

The Representation of Clash of Culture in China Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease: African Literary View*

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Abstract

The present paper traces the clash of culture and traditions in post-colonial Nigerian society in China Achebe *Things Fall Apart* and *No longer at Ease*. The paper will essentially focus on how China Achebe depicts the clash of culture that was affected by colonialism. In other words, colonialism brings new forms of cultural norms that contradict with the natives' culture. These norms are opposed by the inherited traditions of the Nigerian society. Therefore, the paper will concentrate on the clash between the traditional cultural norms and the colonial norms that oppress the native and distort their forefathers' identity. The paper is going to rely on Bhabha's concept of clash of culture that involves critical arguments about the relationship between the colonized people and the colonizers. For this reason, the analysis of the cultural difference will cite some critical arguments about the clash of culture portrayed in the selected plays. The concept, accordingly, will be cited to discuss two thematic tenets in the selected plays.

Keywords: China Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, *No longer at Ease*, Clash of cultures, African Perspectives

Introduction

The paper will first approach clash of culture by analysing death ritual in *Things Fall apart and No longer at Ease*. This ritual is happened in the Nigerian society before colonialism. In addition to, it is opposed by the colonizers and their representative colonels depicted in the selected plays. Here, the natives are rejected the colonial inference with their inherited beliefs about the death rituals. Then, the paper will shed light on modernity and tradition in *Things Fall Apart*. Modernity and tradition have a long history of contradictory points of view. The paper will tackle modernity and tradition in the light of the characters' position in the play. To clarify, some characters adopt the colonizers' modern life styles, while the natives still faithful to their ancestors' traditions. In *Thing Fall Apart*, liberalism will be interpreted as a tool employed to oppose the American and Russian negligence of Africa and Nigerian political and economic crises. Clash of culture, therefore, occurs between the native Africa and Nigerian people and the Western hegemonic attitudes of America and Russia. In final, aboriginal rights will be discussed in *A Dance of the Forests*. The play portrays the persecution of some aboriginal people at the hands of despotic royal regimes. Eren, B. (2022). The analysis of this persecution will be the essence of clash of culture.

The play focuses on the hero, Elesin who is depicted as the king's horseman. The play's Yoruba people believe that when the king dies, his horseman, horse and dog should die to help the king's spirit after death. Otherwise, the king's spirit will return from the hereafter and cause harm to the lives of Yoruba people. Therefore, they perform a death ritual for the king's horseman. Iheka, C. (2024) In the first part, Elesin celebrates his life before Yoruba people set up the death ritual and kill him to help the king after death. Yet, he performs the ritual as an act of committing suicide. When he is about to commit suicide, the British colonial ruler Simon Pilkings, who serves in the local peripheries, interferes; and he prevents Elesin from committing suicide considering it as brutal and banned act according to the British colonial authorities. This contradicts with the Yoruba people's emphasis on the death ritual, because breaking the sacred ceremonies of the king's death will destruct their community and the order of the cosmic universe. In the second part, Yoruba people attack Elesin considering him coward since he loves life and postpones his death till Pilkings comes and violates their holy ritual.

Then, the dramatic action sheds light on Elesin's son, Olunde. He comes back from Europe after he had finished studying medicine. Instead of his father, Olunde commits suicide to cleanse the honor of his family which is spoiled by his father; and, by doing so, he brings back the order of the universe. Feeling guilty and coward, Elesin kills himself. As such, he believes that he could punish his soul by putting it in a non-sacred place after death. Chinua, A. (2021). The play almost ends with Yoruba people's bewilderment that Elesin's and Olunde's suicide is not enough for restoring order to the world because it had been disrupted by Elesin's previously postponed suicide ritual and Olunde's unjustified innocent death. Thus, Soyinka provides us with a vivid picture of how colonialism, represented by Pilkings, breaks the natives' inherited traditions, which ultimately results in clash of culture between these ethnic groups.

