the midst of the people’s struggles with the creation of Ulu as the guardian deity of Umuaro” (Singh, 1983:133).

Nwaka, the “owner of the words”, is well-acquainted about the God Ulu, and he considers Idemili is than the Ulu. The dispute between Nwaka and Ezeulu shifts the focus of the Igbo people to take a refuse in Christianity. It poses the questions of the religious identity and leads to the complexity among them about the social concerns. As a result, the Igbo tribe was trapped in the web of dilemma regarding the security and solace. Ezeulu, as a priest of Ulu, fails to understand the mighty power of Christianity and sends his son to learn the magic of the missionaries. His justification regarding the same leads to the acceptance of the Christianity. He reveals;

“I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place” (AOG: 46).

Ezeulu accepts the fact that the missionaries are powerful. The new religion of them is on the verge of shattering the religious power of the village. He wants to find a way to balance his individual religious power by maintaining the Igbo traditions. His disapproval of war on Okperi is one of the reasons to resist the colonial power. The narrator puts in;

“The man who carries a deity is not a king. He is there to perform its ritual and to carry sacrifice to it. But I have been watching this Ezeulu for many years. He is a man of ambition; he wants to be king, priest, diviner, all” (AOG: 26-27).
The python is considered as the most revered animal among Igbo people. It is worshipped as ‘father’. But Oduche, Ezeulu’s son keeps the python into the box and tries to kill it. It is an abomination against their deity. Ezeulu’s consideration to the act of his son without any punishment signifies the duality in the religious faith among the Igbo clan, which is considered as the issue of religious identity of the tribe. David Carroll identifies the religious control of Ezeulu. He observes;

“Ulu has reasserted his control over the divine half of Ezeulu's ambiguous nature in an unmistakable way, adn all doubts and the perplexities are resolved.....Now the priest becomes once more the remote agent of the supreme god, rather than the representative of the clan” (Carroll, 1980:116).

The tragic death of Obika lessens the religious power of the Igbo clan. Ezeulu seems a failure to convince his clan about the power of Ulu to celebrate the New Year by offering the sacrifices. He loses his power to see the moon in the sky subsequently he cannot guide his people about the religion of the tribe which was replaced by the new change. The collapse and the ruin of the religious power of the Igbo clan is an instance of the agony for the worshippers of Ulu. The Christianity ruled the Igbo tribe by their laws and promised security against the possible wrath of Ulu. It made Igbo to believe; “praying that the day would not be far when the priest and all his people would turn away from the worship of snakes and idols to the true religion” (AOG: 214). The missionaries promoted Igbo to abandon the ‘snakes and idols’ and join the church to become civilized and find a salvation. The Christianity provided the stronger protection than the deity, Ulu. The Christ is believed to be the strong, merciful and forgiving and Ulu in compare to Christianity is weak and stubborn; the stubbornness of the native deity caused the religious identity. The missionaries declare, “Ulu who is a false god can eat one yam the living God who owns the whole world should be entitled to eat more than one” (AOG: 215-216).

It is evident in the novel when Igbo people accepted the white man’s religion. It marks the changes in the religious identity. The alien indigenous gods were replaced by the change invented by the missionaries. Ezeulu’s power, in the beginning to instruct the harvesting had lost its magic at the end subsequently his religious identity and ambition to maintain the Igbo tradition by celebrating New Yam Festival.
The narrator explains, ‘Thereafter any yam harvested in his fields was harvested in the name of his (Ezeulu’s) son’ (AOG: 230). The religion of Igbo people got the less importance than the Christianity.

4.1.7 Disruption of Nigerian Identity

The struggle of the Igbo people in Nigeria in the pre-colonial and colonial period marked the disruption of their unified identity by the power of Christianity. As a result, Christianity is identified as the source of their power in _Arrow of God_ (1964). Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Umuaro fails to continue the tradition of the Igbo to celebrate the ‘New Yam Festival’ and the catechist at the church made the people to believe in Christianity by convincing them to protect their yams. The identity of the Igbo people was based on the seasons which are regulated by the rituals and festivals. Ezeulu, as a Chief Priest of Ulu, holds the religious power to monitor all the aspects of their culture. The agricultural tasks and purification rites are used to perform by the message of the God Ulu. Ezeulu thought that he had immense power over the year, over the crops and therefore over the people.

The disruption of the Igbo identity starts with the land issue of Okperi and Umuaro. The missionaries divided them and declared the decision in favour of Okperi. The power relations between Ezeulu and Nwaka is the another instance of the division in the tribe and Ezeulu tries to preserve the identity of the Igbo people, but his limited power didn’t help him to resist the colonial impact. He permits one of his sons to join the missionaries to learn the power of their religion, but it heralds the disruption of his identity consequently the disruption of the clan. He becomes a ‘tool’ or an ‘arrow’ in the bow of his God with no power in his hands. Secondly, Ezeulu’s decision to refuse the offer of the missionaries as the Chief of the village in presence of the elders or _ndichie_ of his clan results into the thirty-two days imprisonment of him in Okperi by the missionaries.

