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**Portrayal of African Traditions and Customs in
Achebe's Novels**

استعراض العادات والتقاليد الافريقية في روايات جنوي اجبي

**A thesis Submitted to Department of English, College of
Languages in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of
Ph. D. in English Literature.**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father, and my beloved wife and little ones.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my special thanks and sincere gratitude to my supervisor Professor Yousif Omer, who has offered me continuous support, advice, and encouragement. Thanks are due to him for scholarly guidance, patience, and critical comments.

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Abstract

This research attempts to explore how successful Achebe is in portraying the African traditions and customs and their way of life in these selected novels by Achebe. Thus, it has taken Sudanese Nuba's traditions and customs in the Nuba Mountains as a reference to support the view that these novels really depict Africans traditions and customs.

The study traces Igbo traditions and customs including religion concepts and practices, funeral rites, harvest festivals, marriage rituals, and wrestling matches in *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*, and then compares them with those of the Nuba's. The research employs the descriptive analytical method.

The research consist of five chapters; chapter one is a general introduction, chapter two deals with theoretical frame work and published researches that deal with this study, chapter three shows the method and thematic representation, in chapter four the comparison between the two communities' traditions and their way of life is held, and chapter five is a concluding chapter which presents summary, findings and recommendations.

The research results show considerable similarities between the two communities in religious beliefs, marriage rituals, harvest festivals, and funeral ceremonies. These similarities definitely support Achebe and other African writers in their argument with their European counterparts, who contend that the Africans have no culture of their own.

The study reveals that Africa has a great and rich religious system, which had organized people's way of life spiritually, socially, and politically.

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتوضيح الي اي مدي نجح الكاتب والروائي النيجيري (جنوي اجبي) في استعراض العادات والتقاليد الافريقية القديمة في رواياته. إذ ركز هذا الكاتب في معظم رواياته على وصف عادات قبيلة "أقبو" التي ينتمي إليها ، واستعراض أسلوب حياتها، وإرثها الثقافي والروحي. وتسعى هذه الدراسة إلى متابعة العادات والتقاليد الافريقية القديمة لقبيلة "أقبو" وتقارنها بعادات وتقاليد النوبة بجمال النوبة وتشمل الطقوس الدينية التقليدية ، وطقوس الزواج إلى جانب أشكال المعتقدات الأخرى المتمثلة في: أعياد الحصاد، والمصارعة ودورها في الحياة، طقوس الجنائز والاعتقاد في الأسلاف ودور المرأة في الحياة الاجتماعية والدينية ، والديانات وأهميتها ودورها في تنظيم حياة المجتمعات القديمة روحياً وثقافياً.

اتبع الباحث في هذه الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي ، مستقيماً معلوماته من مصادر البحث الرئيسية المتمثلة في الروايات الثلاث – موضوع الدراسة – إلى جانب المصادر الأخرى.

تتكون هذه الدراسة من خمسة فصول: الفصل الاول تمهيدي يتعلق بمقدمة عن الدراسة، الفصل الثاني يغطي الجانب النظري والدراسات السابقة، الفصل الثالث يوضح الرسائل والدروس المراد توصيلها وتدريسها من خلال هذه الروايات الثلاثة، الفصل الرابع تحليل الروايات واجراء مقارنة بين عادات وتقاليد قبيلة اقبو النيجيرية وقبائل النوبة السودانية.

خلص هذا البحث إلى نتائج أهمها وجود تشابه كبير بين معتقدات وطقوس قبيلة "النوبة" السودانية و"أقبو" النيجيرية ؛ خاصة الدينية والتي تتجلى في صور أهمها الاعتقاد الراسخ في الحياة بعد الموت وما يتبع ذلك من طقوس من ضرب الطبول وذبائح ورقص، كما ان هاتين القبيلتين كانتا تعتقدان ان للأسلاف قدرة خارقة علي حماية سلالتهما وتيسير سبل الحياة لها ومعاقبتها أيضاً.

