

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA**

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N°:



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**The AFRICAN TRAGEDY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S
*THINGS FALL APART***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Master's Degree**

By:

Miss. Rima BENNIA

and

Miss. Manel KHOUDOUR

2016 /2017

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Every challenging work needs making efforts as well as guidance of elders especially those who were very close to us.

I dedicate this work to my family, my father Amar, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother Malika whose words of encouragement ring in my ears. To my sister Hanan, who stands by me when things get hard.

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ABBREVIATIONS

TFA: Things Fall Apart

ABSTRACT

Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* marks a very important milestone in African literature. It has received global critical acclaim. The novel dramatizes precolonial and postcolonial *Igbo* life. Through Achebe's narrative discourse, one can assume the distinction between the two cultures, the culture of the colonizer and the culture of the colonized, as well as the tragic events caused by the coming of the *white* man. Therefore, the aim of this research is to study African tragedy in *Things Fall Apart*. It examines Achebe's postcolonial counter discourse to express the tragedy of a man and his people. Hence, the first chapter introduces the sociohistorical context of the novel. It sheds light on the different social, historical, and literary contexts that surrounded the writing of the novel. The second chapter involves the narrative discourse and stylistic techniques employed by the writer. The third chapter employs postcolonial literary criticism to approach the novel. Thus, we conclude that *Things Fall Apart* is one of the major literary and cultural works in the African canon. It explores the destructive aftermath of the advent of the *white* man, and the tragedy of the hero Okonkwo that implies the tragedy of the whole Umofian society in particular and the plight of Africa and Africans in general.

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INTRODUCTION

Things Fall Apart is considered as one of the most celebrated African literary works in the postcolonial era. Chinua Achebe transforms African literature and African novel as far as structure, techniques and style. He is considered to be the founding father of African literature, bringing younger generations of African writers with a particular African literary aesthetic. *Things Fall Apart* is regarded as a social protest and as a medium of political reassertion that celebrates African culture in a sophisticated way. Achebe manages to create a complex portrait of traditional *Igbo* life and culture in Africa. It is his first novel that brought him worldwide critical acclaims.

Besides, *Things Fall Apart* is the first novel that tells an African story from the perspective of African writer. Achebe is regarded as a pioneer in creating new stylistic techniques that project African culture and identity. Achebe criticizes those who call art for art's sake. He believes that artists should address issues related to the society's plight. His novel is meant to restore African traditional culture and identity to counter colonial and postcolonial agendas. Gikandi describes *Things Fall Apart* as a novel that explores "the crisis of culture generated by the collapse of colonial rule."¹ Achebe wants his art to be a weapon to enlighten the Africans about their native culture through shedding light on its richness as well as vitality.² Although he uses English as a medium of expression, he opens wide gates for the revitalization of African culture.

¹ Esonwanne Uzoma, "Crisis of the soul": Psychoanalysis and African Literature," Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 140-142; p. 141.

² Sinvansankar .K and v.Ganesan, "Chinua Achebe: An Exemplar in the postcolonial Epoch," International Journal of Science and Research, Volume. 4, Issues.12 (December 2015), pp.489-492; p. 491.

Achebe's five novels are chronicled according to African socio-historical changes. *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964), as *The African Trilogy* that celebrate pre-colonial *Igbo* culture and the coming of the *white men*. *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) deal with the crisis of post colonialism and Neo-colonialism.

Things Fall Apart foreshadows the violent transition of indigenous life and values caused by the advent of British colonialism by the end of the nineteenth century. It looks at the colonial experience from the perspective of the Africans themselves. The story is set in the Nigerian village of Umuofia before the coming of the *white men*. It narrates the story of Okonkwo who lived in an independent and organic society. Okonkwo, the protagonist is a rich and respected man who encounters a tragic fate by the end of the novel. Okonkwo's destiny marks the tragic transformation of tribal life. Achebe has been able to achieve his proper sense of drama by creating tragedy of a man and his people.

Achebe's contribution marks the turning point in African literature. He rises as the spokesman of a whole continent through his "verbal craftsmanship."³ His narrative strategies make *Things Fall Apart* a powerful artwork that helps in portraying the tragic end resulting from colonizer-colonized contact. Indeed, Achebe's narrative structure and his narrative techniques depict the vivid image of the Europeans' cruelties. Achebe writes his novel in English including some proverbs, myths, and folktales from his mother tongue. He also uses pidgins and creoles to give voice to African cultures. His adoption of *Igbo* cultural heritage and his appropriation of English language bring him critical reception and worldwide acclaim.

³ Abdoulaye Alassan, "Achebeism": Verbal Artistry and Style in Chinua Achebe's Writing," *An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, Ethiopia, Vol. 3 (1), Serial No 7 (February, 2014), pp. 56-75; p. 58.

Achebe's narrative discourse in *Things Fall Apart* refutes European false representations about Africa. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is Achebe's object of response and writing back. Achebe believes that *Heart of Darkness* strengthens the image of Africa as the Dark Continent. Achebe was able to defend his people and voice out his message to the world. He could rewrite a good representation to a large readership. As a result, *Things Fall Apart* had reached its peak of fame in postcolonial literature.

Things Fall Apart presents an ironic and apocalyptic vision of the advent of the colonizer. Chinua Achebe seeks to depict the voices of indigenous populations after the massive devastation and chaos caused by colonization. The story reveals the failure to maintain order and balance in the Umofian society. Hence, the present research examines:

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It attempts to answer the following research questions: how does *Things Fall Apart* reflect colonial and postcolonial realities in Africa? What are the features of Achebe's narrative discourse in *Things Fall Apart* to depict African tragedy? What are the postcolonial critical readings of *Things Fall Apart*?

CHAPTER I. SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first chapter sheds light on of the different socio-historical circumstances that characterized African life and that shaped the writing of the novel. The first section, **Winds of Change**, It is divided into three subsections. The first subsection, The Rise of Modernity, attempts to highlight the impact of modernity on the Umofian society. Furthermore, the second subsection, Industrial Machinery and African Life, demonstrates that the boom of industrialization creates positive and negative effects on the African society. The second section, **Nationalism: Strengths and Weaknesses**, discusses the contribution of African

nationalists in raising people's awareness of the need to resist colonialism and its negative effects in Nigeria. The third section, **Christian Missionaries in the Dark Continent**, seeks to illustrate the infamous project of the *white man's* burden and la mission civilisatrice in Africa.

The fourth section, **Nigeria at the Crossroads of Culture** is divided into four subsections. The first subsection, *The White Man in the Igbo land*, gives an insight into colonial and postcolonial tribal characteristics that made it a unique African ethnic group. The second subsection, *The Psychic Trauma and the Rapid Shift*, expounds on the idea of the necessity for cultural recovery and reassessment of the African traditions, also examines the psychic problems of the Africans after independence. The third subsection, *Social Problems at the Eve of Independence*, deals with the social difficulties that were inherited from colonialism. The fourth subsection, *Achebe's Humanism*, examines Achebe's argumentation of African self and human rights.

CHAPTER II. ACHEBE'S NARRATIVE DISCOURSE IN *THING FALL APART*

The second chapter delves into **Achebe's Narrative Discourse in *Things Fall Apart***, it spots light on the stylistic strategies that Achebe uses in representing the African tragedy, and how he contributes in reshaping African literature and African culture. Firstly, **Drama and African Tragedy in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*** explores how the writer creates an environment of tragic drama using specific techniques. The second section, **Achebe and the Yeatisian Title**, seeks to explore the purpose of using the first line of Yeat's poem "The Second Coming" as an epigraph in his story *Things Fall Apart*. It illustrates the tragic theme expressed by the two writers, and the downfall of the two societies. The third section, **Okonkwo's Tragic Flaw**, The fourth section, **Two Narrative Modes**, analyses how Achebe uses the voice of celebration in the beginning of the novel, as well as the pessimistic voice by the end. The fifth section, **Narrative Structure: from Linearity to Flashbacks**, throws light

on Achebe's change of the narrative structure of the plot. The novel's plot structure is characterized by linearity at the first part of the novel; in the second part, Achebe shifts to the use of a non-linear structure affected by the coming of the British. The sixth section, **the Tortoise Tale**, highlights the symbolic relationship between the tortoise and Okonkwo in shaping the tragic events of the novel. While in the seventh section, **Narrative Dialogues and Characterization** deals with characters' dialogues and how they help in understanding their behaviours and inner thoughts. The last section, **Igbo's Ancestral Magic Proverbs**, shows the role of the use of the oral traditions in the novel to show identity and originality.

CHAPTER III. POSTCOLONIAL READING TO *THINGS FALL APART*

The third chapter deals with postcolonial criticism of *Things Fall Apart*. It is divided into eight sections. The first section defines, **Postcolonial Literature**, as one of the challenging genres that emerged when the Africans were searching for identity and originality, and when most African writers sought to restore their lost culture. This section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection deals with the Orient versus Occident by Edward Said. His Orient/Occident binaries are examined in the light of the tragic events of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The second subsection, **Postcolonial Aesthetic**, reveals the writers' and the intellectuals' capacity of the colonized mind in changing their tragic fate caused by the colonizer "Other". The third subsection, **Fanonian Binary Oppositions**, enlarges the idea that the decolonization process depends upon the survival of its people. The second section, **The Problem of Language in African Literature**, highlights the difficulties encountered by postcolonial writers in selecting the appropriate language as a medium of self-expression. This section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection, Achebe's Appropriation of English Tongue, examines the main reasons for Achebe to use English in his narration as a weapon to deliver his message worldwide. The second subsection,

Decolonizing the Mind, Decolonizing Literature, unlike Achebe, Ngugi uses the native language in his postcolonial narrative discourse as a way of resistance to colonialism. The third section, **Inferiority Complex**, explains the ideology of the colonized in praising all what reflects European civilization as an attempt to imitate them. **Afro-centrism** deals with the African's firm belief in *white* superiority. The fourth section, **Europeans False Representations**, considers the false representations of African history as a long night of savagery, and Africa as the Dark Continent and the heart of darkness. The fifth section, **Counter Discourse in *Things Fall Apart***, treats *Things Fall Apart* as a response and a counter discourse to the image of Africa in the world. The sixth section, **Pride and Prejudice**, shows Achebe's pride in his origin, identity and culture. The seventh section, **The Aftermath of Colonization**, deals with the effects of the colonizer on the colonized. It deals with the total damage caused by the advent of the British colonizers. The eighth section is entitled, **Freezing the Image of the Cultural Apartheid**, it covers the new language between the colonized and the colonizer, Achebe mixed the two cultures to reach the social and literary African originality.

