

Religion, Peace and Sustainable Development: An Approach to Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

It is the task of this research essay to show how religion, peace and sustainable development are dependent from one another. Religion if well used favors peace and thereby sustainable development. Put the other way round, religion when misused brings about religious wars that are not compatible with principles of sustainable development. As the saying goes, there is no development without peace. How should religion therefore be central to peace and sustainable development? This article lays emphasis on religious hybridity or rapprochement as powerful factors for peace-building in Africa and in the world as a whole. This article prolongs the debate upon how religion should contribute to peace instead of religious wars that have taken form as Boko Haram, Islamic State, Alquaïda and many other terrorist organizations that destroy efforts for peace and sustainable development. Through the novels *Arrow of God* and *Purple Hibiscus* that particularly portray African traditional religions and the Christian religion, this essay seeks to demonstrate how religious hybridity may be an efficient alternative for peace building and sustainable development. This study is going to be conducted through the lenses of the reader-oriented theory. The major expected result calls upon those who use religion as a means for wars to instead make of it a factor of peace. Another result is to end, through religious dialogues and rapprochements, human deaths and predicaments in the name of religion.

Keywords

Hybridity, Peace, Religion, Sustainable Development.

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Résumé

Cet article recherche à démontrer comment la religion, la paix et le développement durable sont dépendants les uns des autres. Si elle est bien utilisée, la religion favorise la paix et donc le développement durable. À l'inverse, la religion mal utilisée entraîne des guerres de religion qui ne sont pas compatibles avec les principes du développement durable. Comme le dit l'adage, il n'y a pas de développement sans paix. Comment la religion peut-elle donc être au cœur de la paix et du développement durable? Cet article met l'accent sur l'hybridité ou le rapprochement religieux comme de puissants facteurs de promotion de paix en Afrique et dans le monde. Mon article prolonge le débat sur la façon dont la religion devrait contribuer à la paix au lieu des guerres de religion qui ont pris forme comme Boko Haram, l'État islamique, Alqaïda et bien d'autres organisations terroristes qui détruisent les efforts de paix et de développement durable. À travers les romans *Arrow of God* et *Purple Hibiscus* qui représentent particulièrement les religions traditionnelles Africaines et la religion Chrétienne, cet article cherche à démontrer comment l'hybridité religieuse peut être une alternative efficace pour la promotion de la paix et le développement durable. Cette étude va être menée à travers les lentilles de la théorie littéraire basée sur le lecteur. Le principal résultat attendu appelle ceux qui utilisent la religion comme moyen de guerre à en faire plutôt un facteur de paix. Un autre résultat est de mettre fin, par le biais de dialogues et de rapprochements religieux, aux morts et souffrances humaines au nom de la religion.

Mots clés

Hybridité, Paix, Religion, Développement durable.

Introduction

Scholars have over the years sought sustainable solutions to challenges that impede development in Africa. As such, African literary authors have mounted the rostrum to bring their contributions in the resolution of challenges such as generational conflict, clash of religions and most recently those thought-provoking wars based upon religious differences and misunderstandings destroying thus efforts of peace

building and sustainable development. This article posits that an in-depth exploration of religion, peace and sustainable development becomes a powerful alternative to achieve peace. It is worth noting that the three concepts are closely linked and amply express mechanics to attain human progress through a sustainable development. To S. Kierkegaard (1973, p. 7): “Religion is at the bottom of everything... Indeed, the 'vital fluidum' from which everything, including life itself flows. Our social and economic development modes operate with ideological sub- and superstructures that consist of ideas and values ostensibly drawn from our religious beliefs and practices”. Undeniably, religion becomes therefore extremely central to human life. In their “*Myth 1: All Societies Have Religions*”, J. Morreall and T. Sonn (2013), *define religion* as a socio-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, beliefs, worldviews, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics that generally relate humanity to supernatural, transcendental and spiritual elements. One distinguishes different types of religions worldwide but, Christianity and traditional African religions are the major concerns of this article. All religions advocate peace-building. According to Wikipedia, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals. The concepts of religion and peace-building refer to the study of religion’s role in the development of peace. C. F. Nathan and C. J. Woolner (2011, p. 351) categorize these approaches into three models among which “peace through religion alone”. This proposes to attain world peace through devotion to a given religion. Such an ideology seeks to attain world peace through their particular religion only and have little tolerance of other religious ideologies. The project of an Islamic State and Boko Haram are, for this purpose, excellent examples. I am particularly critical of this philosophy since my article advocates to reach world peace through rapprochement or religious tolerance only. I do strongly believe in C. F. Nathan and C. J. Woolner’s (2011, p. 351) approach of “peace with religion”. This approach focuses on the importance of coexistence and interfaith dialogue. T. H. Gerrie (2005, p. 18) suggests that religion is neither inherently good nor bad for peace, and that its influence is undeniable. Peace with religion, then, emphasizes promoting the common principles present in every major religion.