هذا التشابه يبيّن أن وصف (أجبي) لعادات وتقاليد قبيلته لم يكن مجرد صور خيالية وهمية صاغها لتشكيل بنية أدبية فحسب؛ وإنما هي حقائق واقعية موثقة وسوف يدعم بقوة رؤية الكتاب الأفارقة في ضحرم لفكرة الكتاب الأوربيين الذين يظنون ان الأفارقة لم تكن لهم ثقافة قبل مجئ الأوربيين.

يخلص الباحث إلى أن النوبة في السودان لهم إرث غني , وان هذه الدراسة ذات فائدة كبيرة لطلاب الدراسات اللغوية ، والأدب ، والتاريخ ، والمختصين في الأديان المقارنة.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Overview

All cultures around the world have established a set of beliefs, and traditions and customs that constitute the code of values and moral laws for the people who belong to that particular culture. In Africa, the indigenous people were exposed to certain social phenomena and consequently adopted corresponding beliefs that now dictate and influence behavior and make a completely separate culture. In some communities, people share different beliefs and values due to a variety of important factors. Religion is one of the most important influences that shape the society in terms of its cultural beliefs and traditions and customs. Another component is history that can tell us about the events of the past that might have had some influence on the further development of people in that particular country or society. People are inevitably shaped by their past because history has a habit of repeating itself.

Traditions and customs play a vital and important role in organizing the social life of most of the Africans indigenous communities. The culture and behaviors of the members of a community and their way of life is identified and organized by their traditions and customs. The two are invisible bonds, which tie the people of a community together. Traditions and customs are related to a person's attitude. They play an important role in shaping the principles of the individual's life.

In Africa, traditions and customs are the ultimate system of social control where people monitor their standards and behaviors. A

community's traditions and customs lay the foundation of the living of its people. The cultural values serve as the founding principles of a person's life. They shape an individual's thinking and influence his or her mindset. Thus, traditions and customs give a member of the community a unique identity. They are believed to give the people of a community a character of their own, and discipline them accordingly. In some cultures, if somebody does something that is against the law of tradition, he or she will be fined or punished.

Therefore, having and preserving traditions and customs within local communities is of importance and has many advantages. It is a way to pass down a number of preserved practices and customs. This will lead to creating unity among the member of the society and give them a sense of belonging. In addition to that, traditions provide an important connection with the past. Roots, heritage and core values are often parts of that connection and bring values and meaning into our lives.

Understanding the traditions behind a family's heritage and belief can provide insight into present-day life. As well, participating in those rituals and observances gives guidance, a comforting framework of reference and a sense of continuity.

Many African societies worship a single God, while, some recognize a dual God. They do this by paying obeisance to the God through lesser deities. Some African societies deify entities like the earth, the sun, the sea, lighting or the nature. Each deity has its own priest or priestess. According to report by African child magazine, In Zimbabwe, some ethnic groups like the Ndebele have a trinity – a fundamental family group-made up of the

God father, God the mother, and God the Sun. Among the Fon in the Republic of Benin, God, who is called "Vondu", has male and female traits.

In Ghana, the Ewe people have a conception of the high God as a female-male partnership. Mawu who is a female is often spoken of as gentle and forgiving. Lisa who is a male renders judgment and punishes. Among the Ewe it is believed that when Lisa punishes, Mawu may grant forgiveness. This shows the complementarities of male and female that characterizes many of the traditional African religions.

In Sudan, the Nuba Mountains is one of the places in Africa which has a female high Goddess, whose culture has matriarchal traits. The Nuba conceive of the creator Goddess as the "Great mother" who gave birth to earth and mankind.

In most African communities, God is often worshipped through consultation or communion with lesser deities and ancestral spirits. The deities and spirits are honored through libation, sacrifice of (animals, vegetables, or precious metals).

The will of God is sought by the believer also through consultation of divination or oracular deities. In many African traditional religions there is a belief in a cyclical nature of reality. The living stands between their ancestors and the unborn. According to Gottlieb and Mbiti, traditional African religions embrace natural phenomena –ebb and tide, waxing and waning moon, rain and drought- and the rhythmic pattern of agriculture.

Religion plays a vital role in the lives of most Africans. Wherever the person is, there is his religion with him: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him.

