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TRANSLATING HEALTH AND HEALING IN *THINGS FALL APART* (*TFA)* AND *ARROW OF GOD (AOG)* INTO GERMAN: AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION APPRAISAL

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Abstract
The knowledge about a people that engenders attitudes and responses towards them come mostly from knowing diverse aspects of their culture. This knowledge can be accessed through various textual media including translated literary texts. The world of diseases, ill-health and healing of a people, the Igbo in this instance, mirrors aspects of the cultural landscape of world-views, values and belief systems that not only determine the attitudes and relationships within the culture regarding well-being but also shape how the people may be perceived as an African cultural identity. Differences and distance between cultures, asymmetry in cultural attitudes and relations plus the cultural competence of the translator would affect adequacy in the transfer of meanings of health contexts, terms and concepts in translation and thus determine the quality of representation of a people. Employing intercultural textual and translation analysis and illustrating with purposively selected translated text units from the German translations of Chinua Achebe's novels Things Fall Apart (TFA) and Arrow of God (AOG), this paper concludes, following observed misrepresentations of the source culture, with emphasis on sufficient knowledge of the interrelating source and target cultures and a thorough understanding of particular contexts of cultural meanings as translator base-knowledge that will facilitate adequate transfer of meanings and make intercultural understanding and representation feasible through translation.
Key words: Intercultural communication, German translation, Igbo traditional health, *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, Chinua Achebe

Introduction

The conception and perception of diseases by a people and the indigenous health and healing practices of societies, especially traditional societies, are entwined with their cultural belief and value systems. Madugba (2009) highlights theoretical approaches to the view of diseases and their causes to include the following: (i) medical theory approach by which diseases results from man's total environment, physical, biological and chemical. Causative, transmitter and radiation agents of diseases can be isolated, for instance, an entire family death from food poisoning following the consumption of wild mushroom meals**;** (ii) the Psychological theory, following Sigmund Freud, by which diseases are seen through the analysis of the unconscious and other innate

primitive drives in human kind illustrated with the Greek mythology of Oedipus**;** (iii) the Conspiratorial theory that related diseases like Schizophrenia and mania with the conspiracy of relations to deprive an endowed relation of his inheritance by declaring him mad, a thing once done, leaves a stigma; (iv) the Historical theory illustrated with the cure of Naaman of Syria of his Leprosy by Prophet Elisha as recorded in 2nd Kings, Chapter 5; and (v) the Culture-Bound and Health theory where the natural, preternatural and supernatural forces join hands to determine the causality, diagnosis, management, prevention and prognosis of diseases. In this theory, 'diseases are caused or sent, they do not occur'

The Igbo concept of disease, health and ill-health and their healing practices are explainable by the culture-bound and health theory. The concept and context of society and culture here exceeds what only takes place at the plane of human relationships; they extend to the complex interaction of forces and agents inhabiting the terrestrial realm (i.e., earthly; land, forests, water, air), extra-terrestrial or preternatural realm (witches, sorcerers, magicians, spirits of evil men and women, etc.) and the supernatural realm (gods, *chi*, ancestors, deities, etc). As Madugba illustrates 'A man falls off a palm tree and dies. Divinations are made to determine the cause of the fall even though he may have used a brittle rope and later, an ancestor whose burial rites may not have been adequately performed emerges to be placated with extortionate sacrifices in order to prevent more falls and deaths in his family' (2009, cf. TFA, 15).