This, calls then for religious hybridism or rapprochement which constitute powerful channels in attaining world peace that may guarantee a sustainable development for humanity. For S. Rouiha and H. Guezzoun H. (2017, p. 24): “Hybridity has appeared as a socio-cultural concept which refers to the cultural mixture and fusion in Africa during and after the colonial period”. Thus, while the concept of hybridity in religion may accrue negative associations because it was used “to imply inauthenticity or contamination, the insidious infiltration of a putatively ‘pure’ religious tradition by meanings, symbols, and ritual practices borrowed from an alien, impure religious tradition” (McGuire, 1997, p. 108), my essay defends the thesis that religious hybridity plays a very important role in peace-building and in the sustainable development of Africa. Explaining the concept of sustainable development, T. Klarin (2018, p. 68) comments that:

The essence of the concept of sustainable development derives from the *Triple bottom line concept*, which implies the balance between three pillars of sustainability – *environmental sustainability* focused on maintaining the quality of the environment which is necessary for conducting the economic activities and quality of life of people, *social sustainability* which strives to ensure human rights and equality, preservation of cultural identity, respect for cultural diversity, race and religion, and *economic sustainability* necessary to maintain the natural, social and human capital required for income and living standards.

With religion as its central topic, this essay goes in line with the “social sustainability” that constitutes the second pillar of sustainable development as seen by T. Klarin.

In *Arrow of God* and *Purple Hibiscus* that form the corpus texts of my investigation, traditional religion and Christianity are juxtaposed respectively by Achebe and Adichie to let readers appreciate how their coexistence is highly central to peace and sustainable development. In this logic, T. Adi (2018, p. 75) opines that: “In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie depicts a fictitious Roman Catholic Church. Through some techniques of rapprochement, she also bridges Christianity and African traditions”. The key concern of this

article is to show how religion affects peace and sustainable development. Besides, it raises the question of whether religious coexistence or hybridity should not be an alternative in the religious self-understanding of Christians and African traditionalists so as to favor peace and social sustainability which is part of sustainable development.

To achieve the purpose of this work, I am particularly interested in the reader-oriented theory. This theory sustains that in a text, the reader and the text share a transactional experience (C. Bresler, 2011, p. 72). This study is based on textual analysis of the selected novels.

My essay is structured around two major sections. Section one is titled “Necessity of Religious Hybridism for Peace and Sustainable Development”. It discusses the religious hybridism as a necessary means for peace and sustainable development in *Arrow of God*. Titled “Religious Hybridism, Peace and Social Sustainability”, section two goes in the same line to discuss religious hybridism, peace and social sustainability in *Purple Hibiscus*.

1. Necessity of Religious Hybridism for Peace and Sustainable Development

This first section deals with the necessity of religious hybridism for peace and sustainable development as portrayed in *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe. In his novel under study, Achebe has portrayed religious hybridism, rapprochement and coexistence to his readership as a necessary and efficient alternative for social cohesion, peace and development. Instead of depicting a fictional society where Western and African religious practices are in a sharp opposition, he does offer to his readers the opportunity to see possible ways of coexistence between two different belief systems, values and practices. Literary scholars have for a long-time discussed clash of religions as being fundamentally exclusive of one another. However, this section of my article rather elaborates on collaboration of African religions and Christianity in *Arrow of God* as a necessity for peace which should bring about development. What captures the reader’s attention is the hybridity in behavior, religious beliefs and educational systems exhibited by Achebe’s characters. Many episodes in the novel reveal that most Christians, willingly or unwillingly

accommodate with traditionalists and vice-versa. Achebe sees to it that white missionaries as well as British administrators and African traditionalists are brought together so as to accept one another. By doing so, the author creates mutual cohesion, coexistence, collaboration and mutual respect among characters (whites and blacks) and mutual consideration of their different values. This fact is well remarked by E. Obiechina (1975, p. 246) when he says in *Culture, Tradition and society in the West African Novel*, he comments that:

In spite of the effort of the Christian sects to meet traditionalism halfway as a strategy of survival, it is clear that traditional religion has never really been in danger of obliteration, for the simple reason that many of those who in their youth found their way into the church, often via the elementary school, tend in the middle age to drift back, either to take the much-coveted traditional titles or to marry additional wives, an action likely to put them outside the orthodox Christian communion anyway. Even those who remain in the Christian fold try to have their cake and eat it: they profess Christian virtues but consort with traditionalist agents-medicine men diviners and priests-especially during major crises when the Christian God has failed to provide remedies and respite.

Obiechina's position is very illustrative in the sense that whether in fictional societies or out here, an appeal is made to traditional practices by Christians or that of Christian practices by traditionalists. It is my contention that both traditional religions and Christianity find system of accommodation in which virtues of Christianity and those of traditional religion be put together for a pacific life. There is no need hating christianity or traditional religion which in fact promotes good values as does the christian religion. As shown in the excerpt above, Christians and traditionalists should come together to attain world peace and social sustainability. In this logic, A. Ainamon and C. F. Bodgrenou (2014, p. 25) advocate "a Christianity that must not only empower African cultures but which must also guarantee peace and social cohesion in Africa". This is a clarion call for Africans to make their own religious hybridity if they actually would like to enjoy peace and social cohesion. This is reminiscent of African religious duality/syncretism which dominates many African societies because of

colonial influence. Achebe's African characters in *Arrow of God* have well understood the necessity to collaborate with the white man's religion while preserving at the same time their Igbo cultural identity. Achebe creates characters who accept to convert to the imported religion.

Facts of hybridism are legion in *Arrow of God*. For instance, after refusing to let his peoples which are dominated by hunger and starvation observe the new yam festival, Ezeulu's population leaves him alone and joins the mission church for it to free itself from the threats of the traditional priest. This is an excellent example of hybridism as seen in traditionalists since they bear both traditional and Christian values. Thanks to this fact, the reader safely arrives at the conclusion that the Umuaro male and female characters are tolerant but skeptical, democratic. They challenge Ezeulu's authority and are opened to change. They exhibit a kind of religious democracy by freely moving from traditional religious practices to Christianity and vice-versa provided that they find peace. Their value is not to have fixed religious values. What is worth noticing is that people of Achebe's fictional Umuaro are never religiously static; they are always opened to change as far as this change can satisfy their current need. Rigidity is not therefore part of the principles of Umuaro's people. As a result, Ezeulu's rigidity towards his community brings about his downfall. It becomes obvious that, Ezeulu, the principal character in *Arrow of God*, because of his rigidity toward the whole Umuaro, and his unstable position- at the beginning of the narrative he seems to befriend the white man but toward the end of the narrative, the white man becomes his first rival - is left by the latter and consequently, all the powers he had over the community get ruined. A close analysis of Achebe's portrayal of Ezeulu reveals that the main character's downfall originates in his refusal to promote religious hybridity which demands openness and collaboration with the Christian religion. Ezeulu does not enjoy peace because of his refusal to take seriously religious hybridity. What is more, by boycotting Ezeulu's refusal to let them observe the new yam festival, the Umuaro's traditionalists have joined the mission church for one major motive: to enjoy peace and freedom. Without that peace and freedom, Umuaro people won't develop themselves religiously or socially

talking. Religion, therefore, affects peace and social sustainability which is an important pillar of sustainable development.

Elsewhere in *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu is made to bring his son to the white man's church as another strategy of rapprochement, hybridity and coexistence between traditional African religious believers and Christians:

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: GOME, GOME, GOME, GOME, GOME. 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[sic] and the stories he heard about his people that the white man was very wise (*Arrow of God*, p. 42).