Thing Fall Apart can be considered central to the canon of modern African literature. It owes a distinction due to the significance that was assumed after its publication. So, the present research attempts to demonstrate Achebe's quality and manner of presenting the loss of the Igbo culture in the novel, and in expressing natives' tragedy in Nigeria.

CHAPTER I. SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“I believe it's impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of message, and some kind of protest. The whole pattern of life demands that you should protest that, you should put in a word for your history, your traditions, and your religion and so on”.⁴ For the African writers, this intellectual and cultural activities is a another mean for their long lasting struggle to assert themselves and celebrate all what is black, one of these novels was Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This work probably is the first to represent the African experience in more realistic narrative that sought to be different from the colonial novel of the time. The socio-historical context can be indeed an inspiration to those writers in their literary works affecting their way of expression as well as their themes, this chapter attempts to delve to provide a good background about Achebe's time of writing that enlarges the understanding for how tragedy occurred in the novel.

1.1. The Winds of change

By the coming of white men, Nigeria was in time when many social changes had started. Modernism had dominated the Umofian society and culture. Nationalism was also introduced by the elite of the intellectuals. This was coincided with the role of missionaries to convert people to Christianity; while some others had changed their role to help the colonizers in their imperialistic mission.

⁴ Madubuike Ihechukwu, “Chinua Achebe: His Ideas on African Literature,” Presence African Edition. (1er Trimester, 1975), pp.141-142; p.

1.1.1. The Rise of Modernity

It was not the intention of the British to practice their system in the colonies. They practiced a colonial system, a totalitarian system, whether in Africa or India or wherever.⁵

Achebe wrote his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in a time where the first steps toward modernization took place. Modernity is a “total process associated with economic development in terms of preconditions, concomitants, and consequences of the later.”⁶ It was an indirect type of imperialism and colonialism. Its first wave appeared in the 1950^s and 1960^s. It resulted in many developments: literary, cultural and national identity. By 1950, political changes occurred and power had been transformed with the new generation, an age of ideas and actions had begun and the country witnessed an expansion of its infrastructure, health services, schools and industries. The late colonial and postcolonial Nigerian history resulted in the economic reforms and modernization.

Modernity is the transformation from traditional, rural and agrarian society to secular, urban and industrial one. It explains the changing ways of communication and media in traditional and modern societies. It promotes a state of mind, social innovations and techniques in the new colonies, it focuses on industrialization as a key of culture and personality transformations, having a great influence on framing knowledge of change, these affected the diverse natives in Africa.

With the rise of colonialism, modern Europe imposed the image of itself of rationality. They introduced science, technology, and religion as means to apply their corrupt political system. For Achebe, colonialism did not only occupy the land but rather it subjugated the

⁵Jussawala Ferosa & Dasenbrock Reed, “Chinua Achebe in Interviews with Writers of the Post-colonial World,” (University Press of Mississippi 1992), p. 66.

⁶ Bernstein, H, “Modernization Theory and the Sociological Study of Development,” *Journal of Development Studies*, 1991, pp.141-160; p. 146.

minds of Africans to a false history and false thoughts.⁷ Achebe was able to change how African history was seen, his modernist view created the basis for modern literature in Africa, he radically shifted the view from colonialist to a native point of view. Achebe's mission was to depict the corruption of the white men as far as the drawbacks of modernity. In *Things Fall Apart*, the essential dilemma that is Nigeria and is Africa is also modernization heart of darkness.⁸ It is made as a literary representative text of the African rapid response to Europeans colonialism and modernity.

Modernity had two edged swords; one is dynamic and progressive; while the other is dark and problematic. It resulted in an increase in social problems. Although the industrial system of production is phenomenally powerful, this power created different social classes and conditions of life. These degraded conditions of people and workers would be the most eloquent testimony to the dehumanization brought by the system of modernism.⁹

Nigeria's focus became switched from this progress to political competition between ethnic groups instead of fighting against colonialism; this situation had reached a crisis point with political and ethnic tensions in the country. As a result, Nigeria started to lose stability and equilibrium among its states and resulted in the Nigerian Civil War. The whole country was traumatized by the years of fighting until 1970. The horrifying events of both world wars, specifically world war one, made many people question the future of humanity. Instead of progress, people saw a decline of civilization, the modernist writer saw the increase of capitalism which alienated the individual and caused his ennui.

⁷ Kurtz Thomas, "Books are Weapons: Chinua Achebe," New York Press, Vol. 15 (14 Mars 2002).

⁸ Ibid., p. x

⁹ Whittaker David and Mpalive-Hangson Msiska, "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," (Taylor and Francis eLibrary, 2007) Preface. p .x

1.1.2. Industrialization and Social Changes

Modern society is an industrial society. Industrialization encompasses profound economic, social, political and cultural changes in the Nigerian society. It transformed totally all the primitive societies and completely separated them. They witnessed great achievements that never had been seen. Industrialization is one of the most influential systems in Africa and literature in particular; it affected the writers of this period. This revolution which involved major changes transformed the daily lives of people and even their thoughts, its emergence radically brought about distinctive literary ideas and directions. Chinua Achebe was one of those writers, he wrote *Things Fall Apart* in similar vein when he wanted his people to regain their life and identity. Industrialization was mainly a transitional period in their culture as for their literature.

1.2. Nationalism: Strengths and Weaknesses

Nationalist movement coincided with new constitutional proposal designed to promote regional and cultural unity, a political sentiment shared by many of Nigeria's educated elite.¹⁰ Nationalism had emerged in Nigeria in 1920^s to assert the necessity of being united so that Nigerians could resist colonialism. Nigerian nationalists optimistically looked forward to the day when the country would become a self-determining nation and gain its independence.¹¹ Its goal of an independent sovereign state was achieved in 1960 when the British colonial rule ended and Nigeria declared its independence. Chinua Achebe wrote his novel when the nationalist movement for independence was at its peak. This is an important area of influence

¹⁰“Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*,” op. cit., Preface, p.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 6

on his work.¹² The African consciousness increased and Africans started questioning the European presumption of superiority

Nationalism resulted in ethnic divisions within the Nigerian society. Those groups did not agree and seceded from the government; tribal struggles emerged by 1966. Many Igbo people had lost faith in Nigerian nationalism and membership. They formed the Republic of Biafra that became a real threat for their unity. This secession was followed by other states. From 1967 to 1970, the Nigerian civil war was fought and ended with the defeat of the Biafran separatists that resulted many losses. The whole country was traumatized by the years of fighting, which ended only in 1970 with the defeat of the Biafran government and army. Achebe was deeply affected by the war, and particularly by the loss of many friends and acquaintances.¹³

Many organizations and tribal associations flourished with the nationalist movement from around 1800^s. The National council of Nigeria and Cameroun in 1944 called for self-government. Newspapers and media played a significant role in rising social and political awareness among Nigerians.

1.3. Christian Missionaries in the Dark Continent

A lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens. (*TFA*, 110)

The legacy of Christian missionaries lives up to this day because most of the leaders who fought for independence were educated by missionaries. These missionaries assisted their government in the subjugation of Africans. It was their mission to do anything necessary to convert Africans who were viewed as uncivilized and barbaric. The activities of these

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibid. , p. 7.

missionaries and their educational programmes helped in increasing Nigerian's consciousness of a shared identity and to train a new set of elite, those elites participated in nationalist movement and leadership for the young nation's independence. The involvement of missionaries helped in shaping the first generation of leaders and the socio-cultural life of present day Nigeria. Later on, the involvement of missionaries is totally changed, things started to vary,

The white men had indeed brought a lunatic religion; he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and Kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umofia. (*TFA*, 128)

This was a decisive plan for colonizing them, the situation had been turned. Most of the villagers were excited about the new opportunities and techniques that the missionaries brought, but this European influence eradicated the Nigerians' mastery of traditional methods of living. They often depended on the support of the colonial power and their financial aids. Similarly, the colonizers inevitably profited from the missionaries' effort since their educational work helped them in the establishment of a colonial government. This deal changed the role of the missionaries from a religious to a political one. They challenged the indigenous customs and traditions believing that they were saving lost souls and civilizing the heathen. This, however, was a big lie. They came to Africa in a mission of exploitation in the name of civilization, *white men's* burden. For Abdul Jan Mohamed, this duality of the Europeans originated from their thoughts and the heart of their colonial mentality:

[it was] dominated by a Manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object.¹⁴

¹⁴ Abdul Jan Mohamed, *Manichean Aesthetics*, "The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa," (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), p. 4.

Those ideas pushed them to colonize the Africans and eliminate their culture to place their own colonial one. Fanon argues that “the colonial world is a Manichaeian world.”¹⁵ In which he stated that the colonizers viewed Umofians as irrational, depraved, and different; whereas the Europeans as rational, virtuous, and normal. One of the factors to play on the weakness of Umofian society was the missionaries. Christianity did not take over through militarism or force; “but by responding clearly to a need so deeply felt that it has not been clearly formulated.”¹⁶ Most of the colonized people were converted simply regarding the social changes occurred at that time.

Many historians asserted that the coming of white missionaries in the nineteenth century to atone the horrors and trauma of slavery was used as a pretext for colonization. The assumption that the Christian Europeans would heal the wounds had been inflicted by slave trade. So, they did not expect any moral or religious teachings. Christian Education supposed to support the tribal teaching not violating it, but because of their ignorance the missionaries often deepened their old scars.

1.4. Nigeria at the Crossroads of Cultures

Chinua Achebe once wrote that the time and place in which he was raised was strongly multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious, somewhat chaotic colonial situation. For him this reflects the experience of growing up in Nigeria in the first half of the twentieth century, a various cultural developments engaged in its own social progress. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe captured the inner movement of transition from the past to the modern *Igbo* that resulted the tragic fall of the society, this work looked back at both pre-colonial culture and

¹⁵ Frantz Fanon, “*The Wretched of the Earth*,” (London: Penguin 1965), p. 31.

¹⁶ Carroll, David “Chinua Achebe” 2nded (New York: St-Martin’s Press, 1980).

the changes brought by the British imperialism. *Things Fall Apart* reflected the authentic image of the *Igbo* society.

