



Corruption commonplace in the lives of African politicians, case of Achebe's a man of the people

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Abstract

Corruption has become commonplace in the lives of African politicians. Defined as the abuse of power for personal gain; corruption can take many forms, ranging in intensity from minor use of influence to institutionalized corruption; it can mean not only financial gain but also non-financial benefits.

Keys word : corruption, commonplace, politician, African, a man of the people.

Résumé

La corruption est devenue monnaie courante dans la vie des hommes politiques africains. Définie comme étant l'abus de pouvoir à des fins personnelles ; la corruption peut prendre de nombreuses formes, dont l'intensité varie depuis l'usage mineur d'influence jusqu'à la corruption institutionnalisée ; cela peut signifier non seulement un gain financier mais aussi des avantages non financiers.

Mots clés : corruption, monnaie courante, politicien, africain, l'homme du peuple.

Introduction

Political corruption is the use of power by government officials or their networks for illegitimate private gain. Forms of corruption change but can include bribery, nepotism, favoritism, influence peddling, and more. Corruption stifles economic growth, destroys the rule of law, and wastes valuable skills and resources.

The importance of the pen, the brush and the voice of the artist as a social critic and an interpretive lens to focus on the intricacies as well as the banalities of inter-human conflict may or may not carry less weight than they did in distant and not so distant past.

The absence of a truly political leader is the cause of degradation of people's lives in Achebe's *A Man of People*. Chief Nanga is paradoxically not a man of the people, as the title reads, but an enemy of the people. The novel is built around this irony of situation.

The thesis to defend in this work is that the misery and exploitation of post independent African people result from their *ignorance and lack of schooling*, education being a solution.

For the purpose of this work the research methodology is multi-approaches.

The primary sources of data to collect information is the novel "*A Man of the People*". Three techniques are used to collect data, namely: *note-taking, checklist of vices and critical statements*. In addition, there are seven (7) literary approaches used to proceed with the analysis of the same novel: *the formalist, socio-historical, psychological, psycho-analytical, analytical, critical and discourse-comprehension approaches*.

The main objective of this study lies on its capacity to awake people's conscience on the basic causes of African people's exploitation by the white man, and of their misery and mischief, namely the lack of education and ignorance.

Achebe's observation of post-independence Nigerian government corruption after the white man left, and the people's misery and exploitation by the new political and governmental leaders that become his concern in those early years of independence.

Achebe is regarded as the most dominant and influential writer of modern African literature, and has been called the "father of African literature", the "founding father of African literature", and the "father of the African novel in English". Achebe rejected such descriptions. *Things Fall Apart* has been described as the most important book in modern African literature and was called a *master piece* by critic *Dwight Garner*. Selling over 20 million copies worldwide, it has been translated into 57 languages, making Achebe the most translated, studied and read African author.

Chinua Achebe received several honors for his contributions to the world of literature such as : *Commonwealth Poetry Prize* (1972); the *Nigerian National Order of Merit* (1979), the *Order of the Federal Republic* (1979); an Honorary Fellowship of the *American Academy of Arts and Letters* (1982); In 1992 he became the first living writer to be represented in the *Everyman's Library* ; the *St. Louis Literary Award* (1999); the *Peace Prize of the German Book Trade* (2002); the Man Booker International Prize (2007); and the *Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize* (2010).
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinua_Achebe - cite note-
[FOOTNOTE"CBC News"2010-136](https://www.cbc.ca/news/2010-136)

Achebe's integrity is what makes him outstanding, and he is remarkable for national interest and patriotism, integrity for which he refused to associate, celebrate and dance with the government of his country because of mediocrity.

Chinua Achebe was a novelist, poet, essayist, editor, political activist and author of many literary works. His novels are filled with *symbolism, imagery, metaphors* and traditions of the Igbo people to illustrate real life situations of the typical Nigerian Africans.

Plot of A Man of the People

A Man of the people tells story of a nation's slide into corruption and greed after independence. It begins with Odili Samalu's observation and contemplation the corrupt behaviors of his country leaders and people's response to them.

He laughs at the ignorant villagers who are getting ready to welcome Chief Honorable Nanga, the minister of culture.

