

**SUPERSTITION AGAINST SLAVERY:
A HEGEMONIC STUDY ON AFRO-AMERICAN SOCIETY 1850 – 1870
IN CHARLES W. CHESNUTT’S NOVEL *THE CONJURE WOMAN***

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Abstract

The study was aimed at analysing how the superstition of Afro-American people was used as a counter-hegemony against the supremacy of the white reflected in The Conjure Woman novel. The study belonged to qualitative descriptive research by applying the library method. The formal object of the study was the superstition of Afro-American people against the slavery in Southern States. The primary data covered the texts of the novel relating with superstition and secondary data consisting of some criticism of the novel and what not. The technique of the data collection was as follows 1) reading all the texts of the novel; 2) exploring the superstitious values in the novel; 3) categorizing the texts consisting of the hegemonic cultures. Technique of the data analysis was based on the hegemonic approach. He result of the study showed that by means of the superstition, Chesnutt as the writer wanted the Afro-American people to fight against the hegemony of the white people and also to wipe out the slavery from Southern states and to construct a mutual life relationship among them.

Keywords: *The Conjure Woman novel, Afro-American culture, slavery system, superstition,*

hegemony, resistance.

A. Introduction

The history of white people in United States of America (USA) cannot be separated from the history of European people especially The Great Britain around 1500s. In that era, a sharp religious conflict between the puritan group and authority of the kingdom and the church happened. The puritan group who wanted to purify the teaching of Church of England were chased, captured and burned at the stake. To escape from the chase, some of them fled by aboard *May Flower* ship to *The New World*. In short, they landed in Massachussets and they built a colony known as *Massachussets Bay Colony* (MacDonald, 1908: 22).

The colony of European people in that area day by day grew well in popultion as well as the quality of their lives. Their economic life in the promised land seemed better compared with those in *Old England*. They cultivated the land and planted many varieties of the plants such as grapes, cotton, sugar can, tobacco and so on. They also breded some animals such as chicken, pigs, cows, horse, mules and what not. The happy news of the Eropean in *The Nw World* finally srpead out in the European countries. From that time on, a great migration of the Europeans began (Williams, 1944: 10). The American continent provided many kinds of living

resources. The wide and fertilized land attracted the Europeans to land it and cultivate the land with many sort of plants. Beside that, the land also provided a huge natural resource such as oil, gold, coal which gave much economic benefit for them.

Another factor that supported the Europeans to migrate to America is the imperialistic character of them (Kroes, 1999: 465). From the historical record, it was known that in the the representative of their King, the Europeans expanded their empire around the world. With the development and the strength of sea transportation, navigation and military, they went around the world to expand their territory. In expanding their teritory, they did many varieties of way such as peaceful or warful ways. The next factor is the curiosity of a new area they did not know yet. This factor gave a great push to them to satisfy their sense of curiosity. These factors generated the imperialistic Europeans to search for other resources to move their economic activities around the world (Williams' 1944:5).

For cultivating and exploring the economic potencies, the Europeans especially Great Britain needed a huge number of man labour. In the begining, the white people made use of Indians as their slave. In addition, they also used poor white labours (Williams, 1944: 10). In the following phase, the white and Indian labours were seen as not disciplne and inefficient labours by the white employers. Such behaviour of working poor white was caused by a race-close relation among them. As the same white race, they had more

courage to reject the order from other white people. Meanwhile for the Indians, according to Williams (1944: 9), the inefficient behaviour of them could be described as follows.

” In the New England colonies Indian slavery was unprofitable, for slavery of any kind was unprofitable because it was unsuited to the diversified agriculture of these colonies. In addition the Indian slave was inefficient. The Spaniards discovered that one Negro was worth four Indians. A prominent official in Hispaniola insisted in 1518 that "permission be given to bring Negroes, a race robust for labor, instead of natives, so weak that they can only be employed in tasks requiring little endurance, such as taking care of maize fields or farms." The future staples of the New World, sugar and cotton, required strength which the Indian lacked, and demanded the robust "cotton nigger" as sugar's need of strong mules produced in Louisiana the epithet "sugar mules." According to Lauber, "When compared with sums paid for Negroes at the same time and place the prices of Indian slaves are found to have been considerably lower." The Indian reservoir, too, was limited, the African inexhaustible. Negroes

therefore were stolen in Africa to work the lands stolen from the Indians in America.”

