

Review Article

The Easy Road to the Rewriting of European Slavery and Colonization of the African People

Chinedu Ogoke^{1*}

¹Department of English and Communication Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Federal University, Iga, Otuoke 562103, Bayelsa, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: Chinedu Ogoke

Department of English and Communication Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Federal University, Iga, Otuoke 562103, Bayelsa, Nigeria

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Abstract: People from Nigeria were thrown to different corners of the world in the course of slavery. The dispersal curiously created financial enduring financial fortunes for European states and their people. Many of the slaves were assembled in today's United States of America. The Europeans returned to force their way into the communities of the Africans in the name of colonialism. Great wealth transfer occurred, which continues to this day. What is usually not mentioned is the destruction of the local people's cultures that took place. England stage-managed a war in Nigeria; a war designed to permanently plant English foot in Nigeria. Nigeria became the kitchen for crude oil to service English lifestyle and industries. The weight of English economic program in Nigeria is too much for the natives to bear. Nigeria is further reduced to a beggar colony. The outcome is also a hopeless citizenry seeking succour in England and other parts of the world. There are deficiencies noticed in all aspects of Nigerian life. Unfortunately, there is increasing defence among Nigerians of the role of England in the predicament of Nigeria, thus throwing open the debate on colonisation. This work identifies English roles in Nigeria's and correctly lays the blame on the West, especially England. Popular assumptions by many British people that their country is not appreciated for civilizing the Nigerians is gaining support from the young people in Nigeria. The purpose of the essay is also to initiate a vigorous re-education of young people on the subject matter. The work is influenced by debates this writer followed on Facebook. Books, newspaper and journal articles are the sources of the materials used for this essay.

Keywords: Colonialism, slavery, idol worship, imposition.

INTRODUCTION

Slavery is as old as mankind. In Asia, the Americas and Europe, there have been movements of people from one location to the other for labor and other services. Various nations and peoples were vanquished and their people taken as bounties by the victorious parties. This was the case in Eastern Europe, where Arab slave drivers invaded communities and took away captured people. The English had upset the Irish population as scores of Irish were ferried to the Americas for slave labor. It was the routine until the English had access to Africans in the West African region. The slaves endured a painful journey from West Africa to Europe, and finally to the Americas. It is better known as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. This hijacking of people and the accompanying tortures lasted for over 400 hundred years. Clearly, the Europeans initiated the trade because they created the demand. They arrived Africa from distant shores. Among the abductors, they were present in all phases of the business and had sufficient information about the conclusion of the act. They adjusted the ethnic composition of the slaves, to cut them off from their roots in order to prevent insurrection. Hot irons were used to brand the slave for easy identification, but use of their natural names were prohibited. Therefore, each slave became lost in a multitude of other bonds men. Mothers who gave birth to children on arrival in America, were not allowed to go with their children to the next buyer. Stories about plantation life, as that was where most slaves experienced, horrendous (Eltis). Till a ship completed its weeks' journey across the Atlantic, the slaves were shackled like goods and badly fed. For the

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sick, their journeys ended in the mid-Atlantic, as they were pushed into the water. The slave dealers had a good supply of weapons, the types that were unknown in Africa, for slave raids. Arabs also left their homa places to lay siege on African communities for slaves. Like the Europeans, they instigated slave raids. Because of the allure of what the foreigners offered, Africans gladly handed over their fellow Africans to those outsiders. The aliens told the local people what they were looking for. African territories became war zones. A band that raided a community was destined to be an eternal enemy. There was a breakdown of law and order. In Europe, every kingdom wanted to be the lord of others. Sophisticated foreigners would hqave stirred conflicts in various kingdoms, like the Romans did in Britainia. The local people would have been collecting some gifts to sell off enemies, whose existence was undesired. This is the same way the Naragansets spied on the Pikoat for the Ednglish or Dutch, with the Europeans benefitting at the end (Mohammad 887-888, 893).