1.4.1. The *White Man in the Igbo Land*

At the time of independence 1960, Nigeria consisted of three strong regional governments. One of its major tribal groups was the Igbo. The later was the largest ethnic nationalities society that was traditionally very equalitarian and democratic race, based on large centralized tribal institutions; the Igbo people had strong belief in self-determination and autonomy. Trade was the main link between its independent communities. The *Igbos* spoke various dialects and used proverbs and epigrams which represented a repertoire of communal wisdom and knowledge.¹⁷

To make it more clear the Umofians' life characterized with elaborate moral and ethical codes. They believed in the hierarchy of gods, since they were religious men, and that nothing happened by chance. Thus, they focused on legends and mythology. They believed that the failure to preserve traditions might anger the spirits of their forefathers. What the colonizer failed to understand was that the African societies had had a highly evolved system. Replacing of the presumed anarchic; savagery with a form of civilization caused a tragic loss of everything.¹⁸

1.4.2. Psychic Trauma and the Dramatic Shift

The significance of the novel came into its own when the socio-cultural situation demanded a reassessment of the African history. It was a time when the Nigerian people were calling for cultural and psychic recovery. The period in which Achebe wrote the novel was a

¹⁷“Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,” op. cit., p. 22-26.

¹⁸Mahanta Pona and Dipakare Maut , “The Impact of Colonizer on the Colonized: A Postcolonial Study of Nigerian Igbo Culture and History in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,”(International Journal of English literature and culture, October 2014), vol. 2(10) ,pp . 259-260; p. 259.

time of controversial challenges. Many historians argued that there was a deep historical, psychological gap between the years of colonialism and independence. Post-colonial culture was in confusion after a long established European one. The colonized individual is usually forced to follow the culture of their colony, and many scholars claimed that even though after gaining independence most countries still subjected to the form of neo-colonialism. The colonial rule in Nigeria entered the final phase and the question was about the nature a national identity after colonialism.

Besides, the period witnessed a dramatic shift from pre-colonial to colonial and from colonial to post-colonial and from postcolonial to neo-colonial era. The cooperation with all those changes will certainly cause psychic as well as socio-cultural traumas; sometimes this crisis is the result of racial inferiority complex in which they were treated as uneducated and marginalized blacks. This led them unconsciously to adopt and favour European culture at the expense of their traditional African values. So, the newly emerging intellectuals take the responsibility of collective psychological recovery, also to reconnect and make reconciliation with the past, which they had abandoned for Christianity. Achebe recognized that writing for Africa is a serious enterprise, he said:

[...] African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; [...] their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and beauty [...] they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain[...]the writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost.¹⁹

The above passage reflected clearly Achebe's purpose of writing. Achebe understand the power that the colonizer used as tool to devalue the natives' culture and dignity, his mission is to develop a clear comprehensive theory, and use his pen to recall for the history and identity

¹⁹ Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," African Writers on African Writing, ed .G.D.Kilam (Evanston: North western University .Press, 1973), p. 8.

of his nation. Achebe used the foreign language of interpret this denigrated past. The responsibility of the writer is to restore dignity to his people, the people who have been dehumanized by European imperialists during the colonial period.

1.4.3. Social Problems at the Eve of Independence

Although the colonial countries achieved political independence; the impact of decades of British imperialism had been severally deep. The colonized were struggling with the conquerors' culture, the fear of the ambiguous future, their lost hopes and dream, and even about their own identity. Nigerians were not able to respond to language changes and curriculum matters in education and race differences. *Thing Fall Apart* came in a time when the meaning of Africanization was in postcolonial clash between the Europeans and Africans, the long life struggle to preserve the traditional one and accommodate with the new. The era had been proved to be catalytic; the long life struggle to impose itself highly affected the values, codes of conduct rooted in the past.

Achebe wrote when the African society was moving toward denigration. He made a clear socio-cultural awareness for his readers about the changing life in the Umofian society. Colonialism had distorted the cadence of cultural growth and created an unbridgeable cultural gap between the two sides. Africa became fully westernized and western culture now regarded as front line culture. They lost the ancient power of cultural development, strength, traditions and customs that lost their stature by the coming of Christianity. African culture collapsed due to the imposed capitalism that focused on individualism and self rather than on community. Social values had been dramatically damaged and broken down attaching people together.²⁰

²⁰Maleki Nasser and Maryam Navidi, "Foregrounding Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Postcolonial Study," (Canadian Social Science, September 2011) , Vol. 7, pp 10-15 .

1.4.4. Achebe and African Humanism

Humanism is a philosophy of life that was a common characteristic in postcolonial era and enabled naturally the coexistence of human beings. Achebe expressed the displeasure in breaking this ideology by introducing the western way of life, African humanism is the enjoying African way of life as it is; which Achebe tries to emphasize as an African Humanist, he chose to give what he knows and what the world should know, that Africa is an extended to European humanism but, what they did was to extend cruelty and set us against our self.²¹

The second chapter attempts to explain Achebe's narrative discourse. It seeks to investigate the different stylistic techniques used in the novel *Things Fall Apart* and to spot more light on the tragic sense of the colonized Nigeria. Achebe used Yeats' line of the poem as his novel's title, narration mode as well as structure to deepen his analysis of the hero Okonkwo. Furthermore, the second chapter scrutinizes the different literary tool as proverbs, myths, tales that gives the novel the real sense of portraying African life.

²¹Edeh, E "African Humanism in Achebe in Relation to the West,"(Open Journal of Philosophy)

CHAPTER II: NARRATIVE DISCOURSE IN *THINGS FALL APART*

After relating Achebe's works to its socio- historical context, this chapter deals with narrative strategies used by the writer to create the African tragedy. He attempted to highlight the adoption of specific literary techniques to shape his tragic novel. Although *Things Fall Apart* appears to have perfectly transparent narrative lines, but it tells the tragic story of Okonkwo's rise and fall in the *Igbo* society. So, a hasty reading is not sufficient for understanding the deep and complex meaning of Achebe's own unique image about Africans. The apparent picture seems to be a story of 'hamartia' tragic flaw.²² But turning into the construction of the characters and choices of words made by the author have another far complex interpretation of its tragedy. The novel clearly demonstrated the idea that "*life is chaotic, but art is orderly.*" Achebe was able to create and organize a fiction through the combination of formal techniques with an artistic narration that give a new insight into human experience, it gives his first novel meaning of completeness and reaching global audience for the first time in African literature. Achebe ending must reconcile itself with the fact that the novel describes a situation of profound cultural entropy, a society in which the norms of conduct and institutions of governance are in process of falling apart.

2.1. Drama and African Tragedy in *Things Fall Apart*

The writer over-controlled his selections to portray African and Nigerian tragedy. He internalized the new linguistic terms with Umofian changes and manipulated the specific techniques and style in way that suits his objectives. To create an atmosphere of tragic coming events for his audience, as he stated clearly in the following lines:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievement.

²² Begam Richard "Achebe's Sense of an Ending: History and Tragedy in "Things Fall Apart"," Studies in the Novel, Vol. 29, No. 3(The Johns Hopkins University),pp. 396-411; p. 399.

As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the cat. [...] The drum beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their back [...] that was many years ago, twenty or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like [...] And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get words out quickly enough [...] He had no patience with unsuccessful men. (*TFA*, 1)

The above opening passage establishes Okonkwo as an African tragic hero. It outlines the structure of the story raising the expectation of how the end will be. The very first two sentences of the passage allude to the social background of Okonkwo's life and his communal achievements. Achebe in this regard uses a lot of simple sentences as well as compound sentences, with few compound complex ones which reflects the simplicity of its content. For many scholars, the use of such specific types reflects the simple way of *Igbo* culture that lacks the complexity of modern life, and how the hero was so related to his community; so that the reader would sympathize with him. However, the writer in the second part of the passages describes Okonkwo's weakness and his fault that led him to struggle with his community.²³

Achebe was able through these passages to succeed on many levels. His style is characterized by the economy of words. For example; he said, "*He had no patience with unsuccessful men.*" (*TFA*, 1) This gives the novel a great credit since a less competent writer would spend many more words in making this idea clear. The significance of his narrative lies in his ability to relate the tragic hero with the tragedy of a whole community. Through this drama and cohesion, he could create a breathtaking tragedy from the opening of the story referring to the plight of his protagonist and the old traditional life.²⁴

²³Obiechina, Emmanuel, "structure and significance in Achebe's *Things fall apart*," English in Africa (Rhodes University, 1975), pp. 34-44; p. 39.

²⁴"Structure and significance in Achebe's *Things fall Apart*," op. cit., p. 40.

Achebe is considered the first spokesman of Africa and African literature because of his experimentation with the tragedy in *Things Fall Apart*. He could absorb the characteristics of the oral traditional novel and re-organize it into a new cultural literature. Vital aspects of the oral literature are extended into an emerging written literature of greatly invigorated forms infused with vernacular energy through metaphors, images, symbols, and more complex plots, and diversified structures of means.²⁵ He uses new and different tools to achieve his goal and prove to the Europeans as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in particular that Africans can tell their story. For Achebe one big message that he try to put across is that Africa was not a vacuum before the coming of Europeans, and that culture was not unknown in Africa, it was not brought to Africa by the *white* world.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe relies on traditional folktales as well as *Igbo* proverbs, legends, myths, in addition to some dialogues that were chosen from the oral tradition. By writing *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe could reclaim the lost heritage and cultural identity, to revive past history and old memories. He achieved something that no other writer had done before him, and his novel had changed the careers of many African writers.²⁶ Achebe accomplished his purpose with changing the entire literary world; his contributions to make an African literature far away from European writings make him unforgettable for Nigerians Africans and Europeans as whole.²⁷

By using English, Achebe could reach many more readers and have a much greater literary impact. He employs elements of the *Igbo* concepts into English text about his culture to solve the lack of understanding between the *Igbo* culture and the colonialist one. Achebe

²⁵ Obiechina Emmanuel, "Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel," (Oral Tradition 1992), pp. 197-230; p. 197.

²⁶ Adaoli Ihueze Olivia, "Folklore in Literature: A Tool For culture Preservation and Entertainment," Department of English language and literature (Nnamdi Azikiw University), pp. 57-6; p. 58.

²⁷ Chinua Achebe *.Things Fall Apart*, "Achebe Novel's and Nigeria," New York Bantam double day d'el Publishing Group, I'ns., 1959. Online, Int.

goes a long way to bridge a cultural division; he helps the non-*Igbo* readers relate to the complex *Igbo* vocabulary.