What captures the attention of the reader is that though a strong and devout traditionalist, chief priest and keeper of the custom of Umuaro, Ezeulu does not hesitate in sending his son to the white man's church so that he learns more about the white man and his religion. For him the white man has something that he lacks and sending Oduche to him will be the only way through which he can get to know about white men and their imported religion. These are scenes some readers may consider as acts of curiosity. However, beyond its curious aspect, the reader sees a powerful means of religious hybridity, coexistence and collaboration for the sake of peace. This is particularly reminiscent of womanist stands as promoted by K. M. Nubukpo (1995, p. 65) when he suggests tolerance and mutual collaboration among different people with different values. For this purpose he says:

If womanism and the male tradition were to be roommates or neighbours with troublesome pets, I can well imagine womanism telling the male tradition 'Listen, why don't you and I sit down and talk and get organized like two descent human beings, so that

we can keep your best dogs and my best cats. And chances are that they would sit down and humanise each other.

By sending his son to learn about the Christian religion, chances are that Ezeulu may understand and accept to collaborate and coexist with Christians. As such, Christians and traditionalists may “sit down and humanize each other”. This may favor social cohesion, mutual understanding, peace and social sustainable development. Through the above extract of *Arrow of God*, Achebe seems to have initiated an interreligious dialogue between traditionalists and Christians. Achebe (1975, p. 48) clearly observes that in order to understand somebody’s world view, one has first to learn it. Therefore Ezeulu, by bringing his son to the white man’s religion wants simply to understand the latter’s world view and understanding somebody’s world view prevents from being in conflict with him/her. Commenting this episode, S. Lefara (2012, p. 20) reiterates that “Ezeulu knows that Africa can’t go without Europe and vice versa. This is why he willingly accepts the white man’s friendship. As a consequence, Ezeulu is the man from Umuaro to ever send his son, Oduche, to the mission school”. Lefara’s point sheds more light on Achebe’s philosophy of hybridity of cultures and religions, which he sees as the core solution to religious conflicts and wars in African societies as well as in all corners of the world where difference in religion constitutes a war cause. What is also noticeable is the proximity of the chief priest’s house and the Christians’ place of worship. Achebe purposefully puts these two areas side by side to allow his readership to be aware of his peace- building methods which are hybridity, coexistence, and rapprochement. The hidden philosophy behind this vicinity is that the author invites Christians and traditionalists to come together and work hand in hand to preserve and promote peace in their different religious beliefs. Religious differences should be factors of peace instead of war that does not promote development. The place itself is purposefully chosen to build the church. Indeed, it is because the church is closer to his compound that Ezeulu’s mind has turned from his traditional festival to the white man’s religion on hearing the ringing of the bell. At some specific levels of the novel for example, the reader becomes aware of Ezeulu’s determination to accommodate with the white man’s religion so as to get its benefit. This is made available through the words of Ezeulu to

his son: the “world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had they known tomorrow” (*Arrow of God*, p. 46). In the above extract, Achebe is, through Ezeulu’s voice inviting each and every one to avoid religious purism which becomes an illusion in a drastically changing world. This goes out here in society to attack the fanatic believers who take their religion as the best and therefore compellingly for everybody to adhere to it. In fact, this kind of belief never constructs but always destroys social peace and sustainable development.

Another example illustrating hybridity between traditional religion and Christianity is seen in the relationship between the policemen and the traditional *dibia*. Many are people who confess to be Christians but whenever they are under helpless situation, they seek rescue from the traditionalists. Achebe has made available this episode for the reader to best appreciate:

At first ‘Couple’ Matthew Nweke was not too worried. He had a strong personal protection which a great *dibia* in his village made for him during his last leave. But as he heard more and more about Ezeulu his faith in his safety began to weaken. In the end he held quick consultation with the policeman who had accompanied him to Umuaro and they decided that to be on the safe side they should go and see a local *dibia* straight away. It was past ten o clock [sic] at night when they arrived at the man’s house. He was called throughout the village *The Bow that shoots at the Sky*.

As soon as they came in he told them the object of their mission. ‘You have done right to come straight to me because you indeed walked into the mouth of a leopard (*Arrow of God*, p. 158).

