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Explicating Social Implications of Colonization in *Afterlives* through Goffman's Idea of Total institutions

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Abstract

This paper presents a nuanced analysis of the social implications of the German colonization of Africa on characters in the novel *Afterlives*, particularly Hamza and Ilyas, who were once part of the German Askari force. Using Erving Goffman's concept of Total Institutions, the study scrutinizes the impact of the German Askari force on the characters' identities, social lives, and their experience of the total institution. Initially, the study articulates the experience of Hamza and Ilyas as members of the Askari force through a thorough textual analysis, paralleling their experiences with the characteristics of a Total Institution as posited by Goffman. The oppressive impacts of such an institution on the characters' social lives are subsequently examined, shedding light on the disrupted social existence of Hamza, Ilyas, and their families post their military service. A deep dive into the mortification of self, a notable impact of Total Institutions, is explored. The paper also provides a critical introspection into Hamza and Ilyas's post-military life, uncovering the ramifications of their experiences at the German Askari force, considered a Total Institution. The paper also discusses the impacts of Total Institutions to the broader process of German colonization, which required institutions like the German Askari force to capture, train, and coerce people into labor and slavery for colonial purposes. The study adds a fresh perspective to the understanding of the far-reaching effects of colonization and institutionalized oppression on individual and social lives.

Keywords

Total institutions, colonization, social lives, Africa, oppression



1. Introduction

Colonialism has left an indelible mark on the history of humanity, shaping societies and individuals in complex ways. The German colonization of Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries stands as a significant chapter in the global story of colonial domination. This research paper aims to delve into the social implications of German colonization in Africa by examining the experiences of characters in *Afterlives* (2020) by Abdulrazak Gurnah. Furthermore, it seeks to employ the theoretical framework of total institutions and the ideas put forth by sociologist Erving Goffman to illuminate the lasting effects of colonization on individual lives and societal structures.

Afterlives (2020) a compelling literary work set against the backdrop of German colonization in Africa, provides a rich tapestry of characters and narratives to explore the far-reaching consequences of colonization. By delving into the lives and experiences of these characters, this study aims to shed light on the intricate interplay between power dynamics, cultural assimilation, and individual identity formation in a colonized society. German colonization in Africa was characterized by the imposition of Western norms, institutions, and ideologies upon indigenous populations. The effects of colonization were multifaceted, transforming every aspect of African societies, from political and economic structures to cultural traditions and social relationships. It is within this context that *Afterlives* (2020), presents a narrative that captures the nuanced and deeply personal experiences of individuals living under colonial rule. Erving Goffman, a prominent sociologist, introduced the concept of total institutions to analyze social settings where individuals are subjected to complete

institutional control and regulation. Goffman's idea of Total Institutions will be incorporated to analyze the social implications of colonization. Goffman in one of his works titled as *Asylums: On the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961) expand upon the idea of Total Institutions in a chapter of the same book mentioned erstwhile. He defines the idea as "a total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (p. p. 13). Thus, it is seen as a place that is severed from the outside world and has its own modes of administration and control. By applying Goffman's theoretical framework, this study aims to understand the ways in which colonization operated as a total institution, shaping the social fabric of African communities and profoundly influencing individual agency. This research paper adopts a qualitative approach, analyzing the characters in *Afterlives* (2020), as representatives of various social groups and examining their experiences within the framework of total institutions. By closely examining the characters' interactions with the colonizers, their encounters with cultural assimilation and the loss of their indigenous heritage, as well as their resistance and attempts to reclaim agency, this study aims to unravel the intricate dynamics of power and identity formation within the context of colonization. By exploring the social implications of German colonization through the lens of total institutions and Goffman's ideas, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the lasting consequences of colonial domination. It seeks to reveal the enduring legacies of colonization on individual lives and the broader social fabric of

colonized communities. Through this examination, we can gain insights into the complexities surrounding the historical and sociological aspects of German colonization in Africa, illuminating the intricate web of power relations, cultural transformation, and identity formation that occurred during this period. The scope of the research will entail the analysis of all the aspects of control that are monopolized by the colonizers to force the subjects into subservience. The theoretical framework of Erving Goffman's idea of 'Total Institutions', will supply the core dimensions of control on which the superstructure of a nation is constructed. The impacts of such a structured process of colonization on the native people are also one of the prime areas of this research which is analyzed through this theoretical framework. It tends to highlight that how the individuals suffer as part of an environment which is coercive and compelling.

