

Mid Sweden University
English Studies

**Invisible Weapons –
Hegemony and Binary Relationships in Chinua
Achebe's *Arrow of God***

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“The white man has a gun,
a matchet, a bow and carries
fire in his mouth. He does
not fight with one weapon
alone.” (Achebe, 85)

Introduction

These words of Chief Priest Ezeulu from Chinua Achebe’s novel *Arrow of God* describe how the white man uses more than just material weapons to dominate the Ibo people of Nigeria. Many of Achebe’s novels deal with the traditional Nigerian Ibo society during the colonial era and how they are influenced by colonists and their Christian church, as well as the problems and tragedies resulting from this influence. These themes are central in the author’s ‘African Trilogy’, which begins with *Things Fall Apart* and culminates in *Arrow of God*. The last novel follows the Chief Priest Ezeulu, his family and his clansmen of the Umuaro clan, as well as the neighbouring Okperi clan which is the local seat of the colonists’ power. Ezeulu and the other Ibo attempt to live their lives under the dominating and changing influence of the white man. In an article, Innes describes this third novel as mainly being “‘about’ the problem of authority and the related questions of whom or what to believe or follow” (73). This ‘problem of authority’ is central to the novel, where the Ibo people have their independence taken away from them as they are watched by the white man. They also struggle internally when the Priests of the Ibo deities attempt to claim power over the tribes for themselves. At the same time, many of the Ibo face other problems with their identities. They are torn between the promises of the new religion and the safety of their old deities, as well as between the opportunities offered by the white man and their old traditional ways of living. In the midst of their crises, the colonists wield the power of cultural hegemony and binary attitudes; invisible weapons that subtly influence the native peoples to accept the rule and dominance of the white man.

Aim and Approach

This essay will use close reading and postcolonial theory to investigate the clash of the Ibo culture with its British colonisers in Achebe's *Arrow of God*. In particular, the presence of hegemony and binarism will be explored. There will be a closer look at the interactions between the native Ibo and the British colonisers and how the actions of the colonisers exhibit hegemony and promote binarisms, as well as what consequences these actions have. In this essay I will show that the white coloniser's actions create binary relationships and cultural hegemony in an attempt to improve their 'domination by consent' over the Ibo.

Postcolonial theory

This essay will use postcolonial theory, in particular the theories associated with hegemony and binarism. Postcolonial theory analyses and criticises literature and discourse dealing with colonialism and its aftermath. It is important to note that, according to McLeod in *Beginning Postcolonialism*, "the term 'postcolonialism' is not the same as 'after colonisation'" (33). Rather, 'postcolonialism' is an attempt at a break from colonial discourse, a "*challenge* to colonial ways of knowing" (McLeod, 32, author's emphasis). Postcolonial theory deals both with texts "produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism" as well as texts "produced during colonialism" (McLeod, 33), the former being the case with *Arrow of God*.

Hegemony and Binarism

Binarisms and hegemony were both important tools for the motivation and success of imperialism, of which colonialism was but one facet. Binarisms divide the world into opposites, such as coloniser/colonised, civilised/primitive, centre/periphery and white/black. In *Post-Colonial Studies – The Key Concepts*, Ashcroft et al agree that these opposites show "the violent hierarchy on which imperialism is based and which it actively perpetuates" (19). This practice is also mentioned in the essay "Decolonizing African Literature" by Chinweizu et al, where "Western culture insists on calling itself 'civilization' instead of 'Western civilization', conveying the undeserved impression that it had attained a unique situation called 'civilization'" (279). These binarisms of civilised/primitive, of centre/periphery, and other binary relationships like them, were used as a justification for colonialism. It was considered to be the right and duty of

those who are 'white' and 'civilised' to bring civilisation and enlightenment to those who were 'black' and 'primitive'.