Religion among most African ethnic groups was not simply a faith or worship system; it was a way of life, a system of social control, a provider of medicine, and an organizing mechanism. Right from womb through birth, infancy, puberty, marriage, and funeral many Africans societies have religious rituals for each phase of life. Each begins with prayer, offering of kola nut and pouring of libation.

1.1- The Igbo people

The Igbo (Ibo) people are one of largest ethnic groups in Africa who settled in southeastern Nigeria. They speak Igbo language and the majority of them also speak Nigerian English. Originally, they settled in many autonomous villages. They are mostly craftsmen, farmers and traders. Their most important crop is the yam; celebrations are held annually at the time of its harvesting. Other staple crops are cassava and taro. The Igbo people have a sense of cultural unity and are inclined to unite for political action.

Although many Igbo people are now Christians, traditional Igbo religious practices still abound. The traditional Igbo religion includes uncontested general reverence for Ala or Ana, the earth goddess, and beliefs and rituals related to numerous other male and female deities, spirits, and ancestors who protect their living descendants. Revelation of the will of certain deities is sought through oracles and divination. The Igbo believe in a supreme god who keeps watch over his creatures from a distance. He seldom interferes in the affairs of human beings. No sacrifices are made directly to him. However, he is seen as the ultimate receiver of sacrifices made to the minor gods. To distinguish him from the minor gods, he is called Chukwu- the great or the high god.

Minor gods are generally subject to human passions and weakness. They may be kind, hospitable, and industrious; at other times they can be treacherous, unmerciful and envious. Minor gods include Ala, the earth goddess. She is associated with fertility, both of human beings and of the land. There is also Anyanwu, the sun god who makes crops and trees grow, whereas Igwe is the sky god, the source of rain.

In addition to their gods, the Igbo believe in a variety of spirits whose good will depends on good treatment. Forests and rivers at the edge of cultivated land are said to be occupied by these spirits.

The Igbo have a system of folk beliefs that explains how everything in the world came into being. It explains what functions the heavenly and earthly bodies have and offers guidance on how to behave toward gods, the spirits and one's ancestors. The Igbo believe that the world is peopled by invisible and visible forces: by the living, the dead and those to be born.

1.2 The Nuba People

The Nuba(s) are different African ethnic groups which settled in Southern Kordofan Province, Sudan. They possess extraordinarily rich and varied cultures and traditions. Their diverse cultures have a deeply rooted tradition of tolerance of which they are proud.

Their settlement place is known as Jebel al-Nuba or Nuba Mountains, with estimated population of 2.5 million. Although the name (Nuba) is used as if they composed a single group, they are multiple people and speak different languages. Khalid, in his book, Nuba Mountain Ethnics and Heritage, points out that, one of the most common mistake people make is that they think Nuba is a single tribe and speaks one language. This is not true, because Nuba(s) consist of more than one hundred tribes and each one has its own language.

Researchers differ in dividing Nuba people into groups. Nadel divides them into Nuba into fourteen ethnics groups. That are represented Otoro, Tira, Moro, Krongo, AL-masakein, Tolushi, Kawaleeb, Dilling, Nyimang, Kadaru, Afyaite, Dadity, Dajo, and Tagale. However, Professor Ronald Stevenson, the famous linguist, in 1984 classified more than fifty Nuba languages and dialect clusters into ten separate groups. This means that there is more linguistic diversity within the Nuba Mountain than in the entire remaining parts of Sudan.

The Nuba people mostly reside in the foothills of the Noba Mountains. They are mostly farmers and herders. Sesame is one of the most important crops. Dr. Khalid states that Noba often maintain three different farms: a garden near houses where vegetables such as onions, peppers and beans are grown; fields further up the hills where quick growing crops like red milled is cultivated; farms further away, where white milled and other crops are planted.

A distinctive characteristic of the Nuba people is their passion for athletic competition, particularly traditional wrestling. Their strongest young men of tribes or villages compete with each other to win, in order to bring honor and pride to their villages or tribes. The Nuba's passion for physical excellence is also shown through young men's vanity – they often spend hours painting their bodies with complex patterns and decorations. This vanity reflects the basic Nuba belief in the power and importance of strength and beauty. The majority of Nuba people are Muslims; there are also Christians and traditional shamanistic beliefs. This study deals with traditional shamanistic belief.