Achebe wrote in English as a medium of international exchange to bring out his message to Europeans. He asserts that a writer should write for social purposes, unlike the western writers who create art for art's sake. Achebe became the founding editor for a series of African literature, he comments that Africans have their own culture before the coming of the *white* men, they had poetry and above all they had dignity. It is this dignity that Africans lost during colonialism, and it is this that they now must regain; they wanted to re-establish their own national culture in the post-colonial era.²⁸

2.2. Achebe and Yeatsian Title

Chinua Achebe opens his novel with the first lines in W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" as an introduction to his book:

Turing and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things Fall Apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (*TFA*, 1)
From: W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

Things Fall Apart foreshadows the tragic events of the story; it is a story that describes whatever one may expect from its Yeatsian title.²⁹ The title is significant because it sets the mood for the novel, the mood of a society who is totally unaware of dramatic changes that are only a falconer's step away.³⁰ It documents the falling apart of the *Igbo* tribe due to the coming of the Christian missionaries and the rule of the English government. It coincides with a time of chaos in European history after World War one and the catastrophes of communism

²⁸ Alan Mahbulbul, "Reading Chinua Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart* From the Post colonial perspective," Research on Humanities and Social Science, Vol.4, No.12, (2014), pp. 101-106; p. 102.

²⁹ McCarthy, B. Eugene, "Rhythm and Narrative Methods in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," A Forum on fiction, Vol.18 No. 3 (spring, 1985) (Duke University Press), pp. 245-256; p. 243.

³⁰ Champion A. Ernest, "The Story of a Man and his People: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," Negro American Literature Forum, Vol. 8 No. 4 (winter, 1974) St. Louis University, pp. 272-277; p. 272.

and fascism. Yeats argues that societies do not collapse without exerting external pressure. The chaos that has been made in the modern era was due to the collision between tradition and modernity that resulted in cultural trauma.³¹ It is similar to the disorder that sweeps Umofia; there was a good interpretation in using the first lines of William Yeats. This event is presented clearly in the metaphor “the falcon cannot hold the falconer” as if whenever you become far away from your culture, origin and traditions that brought people together, certainly you will get lost and fall down. Achebe uses the language of the colonizer to open their eyes to their brutality. The line *Things Fall Apart* serves his thesis. In the novel, the traditional structure of the *Igbo* has fallen down by the coming of the Christian missionaries. Obierika sums up the causes and effects of Okonkwo’s death:

“How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever; he came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We are amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.” (*TFA*, 167)

This passage clearly ties the destruction of the *Igbo* people’s way of life to sneaky and divisive actions on the part of the imperialists. The tribe whose heart beat as one is now divided, Okonkwo believed that if Umofia fight to return to its former self; the *white men* will be driven away. But he didn’t understand that he must fight against his clan before fighting the colonizer.³² As a result, the unity of the clan had shattered. Yeats wanted to depict the

³¹Geetha .R, “Myth and History in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*” An International Journal in English (Karunya University, Coimbatore), pp. 1-5;p. 3.

³² “The Story of a Man and his People: Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,” op. cit., p. 276.

impression of the second coming of Christ and anarchy, while Achebe showed the horrors of Imperialism and bad effects of colonialism in a civilized society.³³

2.3. Okonkwo's Tragic Flaw

Things Fall Apart is a tragic title that implies the tragic events of the story. It tells the story of the Umuofian clan being invaded by outsiders.³⁴ Okonkwo is a man of wealth and status who nonetheless has a tragic flaw, his flaw compared to that of Shakespeare and Oedipus of the Greek who married his own mother, those heroes were of great men with high qualities but at the same time have a fault that is likely to overshadow their merits.³⁵ He defends his claim in an interview with Charles Roles:

[The tragic protagonist] is the man who is larger than life, who exemplifies virtues that are admired by the community, but also a man who for all that is still human, he can have flaws, you see; all that seems to me to be very elegantly underlined in Aristotle's work.³⁶

For many times, Achebe was asked to identify the main cause for the ironic end of Okonkwo. Several suggestions state that Okonkwo's tragic end is because of his weak character or due to the destruction of cultural norms by the coming of *white men*. He struggles to react against the ideals of heroism, in which the Umuofian society claimed that a hero is a product of social norms.³⁷ Okonkwo would never achieve heroism among his people if they ignored totally his wishes. Achebe was skillful in creating a paradox hero in which the events of the story took place within cultural context that started to be affected by the colonizer.

³³ Ibid., p. 277

³⁴ Friesen Alan. R, "Okonkwo's Suicide as an Affirmative Act: Do Things Really Fall Apart?" Post colonial text, Vol2. (University of Regina), pp. 10-11; p. 10.

³⁵ "Myth and History in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God*," op. cit., p. 3.

³⁶ "Achebe's Sense of an Ending: History and Tragedy in "Things Fall Apart,"" op. cit., p. 399.

³⁷ "The Plight of Hero in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," op. cit, p. 154.

Okonkwo's stammer is a tragic flaw. It is not seen in the book much more, but Achebe did not quote a passage when Okonkwo sputters out his words. One of the reasons for this may be that Okonkwo uses aggression. Achebe said:

When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground [...] as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often [...] whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough [...], he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father (*TFA*, 1)

This passage also reveals the ultimate cause of Okonkwo's tragic end, his impatience and temper. The narrator tells us simply that: "*He had no patience with unsuccessful men*" (*TFA*, 1). The narrator further adds that Okonkwo walked "*as if he was going to pounce on somebody.*" (1) Okonkwo did so quite often. Therefore, this passage opens Achebe's novel, the ingredients necessary towards creating a successful tragic character out of Okonkwo; however, Okonkwo's tragic flaw can be interpreted also as result of his fear of weakness:

Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man, but his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods [...] Okonkwo's fear was great than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself. (13)

This highlights that Okonkwo's fear was internal, far away from external pressures. His fear of unmanliness caused him to act harshly toward his fellow clansmen, his family and himself. In Okonkwo 'eyes a man is violent, hardworking, wealthy person and any more who doesn't meet standards he considers weak. Okonkwo entire identity is built around the concept of masculinity. His father had of traits that Okonkwo considers distinctly feminine. Also, the agitation to wage war against the *white* missionary in both Umofia and Mbanta were some of the issues where Okonkwo did not have full support from other men in the society, and his reason for calling them effeminate. Okonkwo is determined to prove that he is not like his father, he is overly aggressive to the point of destruction .He never allows himself to show

any warmth or emotions. Okonkwo has built his whole life on the masculinity of the tribe, the masculinity that had helped the tribe survive before the arrival of the Western culture and ideologies.

Besides, the protagonist was not in home when the white missionaries first arrive, so he is not able to save his people during the time. Okonkwo is afraid for their current life and for their future, their future is unknown and terrifying, the younger men have forgotten their bonds of kinship and that has led to their down fall as he said:

“But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong the bond of kinship is. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what it is the result? An abominable religion has settled among you [...] I fear for you; I fear for you the clan.” (*TFA*, 167)

By the end, when he returns he kills himself because he could not save his people, his death was tragic and his failing also might have had a hand in the collapse of the *Igbo* values.³⁸ Okonkwo’s is a great man whose tragic destiny is linked with that of his people.

2.4. Two Narration Modes

Things Fall Apart narrative strategy seems to have specific techniques. One can notice that there are distinctive narrative modes throughout the novel. In the first chapters of the novel, narration is highly synchronic, having the same rhythm of detailed everyday life of Umofia, as well as the development of the hero Okonkwo, this simple narration mode with simple prose style lies in the desire of the writer to reflect the African verbal style . However, with the engagement of the *white* man in the second part, narration becomes diachronic in another word; the mood that has dominated the first part which is profoundly calm, happiness, order, equality and freedom was replaced by anger, unhappiness, disorder and the feeling that

³⁸Nnoromele Patrick c, “The Plight of Hero in Achebe’s *Things fall Apart*,” College literature (The Johns Hopkins University press, 2000), pp. 146-156; p. 140.

something was being definitely taken away from the native. This shift is also extended to the rhyme reflecting the disruption of the existing order by the arrival of *white* missionaries. However, Okonkwo is unable to adopt these changes which led to his downfall.³⁹

Moreover, there is a tone that dominates the first part of the novel. Achebe intended to highlight a voice which adheres to the *Igbo* traditions. The second part of the novel, however, adopts a modern view which praises the *white* man's values and culture and marginalized *Igbo* culture that is referred to in the eponymous phrase *Things Fall Apart*. For Achebe the adoption of such moving voice is a sign of tragedy and the collapse of whole society which is supposed to be so rooted in past civilization, as Carroll points out "when the narrator begins to delve into the single mind we anticipate with foreboding an unpleasant turn of events."⁴⁰ Achebe has made his novel very unique. The novel is written in the third person omniscient point of view. It can share the thoughts of many characters as it switches from one character to another.

2.5. Narrative Structure: Flashback Technique

Achebe presents Umofian society with dual sides, ritualistic, rigid and in many ways surprisingly and flexible. Achebe's narrative has a tripartite structure. The first thirteen chapters introduce Okonkwo's life with its detailed customs and cultural rituals of the society, his tragic end and his exile. The second part consists of six chapters. It depicts the hero in exile and the appearance of the British colonizers. The last part entails the return of the protagonist from exile and the dramatic shifts in his clan.

These divisions signal that the periods of change are approaching Okonkwo's life; each one is considered as a step downward from his proud to his tragic end. The first part is the longest section which provides much more information about the cultural background of

³⁹ Chinua Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁰ Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 7.

the hero. It corresponds to the rise of his fortune. The writer's lengthening of this part is purposeful. He intends to shed light on the richness of the *Igbo* culture to make the readers more familiar with the African culture. What is important is that this section is not linear. It moves backward and forward lacking the narrative linearity that was common in European realistic fiction. For example, the first part sometimes describes Okonkwo at the age of eighteen years old as in the first paragraph. However, the descriptions in the third paragraph take place at the age of fourteen years old. Still, narration in the last paragraph of the chapter shifts to Okonkwo's achievements in his early age.

Historians argue that much of novel's narration is devoted to praise the *Igbo* culture. By contrast, the last part on the novel specially the last six chapter, the plot becomes more linear and the narration quicken for the first time, no roundabout words till the end of novel. So, the movement from a disrupted plot to a linear is due to the destruction of oral culture which will be replaced by written one by the end of the novel.⁴¹

2.6. The Tortoise Tale

Achebe had selected the folktales in the opening pages according to their role to advance the meaning of the text. For example, the tale about the feast of the birds that was narrated by Ikwefi:

"Once upon a time," she began, "all the birds were invited to a feast in the sky. They were very happy and began to prepare themselves for the great day[...]"Tortoise saw all these preparations and soon discovered what it all meant[...]"As soon as he heard of the great feast in the sky his throat began to itch at the very thought[...]" Tortoise had a sweet tongue, and within a short time all the birds agreed that he was a changed man, and they each gave him a feather, with which he made two wings[....]" At last the great day came and Tortoise was the first to arrive at the meeting place... he was soon chosen as the man to speak for the party because he was a great orator[...]"There is one important thing

⁴¹ Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 8.

which we must not forget,' he said as they flew on their way. 'When people are invited to a great feast like this, they take new names for the occasion [...]"None of the birds had heard of this custom but they knew that Tortoise, in spite of his failings in other directions, was a widely-travelled man who knew the customs of different peoples. His speech was so eloquent that all the birds were glad they had brought him [...]" (TFA, 32-33).