From the above description, it can be understood that Negroes physically were bigger and stronger and the price of Negroes labour was cheaper than the Indian slaves. In addition to that, Negroes slaves could be treated hardly in the working discipline. That treatment could be done by the owners to control the plantation stability under their authority (Franklin, 1994: 32). The plantation stability was very needed by the owners to increase the plantation productivity and at the end it could increase the economic benefit for the owners.

There were many ways done by the owner of the plantation to control the behaviour of the Negro slaves. The first is the stigmatization of the slave. The white people in the plantation gave label to the slave as animal like cattle. The stigma gave an impact on their mind and they felt that their dignity was lower than the white people (white supremacy). As a result the slaves felt inferior and subordinated by the white people. The stigma made the white people treat them as they liked. The second was to make some regulations or rules. The slaves were demanded to obey the rules in the plantation. The regulation or the rules were made to control the slaves in the plantation.

This is the part of the American history that becomes the background of the study as well as the base of the analysis. The wholistic study requires consequence of widely-related facilities as well namely the scope out of one study of the dissertation. So the study limited the data sources on the phenomena that had taken place and was significant to the American social life. The study focuses on the society

of *Southern states* when the eve of and the time of Civil War in 1863 to 1865 and the era of Reconstruction in 1865 to 1877 that showed the phenomena of the white people's unfair treatment on the slaves (Afro-American) and the resistance of the slaves against the treatment of the white people,

The study made use of *The Conjure Woman* novel written by Charles W. Chesnutt as the data sources of the analysis. The reason is that the novel is an episodic novel revealing some life phenomena experienced by Afro-American society in the eve of *Civil War* to the era of Reconstruction in *Southern states*. The interesting thing of the novel is the use of superstition against the hegemony of the white people. *The Conjure Woman* novel consists of seven subtitles that describe how practices of hegemony were carried out by the white people to control almost all of the life aspects of the Afro-American people in the plantation and this novel also reveals the efforts done by the slaves to attack the practices of the hegemony of the white (counter-hegemony).

B. Focus of the Study

The study focused on superstition against slavery in *Southern states* 1850 to 1870 and used *The Conjure Woman* novel as the material object. The formal object of the study was broken down into some problem formulations of the study, as follows.

1. How is the social and historical background of Afro-American society in the middle of 19th century?
2. How is the practice of hegemony carried out by the white people toward Afro-American society?
3. How is the rebellion of the Afro-American people against the hegemony of the white people?

4. How is the superstition of Afro-American people used as a counter hegemony against the supremacy of the white reflected in *The Conjure Woman* novel?

C. Theoretical Framework

Looking at some problem formulations above, it is appropriate to implement a theoretical framework of hegemony. The theory of hegemony concerns closely with the so called power. In maintaining the power or authority over the slaves, the white people created some rules or regulations to control the behaviour of the slaves in the plantation. By such doing, they had a stronger position in doing their business and getting more profit from their plantation.

The theory was introduced by Antonio Gramsci from Italy. He was a political activist and as Marxist follower. Gramsci had a differently political idea and concept with the Italian government at that time. According to Patria (2003: 12) the political background and the concept of hegemony were the experiences of Gramsci himself. The focus of Gramsci's attention on that matter appeared from the political condition when he lived and became an intellectual leader of the proletariat group in Italy during the First World War and after. At the war, Italy was an important country for a political struggle for *The Left* and *Right*. Finally the political disputes were won by Fascist group in 1922 and it wiped out the political rights of the people. As the key person of the Italian Socialist Party and Italian Communist Party, Gramsci saw the political failure of the revolutionary labour mass and the rise of the reactionary fascist mass supported by the working class mass.

From the political event in Italy, finally he was captured and jailed. In the prison, he wrote a book entitled *Prison Notebook* containing his ideas about state, authority and hegemony. Gramsci (in Baker, 2001: 59) formulates hegemony as follows.

“Hegemony implies a situation where a ‘historical bloc’ of ruling-class factions exercise social authority and leadership over the subordinate classes through a combination of force and, more importantly, consent.”