There is a wider similarity between almost all the tribes in the Nuba Mountains as far as customs and traditions are concerned. This fact gives the Nuba people the sense of "unity of culture". Sibir is one of the most

important traditions which is widely practiced and almost covers the whole area of the Nuba Mountains.

Sibir is a festival that takes place twice or more every year and it differs from one area to another. The festival is attended by youngsters and elders as well, and animals are slaughtered. Kujur(the rainmaker) would ask all the people, especially the rich to bring a large number of cattle and goats to the festival place. He would perform some magical ceremonies on these animals and mark them with some white ashes as an indication that these animals become for the stranger. The animals would then be slaughtered. The people would rush to take the blood of the slaughtered animals- after the Kujur has taken his sufficient amount, and pour it in a gourd and spray it over the guests and relatives for blessing. Then, all the food and slaughtered animals would be taken to the Kujur's house, where all the people would feast. People would dance daily, and for the whole week.

1.3 -The Significance of the Study

Traditions and cultural differences present a very interesting social phenomenon and literary topics to study, for through them, it would be possible to learn about people's way of life, and beliefs and values. Indeed, cultures are thought to share similar values and traditions, while at the same time, they have different beliefs and customs.

This research is expected to be of importance to both Igbo and Nuba people. For it would underline their valuable heritage of traditions and cultures, and that the two communities share similar traditions and customs.

Also, the research will be useful to those who are especially interested in African culture and literature, which are the mirror of traditions and

customs. Folklorists and anthropologists are likely to find it a resourceful store of information. Also, the research will be of use to scholars of social sciences who are concerned with the study of interaction between human beings, including sociology, political science, criminology and social psychology. Moreover, the research is expected to be useful to research centers, English language scholars and learners.

In addition, this study provides supports to the African writers in their argument with the Western writers, including Conrad, and Joyce who present and describe African communities as mindless and primitive, and that they have no culture of their own. From this research it can be learn that: African people have deep rooted traditions and values. It is not true that the Africans come to know about the culture from the European writers.

1.4- Statement of the Problem

In his novels “Things Fall Apart” and “Arrow of God”, Achebe draws a vivid picture of the Igbo society in many ways, and he epitomizes traditional African society. The Igbo people (sometimes spelled Ibo) are an ethnic group in Southeast Nigeria. Reading Chinua Achebe’s novels would make one feel as if the writer is writing about Nuba.

European writers have portrayed Africa and its people in humiliating images in their writings before two centuries ago. Africans were describing as savages and accused of not having culture of their own. This research attempts to explore how successful is Achebe in responding to them by portraying real African traditions and customs and their way of life in his novels Things fall Apart, Arrow of God, and No Longer at Ease. It takes Nuba Traditions and customs a reference, to

support a view that this depicted traditions and customs are real Africans.

The research makes comparison between the two African communities (that of Nuba and Igbo), to include their lifestyle, religious rituals, wrestling competitions, wedding ceremonies, harvesting ceremonies, the naming system beliefs, performing funeral rites, superstitions beliefs, and the role of a woman in the society.

1.5 - Objectives of the Study

In this research it will be attempted to:

- 1- Trace and identify Igbo traditions and customs as is shown in Chinua Achebe's fictional works and compare them with Nuba traditions and customs in Sudan.
- 2- Discover the role of traditions and customs in organizing and ruling indigenous Africans' (Igbo and Nuba) life before the start of British colonization.
- 3- Confirm that, some of the traditions and customs that are mentioned in the selected novels are to be found in some parts of Africa, especially in the Nuba Mountains in Western Sudan.
- 4- Underline the impact of Western values on local African traditions and customs.

1.6- Research Questions

- 1- To what extent does Chinua Achebe succeed to depict real African traditions and customs by his fictional works?
- 2- What similarities and contrasts are there between Igbo and Nuba traditions and customs?
- 3- Do the traditions and customs in the Igbo and Nuba societies decide the fate of men, women, and children?
- 4- What message does Achebe want to send to his African readers and Europeans readers through his works about African culture?
- 5-What are the women's role in the both Nuba and Igbo communities?