Closely tied to the binary way of dividing the world into coloniser/colonised is the practice of hegemony. The term was coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, and generally means "domination by consent" (Ashcroft et al, 106). A more elaborate definition is that "hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all" (Ashcroft et al, 106). In a colonial context, the interests of the 'coloniser' and the 'civilised' are held higher than those of the 'colonised' and the 'primitive', in fact the interests of the 'coloniser' and the 'civilised' are promoted as the interests of all. Local culture and religion is ignored or undervalued, denigrated or suppressed, in favour of the culture and religion of the coloniser, allegedly in the interest of 'everyone'. Overall, hegemony is important as "the capacity to influence the thoughts of the colonized is by far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power" (Ashcroft et al, 107). Thus, hegemony is used as a weapon to make the colonised natives accept their colonisers' domination, much like the situations arising in *Arrow of God*.

In summary, both hegemony and binarisms are important ideological weapons for the colonists. Hegemony is the practice whereby the colonisers convince the group that they dominate that their interests are the interests of all. The usage of binary relationships that present the colonisers, their interests and ideologies as superior are an integral part of the hegemonic relation. This essay will highlight situations in Achebe's *Arrow of God* where the white colonisers create binary relationships between themselves and the colonised Ibo to promote cultural hegemony, with the aim of easing their colonial domination over the natives.

Material and Previous Research

The particular novel that I will analyse in this essay is the second edition of *Arrow of God*, published by Anchor Books in 1974. It was written by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, who was born and raised in the Ibo village of Ogidi by his converted Christian parents.

Secondary Sources

In order to examine the presence of hegemony and binarisms in *Arrow of God*, I used resources such as *Post-Colonial Studies – The Key Concepts* as well as *Beginning*

Postcolonialism to define the two terms. With a relevant definition, these two practices will be more easily identifiable in the novel. Other resources used are essays from the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *Critical Inquiry*, as well as *Conversations with Chinua Achebe*, which will provide input on various aspects of the analysis.

Previous Research

Many of the studies on *Arrow of God* revolve around the use and misuse of power in the novel, as well as the role of the Chief Priest Ezeulu, such as in Umelo Ojinmah's "The man behind the Priest". Other themes revolve around Ibo society, such as in "Tragic Paradox in Achebe's *Arrow of God*" by 'Sola Soile. However, there does not appear to be many easily found studies concerning colonial influence, which this essay discusses.

Analysis

The land of the native Ibo in *Arrow of God* has recently been colonised by the British Administration. The people still live largely traditionally, but the ways of the white man encroach more and more on their traditions and everyday lives. There are several situations in the novel where the Ibo are confronted with the influence of their colonisers, some of which will be analysed and displayed to prove the presence of binarism and hegemony.

Hegemony of the White Man

The 'elder brother'

Since the arrival of the British Administration, the Ibo try not to start any wars as they are watched by the white man. One of the Ibo says that it "is all due to the white man who says, like an elder to two fighting children: You will not fight while I am around" (Achebe, 19). Due to military might, the white man can decide who wages war and who does not. Thus, the white man takes on the role of a stronger, and wiser, 'elder brother', who knows what is best for the 'children', the Ibo. As the colonisers present themselves as 'older', wiser and more experienced, they claim that they are more suitable to decide in important matters such as wars. It is very common in colonial discourse to label native peoples as inferior. In "Colonialist Criticism", Achebe mentions this when noting that to "the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: 'I know my natives', a claim which implied [...] that the native was really quite simple"

(273). In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that by labelling the native peoples as inferior, simple or backwards, “discriminatory and authoritarian forms of political control are considered appropriate” (119). Thus, the binary relationship between coloniser and colonised is used to enforce the white man’s right to watch and rule the Ibo. This hegemonic practice forces the Ibo to accept what is best for everyone according to the colonisers.

In effect, the Ibo are robbed of some of their independence. They feel watched as well as belittled as their decisions can no longer be their own, because of their fear of repercussions from the colonisers. The Ibo are trapped in the hegemony of the white man, becoming the ‘fighting children’ who require supervising from their ‘elder’. They are forced to accept the idea that the white man’s decisions are the best decisions for all.

