

Reconstructing Ethical Conflict in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*

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Abstract

This paper delves deeper into the popular theme of cultural clash in African literature by narrowing on the ethical conflicts arising at the intersection of Igbo traditions and Western ethics in colonial Nigeria, as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964). It examines how Achebe explores these ethical clashes through characters who are torn between preserving their way of life and adapting to the beliefs and values introduced by the colonial system. By undertaking a close textual analysis, the paper reveals varied responses to these ethical confrontations, highlighting the different forms of resistance and compromise within the Igbo community depicted in the novel.

Keywords: African ethics; Ethical conflict; Western ethics.

In the realm of African literary discourse, Chinua Achebe emerges as a pivotal figure offering profound insights into the cultural and ethical landscapes of Nigeria during and after the colonial era. His novels have garnered extensive scholarly attention, particularly for their exploration of themes such as the conflict between tradition and modernity, the impact of colonialism on African societies and cultures, the tension between indigenous African traditions and colonial values, and the struggle to preserve cultural identity amid these disruptions. These themes are intricately woven in his set of African Trilogy, which comprises *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*. Through their complex narrative structures and nuanced character portrayals, these works provide a rich commentary on the aforementioned themes and issues.

Beneath these socio-cultural clashes lies a deeper, often overlooked layer, which is the ethical conflict between Indigenous African and Western systems. This dimension of moral confrontation serves as a central thread in

Achebe's novels, yet it remains underexplored in the existing scholarly literature. The present study seeks to address this gap by reconstructing the ethical conflict depicted in *Arrow of God*, offering fresh perspectives on the intricate moral dynamics at play in the work. In so doing, the first section of this paper will briefly examine the nature of both Western and traditional African ethics, highlighting their inherent tensions within the context of African literature, culture, and Indigenous traditions. The second section will present a close textual analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, illustrating how the conflict between these two rival ethical systems is internalized and reflected in the actions of various characters. Finally, the third section concludes the analysis by highlighting how Achebe skillfully portrays these ethical conflicts at the intersection of the two systems, along with the diverse individual and community responses revealed through the analysis.

I

Reconstructing the ethical conflict within a literary text necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the concept of ethics. This section, accordingly, aims to outline the notion of ethics as is conceived in African traditions vis-à-vis the Western ethical system that was brought to Africa through colonization.

Traditional African ethics is deeply rooted in the socio-religio-cultural fabric of African societies. A substantial body of scholarship on African ethics identifies three overarching themes: communitarianism, personhood, and the vital or life force, all of which are instrumental to the collective welfare of the community^{*}. Central to African ethics is the emphasis on the common good, where the well-being of the community takes precedence over individual interests. This principle is encapsulated in popular African maxims such as "A person is a person through other persons" (South Africa) and "I am because we are" (Eastern and Western Africa). These sayings reflect the profound commitment of the African worldview to the collective good of the community.

In addition to these core themes of communitarianism, personhood, and the vital force, scholars have highlighted various sources of moral norms in African societies. For instance, Okeja (2018) categorizes moral justifications in African philosophy into four types: (1) appeal to tradition, (2) appeal to community, (3) appeal to religion and deities, and (4) appeal to hu-

* For a detailed discussion on these themes, see (Menkiti 1984, 2004, 2018); (Mbiti 1990), (Gyekye 1995, 1998, 2011); (Molefe 2019)

man well-being. He argues that “moral norms are social artifacts designed to guide human interactions.” Similarly, Murove (2021) identifies three fundamental themes in African tradition: ancestors, ubuntu (humanness), and relationality, all of which contribute to the ethical framework of African societies.

African ethics, thus, is deeply embedded in the communal and spiritual fabric of society and profoundly shapes social behaviour and moral values of a community. Communalism, as noted earlier, is an important precept in African ethics which regards the community as the fundamental unit of social organization. It emphasizes collective responsibility, cooperation, and mutual support, where individual identity and well-being are intricately tied to the community. Decisions are often made collectively, prioritizing communal welfare over individual desires, and actions are evaluated based on their impact on society and their contribution to the common good. In this context, by extension, Sub-Saharan African moral philosophers identify three primary conceptions of moral rightness within the African ethical perspective: fostering harmonious relationships (Verhoef and Michel, 1997; Tutu, 1999; Ejizu, 2011), preserving and promoting the vital force of all living beings (Peter, 1994; Pantaleon, 2005), and advancing the common good (Gyekye, 1997, 2011). These conceptions reflect the deeply interconnected and holistic nature of African traditional ethics.