After slavery was abolished, the Europeans opened another chapter, which was colonialism. The Scots first led the way in what is today known as Nigeria, sailing under the guise of having a close look at the interior. English colonization followed. Igbo land came under direct attack by the British superior power. For the Ekumekus, the stakes were high and they held on for thirty years. Historians avoid relating how those wars led to the loss of lives and the destruction of properties of the local people. It changed the people's world views, altered ways of religious worship and uprooted the political and judicial system of the place. Igbo society became exposed to various advantageous practices. Definitely, by completely wiping out many things that worked for the people and planting an unworkable system in a country they created without consulting the indigenous people, it is shocking that the British have an intense love for the act. The interests of the people they brought together are worlds apart, just as the physical looks of the people are. The British manipulated census figures and fabricated a political system as if the left the indigenous people with blades of knives to turn the country to a perpetual slaughter house (Okonkwo).

Elizabeth Windsor, the queen of England, would not leave solely in the hands of the prime minister and his cabinet. It was the pet project of her family. This was clear enough, as she participated in the independence talks on Nigeria. Till she passed on, the level of her involvement was quite clear. She spent very much of her time getting daily briefings from the prime minister's office. The prime minister sought her views and got her approval for any major policy (Okonkwo).

The death of Elizabeth Windsor gave people who have questioned British and the queen's roles in Nigerian affairs, as the young generation were unconvinced that the British had any blame. They have known the queen as a ... would, waving to crowds of English folks who were smitten by their love for her. These generation of Nigerians are great believers in British colonialism. In the records, the Africans were solely to blame for slavery. They claim Africans could have declined the request to sell their fellow Africans. They could not bear a family they loved being criticized. They discounted everything that had been said by the colonized against the colonizer. They did not think Britain did anything wrong during Nigeria's march to independence and in the course of the Biafra war. You will definitely not have the same views with somebody whose ethnic group was on the other side of the Biafra war. This is where the exoneration of the queen is anchored. For some others, their knowledge of history is not deep enough for them to understand any issue. The British became the people that abolished the killing of twins. Britain lifted Africans from idol worship and converted Africans to Christianity. But for British hospitality, many Nigerians would not have food on their table, as their Britain-resident relations support the helpless ones at home. We should not blame them for being lucky, unlike us, to have great leaders. Be humble and ask for a visa to relocate to their country. If someone is already in Britain or the US, they dictate what the attitude of an immigrant is, which is to be grateful and not come on TV to criticize the hosts. The quality of the argument dos not give anybody any cheer (Nakiryia).

There have always been reactions to colonial rule by the colonized. At its very ripe moment, it got labelled post-colonial studies. It was a time when the indigenous people had found a voice through literacy. The colonialists have always justified colonialism. They think it is a problem when people do not acknowledge the fact that William Wilberforce, a British, ended slavery. They speak out because they are hurt. It has been put in writing, in songs, on movies, etc. a people cannot leave that level of destruction in a place and believe the local people would not protest. People are living with agonies that are traced back to slavery and the colonial period. They have made enquiries into the past and present. There are cries heard as far as Jamaica, Kenya and South Africa. For these acts, the colonized have been calling for reparations, admissions of wrong doing and apologies. The process for restitution has begun in Algeria, Kenya, Australia and Canada. The calls became louder at the death of Elizabeth Windsor. Surprisingly, many in Nigeria have either ignored these ... developments or are insensitive to the losses suffered by victims or whatever they know about slavery, the colonial period and the present time do not cover any form of damage occasioned by.. These people celebrated Elizabeth Windsor and mourned her solemnly, deriding people who had opposing views. They reacted as a result of different motivations. This development would only discount the atrocities by the European colonizers in Africa and elsewhere (Nakiryia).

Slavery

Over the years, there have been calls for reparations for slavery of Africans by Europeans. American abolitionists were in no doubt about the inhuman acts of their people against Africans. Spokespersons like Abraham Lincoln and Lloyd

Garrison and even Thomas Jefferson admitted that Africans had been wronged. Some of them were appalled at the act, and trace the planning and execution of the enslavement. The appearance of Africans or Irish in the Americas had beginnings. When Portuguese sailors like Ferdinand Magellan and Vasco Da Gama departed European ports for Africa, they were on missions to brutally take people away from those people's habitats, doing that for commerce. It was as a result of expansion of trade, and in search of treasures that the Europeans decided to own territories and plantations overseas. Slave labor was needed to attend to the plantations. Irish slave labor was abandoned with the inclusion of Africans (Mohammad 893).