1.7- Hypothesis

- 1- Achebe has successfully depicted really African traditions and customs in his selected novels.
- 2- There are similarities between the two communities (The Igbo and Nuba) in their various ways of life.
- 3- Women play important roles in both communities socially and spiritually.
- 4- He wants to send messages to both African readers and European's as well.

1.8 The Method of the Research

In This research, the descriptive and analytical method is used, and a comparison between the Igbo traditions and customs and those of the Nuba will be made.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Part (A) Theoretical Framework

2.0 Introduction

Before Achebe wrote his novels *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, and *No Longer at Ease*, all the novels about Africa and Africans were written by Europeans, except for Amos Tutuola's novel, "The Palm Wine Drunkard". In the Europeans writings the Africans were described as uncivilized and uneducated people. The Europeans, on the other hand, portrayed themselves as civilized more advanced than the Africans. Nonetheless, they were inclined to help, educate and enlighten the African natives whose countries they had colonized.

Sickels (2012:2), pointed out that *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad, was one of the most popular novels after its publication in 1899. In it Africa is described as a "wild dark and uncivilized continent". In 1952 *Mister Johnson* by Joyce Cary gained similar popularity. However, the novel's protagonist appears to be a "childish, semi educated African who reinforces colonialist stereotypes about Africa".

Based on the descriptions of Africa and its people by both Conrad and Cary, it comes as no surprise that Achebe and other African writers were determined to give their own account of Africa and its people. Not only were Conrad and Cary's novels a misrepresentation of Africa but also they were thought to be humiliating to its people.

It was through the insights of Achebe's novels that the world comes to know Africa and its people and the truth surrounding the stereotypical ideas

that were propagated by the European writers were proven as prejudiced and false.

2.1 Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial literature is a body of literary that emerged in response to European colonization in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific and elsewhere.

In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, it is pointed out that, "postcolonial literature" addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country and of a nation, especially the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated colonial people". In addition to that, it covers literary critiques of and about postcolonial literature, the undertones which carry, communicate and justify racialism and colonialism.

The literature written during the colonial period is generally called colonial literature, and that published after independence is known as postcolonial literature. The latter depicts the way of life and deals with customs, attitudes, religion, and legends. It is thought to inscribe a culture in a frame, and form new identities of newly emerging countries. It is mostly a realistic literature that gives account of the real country.

On the other hand, Colonialist literature is written by British or European writers that have adopted or accepted the colonizers views or ways of life.

The postcolonial style of writing is a branch of post-modern literature concerned with the political and cultural independence of people formerly subjugated in colonial empires.

The concerns and characteristics of postcolonial literature as listed by Bill, Gareth and Helen (1989) are as follows:

Reclaiming spaces and places, colonialism was a means of claiming and exploiting foreign lands, resources and people. Therefore, migration forced many indigenous populations to move from their original places. Postcolonial literature attempts to counteract their resulting alienation from their surrounding by restoring a connection between indigenous people and places through narration, description and dramatization.

Asserting cultural integrity: During colonization, the indigenous cultures were often sidelined, suppressed, and openly denigrated in favour of elevating the social and cultural preferences and conventions of the colonizers. In respond, postcolonial literature seeks to assert the richness and validity of indigenous cultures in an effort to restore pride in practices and traditions that were systematically degraded under colonialism.

Revising history: colonizers often depicted their colonial subjects as existing "outside of history" in unchanging, timeless societies, unable to progress or develop without their intervention and assistance. They justified their actions including violence against those who resisted colonial rules. Revising history to tell things from the perspective of those colonized is thus a major preoccupation of postcolonial writing.

As for its characteristics, postcolonial literature and writers are inclined towards resist and descriptions. They use detailed descriptions of indigenous people, places, and traditions and customs to counteract or resist the stereotypes, inaccuracies, and generalizations which were circulated in educational, legal, political, and social life and settings.

