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14 Sep. 2011

Summer Reading Book Review

Introduction

Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria, in 1930. He was raised in a Christian family, and went to a missionary school. "Things Falling Apart" is a novel written in 1958. It is about an Ibo worrier, and his village. The story shows the reader the land, the life and the customs in Nigeria. It tells the reader the values in there, about family, gender, life. It also shows the struggle between the tradition and the change, by telling the story about colonization. Achebe tried to show that the view of the sides from one race is not the only view, and people who sometime had been considered as not a human as the human of that view are truly human who have emotion, mind, belief, and agony just as them. By showing the equality as a human in each sides, he also suggest the impossibility of stating justice. His purpose was successful. "Things Fall Apart" was sold over 8 million copies, and expressed his message in more than fifty languages by telling a sorrowful story of the village falling apart.

Summary

Okonkwo was a brave, strong, wealthy worrier of Umuofia. Still, he always had a fear of being thought as a woman, as a coward, resembling his father. Okonkwo was ordered to take care of a boy from other clan called Ikemefuna, who came to Umuofia as an indemnity, until his punishment is judged. Okonkwo started to feel and love Ikemefuna as a real son. After three years, Ogbuefi, the respected village elder told Okonkwo to not take part of the murder of Ikemefuna. At the very end, Okonkwo swung downward his machete, because of his fear. In Ogbuefi's funeral, Okonkwo's gun exploded accidentally, and killed Ogbuefi's son. He was banished for seven years. He starts to live in Mbanta, his motherland. During the second year of his exile, Obierika, his friend, visits him. He brings news. Another village had been destroyed by white men. Soon after that, missionaries arrived to Mbanta. Villagers did not understand the story, but some villagers converted, including Nwoye, Okonkwo's eldest son. Okonkwo goes back to Umuofia. He was shocked about the church and the court ruled by

white men, and numerous converts. Enoch, the convert unmasked one of the egwugwu, the ancestral spirit. Egwugwu burned his house and the church as a pay back. The District Commissioner was angry with this, and threw the leaders of Umuofia in to jail, where they were treated with cruelty and insult. Soon after they were released, there was a meeting hold by clansmen. Messengers arrived to stop the meeting, and Okonkwo killed one of them. He knew that the clansmen were not going to fight for their village, because no one followed him. When the commissioner arrives to Okonkwo's compound, Obierika leads him to the hanged body of Okonkwo. He explains that suicide is a big sin, and he says white men let this happen to the great soldier. The commissioner decided to add this happening in his book, which he already decided the title: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

Critique

Some people may say this book is a novel about a fictional Ibo man who had a big ambition, and his story in his fictional village. Although it is a rich novel, it is written from the side of African, and it is unfair to judge it as a realistic literature. The book seems to introduce the dark side of colonization, but it cannot be a completed masterpiece for consideration of the problems from colonization by its own. Therefore, this book is more a portrait of a man than a realistic novel showing the matter of civilization. This criticize is partly true. However, even in some points it could be seen as an offensive book against the white men, Achebe did not stand on either side, to criticize the other. Achebe was born in the village of Ibo in Nigeria, and he had a Christian family, and went to a missionary school. In his days, his village was no longer following the one traditional custom, but it was in a mixture of traditional and new arriving cultures. Therefore, because he was surrounded by both cultures, Achebe was possible, and also did, wrote both positive and negative points of each clan and the white men equally. He did not treat Okonkwo as a Superman, or Umuofia as a utopia, but as a normal man, and a normal village. For example, Okonkwo was a great man, but he had a complex, which comes from his father; this complex is seen all over the world. From this complex, he is written as a man who can be considered as a violent, arrogant man. It is true that the story is a portrait of fictional African man and his village; however, it is characterized in a realistic way. Thus, this book is worth to be treated as an realistic novel which shows about civilization from African view. However, the book point out a suggestion,

which is more than just about civilization. By writing both positive and negative points for each sides, and not showing a clear judgment about which is superior or which is correct, between Okonkwo and his father, men and women, clansmen and white men, it shows the difficulty, or more, impossibility of stating one exact justice in the world. Each side has their own value based on reasons, whether it seems more like evidence or more like faith, it does not mean that it could be decided as one right side and one wrong side.

Conclusion

“Things Fall Apart” is a great book, not only as an entertaining novel, which let you smell the breeze of Africa, but also as an book which broaden our views about African culture and civilization. It shows especially, the matter about gender, race, religion and colonization. It also reminds the reader about the everlasting task, the weakness of justice, and the impossibility to define it. This book reminded me a comic called “Mud Men”, which is about a story placed in Papua New Guinea. It is a fiction, but the villages and cultures in the story are well created. It shows the conflict between traditional and modern culture, in a dramatic context.

Works Cited

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