The Europeans had plotted how to get the African slaves. This was done through enticements. It was impossible for Africans not to succumb to offers the Europeans made. Naturally, like peoples all over the world, African communities bore grudges against one another. For instance, European kingdoms were the nightmares of other kingdoms, which was unceasing, leading to the two world wars. When there is a stronger foreign player, without the cooperation of one ethnic group, it would have been difficult for the Europeans to subdue the Native Americans. The aliens require intelligence and knowledge of the place. It was the reason why England achieved astonishing success over large populations in Asia. Local enablers also were not in short supply.

In Nigeria, even as attested to by colonial literatures, the Africans did not invite the European slave dealers. The Europeans introduced sorties along the coasts, which developed into slavery and colonization. To Africa, they went with various commodities that were unknown to those parts. It will sound strange that, once, in England, someone from the rural area was astounded a match stick could produce fire. Man, by nature, is obsessed with excelling in his society. It suits him when orders are taken from him. To exercise control, he must need some incentives to facilitate that. Items like mirrors, whiskey and fire arms that were produced in advanced societies performed that magic. Many communities would like to reduce the influence of their neighbors. They were excited at possessing those items, which gave them a lot of liberties and also changed their fortunes. People were not very kind to peoples of other communities and could drive the weak ones off their lands. More armed, the temptation grew to do even more. The Europeans were more civilized and had been exposed to various philosophies and the Christian Bible. That made them to develop the mechanism of recognizing good or evil. The Europeans had fitted out their ships and had all the instruments of propagation of warfare and mayhem. It was impossible not to succeed. Gun powder and canons, and all the things people take along when they are going to battle. There were theaters cut across West Africa. People did not really understand the assignments they were carrying out. Germans, the people of Britania, the Romans, the French, the Chinese and the Japanese left communities of their enemies in ruins centuries earlier. It would have been possible in every case for a more endowed alien to wander into their societies and instigate one party against another and exploit the situation (Mohammad 893-896). Populations vanished when they were set upon by other populations. With Roman occupation of England, Latin became the official language of England. A powerful alien can choose any party anywhere in the world to do his bidding. Africa's case fitted such scenarios. What is missing in most of the accounts are the possibilities of Africans or African leaders who altruistically resisted slavery. Fuglestad, in his attempts to blame the Africans for slavery, states that:

[o]n the African side, one cannot but wonder what would have happened if the local rulers had followed the example of a certain seventeenth-century Hindu warlord on the Coromandel coast of India who refused to supply the Dutch with slaves, in spite of the latter's insistence. His argument was that to do so would have been a great sin in the eyes of the gods. As a result, the slave trade from that coast never took off, and in fact petered out quickly, much to the disappointment of the Dutch. (15)

He admits thus,

Actually, we do know of at least one African ruler who did something of the sort, as we shall see – the king of Benin in present-day southwestern Nigeria; he decreed a ban on the sale of male (although not female) slaves, a ban that lasted for more than two centuries. But his was and remained an exceptional case. (15)

Definitely, to oppose slave trade, the Africans had to match the European and African slave dealers and hunters in terms of weaponry and other means. The African communities were mostly not built as blocks. Besides, the instruments that gave people power resided with Europeans, who selected recipients' war materials. Once it had become a means of livelihood, it was difficult for the actors to give it up. They thought they were sending away their enemies. European slave merchants would not claim they went to Africa to buy enemies. Africans who sold fellow Africans were unaware of the fate that awaited the captives at the end. If they knew, the information obtained would have influenced African attitude to the trade. On the contrary, the Europeans were so inhuman that they concealed the fact that the African slaves were tied like cargo in ships which rode for weeks and months to different parts of the world. The Europeans knew about the concluding stages of the trade; life in the plantations and business premises and households of the slave masters (Mohammed). Mohammad reveals that

