

SURA YA ISHIRINI NA TATU

For the first time in many years Okonkwo had a feeling that was akin to happiness. The times which had altered so unaccountably during his exile seemed to be coming round again. The clan which had turned false on him appeared to be making amends. He had spoken violently to his clansmen when they had met in the marketplace to decide on their action. And they had listened to

Kwa mara ya kwanza baada ya miaka mingi Okonkwo alikuwa na hisia ambayo ilikuwa sawa na furaha. Nyakati ambazo zilikuwa zimebadilika bila hesabu wakati wa uhamisho wake zilionekana kuwa zinakuja tena. Ukoo ambao ulikuwa umegeuka kuwa uongo juu yake ulionekana kufanya marekebisho. Alikuwa amezungumza kwa jeuri na watu wa ukoo wake walipokutana sokoni ili kuamua

Chinua Achebe

him with respect. It was like the good old days again, when a warrior was a warrior. Although they had not agreed to kill the missionary or drive away the Christians, they had agreed to do something substantial. And they had done it. Okonkwo was almost happy again.

For two days after the destruction of the church, nothing happened. Every man in Umuofia went about armed with a gun or a machete. They would not be caught unawares, like the men of Abame.

Then the District Commissioner returned from his tour. Mr. Smith went immediately to him and they had a long discussion. The men of Umuofia did not take any notice of this, and if they did, they thought it was not important. The missionary often went to see his brother white man. There was nothing strange in that.

Three days later the District Commissioner sent his sweet-tongued messenger to the leaders of Umuofia asking them to meet him in his headquarters. That also

juu ya hatua yao. Na walikuwa wamemsikiliza kwa heshima. Ilikuwa kama siku za zamani tena, wakati shujaa alikuwa shujaa. Ingawa hawakuwa wamekubali kumuua mmishonari huyo au kuwafukuza Wakristo, walikuwa wamekubali kufanya jambo fulani kubwa. Na walikuwa wameifanya. Okonkwo alikuwa karibu kufurahi tena.

Kwa siku mbili baada ya uharibifu wa kanisa, hakuna kilichotokea. Kila mwanaume wa Umuofia alizunguka huku na huko akiwa na bunduki au panga.

Hawangekamatwa bila kutarajia, kama watu wa Abame.

Kisha Mkuu wa Wilaya akarejea kutoka katika ziara yake. Bwana Smith alikwenda kwake mara moja na wakafanya mazungumzo marefu. Watu wa Umuofia hawakuliona jambo hili, na kama wangelitambua, walifikiri halikuwa muhimu. Mara nyingi mishonari huyo alienda kumwona ndugu yake mzungu. Hakukuwa na kitu cha ajabu katika hilo.

Siku tatu baadaye Mkuu wa Wilaya alimtuma mjumbe wake mwenye lugha tamu kwa viongozi wa Umuofia akiwataka wakutane katika makao yake makuu. Hilo

Mambo Husambaratika

was not strange. He often asked them to hold such palavers, as he called them. Okonkwo was among the six leaders he invited.

Okonkwo warned the others to be fully armed. "An Umuofia man does not refuse a call," he said. "He may refuse to do what he is asked, he does not refuse to be asked. But the times have changed, and we must be fully prepared."

And so the six men went to see the District Commissioner, armed with their machetes. They did not carry guns, for that would be unseemly. They were led into the courthouse where the District Commissioner sat. He received them politely. They unslung their goatskin bags and their sheathed machetes, put them on the floor, and sat down.

"I have asked you to come," began the Commissioner, "because of what happened during my absence. I have been told a few things but I cannot believe them until I have heard your own side. Let us talk about it like friends and find a way of ensuring that it does not happen again."

pia halikuwa jambo geni. Mara nyingi aliwauliza washike palavers kama vile alivyowaita. Okonkwo alikuwa miongoni mwa viongozi sita aliwaaalika.

Okonkwo aliwaonya wengine kuwa na silaha kamili. "Mtu wa Umuofia hakatai simu," alisema. "Anaweza kukataa kufanya anachooombwa, hakatai kuombwa. Lakini nyakati zimebadilika, na lazima tujiandae kikamilifu."