From his statement above, there two important aspects in hegemony, namely force and consent. The force or authority is gained through politics and after getting the power, the ruling class creates many kinds of regulation or rules that tend to make a benefit to the ruling class and vice versa it harms the subordinate group. So hegemony is a process to create, maintain and reproduce a set of meaning and authoritarian practices in order that the ruling class can maintain their hegemonies over the subordinate class. Thus the hegemony fight is not gratis but it must be struggled and won and always negotiated and maintained. Viewed from its characteristic, there are two kinds of hegemony, i.e. a hard and soft hegemony. The hard hegemony can be in the form of war, economic embargo, physical and psychological violence and the soft hegemony can be in the form of a humanistic help, a cultural and military cooperation and what not.

D. Discussion

1. Practices of the Hegemonic Culture in *Southern States*

a. Stigma

As explained before that hegemony is a theoretic framework to describe a process of creating, maintaining and reproducing meanings and authoritarian practices. In relation to this, the white people with their spirit of the white supremacy, labelled the slave as animal like cattle. By so doing, they could treat their slaves as they liked in their plantation. They could hit, beat, torture and many other violence. They did so in order that their slaves worked effectively and efficiently in their plantation and at the end their plantation could give more profit to the owners.

b. Slave Codes as Manifestation of the Hegemonic Culture

Slave Codes were the law that ruled the status and the position of the slaves and the owner's rights. The law gave the owner more an absolute authority over their slaves. In addition to this, the codes had a function to manage the relation between slaves and the owners and also supported the slavery systems in the framework of controlling the slaves as their properties. Beside that, the codes were made for controlling and anticipating the rebellion of the slaves. Generally the codes had a similarity and however every state had a specific slave code which was adapted with those states. Some instances of the general slave codes was that the slaves were not allowed to have weapon, to leave the plantation without permission, to rise their hands when

being investigated by the white people. In general, the slave codes produced the rules in effect structurally, systematically and massively in *Southern states*. Thus the slave codes were hegemonic.

1) The Slave Codes in South Carolina

South Carolina had implemented the slave codes since 1712 with the rules as follows.

- a) Slaves were forbidden to leave the owner's property unless they obtained permission or were accompanied by a white person.
- b) Any slave attempting to run away and leave the colony received the death penalty.
- c) Any slave who evaded capture for 20 days or more was to be publicly whipped for the first offense; branded with the letter R on the right cheek for the second offense; lose one ear if absent for 30 days for the third offense; and castrated for the fourth offense.
- d) Owners refusing to abide by the slave code were fined and forfeited ownership of their slaves.
- e) Slave homes were searched every two weeks for weapons or stolen goods. Punishment for violations included loss of ears, branding, nose-slitting and death.
- f) No slave was allowed to work for pay, or to plant corn, peas or rice; or to keep hogs, cattle, or horses; or to own or operate a boat; to buy or sell or wear clothes finer than "Negro cloth."

2) The Slave Codes in Virginia

In Virginia state, the slave codes which were in force were different from the one in South Carolina. The slave codes in Virginia had been revised in 1738 with the amendment as follows.

- a) No slave could be taught to write, work on Sunday or work more than 15 hours per day in summer, and 14 hours in winter.
- b) Willful killing of a slave exacted a fine of 700 pounds, and "passion" killing 350 pounds.
- c) The fine for concealing runaway slaves was \$1,000 and a prison sentence of up to one year.
- d) A fine of \$100 and six months in prison was imposed for employing any black or slave as a clerk, for selling or giving alcoholic beverages to slaves, and for teaching a slave to read and write.
- e) Freeing a slave was forbidden, except by deed, and after 1820 only by permission of the legislature.

c. The Hegemonic Culture at the Civil War Era

Since around 1840s, there was a massive migration of the slaves who escaped to the North states. The owners of the slaves were disappointed because the Northerners did not want to bring the slaves back to their owners in the South. From the historical notes, it turned out that there were so many Northerners helped the slaves to escape to the North. It made the Council Board in the South was angry and at the end they made a hard rule for the slaves such as any slave attempting to run away and leave the colony received the death penalty. The rules were aimed at protecting their investment in the slavery system.