Ezeulu is bewildered by the ways of the new age. He couldn’t see the society changing. He is regarded himself to be the god, who founded their town. He expected everyone-his wives, his children, his kinsmen, his friends and even his enemies to follow him and act like himself. His overconfidence of his power didn’t favour him a long. As a result, the people believed that no any man is greater than the community. Achebe explains the inability of Ezeulu to keep pace with the time to announce the ‘New Yam Festival’. The Igbo use ritual as a safeguard against the Europeans, but
mainly to pacify the mysterious spirit world, which surrounds them. They spend the
greater part of their lives with the dilemma, which marked them to understand that the
two worlds never achieve any insight into each other’s systems of value.

The Whiteman broke the guns of Umuaro which signals to the Igbo people about the brutal treatment given by them to the Abame villagers in the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) The Igbo didn’t speak about it. “The story of what soldiers did in Abame was still told with fear, and so Umuaro made no effort to resist but laid down their arms” AOG: 27). The fear of missionaries among Igbo people is revealed by the narrator. He says;

“Everywhere elders and men of title heard the signal and got ready for the meeting. Perhaps it was the threat of war. But no one spoke of war any more in these days of the white man. More likely the deity of Umuaro had revealed through divination a grievance that must be speedily removed, or else … But whatever it was—a call to prepare for battle or to perform a communal sacrifice—it was urgent”(AOG:141).

To some extent, the disruption of Igbo people is resisted by Ezeulu challenging the missionaries. At first, he tried to avert the war with Okperi on the land ownership so it could make certain impact to fight with the missionaries with unique force. But he, unfortunately, didn’t succeed in it. Secondly, He favoured his son to join the missionaries to keep an ‘eye’ there to know the secrets of them. Lastly, he rejected the call of the missionaries being as a Chief of the village under their rule. He says; “tell your white man that Ezeulu doesn’t leave his hut. If he wants to see me he must come here” (AOG: 139). His vision to keep the society united is seen from his intention when he cautions Akuebue, “We did many things wrong in the past, but we should not therefore go on doing the same today” (AOG: 132). It is noticeable from the comment that the identity of the Igbo people was erased by the colonial power in the past. But the Igbo religion kept them altogether for time being and it was again at the cusp of the disruption of the clan.

Ezeulu’s pride as a powerful religious man and Chief Priest in Umuaro is an example of the relational system of the Igbo community, which identifies them integrated. But the disruption of their identity due to diverse, conflict and disorderly
elements of society creates chaos among the clan. The psychologists Laplanche and Pontalis state about the identification of the social system;

“Identifications viewed as a whole are in no way a coherent relational system. Demands coexist within an agency like the super-ego, for instance, which are diverse, conflicting and disorderly. Similarly, the ego-ideal is composed of identifications with cultural ideals that are not necessarily harmonious” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1985:208).

The concept of identity doesn’t signal the stable and unchanging social patterns. It changes the way of belongingness and self-preservation. The pre-colonial Igbo identity demolishes in the demand of co-existence with an agency like Christianity. Achebe tries to reflect the connectivity between illiteracy and ignorance. The Igbo people were simple and illiterate, but ignorant as well. They were captivated by the change- the change in religion, change in cultural patterns, change in customs and change in ethical values, but they paid for it a high cost that is the disruption of their identity as an integrated people in Nigeria.

4.2. Issues of Culture in ‘Arrow of God’

The Issues of culture in Arrow of God (1964) are epitomized the loaded traditional Igbo tribe in Nigeria during pre-colonial and colonial period i.e. between the 1920s and 1950s. Achebe portrays the traditional structures of the social order and leadership in Igboland of Nigeria. The internal turmoil regarding Ezeulu’s place in the clan poses the issues of cultural conflicts among Igbo people. David Cook points out; “the novel searches into the limits of individual power in a system controlled by tradition” (Cook, 1977:18). However, Ezeulu tries to consolidate his ‘power’ by unchanged cultural patterns. The culture of any society changes as per the changing situation because it is fluid rather than static.

The change in the culture of Igbo people marks the historical references in the novel. The narrator says that it had been six clans once; The God Idemili had been replaced by the God Ulu and there had been the fifth title in Umuaro as the ‘King’ it cites the different structure of the cultural patterns of the Igbo people. The sense of complexity of change is noted in the form of the cultural issues among Igbo people and it resulted into the war between Umuaro and Okperi. The issues of culture in
Umuaro are told when the Umuaro people were astonished by the new rule. Achebe writes;

“Nnanyelugo deftly steered the conversation to the subject of change. He gave numerous examples of customs that had been changed in the past when they began to work hardship on the people. They all talked at length about these customs which had either died in full bloom or had been stillborn. Nnanyelugo reminded them that even in the matter of taking titles there had been a change. Long, long ago there had been a fifth title in Umuaro—the title of king” (AOG: 209).

It signifies the cultural change during the past and the Igbo people psychologically prepared them to accept the inevitable change during the colonial period. The traditional rules were abandoned by the people for the harmonious co-existence of the society. The natives of Umuaro are left with no alternatives to obeying the missionaries and their religion. The road, connecting to Okperi and Umuaro is symbolic rather than the two divert traditional patterns of the Igbo people. It proclaims the repair of the damaging system of the native values by the measures to accept the new religion. Moses Unachukwu convinces the natives; “As daylight chases away darkness so will the white man drive away all our customs” (AOG: 85). The darkness of the Igbo beliefs and the superstitions is driven away by the Christianity as the natives looked in the change of traditional beliefs.