There, silly and ignorant villagers are dancing and waiting to blow off their gun powder in honor of Nanga, a native of Anata(village) where he was a teacher at the Grammar School before he entered politics. Odili Samalu, who was one of his former student rather prefers to work in the village Grammar School than take up a civilian job in the capital city. He enjoys being autonomous rather than having a position in the bureaucracy in the capital city.

When he arrives at Chief Nanga's home, Odili discovers that his suspicions are true. Chief Nanga lives a luxurious life, Odili realizes also that Chief Nanga knows very little about culture. As Odili continues to narrate the story, he reveals details of Nanga's upbringing and his past romances. He had a love with Elsie, over the past few years. Actually, Elsie was Odili's girlfriend.

One night, as Odili is ascending the stairs to Elsie's room, he finds that Chief Nanga and Elsie are sleeping together. He got angry and he decides to take revenge on Nanga who has taken his wife while he (Nanga) was already married. His plan has two parts, first: he decides to threaten Chief Nanga's personal life and professional power. He also decides to woo Edna, who is Chief Nanga's fiancée, and he also decides to run for the same office.

He seeks for Max's help the latter as, his former classmate and currently, a successful lawyer and a politician. Max and his girlfriend Eunice play a great role by exposing the corrupt regime. Along with the other friends people, they plan to make Odili the secretary of their newly created party, the CPC or Common people's Convention. Max's job is to promote this party in his village and in the other villages around, which he did.

Odili knows a lot about this corrupt government, and he decides to involve himself politically. He decides to run against Nanga during the next election as Cultural Minister. Actually Odili is a young, educated and throughout his campaign, Odili is forced to reliable person, far better than Nanga.

During the campaign, Odili and his family are threatened to deal. Odili is encouraged to take bribe and withdraws himself from the election. At one point in the story, Odili discovers that Max has taken a bribe from a minister named Chief Koko, *Minister of Overseas Training*. Although Odili is angry at Max's opportunism, Max insists that the paper he signed has no legal importance and the money from the bribe will allow them to further fund their campaign.

Meanwhile, Odili decides to marry Edna in order to hurt chief Nanga's feelings, but the latter is afraid to leave Chief Nanga who invested into her family and wanted her in marriage. Nanga paid for Edna to go to college.

The next day, Max and his campaign team arrive at Odili's home in Urua village. They've come with a car, a minibus and two brand-new Land Rovers with loudspeakers on the roof. Max suggests they launch their campaign there. Odili objects because his father is the chairman of P.O.P (People's Organization Party) in the village.

Odili attends Nanga's address to the public. He sees Edna and Mrs. Nanga seated on the dais with Chief Nanga. The latter recognizes him in the crowd, pulls him to the dais with the help of his henchmen and slaps him in front of public. Nanga said *"my people this is the boy who is thrusting his finger into my eye; he come to my house, ate my food... I*

called him to my house to arrange for him to go to England and you have come to seek me out". Odili reply : "I came to tell your people you are a liar".

Soon after that Odili is beaten by Nanga's hooligans and is seriously injured by the crowd instigated by Nanga's words. The last things Odili noticed before falling unconscious was the policemen turning and walking away.

Odili wakes up in the hospital with a cracked head, broken arm and countless bruises. He sees his mother, father and Edna waiting on him. There is also a policeman posted outside. He learns from the nurse that criminal charges were filed against him when Nanga's men allegedly found some weapons of destruction such as five machetes, and two guns in his car. They withdraw the case later.

The nurse also told Odili of his car being sacked and burnt. Later a criminal case was registered against him to stop him from signing his nomination papers.

The first set of nomination papers was seized from his bodyguard on his way to file in the electoral office. When Max tried to get them again, he was prevented. And on Election Day Max was killed. Eunice, Max's fiancée, stood up like a stone, she opened her handbag, took out a pistol instead and fired two bullets into Chief Koko's chest.

Odili is informed about this by Edna after he recovers from his injuries. He is happily surprised to learn that Edna is no longer engaged to Nanga.

One day, before Odili left hospital, Edna came to see him and both plan about their future. Odili goes to Edna's house with his father to pay her bride price. Edna's father is disappointed because he missed the chance of getting a prosperous son-in-law like Chief Nanga.

Suddenly a military coup d'Etat took place in the country. And Odo, Edna's father, sees the wisdom of accepting Odili's offer to marry his daughter. Odili agrees with old man's condition that he should return the bride price that Chief Nanga has paid to him.