This context and environment of "spiritual communality" determine health and healing and well-being (cf. Eke 2012, 18). It is one in which relations within the human community inter permeate with those of the animal world, the world of nature, (plants, rivers and air) and the world of the spirits and gods, the dead and the ancestors and the unborn; it is the context in and from which health and healing concepts and terms derive their meaning, relevance and significance to cultural identity representation. Recent studies on health seeking behaviour in developing societies have also shown that besides poverty, absence of and high cost of accessing orthodox medical facilities, distrust of the 'overchemicalisation' of orthodox drugs among many others, a major factor why people, including some educated persons, prefer traditional medicine are cultural beliefs and values (Gyasi et al. 2016, 14, Akhagba 2019, 202, Deji et. al. 2021, 17). This denotes the need that textual practices of knowledge and meaning transfer like translation take due cognisance of underlying cultural beliefs, values and contexts governing health behaviours even in literary text translations. Traditional medicine is used here to reference the arguably non-scientific and religious health practices,

approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being (Egnew, Thomas R. 2005, 255; Fokunang, Ndikum, Tabi, et al. 2011, 284)

Materials and methods

Foregrounded on a comparative and descriptive research design, this paper adopted the meaning and skopos theories of intercultural communication and translation respectively as framework. The meaning theory otherwise the meaning-of-meaning theory by I.A. Richards as adapted to intercultural communication in Griffin is a context-based approach to meaning which explains that misunderstanding in intercultural communication chiefly results from the "proper meaning superstition" – the false but widely held belief that each word has a precise, correct, proper use and meaning of its own and that when people use these words they were effectively communicating (cf. Richards 1936/1950, 11, Griffin 1997, 57-68, Bannfield 2006, 102, Reißinger 2009, 54). Thus, the main claim of the theory is that meaning does not reside in words; they reside in people's past socio-cultural experiences. Through the knowledge and understanding of the contexts of social and cultural experiences that affect interlocutors and give rise to words and expressions used, misunderstanding can be avoided.

Skopos translation theory of Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiß (Reiss and Vermeer 1984, 95-6, 100, 134; Honig 1997, 9; Schäffner in Baker 1998, 235-6) contend that the purpose of the target text set by commissioners and executed by translators determines translation strategies and target text outcomes (Reiss and Vermeer 1984, 95-6, 100, 134; Honig 1997, 9; Schäffner in Baker 1998, 235-6). Skopos theory points to the power of translation, of translators, clients and commissioners, and receivers over texts. They can shape how the target text may be read and understood. This is particularly important in translation mediated communication between cultures where cultures may be wrongly represented through the translated text. The two theories enabled the analysis of the meaning value of words, terms, concepts and expressions and their rendition across the source to the target text with the context of the underpinning cultures. Purposively selected data from the German translated versions of TFA and AOG[1] were subjected to intercultural and translation analysis.

Analysis and discussion

In his assemblage of the mosaic of cultural aspects to discursively demonstrate the consummate, complete and harmonious nature of the prototype African culture and society, the Igbo African cultural identity, Chinua Achebe logically included terms, concepts and contexts of health and healings which translation is important to intercultural understanding and illustrates the relations of cultures in the translated text. At the risk of overemphasis, Chinua Achebe recovered, in his literary classics: *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) and *Arrow of God* (AOG), the muted voice of authentic African cultural narrative to force global attention to the relegated or, at best, contested reality of an African cultural identity.

Three of such health and healing-related terms and concepts are the focus of this analysis namely *Ogwu* **(***Ọgwụ)*, *Medicine-man* and *medicine*. The variants of cultural references they implicate and their translations give valuable insight into the Igbo world of ill health, healing and wellbeing and into communication across cultures through translation.

Translation of the term 'Ogwu' (ọgwụ)

In Things Fall Apart, one of the overzealous members of the Church is Enoch. In defiance of the customs of the land, he unmasked an *egwugwu* (a masked ancestral spirit). This is an abomination regarded as killing an ancestral spirit. Consequently, all the *egwugwus* of the clan marched to the church in a definitive confrontation with the intruding Christian religion. Among those that went with them were 'men whose arms were *strong in ọgwụ* or medicine' (TFA, 132). What the translators render by ommission and paraphraseas:

> …alles Männer, die über große Zauberkräfte verfugten. (TFA trans, 206). (...all men who possess great magical powers)

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[1] TFA and AOG have been used for citing the source texts written by Chinua Achebe; TFA trans. and AOG trans. for citing their translated versions.