2. Literature Review

Afterlives, (2020) by Abdulrazak Gurnah falls into the genre of African Historical Fiction and the subgenre of Postcolonial Historical fiction. Post-colonial literature emerged as a genre in mid-twentieth century at the same time when colonies were fighting for their independence and rights. Post-colonial fiction, written against the backdrop of the vicious and evil period of colonialism that affected native people's culture, tradition, language, religion and other indigenous sensibilities, became a weapon for dismantling the hegemonic imperial structures and created binaries between colonized and colonizers. African writers responded to this colonial period with urgency and wrote novels that helped in the discovery of true historical facts and exposed the horrors of the colonial era. Therefore, it could be asserted that the foremost

concern of African postcolonial writers was to restore and retrieve the historical events that manipulated the native people and it also serve as a critique to the horrible imperial policies which the colonizers structured to belittle the natives. Abdulrazak Gurnah holds a significant position in the post-colonial literature. His works are explored and interpreted from a variety of theoretical frameworks which continue to supply meanings to his works adding to the body of knowledge. One of the researchers Sophy Kohler (2017) in her research article titled as "The Spice of Life": Trade, Storytelling and Movement in *Paradise and by The Sea* by Abdulrazak Gurnah" discusses the relationship between the trade along the trade routes of East Africa and storytelling. According to the researcher, the two novels of Gurnah, namely *Paradise* and *By the Sea* "draws attention to these networks, presenting trade and the goods of trade as inextricably linked to storytelling and movement" (Kohler, p. 274). Moreover, it borrows an idea of social life of things from Arjun Appadurai to highlight the inextricable link that is developed between storytelling, movement and trade in Gurnah's two novels. It extensively talks about the objects of goods that become an enabling element for the characters in a way that through those objects they are able to speak about other objects.

In one of his interviews, Gurnah was asked about the absence of the comic elements, moments of happiness and light heartedness from his novels. In response to this question, Gurnah answers that the comic relief may be absent in his novels according to one's own interpretation of the novels but for him "there is comedy both in events as well as in language" (Gurnah, p. 3). He goes on to say that according to him "the overshadow of pain and loneliness, is the condition of

human existence” (Gurnah, p. 3). In addition to this question, when he was asked about his writings to be falling under the paradigm of post-colonial studies he said that the idea of post-colonialism appeals him because it is such a discursive domain that allows him to view and perceive a common ground between the literature and writings hailing from different cultures, geographies and histories. The vastness of the scope of post colonialism appears to be a reason of fascination of Gurnah for post-colonialism. Moreover, Gurnah’s fourth novel, *Paradise*, is considered to be his most remarkable work which was published in 1994. The setting of the novel is the same that is East Africa and the story is of a twelve year old boy, Yusuf, who is sold to a trader by his father as redemption of his debt. His life journey revolves around experiencing and observing the changes and transitions that have taken place in his region owing to colonization. In addition, his sixth novel, *By the Sea* (2001), is a story of a Muslim refugee who garbs his identity to acquire asylum and gets a chance to settle in England. The story reaches its climax when the man who has veiled his identity finds that man whose identity he has taken. In another novel *Desertion* (2005), a different subject is touched upon under a similar theme of colonialism. The story unravels the impacts of colonialism on love and societal relationships starting with an intriguing story of Martin and Rehana. His other works include *Pilgrims Way* (1988), *Dottie* (1990), *The Last Gift* (2011) and *Gravel Heart* (2017). In his recent publication, *Afterlives* (2020), Gurnah introduces fresh perspectives to his body of work by skillfully intertwining the war experiences of African soldiers enlisted in the German army with the unraveling of their social lives. This narrative approach enables researchers to delve deeper