The disorder of the Igbo cultural system in the novel is started with the Oduche’s act against the native religion when he tries to lock the royal python into the box. Keeping python into the box is related with the certain symbol that the Igbo culture seems to be caught by the changing patterns among Igbo people. Captain Winterbottom divided the Igbo people by “making a dozen mushroom kings grow where there was none before” (AOG: 59). The missionaries appointed the authorities with the title of warrant chiefs to utilize them as the agents of the new faith and the breakers of the traditional cultural rules of the Igbo society. Padmore writes about the policy of the colonial administration in Nigeria. He says, “The Chief is the law, subject only to one higher authority, the white official stationed in his state as advisor” (Padmore, 1936:317). Achebe explains the colonial administration in a
similar way in *Arrow of God* (1964) as the destroyer of the Igbo customs which were known as the core parts of their culture.

The native culture of Igbo people lacks the material aspects, unlike the missionaries. The culture of the natives treats all by giving the due respect even he is an enemy. The difference between the missionaries and the natives matters the most in preaching the gospels of the each of the religions. The narrator says about the Igbo culture:

> “Ezeulu often said that the dead fathers of Umuaro looking at the world from Ani-Mmo must be utterly bewildered by the ways of the new age. At no other time but now could Umuaro have taken war to Okperi in the circumstances in which it did” (AOG: 14).

The Igbo people believe in the peace rather than to harm each other. The unity in the clan is preferred by the pre-colonial Igbo people. Ezeulu tries to avert the war in the colonial period for the same reason. On the other hand, the missionaries treated the Igbo people in a brutal manner and made them to think about the irresistible colonial cultural patterns, therefore, the issues of the culture in *Arrow of God* (1964) persist in the form of power relations between the Igbo people and against the missionaries.

The narrator gives an insight about the issues of the cultural patterns among Igbo people. He says; “The Christian harvest which took place a few days after Obika’s death saw more people than even Goodcountry could have dreamed” (AOG:230). The influence of Christianity according to G. D. Killam;

> “At the end, Igbo society is smashed and the important part, perhaps the finest part, is lost. When Obika dies, the God has claimed his harvest and it is the Christian god that reaps it” (Killam, 1969:18).

The change in the cultural patterns on the part of the Igbo people poses the quest for identity. The religious beliefs of them are provoked till the acceptance of the Christianity.
4.2.1 Social Structure of Igbo Clan

The Igbo social structure is based on the blood relationships. It is traced by the lineages and the kinships. In the society, family is at the centre into which the compound of the Igbo person is considered for the familial relations. It expands at the village level to the clans and the towns. The lineage creates the associations with the neighbours. The people take the decisions in a democratic way as there is no monarchy. There is a deep faith in the religious rituals, trades and marriages. All the people of different age-groups interact with each other during the war or in peace. The leaders and the ‘tilted’ men are honoured as well as the individuals are promoted and given due credit by the achievements, initiatives and leadership.

*Arrow of God* (1964) portrays the traditional structures of social order and leadership in Igbo land. It is mainly based on the typical idea for the fictional presentation. But the differences between presentation of social structure in the novel and the actual background of the society are crucial for the analysis of the issues of culture of the Igbo clan. The issues of culture and the leadership of the society directly foster the past social issues and the narrator shifts the focus in a flashback way. In such a context, the novel begins with an issue of the leadership in Umuaro and the tribal war between Umuaro and Okperi.

The meeting of the elders and the men of ‘title’ in Umuaro decide the ownership of the land on which the dispute takes place. It is believed that the parents explain the true histories to their children as Ezeulu remarks; “my father said this to me that when our village first came here to live the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi, who gave us a piece of their land to live in” (AOG: 15). On the other hand, Nwaka, who had taken the highest title in the clan, claims that the people of Okperi were wanderers. Nwaka wins the favour of the people in the meeting and it poses the issues of confused leadership in the Igbo clan by the rivalry between Ezeulu and Nwaka. It makes an influence on the younger generation about the traditional bravery of Umuaro “Before the whiteman turned upside down” (AOG: 16). It is an evident that the religious power of Ezeulu gets dominated by the political concerns through Nwaka’s appeal. The social structure of the Igbo reflects the importance of a rank. In the context, Hunter and Whitten point out;
“The differences among adults are differences in influence and prestige rather than the absolute distinctions between the powerful and the powerless typically found in state societies” (Hunter & Whitten, 1977:174).

The different age-groups of the society had the voice to discuss the issues of their society as a part of the social mobility. Of course, the final sanction of the decisions attributes to the elders and the men of title. Achebe writes; “There were murmurs of approval and of disapproval but more of approval from the assembly of elders and men of title” (AOG: 16). The power relations form the traditional and conventional levels of communication between the clan and the entities. The Igbo traditional system and the colonial administrative order are the socio-cultural forces, which regulate the norms of the culture of their own. The colonial power gets dominated at the intellectual and philosophical levels in compare to the logic and the reasoning patterns of the Igbo people. The issues of the culture persist among Igbo people about to follow the traditional patterns or the new religion like Christianity. Ezeulu states that the colonial power becomes influential among Igbo people due to the war of Umuaro with Okperi. He says;

“We have shown the white man the way to our house and given him a stool to sit on. If we now want him to go away again we must either wait until he is tired of his visit or we must drive him away” (AOG: 132).