Now that the new military government has abolished all political parties, Odili decides to establish a new school in his village in Max's memory. Incidentally, Max is declared a "hero" by the new government because he died a martyr's death at the hands of a previous corrupt regime.

"All is well that ends well" they said; now, tables are turned against the former civilian Government. Previous members of the Government, such as Honorable Nanga and friends are denounced and Chief Koko become a "thief and a murderer" overnight. Army officers take over the affairs of the government. Chief Nanga was arrested while he is trying to escape by a canoe dressed like a fisherman.

The main problem in *A Man of the People* is corruption of post independent political governmental leaders and their irresponsibility that causes degradation of people's lives and living conditions and results in the conflict between chief Nanga representing the corrupt generation of politicians, and Odili belonging in the younger generation who is fighting in order to bring about change in the country.

The problem is resolved when a military coup d'Etat took place in the country. The new military government abolishes all political parties, *"Army obliged us by staging a coup at that point and locking up every member of the government"* (Achebe, 1966:160).

Tables are turned against the former civilian Government. Previous members of the Government, such as Honorable Nanga and all of his friends are denounced. Army officers take over the affairs of the government. Chief Nanga was arrested (Achebe, 1966:162).

The elements that make the plot become complex are *recognition, the reversal of intention, dramatic irony and poetic justice*, to which Aristotle refers as the devices of the plot.

The Recognition, as the term indicates, it is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hatred between the persons destined by the author for the good or bad fortune.

An example of recognition in this novel is when Odili went to Nanga's house; before he had a positive image of Nanga, because he did not know him; Nanga said: "*I want you to come to the capital and take up strategic post in the civil service...*" (Achebe, 1966 : 13). Once together, Odili discovers that Nanga is corrupt; Odili reply: "*take your money and take your scholarship to go and learn more book; the country needs experts like you. And leave the dirty game of politics to us who know how to play it*" (Achebe, 1966 : 129).

The reversal of intention is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. In other terms, there is reversal of intention when the action changes or shifts as to one direction or position to another opposite to the first.

There are examples of reversal of intention in this novel: at the beginning of the story, for example, Odili appreciates Nanga as a model, the teacher he supervised at Grammar School, so he accepted Nanga's invitation to join him in the political area, as the novel reads: « *Odile, I think you are wasting your talent here. I want you to come to the capital and take up strategic post in the civil service...* » (Achebe, 1966 : 13). But after Odili discovered that Nanga is the opposite of what he thought, he changes his mind and decides to be opposed to him overtly: « *...it was better to start our new party clean, with a different kind of philosophy.* » (Achebe, 1966 : 89).

Another instance of reversal of intention is when Edna's father, Odo who refused to give his daughter in marriage to Odili than to Nanga, finally accepted after Nanga was arrested, "*were you not the one I told the other day never to come here again?*" (Achebe, 1966 : 114); but at the end of the story when Nanga is arrested Odo had no choice, He takes Odili's Dowry "*our host simply refused to believe that he had lost a Chief and Minister as son –in – law and must now settle for this crazy boy...*" (Achebe, 1966 : 160).

Dramatic irony is the kind of things that happen in a play, for example, when the audience or a character is aware of something, which a personage in the play is not aware of.

Example of dramatic ironic: "*a coup d'Etat*"; "*Army obliged us by staging a coup at that point and locking up every member of the government*" (Achebe, 1966 : 160). It's rather the fact of politicians didn't know that here was a coup d'Etat being prepared against them and reverse everything. I did not know that they will chased and arrested.

Poetic justice is an acceptable coincidence, a kind of thing that we wish would happen; such as when a man is punished in way that is appropriate with the story. It appears as a kind of revenge that is justified, as ideal justice with proper distribution of rewards and punishments.

An example of poetic justice in the novel, is *the arrestation of the* previous members of the Government, such as Honorable Nanga and his friends due to the looting and trouble they caused to the country and the population.

A point is often made between central theme and secondary themes or sub-themes in a literary work, thus suggesting that a literary work in general has a central theme, one and several other themes of secondary importance or sub-themes.

The central theme of a literary work is its dominating or controlling idea, that which is recurrent throughout the work to become (1) the hero or main characters' preoccupation or (2) his cause of trouble. The central theme of literary is something to be worked out, derived or deduced from just as any other meaning.