Western ethical system, by contrast, focuses on a general framework of moral conduct in terms of right/wrong, good/bad distinctions.** Unlike African ethics which is experiential and rooted in the beliefs, attitudes and worldviews of its inhabitants, Western ethics, according to (Singer 2011), is claimed to be universalist and normative in its orientation.*** The ethical framework in the West is predominantly shaped by two fundamental approaches to moral judgment: consequentialism and deontology. According to the consequentialist framework, the morality of an action is determined by its outcomes. In this view, ethical judgment relies on the empirical evaluation of the consequences an action produces. Prominent ethical theories within consequentialism include hedonism, utilitarianism, and ethical egoism, all of which focus on the happiness or well-being of individuals or society as the primary measure of morality.

** Dewey and Tufts (1932), for instance, describes ethics as the science that deals with conduct, considering it as right or wrong, good or bad. Ethics aims to systematically account for our judgments about conduct, assessing it from the perspective of right or wrong, good or bad

*** Singer, however, recognizes the limitations of this framework, noting that not all ethical judgments are universally applicable (11). He contends that ethical judgments may differ depending on specific contexts and circumstances.

Deontology, in contrast, emphasizes the duty or obligation of an individual in performing an action. This framework asserts that certain duties must be fulfilled regardless of the consequences that may result. Rooted in rational evaluation, deontology prioritizes principles over outcomes. Immanuel Kant's principle of the "categorical imperative" exemplifies this approach, asserting that moral actions are guided by universal maxims derived from reason. Despite the distinct nature of these two rival frameworks within the Western ethical tradition, both are fundamentally universalist in orientation, tending to generalize moral judgments without accounting for the specific contexts in which actions occur.

An alternative approach, virtue ethics, draws inspiration from Aristotle's philosophy, emphasizing the cultivation of virtues as a means to achieve eudaimonia—a concept often translated as happiness or the supreme good. Unlike the rigid principles of consequentialism or deontology, virtue ethics focuses on character development and the practical wisdom needed to navigate moral complexity. These normative frameworks are further challenged by ethical or cultural relativism, which contends that moral judgments must account for the specific socio-cultural contexts in which actions take place. Relativism argues that dismissing these contextual factors in favour of universal principles overlooks the diverse ways in which moral values are understood and practiced across cultures. That said, universalist frameworks within Western ethical system continue to flourish with the emergence of neo-utilitarianism and neo-Kantianism in the present moral philosophy.

The brief outline of traditional African and Western ethics presented above highlights the distinct systems that converged in Africa during the colonial period. This encounter gave rise to an ethical conflict, evident in various aspects of African history, such as the socio-political and cultural reforms imposed by the colonizers and the resistance to these changes by native communities. These themes are central to Achebe's exploration of the Igbo universe.

It is crucial to note, however, that this ethical conflict is an extension of deeper clashes rooted in the rivalry between traditional African societies and the Christian West. The ethical system of African culture is undeniably grounded in the religio-spiritual practices of Indigenous traditions. In contrast, the Western ethical framework, which often presents itself as rational and secular, is fundamentally shaped by its Christian origins, as Taylor (2002) observes:

Religion, and more specifically the Christian religion, nourished the idea that there is a kind of obligation higher, more authoritative, and more demanding than the obligations that arise among persons, higher even than one's obligation to the state, or to humanity itself – namely, obligation or duty to God. Thus arose the idea of a unique kind of obligation, which eventually came to be called *moral* obligation, hitherto quite unknown to philosophy. What is demanded of us by God, it came to be believed, takes precedence over anything demanded of one person by another, even if the latter is a king or a Caesar. And, philosophers, even though they no longer think of ethics in religious terms still, to this day, consider it meaningful to speak of a kind of moral obligation that is supposed to take precedence over every other. It is no longer thought of as an obligation to God, to be sure; indeed, it is no longer thought of as an obligation *to* any person or persons, divine or other. It is simply thought of as a unique obligation that each of us has, standing by itself (78).

The grounding of ethical conflict in the religio-spiritual traditions of both Africa and the West offers a fresh perspective for analysing Achebe's novels, which have predominantly been examined through the lenses of cultural clashes and the impact of colonialism on Indigenous traditions. The following section undertakes a close examination of Achebe's *Arrow of God* to reconstruct the ethical conflicts depicted in the novel.

