



Postcolonial Nigerian Literature As Evident In Achebe's Novels

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ABSTRACT:

This paper sets out to explore and analyze Chinua Achebe's books *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* through which the author depicts quite clearly the impact of postcolonial reality. It is the turn of the nineteenth century. An imperial power hungry for gold, trade, or perhaps even more power, invades a country. The indigenous people must struggle with this newly arrived culture and all of its beliefs, values, habits and traditions that have now become entangled within their own lives. They must evaluate which part of that change brings benefits (stimulation of the economy through trade, increased awareness and self-sufficiency through education, advanced medicine that may lead to the removal of disease) and which part reaps harm (loss of traditional culture, beliefs, and values). In many cases, the lines blur and the imposed change can be thought to have both positive and negative ramifications. In either case, the issue of colonization touches upon more than just the struggle of native people to adjust to a new culture. A more serious obstacle needs to be faced: the suppression, and oftentimes overt annihilation, of the native people's former lives and culture that comes with the new presence of **another**, who believes -- **knows**, he'll even tell you, deep in his heart -- his culture is superior. This other, neither a typical enemy nor a traditional invader, does not share similar traditions or warfare. He does not seem aware that he stands on a land that is not his own, but on a land belonging to dead ancestors. Rather, this colonizer -- a foreign force -- holds that idea that the land he has come to conquer truly **can** be owned and furthermore, that it can be owned by him. He holds an unfaltering belief that his culture is superior to the one he has come to suppress.

المستخلص:

في منصف القرن التاسع عشر والعشرين. قوة امبريالية المتعطشة للذهب، والتجارة، أو ربما أكثر قوة، يغزو البلاد. السكان الأصليين يجب أن النضال مع هذه الثقافة وصلوا حديثاً وجميع من في المعتقدات والقيم والعادات والتقاليد التي أصبحت الآن متشابكا في حياتهم الخاصة. يجب أن نقيم أي جزء من هذا التغيير في تحقيق منافع (تحفيز الاقتصاد من خلال التجارة، وزيادة الوعي والاكتفاء الذاتي من خلال التعليم والطب المتقدمة التي قد تؤدي إلى إزالة المرض) والجزء الذي يحصد ضرر (فقدان الثقافة التقليدية، والمعتقدات، والقيم). في كثير من الحالات، وخطوط طمس وتغيير المفروضة يمكن يعتقد أن لها انعكاسات إيجابية وسلبية على حد سواء. في كلتا الحالتين، فإن مسألة الاستعمار يمس أكثر من مجرد نضال الشعب الأصلي للتكيف مع ثقافة جديدة. وتحتاج عقبة أكثر خطورة التي قد تواجهها: قمع، والفاء المكشوف في كثير من الأحيان، من حياة سابقة على السكان الأصليين والثقافة التي تأتي مع وجود جديد من آخر، والذي يعتقد - يعرف، وقال انه سوف اقول انت ايضا حتى في عمق له القلب - ثقافته متفوقة. هذا الآخر، لا عدو نموذجي ولا الغازي التقليدي، لا يشارك التقاليد أو حرب مماثلة. وقال انه لا يبدو على علم بأنه يقف على أرض ليست بلده، ولكن على أرض تابعة لامتوى الاجداد. بدلا من ذلك، هذا المستعمر - قوة أجنبية - يرى ان فكرة أن الأرض انه قد حان لقمح حقا يمكن أن تكون مملوكة وعلاوة على ذلك، أنه يمكن أن تكون مملوكة له. وهو حاصل على الاعتقاد الراسخ بأن ثقافته متفوقة على واحد انه قد حان لقمح.

INTRODUCTION:



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Nigeria is an African federal constitutional republic which is consisted of 36 states and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A current form of Nigeria is a result of many historical events, wars between ethnic groups and mainly of British colonization. It had an enormous impact on the whole organization of the then Nigeria and helped to establish the state with government and law and brought western rules, values and religion there. In Nigeria, there have always been a large number of different ethnic groups. Among the most important ethnic groups belong Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, about which Chinua Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*.