into the social implications of colonialism, while specifically examining the lives of Africans serving under the German regime. The Gurnah’s adept construction of a correlation between the characters’ military engagements and their social existence within *Afterlives* (2020) contributes to the work’s distinctiveness and profound impact. All works of research, mentioned earlier, add to the very richness and depth to the work of the author as all the researchers have tried to give a new meaning to the text while interpreting it through a certain theoretical framework and in a certain discursive paradigm. Simultaneously, it tends to show the global readership and recognition of the author which is reflective of originality and beauty of Gurnah’s literary craft. Following the similar track of contributing to the body of knowledge through interpretation of texts, this research will analyze Gurnah’s latest novel *Afterlives* (2020) through Erving Goffman’s idea of Total Institutions. Through this theoretical model, this research will reveal the subtle working of colonial process by German colonizers in a highly structured manner along with its impact on the colonized people which are African in the context of *Afterlives* (2020).

3. Research Methodology

This research paper undertakes a qualitative approach to expand upon certain ideas which form the foundation of the thesis. Since, the research is qualitative in nature the method is hermeneutic which is the interpretation of the text. The primary text that is chosen for interpretation is Gurnah’s *Afterlives* (2020). It deals with the idea of German colonialism in East Africa and its repercussions. To interpret the text, a foundational theoretical idea of “Total Institutions” is employed in this research paper. Erving Goffman, a Canadian

sociologist of the twentieth century. Some of his notable books are *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), *Asylums: On the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961), *Relations in Public* (1963), *Stigma* (1963). Goffman made the thoughts of individuals in social life as his major concern. His concept of Total Institution is used in this paper to expand upon the social life of the characters in the text under discussion. This particular concept was arguably published in one his paper titled as "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions" (1957). An explanatory version of this concept came later in Donald Cressey's collection entitled as *The Prison* which was later reprinted under Goffman's 1961 collection, *Asylums: On the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961). It is also said that Goffman heard this term in a lecture by Everett Hughes, who is an American Sociologist. Whether he has coined the term or not, he can always be given credited for popularizing this term of "Total Institutions" which explicates the influence on self as part of a controlled environment.

4. Discussion:

This chapter seeks to examine the impacts of German colonization on the social lives of the two major protagonists, Hamza and Ilyas, in Gurnah's *Afterlives*. Both Hamza and Ilyas, who become related to each other in the later part of the novel when Hamza marries his sister, have spent time with the German Askari force. Based on their experience with the German forces, this chapter will explore the transformation in their lives after their return from military life to civil life. The theoretical framework of Total Institutions will be applied to Gurnah's *Afterlives* to probe into the social implications of the military experience of the two

characters. Goffman, a Canadian sociologist, in the introduction of his book titled as *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961) defines Total Institutions "as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman 13). The discussion in this chapter will entail three major parts which will be discussed in a sequence one after the other. In the first part of discussion, the theory of Total Institution will be explained along with the characteristics of a Total Institution. After this, the discussion will shift to the debate around the institution of German Askari force being an apt example of a Total Institution through textual examples. The final part of the discussion will entail the impacts of Total Institution, elucidated by Goffman, coupled with textual analysis of *Afterlives* by relating the impacts of Total Institutions to the post-military life of former askari soldiers from the colonized African community. According to Goffman, a Total Institution differs from a normal institution in a way that in a normal setting, an individual enjoys sleep, play and work in different spaces in collaboration with other social actors under different authorities without "an over-all rational plan" whereas in a Total Institution all such differences are eliminated (Goffman 6). Firstly, "all the life activities are conducted in the same place and under the same authority" (Goffman 6). Secondly, these daily activities are carried out in the presence of other individuals who are treated alike. Thirdly, these activities are tightly scheduled and fourthly all such activities are directed to a single objective of the institution (Goffman 6). In relation to these features of a Total Institution, all the