The central theme in "A Man of the People" is "corruption-bribery" that led to the ruine of the country after the white men left Nigeria.

A lot of subthemes could be deduced from this novel, such as: *betrayal, bribery, brutality, corruption, selfishness, hypocrisy, hostility, irresponsibility, ignorance, unfaithfulness, moral decay, embezzlement of public funds, polygamy, political assassination, poverty, position of women in the society, nepotism and revenge.*

The use of discourse resorts to a lot of devices such as *image, irony, symbol, personification, metaphors etc.*

Image : the use of words to bring a picture of a certain event takes place in the novel.

Example:

- Kilimanjaro; *"I was simply too fascinated by the almost ritual lifting of the clouds ...the unveiling of the white dome of Kilimanjaro ..."* (Achebe, 1966:43); image of Mountain that means problem.
- Pit-latrines; *"I'd used pit-latrines like the one at what was then my house in Anata. As everyone knows, pit-latrines are not luxurious or ultra-modern"* (Achebe, 1966:44); this is the image of poverty.

Irony of situation : It is the use of words that mean the opposite of what you really think especially in order to be funny.

Examples:

- The meaning of the title is opposite of what that means; actually chief Nanga is not a man of the people but an enemy of the people because he is corrupt and egoist ;
- When Nanga says: "teaching is a very noble profession (Achebe, 1966:9). Here he means otherwise; it's a way to make fun of teachers, he knows how much they earn at the end of the month, a derisory salary;

Metaphors : is a comparison, but it does its job without 'like' or 'as'

Examples:

- *"Let us now and for all time extract from our body politic as a dentist extracts a stinking tooth"* (Achebe, 1966:4); *that means we need now a new system not the bad politicians.*
- *"The prime minister was called the Tiger, the Lion..."* (Achebe, 1966:5); *This is because it cannot be manipulated by the dictatorial system.*

Symbol : it is the use of symbols to express or represent ideas or qualities in literary works.

Examples:

- Guns and gunpowder (Achebe, 1966:2): symbolizes power and intimidation;
- Cadillac (Achebe, 1966:63): symbolizes wealth;

Personification

Personification means giving the qualities of a person to a thing or idea (Ngwaba : 2013).

Examples:

- *Giligili is a poor village, Odili said : "Giligili was our nightly war on rats" (Achebe, 1966:44); image of dirt, poverty etc.*
- *Tiger and Lion (wild animals that live in the forest), "The prime minister was called the Tiger, the Lion..." (Achebe, 1966:5); The image of someone who is harsh, severe.*

In this novel, the tone is at the same time *narrative, critical, ironical and humorous*. It is *narrative* because it tells the story a *corrupt, unmoral politician named Chief Nanga, minister of culture who is able to do any things in order to stay Minister*.

It is *humorous*; because it is somehow funny Chief Nanga tells Odili that he can bring him six girls and Odili will have sex with them till he gets tired, as in: "If you like I can bring you six girls this evening"(Achebe, 1966:78).

The tone is also *critical* because the novel criticizes Nigerian post independent politicians leaders as looters and enemies of the people and nation.

"Let them eat", let's wait our chance" after all when the Whiteman used to do all the eating did we commit suicide? And where is the Whiteman today? He came, he ate, he went, but we are still around. The important thing is to stay alive" (Achebe, 1966:135).

By portraying corruption and vices which prevailed in post independent African countries of which Nigeria is an example, Achebe wants to criticize and ridicule Nigerian politicians. This novel appeals to responsibility and commonsense.

A Man of the People" is a true sketch of corrupt life and politics in many African countries with leaders who are greedy of power, as is the case with Chief Nanga. The book is about this corruption and greed.

The feelings aroused in the novel are *hope, disappointment, fear and disgust*. At first, the title of this novel arouses a feeling of "*hope*", *because the ancient system and rules are broken by the military coup, who's abolished old system, the corrupt politicians are arrested*. And, the body of the text arouses other feelings such as: *disappointment, fear and disgust* dire to leaders' irresponsibility and mistreat of the people they have stored the wealth of the country and they step on the population; "*many villagers sat on the floor, right up to the foot of the dais..." (Achebe, 1966:1).*

From the plot and devices of plot, the central theme, sub-themes and tone the author try to awake African people's conscience on the basic causes of African people's exploitation by their politicians leaders who are corrupt and greedy. Another effect is hatred towards those political corrupt and greed leaders.