According to Ezeulu, it was difficult for the missionaries to rule the Igbo people in Umuaro. But the war between Umuaro and Okperi made them to know the failings of the people and they interrupted the war by taking the hold of their power. Ezeulu’s comment about the white man’s dominance in Umuaro and Okperi reveals the agents from the Igbo clan, who helped the missionaries to get a commendable position. Mr. Winterbottom says about the disintegrations of the Igbo society when some of them began to work as the agents of the missionaries. Mr Wnterbottom says; “They all manage to turn themselves into little tyrants over their own people. It seems to be a trait in the character of the negro” (AOG: 108). The system of the warrant chiefs and the native courts is introduced by dramatic changes in the Igbo society. The Igbo people protested against the warrant chiefs and the native courts systems, but their protests resulted only into the punitive expeditions.
The social structure of Igbo people is destroyed by the missionaries as the Igbo kinships fall apart, the blood ties of them got separated to prove the strength in the political and religious spheres. The new system of the missionaries made them to dislocate from the traditional and cultural beliefs. The traditional judicial system of the Igbo people got destroyed by the courts of the missionaries and the religious power made no way to survive their hopes on the God like Ulu and Idemili. The strength of the primitive Igbo people was their Igbo religion. But the Igbo clan gives a message that “no man however great was greater than his people; that no man ever won judgement against his clan” (AOG: 230). The colonial power is the most influential factor in the breakdown of Igbo traditions. It can be argued that the cultural patterns of the Igbo clan are concerned with the nature of the confrontation between Igbo land and the colonial power. The conflict between the man of religion and the man of wealth divided the Igbo tribe. The social structure of the Igbo clan emphasizes that the power rests with the group, the community and society. Any attempt by an individual to tamper with the principle can only be disastrous for the integration of the society.

4.2.2 Proverbs and Oral Tradition

Proverbs in Achebe’s novels constitute and identify the Igbo social patterns and their identity through the words of wisdom and beliefs. The elders or the wise people utter the proverbs to articulate the oral and rural manners of the Igbo people. Eira Patnaik reveals the importance of proverbs to describe the cultures. She says;

“cultures that employ the oral mode of communication are more likely to value compressed succinct expression, what better vehicle of communication than the proverb, which by its very nature penetrates to the heart of the situation and character, lending at the same time, to succinct thought a freshness of expression and ingeniousness of idea” (Patnaik, 1982:98).

The proverbs are not merely the vehicle of communication but also the representation of social identity and the cultural patterns along with the ethical values of the society. The proverbs in Arrow of God (1964) relate the cultural patterns of the Igbo people and the social milieu. The customs of the Igbo are revealed by elders of the tribe to acquaint the historical significance in a philosophical way. The proverbs
of the Igbo people reveal the significance of the moral laws and the social justice. The central figure of the Umuaro, Ezeulu points out his attitude regarding dispute with the Okperi village. He draws attention of the people towards the bravery of the Igbo people that lies in their power. Ezeulu says, “When an adult is in the house the she-goat is not left to suffer the pains of parturition on its tether” (AOG: 18). It makes a sense about the beliefs of the ancestors of the Igbo clan, who dare to resist the crisis of the clan. The elders of the clan are the torchbearers to the next generation and it is duty of them to acquaint the clan with the right decision. Ezeulu compares the elders of the clan with the lizard by saying that “If the lizard of the homestead neglects to do the things for which its kind is known, it will be mistaken for the lizard of the farmland” (AOG: 17). He reminds the responsibilities of the elders to play a significant role as mentors during the crisis.

Nwaka, while talking about the decision of war with Okperi speaks “softly in the silence he has created with his salutation” (AOG: 16). He convinces his people by taking into account the people’s psyche and draws attention and emotional support towards the sensibility of everyone by using the proverb “Wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own” (AOG: 16). It implies the meaning that everyone among Igbo is indicated by their own abilities, the way they carry goatskin bag. Everyone carries the goatskin bag straight or askew, depending on their abilities. He states it by the saying that the people may have different opinions and they go with them, whatsoever they like. Ezeulu as a great orator convinces the Igbo people to maintain the cultural ethics of the society. The Igbo people followed the new religion. The disruption of their culture is pointed out by Ezeulu expressing the apologies and persuading them to join the clan again. He appeals to the people of Umuaro, “When a man sees a snake all by himself he may wonder whether it is an ordinary snake or the untouchable python” (AOG: 143). Ezeulu’s appeal to all the villagers is an attempt to maintain the social identity through the unique culture of the Igbo people during colonial period.

Oduche’s abomination against the God Ulu by trying to kill the python in Umuaro draws the resentment of the people to Ezeulu. In the defence of him, Ezeulu says that “Unless the wind blows, we do not see the fowl’s rump” (AOG: 60). The people of Umuaro reminded Ezeulu that it is an abomination against the God Ulu and the man who did the crime must be punished. But the eloquent Ezeulu says that such crimes are the parts of the tribe and the seriousness of it must be neglected by
considering the impact of new religion. He continues, “a man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards” (AOG: 61). Though, Ezeulu didn’t want anyone to pity his son’s act, he didn’t ignore the religious implications of Oduche’s act. He supports Oduche to embrace the religion Christianity and the culture by saying, “A man who has nowhere else to put his hand for support puts it on his own knee” (AOG: 133). Nwaka, the rival of the Ezeulu states that the conversation of Ezeulu with Winterbottom is responsible for the disruption of the culture. It makes an impact on the cultural identity of the Igbo people. According to Nwaka, “A disease that has never been seen before cannot be cured with everyday herbs” (AOG: 133). When Ezeulu sends his son to know the Christian religion it makes the feelings of fear and the beginning of the pacification of the Igbo people.