soldiers of German Askari army are kept under a single place and under the same authority which are German colonizers. Moreover, they are made to follow a specific routine which is a characteristic of a Total institution. As stated by Goffman in his list of social institutions, some of the examples of Total Institutions are army barracks, colonial compounds and large mansions from the point of view of those who live in the servant quarters just like Hamza does while he serves the German officers after he voluntarily joins the Askari force. Another key feature of a Total Institution is that it tends to manage the needs of masses through “bureaucratic organization” of people and it resonates with the way the local recruits in the German askari force are handled (Goffman 6). They are kept in an enclosed space separated from all other spaces while their needs are catered by certain officers. In a separate block, the subjects can easily be supervised and this is what happens in *Afterlives* that the officers are able to keep an eye on all the soldiers. Thus, the element of surveillance is another product of a Total Institution which is pertinent in *Afterlives* as well. For instance, in the third chapter of the novel where Hamza’s journey with the German forces is narrated the soldiers are shown marching to their quarters. After walking for the whole day “they arrived at the camp at dusk” (AL 54). They were exhausted after the day’s march but the German Askari commander “stayed there, still keeping an eye on them” which is an example of surveillance that is there in the Total Institution of German Askari force (AL 54). In addition to this, there is a sense of hostility between the different groups in a Total Institution (Goffman 7). In the context of *Afterlives*, there are two main groups in direct conflict with each other; the commanding German officers and the local

recruits which in its simplest form imply the conflict between the colonizers and the colonized. According to Goffman “the staff often sees the inmates as bitter, secretive and untrustworthy, while inmates often see staff as condescending, highhanded, and mean” (Goffman 7). Integrating the very notion of hostility between the staff and inmates to the nature of relationship between the commanding officers and the lower ranked soldiers, the animosity is evident. On one hand, the German officers consider the native soldiers backward, savage and uncivilized, on the other hand the native soldiers and native people consider the German soldiers brutal whose hands are covered in blood. Moreover, in chapter five of the novel where Hamza has been employed as a personal assistant to a German officer on account of his ability to understand German language, there is a constant scrutiny of Hamza while he serves the German officers. “The transparent blue eyes” of the officer “fixed immovably on him” which is a harbinger of the lack of trust the colonizers have for the colonized Africans (AL 78). After discussing the characteristics of Total Institution it is imperative to highlight the impacts of the Total Institution of German Askari force on Hamza, Ilyas and their respective families. In one of the online articles titled as “Erving Goffman and the Total Institutions” it is elucidated that here are certain social impacts on a person as part of a Total Institution which result due to the Mortification of Self (Goodman). Mortification of Self is in fact a term that is used by Goffman to explain the transition that a subject goes through in a Total Institution (Goodman). In simpler words, it is the loss of identity which is a result of degrading and humiliating treatments that are carried out as a deliberate attempt by the staff members. As a result of maltreatment by the

organizers of the Total Institution the self of the subject gets mortified. According to the theory of Goffman, the Mortification of Self results due to five reasons which include “role dispossession”, “dispossession of property, name and identity kit”, “imposition of degrading postures and humiliating practices”, “numerous restrictions of self-determination” (Goodman). The Mortification of Self in a “Total Institution” manifests itself through certain processes which resonate with the ways Hamza and Ilyas are treated in *Afterlives* at the hands of commanding German officers. One of the reasons of the Mortification of Self is the role dispossession. (Goodman). Hamza, in the novel voluntarily joins the askari force thus denouncing his civil life and entering into a controlled environment which demands a certain discipline to be followed. Although, Goffman’s idea of total institution emphasizes majorly upon the mental patients in a hospital but his categories of Total Institution which include the army barracks and colonial compounds as well, allow appropriating these ideas to the treatment of Hamza and Ilyas with the German askari force. Thus, there is a role dispossession in the case of Hamza in a way that he gets divorced from all the social roles that he used to play in the civil society once he gets recruited in the army. For instance, chapter three starts with the soldiers, including Hamza, lined up for inspection and military exercises. In the beginning, when he was merely a soldier he had to do military exercise on daily basis whereas in chapter four of the novel he is shown as a personal assistant to a high class German officer. In both the cases, “Hamza lost himself in the exhaustive routine” (AL 60). Moreover, he is compelled to make beds and sweep things under constant surveillance of the officers. Thus, his roles