'Medicine' used in the expression 'strong in *ọgwu* or medicine' by the source text to explain the source culture term '*ọgwụ*' is a rather weak, though perhaps the closest, equivalent representation of its meaning in the 'English' of Achebe. The target reader inured to western orthodox medicine might think of *ọgwụ* only in terms of medically or therapeutically processed substance or orthodox drugs used for the treatment or prevention of a disease. The concept of *ọgwụ* in Igbo references the potencies of flora and fauna, substances and of natural

and supernatural powers appropriated and manipulated not only as preventive or curative remedies to diseases and ailments but also as means to **control and** force natural things, persons and even spirits in order to bring about a desired objective (Ogugua, 2015).

In the narrative and source cultural context of the passage above, '*ọgwụ*' alludes to esoteric and magical powers obtained mostly through the inoculation of potent roots and herbs into the body and sacrifices to spiritual essences and/or through preparations of potent roots and herbs with activated spiritual/supernatural powers worn as protective amulets (cf. Madugba 2009). The men and people of Umuofia regard the church to be a shrine, the habitation of a strong foreign god and its priest (TFA, 134). Therefore, the march to go and destroy the church is seen as a confrontation with this foreign god and its powers. Both the troop of *egwugwu* and the elders that accompanied them were armed with their charms and amulets.

The translators have translated adequately to cultural meaning retaining and improving the sociocultural and communicative value of the source text expression. However, the omission of the term 'ọgwụ' in the translation removes not only local colour but also the potential of the term to invite the target reader to its deeper cultural and communicative meaning and the evidence of identity from the cultural expression. A semantic cushioning technique will be appropriate here. In *semantic cushioning*, a literal translation is combined with paraphrase or elaboration:

> …alles Männer, die kräftig in ọgwụ sind, die große Zauberkräfte verfugten [...all men that are strong in ọgwụ, who possess great magical powers.]

The latest translation of *Things Fall Apart* by Uda Strätling apparently acknowledged the inappropriateness of that omission and included ọgwụ in its (re)translation as '*Es waren Männer, deren Arme mächtig waren an solchem ọgwụ*' [they were men whose arms were mighty in ogwu] (TFA Strätling 2012, 203). The translation is judged to be fairly adequate on the whole to the understanding of the source culture in the target text.

Medicine, Medicine-men

The terms and concepts of medicine and medicine-men and the various contexts in which they are used introduce the target reader to aspects of Igbo medical register and, perhaps much more importantly, to that complex environment of health and healing that is permeated with the communality and spirituality of the source culture. For example, in TFA (8, 9), Medicine is portrayed as a spirit when the narrator states that the most potent war medicine of

Umuofia people is an old woman hopping on one leg ***-agadi nwanyi***. The *agadi nwanyi* medicine has a shrine, pointing out that medicine may equally have a home. Okonkwo, himself, indeed has a medicine house near his barn where he keeps the wooden symbols of his ancestors and ***chi*****,** his personal god (TFA, 10). In TFA (53), Okonkwo has to collect herbs and roots from the bush to prepare *iba* (malaria fever) medicine for his daughter, Ezinma, who is seriously sick. The herbs and roots were boiled to potency and appropriately administered. In TFA (55), Okagbue Uyanwa is a medicine-man specialised in dealing with matters of spirit children, *ogbanje*. He has to severe the tie of Ezinma with the spirit world of the *ogbanje* by finding her *iyi-uwa* so that Ezinma would break her cyclical deaths and rebirths to the same woman and stay with the living

Medicine Men: Example a. AOG 15; trans. 24

Medicine-men is here translated as *Heilern*, i.e., literally *healers*. In the narrative context, the narrator follows the thought of Ezeulu to describe the circumstances that led to the emergence of Ulu as the preeminent deity in Umuaro. In the face of intense and unceasing raids of Abam warriors, carrying Umuaro men, women and children into slavery, the leaders of Umuaro hired a strong team of '*medicine-men*' to install a common deity for them.