All these actions are features of clash of culture. Soyinka approaches a huge variation in the historical patterns and consequences of imperialism and colonialism in different parts of the world. Most importantly, perhaps, much of the theoretically inclined and more influential postcolonial writing has focused on Nigerian colonial matter. There are, needless to say, significant historical and ideological differences between the settler colonialism of the early British Empire stemming from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the later, originating in the latter half of the eighteenth century and associated especially with Nigeria. (Raynor, 2021). It is beyond the possible competence to evaluate the historical linkages and discontinuities between these two periods. Hence postcolonial concept of clash of culture entails a problem that "arises from the cultural confusion wrought by terrible wars and mutual conflicts" (Bhabha, 1994, p.11). In *Death and the King's Horseman*, such clash arises between the colonial representative Simon Pilkings and the natives who still loyal to their national traditions:

PILKINGS (approaching the verandah): I'm sure I heard some- thing fall over.

AMUSA (stammers badly and points a shaky finger at his dress): Mesta Prinking mesta prinking . . .

PILKINGS: What is the matter with you?

I would like to mean that the postcolonial clash of culture condition is one in which the legacy of colonialism - practically, historically and theoretically - is ever-present, even in the attempt to think beyond it. As Bhabha (1994) has put it, clash of culture "is exactly the place of prohibition and repression, a conflict of authority". China similarly, depicts the postcolonial subject which always starts from within a set of relations of power, in this case, including the discursive, normative and institutional practices of western domination. The presumption of the ubiquity of relations of power is a crucial tenet of postcolonial theory, as it is in other domains, and one that postcolonial liberalism embraces as well.

However, postcolonial theorists develop the consequences of this claim in very strong terms. For the postcolonial theorist it is precisely this radical heterogeneity that must, somehow, be theorized.

Postcolonial writing often focuses on the particular forms of agency, subjectivity and modes of sociality governed by colonial and imperialist institutions, as well as the historiography and political theory that accompanied them. Bhabha (1994) claims that the concept of clash of culture includes “contradictions and conflicts, which often thwart political intentions and make the question of commitment complex and difficult” (p.26). In his play, Soyinka argued that the public/private distinction at the heart of liberal conceptions of citizenship, deployed in nationalist interpretations of Nigerian traditions and history, displaces and suppresses the distinctive ways in which various Nigerian subaltern communities challenged and contested such a distinction. Slemon, S. (2023). He claims these voices’ and communities were denied their appropriate place in histories driven by European models of nation building, including histories written by various Nigerian nationalists as well. Similarly, he emphasizes the extent to which the methodological individualism at the heart of much of normative liberal ethnic traditions often precludes proper consideration of non-western communities’ collective understandings and experience of culture, especially where they are minorities living within liberal democracies. These colonial matters appeal to the nigerina natives and their opposition of the colonial government:

PILKINGS: What’s that rubbish again?

JANE: He is dead earnest too Simon. I think you’ll have to handle this delicately.

PILKINGS: Delicately my .! Look here Amusa, I think this little joke has gone far enough hm? Let’s have some sense. (p.27)

Another important theme of clash of culture is an emphasis on what we might call complex identification; the diverse ways in which individuals and groups identify themselves culturally, socially and politically. Some theorists claim that liberal political theory is incapable of capturing the complex, overlapping and ambivalent mode of subaltern agency. Bhabha (1994) has made famous what he refers to as the “hybridity” of postcolonial identity; of identities and practices constituted by “in-between” and movement-“the overlap and the idea of displacement of domains of difference” (p.2). Soyinka tackles the positing of hybridity at the center of the postcolonial experience proposed by writers such as Bhabha. This hybridity is not intended only as a descriptive claim, but also a normative one as well. Bhabha (1994), for example, accuses liberals of too often conceiving of minorities as abject “subjects” of their cultures of origin huddled in the gazebo of group rights, preserving the orthodoxy of their distinctive cultures in the midst of the great storm of “Western progress” (p.130).

Methodology:

The main methodology of this paper is to show the clashes and struggles among the human beings in Nigerian society. In this methodology, the scholar has analyzed the ideas of clashes of the societies in life.