Breaking of the guns

When the Umuaro clan starts a war with their neighbour Okperi, the white man stops it. The colonisers then break all the guns in Umuaro to stop future hostilities. The narrator tells us that the “white man, not satisfied that he had stopped the war, had gathered all the guns in Umuaro and asked the soldiers to break them in the face of all, except three or four which he carried away” (Achebe, 28). The colonisers do not only stop the war and solve the dispute; they also decide to break the guns of the Umuaro in public, ‘in the face of all’. This show of force communicates the disappointment of the white man, as well as stating that the Umuaro do not deserve or are not fit to care for the weapons. The white man, like the ‘elder brother’, decides that it is not safe to let the Umuaro carry guns and removes them to save the clan from themselves. By stepping in and resolving the dispute, the white man is presented as more adult and trustworthy. Once again the colonisers are the experienced ones while the Ibo are seen as inferior and even unfit to carry arms. This binary relationship between competent/incompetent and the understanding of the Ibo as ‘unfit’ and ‘inferior’ is of great aid to the colonisers’ attempts to control the Ibo. In the end, the colonisers control the guns and the Ibo themselves.

After this event it is clear to the Umuaro clan that they have angered the white man. They feel anxious and will always remember to be careful not to disappoint the white man in the future, as mentioned by an Ibo elder a few years later: “[Y]ou, Ezeulu, told us five years ago that it was foolish to defy the white man. We did not listen to you. We went out against him and he took our gun from us and broke it across his knee. So

we know you were right” (Achebe, 188). JanMohamed notes that colonialism relies “on the active and direct ‘consent’ of the dominated, though, of course, the threat of military coercion is always in the background” (62). Thus, it appears to the Ibo that following the white man leads to less confrontation and less repercussions. The threat of the colonisers causes the Ibo to once more accept the idea that the white man’s interests are also their interests.

Writing with the left hand

Eventually, Chief Priest Ezeulu comes in further contact with the British Administration and their power. Ezeulu later tells his son:

“When I was in Okperi I saw a young white man who was able to write his book with the left hand. From his actions I could see that he had very little sense. But he had power; he could shout in my face; he could do what he liked. Why? Because he could write with his left hand. That is why I have called you. I want you to learn and master this man’s knowledge” (Achebe, 189)

The young white man, writing with his left hand, can act in any way he sees fit and ‘do what he like[s]’, including shouting and being disrespectful to the elders. From his visit, Ezeulu learns that even young men with ‘very little sense’ can gain power by learning to use the tools of the white man, especially his language. In turn, the Chief Priest wishes for his son to learn of the white man’s ‘knowledge’ to gain this power. The old knowledge of the Ibo leads nowhere, while the white man’s language can grant status and opportunities. Thus, the English language is seen as powerful and civilised, offering progress, while the Ibo tongue is inferior, primitive and backwards. Aschroft et al note in *The Empire Writes Back* that it is common for the colonised to become ‘interpreters’ of the coloniser’s language, so as to “acquire the power of the new language and culture in order to preserve the old, even whilst it assists the invaders in their overwhelming of that culture” (79). As a result, knowing English becomes an important tool to both deal with the coloniser and to rise above colonised peers.

In *Conversations with Chinua Achebe*, Achebe himself notes the difference in power between the young users of the English language and the old natives. Achebe mentions that “There is no other situation in the world where power resides with the inexperienced and young people. A young man would not approach the seat of power in England, but in a colonial situation he is given power and can order a chief around. In a

very deep sense this reversal is the quintessence of colonialism” (Fabre, 50-51). Consequently, the English language is connected with power and prestige; it lets the young and senseless dominate the elder and experienced. Mastery over the white man’s tongue becomes the interest of all who seek success, whether young or old. The converted Moses Unachukwu gains respect when seen talking English with the white man: “Unachukwu’s reputation in Umuaro rose to unprecedented heights. It was one thing to claim to speak the white man’s tongue and quite another to be seen actually doing it” (Achebe, 78). Ezeulu, Moses, and others with them, are influenced by the white man’s hegemony, believing the white man’s tongue to be a tool of progress and power. As a result, they seek to learn the white man’s secret so they can gain an edge over their peers in order to join the civilised and knowledgeable instead of the primitive and backwards.