become redundant and his routine becomes mechanical which results in the mortification of the self. Similarly, Ilyas who is abducted by a German soldier gets alienated from his social life once he is made to learn German at a school and then being forced into work with the Askari force. The extent of his obsession with the Askari force is represented by Gurnah through his return to the German forces. His return to Askari force can be interpreted as an example of deep seated impact of the Total Institution of German Askari force he remained a part of in the past. For instance, even when he returned to resume his social life, the impact of the Total Institution of Askari force was so much that he could not cope with the civil life anymore. It can be argued that he was conditioned to work in a controlled environment of a Total Institution which forced him to re-abandon his social life. Another significant reason for the mortification of self in a Total Institution is the “dispossession of property, name and identity kit” of the subject (Goodman). It can be asserted that the individual in a controlled institution is removed from all the artifacts or things that can be regarded as a marker of his identity. Hamza and Ilyas as part of the askari force does not have any property and their names do not matter in an environment where nobody knows them and they are treated as entities. For instance, throughout his experience with the askari, Hamza’s name is not given any importance rather his work and his skills remained the focal point of the German officers. Similarly, Ilyas after rejoining the Askari army is found to have “changed his name to Elias Essen” (AL 274). In relation to the idea of dispossession of property as a marker of identity, both Hamza and Ilyas are shown to be isolated once they return to social life. For instance, when Hamza returns to find his home, he is in utter

confusion and is unable to find anything. He does not feel at ease and considers himself as an intruder. There is an “anguishing strangeness” but he tries to stride purposefully (AL 135). Thus, he is shown to be utterly lost in place to where he belongs and that can be seen as an impact of the Total Institution on the life of Hamza that he is left alienated and isolated in his social life. His family is dislocated and he knows nothing where to go and live. He searches for work and by dint of luck he manages to work in a warehouse but he does not have any pace to sleep. Chapter nine of the novel starts by highlighting the difficulties that Hamza faces after his return from the German Askari army that “Hamza slept by the doors of the warehouse” (AL 149). Similarly, when Ilyas returns to his village he finds that his parents have died and his sister is at his uncle’s place and she is treated like a slave at the hands of his uncle’s family because they considered her a burden. Thus, both Hamza and Ilyas are left with nothing in terms of property or a family name which could serve as their identity. The imposition of degrading postures and humiliating practices are justified on grounds of medical interventions also result in the mortification of self (Goodman). This notion is although not exactly relevant to the novel but it can be appropriated in a way that German colonizers tend to impose a discourse on the natives that denigrates their identity which is justified on the grounds that they have come to Africa on a holy mission of civilization. For instance, they consider the native people violent, backward and savage having no mental discipline which is required for an enlightened mind. The Germans, on the other hand always keep their distance from the local people because they consider them inferior and hence they consider it their duty to humiliate them and strike fear

in their mind. Moreover, as a part of their image creation as a superior race, the native soldiers are made to believe that *schutztruppe* is a prestigious force and it is an honor to be a part of such a force. German colonizers having the ultimate power over East Africa in *Afterlives* denigrate the African’s identity by humiliating them. Since, they are in the position of power; therefore, there is no body to question them. All, a servant in the service of commanding officers can do is to ignore the mockery. For instance, when Hamza is in the service of the officers at their place some of the officers make “monkey out of him” (AL 79). They call him with different disparaging words in German which he does not understand as he is not yet that proficient in German language. Later, he understands from his fellow servant that he was being mocked by the officers. Hence, the dichotomy of the position of power on the one hand and powerlessness on the other allows the dominant to exercise their control over the dominated under the garb of an ideology which is that of civilization in *Afterlives* and this in turn results in the mortification of self. “Numerous restrictions on self-determination” is another factor that contributes to the mortification of self (Goodman). The lack of autonomy and freedom in a controlled environment has its due bearing on the subjects detained in a Total Institution. It, in fact, results in the loss of interest and meaning in life. It can even restrain one’s mental faculty to develop any sort of interest as part of a monotonous and strictly controlled routine. In *Afterlives*, both Hamza and Ilyas appears to be a strong victim of the restrictions that is imposed upon them by the Total Institution of German Askari force. For instance, Hamza joined the askari by choice “but he was ignorant of what he had now sold himself to” (AL 52). He came to realize very soon that