II

Arrow of God, the third instalment in Achebe's African Trilogy, is set in 1920s Nigeria during British colonial rule. The novel follows Ezeulu who is the proud and resolute chief priest of Ulu, the deity of the village of Umuaro. Ezeulu is determined to preserve his traditional authority in the face of dissent from both his kinsmen and British colonial rulers. However, his refusal to adapt to change leads to unrest within his community and the eventual ascendancy of the new religion imposed by the colonizers. Through several pivotal episodes, the novel vividly illustrates the ethical conflict between traditional African values and Western principles. This section examines the nature of this conflict in the novel under the following titles:

Personal Aspiration Versus Duty Toward Community

Achebe presents the main character, Ezeulu, as a Chief Priest who holds a significant responsibility towards preserving the traditional beliefs, practices, and values of his Igbo community. His role involves upholding the

spiritual and cultural heritage of his people, ensuring the continuity of their traditions, and guiding the community in matters of faith and rituals. Ezeulu's duty towards his society is deeply intertwined with his identity and position within the community, and it entails maintaining the integrity and coherence of their cultural unity.

However, Ezeulu's aspiration to cultivate new knowledge and engage with the Christian religion introduces a conflicting dimension to his sense of duty. Achebe suggests that Ezeulu perceives the arrival of the white man and the introduction of Christianity as opportunities for growth, enlightenment, and potential benefits for his community. He decides to send his son Oduche to learn the Christian way of life. This decision stems from his belief that exposure to new ideas and perspectives could enrich their lives and enable them to navigate the changing landscape brought about by colonialism. Islam (2021) argues that Ezeulu oversteps the collective restrictions set by his society when he chooses to follow his materialistic desires as an individual. This creates a fundamental conflict between the native society as a whole and Ezeulu, who seeks to govern the community based on his own ambitions, disregarding the voices of the native people (22). Already burdened by his decision, Ezeulu subtly instructs his son to evade the perceived suspicion of his motives by the villagers so that "If anyone questions why you are being sent to learn these new things, tell them that a man must dance the dance of his time" (Achebe 191).

Achebe employs the sound of the church bell penetrating Ezeulu's contemplations on his cultural heritage as a subtle symbol of the enduring conflict between tradition and change. This intrusion intensifies Ezeulu's internal turmoil, as he grapples with the dilemma of being torn between Christianity and his indigenous values. As a revered leader facing this inner struggle, the church's proximity to his home magnifies the pressure on him to resolve the clash between these opposing belief systems:

The place where the Christians built their place of worship was not far from Ezeulu's compound. As he sat in his obi thinking of the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves, he heard their bell: ... His mind turned from the festival to the new religion. He was not sure what to make of it. At first, he had thought that since the white man had come with great power and conquest it was necessary that some people should learn the ways of his deity. That was why he had agreed to send his son, Oduche, to learn the new ritual. He also wanted him to learn the white man's wisdom, for Ezeulu knew from what he saw of Wintabota and the stories he heard

about his people that the white man was very wise. (Achebe 43).

This desire for new knowledge, evidenced by Ezeulu's request for his son to learn about Christianity, conflicts with his position as the Chief Priest and custodian of tradition. By indirectly endorsing Christianity, Ezeulu risks undermining the cultural and spiritual foundations he is responsible for safeguarding. His choice to send Oduche to the Christians might be viewed as a betrayal of his duty to uphold the ancestral values of his community, especially by those community members who perceive Christianity as incompatible or antagonistic to their indigenous customs and traditions.

Achebe suggests that Ezeulu's ethical dilemma goes beyond a simple clash of belief systems; it is a profound personal struggle that mirrors the complexity of balancing competing values and principles. On one side, he wrestles with the appeal of Christianity, which promises new knowledge and potential spiritual advancement for himself and his community. Yet, on the other side, he cannot disregard the deeply rooted traditions and customs that have defined his own identity and that of his people for generations.