This above episode shows the extent to which Christianity and traditional religion are mutually complementary. In certain situations, one depends on the other and vice versa. It is because the white man’s policemen fear Ezeulu will do them whatever harm that it becomes a necessity for them to seek the help of another traditionalist who can, at least prevent Ezeulu from harming them. In this sense, in contemporary African societies, some Christians openly or most of the time hide

themselves to go to traditionalists especially to traditional priests and medicine men for help (Obiechina, 1975, p. 246). Likewise, when things go wrong for some traditionalists, the best solution for them is to convert in Christianity or Islam. Achebe has Ezeulu observe that as time and needs change; one must cope with these changes.

Consequently, Ezeulu advises his son Oduche to tell anyone who happens to ask him why he has converted in Christianity that “a man must dance the dance prevalent in his time” (*Arrow of God*, p. 189). No doubt, the “prevalent dance” in the religious sphere today is hybridism, coexistence, interfaith, in-betweenness and cooperation despite differences. It is only by so doing that religion may greatly impact peace and social sustainability which is part and parcel of sustainable development.

2. Religious Hybridism, Peace and Social Sustainability

This section of my essay is devoted to the study of religious hybridism, peace and social sustainability as depicted in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie’s standpoint about religious hybridism is made clear as she gets poisoned the fanatic Eugene. The leading character of the novel displays no tolerance for the traditional religion and as a result, he has been poisoned by his wife at the end of the novel. This poison brings the main character of Adichie’s novel under study to his tragic end. The philosophy Adichie advocates through such portrayals is accommodation between religions. By having her protagonist end in a sorrowful way, she would like readers to get rid of religious intolerance and purism so as to accept religious hybridism, coexistence and rapprochement as important ways to promote peace and social sustainability. Eugene’s failure to maintain a pure Christian religion within a highly traditional Nigerian society should be seen as a powerful narrative technique used by Achebe’s “21st-centrydaughter” (that is the name given to Adichie by some critics) J. Soungoua, (2014, p. 155) to bring both religions together. This episode shows that no culture or religion in postcolonial African societies is self-sufficient. Cultures and religions in order to survive must complement one another. According to A. C. Neneve (2018, p. 68),

The postcolonial Nigeria represented in *Purple Hibiscus* (in terms of its culture and religion) is a zone of “in-between” (...), a space of mediation between the past and the here and now, a space in which the past is renewed. Therefore, many people in this in-between zone are led to negotiate, accommodate both the new and the so called past, which is what we can see happening with many characters in the novel, who, in their context, inhabit such a space and who, unlike Eugene, have embraced the mixture in it and do not resist the contamination from either of the sides, the new or the past.

What is worth of note in Neneve's position is that the “past” she refers to is the African traditional religious and cultural values as they were authentically practiced before the coming of the imported religions while “the here and now”, in the context of *Purple hibiscus* is the Roman catholic church which is introduced to Africans as a result of colonization. For her, African traditional religions are revisited or “renewed” in *Purple Hibiscus* in order to cope with present situations. Many characters, unlike the fanatic Eugene and few others, exhibit a kind of mixture of both the traditional religion and Christianity. Adichie sees that there is no peaceful life without accommodation and attempting to be purely Christian or purely traditionalist brings about misunderstandings and marginalization. In order to erase the barrier between both religions, she makes Aunty Ifeoma and her children mix traditional religious practices to Christian ones. Ifeoma for example, refuses the idea of her brother, Eugene that their father be buried according to Christian norms. In fact, Papa-Nnukwu was a practitioner of traditional religion before his death and consequently, though Ifeoma is a catholic, she insists that their father must be buried according to his religion, not another one's. In a conversation with her brother about Papa-Nnukwu's death, she repudiates the latter's decision to call a priest for “extreme unction” (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 188). She harshly asks Eugene:

Is that all you can say, eh, Eugene? Have you nothing else to say, gbo? Our father has died! Has your head turned upside down? Aunty Ifeoma got up and started to shout. Her voice was unsteady. “I will put my dead husband's grave up for sale, Eugene, before I give our father a catholic funeral. Do you hear

me? I said I will sell Ifediora's grave first. Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene... (*Purple Hibiscus*, p.188-189).