The Igbo people are advised by the proverbs that they should not go against the ethical values of the tribe. The Igbo proverb indicates the advice as “He who will swallow udala seeds must consider the size of his anus” (AOG: 232). The person, who goes against the customs of the tribe, has to face the punishment. It is an advice of the Igbo people. The change by the missionaries among Igbo was accepted by the clan and they believed that it is an inevitable one. The power of the missionaries is mentioned in the proverb, “When two brothers fight, a stranger reaps the harvest” (AOG: 131). It gives an explanation that the quarrel between the clansmen is the fertile ground for the missionaries to seize the opportunity to spread the gospel of the new religion among Igbo people.

The Igbo proverbs explain the way to adjust with the inevitable truth. Ezeulu becomes powerless as the missionaries take over the rules of the tribe. He expresses the collapse and the ruin of all the things by looking at the worshippers of God;

“If the rat cannot flee fast enough
Let him make way for the tortoise!” (AOG: 229).

The breakdown of the traditions of Igbo society at the end in Umuaro is apparent and the aptness of the words in the proverb makes them to accept the reality. Ezeulu tries to adjust with the changing times, takes appropriate actions, but they lead him to neglect his duties and the responsibilities. Griffith points out;
“Ezeulu seeks help in "proverbial" knowledge and that "frantically he runs through the proverbial wisdom seeking for a clear sign that the relationship of trust which must exist between high priest and god still endures" (Griffith, 1971:97).

The use of proverbs fosters the identity of the Ezeulu as the struggling messenger of the God, Ulu. Ezeulu is crushed by the burden of the Igbo religious beliefs. It is a kind of disruption of the cultural identity of Igbo society and caused the displacement of Ezeulu’s identity as a powerful man in the clan.

The issues of culture and beliefs of the Igbo people have been considered with complexities and conflicts in compare to the philosophy of the new religion Christianity. Ezeulu’s struggle to claim that he is always right, even at the risk of offending the clan evokes the conflict between the traditional ethics and colonial society. Ezeulu asserts the passivism of the native people and the negligence to follow the traditional customs is a mark of the disruption of the cultural patterns. He says that “the white man should come from so far to tell them the truth they knew but hated to hear. It was an augury of the world’s ruin” (AOG: 7). It reminds that there was a sign of the issues of culture among Igbo people by the arrival of the missionaries.

4.2.3 Superstitions

The superstitions among Igbo people are the outcome of their illiteracy which constitutes the major hurdles in shaping their social order. The Igbo clan follows the traditional beliefs and they consolidate their cultural power through religious beliefs of their deities. The tribal war between Umuaro and Okperi takes place due to the great respect to ‘ikenga’ an instrument that is being used by the town-crier to draw the attention of the people. Igbo people call it the strength of the man’s right arm. It is a kind of superstition that it is a sacred. Akukalia breaks the ‘ikenga’ hence he was killed by Ebo, one of the villagers of Okperi and the dispute between them continued until the nine Igbo people were being killed over an issue.

The religious beliefs of the Igbo people follow the superstitious acts as the New Yam Festival doesn’t begin until the moon is not seen in the sky. The narrator says that “The little children in Ezeulu’s compound joined the rest in welcoming the moon” (AOG: 1). The Pumpkin Festival is declared by Ezeulu and the Igbo people got relieved. Ezeulu prays the God Ulu on the part of all the clan sitting in front of the
shrine. The prayer is very meaningful in different aspects as he prays to strengthen the masculine power as well as about the sacrifices to their deities.

“May our wives bear male children, May we increase in numbers at the next counting of the villages so that we shall sacrifice a cow and not a chicken as we did after the last New Yam feast, May children put their fathers into the earth and not fathers their children” (AOG: 06).

According to the Igbo People, the God ‘Ulu’ favours the prosperity on them if the sacrifices are made to it. It is superstitious belief of them to see a flash of lightning during the night. Obika sees a flash of light and gets frightened by its appearance as it looked like a strange man on the boundary of the villages Umuachala and Umunneora. Ezeulu convinced him that he had seen the magnificent God Eru, who is known for the prosperity and showers the wealth on the people but on the other hand, the God Uru harms the people who had sworn falsely in the shrine of Ulu. Ezeulu says that “Eru only harms those who swear falsely before his shrine” (AOG: 08). It means that the superstitions are used for the basic purposes of a good conduct in the society. The people do not dare to go against the religious principles, which are laid for the moral conduct of the society. The celebration called ‘Akwu Nro’ before the big festival is celebrated in Umuachala as the kind of belief of the widow women to offer the food to their departed husbands. The narrator puts in;

“Every widow in Umuachala prepared foofoo and palm-nut soup on the night of Akwu Nro and put it outside her hut. In the morning, the bowls were empty because her husband had come up from Ani-Mmo and eaten the food” (AOG: 194).