There were many compromises negotiated by both parties, *The North* and *The South* to resolve the slave problems. The first was *The Compromise 1850*. This compromise was aimed at resolving the political tension between *The North* and *The South* about the desire of *The South* to expand their slavery areas. The compromise

was successful because of the shrewdness of Henry Clay to handle the conflict. The second one was *The Constitutional Convention*. This convention was the result of compromise of negotiation of the importation of the slaves to USA and the number of the Black as the representative of the Black people in *House of Representatives*. The third one was *Missouri Compromise* in 1820. This compromise was also the negotiation of the slave problems. In 1860s the slave problems could not be solved with the compromise again but with war. Finally the ultimate patience of both parties was broken and *The Civil War* broke out and at the end *The North* won the war.

d. The Hegemonic Culture in the Post-Civil War

The *Reconstruction Era* is an era when USA started to reconstruct the nation after *The Civil War* in 1863 to 1865. The war had damaged the social and economic infrastructures of the country. Moreover the war also took many lives of both parties *Union* and *Confederate* troops. In addition to this, there were many American families were divided and were not harmonious because of the war. For that, all aspects of life of USA needed reconstructing.

Actually at January 1, 1863, USA government had declared *Emancipation Proclamation*. The proclamation gave Afro-American people in USA freedom. They should get job, land for housing and gave vote in USA's President Election. In reality, Afro-American people especially in the Southern states had not got that freedom fully because the white people in *Southern states* halfheartedly gave the freedom to the

Afro-American people. The white people still discriminated almost all aspects of their lives. The white authority in the South made a high standard for Afro-American to get a job, such as Afro-American people had to be able to read and write. It was impossible for Afro-American to fulfill those requirements. Only view of them could do those requirements.

After the officials and the Confederate troops were pardoned by President Andrew Johnson because of their mistakes, they were stronger again to control their political power. To limit the Afro-American's political movement, the Southern officials made a rule called *Jim Crow Laws*. The law was an effort to control and ignore the political rights and freedom of Afro-American people. At its essence, the law wanted to legalize again the slavery practices in *Southern states*.

Another effort done by the white people in the South to ignore the rights of Afro-American society was to create KKK, the acronym of Ku Klux Klan. The organization was aimed at preventing the Afro-American people, carpetbaggers and scalawags to vote and take part in the Southern government. They did their plan gradually. The first step they scared Afro-American people. If it was failed, they threatened them scare-fully. If this strategy got failure, they did violent treatment, such as whipping, beating up to death sentence (Stovall, 1976: 104).

2. Counter-Hegemony Reflected in *The Conjure Woman* Novel

A novel is a social and cultural product. The creation of a novel is not in vacuum. It must be related or influenced by a social condition or an environment around a writer who creates a novel. It can be said that the novel reflects the phenomena that happens in the society. *The Conjure Woman* novel created by Charles W. Chesnutt was inspired by the social and cultural phenomena which happened in the surrounding of Chesnutt.

Chesnutt was born in June 20, 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio. His parents are Andrew Jackson Chesnutt and Anna Maria Sampson. They are free African Americans. They still lived in Cleveland until 1866 and then move to Fayetteville, North Carolina. The young Chesnutt knew well about the Southern cultures and what happened in the South States at his life time. He also knew the slavery system in the plantation and also knew what the slaves experienced during in the plantation.

Chesnutt is an African descendant. As the African descendant, he had much knowledge of African cultures. One of the cultures is about the African religion. The religion of the African people is known as ancestor worship. According to Franklin (1993:30), the religion of African people is described as the ancestor worship. He explained as follows.

"The African believed that the spirit of their forefathers had unlimited power over their lives. Not only were the spirit of deceased members of the family worshipped, but any similar high regard was

held for the spirit that dwelt in the family land, the trees, rocks in the community of the kinship group, and the sky above the community."

From the description above, it can be understood that the Afro-American society as the descendant of the African people in Southern states believe in a supernatural things such as the spirit of their forefathers having an unlimited power over their lives, the spirit of their ancestor dwelling in the family land, the trees, rock and in the sky above the community. In short, they believe in superstition. The superstition turns out to have a hidden power to persuade someone to do something.