Finding and discussion:

When this becomes the common view of minorities in liberal societies they become only “virtual citizens”, never quite considered “here and now relegated to a distanced sense of belonging elsewhere, to a there and then” (Bhabha, 1994, p.2). Thus clash of culture seems to entail an ethical claim on behalf of a particular conception of the self and society, one that operates in the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications [and which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (p.2). The concepts of a genuine flourishing of difference is another crucial tenet of postcolonial theory. Liberal political thought is accused of cramping the space for

difference, by not only imposing Eurocentric conditions on the legitimate political accommodation; and expression of difference, but in missing the way liberalism itself might be - needs to be - transformed in its encounter with these new minorities. **In the play, the minorities face the oppression of Western hegemony preventing them from performing their traditions:**

AMUSA (without looking down): Madam, I arrest the ringleaders who make trouble but me I no touch egungun.. **PILKINGS**: It's hopeless. We'll merely end up missing the best part of the ball. When they get this way there is nothing you can do. (p.25)

A set of distinctive political commitments follows from these postcolonial themes. Bhabha (1994), for example, argues that the "postcolonial perspective [in resisting both holistic and methodological individualist forms of social explanation] forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres" (p.173). Furthermore, the concept of clash of culture forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of cultural community. It insists that culture and political identity are constructed through a process of alterity. The time for "assimilating minorities" to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has dramatically passed" (p.160). In the play, the Nigerian native community faces difficulty while dealing with the oppressive colonial orders to prevent the death of Elesin:

PILKINGS: Never mind being ready, just listen to this.

JANE: What is it?

PILKINGS: Amusa's report. Listen. 'I have to report that it come to my information that one prominent chief, namely. (p.26)

The tense relationship between the natives people and the colonizers people is a condition of clash of culture. Parmentier, & Fischer, (2015). This is true at both the domestic and international level. There is, claims Bhabha (1994), a new public sphere which is emerging "in-between the state and non-state, in-between individual rights and group needs ... an analytic and ethical borderland of hybridization" (p.7). The new minorities emerging from this borderland, argues Bhabha (1994), do not fit comfortably into liberal theories of rights, including recent theories advocating collective rights. Irele, F. A. (2000). These theories tend to focus on "national cultures", he (1994) argues, the definition of which either privileges a certain kind of cultural identity conveniently amenable to liberal norms, or if not, demonizes them as ripe for legitimate liberal intervention. As applied to the situation of cultural minorities in the world today, Bhabha's (1994) notion of the clash of culture of traditions and national identities seems to entail a radical rethinking of how we conceive of cultural minorities in the first place, which in turn should force a rethinking of the nature of the idea of minority rights themselves. Soyinka critiques the essence of colonial oppressive hegemony in terms of clash of culture. Harlow, B., & Carter, M. (2023). The colonizers' culture prevents the colonized people's culture from performing the sacred death ritual, or else, the native would be arrested and punished:

PILKINGS: No-o. I'll have the man arrested. Everyone remotely involved. **JANE**: Really? I thought you found Amusa's rumours generally reliable. (p.26)

Bhabha (1994) calls for a unique critique and opposition of liberalism. That is, some of liberalism's main concepts - of civil society, equal citizenship and negative freedom - are categories whose global efficiency can be taken for granted. Thus for Bhabha (1994), liberal political thought has played a part in assimilating all other probabilities of human rights solidarity. What needs/inneding to be mapped instead is what opposes and avoids the best human effort at translation across cultural and other

colonial system, so that the colonized community could be imagined as totally heterogeneous due to colonial oppression. This means exploring other possibilities of human relations which are defined neither by the rituals of liberal nationhood nor the crisis of tradition that colonial creates. But again, this does not mean simply rejecting out-of-hand, liberal values. Rather, Bhabha (1994) suggests, it means trying to critique European historicism without completely abandoning European hegemony. By analogy, it means criticizing liberalism without abandoning a commitment to justice, freedom or human well-being. In Chinua Achebe *Death and the King's Horseman*, the European hegemony imposes its culture upon the Nigerians who reject that culture:

PILKINGS: That's true enough. But who knows what may have been giving him the scare lately. Look at his conduct tonight.