The translators substituted *medicine-men* with a word derived from the presumed outcome or product of their activities, i.e., 'healing'. In doing so, they created a noun of uncommon or infrequent contemporary usage in German, i.e., *Heiler*, literally *healer*. This German term references any member of the healing profession including orthodox, unorthodox and alternative medical practitioner. The German target reader would expectedly approximate correctly the meaning of *Heiler* from the verb *heilen*, i.e., to heal.

The Igbo term or word from which Achebe transcribes the term *medicine-men* is *dibia*, literally 'doctor' and generically 'healer'. However, its generic usage may not be suitable in specific contexts and may lead to a misunderstanding of its cultural significance or reference if not adequately qualified or elaborated upon. *Doctor* would be a poor translation of *dibia* in all contexts because the reference of *doctor* will, for the target reader, most presumably be limited to or include Western biomedics or orthodox medical practitioners with their 'objective' 'scientific', non-religious and non-spiritual diagnoses and procedures and may not encompass the herbal, spiritual, ritual, and communal dimensions of Igbo traditional medicine to which *dibia* exclusively refers. The range of traditional health practitioners covered by the term *medicine-men* is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Dibias and their specialist domain of care

Appellation	Domain of care
1. *Dibia afa, dibia ogba aja*	Divination diagnosis
2. *Dibia aja, or nchu aja, or anya odo*	Priest, ritual expert
3. *Dibia onye oha*	Community matters, king making
4. *Dibia mgborogwu*	Root and herb expertise, herbalism
5. *Dibia ara*	Insanity
6. *Dibia ogbaokpukpo*	Bone-setting
7. *Dibia ogbanje Ogbanje*	healing, care for spirit children
8. *Dibia amusu*	Witchcraft healing
9. *Dibia mmanwu*	Masquerade guarding
10. *Dibia amadioha*	Rain and thunder matters
11. *Dibia omumu*	Fertility healing and attending
13. *Dibia owa ahu or okwochi*	Surgery related ailments
14. *Dibia owu mmiri*	*Mami wota* (Mermaid) crisis
15. *Dibia anya, nti, etc.*	Cure of eye or ear problems

Table taken from Iroegbu (2010, 327).

A healer may combine various specialisations. Most healers address the common afflictions, such as malaria (*akom*), aches and pains (*ahu mgbu na ikwukwe*), as well as fever (*oyi*). Most may also deal with infections, such as measles (*akpata*), HIV/AIDS (*oria amuma ahu*) in their own right; as well as serious or prolonged diarrhoea (*otoro*, lit., excessive looseness of the bowels).

When the 'leaders' (these are elders and titled or noble men) of Umuaro adjudged the onslaught of the marauding Abam warriors to have reached the state of unbearable threat and distress to the continued existence of the clan, they hired a strong team of *medicine-men* to install a common deity for them. Unlike the case of Okonkwo's daughter, the clan is not literally 'sick' as a physical body would be but only metaphorically because it has become extremely unsafe and insecure. The needs of the clan were those of defence and security against Abam warriors. This strong team of *medicine-men* was not made up of 'body healers', as such; at least, 'body-healing' was not what they were commissioned to do. The team was composed mostly of 'diviners', 'priests', ritual 'experts' and 'herbalists'. In Igbo medical register they are '*dibia afa*', '*dibia aja*', '*dibia Mgborogwu*' (cf. Iroegbu 2010, 82).

The deity that the leaders and elders of Umuaro through this team installed for Umuaro is the actual medicine, not drug in this context, but the spiritual force that would ward off the Abam warriors and restore internal and external security and safety to Umuaro.