The British colonial period in Nigeria lasted from 1900 until 1960 when Nigeria became an independent state. When British colonizers came to Nigeria they had numerous armed forces with them, but they also had a huge number of officers and civilians whose goal was to establish a new social and political system and entice as many Nigerians as possible to support the new system. The new system comprised mostly of three tools: the Christian Church, schools that taught according to British curriculum, and the English language. Nigerians, who underwent and accepted those systems of knowledge, got lucrative posts in the state administrative within the colonial system, whereas Nigerians, who did not accept or did not gain the access to those systems of knowledge, had a big disadvantage. The colonial presence and the impact of Britain in Nigeria can be divided into three main phases: the formation of the colony, the creation of the British and 'proper' way of education and living and the immediate aftermath of the moment Nigeria gained the independence (James 8; Ihuegbu).

The first two phases can be seen in Achebe's books: the first phase, the formation of colony, is

described in *Things Fall Apart*, where the author showed the first contacts between colonizers and Nigerian people who must find a way how to accept new rules and different religion and cope with them. The second phase, the imposition of British system and implementation of new rules and ways of education, occurs in *No Longer at Ease*, where British colonizers and their rules are more settled and Nigerian people have used to it a bit. Young Nigerians are offered to travel abroad and gain education, learn English language and then go back and where they very often get jobs at state administration. Achebe wrote about the intermingling of the old values and habits and new values and habits which are brought by young Nigerians from their travels abroad.

Chinua Achebe as an Author

Chinua Achebe, whose full name is Albert Chinualumogu Achebe, was born on 16th November 1930 in the Igbo town of Ogidi, eastern Nigeria. He studied at the University of Ibadan which was established thanks to the British presence in the country and Achebe was very grateful for that because it provided him with many opportunities to get education in English language and travel abroad and get experience. From 1961 to 1966 he worked as a director of external broadcasting in Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. Before starting his career there, he published his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 which was awarded many times and praised by reviews and more than 10 million copies of the book have been sold so far. That success inspired him to write more novels, which he did in 1960s when he wrote other very well praised books, like *No Longer at Ease* (published in 1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *A Man of the People* (1966). All of them address the issues of cultural clashes between the traditional ways of life and new colonial values.



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The books were issued in the period when Nigeria gained independence (in 1960) and there were many changes in political and social system. It was a very important milestone for Nigerian people (Garner).

Chinua Achebe went on promoting and lecturing tour via the United States with his fellow writers Gabriel Okara and Cyprian Ekwensi, and he was giving lectures at various universities there. After spending some time in the United States, he came back to Nigeria where he became a professor of English (from 1976 to 1981) He was baptized Albert Chinualumogu which signified the double cultural influences present in his world. He later dropped the name "Albert" and used to say: "if anyone asks you what her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria had in common with Chinua Achebe, the answer is, they both lost their Albert". (AbdelRahman 178) Achebe talked about British presence in Nigeria and its advantages it brought as far as education is considered:

"Ibadan was, in retrospect, a great institution. In a way, it revealed the paradox of the colonial situation, because this university college was founded towards the end of British colonial rule in Nigeria. If they did any good things, Ibadan was one of them" (Brooks). In 1970s Achebe wrote many short stories and children's books, he published many poetry collections and his first book of essays as well. In 1990s, he had a car accident which left him paralyzed from the waist down and confined him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Soon after, he moved back to the United States and he taught at various universities. He died on March 21, 2013, Boston, Massachusetts, United States.

Achebe's View of Christianity

Chinua Achebe's father was a Christian convert while his grandparents and great grandparents rejected new religion and stayed tribal. His

parents not only strongly believed in God, they also spread Christianity: the father was a religious teacher and the mother travelled for thirty-five years to all parts of Igbo land in order to spread the gospel (Brooks). Members of his family had a direct experience with the pre-colonial society as well as with the coming of British missionaries and the huge changes they brought. He experienced himself the impact Great Britain had on Nigeria as a British colony: in new religion, establishing English as a centralizing language and introducing new western values and culture. This experience allowed him to describe more deeply and precisely the situation when the old values and system were endangered and lately replaced by new, western values and rules. Even though his parents were Christians accepted religion brought by the colonizers they deeply loved their Igboland and wanted Chinua Achebe to love it too. (Achebe 2012). He once commented on this fact:

We were Christians, though the inter-religious struggle was still evident in our time. Here were occasions when one would suddenly realize there were sides, and one was on one or another... I can say that my whole artistic career was probably sparked by this tension between the Christian religion of my parents, which we followed in our home, and the retreating, older religion of my ancestors, which fortunately for me was still active outside my home. I still had access to a number of relatives who had not converted to Christianity and were called heathens by the new converts. When my parents were not watching I would often sneak off in the evenings to visit some of these relatives. (Achebe 2012).

Achebe's View of English Language

The question of language of writing used by African writers is very important.



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Achebe uses English language in his writing, the language of the colonial empire which changed the Nigerian and established the new political, social and cultural system. Chinua Achebe was many times asked why he did not write his books in Igbo language and chose English instead. When explaining his choice, he said he writes in English not to attract a wide international audience, but because he was educated in English. He calls himself a victim of linguistic colonialism. But he always emphasizes the importance of Igbo language in his life as well:

I have made provision for that myself, by writing certain kinds of material in Igbo. For instance, I will insist my poetry is translated back into Igbo while I'm still around. I hope I have shown it is possible, in these two languages, to show respect to English and Igbo together.

According to Ismail S. Talib, a literary expert, Chinua Achebe in this passage shows his feelings about Igbo language. He knows that English enabled him to be educated well and the opportunity to reach wider audience throughout his writing, but on the other hand he feels that Igbo is still closer to his heart than English, because English is not his mother tongue. Achebe confirmed this opinion in one of his interviews, where he asked himself: "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's?" and he immediately replied: "It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling" (Talib 91).

In *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* the author shows the clashes between two different cultures, languages and the ways of life. Chinua Achebe tried to describe how hard it was for Igbo people to adapt to the new situation and conditions after the coming of British colonizers. He depicted the struggles people had inside

themselves: suddenly there were two forces and opposite poles which did not correspond together and they were forced to choose one or try to find some kind of compromise between them. Achebe himself talked many times about his struggle with his identity: whether he was more British or Nigerian. The following quotation from the text by Abdel Rahman offers Achebe's opinion of choosing between the two cultures, languages and religions: This is the problem of being at the crossroads. You have a bit of both, and you really have to know a lot more than either. So their situation was not very easy. But it's very exciting. Those who had the energy and the will to survive at the crossroads became really exceptional people (Moyers qtd. in Abdel Rahman 180).

The Igbo in Nigeria

Since Chinua Achebe focused on Igbo people in his books, it is highly important to bring a brief characteristic of this tribe: their customs, religion, social structure, mythology and approaches to foreigners, for better understanding of the issues Chinua Achebe wrote about in his two books and which were analyzed in this paper. The Igboland (or archaically Ibo) is mostly situated in Southeast Nigeria between the Niger River in the west and the Cross River in the east. The Niger River divides the area in two unequal sections: the Eastern region (which is larger) and the Midwestern region. The Igbo language has dozens of dialects which developed as a result of segregation of Igboland which comprised of self-contained towns and villages separated from each other by very thick forest and bush. During the colonial period (1900-1960) many Igbo people travelled far from their villages and when they spoke together they realized that their dialects were different, but all of them had the same base (Ohadike 20; Slattery). The Igbos are



very religious people who believe in a Supreme Being, a creator named *Chukwu* who is believed to create the whole universe, *uwa*, as well as the first human family, Eze Nri with his wife, sons and daughters. The Igbo relies on mythology, legends and traditions very much. According to Igbo belief nothing happens by chance, everything (good health, illness, death, marriage) is controlled by the will of God. But there is no symbol of *Chukwu*, because nobody knows what he really looks like. and *No Longer at Ease* as well. Achebe for example in his books showed various habits and rituals performed by Igbo people on many occasions like the wedding, a birth of a child, funeral or celebrations. He showed how much Igbo people are connected together through these rituals and their religion which forms their everyday lives.