The above tale has a great effect upon the novel's narration. The tortoise was so clever in conveying the birds of choosing the name "all for me" that was new things for their ritual practices, and at the same time serves his benefits. What is important here, that Achebe appropriate selection from oral African tradition is directed to his main theme of the novel *Things Fall Apart*. The rise of the tortoise corresponds to the rise of Okonkwo to high position, and then followed by his fall as the novel ends. Moreover in the line when Ikwefi said "Tortoise had a sweet tongue " might refers to the Christians missionaries' ways of converting indigenous people .

The story is used to predict the characters' collapse and down fall. However, due to the frequent use of such type of oral tales, some critics assert that the novel is plotless. But for Achebe, this insertion has a purpose. He could manipulate two things represented *Igbo* folktales with English language, the writer could create tragedy using the local colour, it coincided with the hero's downfall from high position, followed by an era of decline with the social changes occurred that led him to suicide.⁴²

2.7. Narrative Dialogues

Things Fall Apart makes a considerable use of narrative dialogues. It makes it easy to understand and provide more detailed information on the characters. These dialogues are presented in the form of direct quotations and can be found in any chapter. They make the writer reliable since he presents the actual interaction between characters. It is used to reveal

⁴² "Folklore in Literature: A Tool for Culture Preservation and Entertainment, " op. cit., p. 59.

the attitudes or moods of characters in any given situation. For instance, Okonkwo's anger is depicted in the novel. He has a confrontation with his wives and children about his banana tree "who killed this tree? Or are you deaf and dumb?" (TFA, 38) His anger and aggressive actions marked his tragic downfall because he thought that his harshness with his society signalled his masculinity. Achebe provides a detailed description of characters, events and situations. It gives readers enough information about the various characters.

2.8. Igbo's Ancestral Proverbs

Proverbs are regarded as one of the main features of oral traditions in *Things Fall Apart*. They are autonomous stories that appear in different genres and narrative register within different structural linguistic plans. Achebe's novel is the best example of the use of such genre that expresses the distinctive quality of African fiction. It was the most successful novel that used this strategy in thematic and aesthetic levels.

Things Fall Apart is a story about the clash of cultures at the eve of the encounter between the British colonizer and the Nigerian colonized. It is symbolized by Okonkwo's struggle against the newly established order of the Christian missionaries. The life of Okonkwo is so much related to old norms and oral tradition, that is why the use of narrative proverbs plays a crucial role at two levels: the *Igbo* and the novel in itself. First, in structuring the events of the novel and defining their vernacular sensibility, orality in the novel is more than an intrusion of an exterior style; it is a means of a real portrayal of experience in picturesque manner. Second, Achebe's use of proverbs brings out the novelist's notion that the English of Africa will be as new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings to combine traditional Africa and modern one, and to preserve "glory of

*the Igbo oratory.*⁴³ Achebe wants to convey *Igbo* flavour through newly skilful use of English, as in the proverb below “*The sun will shine on those who stand before it shine on those who kneel down.*” (*TFA*, 2) This proverb used to depict the importance of the values principal in the traditional *Igbo* community. In another context as the proverb; Eneke, the bird, was asked why he was on its wing and he replied, “*Men have learnt to shoot without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twig.*” (66) This proverb said when meeting of the elder, when deliberating on how to exterminate Christianity. Moreover, proverbs are also used throughout the narrative to provide more understanding of the *Igbo* people. The elders said that,

Locusts came once in a generation, reappeared every year for seven years and then disappeared for another lifetime. They went back to their caves in a distant land, where they were guarded by a race of stunted men. And then after another lifetime these men opened the caves again and the locusts came to Umofia. (*TFA*, 38)

The locusts descended on the Umofian village and crowded the tribe; the realistic impact reported of this myth is the full invasion of the Europeans in Nigeria. Okonkwo describes the locusts coming as individuals to survey the land. This foreshadows their advent and ultimately the clan falling apart. Okonkwo seems to be the only one who wants to fight, the clan did not understand the destructive presence of the white. People are not aware of that, and he feels the responsibility that he cannot hold, so he hanged himself. The future of his people was one of the causes that led to his tragic end.⁴⁴

As far as, the use of proverbs is concerned, one can conclude that Achebe skilfully applies such genre in his tragic theme. He also uses more than one hundred and twenty seven proverbs in the course of his narration; “Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next

⁴³Obiechina, Emmanuel, “Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel,” *Research in African Literature* (Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 123-140; p. 128.

⁴⁴“Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*” op. cit., p. 48-49.

half a dozen sentences with proverb. Among the *Ibo* the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverb is the palm oil with which words are eaten” (*TFA*, 6). All of them are used in the first chapters of the novel that detailed life in Umofia before the advent of colonizer. However, as the narration continues through the last chapters, by the presence of the *white man*, one marked the acceleration of the language in which oral and native *Igbo* words decrease, this technique decreases before it practically disappears by the end, this was as mirror of the process of falling down, due to the affected inner *Igbo* society with the encounter of Christian missionaries. The writer stops using this tool paving the way for readers to witness the deterioration of the *Igbo* culture and Okonkwo’s life. It was as a literary sign for the whole theme of the novel ‘Things *Igbo* falling down.’

Achebe’s use of proverbs helps the readers to understand the concept of culture and colonialism. The struggle of the two cultures is tragically apparent. In the first parts of the novel, Achebe seeks to prove the pre-colonial culture of the *Igbo* as a response to the imperial one. The village of Umofia in *Things Fall Apart* witnesses dramatic and violent changes. These changes led to the tragic end of the *Igbo* culture. By the end, Achebe changes even his way of writing, he starts to talk about Okonkwo’s return from exile and the effects of the missionaries.

All in all, one can conclude that the main idea behind analysing those literary techniques of the novel *Things Fall Apart* is that Achebe is an avant gardist. It tries to show the writer’s craft hand in drawing African tragedy in certain way that brings him to be the pioneer of African building literature.

CHAPTER III: POSTCOLONIAL READING TO *THINGS FALL APART*

Although, by the nineteenth century most countries in Africa and Asia had achieved political and military independence, the effect of cultural ideological colonization was so deep. Colonization went through new way, with colonization of the mind. In this regard, the term Postcolonial had covered all the existing cultures affected by imperialism from the first contact until nowadays.⁴⁵ So, the task moved to the crisis of identity and originality that most writers from the third world, who witnessed an epoch of colonization, try to regain a self-image about their former countries and people who have been a lot misinterpreted. Postcolonial literature has become one of the most rapidly growing and challenging genres of literature. It embodies the range of works produced either by the colonizer or the colonized. The latter engaged in a process of restoring the native and cultural heritage, because it has been disintegrated by the former over centuries. These literary works indicates the necessity to write about the effects of colonization to draw back a good image of Africa. According to them, military independence was not a guarantee for the end of colonization, and saw the need for an ideological resistance.⁴⁶

3.1. The Founding Fathers of Postcolonial Literature

Every situation of conflict determines the rise of movements of resistance for African literature. There are several critics who propose counter discursive strategies as social protest and medium of political reassertion, among those writers were Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), France Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), and *The Wretched of the Earth*

⁴⁵Sinvansankar .K and v.Ganesan, "Chinua Achebe: An Exemplar in the postcolonial Epoch, " International journal of Science and Research, Volume 4 Issues12,(December 2015), pp.489-492;p.489.

⁴⁶Walder. Denis, "Introducing the Post-Colonial" (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), pp. 52-80; pp. 59-61.

(1961), and Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffins in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989).

3.1.1. The Occident versus the Orient

Edward Said is one of the founders of critical-theory of postcolonial period that traces colonialism's effects upon the colonized. It emerges in western literature as well as to represent the literary discourse of resistance. With close examination of his theory, one reflects on the dominance of Europeans' culture for decades. In his book *Orientalism*, Said explains the westerners' image about the Orient, that was created by early explorers and contemporary writers to legitimate their colonial coming, which till nowadays regarded as common features in social media and political cycle.⁴⁷ Said's basic ideology is that *Orientalism* is a style of thought, it is based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident created by the westerner, stating that the Orient characterized by being primitive, *uncivilized* and *other*. However the Occident is civilized, rational and advanced.⁴⁸

Said defines *Orientalism* as “a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, about what ‘we’ do and what ‘they’ cannot do.” This false representation of the colonized has been used as a claim to legalize the political and military occupation, as well as a responsibility for them to enlighten and civilize those primitive people in what they called the ideology “White man's burden.” Said argues that the horror

⁴⁷Hamadi Lutfi, “Edward Said: The Postcolonial Theory and the Literature of Decolonization,” *European Scientific Journal*. Edition, Vol. 02 (June 2014), pp.39-49; p.39.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p.40.

did not end with the end of direct colonization, but went further with imposed values and language of the colonizer.⁴⁹

Moreover, Said asserts that the Orient feel that they could not express their own lived experience. So, they rely so much on western representative and image, which was most of the time a false representation, that had a great effect upon postcolonial writings, or him and many other writers they attempt to react against those claims and corrects a whole history of misrepresentation. Achebe in this regard is among the first who try to improve counter discourse; he could create a unique African literature either thematically or stylistically. His aim is to idealize African cultural recovery of the spiritual side that has been crumbled.

3.1.2. Postcolonial Aesthetic

Among the early founders of postcolonial literature are Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. In their book, *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin have taken the first writings from settlers colonies of the seventeenth century to mark the start of the “writing back” as the most important aspect of post colonialism. The great effect of this book lies partly in its emphasis on the importance of the literary role of creativity in the former colonies involved in the decolonizing process. The intellectuals of these communities are able to produce their own literature different from the European model. Besides, the main idea of this book is that the colonized has been part of imperial activity at many levels, and therefore postcolonial literature has to cover every aspect of colonizer-colonized contact.⁵⁰

3.1.3. Fanonian Binary Oppositions

Among many critics Frantz Fanon in another figure who raised crucial issues concerning postcolonial discourse. His book *The Wretched of the Earth* is one of the important literary

⁴⁹Ibidem.