Na hivyo watu sita wakaenda kumuona Mkuu wa Wilaya, wakiwa na mapanga yao. Hawakuwa na bunduki, kwa kuwa hilo lingekuwa jambo lisilofaa. Wakaingizwa katika mahakama aliyokaa Mkuu wa Wilaya. Alizipokea kwa adabu. Walifungua mifuko yao ya ngozi ya mbuzi na panga zao, wakaviweka sakafuni, na kuketi.

"Nimekuomba uje," Kamishna alianza, "kwa sababu ya kile kilichotokea wakati sipo. Nimeambiwa machache lakini siwezi kuamini hadi nisikie upande wako. Tuzungumze kama marafiki na siwezi kuamini. tafuta njia ya kuhakikisha kwamba haitokei tena."

Chinua Achebe

Ogbuefi Ekwueme rose to his feet and began to tell the story. "Wait a minute," said the Commissioner. "I want to bring in my men so that they too can hear your grievances and take warning. Many of them come from distant places and although they speak your tongue they are ignorant of your customs. James! Go and bring in the men." His interpreter left the courtroom and soon returned with twelve men. They sat together with the men of Umuofia, and Ogbuefi Ekwueme began to tell the story of how Enoch murdered an egwugwu.

It happened so quickly that the six men did not see it coming. There was only a brief scuffle, too brief even to allow the drawing of a sheathed machete. The six men were handcuffed and led into the guardroom.

"We shall not do you any harm," said the District Commissioner to them later, "if only you agree to cooperate with us. We have brought a peaceful administration

Ogbuefi Ekwueme alisimama kwa miguu yake na kuanza kusimulia hadithi.

"Subiri kidogo," alisema Kamishna. "Nataka kuwaleta watu wangu ili nao wasikie malalamiko yako na wapate onyo. Wengi wao wanatoka sehemu za mbali na ingawa wanazungumza lugha yako hawajui desturi zako. James! Nenda ukawaingize watu hao." Mkalimani wake alitoka nje ya chumba cha mahakama na mara akarudi akiwa na wanaume kumi na wawili. Walikaa pamoja na watu wa Umuofia, na Ogbuefi Ekwueme akaanza kusimulia hadithi ya jinsi Henoko alivyoua njugu.

Ilifanyika haraka sana kwamba watu sita hawakuona inakuja. Kulikuwa na mzozo mfupi tu, mfupi sana hata kuruhusu kuchora kwa panga iliyokatwa. Wale watu sita walifungwa pingu na kupelekwa katika chumba cha walinzi.

"Hatutawadhuru," Mkuu wa Wilaya aliwaambia baadaye, "ikiwa tu utakubali kushirikiana nasi. Tumeleta utawala wa amani kwako na watu wako ili uwe na

Mambo Husambaratika

to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall come to your rescue. But we will not allow you to ill-treat others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own country under a great queen. I have brought you here because you joined together to molest others, to burn people's houses and their place of worship. That must not happen in the dominion of our queen, the most powerful ruler in the world. I have decided that you will pay a fine of two hundred bags of cowries. You will be released as soon as you agree to this and undertake to collect that fine from your people. What do you say to that?"

The six men remained sullen and silent and the Commissioner left them for a while. He told the court messengers, when he left the guardroom, to treat the men with respect because they were the leaders of Umuofia. They said, "Yes sir," and saluted.

As soon as the District Commissioner left, the head messenger, who was also the prisoners' barber, took down his

furaha. Ikiwa kuna mtu mgonjwa. -inakutendea wewe tutakuja kukuokoa. Lakini hatutakuruhusu kuwatendea wengine vibaya. Tuna mahakama ya sheria ambapo tunahukumu kesi na kusimamia haki kama inavyotendeka katika nchi yangu chini ya malkia mkubwa. nimewaleta hapa kwa sababu mmeungana kuwanyanyasa wengine, kuchoma nyumba za watu na mahali pao pa ibada. Hilo halipaswi kutokea katika utawala wa malkia wetu, mtawala mwenye nguvu kuliko wote duniani. Nimeamua kwamba mlipe faini. ya magunia mia mbili ya ng'ombe. Utaachiliwa mara tu utakapokubali hili na kujitolea kukusanya faini hiyo kutoka kwa watu wako. Unasemaje kwa hilo?"