JANE (laughing): You have to admit he had his own peculiar logic. (Deepens her voice.) How can man talk against death to person in uniform of death? (Laughs.) Anyway, you can't go into the police station dressed like that. (p.26)

This situation can show the clash of culture between the Nigerian native and the colonizers. However, one of the central claims of postcolonial critics, in light of this focus on the historical character of philosophical argument, has been discussed as a result of oppressive liberalism included a justification of imperialism and colonialism. There are two variations on this critique which are relevant to the themes of this book. Chinua, A. (2021). First, that even when liberal rights were extended to previously disenfranchised peoples, there were usually special conditions attached. Liberal thinkers were constantly concerned that liberal citizens exercise their freedoms in the right way. (Klarén, 2022). Postcolonial theorists have been concerned with what we might call the subjugation of minority "rights" (Bhabha, 1994, p.6). In Chinua Achebe *Death and the King's Horseman*, gaining political or legal recognition from the state, or from an international system of states, entails organizing the native affairs in light of certain regulative norms enforceable by the state. Arabi, S., & Nahman, A. (2020). The paradox is that in order to reduce the presence of the state in one sphere of Nigerian social or political life that requires that it be increased in others, acting at a distance. To a certain extent there is no avoiding this. Stratton, F. (2020). All Nigerian social and political relations are mediated relations. But what postcolonial theorists have pointed out are the particular ways in which regulative conceptions of freedom, sovereignty, self-determination and reason, for example, have been deployed in colonial contexts - as forms of control and domination as much as anything else. One of these forms is the restriction of death ritual in the play, which leads to a clash between the Nigerian natives and the colonizers:

JOSEPH: It is native law and custom. The King die last month. Tonight is his burial. But before they can bury him, the Elesin must die so as to accompany him to heaven.

PILKINGS: I seem to be fated to clash more often with that man than with any of the other chiefs. (p.28)

Irele, F. A. (2000) this conflict arises from racism. Bhabha (1994), for example, argues that liberal multiculturalism is essentially continuous with the racist and colonial policies it succeeded. Since power, not moral argument, shapes social and political interaction, moral argument without a transformation of the relations of power is simply vacuous moralizing. Worse, liberal attempts at recognizing cultural difference, especially indigenous laterite, are merely more complicated ways of constraining and controlling it. Thus, the cultural respect for native traditions rejects the colonizers' culture because "it is the question of culture's representation of difference - manners, words, rituals customs, [and] time" (p.125). Consequently, a new form of liberal power is at work, whereby recognition is necessary to oppose colonialism. The inevitable failure of the indigenous subject to match the liberal state's pre-conceived notion of what constitutes a valid traditional culture then justifies the legal

curtailment of the expression of this alterity, and sets them apart from dominant social values. Clash of culture is incapable of recognizing hegemony except as otherness, which is already oppressive. Soyinka deals with clash of culture in the light of the colonizers', like Pilkings, who hinder the performance of death ritual as an inherited Nigerian tradition:

In fact, Achebe presents some colonial states which worked hard to try and block the extension of even this relatively weak form of protection to various Nigerian national groups, claiming that it provided incentives for devout minority groups to threaten the unity of the colonial government. So indigenous Nigerian people are offered, on the one hand, self-determination as people but only if they fit a narrow and arbitrary definition of what constitutes a colonized people, which – unsurprisingly - they do not. On the other hand, they are offered a right to exercise their death ritual as a form of their native culture through freedom of association and expression, but one that is compatible with policies that undermine their very capacities to do so, since a right to freedom of association or expression is compatible with a state abolishing special.

Conclusion

All in all, this paper has presented the idea of conflict and clashes. This type of conflict. This writer who writes about the conflicts of Nigeria in life. This study has indicated the struggle, conflict, classes, fighting among Nigerian people of the societies as it is shown by Chinua Achebe in his selected plays such Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God

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