From this extract, we see how devout Ifeoma is towards traditional religion. Despite her being Christian, she does not consider her father's religion as "satanic" as her brother does. Unlike the fanatic and zealous Eugene, Ifeoma is determined to offer a good traditional burial to their father at any expense. To show the degree to which Ifeoma is committed to remain hybride, Adichie has her say that she is ready to sell her dead husband's grave in order to bury her father the way his religion requires. Readers are therefore introduced to an Ifeoma who not only knows well her African origins but accepts change while respecting the requirements of the christian faith. Even during the period of Papa-Nnukwu's illness only Aunty Ifeoma helped by her children and their cousins took care of the old man despite the fact that they belong to from different religious groups (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 152). What is more, Adichie's reconciling mission is seen also through the episode where she allows Jaja to participate into to the traditional initiation rite. During an exchange with Jaja, she is astonished on hearing that the latter is not initiated into the fictive traditional Igbo practices:

"You didn't do the ima mmuo, did you? Obiora did it two years ago in his father's hometown."

"No, I didn't," Jaja mumbled. I looked wondered if the dimness in his eyes was shame. I suddenly wished, for him that he had done the ima mmuo, the initiation into the spirit world. I knew very little about it; [...] (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 87).

Here again, what readers realize is that not only Aunty Ifeoma herself does not see any trouble in traditional religion, she gives also a free choice to her children to be initiated. For the postcolonial Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Christianity does not exclude traditional practices and vice versa. It is my contention that as an African, one should not repudiate Christianity in favor of traditional religion nor become "too much of a colonial product" by totally willing an eradication of traditional religion if one wants harmonious life. Adiche's characters are not created for the sake of nothing. The

likes of Eugene (those who want a tabula rasa of traditional religions) and the likes of Aunty Ifeoma (those who accommodate) have existed and still exist not only in Nigerian but everywhere in African societies. If some of her characters misbehave and yet others have a good behavior; if some are rigid or fanatic and others accept to cooperate, it is simply that she has portrayed the society the way it is. She has observed such persons in the society where she lives.

Adichie is one of the best promoters of peace and collaboration since she gives freedom to most of her characters to blend both religions. By letting her character Ifeoma combine the traditional religion and Christianity, she is on the right way of womanism as seen by A. Pewissi (2017, p. 1) who sustains the view that people, whether in literature or in real society, must learn to capitalize on their differences in order to promote values of humanization, tolerance, peace and love. For this to be achieved, we must allow integration of cultures and religions.

Besides, Ifeoma, another character who promotes hybridity is the Igwe who is, to speak like A. C. Neneve (2018, p. 68) “in the highest point in the hierarchy of the Igbo village and is a figure of authority”. We learn from the novel through the narrator that despite the Igwe’s conversion to Christianity, he allows his relatives to perform sacrifices in his palace (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 93). In a sense, the Igwe knows the importance of carrying out sacrifices and this is why he does not forbid anyone to perform them. The philosophy behind Adichie’s creation of such hybrid characters is to promote unity through hybridity which is made possible through tolerance regardless of the difference in religious practices.

Another aspect of hybridity is introduced to the reader through the relationship between Kambili, her brother and their grandfather. To reject Eugene’s radicalism towards his father, Adichie portrays scenes through which she gets Eugene’s children exhibit religious hybridity and coexistence by seeing to it that Kambili and Jaja accept to cooperate with Papa-Nnukwu (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 66) a traditionalist. This goes against Eugen’s desire to see his father abandoned in loneliness because he does not go to church. Kambili’s desire to stay and assist her grandfather (get water for Papa-Nnuku), is an example of the way Adichie brings people of different beliefs together to favor social sustainability which participates in the sustainable

development. Even the visit of Eugene's children to their traditionalist grandfather has proved an essential literary tool in Adichie's hand to create rapprochement between Papa-Nnukwu the representative of the traditional religion and his small children whom Eugene seeks to raise according to the standards of Christian faith. Adichie's technique of building peace through religious hybridism is also depicted through the character of Ifeoma who convinces Mama to go to Abagana for the "Aro festival". She addresses her sister-in-law in these terms: "But you can't stay here serving them all day. We should take the children to Abagana for the Aro festival tomorrow, to look at the mmuo" (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 73). Their conversion makes it clear that Ifeoma, though a christian, still has a hand in the Igbo traditional rituals and festivals and would like her sister-in-law to join her. This is what should be done to promote peace among individuals of different religious beliefs and this may erase religious wars.