This is the African value inspiring Chesnutt to create *The Conjure Woman* novel. Behind the superstitious story in this novel, actually it reveals some mental evidences of how the Afro-American society made use of superstition to fight against the hegemony of the white people and to create a mutual life relationship among them.

a. The Economic Aspect

1) *The Goophered Grapevine*

In this part of the novel, it was narrated that after *Civil War* a white couples, John and Annie, wanted to make a business of a grape plantation in North Carolina. When they met Uncle Julius, a plantation keeper, they express their intention to buy the plantation. Uncle Julius suggested not to buy that plantation.

"Well, suh, you is a stranger er me, en I is a stranger ter you, en we is before strangers to one anudder,

but 'f I 'us in yo' place, I would n' buy dis vimya'd." (TCW:11)

When asked why, Uncle Julius responed as follows.

"Well, I dunno whe'r you b'lieve in conj'in' er not, --some er de w'ite folks don't, er says dey don't, -- but de truf er de metter is dat dis yer ole vimya'd is goophered."

Although Uncle Julius explained firmly, but John and Annie strongly bought the plantation without being influenced with what was narrated by Uncle Julius. Finally the white couples knew why Uncle Julius prevented them to buy the plantation. The description is as follows.

"I found, when I bought the vineyard, that Uncle Julius had occupied a cabin on the place for many years, and derived a respectable revenue from the product of the neglected grapevines. This, doubtless, accounted for his advice to me not to buy the vineyard, though whether it inspired the goopher story I am unable to state. I believe, however, that the wages I paid him for his services as coachman, for I gave him employment in that capacity, were more than an equivalent for anything he lost by the sale of the vineyard."

The description above shows that the motif behind the superstitious story is economic. Uncle Julius was afraid that if the plantation was sold to the white people, he would loose befenit of the plantation.

2) *The Gray Wolf's Haunt*

In this part, John and Annie intended to enlarge their plantation. To know their intention, Uncle Julius tried to prevent them to do their plan. He told them that the gray wolf hounded the plantation. However John did not believe that story and still wanted to enlarge the plantation. In the end, John knew that Uncle Julius got honey from one of big trees that became the bee nest producing a lot of honey. The description is as follows.

"I did find, however, a bee-tree in the woods, with an ample cavity in its trunk, and an opening through which convenient access could be had to the stores of honey within. I have reason to believe that ever since I had bought the place, and for many years before, Julius had been getting honey from this tree. The gray wolf's haunt had doubtless proved useful in keeping off too inquisitive people, who might have interfered with his monopoly."
(Chesnutt, 1996: 194)

Motif behind the superstitious story narrated by Uncle Julius is economic. Uncle Julius was afraid to lose financial benefit from the honey. So he prevented John from enlarging the plantation.

From both stories above, it is clear that Chesnutt created the character of John, Annie as the representative of the white people and Uncle Julius as Afro-American people. In the life history of Afro-American people, their life resources had been stolen by the white people. The white people implemented the slave codes to control and supervise the slaves to do their job in the plantation without wages. The slaves had been exploited in order to work hard to generate the financial profit for the owners.

The slaves themselves did not enjoy their works.

As a result they struggled to reach the life resources in order that they could live freely far from violence and exploitation of the white. For gaining their hopes, they fought the slavery system that had taken their life resources.

b. The Religious Aspect

1) *Po' Sandy*

One day John wanted to build a new kitchen for his wife. He made use of the used planks of the old school building in the plantation. Knowing the intention of John, Uncle Julius suggested John and Annie not to take the planks from the old school building because the plank was body of Sandy. Uncle Julius told that the spirit of Sandy still goathered around the school.

After listening the story, Annie changed her mind and said to her husband not to disturb the old building. John finally surrendered and followed his wife's desire. Not long after that, Uncle Julius and his friends formed a religious organization and they made use of the old school building for their religious activities. When asked whether their friends and he were afraid of the spirit of Sandy, Uncle Julius said that the religious activities would be good for the spirit. The following is Julius' response to John's question.