One other characteristic is the appropriation of the colonizers' language, although a lot of colonized countries are home to multiple

indigenous languages, many postcolonial writers choose to use the colonizers' tongue. However, writers such as Arundhati Roy deliberately play with English, remolding it to reflect the rhythms and syntax of indigenous languages, and inventing new words and styles to demonstrate mastery of a language that was, in a sense forced upon them.

Postcolonial is characterized by a tendency to rework colonial art forms. Writers tend to reshape imported colonial art forms to incorporate the style, structure and themes of indigenous modes of creative expression, such as oral poetry and dramatic performance.

Homi(1994), underlines certain characteristics of postcolonial literature. They include; interacting with the traditional colonial discourses, critical look at imperialism and its legacy, reclaiming the past, searching for cultural and personal identity, self-reflection, style often ironic, and approach, eclectic, political and egalitarian.

2.2 Culture and Tradition

Culture is an integral part of every human society and all social groups are characterized by culture. Ameh(2003:165)), defines culture as “complex pattern of behaviour and material achievement which are produced, learned and shared by members of community”. On the other hand, Webster (1966: 176), defines culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group”.

Tradition refers to the passing of beliefs or behaviors from one generation to the other generation, whereas culture reflects the characteristics that describe a society at a particular time; and it is mostly associated with the art form. Tradition is more concerned with way of thinking, behaving or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family, and society for a long time.

In Wikipedia, 'tradition,' is defined as “belief or behaviour passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with the origins in the past.” Today it has come to mean things and practices that are not modern and are being followed since old times. For example, there are different rituals in different religions that have been handed over by one generation to another, the way people greet each other, the way they eat, sleep, dress up...etc.

2.3 The Basic Elements of Culture

Culture is the totality of learned and socially transmitted behaviours. It is shared and practiced in all societies of the world. Each culture has basic elements. According to C.Kluckhohn (1953:112), there are seven universal elements of culture: language, social organization, knowledge system, technology system, job system, religious system and art.

Farooq in his essay, Basic Elements of Culture (2012, 101), has underlined the basic elements of culture as follows.

Language; which is a set of socially sound pattern, words, and sentences having specific meaning and terminology common to the same culture. Language is a source of communication and to transmit message from one person to another. Language is like a vehicle through which we can out our complex social activities. Language is the foundation of a culture and ticket to the entrance of a social life. Animals not have a culture because they do not have special language to transmit words to each others.

Culture, which is a system of symbols, which are anything used to represent, express and stand for an event situation. Symbols are signs that guide our behaviours. Bowing head, whistling, winking of eyes are all symbols that express a specific object idea.

Norms are the rules and the guidelines that specify the behaviour of an individual. They keep a person within the boundary of the society and its culture, and it moulds our behaviour and provides us with knowledge about what is wrong and right. Farooq believes that norms can be divided into: (a) Folkways, which are the simple customary ways of the people, they are recognized or accepted ways of behaviour that people follow in their everyday life in the society. (b) Mores, which means customs or beliefs. Norms are “customs, social behaviour, and moral values of a particular group”. Therefore, mores refers to “what ought to be and what ought not to be”.

Values, which are anything getting importance in our daily life. The origin of values is not biological; rather it is a social production while living in society the values develop.

Cognitive Elements which are ideas that the individual knows how to cope with in an existing social situation? Examples include: how to survive and make shelter from storms and other natural calamities, all of which represent the practical knowledge of a culture.

Belief, which is a feeling that something is definitely true or definitely exists. For example, "polytheism", is the worship of or belief in multiple deities which are usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses.

2. 4 Processes of Change in A society

All human cultures, traditions and customs are inherently predisposed to change and resisted of change.

O'Neil (2002:77), mentions that there are three general sources of influences or pressures that are responsible for both change and resistance to change: the forces at work within the society. Contact between societies and change in the natural environment.

Within a society, the processes leading to change include invention and culture loss. Invention may be either technological or ideological. Culture loss is an inevitable result of cultural patterns being replaced by new ones. For example, today a lot of Americans do not know how to care for a horse, a century ago, this was a common knowledge. Since then, vehicles with internal combustion engines have replaced horses as means of transportation and horse care knowledge lost its importance.