Riches and progress

The colonisers bring new goods and new opportunities for wealth to the Ibo. One man explains the recent prosperity of the Okperi clan: “Their market has grown because the white man took his merchandise there” (Achebe, 19). Another man mentions the money that is to be made by working for the white man, “a man of sense does not go hunting little bush rodents when his age mates are after big game. [...] join in the race for the white man’s money” (Achebe, 169). The true riches are thus made by working for the white man or by trading his goods. It is also implied that a clan cannot have a popular market without the merchandise of the white man. By embracing the trade of the colonisers the Ibo gain new riches and prosperity that they did not have before. With the success of this trade comes the impression of the superiority of the colonisers’ opportunities. The white man’s goods and employment bring riches and opportunity; they bring progress. The Ibo offers no such thing. Their goods are plentiful and cannot create prosperity like the white man’s exotic merchandise; the Ibo goods are backwards and inferior.

With the colonisers’ goods and services being seen as superior, they also become the interest of all. This hegemony of the white man turns the colonisers’ goods and employment into the means to gain prosperity and riches. Those who are interested in succeeding and those who are after ‘big game’ are drawn to the colonisers and join the ‘race for the white man’s money’. Markets that sell the white man’s merchandise prosper; those working for the white man gather money and become rich men. In

comparison, those staying true to Ibo traditions have to settle with ‘little bush rodents’ and be considered backwards and against progress.

New roads, better life

The colonisers also create new roads and infrastructure in the lands of the Ibo. One such road is built between the clans of Umuaro and Okperi, and is welcomed by the Okperi clan: “[T]he new road makes even a cripple hungry for a walk” (Achebe, 138). The new road is celebrated and claimed to be so much better than Ibo roads that journeying becomes a joy and makes ‘cripple[s] hungry for a walk’. The attitude towards the white man’s new road echoes the superiority of the coloniser’s infrastructure. This is contrasted against the old roads of the Ibo, which are slower and outdated in comparison. The white man’s infrastructure is embraced as bringing civilisation and progress to the primitive lands of the Ibo. Alber explains that the superior status of the coloniser’s infrastructure was connected to the fact that “passable roads between villages were a matter of course in Europe, and Europe served as the model for a developed cultural landscape” (86). Therefore, colonisers would attempt to “appropriate ‘wild’ space, to re-structure it in line with European concepts” and to re-model the primitive native lands in the image of civilised Europe (Alber, 86).

Consequently, the new road becomes somewhat of a symbol and a tool of colonial influence. As travel is made easier, the new road sees a great deal of traffic and the acceptance of the white man grows. By allowing the white man a place in the lands of the Ibo, the natives believe they might be given new roads and other infrastructural improvements; inviting the white man becomes the interest of all who wish for an easier life. As a result of the white man’s hegemony, the new infrastructure of the white man is seen as a better alternative than the outdated environment of the Ibo. This binary relationship between the new, the civilised and the old and the primitive, is of great help in getting the white man’s ‘civilisation’ accepted as the interest of all.

Binaries of the White Man’s Religion

The church bell’s call

The colonial influence is most noticeable in the churches of the colonisers’ new religion. To the new converts, such as Moses Unachukwu and Chief Priest Ezeulu’s youngest son Oduche, it becomes an important part of their life, while the traditional Ibo stay suspicious:

Nwafo came back to the *obi* and asked his father whether he knew what the bell was saying. Ezeulu shook his head.

“It is saying: Leave your yam, leave your cocoyam and come to church. That is what Oduche says.”

