

# RESTORATION, HYBRIDIZATION AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF AFRICA DURING BRITISH COLONIZATION

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## ABSTRACT

*The Britain colonized one-third of the world. In the colonization, the natives of different colours and races hybridized, transformed, and went through the identity crises but the African colonization suffered beyond that. The European academia has captured a very bleak picture of the Africans which cannot be seen in other British colonies. Savagery had been picturized through films and writings where Africans depict no culture and history. These writings portrayed a bleak picture of Africa across the world. It is also a fact that the slave trading to British colonies started from Africa. Many Africans were forcefully deported to America. However, after the colonization, an aggressive response came from the African writers. They have not only condemned colonization but also restored their culture and social norms and traditions through their writings. Achebe has documented a complete journey of African culture from its start till transformation in his trilogy. He has established African culture in his book *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Later, Achebe has narrated the story of African hybridization and change in *Arrows of God* (1964), and *No Longer at Ease* (1961). The trilogy of Achebe presents African culture, identity, hybridization, and cultural change with the passage of time. This trilogy has been taught in the history and cultural books in most of the universities in the West. This research paper is an investigation of the trilogy of Achebe's exploration of Africans' cultural identity and how natives were hybridized and transformed in the result of British colonization.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Restoration; Cultural Hybridization; Cultural Transformation; British Colonization; Achebe.

## INTRODUCTION

Restoration, hybridization, and transformation go hand in hand in human history (Jamison, 2001). Change and resistance are also integral parts of human

beings' psychology (Cooley, 2017). This research is an investigation of the blending of remote and local societies in the Igbo culture displayed in Chinua Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*. These books are the piece of a set of three in which the main novel is *Things Fall Apart*, a milestone in the universe of African writing (Shea, 2008). There appears an ideal depiction of the colonized African culture in Achebe's writings. These compositions translate how the command of colonizers infringe the social and cultural existences of the Igbo individuals who get blended into two distinct societies, and neglect to acclimate upon the conditions. Achebe's books are named as counter-talk to the works of those European writers who have exhibited the negative picture of the non-European grounds; especially Africa (Achebe, 2012). Another key author among the European authors is Joseph Conrad who shows a dim picture of Africa and announces the African individuals and society crude and socially poor in his novel *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 2010). Achebe appears to influence the general population to see how the frontier powers demolish the public activity and customs of the local individuals by pulling them towards new religion and culture. The three novels reflect how the natives are hybridized and transformed.

Most of the European writings reflect Africa as a land where animals live in human shape (Conrad, 2010). They illustrate that the Africans have no culture, religion, social norms and traditions and they follow a no rule. Achebe has not only condemned these notions but also restored African culture, religion, social norms, and traditions through his writings. He has presented the Igbo society in his novels, which has high moral grounds and identity.

Along with the establishment of the African culture, the writer has also described the process of hybridization, how the western culture and religion has indigenized in colonial culture. It has not only destroyed the natives' culture but also has created difficulties for their own cultural identity (Achebe, 1958). An indigenized form of culture appeared which led to the identity crises of the natives. It has also generated the inferiority complex in the minds of the natives. The writer has also tried to portray that colonization was evil in the name of good. The colonizers constructed a playground to justify the colonization (Achebe, 2000). However, they highlighted the weaknesses of the native culture. The colonizers presented such a bleak picture of the colonized which is unacceptable for the colonial people.

This research investigation shows a complete colonial process and its effects on colonized people. How various characters have been affected

by the British colonization. The study further proves the psychological problems of the natives created by colonization.

### **RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

The theory of hybridity and the views of the other writers and critics were kept in mind while elaborating the desired aspects of the novels. The theory of hybridity (proposed by Bhabha) is based on the mixed approaches of the colonized people towards the local and foreign culture and religion, the dialogues and events were quoted from the texts of the novels that reflected such tendencies (Bhabha, 2012). These examples were elaborated to accomplish the research objectives and to get the answers to the research questions.

The analysis is based on the restoration and representation of Igbo culture on one hand, and cultural hybridization and transformation on the other. The theory of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha is applied to analyse the novels. Hybridity is a postcolonial term which defines how the colonizers polluted the natives' culture (Bhabha, 1997). This study is based on three aspects of cultural restoration, hybridization, and transformation.

#### **Restoration of African Culture**

There is a historical debate that whether Africa is a land of savages or civilized people (Jacques, 1997). Different writers have tried to transcribe African culture and identity, but they could succeed as Achebe (Hall, 2014). There is no doubt that the trilogy of Achebe is a narration of African culture, identity, and identity crises as well. The novelist is recognized as the first African historian who resorted African Identity (Achebe, 1978).