"...ghosts never disturb religious worship, but that if Sandy's spirit should happen to stray into the meeting by mistake, no doubt the preaching would do it good."
(Chesnutt, 63)

It is clear that the motif behind the superstitious story is a religious motif. It means that the Afro-American people wanted to get a place for worship and practicing their religious activities. Through his novel, Chesnutt wanted the white people to pay attention to the Afro-American people to exercise their religious belief by giving them a place for their religious activities.

c. The Humanistic Aspect

1) *Mars Jeems's Nightmare*

It was narrated that Uncle Julius tried to persuade John and Annie to accept his cousin, Tom, to work again in John's plantation. In response to Julius's intention, John refused it like in the following statement.

"I am sorry, Julius," I said to the old man; "I should have liked to oblige you by keeping him; but I can't stand Tom any longer. He is absolutely untrustworthy."

Getting the response, it did not stop Uncle Julius influencing John and Annie to accept his cousin again. But John still rejected his intention by saying as follows.

"No, Julius," I rejoined decidedly, "it is impossible. I gave him more than a fair trial, and he simply won't do."

Knowing this, Uncle Julius narrated a story of a sadistic master called Master Jeems. As the master in the plantation, he forced the slaves to work hard every day, no time for fun; the slaves were not allowed to marry. Feeling the inconvenience, one of the slaves, Solomon, asked for help of Aunt Peggy, a conjure woman, to change Master

Jeems' behavior. Then Aunt Peggy spelt some words addressed to Master Jeems.

Since that time, Master Jeems always had a nightmare and he finally changed his behavior to treat his slaves in the plantation. He treated them well and he dismissed his sadistic overseer. Master Jeems also allowed the slaves to have fun in the night and allowed them to marry.

Soon after Master Jeems treated them well, all the slaves in his plantation felt happy and they worked well. It gave a good impact on the plantation life. The plantation more and more was getting prosperous.

After listening to the story, Annie seemed touched so that she accepted Tom to work again in her plantation with the expression as follows.

I told him that if he would try to do better, we (John and Annie) would give one more chance. (Chesnutt, 102)

2) *The Conjuror's Revenge*

One day, Uncle Julius heard that John and Annie wanted to buy a mule to cultivate their plantation. Knowing their intention, Uncle Julius suggested them not to buy a mule. The following is his suggestion.

"Well, you may 'low hit's all foolis'ness, but ef I wuz in yo' place, I would n' buy no mule."

Then Uncle Julius narrated a story of Primus, a slave, to be changed to a mule by Guinea conjurer. Then the mule was sold and the money was shared together his friends. The changing of Primus into a mule was not last longer because the conjurer felt

very sinful and wanted to wipe out all his mistakes. Then he wanted to change the mule to Primus again. The following is the process of changing the mule to Primus.

"De mule seed de sense er dat, en stood still. Den de cunjuh man tuk de go'ds en bottles, en 'mence' ter wuk de roots en yarbs, en de mule 'mence' ter turn back ter a man,— fust his years, den de res' er his head, den his shoulders en arms. All de time de cunjuh man kep' on wukkin' his roots; en Pete en Primus could see he wuz gittin' weaker en weaker all de time. (The Conjure Woman: 124)

Unfortunately the conjurer passed away when process of changing was not yet finished. As a result only one of Primus' legs was not successful to change into human leg. It was still in the form of mule leg.

The story of Uncle Julius successfully influenced John and Annie so that they decided not to buy a mule but they bought a horse of Uncle Julius' friend. From the transaction Uncle Julius got commission from his friend. It meant that he got a financial profit. The next day he bought a new cloth.

Key word of the story is cloth. The word cloth refers to one of the basic human needs. Concerning with cloth, the authority of South Carolina had implemented slave codes since 1712. One of the codes said that:

"No slave was allowed to work for pay, or to plant corn, peas or rice; or to keep hogs, cattle, or horses; or to own or operate a boat; to buy

or sell or wear clothes finer than "Negro cloth."

From this rule, the Afro-American people were very difficult to fulfill their basic needs especially a better and finer cloth than the slaves used to wear. Inspired with such slave codes, it motivated Chesnutt to write *The Conjure Woman* to protest against the implementation of the hegemonic codes that ruled the way Afro-American people wore their clothes discriminatively.