“Yes,” said Ezeulu thoughtfully. “It tells them to leave their yam and their cocoyam, does it? Then it is singing the song of extermination.” (Achebe, 43)

The converted Ibo are compelled to heed the call of the church bell, to go to church even if it means leaving the work in the fields behind. It is in preference of their new church that they abandon their ‘yam and leave their cocoyam’, as they do not wish to miss their lessons or anger their tutors. The Ibo converts are convinced of the superiority of the Christian church, as they so readily leave the fields. According to Innes, these ‘mission-educated’ Ibo see “the white man’s civilization as the wave of the future”, to them it is the way to progress and prosperity, the way to something better (64). Chief Priest Ezeulu explains to Oduche that he must learn ‘these new things’, as a “man must dance the dance prevalent in his time”, because he has realised that the white man’s church could be an important part of the modern times (Achebe, 189). To the converts, this new church is a divine and important part of civilisation and the future, while the traditional work in the fields is profane and part of the old and primitive ways. Through this cultural hegemony, the converts believe they become part of something divine and leave their profane lives behind to pursue something far more important, and in doing so become superior to their heathen peers.

As the Ibo converts leave their fields they distance themselves from the rest of the Ibo. They follow the white man’s god while forsaking their traditional duties. However, they also become somewhat of an educated and civilised elite, who are set apart from the rest of the heathen Ibo. To them the call of the church bell is more important than their farms. To them the white man’s god is more important to obey than their traditions. The binary relationship between the divine, progressive church and the profane, backwards fieldwork enforces the lure of the church bell in the eyes of the converts.

Christians and heathens

The divinity and superiority of the white man’s religion is reinforced more than once to the converted Ibo. When one of the converts speaks in defence of the Ibo’s sacred

python, he is reprimanded by his teacher: “You say you are the first Christian in Umuaro, you partake of the holy Meal; and yet whenever you open your mouth nothing but heathen filth pours out. Today a child who sucks his mother’s breast has taught you the Scriptures” (Achebe, 49). Later, the same teacher also writes to one of the Ibo’s Priests, “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” (Achebe, 214). The teacher expresses his disappointment over how the Ibo around him stay stubborn, instead of welcoming enlightenment. He and the other colonial missionaries present the white man’s religion as the path to enlightenment, wisdom and civilisation. Aschroft et al also note that to colonial missionaries, being ‘civilised’ was often “a concomitant of, if not an absolutely necessary precondition for, salvation” (39). It is, according to the missionary teachers, in everyone’s best interest to abandon the heathen ‘snakes and idols’ and join the church to become a wiser and more civilised adult, and to thus find salvation. A person cannot be truly respected, or be considered an equal, until they have abandoned their false beliefs; one cannot ‘partake of the holy Meal’ while defending the sacred python.

There is quite a clear binary relationship between the white man’s religion and the beliefs of the Ibo. While the Christian church presents itself as true and divine, the Ibo’s religion is labelled as false and heathen; as a collection of ‘snakes and idols’. According to Aschroft et al, it was common to denigrate native religions as ‘superstition’ or even openly attack them as ‘heathenisms’ (188). Consequently, to speak of the Ibo deities is to speak ‘heathen filth’. To know and belong to the Christian church is presented as adult and civilised, while the Ibo beliefs are labelled as childish and primitive. The man who speaks in defence of the sacred python is told that ‘a child who sucks his mother’s breast’ has taught him of the scriptures, implying the shame of not knowing the white god’s sacred texts; to defend the heathen deities is to be less mature and enlightened than even a child.

Consequently, the converts who do not know the Scripture of the white man’s god are branded heathens by their teachers. The missionaries berate those who do not prove themselves to be true Christians, those who do not fully abandon their old Ibo deities. The converts end up feeling ambivalent in their old faith and new religion. They wish to be good for their teachers, they wish to be enlightened, wise and civilised adults, but at the same time they do not want to completely turn their backs on their traditional beliefs. Ben Beya describes the situation as distorted, “a *neither-nor*: one that is