The technique of religious hybridism as an important alternative for peace and social sustainability is also made available through the way the authoress depicts the novel's form and title. First of all, talking of the form, one realizes that most of Adichie characters like those of Achebe carry Igbo traditional names. This is the example of Ezeulu, Kambili, Jaja, Papa-Nnukwu, Amaka, Chima, Obiora, Amadi, Ezinne, Amadi. Though they bear local names, some of them are Christians. Their hybrid aspect is that despite their being Christian, some still accept to be baptized and confirmed while conserving their Igbo names. A case in point is Amaka who, despite the urge of Father Amadi and her own mother, refuses to take a confirmation name. She prefers an Igbo name to an English one because for her whether an English or Igbo name, both are the same in terms of meaning (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 241). For her, traditional names and Christian names are meant all to glorify God. This is seen through her following position: 'Chiamaka' says God is beautiful; "'Chima' says God knows best; 'Chiebuka' says God is the greatest. Don't they all glorify God as much as 'Paul' and 'Peter' and 'Simon'?" (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 272). These episodes reveal religious hybridism through hybride names (Christian and traditional names provided that all glorify God).

The title *Purple Hibiscus* itself is another important narrative element used by Adichie to promote hybridism in religion. In fact, the

title of Adichie's novel is itself hybrid in its meaning. The color purple is a composite color which is the mixture of the blue and red together. The hibiscus as a flower stands for peace or happiness. So, the whole philosophy of the authoress is imbedded in the title of her book. Since the color purple is a mixture of red and blue together, Adichie through this color wants to encourage the mixture of Christianity and traditional religion together for life to be beautiful like the flower hibiscus. According to Bourn as quoted by A. Pewissi (2017, p. 11-12):

Purple combines the calm stability of blue and fierce energy or red. The color purple is often associated with royalty, nobility, luxury, power, and ambition. Purple also represents meanings of wealth, extravagance, creativity, wisdom, dignity, grandeur, devotion, peace, pride, mystery, independence, and magic.

The point here is that all the quality associated with color purple are all leading to negotiation for a harmonious life. If people are united, they can have the same ambition, become powerful, be wealthy, and then live a peaceful life. A. Pewissi (2017, p. 12) reiterates that "purple calls for negotiation as it takes color to form itself; exchange and mutual enrichment are the suggestion of nature". I think this is the kind of life Adichie wants to promote through her novel's title. No peace or sustainable development is possible in a world which lacks such values.

Conclusion

It has been the major task of this article to discuss religion, peace and sustainable development in selected novels by Achebe and Adichie. First and foremost, I came up with the result that religion affects peace and social sustainability which is an important pillar of sustainable development. Next, my essay has found that religious hybridism becomes a necessary means for religions to actually contribute to peace and social sustainability and in the process avoid religious wars that threat efforts of peace and development in Africa and all over the

world. Achebe's and Adichie's positions about religious hybridism as an efficient alternative for peace and development are clear in *Arrow of God* and *Purple Hibiscus* since Ezeulu's and Eugene's refusal to promote religious hybridity seem to have caused their downfall. On the contrary, hybride characters enjoyed a religious democracy which helped them freely move from traditional religious practices to Christianity and vice-versa provided that they find peace. A major recommendation of my essay maintains that in order to end religion based-wars and as a result attain world peace and sustainable development, religious hybridism, tolerance, coexistence and rapprochement become necessary in a world where religious purism and radicalism are no longer welcome. The fact that various conflicts in modern Africa are placed at the door step of religious and cultural differences requires integrating Christian religion and traditional religion in Africa. That is the inculturation which is to bring the Christian religion into every aspect of life of the local communities and to be more accommodating and tolerant towards local practices and customs that do not stand in direct contradiction to Catholic doctrine.

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