[i]n addition to extreme depression, African slaves suffered from other forms of physical and psychological harm. European sailors raped African female slaves aboard the ship.⁷⁶ Since the captains, sailors, and ship's crew believed that the African slaves were mere captives, it was easily in the realm of consciousness for their captors to have coitus with the slaves as they desired. Other slaves aboard the ships were killed, and their corpses were

thrown overboard to instill fear in the others and discourage them from insurrection.⁷⁷ At other times, the European crew would force the slave captives to eat the flesh of rebellious slaves." Such an act was not only physical punishment for the actual victim, but also psychological torture for those forced to witness the barbaric treatment. The European slavers knew that for the most part, they would be met with little resistance because of the fear instilled in their captives after being kidnapped and stripped away from their native land. Moreover, physical restraints prevented the slaves from rebelling even if they wanted to. (899)

Abolition debates that were going on later never softened their hearts. Africans share in the blame for slavery, but it is a splinter compared to the participation of European slave merchants and their leaders. The Europeans also made incursions into African settlements and took away Africans and the Africans never saw their relations or their homelands again. Mohammad informs us that

Slave traders even kidnapped children whose mothers were already slaves and sold them to other slave traders, or purchasers. ⁹¹ Other times, slave traders kidnapped parents, who were already slaves, from their children, and sold them to other slave masters.⁹² Rather than separate slaves from their families. (902)

The Pre-colonial

Igbo land consisted of nations who spoke Igbo as first language, and as a result could be identified by a common culture. The nations operated independent of one another. It had no provision for a central head. This is explained by the republican political system. Igbo society could not lay claim to being a peaceful one (*Things Fall Apart*, Arrow of God). It was tainted by numerous practices. It can be faulted on the issue of Okonkwo's father, Unoka, who is taken to the evil forest and left to die there because the disease Unoka suffers disqualified Unoka from living among his own people (Achebe 6). The prevalence of female circumcision then does not ring well. Existence of twins was seen as a reproach to humanity. Therefore, twins were not shown love, but were thrown into the evil forest. It was because their humanity was considered abnormal. But Igbo land had a healthy political system. It was corruption proof. Love for one another was the norm, and there was social net for indigent persons. Like in most economies of the time, the economy struggled. Slave trade, introduced by Europeans had a great toll on Igbo land. The Igbos had hardly recovered from slavery, which destroyed the economies of the areas, when they were forced into another type of relationship with aliens, known as colonialism (Okonkwo).

To make colonialism possible, the British instituted various reforms, the negative effects which the Igbos still suffer till this day. The British toppled the Igbo political system and constituted a feudal and corrupt representative system. A type of commerce the British brought partially replaced the local one. Igbos adopted Christianity. Western education took root in a place where there was no form of formal education. There is a catalogue of wars the British waged in Africa to subdue the local people, and the Igbos had their own share. War comes with destruction, which is omitted in the compilation of accounts of those events. When takes into account what happened in Benin Empire, one will be able to make a guess that the losses and destruction were routine. In Benin, the British engaged African soldiers. A very good part of Benin was rubble at the end of hostilities. They joked about how the Asante cried when the bullet hit them. In the course of the expedition, Benin was plundered and livestock were not spared. The livestock were either stolen or burnt. Talks have been successful to return some of the artefacts taken away (Okonkwo).

Colonial rule was humiliating. Some of the practices of the local people came under prohibition. When an English man is killed in Mbanta in *Things Fall Apart*, the British make sure the destruction Mbanta will suffer will be a reference point henceforth (Achebe 116). When Okonkwo and some elders leave the detention center, the repulsion at the sight of their shaven heads was strong, prompting Okonkwo to commit murder and also take his own life (132-137). The Ekumeku that lasted for thirty years happened as a result of attempt by the British to occupy that part of Igbo land (Igbafe 152-155). King Jaja of Opobo, Nana the Itsekiri king, were toppled and sometimes exiled (Eze). The Asante Hene in Ghana kissed the earth (Adjaye 232-237).

The traditional institutions of the local people were desecrated. In *Arrow of God*. Ordinary eyes behold the face of the masquerade as its guise is pulled off by a Christian, making the spirits of the clan to wail in a terrifying manner throughout the night. A church building is demolished, but the people are punish (ed). Shockingly, they have to take orders from aliens, who never sought permission to come into their midst. The cultures of the people were trampled, as the source of power changed. The Igbo language may join the league of extinct languages. Wrong education many Igbos now acquire is threatening Igbo society. They have ignored their language to learn a foreign one, but are hardly proficient in the alien language. For many Igbos, the language is a spoken and not a written one. People disapprove any positive reference to Igbo gods. The reproduction of Igbo gods has taken knocks that they have been brought down (Baidya).