⁵⁰“Post Colonial Literature in English: History, Language, Theory,” op. cit., pp. 68-70.

productions in postcolonial era, based on the idea that colonization operated under the assumption that Europe represents the only course of progress. Fanon in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* talks in depth about this assumption of 'binary oppositions'. All the colonialists who were white, beautiful, educated, masculine, civilized, Christian, were collectively opposed to all the natives of the colonies, who claimed to be 'black, ugly, uneducated, savage, feminine and pagan. For the colonialist, there was only one way of progress that was technological; only one civilization, that was European; only one religion, that was Christianity. Thus, colonialism functioned as a system of knowledge and beliefs about the state of colonization and also a system of statements that can be made about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Its literary contribution lies in its capacity to raise African awareness about the system that the colonizer adopts, as a step toward decolonization as far as Achebe concerned with Fanon idea, in his novel *Things Fall Apart*, he highlighted how the coming of the British colonizer had dramatic impacts.

3.2. The Problem of Language in African Literature

One of the controversial issues in postcolonial literature is the use of language. Language is a tool of power, and postcolonial writing finds difficulty in choosing the appropriate language to *write back*. Writers have to select the one that serves postcolonial necessities. It goes toward two stages namely: the stage of abrogation which is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture and the fixed traditional meaning in which English is the language of *the colonizer*, and the stage of appropriation by using new English with a local colour and native words to transfer the real experience with colonization in transparent style that helps readers discover African culture.⁵¹

⁵¹Alan Mahbul, "Reading Chinua Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart* From the Post Colonial Perspective," Research on Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 4, No.12, (2014), pp. 101-106; p. 104.

3.2.1. Achebe's Appropriation of the English Tongue

African writers were confused in selecting the suitable medium for pointing out their themes. Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* favoured the colonizer's one as a medium to encounter the false discourse about Africa. Achebe states that the use of English as a medium of international exchange could serve his mission to portray African experience in a detailed aspect of its values.⁵² He argues that English was able to fit for his project and tell the story of the *Igbo*. He asserts that:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its values as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience [...] But it will have to be new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surrounding.⁵³

The above passage stages Achebe as one of the first writers who tried to overcome the curse of imitating the colonizer's language, and learn how to transform it appropriately to a powerful tool for cultural revitalisation. Achebe's decision lies in the desire to reach large audiences to expose the colonizer's brutality. Moreover, he rather revitalizes his culture that has for so long been considered inferior. Achebe employs native literary discourse as proverbs, legends, folktales, and emphasizes the pre-colonial African setting.⁵⁴

3.2.2. Decolonizing the Mind, Decolonizing Literature

For many African writers, the intellectual activity that comes after colonization needs to recover African oral art in the process of reassessment of what represents Africa. Writers however were faced with the problem of language that they should use to fully present the

⁵²Chinua Achebe: An Exemplar in the Postcolonial Epoch," op. cit., p.490.

⁵³ Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English language (1964)," in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, pp 61-2.

⁵⁴"Reading Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* from the Post Colonial Perspective," op. cit., p. 103.

aesthetics of their African culture.⁵⁵ In the debate, Ngugi preferred to use the native language, Gikuyu or Kiswahili, rather than English. He argues that “*What is the difference between politicians who say Africans cannot do without imperialism and the writers who say Africa cannot do without Europeans language.*”⁵⁶ In this regard, Ngugi claims that the use of English has a political attitude. He believes that, by using the colonizer’s language, the colonized is in control of African production which must reflect Africanness. For Ngugi, when the colonized masters the language of the colonizer, they start to deny their native language and their origins which as a step towards submission and exploitation. Another reason for the rejection of English is alienation, as if seeing oneself from outside oneself giving another chance to the Europeans to control. That using colonial language alienates the Africans from their native word to the word of Shakespeare and others, in which African languages represent low status, stupidity and barbarism.⁵⁷

Although Ngugi praised Achebe for his contribution in revitalizing African culture; He criticized him for using English language in his writings. For Ngugi, such genre of literature is another hybrid tradition which mixed the two different cultures. And that the adoption of English syntax and grammar instead of *Igbo* structure is kind of African betrayal.

3.3. Inferiority Complex

By the twenty first century, the task has shifted from decolonizing the land to decolonizing mind. The inferiority complex is the psychological state that prevents the colonized people from self-realisation and advancement. The colonizer’s attitude, behaviour, and way of life are highly praised in the mind of the colonized, which are so hard to be removed in the decolonization process. The ideology that emphasizes the beliefs of *white*

⁵⁵ “Post Colonial Literature in English: History, language, theory,” op. cit., pp.52-55.

⁵⁶ NgugiwaThiong’s, “The language of African literature,” *Decolonizing the Mind*, p. 26.

⁵⁷ “Post Colonial Literature in English: History, Language, Theory,” op. cit., p. 52.

man's supremacy and the native inferiority had long been established. Thus, these colonized countries get rid of colonialism but not imperialism.⁵⁸

The *white* man is so clever in creating such inferiority complex. Spreading the horror and fears in the inner mind of the indigenous people resulted in the feeling of being weak and inferior. Moreover, the colonizer gives an image of the Europeans as the embodiment of what a human being should be. The colonized is different in terms of tradition, customs, religion and social background. They tried to imitate the European model which resulted in loss of self and identity.

3.3.1. Afro centrism

Things Fall Apart strengthens the idea that colonization is not established by an outside force but rather from within. In other words, the colonization process is not done by the white man only but with the help of the colonized people. For him the rapid decline that befalls Umuofia is because the *Igbo* people gave in to colonization. This idea manifests itself when the *Igbo* send their children to receive education in missionary schools. The African people feel inferior emphasizing European superiority. Nwoye is among the first ones who convert easily to Christianity and departs from his indigenous beliefs. His character highlights the idea of believing in European model and the rejection of Umuofian system in a flexible character. Nwoye, when he is beaten by his father for attending the church, he returns to the white man and said: "He went back to the church and told Mr. Kiaga that he had decided to do to Umuofia, where the white missionary had set up a school to teach young Christians to read and write."⁵⁹

⁵⁸Sadeghi Zohra, "Role of Colonial Subject in Making Themselves Inferior in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," (Australian International Academic Center. Australia), Vol. 5, No. 6 (December 2014), pp.48-53; p.49.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.51.

Besides, Chinua Achebe takes responsibility of illuminating the idea of inferiority complex and tries to regain African self in mission of teacher rather than writer. He asserts:

Here then is an adequate revolution for me to spouse to help my society regain its belief in itself and put away the complex of the years of denigration and self-denigration.⁶⁰

In this passage, Achebe plays the role of a teacher or a guide for his people to assert their identity and to be confident and proud of their native culture.

3.4. Europeans' False Representations

Before Achebe, most of the writing about Africa was made by Europeans. They described the natives as barbaric and savages. They saw that their mission is to civilize those uneducated people, because they considered themselves as the masters in the world, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.⁶¹ The most false representative works of Africa and Africans. Chinua Achebe wrote his novel *Things Fall Apart* as a response and as a real representation of the Africans.

Conrad witnessed the injustice, cruelty and brutality of the Belgian rule in Africa when he visited the Congo. Even though, he was shocked by what he saw, he became part of their imperialist power, when he wrote that Africa as a dark continent and Africans as primitives and savages.⁶²

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there- there could look at a thing monstrous and free, it was unearthly, and the men were- No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, a spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their

⁶⁰ "Chinua Achebe: An Exemplar in the Postcolonial Epoch," op. cit., p. 489.

⁶¹ Noori Berzenji Latef The Image of the Africans in *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart* Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research, Vol. 5, NO. 4(August, 2013), pp. 710-725;p. 710.

⁶² Ibid., 724.

humanity- like yours- the thought of their remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar.⁶³

Joseph Conrad opposed the natives and described them as deprived of human qualities and rather as monsters, cannibals and marginalized subjects.

Conrad uses ironic terms and expressions about the Africans, he saw them as cannibals and the mindless frenzy. His novella remains a signal work of the western canon. He said, “*The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when look into it too much.*”⁶⁴ Furthermore, Conrad compared Africa with Europe in many parts of the novel. He even implies that the Congo River of Africa is the antithesis of the Thames River of Britain.

Achebe affirms that Conrad, in his *Heart of Darkness* 1902, represented the Africans in an offensive way. He adds that even African women are depicted as less beautiful than Europeans. Kurtz’s African mistress is “*savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent.*”⁶⁵ She is a savage counterpart of the refined European woman.⁶⁶ It is the dominant image of the natives in the western collective imagination. He opposed the Africans aggressively and gave insulting stereotypes of them.

Achebe point out in his condemnation of the underlying racism apparent mainly in Conrad’s work. Conrad’s negative portrait and dehumanization for the blacks brought him critical acclaim. Achebe described him as “a thorough going racist.” He wrote his famous novel *Things Fall Apart* to confirm African identity and nationality, as Fakrul Alam said, “*One of Chinua Achebe’s goals in writing Things Fall Apart was to correct a whole history*

⁶³Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Popular Classic, 1994), p.51.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

⁶⁶ The Image of the Africans in *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 711.

of misrepresentation of his people and country in occidental discourse.”⁶⁷ Achebe wanted his first novel to be as an African version responded Europeans; he was seeking for their originality. Gikandi Simon notes that “It was probably the first work in which the author set out to represent the African experience in a narrative that sought, self-consciously, to be from the colonial.”⁶⁸ Thus he was called as the father of African literature, because he was intelligent in writing back the colonial representations of the natives.

Chinua Achebe criticized Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* as a racist piece of literature. He countered in *Things Fall Apart* as well as in his essay *An Image of Africa*, these two works asserted that Conrad is a racist writer, so that Achebe could not consider it as a great work of art; he stated that Conrad's depiction of the Africans was false represented. In addition to that, Achebe claimed that a novel could truly portray reality from one primary meaning. Deconstructionist critics contended that no literary text could introduce reality or provide “frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of [its] characters.”⁶⁹ Conrad's novel lacks of any clear reference to say that his description is true. He criticized *Heart of Darkness* for the de-moralization and dehumanization of African Americans, his work constantly contemplated as being a racist piece of art.

According to Achebe, Conrad is a great story teller but his description of the Africans should be questioned. Through the insights of *Things Fall Apart*, the world became more appreciative of Africa and its people; he was qualified to make the surrounding negative stereotypical ideas that once existed about Africans begun to appear in a much clearer light.

⁶⁷AlamFakrul , “Reading Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* Ecocritically,” Bhattar College Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, Vol.1, No. 1(2010),pp. 41-50; p.41.

⁶⁸ Gikandi, Simon, “Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Literature,”*Things Fall Apart*. (Heinemann Publisher: Johannesburg, 1996), Preface, p. x.

⁶⁹Wieslaw Krajka, “Beyond the Roots: The Evolution of Conrad’s Ideology and Art,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 11-155; p. 85.