ambivalent, doubled” (author’s emphasis). Loomba adds that while at “one level they [the converted heathens] represent colonial achievements, at another they stand for impurity and the possibility of mixing, or to use a term that has become central to postcolonial theory, ‘hybridity’” (103). The converts feel neither fully Christian, nor like true Ibos; they are impure, hybrids of the two worlds. In the end, the converts try to speak as much as possible for the new religion, learning as much as possible of its sacred Scripture. Some even try to attack the old Ibo deities to gain their teacher’s respect. Even if he lacks the courage to carry it through, the son of Ezeulu, Oduche, attempts to kill the sacred python, which is the ultimate taboo of the Ibo. Due to the cultural hegemony of the white man’s church the Ibo converts are compelled into becoming as Christian as possible, as they believe the new religion to be the superior, civilised choice.

Victory over Ulu

Towards the end of the novel Chief Priest Ezeulu, having been wrongfully imprisoned by the administration, fails to eat the Sacred Yam and to announce the annual harvest festival. This unfortunate turn of events leaves the starving Umuaro clan unable to harvest their yam. In the time of crisis, a Christian missionary devises a plan to show his god’s superiority:

His plan was quite simple. The New Yam Festival was the attempt of the misguided heathen to show gratitude to God, the giver of all good things. This was God’s hour to save them from their error which was now threatening to ruin them. They must be told that if they made their thank-offering to God they could harvest their crops without fear of Ulu. (Achebe, 215)

To escape the tragedy of Ulu’s Yam Festival, the people are urged to sacrifice to the white man’s god so that they can gain protection from the Ibo deities, to ‘harvest their crops without fear of Ulu’. The people who ally themselves with the Christian god will also be safe from future famines brought upon them by the rigid and unforgiving Ibo priests. The white man’s god offers salvation to the desperate Ibo, who, although being ‘misguided heathens’, can be guided right and be forgiven as long as they turn their backs on their old gods.

Thus, the new church offers salvation whereas the old faith will lead the people to doom. The Christian god is presented as being stronger than Ulu, as he can offer

protection from the Ibo deity. The white man's god is strong, merciful and forgiving while Ulu is weak and stubborn; a stubbornness that has caused the crisis in the clan. The superiority of the Christian god is repeated when his missionaries mention that 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" (Achebe, 215-216). The Christian god, 'who owns the whole world', is greater than the false Ulu and therefore also requires grander sacrifices as he 'should be entitled to eat more than one [yam]'. Once again the white man's god is branded as true and strong, as opposed to the Ibo deity who is branded as false and weak. Ultimately, many among the desperate Ibo choose to sacrifice their yams to the white man's god, and turn their backs on Ulu. Loomba notes that "Gramscian notions of hegemony stress the incorporation and transformation of ideas and practices belonging to those who are dominated, rather than simple imposition from above" (32). This is especially evident when the people of the Umuaro clan embrace the white man's religion, 'incorporating' it and 'transforming' it to fit into their lives. This marks a change in the clan, where the fields are henceforth sown and harvested in the name of the Christian god, as well as to the young sons who saved their families by joining the new religion. Meanwhile Ulu is largely abandoned, overturned by the god and cultural hegemony of the white man.

Indirect Rule and Warrant Chiefs

Another colonial practice that the Ibo come in contact with is the appointment of Warrant Chiefs. The colonisers choose one of the Ibo to become their Warrant Chief, thus providing the Ibo clans with a central ruler who is meant to mediate between the colonisers and the colonised. However, the appointment of a Warrant Chief in Okperi proves to have negative results:

Three years ago they had put pressure on Captain Winterbottom to appoint a Warrant Chief for Okperi against his better judgement. After a long palaver he had chosen one James Ikedi, an intelligent fellow who had been among the very first people to receive missionary education in these parts. But what had happened? Within three months of this man receiving his warrant Captain Winterbottom began to hear rumours of his high-handedness. He had set up an illegal court and a private prison. He took any woman who caught his fancy without paying the customary bride-price. (Achebe, 57)