The translation of *medicine-men* as 'healers', ignores the cultural context. 'Healer' used by the translators has the disadvantage of not helping the target reader to correctly identify the people that make up this strong team hired by the leaders and elders of Umuaro and to associate them with the kind of work they were commissioned to carry out. It, therefore, leads to a loss of cultural meaning and representation. 'Healers' used by the translators, though innovative in the context, derives from a root word in German that in current usage can equally and commonly be associated with orthodox medicine and medical practitioners, i.e., doctors, *Ärzte*. The translation would need, at least, a complementary gloss or creative in-text elaboration to provide the necessary understanding. It is at the same time quite curious that the translators ignored the literal equivalent term in German to medicine-men, i.e., *Medizinmänner*, which, though appeared partly transliterated from the English, has comparable connotations in German with medicine-men as it is used in AOG. The translation did not adequately communicate the cultural meaning of the term to the target readers.

Example b. AOG 112; trans. 139.

Medicine-man is also translated as *Heiler* here, i.e., literally 'healer'. In the narrative context, Akuebue confided in Ezeulu during a friendly visit by the latter about Ogbuefi Amalu, who has fallen critically ill of *aru mmuo* and that John Nwodika of Umuofia has been hired by the Amalus to make medicine for him (i.e., to treat him). Akuebue, however, thinks that Aghadike, the *medicine-man* from Aninta also known as *Anyanafummuo* (eyes that sees the spirits) would have been a better choice to treat Ogbuefi Amalu's condition (AOG, 112).

The preference of Akuebue for Aghadike is because 'he [Aghadike] nips off sickness between his thumb and finger' (i.e., he is well experienced and efficient in the practice of his medicine and heals effortlessly). Ezeulu supports Akuebue's preference for Aghadike but yet for another reason: 'he [Aghadike] is a great doctor and diviner'. Doctor here refers to a herbalist, naturally (AOG, 114). Aghadike is, therefore, a diviner-herbalist, at least, i.e., '*dibia afa na mgborogwu*', making him doubly specialized and more qualified to treat *aru mmuo*, 'a sickness of the spirits' (AOG, 112). Diviners are empowered mediators between the visible and invisible realms of reality.

The technique of translating *medicine-man* here is the same with that described in example a) above and has the same inadequacy of creating ambiguity to the 'medical' context of the source culture. However, this same technique and choice of equivalence may, in comparison to a) above, be judged to be fairly applicable here to the understanding of both the narrative and cultural contexts. This is because *Heiler*,' in this context, directly refers to medical

personnel engaged in the effort to restore 'body health' not to create a spiritual force as in a) above and connotes the use of herbs to heal. However, the reason given by Ezeulu on his preference for Aghadike apparently points to a core belief in the culture that even bodily health has its spiritual dimension. *Medizinmann*, a literal translation of *medicine-man*, would thus be still preferable; for it connotes the possible use of healing methods which the 'modern' target reader would consider unorthodox. This connotation is capable of influencing the attitude of the target reader by making him/her to be unprejudiced or less prejudiced towards the 'unorthodox' methods and practices of healing that may be found in the narrative context.

Example c. AOG 148; trans.180.

In this case, *Medicine-men* is translated as '*Heilkundigen*' (AOG trans., 180), i.e., literally 'healing experts' with connotative reference in German to esoteric healers. In the narrative context, the narrator discusses the lustreless relationship between Ezeulu and his younger half-brother, Okeke Onenyi, though both seem to bear no ill-will against each other. Okeke Onenyi's lack of ill-will is supported by some people with the facts that he, as one of the *medicine-men* in Umuaro clan, has never been accused by anyone of sealing up his wife's womb, and that he has many sons and daughters; for *medicine-men* who carry out such vile practices, like men who relish human flesh, never prosper with children (AOG, 148)

The translation of medicine-men by semantic-simplification would seem to be a safe technique for the translators except that the cultural context could be misunderstood and or 'mistakenly' ignored. Semantic-simplification is the technique which duly considers the semantic or meaning load or connotations of a word and the meaning adjudged by the translator(s) to be the most suitable to and explanatory of the narrative context is selected and used in a simplified or accessible rendition of meaning. It is noteworthy that *Heilkundigen,* which the translators chose for *medicine-men,* is equally a synonym to the German word for medical doctor, '*Arzt*' (DUDEN 8. 2004, 106).