The natives were living peacefully before the arrival of colonizers (Cronon, 2011). Yams were the symbol of their prosperity (Cronon, 2011). The natives were politically independent and had a democratic system. They always solved their problems in a democratic way through their own cultural and social norms and traditions. Along with the democratic system they had also justice system where there was equality (Achebe, 2010). The judiciary was also independent which decided things through customary laws. The natives were enjoying a very lucrative life before colonization (Achebe, 2010).

The second thing which the novelist has portrayed is the cultural aspect of African religion. The writer is of the view that African natives had a religion like the modern religions of the world. The African religion has the monolithic essence because the natives believed in their one supreme

God Chukwa and all other gods were worshipped as assistants of the supreme God. The natives practiced contacting the assistants because they did not want to disturb the supreme God (Achebe, 2010). The colonizers were incredibly surprised to know that there was no king in Mubanta and the people were unaware of the word king. This illustrates the democracy in the natives' land. The novelist is of the view that the colonizers created a master-slave relationship on the colonial land. The natives were free and prosperous before the colonial period (Achebe, 2010).

### **The Journey from Hybridization to Enlightenment: *No Longer at Ease* (1961)**

The story of *No Longer at Ease* (Achebe, 1961), shows that the blood of the whole family in the novel is full of cultural and religious hybridization. The triangle of the main characters is the victim of hybridization. The grandfather of *Isaac Okonkwo* was the follower of the Igbo religion and the wife of the protagonist is also a Christian. Their son, *Obi Okonkwo*, however, wants to marry an outcast girl which shows a further tendency of their hybridization. Obi has an affiliation with Igbo religion which was the religion of his ancestors but when he falls in love with *Clara* his affiliation turned towards Christianity and later, he starts appreciating Christianity and criticizing Igbo religion. Before he used to criticize Christianity, however, he appreciates the Christianity religion just to accept the outcast girl and marry her. Hybridization created a negative impact on colonial people as it creates disorder in the society (Young, 2005).

Hybridization has not only affected individual lives but the collective lives as well. It has created duality of the culture (Jønsson et al., 2010). It has affected the native culture because the colonizers tried to inculcate their own culture in different ways. The beginning of the novel demonstrates the effect of hybridization on an individual's life. The protagonist *Obi Okonkwo* of the novel is affected by hybridization. He is confronting a preliminary in the court because of the charges of pay off and debasement as a government employee. He has likewise borne the demise of his mother *Hannah Okonkwo* and partition from his spouse *Clara*. Everybody is shocked over the defilement accusations and do not believe them with reference to *Obi Okonkwo*. The judge says, "I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this" (Achebe, 1961, *Ease* 4). The Umuofian progressive union who funded *Obi Okonkwo* for training in England also criticised his beneficiary's act. One member of the union narrates, "We paid eight

hundred pounds to train him in England but instead of being grateful he insults us because of a useless girl” (Achebe, *Ease* 7). The president of the union is of the view that going to imprisonment for a civil servant is a matter of shame. The coming discussion shows us what were the reasons for tragedies he faced. It shows that he was trapped in such a situation due to hybridization and cultural transformation.

The novel describes the situation which leads the protagonist and his family toward difficulties. The colonial administration was the reason, the natives converted into Christianity (Stoler, 2010), and standardized the colonizers’ way of living as Bhabha narrates about cultural and religious hybridity (Woods & Jeffrey, 1998). The natives seem ready to send their children for higher education in England. Okonkwo’s family also followed the same trend. *Isaac Okonkwo* converted into a Christian and became a preacher of the religion later.

The novel further narrates, after the foundation of the colonial government in Nigeria, they structured an association of the local individuals of Umuofia who have acknowledged the new religion. It is known as the Umuofian Progressive Union. They begin a plan of a grant by gathering the cash and sending the adolescent of Umuofia to England for the college training. There is such a great amount of hybridized in the wake of tolerating the new organization and religion that they offer exhortation to *Obi Okonkwo* against the old culture and to support of the better and brighter one in the devour that is given by his father *Isaac* on his flight for England. In this regard, *Ikedi* tells *Obi Okonkwo*,

*“In times past, Umuofia would have required of you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads. But those were days of darkness from which we have been delivered by the blood of the Lamb of God. Today we send you to bring knowledge.” (Achebe, 1961, p.17).*

This is indicative of the way that the local Umuofians have condemned their old customs and were extremely quick to take in the new culture and information of the colonizers. As Bhabha gives reference of the story depicted by Anand Meseeh about the local Indians who have acknowledged the heavenly book given to them by the white men amid colonization, these individuals of Igbo society have adapted to the new culture and religion conveyed to them by the colonizers (Bhabha, 1985). Moreover, they went to an extent that they proclaimed the customs of their

progenitors, sheer murkiness. The natives had built strong sentiments in this regard, they organized the grants at their very own cost, without guidance from the administration. They made arrangements of sending more youth understudies to get remote training after *Obi Okonkwo*. The cash that was spent on the grant of *Obi Okonkwo* was required to be paid back after he finishes his studies (Bhabha, 1985). This narrative demonstrates their tendency towards the colonizer's way of life. They are strongly influenced by the new religious lessons and traditions, that they need another life to revert back to their old beliefs.

