

# Depiction of the nigerian civil war in civil peace by chinua achebe



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In depicting significant real-life events or cultural conflicts; “ Civil Peace” is a story about the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war. The story focuses on a fictional character named Jonathan Iwegbu who has an optimistic point of view of life during the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war while people who are struggling living in poverty. Chinua Achebe, is the author that tells about how the Nigerians who endure the war while living in these terrible conditions. The setting of this story shows the impact of the Civil War and the affect it had on the Nigerian people. The Nigerian Civil War, otherwise called the Nigerian-Biafra War; commenced on July 6, 1967 and kept going through January 1970. This war was a political clash caused by the Igbo people of the southeastern regions of Nigeria who didn't agree with the Northern dominated government. The contention was the aftermath of monetary, ethnic, convivial and religious pressures among the different people groups of Nigeria

A person's state of mind is their mindset about existence and living that is reflected in their conduct. Some portion of Jonathan's conduct, a section that is basic to understanding him and his state of mind, is that he feels that he might be perplexed and is always convincing himself that “ Nothing puzzles God.” He makes this statement four times with variation by showing this premise in the story. In his statements he shows how one man could be fortunate of life who is connected to a tragic Civil War that took lives of soldiers and people who have lived in these horrible conditions while being positive throughout the story.

During the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war, Jonathan Iwegbu and his family have stayed positive in spite of the loss of their child in the war.

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Jonathan and his wife search around for what work they can find in an effort to make a decent living. Jonathan works as a taxi driver for the wealthy while his family works at a restaurant making nourishment and beverages for the soldiers. When he comes back to his home in Enugu, he finds that his house is intact and standing in spite of the bombings. Jonathan gets twenty pounds of ex gratia cash in light of the fact that the legislature changed the currency after the war. As one would believe, other people not as fortunate as Jonathan and his family would be envious of their lifestyle in these horrible conditions of life during the aftermath of the war.

A situation later occurs where thieves envious of Jonathan and his well-being during these times robbed Jonathan during the middle of the night to take his ex gratia cash. Ex gratia was the currency used prior to the war and was viewed more valuable than the pound currency that replaced it.

During this incident, the thieves request 100 pounds from Jonathan promising not to hurt him or his family. Eventually, Jonathan has no options left, and decides to give the thieves the 20 pounds of reward money so they will leave the family unharmed. Some thieves insist they should search the house for more, but the leader believes this is all Jonathan has, and allows Jonathan and his family go ahead with their ordinary life.

Jonathan has an optimistic view regarding life. Regardless of what occurs, he appears to look on the positive side. For instance, during the Civil war “ he was compelled to surrender two pounds with the end goal to spare his bicycle from a man mimicking an officer” (Achebe 67). Instead of having a character that would be upset of losing cash that he worked so hard to earn

after the war, Jonathan was excited that he could use his bicycle. Actually he considered it a reward “supernatural occurrence,” however still one that was second rate contrasted with the way that four out of five of his relatives endured the war. Due to his cheerful and uplifting point of view, things that would have been considered “misfortune” were a progression of supernatural occurrences for Jonathan. He didn’t invest energy being miserable that he didn’t have an occupation. Rather, he utilized the reward supernatural occurrence bicycle to make cash as a rickshaw. Rather than being angry, he was excited that he had this small fortune upon him. Toward the ending of the story, Jonathan’s obvious fortunes reaches an end when he is ransacked of his ex gratia or “egg rasher.” However even that does not change Jonathan’s mentality about existence. He discloses to his neighbors that the egg rasher, in the bigger picture, doesn’t mean a thing.

This genre focuses in the historical non-fiction because the setting in which this story takes place is during the aftermath of the Civil War in Nigeria. The Author explains the history through the content which is captured in “Civil Peace” by demonstrating the Nigerian social conditions and how the general population battles to make due after the Nigerian Civil war. Accordingly in the historical context Nigerian Civil War focuses on the living environment of how individuals are being exploited from the war in this story. Despite the fact that individuals were enduring poverty, violence and death amid this period, this didn’t keep Jonathan from feeling idealistic after the war.