It is believed that the departed souls of their husbands are satisfied when the food is offered to them with a kind of ritual. The mask spirited cult among Igbo constitutes the law and order to follow the social norms. It is believed that the masked ancestral spirits to be kept away their identity from the villagers. If anyone goes against the social norms the crime is punishable and unchallengeable. The udala tree in Umuaro is the known as the sacred one according to their beliefs because it is believed that the tree belongs to their ancestral spirits. No one is allowed to eat the
fruits of it. The person goes against the rule of the clan is punished with the sacrifices and the heavy fine. The narrator says;

“The tree was full of the tempting fruit but no one young or old was allowed to pick from the tree. If anyone broke this rule he would be visited by all the masked spirits in Umuaro and he would have to wipe off their footsteps with heavy fines and sacrifice” (AOG: 196).

The superstitious act of the clan doesn’t keep them vibrant with the changing pace of the society during the colonial power and the issues of the culture persist due to the ignorance of the clan. The differences of the Igbo religion and Christianity are visible as the foremost gets less importance and the latter becomes the source of a refuse to the new generation. It is evident from the Oduche’s act to inbox the royal python, which is the divine and sacred animal for the Igbo clan.

4.2.4 Customs and Traditions

Customs and traditions of any society, tribe or clan keep them vibrant about the cultural patterns. The people follow the customs and traditions to regulate the social order. But the customs and traditions have two facets. If the people of the society, tribe or clan do not change their customs as per the changing cultural patterns, the issues of culture persist to disintegrate the people from the ethnicity and the issues of identity in different spheres take place as the matter of ‘pride’ or ‘title’ in fostering the right cultural patterns. Arrow of God (1964) reflects the different customs and traditions of the Igbo clan. The Igbo people believe in the religious practices before the colonial administration in the early 20th century. They had their beliefs in the customs and the traditional practices.

The custom of celebrating the festival of ‘Pumpkin Leaves’ is explored through the kind of tradition of the people to thank the God, Ulu for showering the blessing on the clan in order to get prosperity in their lives. The sacred ‘moon’ is evident of the goodness. It can be a doyen of good fortune or a harbinger of evil. The customs and traditions make the people to show respect towards their culture and ancestry. It is the custom of the Igbo clan to offer prayer to their deity. Ezeulu, as the Chief priest of the God, Ulu prays on behalf of the clan;
“Ulu, I thank you for making me see another new moon. May I see it again and again. May this household be healthy and prosperous. As this is the moon of planting, may the six villages plant with profit. May we escape danger in the farm—the bite of a snake or the sting of the scorpion, the mighty one of the scrubland....” (AOG: 06).

The moon is the cue for the new expectations and the plans according to the customs of the Umuaro Igbo people. The customs of the Igbo vary from village to village about the auspicious days. The Okperi people do not have any business on the Eke day, which is known as the market day. When Akukalia from Umuaro goes to Okperi as an emissary, he was told by the town-crier Otikpo; “Different people have different customs,” said Otikpo after his laugh. “In Okperi it is not our custom to welcome strangers to our market with the ikolo” (AOG: 23). It denotes the quarrelsome situation when Otikpo told Akukalia regarding the common custom of the Okperi villagers. Actually, he wanted to tell him that the message carried by him from Umuaro is less important and insulted him to provoke his anger.

The royal python is the most revered animal for the Igbo people. It is the custom of them to pay a great respect to the pythons. Mr. Goodcountry appeals to the Igbo converts to go against their custom by killing the royal python. He says;

“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” (AOG: 47).

It reminds that the missionaries provoke the Igbo people to go against their customs if they want to change in their religious and cultural lives. The duality in the two religions creates the confusion among the people and the issues of culture seek the chaos in the clan.

The bride’s welcome to the bridegroom’s house is a part of the custom of the Igbo people. Obika’s wife comes to Umuaro. The youngsters of the village admired as the upholders of the customs. The bride’s family is expected to give a dowry in form of things like “cooking-pots, wooden bowls, brooms, mortar, pestle, baskets, mats,
ladles, pots of palm oil, baskets of cocoyam, smoked fish, fermented cassava, locust beans, heads of salt and pepper” (AOG: 115). There were also two lengths of cloth, two plates and an iron pot. The narrator explains the custom of the Igbo people;

“The three compounds of Ezeulu and his sons were already full of relatives and friends before the bride and her people arrived. The twenty or so young maidens attending her were all fully decorated. But the bride stood out among them. It was not only that she was taller than any of them, she was altogether more striking in her looks and carriage. She wore a different coiffure befitting her imminent transition to full womanhood—a plait rather than regular patterns made with a razor” (AOG: 116).

The song about the arrival of the bride takes place to offer her goodness in the house. The bridegroom and his family members stick money on her forehead as a part of the custom that she should contribute in the prosperity of the house. The feast follows the dancing event till the sunset with the yam foo-foo, bitter leaf soup and egusi soup along with the legs of a goat. It is kept before the women, who used to be the song-leaders to thank them for the performance. It is also the custom of Igbo to give a burial feast after someone’s death. The burial feast of Ogbuefi Amalu was at the risk of their customs as there was the delay in declaration of the Pumpkin Leaves Festival due to the imprisonment of Ezeulu by the missionaries. It creates the confusion among the people about to perform the burial feast. It is one of the responsible factors for them to not believe in the God, Ulu, which doesn’t give them the right directions, subsequently the Igbo people decide to go against the customs of the clan at the end.