Clash Between Devine Duty and Moral Obligation

When the colonial administrator Captain Winterbottom intervenes in the conflict between Okperi and Umuaro, Ezeulu's reputation among his own people takes a downward turn. Many in Umuaro hold him responsible for the unsettling presence of the colonizers and the changes it brought. However, amidst the suspicion and blame from his community, Captain Winterbottom, from a western perspective, sees beyond the surface perceptions. He recognizes Ezeulu's integrity and commitment to truth, perhaps sensing the complexity of the situation and the inner conflict Ezeulu faced. This recognition from an outsider, particularly one representing the colonial power, highlights Ezeulu's moral character and the internal struggle he grapples with amidst the encroaching forces of colonialism.

Based on this experience, Achebe illustrates Ezeulu's distress, portraying him as deeply troubled and even experiencing agony in his role as the Chief Priest of Ulu, particularly when he fulfils his sacred duty of offering prayers for the village of Umuaro:

Every time he prayed for Umuaro bitterness rose into his mouth, a great smouldering anger for the division which had come to

the six villages and which his enemies sought to lay on his head. And for what reason? Because he had spoken the truth before the white man. But how could a man who held the holy staff of Ulu know that a thing was a lie and speak it? (Achebe 6).

Nwakanma (2018), in his essay "*The Rupture in Sacred Time: Ezeulu's Discontent and the End of History in Arrow of God*," suggests that Ezeulu's resentment arises from his pride and the feeling of being rejected because he refused to lie for Umuaro before the white District Officer in Okperi. He believes that the deity Ulu is not subordinate to the white man's rule in Okperi, nor should it rely on dishonesty to gain advantage over Okperi (73). From a Western ethical standpoint, Ezeulu's decision to testify against his people before Winterbottom can be interpreted as an act of integrity and adherence to principles of justice and truth. In Western moral frameworks, honesty and truthfulness are typically regarded as fundamental virtues, and individuals are expected to uphold these values even in challenging or unpopular circumstances. Ezeulu's choice to testify truthfully, despite the potential repercussions for his community, may be viewed as an ethical obligation driven by a dedication to fairness and accountability within the legal system.

However, from an African moral lens, Ezeulu's action may be perceived differently. In African societies, communal values, loyalty to the community, and solidarity with one's people are highly emphasized. Ezeulu's decision to testify against his own community could be seen as a betrayal of these values and a breach of trust with his people. In African moral frameworks, the well-being of the community often takes precedence over individual concerns, and actions that undermine the collective welfare may be viewed with scepticism or condemnation. Gyeke (2011) emphasizes that actions that enhance human well-being are considered good, while those that diminish it are deemed bad. Killam (1969) notes that Winterbottom trusts Ezeulu based on the mistaken belief that Chief Priest supported the British administration during the Okperi land issue, without investigating his actual motivations. In truth, Ezeulu acted in accordance with what he believed was morally right within his community, adhering to the commands of the deity Ulu, making Winterbottom's judgment coincidental rather than intentional (70).

Indigenous Custom Versus New Faith

Achebe provides another layer of insight into the tensions caused by the encroachment of colonialism and Christian missionary activities into Igbo

society through the interpersonal conflict between Ezeulu and his wife, Ugoye, regarding Oduche's involvement with the church. Emmanuel Obiechina, in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (1978), observes that Oduche, offered as a sacrifice to the emerging forces, triggers Ezeulu's first major crisis. He becomes a devout Christian, attempts to kill a sacred royal python, the totem animal of Idemili, and is discovered. This act intensifies the animosity between the priest of Idemili and Ezeulu, as well as between their families, villages, and supporters within the clan. (176).

Ezeulu's decision to send Oduche to the church, despite his wife's opposition, highlights the power dynamics within their marriage and the broader societal shift occurring in their community. Ugoye represents the traditional values and beliefs of the Igbo people, which are being challenged and undermined by the introduction of Christianity. Her opposition to Oduche's involvement with the church reflects a desire to protect their family's heritage and cultural identity from what she perceives as a threat. Oduche's act of putting the royal python in a box serves as a pivotal event that exacerbates the conflict between Ezeulu and his wife:

For the past two days she had been full of resentment against her husband because it was he who sent Oduche to the church people in spite of her opposition. Why should he now sharpen his matchet to kill him for doing what they taught him in the church? (Achebe 61).

Her resentment towards Ezeulu stems from his unilateral decision to send Oduche, her son, to the church, disregarding her concerns and objections. This decision reflects the patriarchal norms within their marriage, where Ezeulu assumes the authority to make significant decisions without considering her input or agency. Such unilateral actions underscore the imbalance of power and lack of respect for her autonomy, rooted in patriarchal beliefs and traditions. She feels marginalized and powerless in the face of her husband's authority, as he aligns himself with the forces of colonialism and Christianity at the expense of their shared traditions.