On October 1, 1960 Nigeria pronounced freedom from the British into becoming independence of its own country. After the war, the Nigerian

government changed the cash from Biafra cash to pounds. The British  
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attracted fake fringes western Africa for business reasons. In the story Jonathan gets pounds rather than ex gratia cash for his maneuvering administrations. But later in the mid-1960s, Nigeria faced a serious “ethno-political crises” (CHIAMAKA 86). In which led to the census crisis of 1962-63, the Tiv riots of 1964, the 1964 federal election crisis and subsequent violence, and the 1965 western election in January 1966, followed by a counter coup in July 1966.

What intriguing in perusing this short story is the means by the author write a combination of English speaking with a patois based discourse examples and rhythms of the Ibo tongue. An example of this in the story is when Jonathan is negotiating with the thieves by using civil matter of talking instead of not using violence which hints the title “Civil Peace”, “Ah, missisi de cry again. No need for dat. We done talk say we na good tief. We just take our small money and go nwayorly. No molest. Abi we de molest?” (Achebe 71). This is found in the Southerner part of Nigerian and being more external influences than their counterparts in the Southeast, which may explain variations in dialect and culture.

When comparing Jonathan’s living condition to the people who are affected by the war, he is successful in life by providing taxiing services and being able to live in a house with his family; while other people continue to struggle to survive from the war. “This newest miracle was his little house in Ogui Overside. Indeed nothing puzzles God! Only two houses away a huge concrete edifice some wealthy contractor had put up just before the war was a mountain of rubble. And here was Jonathan’s little zinc house of no regrets

built with mud blocks quite intact! Of course, the doors and windows were missing and five sheets off the roof". (Achebe 68)

According to the Catholic Historical Review, the war lasted for thirty months in Biafra that resulted in ruined buildings, massive unemployment, poverty, and people suffering the physical and psychological effects of bombing, starvation, disease and death. The East Central State for example could only absorb 34, 000 workers, leaving 800, 000 unemployed. Of the more than 2 million people who returned to the region in 1966, less than half could be supported by their families. The rest were housed in refugee camps, schools, and town halls.

In Achebe's writing of this book, he catches oneself being sure on life and being grateful to God for one's prosperity. Jonathan's religious sensibility is reflected by his refrain: " Nothing puzzles God" Jonathan repeatedly refers to positive outcomes, like the survival from his home and family - as " blessings" or " miracles". By grasping the wisdom from God, Jonathan frees himself from agonizing about the seemingly random experiences of the Civil War and its aftermath. He may not understand, but God does. This allows him to use his energy constructively in the present instead of wallowing in the seemingly inscrutable past. This would lead back in history of how Christian activities in Igboland, particularly the work of missionaries; has been discussed by several scholars. Issues such as the influence of the Church on Igbo culture also have received scholarly attention. One area however, that has been neglected is the Catholic Church and the Nigerian Civil War. In addition, the interaction of lay organizations with the people led to increased communication between the Church and followers of the African  
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Traditional Religion. Discussed within the lay groups were issues such as the ozo title. Which is a tradition within Igbo society that establishes religious and social rank for individuals, oath-taking also known as igbandu in the text, secret societies that included the ogboni, and the relationship between Catholics and non-Christians. Previously, such matters had been contentious because they only had been addressed by the clergy.

Jonathan found himself to be very lucky, and having an optimistic attitude towards the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. Everywhere he looks, he sees not a cause for mourning but rather opportunity and fortune, in the short story, " Civil Peace", it shows how the Nigerian people lived during this time period and the focusing theme is a mix of warfare and religion. This theme was fascinating to discover how so much religion played into the lives of the individuals who lived in Nigeria.

To find extent pieces of information in the story, it is anything but difficult to see that a war has gone on that people are not in good financial standing, the country is a mess, and many people have lost family members and belongings. These pieces of information are vital in light of the fact that they give significantly more knowledge into the characters' lives and enable reader to see how one individual could be idealistic from enduring such a war. This would make Jonathan to be a unique character by showing his own cleverness or skill, but rather recognizes everything down to his survival as a special gift.

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