One of the first blows Christians dealt traditional or omenala worshippers was to tag the traditionalists Godless people even though both religions worship the same God. Igbo culture was flawed in some parts. If that was the case, then the faulty parts could simply have been phased out. Condemning a people's culture the way the colonialists did was

unhelpful. There were though the cultural courts during the colonial era, but how could the British create and empower a house of chiefs at the center in Nigeria when the British actually met Igbo communities that did not acknowledge the idea of chief?

Laying the Economic Foundation for Independent Nigeria

The British formula for economic exploitation of the territories of Nigeria was occupation. If they had to be successful, they had to focus on training the local people to provide support for the colonial administration. Once they had Africans who were clerks and messengers, the system would function with ease. There was little attempt to establish technical schools. The reluctance in the one was to check the future industrialization of the colony of Nigeria. Without manufacturing companies in Nigeria and indigenous scientists, Nigeria would be dependent on Britain in the consumption of processed products. In the ..., where the focus was, the colonists endeavored to lay down a system that adulterated and subdued indigenous values. Vocational and technical schools could be counted off the fingers. The course contents ensured the people would be well disposed to their roots, but to glorify British ways and to mimic the British in manners. Colonialism was to be perceived as a civilizing mission. It was meant to make the African shed his brutish ways and appreciate the sacrifices of the British. His root must be an entity that would make him sad. More importantly, the colonizer's homeland equates the paradise all mankind desires to behold. The Nigerians and their leaders have never referred to the British by any other title than 'our colonial masters.'

This thus stamped their inferiority. The king of England and the queen of England succeeded in turning themselves into gods, while the British colonialists were condescending in their relationship with the local people. These cultures have endured (Okonkwo). In preparing to physically leave Nigeria in what is termed independence, the British government placed political leadership beyond some ethnic groups while crowning a successor, pitching continually one ethnic group against another. The British authorities laid a foundation for perpetual indirect rule in Nigeria. Harold Smith, a British colonial official, declined being used by the British authorities for the dubious of his home government, for which Mr. Smith suffered severely. First, the British.

CONCLUSION

British involvement in the lives of the Nigerian people has been destructive. It has been an assault on whatever the people hold dear. The disruption started with slavery, then colonialism followed. The indigenous people and not the British were traumatized by the effects of slavery. It is hurtful to discuss it lightly like Fuglestad is bent in doing. Yes, when bottles of wine were thrown at the Africans, the Africans ran amok and stole people anywhere they could find those people, yet we must admit that the African slave dealers were simply being compelled to behave in that manner. It is indeed disrespectful to defend an act that displaced millions of humans, leaving populations scarred eternally. To justify it means that the offender is so secure in his sins that he can downplay that crime against humanity. It is the habitual practice of not owning up to a crime that will make Fuglestad to posit thus,

In fact, and as we intend to demonstrate later, the treatment of the slaves destined for America, before they ended up in the custody of the Europeans, demonstrates that their fate was of no concern to the local population. If one asks why, the answer may perhaps be something to the effect that a slave was an "other." (14-17)

This comment is flawed. It is known that the accounts of what transpired on the part of the local people are hardly available in written form. Does Fuglestad suggest that the victims' families never grieved over their losses? Many European commentators pretend the African slaves exhibited a complete absence of pain, unlike normal humans should, during the period of slavery. But various accounts of slave revolts in Haiti and the USA abound. One very striking protest was the one remembered as Ebo Landing. That this type of arrogance shown by Fuglestad exists among the Europeans is disturbing.

Similarly, it is being expressed boldly by many Europeans and, especially, English, that the Europeans were on a civilizing mission to Africa. The truth is that Britain should not have bothered the people of southern Nigeria. It has been a trail of destruction in Nigeria since the British came in contact with the indigenous people in Nigeria. The British carried out mayhem across southern Nigeria. Nothing the people hold dear has been spared by the destructive British colonial system. To have allies among Africans who are now happily assisting the offenders in disputing the claims by many interested parties is worrisome. It has to be combated seriously. The campaign has start immediately. It has to be intense, else the guilty would get away with these crimes against humanity.

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