Despite having overstepped his boundaries, the Warrant Chief keeps his post and even gets “his people to make him an *obi* or king, so that he was now called His Highness Ikedi the First, Obi of Okperi. This among a people who abominated kings!” (Achebe, 58-59). The appointment of Warrant Chiefs provides the colonisers with a way to indirectly rule their colonised subjects. The Ibo, a people with shared collective power, receive a central ruler who can easily be supervised by the colonisers. As the Warrant Chief is a native, the clan can identify with him, but the Warrant Chief is also someone who, thanks to the authority granted by the white man, mediates between the white man and the Ibo. According to Nwaubani, this creates a “new, neofeudal political culture” (347). The colonisers could be considered as the supreme sovereigns and the Warrant Chiefs as their ‘vassals’. At the same time, the centralised rule of the Warrant Chief echoes the more ‘civilised’ ways of the white man, as opposed to the ‘primitive’ traditional rule of the Ibo.

However, several problems arise with the Warrant Chiefs that the colonisers try to impose on the Ibo. As the Warrant Chief bypasses the traditional rituals of becoming a ‘king’, he is distanced from his clan. The Warrant Chief uses the power assigned to him from the white man as a justification for setting himself apart from his peers. He seizes power where he can and abuses his position to further his own agenda, shielding himself with the white man. Achebe explains this closer: “In the case of Nwaka, he uses the term ‘king’ to talk about an individual who sets himself apart and against society by wanting to set himself above it. Such behaviour would run against the social cohesion and group integration so dear to traditional Ibo communities” (Fabre, 48). The Ibo, not wanting, or daring, to oppose the white man’s word must accept their Warrant Chief, and they do this even though they would normally consider someone above them as an abomination. The Ibo are, after all, a ‘people who abominated kings’.

In the end, this attempt at a centralised, indirect rule over the colonised fails. Even though the Warrant Kings are meant to provide a better way of governing, they end up as alien abominations that do not fit into the Ibo society. Mad with the power given to them from above, the Warrant Chiefs eventually end up abusing their peers. Instead of providing the hegemonic idea of the indirect, central rule being in the best interest of all, the white man’s Warrant Chiefs bring only problems. Nwaubani concludes that the issues like the ones described “did terminate the warrant chieftaincy in Eastern Nigeria” (352). Even though many of the white man’s hegemonic practices ease and increase the domination of the Ibo, the domination is never total. The Warrant Chiefs break the

traditions and social cohesion of the Ibo, and by doing so create a strong resistance to the colonisers' imposed rule.

Conclusion

Throughout *Arrow of God* there are several cases where the colonisers present their interests to be superior and as the interests of everyone. To steer off conflicts and keep a beneficial peace, the white man acts as an 'elder brother'. When conflicts do erupt, the white man puts an end to them and, in a display of force, even breaks the guns of Umuaro to save the clan from themselves. Furthermore, prosperity comes to those who trade with the white man's goods or work for the white man. Those who master the white man's language and writing gain even more power. At the same time, the colonisers' church claims to offer wisdom, experience and salvation, setting its believers above their peers. The church calls the native converts away from the fields and influences them to turn their back on their old deities. When crisis strikes the Umuaro clan, it is the white man's church that promises to provide protection in exchange for loyalty. Ulu, the greatest deity of the Umuaro, is defeated by hegemonic politics.

The actions of the colonisers promote binary relationships and cultural hegemony. This cultural hegemony indicates that the white man is wiser and stronger than the Ibo, and therefore they should decide who wages war or bears arms. The actions of the colonisers also indicate that the white man's goods and money are superior and lead to riches. The colonisers' language brings power and respect, which let even young senseless men shout in the faces of their elders. Finally, the white man's god, being presented as even more powerful than Ulu, is claimed to bring protection and safety. The actions of the colonisers are presented as superior, while the ways of the Ibo are considered primitive and inferior. These binary relationships support cultural hegemony where the way of the white man is the best for all, coercing the Ibo into 'consenting' to the colonisers' domination. However, this consented domination is not total. The Warrant Chiefs, considered abominations by their peers, provide an example where the Ibo resist and reject the hegemony of the white man.

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