Igbo people strongly believe in life after death and that spirits of their ancestors constantly watch over them. As far as burials and funeral ceremonies are concerned, the most important of all kinds of burials is a funeral of a chief. However, there are several kinds of deaths which are commonly considered shameful, and under these circumstances there is no burial provided at all. Some of examples of such kinds of death are women who died in labor, children who die before they have any teeth, people who commit suicide and those people who die in sacred month. For all of these people there is no funeral ceremony – they are only thrown into a bush. Some people in the past were condemned to death right after they were born. Like twins who were considered less human with no right to live and they were also thrown into a forest. Also babies who were born feet first, babies who were born with teeth, boys with only one testicle and so on. All of them were killed immediately after their birth and Igbo people got rid of their bodies (Slattery). Many of these previously

mentioned facts are also described in Achebe's books, especially in *Things Fall Apart* in order to show the Igbo society better.

Things Fall Apart

Things Fall Apart was first published in 1958 and since then it had been regarded as one of the most influential books of the postcolonial era. Chinua Achebe managed to create a complex portrait of a traditional village life and culture in Africa. Achebe did not only want to inform the outside world about the Igbo culture and its traditions, but he also wanted to remind his people their past and point to the place they belong. He fought against the generally accepted stereotype of African people as primitive nations without any chance for dignified way of living. Over his two books, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*, he showed how much the Igbo culture changed over the time (Brians). In his book, Achebe showed two painful features of modern African life: the humiliation of Africans by colonialists, and the corruption and inefficiency of what replaced colonial rule. The authors showed the Igbo society in the period of transition when rooted, strong and traditional values are put in conflict with an alien and much more powerful culture which eventually tears them apart (French). In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe covers two thirds of the book by the description of the way the Igbo people had lived before British missionaries came and the end of the second part describes the arrival of English Christian missionaries whose goal was to bring a new religion of one God among aboriginal tribes, teach them how to read, write and count, and also bring Western culture and values which were so different from the aboriginal ones. The third part of the book is the shortest one and showed the changing of Igbo society under the influence of British missionaries through the point of view of



Okonkwo who came back to his village after seven years in exile and was appalled by the changes and new rules which have replaced the old traditions he praised.

Things Fall Apart before and after the Coming of Missionaries

The story starts with Okonkwo, a main character who was a proud warrior and one of the most important people in his village Umuofia. He was a very strong, high principled and hard-working man, a husband of three wives and a father of many children. Thanks to his diligence he managed to establish a huge farmstead with fields where he and his family grew vegetables, and he, unlike his father, knew how to make money and became a very wealthy man. Because of his high position and respect he had in the village, he was asked to take a young boy named Ikemefuna, who was taken as a prisoner in a result of a peace settlement between Okonkwo's village and another village. The disputes between these two villages were caused by Ikemefuna's father who murdered a woman from Umuofia. Okonkwo accepts the young boy and even though he never showed his real feelings, he grew fond of him very much. In the book, the Igbo people had the Oracle which was a prophet who spoke for the highest Gods and the Igbo people had to always believe that what the Oracle said had to be done. Chinua Achebe showed here the importance of religion and mythology for Igbos at those times. People from Umuofia relied so much on what the Oracle said that they never questioned her orders and always did what she wanted.

After three years of Ikemefuna's presence in the village, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves made a decision about Ikemefuna's future destiny and ordered Umuofia people to kill him. Nobody from the village doubted the decision and even though Okonkwo's love to him was very strong

(he was like a son to him), he did not ask for reasons why Ikemefuna, a boy who looks up to him like to his second father, had to be killed. Okonkwo did not do anything to save the young boy because he was afraid of looking like a weak hysterical woman instead of a brave man who does not show his feelings and that is why he killed him. After Ikemefuna's death, Okonkwo fell into depression which made him unable to sleep or eat. He felt terribly because there were two parts fighting inside him – a part of him which loved Ikemefuna and did not want to kill him and which missed him very much after his death; and the second part of him which was a brave soldier who had respect at villagers and who never showed his feelings because it would be a sign of weakness. Achebe describes Okonkwo's character in the second chapter:

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 and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. (Achebe TFA 12) He experienced the similar fights later on in the book, for example when his son decided to convert to Christianity and Okonkwo condemns him even though he loved his son very much, his faith and Igbo traditions meant much more to him.