3.5. Counter Discourse and *Things Fall Apart*

One of the factors that led Achebe to write his famous novel *Things Fall Apart* is his outrage of European representations of Africans in fiction. He opposed them in a counter discourse that based on his view on the interior original local context, though he wrote in English about the native *Igbo* myths, folktales, proverbs, traditional customs and beliefs. He could restore their history and dignity. He could his purpose of representing the real image of his people. Achebe tends to reject European attitude towards the Africans. He wrote purposefully to change the false representation initiated by Europeans and that propagated the natives' culture as savage and barbaric.

Chinua Achebe used the colonizers' language as a suitable medium to counter their thoughts about the Africans. He narrates the eventful history of the natives to make them aware of their harmful actions in the Dark Continent. Achebe intentionally responds in the language that they could understand to expose their culture and change their thoughts. He wants to enlighten the world about the brutalities of the Europeans and mirrors African history. He said, “*there is certainly a great advantage to write in world language.*”⁷⁰ He was more conscious about the selection of the language in a time when there was a lack of a written language and many African writers struggled to find a suitable one like the Kenyan Nugugi Wa Thiongo and the Nigerian Wole Soyinka.

Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* revealed the inner view and the self-acceptance of the African human minds to others life. It is often written to point out society's ills and sufferance in an interesting style of writing. This made it as a permanent monument to the modern African experience. He wrote in English and could capture the reality of the *Igbo* people. He reflects African dignity and culture to show the Europeans that they have values, traditions

⁷⁰ “Chinua Achebe: An Exemplar in the Postcolonial Epoch,” op. cit., p. 490.

and customs even before their advent to native's land. Achebe responds explicitly challenging representations about Africa, and their pre-colonial life that is described as one long night of savagery. He could create a narration of Nigerians in particular and Africans in general counter their intervention that brought about shattering and destructive upheavals for the traditional native values.⁷¹

Most of the African writers tend to write in their local language to resist the colonizer, while Achebe's use of English aimed at revitalizing the culture of the colonized. He even uses traditional colour to add the value and beauty of natives' language. These local colours contain ancestral wisdoms and philosophy in the daily lives of the *Igbo* that helped him transmit his ideas all over the world. This brought the novel its perfection and made it ideal work.

3.6. Pride and Prejudice

The aftermath of colonialism have creates an identity crisis in many countries. Many writers of the neo-colonialism period bear the responsibility of forming their own identity and culture far from the colonizer's one. To reshape their originality, they started to write in English as a weapon to enlighten the westerners about their catastrophic existence on their land. Achebe was one of those writers who dedicated his life for renewing their cultural integrity in Nigeria.

Achebe played a great role in cultural revitalization in Africa. Even though he wrote in the colonizer's language, he introduces the natives' oral myths, riddles and proverbs in his writing because he believes orality is dynamic and long-lasting. Achebe acknowledges his peoples'

⁷¹Ibid., p. 18.

traditions to show that these are the real representations of his own community. His aim was not rhetoric only but also to prove his culture to the world.⁷²

Achebe is a great contributor in liberating Africa from imperialistic representations. He could therefore promote African thoughts and the spirit of African renaissance all over the world. Achebe thinks that African writers must hold the responsibility in the face of colonial devaluation to restore dignity:

Africa people did not hear the culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth, values and beauty, that they had poetry and above all they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all bit lost during the colonial period [...] The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in *Igbo* that a man who cannot tell where the rain begun to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain begun to beat them.⁷³

Achebe raises the awareness of Africans about their life and culture. He sees that his duty is to tell his fellows about the destruction of a sophisticated culture which manifested great depth, value and beauty. Through his novel *Things Fall Apart*, he shows African pride and attempts to restore their dignity by shedding light on the aftermath of the colonizer in the colonized Nigeria. He recreates the pre-colonial situation to restore its humanity.⁷⁴ “Chinua Achebe is concerned with the revival of African culture as well as its values, and pride.” The novel *Things Fall Apart* illustrates the modern African writer's need to confront the past in order to revive their history and rediscover their cultural identity. The colonizers began to act like the owners of the land in Umofia, they introduced their social and cultural life in the new colony, “Because of his military superiority, the colonizer is able to impose his will and his

⁷² Chinua Achebe, “An Exemplar in the Postcolonial Epoch,” op. cit., p. 490

⁷³ Chinua Achebe, “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation,” *African Writers on African Writing*, (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 8

⁷⁴ “Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,” op. cit., p. 107

entire world, his social, political, legal, and moral system on the colonized.”⁷⁵ Achebe is determined to take modern African literary genre to greater heights, as well as to prove to the Europeans the value of the African cultural and literary canon. He promotes his people to renew their life and to show for the others their reality, to prove for the Europeans in particular that they are not savages and primitives as they represented them, to affirm that they are well-educated and above all they have dignity.

3.7. The Aftermath of the Colonization

Chinua Achebe is successful in writing about the aftermath of British colonisation of Nigeria. He aims to show a total destruction of a whole culture. In his revolutionary text, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire exposes the bad effects of the colonizer saying that “*The Bourgeois Europe has destroyed the roots of diversity.*”⁷⁶ Before the coming of the *white* man, African societies were culturally diverse. Colonialism has destroyed this diversity.⁷⁷ Césaire described also the disastrous events brought by the colonizer, “I am talking about societies drained of their essence, culture trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, land confiscated, religion smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out.”⁷⁸

Prior to colonialism, *Igbo* people live in harmony, stability and in a unified society. By the advent of the European things start to change, they destroy everything they perform. The novel’s title summarizes the aftermath of colonialism. Colonizers bring instability and disorder to the society; they destroy its religious beliefs and eradicate people’s values.

⁷⁵ “The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa,” op. cit., p. 278.

⁷⁶ “Reading Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* from the Post colonial Perspective,” op. cit., p.3.

⁷⁷ Ibidem.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 104.

As for Cesair, the colonizer made the *Igbo* drained of their essence. Okonkwo is the leader of the society and his suicide marks the suicide of Umofian essence. Okonkwo commits suicide as a result of the colonizer's existence in the *Igbo* land. Moreover, one major consequence of the colonizer's destruction in Nigeria was religion. Christianity plays the main role to make people deny their gods. Cesair believes that Christianity comes and millions of men [were] torn from their gods. Christians tried to remove native beliefs and rituals because they saw it as nothing and still as barbaric and savage. A conversation between a native man and a *white man* about their respective religion:

Native: If we leave our gods and following your god, who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?
White men: Your gods are not alive and cannot do anything harm...they are pieces of wood and stone.⁷⁹

Achebe also sees that the coming of missionaries resulted “*either lost, give up, forgotten or being increasingly neglected while some are being reinterpreted, partially preserved, and absorbed in or interpolated with Christianity,*”⁸⁰ he could interpret their negative aftermath even it destroy people's religion or neglect it or even adopt Christianity.

Lastly, Christianity had a devastating effect on the life of the *Igbo* people. British people brought with them some ideologies different from the Nigerian ones notably individualism. In Umofia, people's relationships are mainly defined as “*being with*” the society. Westerners put emphasis on individualism more than collectivism. This individualism breaks down Africans' communal *Igbo* relationship. This is exemplified in the father-son relationship between Okonkwo and his son Nwoyo. Nwoyo converts to Christianity and adopt Christian

⁷⁹Ibidem.

⁸⁰Uchegbue, Christian Onyenaucheya. “Infancy Rites Among the Igbo of Nigeria.” *Research Journal of International Studies* (2010), pp .157-164; p . 164.

values. When Obeirika asks him, “*how is your father?*” Nwoyo replied “*I don’t know.*” He is not my father “each of them calls for himself only.”⁸¹

3.8. Freezing the Image of the Cultural Apartheid

One of the main themes in postcolonial discourse is hybridity. It is the activity of verbalization and phrasing expressions that demonstrates the dynamic relation between writers to resist the colonizers’ cultural hegemony.⁸² It provides mutability in language and the interrelation between the self and the other illustrating a contradictory cultural interaction between the colonizer and the colonized, “A kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference.”⁸³ It attempts to facilitate the interconnection between the two different continents.

Colonial masters introduced this operation to dominate the other. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful and eventually they brought something new but familiar at the same time. Hybridity allowed “the creation of the new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization.”⁸⁴ However, this ideal extension between the self and the other of distinctive areas permitted them for cultural interaction and engagement. Hybridity is against the theory of essentialism which believes in the fixed properties of a language, it based on the unchanged linguistic forms of writing. Homi Bhabha initiated the former as an antithesis for the latter that “*constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signs*

⁸¹“Reading Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* from the Post colonial Perspective,” op. cit., p. 4.

⁸² Elmo Raj Prayer, “Postcolonial Literature, Hybridity and Culture” *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies*(Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India.), Volume-I, Issue-II, September 2014, pp. 125-128; p. 125

⁸³.Ibid., 125.

⁸⁴Ibid., 126.

can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew.”⁸⁵ He avoids the risk of essentialism by arguing that it is the enemy who claims unity and singleness of identity. Hybridity recreated new subjects and transformed them in a specific culture space. Besides, it emerged as a postcolonial theoretical notion, and served certain interests that anticipated the politics of liberalism and destabilizing of power. Grobman explains that hybridity does not privilege or subsume competing forms, and that it enables readers to escape limiting binaries by considering the countless relationships among a text’s many variables, both within the text itself and with other texts.

The hybrid text is a volatile mixture of parts that work against, within, and among one another and it is fraught with tensions and conflicts. However, these very qualities offer Transformative possibilities for reading, interpretation appreciation, politics and pedagogy.⁸⁶ It enables the readers to understand more since it relates two different variables to provide countless possibilities of interpreting culture, and culture has become active paving the literature that emerges from its bosom to be a cultural transactive. Furthermore, hybridity connected the cultural identities and influenced postcolonial literature.” Hybridity has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural exchange.”⁸⁷ Bhabha’s hybridity is advocated as effect in between existing positions, and articulated the cultural differences which were defined as “in-between space.”⁸⁸ The different manner in which Achebe wrote his novel *Things Fall Apart* brought him otherworldly position and fame

⁸⁵Ibidem.

⁸⁶ “Postcolonial Literature, Hybridity and Culture”, op. cit., p. 127.

⁸⁷ Bill Achcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, “The Key Concept,” Taylor and Francis Group (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 136.

⁸⁸ Easthope Antony “Homi Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity, or Derrida versus Lacan,” (Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies, 1998), pp. 145-151; p. 145.

in European and African literary canons. One of the main aims of this novel is seeking originality and identity.

It is a counter narrative discourse to British false representation as for their imperialism on a typical tribal society. Achebe's audiences appreciated the work for its style of writing since he mixed between the two different cultures.