This context makes clear that Achebe has used the term *medicine-men* to cover a wide range of practitioners in traditional medicine that include malevolent sorcerers and practitioners of witchcraft who could cause such harm and evil like sealing up a woman's womb thus preventing her from conceiving a child and who 'relish human flesh', i.e., bring about the deaths of fellow human beings by diabolical powers or means.

Obviously, the translators ignored this connotation to the term when they translated *medicine-men* as '*Heilkundigen*' (healing experts) and so introduced ambiguity to the understanding of

the cultural context: A healing expert is supposed to heal, to bring about a positive state of health and not to cause ill-health, misfortune and death. When, in the target text, 'healing experts', as translated, is associated with a narrative context that suggests that these same 'healing experts' cause ill-health, misfortunes and deaths, it raises the question to the target reader, what do *doctors* or *medical personnels* do in this culture?

The concept of *ọgwụ* and its usages in the various cultural contexts does not denote only positive outcomes to health and well-being but the appropriation and manipulation of natural and supernatural forces for *desired* outcomes that may be contextually considered positive or negative. As Metuh (an Igbo man) avers 'medicines are thought to tap the power put by God into some herbs and other substances which those who know the right formular can tap and use for their own ends, good or bad!' (1985, p. 5). And Nze also observes that 'medicine, *ogwu*, in Igbo African tradition is not limited to objects applied for therapeutic purpose. It is inclusive of objects with the ascribed powers not only curing or preventing disease but also objects possessing trajectory powers capable of harming somebody aimed at as a target' (1998).

In this narrative context, a literal translation of *medicine-men* into German as *Medizinmänner* with a clarificatory note would be more appropriate in order to accommodate the connotation that could apply to malevolent medicine-men without unduly misrepresenting the source culture. *Medizinmänner* is used in German with reference to aboriginal peoples or cultures. It has comparable (not all) range of connotations as Achebe uses *medicine-men* in AOG, i.e., it connotes *Zauberer* (magician, sorcerer, wizard), *Heilkundiger* (healing experts), and *Priester* (priests) (Wahrig 1992, 873). The translation here misrepresents the source culture and is inadequate for an effective communication across cultures.

Translating Medicine

There are two translations to the term or word *medicine* to reflect the contexts of their use:

Example a. AOG 15; trans. 25.

Medicine is translated here as *Zaubermittel*, i.e., magical cure/magical potion. In the narrative usage of the term, the leaders of Umuaro, through the strong team of medicine-men, created the deity, Ulu, for the six villages of Umuaro. Half of the *medicine* used to make the deity was buried and the other half was thrown into the stream that became *Mili Ulu* (Ulu's River). The translation of medicine here as *Zaubermittel* can be regarded as a description of the ritual products used to create the Ulu deity that is adequate for a meaningful understanding of the

cultural context. However, as earlier pointed out above, in the context of the insecure environment made possible by the raids of the Abam warriors, the deity, Ulu, is the 'medicine', the spirit force that restrains the Abam warriors. The translation here is on the whole adequate.

Example b. AOG 112; trans. 139.

In this case, *medicine* has been translated semantically by the literal technique as *Heilmittel*, i.e., potent substance or remedy for treating ill-health. *Heilmittel* is synonym to *Medizin,* which is of equivalent meaning to the English word, medicine.

In the narrative context usage, Akuebue informed his friend, Ezeulu, that the family of the critically sick Ogbuefi Amalu hired John Nwodika of Umuofia to make *medicine* for him (AOG, 112). In this context, the reference of *medicine* is not only to the herbal preparations but also the charm fortifications around the ailing man and the shooting of a gun at intervals by the medicine-man to ward off offensive spirits (AOG, 114). The rendition of *medicine* as *Heilmittel* is not sufficiently encompassing in its denotative meaning to capture the source cultural environment of ill-health and healing reflected in the narrative context. It is thus not contextually suitable enough for the understanding of both the narration and the source culture. However, the source cultural context in the narrative will activate the connotations contained in *Heilmittel* that implicates whatever other remedy used for healing. The translation may be judged on that account to be adequate.