he had made a huge mistake. After his voluntary entry into the askari he never did anything by his choice simply because he could not. Everything was pre-planned and strictly scheduled by the head officers and all he had to do was to follow the devised plan. The sleep, exercise and eating times were fixed and everything needed to be in time to avoid punishment. There was no free time available for the soldiers and hence no freedom of action which denied any thoughts of doing something of personal interest. Such a repetitive routine tends to numb the mental faculties of the subjects and they are unable to either pursue or develop their own interests. The mind adapts itself to follow a monotonous cycle of events and that is what happens as a result of severe restrictions on self-determination. Extending the very notion of the inability of the subject to develop any interest towards anything to the life of Hamza, the impacts of Total Institution are evident. After he quits the military life and resumes his social life, his experience at the Total Institution of army barrack continue to haunt his life as he is shown to be social misfit altogether. He has neither any work to do nor a place to live which substantiates the deterioration and mortification of Hamza's self even in his post-military life, due to his prolonged stay at a Total Institution. In the end Khalifa gives a room to Hamza to live at the end of chapter nine, after he finds job at Khalifa's workplace. Similarly, Ilyas, friend of Khalifa, during his experience with German colonizers faces restrictions which are although subtle as compared to Hamza but have a forceful impact. As Ilyas was a child when he got kidnapped by the German forces he was forced into things he never imagined. For instance, he was kidnapped by a soldier for making him a gun boy that was to carry the gun of the soldiers while

they marched. Then, he was transferred to a mission school to learn Germany and finally he returned to his village. The whole life of Ilyas appears to follow a line of events that is marked by the colonizers. For instance, in the earlier part of the novel it is revealed that he was abducted by a German soldier and then he was inducted into a school against his will. He never plans his life for himself and invests himself unknowingly for the service of German colonizers even when his family is left abandoned in the village especially his sister, Afiya. Even when he returns to his village and finally meets his sister in a miserable condition he never wants to remain with her rather he is shown to be anxious to join the Askari force. His return to the German force at the expense of her sister hints at his mental condition and the subtle yet extremely profound impact of the Total Institution of German armed forces and the mission school which he attends. Through Ilyas' return to the German Askari force, it can be inferred that the life at the Total Institution incapacitated him to fit in the civil life. It has conditioned him in way that he considers it worthy to serve the German army although his fellow villagers narrate the atrocities that the German forces have inflicted upon their fellow men. It appears that the institutional oppression at the school, coupled with his time spent with the German Askari force, shaped his mind. It is ironical that his original identity as a native African citizen is shown to be insignificant compared to his identity as a soldier of colonial army. This demonstrates the clandestine operation of deceptive narratives and Total Institution on Ilyas. The qualification of the German Askari force as an apt example of a Total Institution in Gurnah's *Afterlives* allows the discussion to delve into the post-military social lives of the characters and their family in relation