The setting implies place and time both of which can be also be symbolic. Mention of the time can be year, month, week, day, part of the day (in the morning, in the afternoon, in the

evening, at night etc.) hour. A symbolic place could be, for example the South USA, (Ngwaba :2018).

The setting of "*A Man of the People*" is imaginative, the place is Anata village and the time is shortly after the independence of Nigeria.

The author used towns, cities and villages which are not real such as Bori, Urua, Anata and Abaga. But what were happened in those imaginative towns, cities and villages resemble the realities and life experiences in most of African societies especially in Nigeria where the author originated, during the 1966 Nigerian Coup-d'État.

Literary appreciation is the process of recognizing/admiring and explaining the values or qualities of a literary work after carefully studying its good and bad features. It says how a particular device is suited to the subject matter, central theme, feeling, tone or the effects created in the reader by referring it to the text.

One of the merits of "*A Man of the People*" lies on its capacity to provide a fresh point of view and its attempt to civilize not only the aristocrats, the middle class but also the low classes. The aristocrats are addressed and ridiculed in their corruption and exploitation of the poor families without pity and shame, and in the sudden coup d'Etat that results in then arrestation and imprisonment. Another merit is its capacity to awake people's conscience on the basic causes of people's exploitation, misery and mischief, namely the lack of education and ignorance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, corruption exacerbates and fuels poverty, and these links are complex. It has consequences for living standards and increasing income inequality, as it hinders overall economic growth and income growth.

"A man of the people" demonstrates some artistry and craft through Achebe's ability to create a realistic story that serves as a platform for satirizing neocolonialism under all its facets and its negative impact on the peasants and workers in post independent. The novel shows how ignorance and lack of education can be detrimental to the life of a people.

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Éditorial

Le présent numéro supplémentaire 105 n°3 de la Revue du Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire de l'Université Pédagogique Nationale témoigne de la vitalité scientifique et de la richesse des recherches menées dans les milieux universitaires congolais. Rassemblant 25 articles issus de disciplines diverses, allant des sciences humaines et sociales aux sciences exactes, en passant par les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation, de l'économie, du droit, de l'agriculture et de la communication, cette publication met en lumière l'ancrage interdisciplinaire des problématiques contemporaines.

Les auteurs interrogent des enjeux cruciaux pour la société congolaise et africaine : la crise sociale, les défis de gouvernance, les tensions identitaires, les inégalités éducatives, les mutations dans les pratiques agricoles, les dysfonctionnements dans le système de santé, la pauvreté, et l'impact de l'environnement sociopolitique sur la santé mentale et les relations humaines. Dans cette mosaïque scientifique, la rigueur méthodologique rencontre une profonde sensibilité contextuelle. Chaque article, dans sa spécificité, participe à un vaste chantier de compréhension, de critique et de proposition.

Ce numéro illustre également le double rôle de la recherche universitaire : produire du savoir scientifique et fournir des outils d'analyse et d'action au service du développement. De l'analyse littéraire à la modélisation mathématique, de l'observation clinique aux évaluations économiques, les contributions reflètent la volonté de penser le réel, de comprendre les dynamiques sociales, de questionner les normes, mais aussi d'innover dans les réponses proposées.

Dans un monde en mutation, marqué par des crises multiformes : économiques, écologiques, politiques et identitaires, la recherche interdisciplinaire devient une nécessité. Elle permet de croiser les regards, de décroiser les approches et d'ouvrir la voie à des solutions plus complètes. Ce numéro en est une illustration tangible.

L'équipe éditoriale exprime sa gratitude à tous les auteurs, aux comités de lecture et à l'ensemble des chercheurs qui contribuent, par leur engagement, à renforcer le rôle de l'université comme lieu de réflexion critique et d'innovation. Ce supplément, au-delà de la diffusion des connaissances, constitue un appel à poursuivre les efforts en faveur d'une recherche ancrée dans les réalités locales tout en étant ouverte aux standards internationaux.

Profondément ancré dans le présent par l'analyse des réalités actuelles de la société congolaise, ce numéro se veut également une passerelle vers l'avenir, en contribuant à éclairer les politiques publiques, à inspirer les réformes sociales, éducatives et économiques, et à enrichir les pratiques professionnelles dans divers secteurs.

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