Furthermore, Achebe develops his postcolonial discourse in a well-constructed method. He attempts to use different narrative linguistic tools to achieve his purposes; he mixes between the western and the African languages. By that time, postcolonial literature was mainly hybrid as Rutherford said "*a hybrid, a dynamic mixture of literary and cultural forms, genres, styles, languages, motifs, tropes and so forth.*" Achebe mixes the two cultures to bring his originality into reality in a desire to search for essential cultural purity.

In addition, the consolidation and hybridity in languages became an increasing issue after colonialism. Achebe adds another twist in his creative use of language. He reveals his hybrid idea because he was concerned with the proper representative of the twenty century literature which addresses the African image. Nigeria maintained a linguistic variety of knowledge throughout the colonial period and thus Achebe was able to learn both pidgin and Nigerian English Creole varieties, Nigerian English pidgin speakers can communicate with members of either Igbo or standard British English. Pidgin is used in emergency situation for the specific use of conveying meaning between two mutually varied speech communities. Pidgin and standard British English variations within the novel are apparently observed. Achebe brought the two languages into an effective use.

Achebe is also successful in bringing his idea into reality. He wanted to reach his originality through his use of *Igbo* language, he could make the readers feel as though are really in an *Igbo* community. His colonial hybridity occurs because he uses direct translations

in the natives' dialects and English language. It adds a local colour and beauty to counter the fallacy of the westerners and prove their proper identity, he use also the *Igbo* chants and songs with English translations. As far as the *Igbo* language is concerned, Achebe could capture the African traditions and customs into effect. He introduces his hybridist theory by using his native culture in his novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Moreover, Achebe presented his novel approaching three key terms of O'Reilly: "*the use of indigenous cultural traditions, the appropriations of English, and the impact of colonialism and its aftermath.*"⁸⁹ These issues are consciously used by Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. He depicts the cultural traditions and customs of the *Igbo*. Thus, he could reach his purpose of writing back to those who misrepresented Africa. He purposefully changed the African way of writing because he thought that a foreign language could deliver his message to the westerners, and reassert the African identity and origin.

⁸⁹"Reading Chinua Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart* From the Post Colonial Perspective," op. cit., pp.61.

CONCLUSION

The experience of colonization and the challenges of a postcolonial world have produced an explosion of new styles of writing in English. The advent of the British has radically changed the culture of the Umofian society of Nigeria in particular and the African continent in general. Postcolonialism scrutinizes the colonizer-colonized relationship and how colonization has deeply affected native cultures and traditions. Nigerian customs, traditions and values had been destroyed and replaced by the western ones. Postcolonialism also has as an objective the endeavour of the African writer to counter imperial discourse and its false representations about Africa and Africans. Hence, many African writers such as Chinua Achebe tried to restore dignity and depict an accurate image about African originality.

Writing his first novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses his pen as a sophisticated weapon to defend his people. Achebe's purpose behind using English as a literary medium of expression is to achieve cultural revitalization and to respond to Europeans in their tongue. It is to enable Africans to tell their own story and to revive their culture and identity. Achebe's use of English along *Igbo* to represent precolonial and postcolonial *Igbo* life has received many critical acclaims. Thus, *Things Fall Apart* is a great resource for learning about the *Igbo* community. Achebe illustrates the clash of civilisations of Eastern and Western binaries.

In this study, we explored the African tragedy in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe dramatizes the double tragedies of his hero Okonkwo as well as his tribe. He covers the tragic downfall of the hero as well as the tragic life of his clansman.

The first chapter examined the socio-historical context of the novel. It shed light on the social, historical and literary contexts in which Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*. By the arrival of the colonizer, many social changes had started to occur. Modernity was an indirect

step towards imperialism. It had influenced all the fields of life namely, literature, culture, identity, and economy. Modernity had transformed African countries from agrarianism to industrialization. Achebe sees that modernity is the heart of darkness. It causes a decline of civilization. Nationalism was a proposal promoting regional and cultural unity to resist the colonizer. Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* when the nationalist movement was at its peak. Achebe was very affected by the suffering of his tribesmen. Besides, Christian missionaries helped the *white* man to colonize Africa. The activities of these missionaries helped the westerners in achieving their cause for colonization. Yet, they came in a mission of exploitation in the name of civilization.

Moreover, *Things Fall Apart* represents a crossroad of cultures. Achebe captures the cultural transition from the past to present, from tribal to colonial which result in the double tragedies of the hero Okonkwo as well as the Umuofian society. The novel depicts precolonial and postcolonial *Igbo* tribe. Achebe portrays the traditions and customs of his tribe before and after the advent of the colonizer. Psychic trauma dominates African imagination because they witness the shift from precolonial to colonial, from colonial to postcolonial, and from postcolonial to neocolonial. Consequently, indigenous culture is ruined and racial inferiority occupies Africans' minds. Chinua Achebe wrote the novel when the society was moving towards denigration.

The second chapter analysed the stylistic aspects of writing used to depict African tragedy during the British colonization. Achebe uses art as a means to voice out his message to the world. English is his medium of expression mixed with his local colour. His use of simple sentences, economy of words reflects the simplicity of Umuofia. He even uses *Igbo* words and proverbs to say that Africa has its own culture far from Europeans, and to make the *non-Igbo* readers relate to the *Igbo* vocabulary. Moreover, Achebe intentionally foreshadows the tragedy of the story by the use of Yeats first line of the poem "The Second Coming" as a title

to his novel. The line “*Things fall apart*” serves his thesis. Okonkwo’s weak personality, the failure of his father, the cultural norms of the colonizer, and his harsh and aggressive actions are the main causes that lead to his tragic end. Achebe then creates a paradoxical hero who could not maintain the values of his tribe. He could capture this tragic end through his style. His shifts in the story narrative voice reveal the existing disorder caused by the arrival of the *white* missionaries. Also, the writer’s linearity and non-linearity in writing *Things Fall Apart* indicates the destruction of oral culture which becomes a written one. It marks the collapse of their Umofian culture. Moreover, Achebe decorates his work by the local colour. His use of proverbs, folktales, and narrative dialogues add an expressive style to convince the readers about the culture of his tribe. It gives authenticity to *Things Fall Apart*. All in all, narrative discourse in *Things Fall Apart* helps in creating the reliability of the story and dramatizing the tragic events of a man and his people.

The third chapter examined postcolonial criticism to *Things Fall Apart*. Postcolonial writers saw the necessity of writing about the effects of colonialism and to counter the false representations of the colonizer about the colonized. Edward Said wrote his book *Orientalism* to trace colonial aftermath in the third world. He makes the distinctive characteristics between the Orient and the Occident. Said argues that colonization had imposed Occidental values and language neglecting Oriental traditional culture. Another group of writers namely, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, co-authored a book entitled *The Empire Writes Back*. They are among the founders of postcolonial literary criticism that serves to restore native culture. They heavily stress the decolonizing process of minds to assert their originality. Furthermore, Frantz Fanon is one of the pioneering critics of the postcolonial discourse. He wrote *The Wretched of the Earth* from a colonial perspective. Its contribution helped in raising the awareness of the colonized.

The question of language in African literature has for so long been a burning issue. Achebe uses Language as a weapon to counter colonial imperial discourse. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, however, defends African languages and asserts that they should make the very material of African literature. He views Achebe's use of English as a sign of European control. Nonetheless, he praises Achebe's endeavour to revitalize African culture.

As Europeans left Africa, Nigeria sweeps into chaos and civil war. This is because of the long lasting psychological effects of colonialism. The idea of the colonizer's way of life was praised in the minds of the colonized, and their main theme was the belief of *whites'* supremacy and African inferiority. The seeds of racial inferiority were planted in the natives' collective imagination. Okonkwo sees that his clansmen were more flexible in accepting this denigrating idea. The aftermath of colonialism is massively devastating. The coming of the *white* man brings Umofia from order to disorder. Besides, they introduce different ideologies as individualism so as to break down the collectivism of the members of the society.

Last but not least, Chinua Achebe is a hybrid writer in the postcolonial period. He provides the in-betweenness of the *self* and the *other* to create mutability in language. He introduces translation forms to English within the contact zones. Hybridity facilitates the interaction between the two continents since it hybridizes their languages, which Homi Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* had brought it for cross-cultural exchanges. Achebe used it as a narrative technique to seek originality and identity.

Above all, Achebe used different narrative tools in his postcolonial discourse to voice his people's plight which is caused by colonisation. He could depict African tragedy and achieve cultural revitalization.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Pidgin and Standard British English Variations within the Novel

Pidgin Word	Meaning	Page Number
<i>inyanga</i>	A cocky attitude, used to mock Obiageli's childish behavior	28
<i>tie-tie</i>	Palm branches fashioned into a rope	34

Appendix B

Igbo Names and Terms Created or Used by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*

Term	Meaning
Amalinze the Cat	Title of Agility and Honor
Ikemefuna	"My Strength Will Abide"
Mbaino	Nigerian Village and Dialect

Appendix C

The Use of Igbo Words Within the Novel

Igbo Word	English Meaning	Page
<i>achi</i>	Tree	63
<i>agadinwayi</i>	Title for an Old Women	9
<i>umu</i>	Community	67

ص ١ م

ربتعت رواية "الأشياء تتداعى" للكاتب ذو الأصول النيجيرية تشينوا اتشيببي من أهم ركائز الأدب الإفريقي الحديث. حيث لاقت نقدا عالميا واسعا فيما يخص المعنى و الأسلوب. الرواية تسرد بساطة الحياة قبل الاستعمار، و كذا حقبة ما بعد الاستعمار والتي من خلالها أراد الكاتب تسليط الضوء على الفروقات بين كلتا الثقافتين الإفريقية والأوربية. وعليه تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعمق في مختلف التقنيات التي انتهجها الكاتب في خطابه السردي لتجسيد المأساة الإفريقية نتيجة الوجود الاستعماري. الفصل الأول يضع الرواية في إطارها السوسولوجي والتاريخي الذي يعكس نمط الكاتب في سرد الأحداث، بينما يتطرق الفصل الثاني من البحث إلى دراسة أسلوبية معتمدة من طرف الكاتب كالخطاب السردي، ازدواجية نبرة النص، استعمال الحكم والقصص الشعبية، والاقتباس . بالنسبة للفصل الثالث الذي يعالج قراءة نقدية للرواية، وعليه ما يمكن استخلاصه أن هذه الرواية ترمز إلى أصالة الأدب الإفريقي في حبك المأساة النيجيرية وتجسيدها في البطل أكونكو الذي يعبر عن مأساة المجتمع من تبعات الاستعمار