In the question she poses to Ezeulu about why he would now consider killing Oduche for doing what he was taught in the church, Achebe underscores the moral ambiguity and confusion surrounding the collision of these two conflicting belief systems. Ezeulu's wife cannot comprehend why her husband would condemn their son for following the teachings of the church, which he himself sanctioned by sending the boy there in the first place. This contradiction highlights the internal conflict, and moral

dilemmas faced by individuals and families caught amid cultural transformation and/or erosion.

Individual Versus Community

In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu's relationship with the Igbo community is fraught with tension and resentment, particularly concerning the New Yam festival. As the Chief Priest of Ulu, Ezeulu holds significant spiritual authority. However, this authority is challenged by the community's perceived neglect of their duties toward him during his imprisonment in Okperi. The New Yam festival, which Ezeulu is responsible for announcing, is a deeply important cultural event that marks the beginning of the harvest season and expression of gratitude to the gods for their blessings.

Upon Ezeulu's return from his humiliating detention by the white authorities in Okperi, his assistants express concern over his delay in announcing the festival date, noting that four days have passed since the appearance of the new moon, the traditional signal for setting the festival. Ezeulu's hesitation can be seen as a form of passive resistance or retaliation against the community, which he feels abandoned him during his imprisonment. The community's silence during his two-month ordeal left Ezeulu feeling deeply wounded and betrayed, fuelling his bitterness. Achebe captures the tension as part of the village elders and Ezeulu's assistants approach him to address the situation:

There is a little matter which we have decided to bring to you. It is now four days since the new moon appeared in the sky; it is already grown big. And yet you have not called us together to tell us the day of the New Yam Feast—'By our reckoning,' Obiesili took up, 'the present moon is the twelfth since the last feast.' (Achebe 205).

Ezeulu initially praises their initiative in seeking guidance but questions their understanding of the timing of events, specifically regarding the New Yam Feast. When one of the assistants, Obiesili, suggests that Ezeulu should have announced the feast at the last new moon, Ezeulu reacts with indignation, emphasizing his authority and knowledge as the Chief Priest. He dismisses any notion that he could have made an error in counting or reckoning time, asserting that such mistakes are beneath someone of his position. Ezeulu adopts a more tempered tone, reaffirming his confidence in his abilities and subtly reminding the elders of his authority over matters concerning the priesthood:

'You have done what you should do,' he said. 'If anyone says you have failed in your duty he is telling a lie. A man who asks questions does not lose his way; that is what our fathers taught us. You have done well to come and ask me about this matter which troubles you... Go back to your villages now and wait for my message. I have never needed to be told the duties of the priesthood.' (Achebe 206).

Achebe's portrayal of Ezeulu's demeanour after the men leave his hut is notable. He suggests that anyone entering Ezeulu's hut at that moment would have been taken aback by his change of attitude. Achebe depicts Ezeulu's countenance radiating with joy, accompanied by a brief resurgence of his youth and attractiveness. "If anyone had come into Ezeulu's hut after the men had left, he would have been surprised. The old priest's face glowed with happiness and some of his youth and handsomeness returned temporarily from across the years. His lips moved, letting through an occasional faint whisper" (Achebe 206).

This portrayal of Ezeulu's inner state contrasts sharply with the feigned surprise and nonchalant attitude he displayed earlier when confronted by his assistants about the delay in announcing the festival date. While he outwardly maintains a facade of indifference and control, internally, Ezeulu is experiencing a sense of satisfaction and empowerment. Thus, Achebe provides insight into Ezeulu's complex motivations and emotions, supporting the interpretation that his delay in announcing the festival date is not merely an oversight but a calculated act of asserting authority and punishing the community for their perceived betrayal.

Ezeulu's refusal to call the New Yam Feast has significant ethical implications for the community of Umuaro. Initially, the news of his decision stuns the people because it goes against tradition and custom, which dictates that the festival should be called when there is only one yam left from the previous year's harvest. However, Ezeulu justifies his decision by explaining that he still has three sacred yams remaining from the previous year, indicating that the time for the festival has not yet arrived according to tradition. Despite Ezeulu's adherence to custom, the community faces a dilemma. The harvest is ripe and needs to be gathered to prevent spoilage by the elements and pests.