The customs about to decide the war, to celebrate ‘Pumpkin Leaves Festival’, to punish the people who go against the social rules, to present kola-nuts as the symbol of love and respect, to follow the customs regarding to welcome the brides or to arrange the burial feasts are the traditional ways of the Igbo people which reflect the cultural patterns of the Igbo clan.

4.2.5 Oral Rhythms

Arrow of God (1964) charts the worships and the oral rhythms of the Igbo people as the parts of the cultural patterns of the clan. The significance of such
tradition is to conceal strikingly the survival of oral modes of perceptions. Achebe records the colonial penetration in the bushland of the Igbo people as the issues of their cultural patterns. The time scheme represented by the Igbo people is about the colonial intervention and the changing scenario in Nigeria. The oral forms including communal exchange are drawn through the emphasis on the historical and mythical references. The narrator points out; “On the day, five years ago, when the leaders of Umuaro decided to send an emissary to Okperi....” (AOG: 14). Or “In the five years since the white man broke the guns of Umuaro...” (AOG: 39). It gives an idea about the traditional phenomenal calendar, which is followed by the Igbo people to intimate the actions of the past. The song sung by the Igbo people by swinging the matchets or wielding their hoes reminds the effective work song of the tribe as a part of their spirit to work with loyalty.

“Lebula toro toro
A day
Lebula toro toro
A day” (AOG: 77).

The new moon during the New Yam Festival is an occasion of joyous mood when Ezeulu eats the twelfth yam and announces the festival. He remembers the song of the olden days during his mother’s time. Ezeulu’s nostalgic vision cracks his mind when he comes across a burial party singing a song of Idemili;

“Look! a python
Look! a python
Yes, it lies across the way” (AOG: 222).

He becomes panic to find the changes in the cultural patterns of the Igbo people when the song is sung as a dirge announcing to the sacred python of Idemili as the common enemy of all the gods of Umuaro. The changes in Umuaro after the arrival of the missionaries the rivalry is seen between the God of Ulu and the Idemili. The following song sung by the children is an instance about not to pay attention to the God Idemili, who is a rival of the God, Ulu.
I was born when lizards were in ones and twos
A child of Idemili. The difficult teardrops
Of Sky’s first weeping drew my spots. Being
Sky-born I walked the earth with royal gait
And mourners saw me coiled across their path.
But of late
A strange bell
Has been ringing a song of desolation:
Leave your yams and cocoyams
And come to school.
And I must scuttle away in haste
When children in play or in earnest cry:
Look! a Christian is on the way.
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha …” (AOG: 222-223).

The urge of the missionaries to the native children about to attend the schools monitors the change in the beliefs of the people. It is a symbol of the new rays to escape from the superstitions and the rituals. The ringing of the bells in the schools symbolises an end of the frequent ringing bells in the temple of the God, Ulu. The Igbo people were reluctant about the new changing phases of the wisdom, the ‘goatskin bags’ of the wisdom were filled up with the changing cultural norms. It is clear from the song that the elders were on the cusp to dislocate from passing the ‘wisdom’ of their culture to the next generation about the ethical values of their culture. In that sense, the issues of the traditional culture raised at the advent of the missionaries in Nigeria.

4.2.6 Ethical Values
The Igbo clan has the ethical values and it regulates the social order of the clan. The Igbo clan maintains the ethical values with the sets of rules and customs that direct their relationship with each other and other beings in the smooth functioning of the social order. The religion fosters the codes of conduct and the manners to behave with certain values. Basden points out the ethical values of the Igbo people in Nigeria. He says:
“In the majority of Ibo towns a very clearly defined code of moral exists theoretically. Infringements of these laws may lead to severe penalties being inflicted, and cases are known where infidelity on the part of the wife has been punished by the torture and death of both offenders” (Basden, 1966:34).

The morality is observed by the clan with the strict rules. The missionaries also didn’t violate the set rules of ethical values. The conversation between Mr. Clarke and Captain Winterbottom centres on the ethical standards maintained by the Igbo people in the clan. Captain Winterbottom says; “Without prejudging the issue I may say that I wouldn’t put anything past Wright, from sleeping with native women to birching their men…” (AOG: 57). The women are treated with the great respect on the ethical ground. The virgin brides are appreciated by them giving the presents to their mothers by the bridegrooms. “Obika had already chosen an enormous goat as a present for his mother-in-law should his wife prove to be a virgin” (AOG: 118). It makes to note that the Igbo clan preserves the ethical standards and the chastity of the women as the significant part of their cultural values. The wrath of their deities and the ancestral spirits prevents the clan from the incest, theft, murder or the adultery. The clan believes in the ideology of the religion.

4.2.7 Dislocation of culture

The dislocation of the Igbo culture in Arrow of God (1964) is represented by the opposing forces in the tribe as well as the forces of the European colonial institutions. Achebe balances the two battles side by side. The external colonial power dominates the internal social system and the cultural patterns only when the foremost is permitted by the latter. Ezeulu’s pride and the Nwaka’s challenge to Ezeulu make the things different among Igbo people, subsequently the traditional cultural aspects of the Igbo people finds no place with the changing pace. The dual of ‘title’ between Ezeulu and Nwaka leads the confusion among people to follow the social order by the messages of their deities Ulu and Idemili to deal with the missionaries. Ezeulu, as a ‘man of thoughts’ opines that the reality to be accepted without violence to his clansmen and the religion. He recognizes that the encroachment of the missionaries can no longer be ignored. Ezeulu’s vision about the strength of colonial power is the mark of the changes in the lives of the people. He says to his son Oduche:
“The world is changing,” he had told him..........The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow” (AOG: 46).