In the book, there is also seen the clash between Okonkwo's culture and traditions he believed in and which he had been following for the whole life even though it was sometimes killing him inside. Suddenly everything he believed in was tearing apart and the main reason for it was the coming of the missionaries and their new religion. He blamed them for ruining the old system and traditions and hated them because he could not find a way how to deal with the



changes (van den Bersselaar 68). According to Diana Akers Rhoads, an American scholar and expert in literature, the British missionaries did not approve the methods used in rituals and very cruel treatment of some newborns which were considered evil. These cruel methods belonged to main reasons why Igbo people decided to convert to Christianity, because under the new religion they did not have to kill their children if they were declared *obanje* or if women had twins. For many mothers it was a huge relief. Rhoads continues in her article with giving further explanation: Those who initially convert to Christianity were members of the clan who had not been fully incorporated into clan life. Achebe wanted to describe the Igbo people completely – positive and negative sides as well. He never intended to romanticize Igbo people. He wanted to show the cruel side of them as well, even though he still considered Igbo people and their habits and culture human and not bad or over the edge. He commented on this issue in one of his interviews:

I did not romanticize, because that was the one thing that was very clear to me 40 years ago when I was a young man beginning to write, that I was not going to romanticize my culture, because I knew that there's a matter of integrity in artistic creation which was involved, and that your reader had to trust what you said, that what you see was what you were going to report I had no question no doubt whatsoever in my mind about my humanity or the humanity of my people. And the story I was going to tell was to make this humanity apparent. Now, you note I was talking about humanity; I'm not talking about angels. I'm not talking about perfect beings. I'm talking about people ("An intimate interview with Chinua Achebe").

During the seven years the missionaries came and started to change the village and its rules

and myths. At first, the two different cultures, the Igbo's and missionaries coexisted in a relative peace, because Igbo people did not think the white people would stay for a long time there. The Igbos thought that the missionaries would be punished by Igbo gods for violating the Igbo rules and myths, and that the white people would not survive there. When the Igbo people realized the missionaries were there to stay and intended to change Igbos' religion, the relationships became much tenser and the culture clash was more evident.

Okonkwo's Return

The last and the shortest part of the book describes the return of Okonkwo and his family back to his village Umuofia which was now partly different due to the presence of Christian missionaries. One can see the changes in a point of view of Okonkwo, who came back to his village after seven years and could see how much it had changed since he left. He could not see the slow changes missionaries and British system in general brought during the seven years and he did not see the whole slow process of intermingling Igbo people and Western system together. The fearless warrior who would never show his feelings and weaknesses and who used to be so much worshipped before he left was all of a sudden only a regular inhabitant of transforming village. But he did not want anything of it. According to Dr. Ernest A. Champion, a professor at Green State University, Okonkwo wanted to maintain the origin way of life which was extremely precious to him. When he came back from the exile, he expected his clansmen to remain as he left them proud of their heritage, culture and strength (Champion 274).



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Suddenly there were new western values and rules which started to replace the old ones. The most evident this change is seen in a passage when Okonkwo and people from the village gathered in a session where Okonkwo wanted everybody to start fight against the white government and for the sake of old times. He wanted the old times back very desperately because all his characteristics and the way he was brought up and acted were tightly connected to the old Igbo village.

For the first time in many years Okonkwo had a feeling that was akin to happiness. The times which had altered so unaccountably during his exile seemed to be coming round again. The clan which had turned false on him appeared to be making amends. He had spoken violently to his clansmen when they had met in the market-place to decide on their action. And they had listened to him with respect. It was like the good old days again, when a warrior was a warrior. Although they had not agreed to kill the missionary or drive away the Christians, they had done it. Okonkwo was almost happy again (Achebe TFA 136). When the Igbo people attacked the church according to the plan by Okonkwo, some of them were caught and arrested for a short while. In the book, after destroying the church, Okonkwo and five other men who committed the crime were having an argument about the way they stood up to the new British system and rules.