However, Ezeulu's refusal to announce the feast can be seen as a response to the disruption caused by his imprisonment. While he upholds tradition by waiting until he has consumed the sacred yams, his inability to do so

due to external circumstances reflects the intrusion of colonial authority into traditional Igbo practices. The white man's actions not only directly impact Ezeulu but also disrupt the socio-cultural fabric of the community, leading to tensions and ethical dilemmas regarding the continuation of long-standing customs in the face of external interference. Innes (1990) notes that because of Ezeulu's refusal, the New Yam festival is postponed, leading the villagers to face hunger as their old yam supplies dwindle. Some villagers begin to turn to the Christian harvest festival as an alternative (64).

One of the community leaders, Onenyi Nnanyelugo, acknowledges Ezeulu's adherence to custom but also highlights the practical need to proceed with the harvest. He acknowledges that the disruption caused by the white man, particularly through Ezeulu's imprisonment, has contributed to the dilemma they now face. He emphasizes the importance of finding a solution to save the harvest and prevent famine, even suggesting that he would personally eat the remaining yams if he could. This reflects a broader awareness within the community of the influence of colonial forces on their way of life and the challenges they must navigate.

Ezeulu, as the Chief Priest of Ulu, feels a powerful sense of duty to uphold tradition and follow the will of the deity. He believes that his refusal to announce the feast is not a personal decision but one dictated by Ulu's will. However, the community leaders are concerned about the practical consequences of delaying the feast, highlighting a conflict between the duty to tradition and the duty to ensure the well-being of the community. Ezeulu expresses concern for the welfare of the entire community, emphasizing that his decision is not meant to harm anyone. However, the leaders of Umuaro are more focused on the immediate needs of the people, particularly regarding the harvest and potential famine. This raises questions about the balance between individual rights and the collective welfare of the community.

Both Ezeulu and the community leaders grapple with questions of accountability and blame. Ezeulu insists that he is following the will of the gods and cannot be held responsible for the consequences of his actions. Meanwhile, the leaders of Umuaro question whether there is a way to appease Ulu and avoid the potential harm to the community, suggesting a desire to hold someone accountable for the situation. The lack of communication and trust between Ezeulu and the community leaders exacerbates the ethical dilemma. Ezeulu feels misunderstood and defends his actions as divine mandate, while the leaders of Umuaro question his

motives and seek practical solutions to the crisis:

'Leaders of Umuaro, do not say that I am treating your words with contempt; it is not my wish to do so. But you cannot say: do what is not done, and we shall take the blame. I am the Chief Priest of Ulu and what I have told you is his will not mine. Do not forget that I too have yam-fields and that my children, my kinsmen and my friends – yourselves among them – have also planted yams. It could not be my wish to ruin all these people. It could not be my wish to make the smallest man in Umuaro suffer. But this is not my doing. The gods sometimes use us as a whip.' (Achebe 210).

Achebe suggests that Ezeulu's earlier resolve to retaliate against the community for what he perceived as their betrayal during his imprisonment casts doubt on the sincerity and consistency of his claims about following Ulu's will. Ezeulu's behaviour seems to be shaped not only by his commitment to tradition and the deity but also by personal grievances and a desire for revenge against the community.

In this depiction, Achebe portrays a confrontation between individual authority and communal well-being, highlighting the intricate power dynamics within traditional Igbo society. Ezeulu asserts his role as the Chief Priest of Ulu and underscores his obligation to uphold divine will, even if it means causing hardship for the community. His actions demonstrate a steadfast adherence to tradition and a belief in the paramouncy of religious authority. Conversely, community leaders express concern for the practical needs of the people and aim to find a resolution that balances adherence to tradition with the welfare of the community. They scrutinize Ezeulu's motivations and endeavour to appease Ulu while minimizing potential harm to the community.

Conclusion

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe masterfully portrays the ethical conflict arising at the intersection of traditional Igbo values and Western ethical systems in colonial Nigeria. Through the moral dilemmas and tensions his characters face, Achebe delves into the complexities of balancing tradition and modernity. This analysis reveals how responses to colonial intrusion reflect differing levels of ethical compromise and resistance within the Igbo community. At the centre of this conflict stands Ezeulu, whose steadfast commitment to his traditional duties and moral principles isolates him,

while underscoring the profound cultural and ethical challenges imposed by colonial rule.

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