Wale watu sita walibaki kimya na Kamishna akawaacha kwa muda. Aliwaambia wajumbe wa mahakama, alipotoka kwenye chumba cha walinzi, wawatendee watu hao kwa heshima kwa sababu walikuwa viongozi wa Umuofia. Wakasema, "Ndiyo bwana," wakasalimu. Mara baada ya Mkuu wa Wilaya kuondoka, mjumbe mkuu ambaye pia alikuwa kinyozi wa wafungwa, alishusha wembe wake na

Chinua Achebe

razor and shaved off all the hair on the men's heads. They were still handcuffed, and they just sat and moped.

"Who is the chief among you?" the court messengers asked in jest.

"We see that every pauper wears the anklet of title in Umuofia.

Does it cost as much as ten cowries?"

The six men ate nothing throughout that day and the next. They were not even given any water to drink, and they could not go out to urinate or go into the bush when they were pressed. At night the messengers came in to taunt them and to knock their shaven heads together.

Even when the men were left alone they found no words to speak to one another. It was only on the third day, when they could no longer bear the hunger and the insults, that they began to talk about giving in.

"We should have killed the white man if you had listened to me," Okonkwo snarled.

kuwanyoa nywele zote za vichwa vya wanaume hao. Bado walikuwa wamefungwa pingu, na walikaa tu na kupepetu.

"Nani mkuu kati yenu?" wajumbe wa mahakama waliuliza kwa mzaha. "Tunaona kwamba kila maskini anavaa kifundo cha mguu cha cheo huko Umuofia. Je, gharama yake ni kama ng'ombe kumi?"

Wanaume sita hawakula chochote siku hiyo na siku iliyofuata. Hawakupewa hata maji ya kunywa, na hawakuweza kutoka kwenda kukojoa au kwenda porini walipobanwa. Usiku wajumbe walikuja kuwadhihaki na kugonga vichwa vyao vilivyonyolewa pamoja.

Hata wanaume hao walipoachwa peke yao hawakupata neno la kusemezana. Ilikuwa ni siku ya tatu tu, ambapo hawakuweza tena kuvumilia njaa na matusi, walianza kuzungumza juu ya kukata tamaa.

"Tungemuua mzungu kama ungenisikiliza," Okonkwo alifoka.

Mambo Husambaratika

"We could have been in Umuru now waiting to be hanged," someone said to him. "Who wants to kill the white man?" asked a messenger who had just rushed in. Nobody spoke.

"You are not satisfied with your crime, but you must kill the white man on top of it." He carried a strong stick, and he hit each man a few blows on the head and back. Okonkwo was choked with hate.

As soon as the six men were locked up, court messengers went into Umuofia to tell the people that their leaders would not be released unless they paid a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries.

"Unless you pay the fine immediately," said their headman, "we will take your leaders to Umuru before the big white man, and hang them."

This story spread quickly through the villages, and was added to as it

"Tungeweza kuwa Umuru sasa tukisubiri kunyongwa," mtu mmoja akamwambia. "Nani anataka kumuua mzungu?" aliuliza mjumbe ambaye alikuwa ameingia kwa kasi. Hakuna aliyezungumza.

"Hujaridhika na uhalifu wako, lakini lazima umuue mzungu juu yake." Alibeba fimbo yenye nguvu, na akampiga kila mwanaume makofi machache kichwani na mgongoni. Okonkwo alikabwa na chuki.

Mara baada ya watu hao sita kufungwa, wajumbe wa mahakama waliingia Umuofia kuwaambia watu kwamba viongozi wao hawataachiwa isipokuwa walipe faini ya magunia mia mbili na hamsini ya ng'ombe.

"Ila ukilipa faini mara moja," mkuu wao alisema, "tutawapeleka viongozi wako Umuru kabla ya yule mzungu mkubwa, na kuwatundika."

Hadithi hii ilienea haraka katika vijiji, na iliongezwa kadri

Chinua Achebe

went. Some said that the men had already been taken to Umuru and would be hanged on the following day. Some said that their families would also be hanged. Others said that soldiers were already on their way to shoot the people of Umuofia as they had done in Abame.