Okonkwo seemed to be the only one who wants to fight against it the others hesitated because they were slowly and unconsciously accepting the new rules are afraid of punishment: “We should have killed the white men if you had listened to me”, Okonkwo snarled. “We could have been in Umuru now waiting to be hanged”, someone said to him. “Who wants to kill the

white man?” asked the messenger who had just rushed in. Nobody spoke (Achebe TFA 138).

Okonkwo did not want to give up and so he planned one more meeting with the white government which was supposed to be another form of protest against the white government. The meeting turned into a wild argument and the messengers of the white government wanted to end the session. Okonkwo rejected that kind of humiliation and the whole anger accumulated from the previous days woke the old part of him: the warrior part. He killed one of the messengers in order to show the white government that Umuofia and the Igbo people in general would never surrender and they would stay in their position. He expected other people from his village to fight for him, but nobody did anything to support him. Okonkwo could see that missionaries and the white government brought an irreversible change to his village and that change affected more or less everyone there. The pure Igbo features were gone forever. The changes were inevitable after the coming of the white government. Igbo people stopped fighting for their rights and slowly started to adapt to the new British system. The next day Okonkwo committed a suicide because he lost all his hopes and everything he was taught to believe in was gone.

Okonkwo gave up because he did not know how to live under the new system. He felt betrayed and hopeless. He was also betrayed by his own son who decided to convert to Christianity and accept values of the white people, which was absolutely unacceptable for Okonkwo. The converting of his son Nwoye to Christianity was also something Okonkwo could never understand and accept and he decided to condemn him instead. In *No Longer At Ease* old



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Nwoye tells his son Obi about his father who condemned him for converting to new religion: I was no more than a boy when I left my father's house and went with the missionaries. He placed a curse on me. I was not there but my brothers told me it was true. When a man curses his own child it is a terrible thing. And I was his first son (Achebe TFA 104). According to Champion, Nwoye is the symbol of a change in the book he found it difficult to understand and follow the old traditions and rules of Igbo people. Especially after Ikemefuna death which happened only because the Oracle had said that he had to be killed. Ikemefuna was like a brother to Nwoye and he never accepted the Oracle's orders. When Nwoye found a new religion and rejected his father and his religion and everything he stood for, Achebe showed a real consequence of the clash between the two cultures and religions (Champion 275). Lily Garcia comments on the changes British colonizers brought to the country and affected Igbo people in various aspects of their lives. She talked about the culture clashes and the way Okonkwo dealt with them: In the most literal sense of human consequences was the death of Okonkwo. Though he was not murdered, his death was the effect of their presence. When he died he did not go the way a warrior should, he fought as much as he thought he could and need to escape. The culture collision was the result of one culture trying to overpower another, but in the end no one really won. Like the turtle's shell cracked and broken, no one left the fight safe. Gradually the visitors pushed their way through, taking with them some villagers. Both sides had powerful conviction and a strong belief that they were right (Garcia 4).

Chinua Achebe himself commented Okonkwo's suicide as a desperate reaction to the colonial expansion in one interview: *People say that if*

you find water rising up to your ankle, that's the time to do something about it, not when it's around your neck. Okonkwo's solution to colonial invasion was to rebuff it, to repulse it, to drive it back. The problem with this was that Okonkwo was the only person in his community who saw the problem and its solution that simply. His community was aware from what they knew of European invasion of Africa at that point that it was not going to be easy to drive it back, they had examples around of communities that were bombarded, of markets that were bombarded. So it was not a simple matter of cowardice or bravery, it was really a question of looking taking a hard look at the situation and deciding that this thing cannot be handled in this simple way without running very, very great risks. The colonizers were not going to be persuaded by simple resistance to reevaluate their intentions. So there's really no escape, that's what I'm saying. There's no escape ("An intimate interview with Chinua Achebe"). Okonkwo and some Igbo people in *Things Fall Apart* were convinced that there was no possibility of Christianity and Igbo religion to coexist next to each other.