3) *Sis' Becky's Pickaninny*

In this part of the novel, Chesnutt narrated that Annie was sick and her husband let Uncle Julius entertain her with his story. It was narrated by Uncle Julius that Becky, a female slave, experienced misfortune in her life because she had no *rabbit's foot for luck*. After being narrated a superstitious and romance story of mother and son, Becky and Mose, Annie was so touched with that story. Without being known by her husband, Uncle Julius lent his *rabbit's foot* to Annie. Day by day Annie was getting better and better.

Behind the story, actually Chesnutt wanted to show that Afro-American people had a skill in curing a disease although the way was different from the white people's way. As a matter of fact, as a slave they were able to make use of a variety of herbs to cure many diseases. The traditional medication was derived from their ancestors. Beside that Afro-American people also had some other potency such as arts, music, dances, handy craft, culinary and what not.

4) *Hot – Foot Hannibal*

This part tells about a dispute of young married couple, Malcolm Murchison and Mabel. They visited John and Annie to find out the way out of their problem. Their quarrels were as follows.

"I hate you and despise you! I wish never to see you or speak to you again!"

"Very well; I will take care that henceforth you have no opportunity to do either."

It would make them divorced. Knowing their problem, Uncle Julius tried to help them maintaining their marriage. By telling a superstitious tale of a female ghost, Chleo, Uncle Julius told that Chleo, Jeff, and Hannibal were involved in triangle love. It of course made them in conflict. Chleo and Jeff asked for Aunt Peggy's help to get Hannibal away from their sight. Aunt Peggy was a female conjurer.

Aunt Peggy gave them a doll and asked them to lay it under the door. After laying down the doll under the door, Hannibal got a serious sickness and hot in his feet. As a result, he always made mistake to do his job and he was sent to outdoor doing his job and the engagement between Chleo and Hannibal was cancelled. In short, Chleo finally passed away in the place where the horse did not want to move forward. She died because of the death of Jeff. The story touched the heart of Mabel and finally she would like to come back to Murchison. They reunited and lived happily.

As a matter of fact Chesnutt wanted to show that Afro-American people had a better ability to resolve their domestic problem compared with the white people. It

is so because they had a more complex experience of the domestic affairs. They used to live in a bitter life. The Afro-American people often saw, felt, and experienced a lot of sufferings due to the separation of family members such as a husband from wife and their children, children from their parents or even they were all scattered. As a result they were more mature and experienced to solve their domestic affairs than the white people. Thus Chesnutt revealed that the Afro-American people were smarter to solve their domestic affairs than the white people and reminded that one of the cruelties of the slavery is the disintegration of the family members. For that the slavery must be wiped out from the *Southern states*.

E. Conclusion

The expression of superstition is an effective way to persuade the mind set of people. In other word, someone or a group of society can make us of superstition to gain what they want. Charles W. Chesnutt is very smart to use the superstition in his novel, *The Conjure Woman* to express the resistance of the Afro-American society toward the hegemony of the white people society. The hegemony toward Afro-American society was intended to control all aspects of their lives in order that the slaves were submissive to serve the owner of the plantation.

The life aspects of the hegemonized group covered the aspects of culture, economy, religion, and freedom of association, freedom of expressing ideas and what not. Thus the slaves were controlled by the imperialistic white people through the slavery systems. Chesnutt in

The Conjure Woman made use of the superstition to express his message to the readers in order that they know how bitter and miserable the life of the Afro-American people was under the slavery system in the plantation.

There are many ways of the white people to hegemonize Afro-American people. The first way is a stigma that the slaves were inhuman like cattle. As a result the white people in *Southern states* assumed the slaves as their property so that the slaves were inferior in front of the white people. Another way is to make some regulation to control the slaves in the plantation. The regulation was called *The Slaves Codes*. If they violated the codes, they would be punished by the slave owners as they liked. He punishment could be whipping, hitting, be stamped with a hot iron to the dead sentence.

The penalties were not discouraging Afro-American people to rebel. Chesnutt in his novel of *The Conjure Woman* expressed the fight of Afro-American people against slavery through the superstition. Actually his novel is a form of a social protest done by Afro-American people to the white people in *Southern states* in order that they did not treat the slaves savagely and blindly. In short, by means of the superstition, Chesnutt as the writer wanted the Afro-American people to fight against the hegemony of the white people and also to wipe out the slavery from *Southern states* and to construct a mutual life relationship among them.

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