It was the time of the full moon. But that night the voice of children was not heard. The village ilo where they always gathered for a moon-play was empty. The women of Iguedo did not meet in their secret enclosure to learn a new dance to be displayed later to the village. Young men who were always abroad in the moonlight kept their huts that night. Their manly voices were not heard on the village paths as they went to visit their friends and lovers. Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run.

ilivyokuwa ikiendelea. Wengine walisema kwamba watu hao walikuwa tayari wamepelekwa Umuru na wangenyonswa siku iliyofuata. Wengine walisema kwamba familia zao pia zitanyongwa. Wengine walisema kwamba askari tayari walikuwa njiani kwenda kuwapiga risasi watu wa Umuofia kama walivyofanya huko Abame.

Ilikuwa ni wakati wa mwezi kamili. Lakini usiku huo sauti ya watoto haikusikika. Kijiji ilo ambapo walikusanyika kila wakati kwa mchezo wa mwezi kilikuwa tupu. Wanawake wa Iguedo hawakukutana katika eneo lao la siri ili kujifunza ngoma mpya itakayoonyeshwa baadaye kijijini. Vijana ambao walikuwa nje ya nchi katika mwanga wa mbalamwezi walihifadhi vibanda vyao usiku huo. Sauti zao za kiume hazikusikika kwenye njia za kijiji walipokuwa wakienda kuwatembelea marafiki na wapenzi wao. Umuofia alikuwa mithili ya mnyama aliyeshuka huku masikio yake yakiwa yamesimama, akinusa hewa iliyotulia, ya kutisha na asijue aendee njia gani.

Mambo Husambaratika

The silence was broken by the village crier beating his sonorous ogene. He called every man in Umuofia, from the Akakanma age group upwards, to a meeting in the marketplace after the morning meal. He went from one end of the village to the other and walked all its breadth. He did not leave out any of the main footpaths.

Okonkwo's compound was like a deserted homestead. It was as if cold water had been poured on it. His family was all there, but everyone spoke in whispers. His daughter Ezinma had broken her twenty-eight day visit to the family of her future husband, and returned home when she heard that her father had been imprisoned, and was going to be hanged. As soon as she got home she went to Obierika to ask what the men of Umuofia were going to do about it. But Obierika had not been home since morning. His wives thought he had gone to a secret meeting. Ezinma was satisfied that something was being done.

Ukimya ulivunjwa na mlinzi wa kijiji akipiga jini lake la sauti. Alimwita kila mwanamume huko Umuofia, kutoka rika la Akakanma kwenda juu, kwenye mkutano sokoni baada ya mlo wa asubuhi. Alikwenda kutoka mwisho mmoja wa kijiji hadi mwingine na kutembea upana wake wote. Hakuacha njia yoyote kuu ya miguu.

Kiwanja cha Okonkwo kilikuwa kama shamba lisilo na watu. Ilikuwa ni kama maji baridi yamemwagiwa juu yake. Familia yake ilikuwepo, lakini kila mtu alizungumza kwa kunong'ona. Binti yake Ezinma alikuwa amevunja ziara yake ya siku ishirini na nane kwa familia ya mume wake mtarajiwa, na akarudi nyumbani aliposikia kwamba baba yake alikuwa amefungwa, na alikuwa anaenda kunyongwa. Mara tu alipofika nyumbani alimwendea Obierika kumuuliza wanaume wa Umuofia watafanya nini kuhusu hilo. Lakini Obierika hakuwa nyumbani tangu asubuhi. Wake zake walidhani ameenda kwenye mkutano wa siri. Ezinma aliridhika kwamba kuna jambo linafanywa.

Chinua Achebe

On the morning after the village crier's appeal the men of Umuofia met in the marketplace and decided to collect without delay two hundred and fifty bags of cowries to appease the white man. They did not know that fifty bags would go to the court messengers, who had increased the fine for that purpose.

Asubuhi baada ya mwito wa kijiji hicho watu wa Umuofia walikutana sokoni na kuamua kukusanya bila kuchelewa magunia mia mbili na hamsini ya ng'ombe ili kumtuliza mzungu huyo. Hawakujua kwamba mifuko hamsini ingeenda kwa wajumbe wa mahakama, ambao walikuwa wameongeza faini kwa ajili hiyo.