The novel portrays *Obi Okonkwo's* settlement in England and his negligence to his local place. He is completely associated with the English way of life and does not ponder on his local land. This is one characteristic of the novel hero in which he is presented as least concerned about his native land by engrossing in the remote culture. However, later another attribute of the character is presented which demonstrates his sharp inclination towards his local culture. "*Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to find another Ibo-speaking student in a London bus.*"

The Umuofian Progressive Union incredibly welcome *Obi Okonkwo* upon his arrival from England. There he demonstrates an unexpected outlook in comparison to the other individuals, in the matter of his dressing. All others were dressed in agbada or European suit apart from *Obi Okonkwo*, who is dressed in shirtsleeves. He stays easygoing in his dressing and does not follow other Umuofians who dress up carefully in the European dressing. Thus, here the two parts of hybridity are indicated; when the general population of a colonized society feels glad to embrace the dressing and way of living of the colonizers, amongst them there was a man who did not offer any importance to it (Achebe, 1961).

Correspondingly, *Joseph*, an Igbo man, and a convert to Christianity, remained *Obi Okonkwo's* colleague at school. He lived in Lagos where *Obi Okonkwo* went for a meeting and later requested *Joseph* to stay and share his room. *Joseph* was surprised, as it was strange for the native that a person coming from England considers them equal and want to share accommodation with them (Achebe, Ease 29). This is a sign of hybridity on the grounds that a native Igbo was overwhelmed by the English and their way of life, that he did not expect a man from England living in a mutual stay with somebody.

Later, there was a discussion between a few individuals on the marriage

of the dark men with the white ladies in the same gathering (Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin, 1991). An Igbo man *Matthew Ogbonna* requests that the general population be appreciative to God that *Obi Okonkwo* had not hitched a white lady. He opined that usually dark men go to England and marry women there which is not appropriate on the grounds that the two accomplices cannot adapt to each other's society (ibid). This vindicates the fact that even though, they had accepted the colonist control over their territory and religion, yet they had not built any profound connections with them. The Igbo men were harmonized and cheerful on their youngsters' getting foreign training however they did not want them to marry the white or embrace the foreign life. This is the evidence of hybridization and conflict of beliefs among the colonizers and colonists as hypothesized by Bhabha (2012).

*Obi Okonkwo* discusses religious issues with his father amid his stay at home. As religious hybridization is additionally a critical type of hybridity; as the regional control in a non-European domain; this discussion demonstrates their discernments toward the religion.

### **The Journey from Hybridization to Enlightenment: *Arrow of God* (1964)**

The novel revolves around two rural areas *Okperi* and *Umuaro* which are under colonial rule. *Okperi* was known as the capital at the colonial time and *Umuaro* region comprised of seven villages. There was a cultural difference between the two areas; one represented the colonial culture while other is the representative of the colonisers' culture. These two cultures are best examples of hybridization as it creates a hybridized effect on the native men which is very dangerous for the native culture. When the two cultures mixed up then the natives' thoughts and mindsets change. The central character *Ezeulu* is the chief priest 'Ulu' who is considered holy, sacred, and worshipped. The war between two villages *Umuaro* and *Okperi* gives an opportunity to colonizers to intervene in the matters of the societies. The same thing happened during the colonization of subcontinent as the colonizers started building churches and converting the natives into Christianity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008).

*Ezeulu* is the most imperious character in the novel whose cross breed inclination is particularly clear in a few narratives. Being the central minister of God Ulu, he is considered as an adherent of Igbo traditions and conventions, however, primarily he has a delicate corner for the



colonizers' lifestyle too. In the novel, he shows excessive cognizance about the new moon observing. As per the traditions of the Igbos the central minister reports the new moon each month; exceptionally before the beginning of the new harvests. This declaration is viewed as sacrosanct and vital, thus, a great deal of consideration is taken on this moon sighting. *Ezeulu* demonstrates one of his attributes of sincerity towards the local traditions and customs. Moreover, it is also seen that he has a tendency towards the religious and social estimations of the colonizers present in his territory, evident through his action of sending his child *Oduche* to the Christian church to learn the methods of the white man and religious lessons of Christianity. *Oduche* takes to the new religion, learning religious philosophy and appreciating the catechist. This is the hybridization at *Ezeulu's* part that he doesn't indicate consistency regarding his state of mind towards the local and remote qualities. He sends his child gladly to take in the new religion under Christian evangelists yet when his child is playing out, his obligations as indicated by their religious lessons, he stops him and requests to stay on the back foot. As stated, he had affirmative sentiments towards the colonizers' living and religion, he however sometimes concerns about the popularity of Christianity in his region. This aspect describes him as a half breed minister. Notwithstanding, being a religious person and a delegate of the divine, he occasionally demonstrates his tendency towards the remote culture and religion, but sometimes feels hatred towards his local standards and qualities.