No Longer at Ease

The second book, *No Longer at Ease*, showed how much the Igbo village changed due to the colonial influence and how the village people dealt with the cultural and religion clashes. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the paper, the second book serves as a completion in order to get a more complex picture of the culture and religion clash and the way the Igbo people dealt with it. Because of this reason, the analysis of *Things Fall Apart* covers a bigger part of the paper than *No Longer at Ease*. The book *No Longer at Ease* was first published in 1960 and is considered a sequel to *Things Fall Apart* because of the main character, Obi Okonkwo



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who was a grandson of Okonkwo, the main character from the previous book. Achebe showed lives of a new generation in Umuofia under the rule of British colonial system and the way the village people dealt with it. He again did not describe things only as black and white, but he tried to show positive and negatives sides of British colonization in Nigeria. In this book, the main theme was the same as in the previous book; it was the identity and culture clash. Nevertheless, this theme was elaborated in a different way and put into a slightly different situation into the time when Okonkwo's grandchildren were adult and the British colonial system had firmly settled in the country. The story started with a trial where the main character Obi Okonkwo from Umuofia was accused of corruption and bribery. Then the story went back to explain what led Obi to this situation. Obi got a scholarship and a great opportunity to study in England, learn English language perfectly and mainly to get education which would guarantee him to get a very high position in a state administration. On his way back home, he met Clara and fell in love with her and later on decided to marry her. When Obi came back to his village, everybody has big expectations. Obi was the first person from Umuofia village who got education and was expected to represent his village well in Nigerian Civil Service. There was also his family which expected him to get a well paid job and pay for his brother's studies and helped his family financially in general. The other side of the struggle was his new life in Lagos where he got job. He had high standards of living and wanted to marry his girlfriend and needed lots of money for the wedding and to cover his expenses (Brucker).

Religion and traditions

In *No Longer at Ease* and *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe analyzed the way Igbo people tried to assimilate to the new system of English colonizers. According to Lokangaka Losambe, a specialist in African literature, the major problem for Igbo people was their inability to get rid of their rooted traditional beliefs. They were still somehow connected to their original culture and habits and it was almost impossible to find some Igbo person who consciously and unconsciously cut off all his ties with his traditions (Losambe, 148). Chinua Achebe confirmed this idea in his two books, especially in *No Longer at Ease*. Obi's father converted to Christianity and rejected the Igbo culture, religion and traditions when he was young. Even though some people accepted the new religion, their tradition and old roots were still part of them. Obi's father was afraid of the consequences of such marriage. He was worried about daughters of Obi in the future who would have to bear the curse of being the daughters of Osu mother. That implied that not only him but also the whole village will follow the old Igbo traditions in the future as well no matter how strong influence the British colonizers will have: 'The Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free.' 'My son,' said Okonkwo, 'I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think. Lokangaka Losambe aptly depicted the main differences between religions and approaches of Igbo people to them. Igbo people were urged to unconditionally give up their roots and beliefs and accept the new religion, system of education and the new way of life in general. Under the new religion, Igbo people must accept that there is only one God and forget the all Igbo gods they used to worship for decades. They also had to erase the differences between Nwadiala and Osu people and consider them as equal. Chinua Achebe wrote about these ties and



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religion-culture clashes in his books, mainly in *No Longer at Ease*, where Obi's father, a deeply religious Christian, strongly condemns Obi's girlfriend just because she was Osu. (Losambe 148 -151).

Conclusion

In his two books, Chinua Achebe analyzed the impact British colonial system had on Igbo society in Nigeria. He discussed the culture-religion clashes between the two worlds: the English and the African. Achebe was not one-sided he showed both negative and positive sides of British colonization. When he described the Igbo society, he used true facts and his own experience as well to give readers as much real

Bibliography:

picture about his society as possible. He did not avoid the description of cruel methods and rituals the Igbo people performed and which were significantly limited after the coming of missionaries and their presence in Igboland. On the other hand, Achebe tried to show that British colonial presence and changes they brought destroy the original African culture for good, the impact British colonizers had on the land was so huge that there will never be just unique African culture again. In his books and in interviews as well, Chinua Achebe never strictly said whether British colonization was right or wrong. In his books, he found many examples of negative consequences of this colonization, but many positive contributions as well.



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