Ezeulu intimates his son and subsequently the clan about the inevitable change in the cultural patterns of them by the colonial administration to dislocate them from their long-lived traditional culture. It is a kind of appeal to all the clansmen to resist the culture from the destruction. On the other hand, Ezeulu’s rival Nwaka convinces the people to not follow Ezeulu by telling them that he is wrong in his estimation about the future. They are both involved in the problems of power, Africans and Europeans misunderstand each other’s motives because they adopt different frames of setting up to influence the cultural ethics among the tribe.

The Igbo clan had lost their faith in God, Ulu due to the secular approach of the missionaries through their religion Christianity. The change in the religion beliefs is accepted by them because they didn’t see each other as rivals. The missionaries challenged the deities and the priests indirectly with the imprisonment of Ezeulu. The Igbo people believed that the white man’s power is both irresistible and embracing. Moses accepts the inevitable change as the John Nwodika joins the Christianity. They want the clan to share in the benefits of a changing world, but by seeking to reconcile it to the destruction of their traditional culture. Mr. Goodcountry’s appeal to kill a python in Umuaro which was practiced by Oduche as the challenge seems the beginning of the dislocation of the traditional culture of the Igbo clan. Oduche’s presence among the missionaries is justified by Ezeulu as the need of the power. Ezeulu’s remark about the change and dislocation of their culture suggests the indirect approval of the less powerful Igbo tribe than the missionaries. He says;

“I am not blind and I am not deaf either. I know that Umuaro is divided and confused and I know that some people are holding secret meetings to persuade others that I am the cause of the trouble” (AOG: 130).

The disruption of the clan and the confusion about the customs of the tribe kept them vibrant about the change in the traditional cultural patterns. The relationship of the priest and the tribe is wrecked by the European power. The
Ezeulu’s motive about not to follow any authority except the God, Ulu was the sign of keeping the clan united. But it has been treated as the pride of him being the most powerful religious man in the clan, which is challenged by his own people with the help of Nwaka. As a result, the disintegration to the tribe made them dislocated from their ethical values and the missionaries dominated by their new faith i.e. Christianity.

Ezeulu’s imprisonment by the missionaries made the people to believe that he is the priest of the dead God. He didn’t seek any help from the clan and when he returned from the prison the clan insisted on him to declare the Feast of New Yam. The crisis of it led to the division of the two groups of the clan. The missionaries took the advantage of it and convinced the people that the Christian God would protect them from the anger of Ulu. The narrator points out;

“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” (AOG:216).

It is evident from the novel that the Igbo traditional way of the rituals were replaced by the change in the religious power subsequently the cultural modes, which made the Igbo clan to dislocate from their culture. The dislocation of their culture is directed against the inflexible modes of the religion. The missionaries extended their power by learning to negotiate in a flexible with alien myths and to supply their inadequacies. In such a way, the dislocation of Igbo culture finds the new directions to practice their beliefs and customs.

4.3. Summary

Arrow of God (1964) charts the issues of the Nigerian Igbo identity and culture. The internal tribal conflicts make the fertile ground for the disintegration of the tribe. The political and religious powers mirror the discourse of their ethnicity. Ezeulu tries to hold the community unified by his thoughtful decisions, but the social aggression is seen to challenge the traditional religious ethos. It is evident from the novel that the change in the cultural patterns sows the seed in the minds of the people by the power relations. The missionaries succeed to fall them apart by the influence of the religion, trade, education and justice. Ezeulu simply becomes an ‘arrow’ or the ‘tool’ of the religious power of the Igbo people for nothingness at the end when the
natives were divided into two groups. One of them, the followers of the missionaries and the second becomes passive due to the ‘pride’ of Ezeulu, who deliberately delays the *New Yam Festival* to prove himself as the most powerful man in the clan. Nwaka’s appeal to the clan about the God Ulu leads the confusion among the people. The missionaries divide them on the ground of the conflicts between Ezeulu and Nwaka regarding the war of Umuaro with Okperi.

The African Igbo society is reflected by relations with the Missionaries and the presence of the imperial power of colonization. The issues of their individual and social identity subsist in various dimensions of conflict: religious, patriarchal and cultural, as well as traditional. In each of these dimensions revolve around issues of identity and culture. The Igbo people express themselves in spiritual communal ethos by which the individual and social identity are found deeply rooted in a spiritual sense of the kinship that do not keep them vibrant with the changing pace after arrival of the missionaries. The continuation of their cultural patterns becomes the complex issues as they consider the changes are meant for to fall them apart from their values. The transmission of the cultural patterns due to imperialism is pointed out as the disruption of their identity.

**Major Findings:**

- *Arrow of God* (1958) reflects the issues of identity and culture through internal tribal conflicts and the intervention of the missionaries to dislocate the Igbo people from their religious concerns.
- Achebe focuses individual pride in fostering status in the form of identity issues versus social patterns of the Igbo people fall them apart during the colonial phase.
- Culture regulates the social order by keeping people vibrant about their social and individual identity, but the cultural changes disrupt the social patterns and individual identity if the vacuums remain in mutual understanding of the people in the society or the clan.
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