to the impacts of Total Institution imbedded in their mental space. Hamza who gets married to Ilyas' sister Afiya suffers from hallucinations and voices which are never there. In dreams he has nightmares of his military experiences which highlight its horrendous psychological impact on the protagonist. Towards the first section of the novel, Afiya, sister of Ilyas, is shown to bore the brunt of his brother's obsession with the German forces which has been substantiated as a part of hegemonic and discursive ideological make up of Ilyas through institutional oppression. Ilyas on his return to village finds her sister in a deserted condition in his uncle's house and takes her away who "did not even know that she had a real brother" (AL 34). Although, he spends quite some time with her sister but his blind faith and affinity with the German forces, that is inculcated in the mind of Ilyas forces him to abandon his sister knowing that there will be no body to take care of her and that her uncle's family treats her like an enemy. On her return the daughter her uncle said that "our slave has come back" (AL 44). The point of significant consideration is that Ilyas who is indubitably a direct victim of the horrendous mechanization of Total Institutions, those who are related to him are also deeply affected. Afiya is an apt example of people who are an indirect victim of colonization. Her brother is unable to resume his normal social life once he has spent a substantial period of time in a Total Institution. In the second chapter of the novel, when Afiya returns to her uncle after Ilyas rejoins the German army, their cruelties exacerbated and one day she got beaten by a cane by her uncle which resulted in severe injuries. This highlights that the nefarious impacts of a Total Institutions perpetuate and seep into the life of all the family members as they become an indirect prey to it.

There is another incident at the end of the novel which indicates the extent to which the social life of the characters is ruined. The incident is pertaining to Hamza and Afiya's son who is named after Ilyas who "is found to have been visited by a spirit" (AL 253). It is revealed through Shekhiya, the local spiritual doctor, that the cause of this is Ilyas, the brother of Afiya, who has gone missing since the time he left to rejoin the German Askari army. Their family tries hard to find him but they are unable to receive any update regarding Ilyas. The memory of Ilyas continues to haunt his family and it is overtly manifested through the son of Afiya who is named after Ilyas as well. This particular incident of Afiya's son being affected by some invisible forces and voices is symbolic of the aftermaths of wars against the local forces and British colonizers in which the native Africans are forcefully engaged. Afiya's son tends to become a generalized example for all those children whose families suffer due to such colonial expeditions. Moreover, the familial breakdown of all the characters signifies the chaos and their ruined social life which is a consequence of German colonization. Hamza gets married to Afiya, who is the sister of lost Ilyas, and they give birth to child with the same name Ilyas. Both these families and their familial relationships are either dead or unknown. Hamza and Afiya comes together as part of a co-incidence which unravels the chaos and the extent of uncertainty the life during German colonization brings with itself. In nutshell, the turmoil in the political landscape of East Africa during the period of German colonization was essentially intertwined with the social life of native Africans who got severely affected during the phenomenon of colonization. The colonial powers scrambling for the possession of Africa forced its

people to fight their war. The novel highlights the suppressed and victimized local people. According to an online source, it is written in *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (2008), "When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers" (Simpson & Speake). It means that in a combat of the powerful it is the weak who suffers. In the context of *Afterlives*, the German and British colonial powers fighting for the rule of Africa are the elephants whereas the local population symbolizes grass and the novel itself is the story of grass. This thesis attempts to explore the phenomenon of German colonialism in East Africa represented by Gurnah in *Afterlives*. In relation to this, this chapter elucidates the impacts of Total Institution on African subjects who have spent time with the German Askari force. It highlights the difficulties in terms of identity crisis that the native Africans face as part of the Total Institution of German Askari force.

5. Conclusion

This paper extends the idea of the process of colonization as a tactic for the territorial control to its impacts on the native population through Goffman's concept of Total Institutions. The ruined social life of the characters in *Afterlives* is shown to be an impact of their experience with the German askari force which is qualified and substantiated as a fitting example of a total institution. As a result of their experience at a total institution the self of the characters gets destroyed and they become social misfits. By employing the theoretical framework of total institutions and the ideas put forth by Goffman, this study aims to unravel the intricate ways in which colonization affected the characters' lives and their broader communities. By analyzing their experiences within the framework of total institutions, this research endeavors to shed light

on the profound and lasting effects of German colonization on individual agency, cultural identity, and social structures. The findings of this study will contribute valuable insights into the lasting legacies of colonization and its profound effects on the social fabric of colonized communities, offering a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the historical and sociological aspects of German colonization in Africa.

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