In the source culture, as the use of the terms and concepts *medicine-men* and *medicine* in the various contexts shows considerably, the search for the cause and the cure for a serious health condition goes beyond the physical body of the sick person. It extends into the planes of the spiritual, the ancestors and the gods, and the community. Besides, the fact that in the land of the spirits, humans and the gods form an interpermeable community (cf. TFA, 85), the belief in sorcery, witchcraft and superhuman forces that impinge on health and well-being, is a central part of the culture.

Pursuant, consulting forces that see beyond the material and temporal realms through *dibias* initiated and trained in the mystery and secrets of the spirits and cures, and reaching out for ritual remedies are for the most part a central part of Igbo (medical) culture. Serious illness or malady that persists becomes the source of family and even communal concern. Family members, close kin-groups and kindred elders consider it their moral obligation to attempt to find the source of the illness as a prelude to finding a cure. At the background of all these

search and cure is a concept of health and healing that is based on relationship and standing with 'community'. We quote Iroegbu elaborately on this relationship:

> The Igbo concept of good and ill health is eccentrically constituted: health is a sum, first of a person's relations with the family and community members, alike with the invisible world of the medicine deity (*agwu*), the earth deity (*ala*), the ancestral cults (*ofufe ndi ichie*). The ancestral spirit is the transmitter and guardian of one's family and personal genius (*chi*). One's capacity to live a quality life is achieved primarily with the support of one's *chi* as well as, if needed, through proper ritual treatment in particular by *ofo* na *ogu* (key symbols to declare innocence, justify conscience, achieve retribution, and obtain ancestral help). Forces, such as thunder (*amadioha*) or town and village deities, may be called upon to bring harm to targeted victims. Other extra human forces, such as *mami wota* (mermaid) or *ogbanje* (ghost or spirit children), may cause suffering and illness. Good or ill health is also the outcome of people's invisible and potentially harmful dealings with one another through evil eye, envy or jealousy, witchcraft (*ita amusu*) or sorcery (*nshi na aja*), curse (*ibu onu*) or the calling down of extra human wrath (*iku ofo na iju ogu*). Such aggression may cause physical injury or insanity, as well as the loss of property, a job, one's beloved ones, and the like. Offended ancestors and evil spirits (*ajo mmuo*) may cause debilitating misfortunes, illness and death. There are moreover social misfortunes, such as the inability to find a loving and stable marital partner, win social status and public authority in one's community. To sustain health and society, people and their invisible allies join forces and rely on competent healers [dibias]. (Iroegbu, 2010, 82).

In this culture, to heal is to restore to health. Health is, however, not just bodily health but being in harmony and wholeness with oneself and the inclusive community of humans especially the family and kinship, the animal world, the world of nature, (plants, rivers and air) and the world of the spirits and gods, the dead and the ancestors and the unborn. Disease and ill-health are often seen to be a threat to that harmony and wholeness

Conclusion

Achebe revealed at various contexts in the entire narrative the Igbo health and healing system or environment as part of the argument on a living and fully integrated and rational traditional African culture. Central keywords or terms in the narrative relevant to the understanding of

this environment include *medicine* and *medicine-men*, among others. These are terms whose connotations guide to the various dimensions of this health environment including the physical, spiritual, cultic or ritual, communal and social dimensions, and which translations are very important to understanding, misunderstanding and (mis)representation of the source culture in cross/intercultural communication through the translated text. Literary texts such as TFA and AOG, deeply rooted in their source cultures, require competent cultural translators with sufficient knowledge of the interrelating source and target cultures and a thorough understanding of specialised terms and contexts of cultural meanings to be able to disentangle the nuances of cultural contexts, meanings and representations.

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