*Oduche* needs to be acknowledged in his community. Thus, when the new catechist proposes that he should demonstrate his confidence by standing up to old religious convictions and slaughtering the sacred python, *Oduche* chooses to so. He backs down at last, and puts the hallowed python in a box, trusting it will bite the dust, and he won't be charged for executing it (McKenna, 2014). However, when *Ezidemili*, the minister of *Idemili* (the divinity that claims the python), knows about it, he sends *Ezeulu* a message. *Ezidemili* needs to realize what *Ezeulu* plans to do to cleanse his home. A twofold approach is additionally faced by *Ezeulu* in this issue. He raises the stakes, reacting that *Ezidemili* can clear out, and the ill will between the two towns keeps on developing. These half breed approach by the father and the son put some genuine consequences for their positions. Their notoriety at home and furthermore in the public arena is influenced by this incident.



Later, the village people blame *Ezeulu* that he is at fault for the white man's presence in their midst. *Ezeulu* visits *Clarke* on his call and refuses the warrant chief position. *Clarke* detains him until he has learned to be more cooperative. The crossover inclinations of the *Ezeulu* and the entire network of his region *Umuaro* are uncovered through a huge occasion amidst the story.

*Ezeulu's* hybridization is clear in his affection towards the power and learning of the white men. Amid his stay at the Government Hill, he rejected the offer of turning into a warrant boss under the colonizers; however, on the other hand, he remained impressed by their way of life. In spite of the fact that he calls white men to have little shrewdness, yet he pronounces them great. He insists his child understand that impersonating the white men's lifestyle can make a man immaculate in all ways. He presumes that by learning the proficiencies of foreigners a man can be more powerful. This recommends that he is immensely impressed by the colonizers. Subsequently, it is a reasonable hybridization which does not allow *Ezeulu* to follow either his traditions or adopt the foreign culture completely.

Soon after, *Ezeulu* is annoyed at the way the general population of *Umuaro* have treated him. *Ezeulu* concludes that he is Ulu's arrow of punishment. Thus, Ulu's revenge starts not long after *Ezeulu* comes back to *Umuaro*. At the point when *Ezeulu's* collaborators come to ask him for what good reason he hasn't called the Festival of the New Yam, *Ezeulu* says that the time hasn't yet arrived. *Ezeulu* clarifies that since he was detained in *Okperi* for such a long time, and on the grounds that no one visited Ulu amid his absence, there were, yet three sacrosanct yams left. It will take three months before he can call the Feast of the New Yam. Even though the men beg him that they will take the punishment, *Ezeulu* did not consider them. People in the town of *Umuaro* got frustrated as they hear that *Ezeulu* wants to adamantly endure three months, realizing that they will start to starve, and their yields will be destroyed in they do not harvest.

Following a few months of famine in *Umuaro*. The catechist at the Christian church offers to acknowledge the sacrifice of *Umuaro* population. He says that the Christian god will protect them from Ulu's rage. Later, *Ezeulu's* son died and people thought that Ulu has rebuffed its minister, *Ezeulu*, on his stubbornness. They, thus, turned their sights to another god and approached the Christian god for protection from Ulu's rage. They plant that year's harvests for the sake of Christianity.

## **CONCLUSION**

Achebe has explored the African identity through the establishment of Igbo culture, religion, social norms, and traditions. The writer has presented Africa as the land of civilized people who had a democratic system even in the Medieval ages. He indirectly condemns the colonizers' notions and writings about Africa. To sum up, hybridization and social change are a vital part of colonization caused by the interaction between the colonizers and colonized. The Africans shape their own way of life and conventions and they live as indicated by their local standards. The occupation has not only destroyed the peace and prosperity of the natives, but it has also created a sense of double-mindedness in natives. They become confused between native and foreign culture. A hybrid culture has grown which led to the transformation of the natives. Achebe has also established this fact that in Igbo religion, there is also the concept of a supreme God like other monolithic religions of the world. Small gods and goddesses work under supreme God in Igbo religion. Achebe's restoration, hybridization and transformation of African culture have some hidden implication for the imperialist world. Achebe's trilogy reflects that the colonizers have their materialistic interests in the declaration of the natives as savages and inferior.

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