These processes can lead to the resistance to change; for example, habit and the integration of culture traits. Older people in particular, are often reticent to replace their long familiar cultural patterns. Religion also provides strong moral justification and support for maintaining traditional ways.

The processes that lead to change as a result of contact between societies are: diffusion, acculturation, and transculturation.

Diffusion is the movement of things and ideas from one culture to another. When it occurs, the form of a trait may move from one society to another.

Acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when alien traits diffuse on a large scale and substantially replace traditional cultural patterns. After several centuries of relentless pressure from Europe on Americans to adopt their ways, Native American cultures were largely acculturated. As a

result, the vast majority of American Indians now speak English instead of their ancestral language, and they come to wear European style clothes.

While acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when it is overwhelmed by alien traits, transcultural is what happens to the individual when he moves to another society and adopts its culture.

2.5 Indigenous African Religion

Like most religious systems (including Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) African religion focuses on the eternal questions of what it means to be human: what is the meaning of life, and what are the correct relations among humans, between humans and the spiritual powers, and with the natural world?

African religious systems seek to explain the persistence of evil and suffering. They portray the world as operating with some degree of order and predictability, while upholding certain types of ethical behaviour. These ideas are expressed in sacred oral traditions, handed down from generation to generation through the performance of rituals (dance and music) and through folktales.

There are some important issues that are related to indigenous African religions. First, it is important to remember that while there are similarities between African religions, there are also differences, just as there are differences among Muslims, Jews, Hindus and others. Therefore, differences are to be found in religious belief and practice among African religions. Secondly, religious belief and practice are central to all aspects of everyday African including what they can eat, the way they hunt, the way they farm, make tools and clothes, arrange themselves in families, marry, educate their children, treat illnesses and bury the dead.

Among indigenous Africans, religious belief and practice are not restricted to one holy day each week, like Friday, or Sunday. They are present in the most common daily activities as well as in special ritual ceremonies.

Third, African religions provide people with what some scholars call a world –view. A view can be thought as a system of values, attitudes, and beliefs, which provide people with a mechanism to understand the world in which they live.

Fourth, African indigenous religions provide a system of morality that establishes right from wrong, good and appropriate; from bad or inappropriate behaviour. Just as in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, children are brought up in accordance to African religion. They learn about right and wrong and what is appropriate and inappropriate from every situation they face.

Fifth, like all religions, rituals are important to African indigenous religions. Rituals are cultural or religious ceremonies that celebrate or commemorate specific events that have deep religious significance. Rituals serve to reinforce important religious beliefs through meaningful activities that bring comfort or joy and strengthen the unity of the followers of the religious tradition. Rituals are often associated with important human events: birth, marriage, death, planting and harvest.

2. 6 Essential Characteristics of African Indigenous Religion

The Indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the African people include various traditional religions. While generalizations of these various African religions are difficult, due to the diversity of African cultures, they do have some characteristics in common. There is a general agreement that the common characteristics of African religion include belief in a Supreme Being, belief in spirits and other divinities, veneration of ancestors, use of magic and traditional medicine. The role of humanity is generally seen as one of harmonizing nature with the supernatural.

The basic feature of African indigenous religious is its worldview. Nyamiti (1984:68), observes that one of the best ways of starting authentic dialogue with African indigenous religions is to have sound knowledge of the central themes of the African worldview, in addition to taking into consideration the people's problems, needs and aspirations.

2. 6.1 The Supreme God and Human Beings

One central theme in African indigenous religion is God and human beings. Walt has observed that the basic structure of African indigenous religion among the Yoruba people of Nigeria has the Supreme Being as the head of all things, the creator and the controller, the everlasting, the omnipresent, and ever-acting God, even if all divinities and the ancestors became silent. The basic belief in the Supreme Being, God, is not disputed all over Africa. He is the unique and incomparable one (p, 63). As Walt's diagram shows, the Supreme Being is the head and the rest of the spirit world and human community follow him.

The concept of human beings in African indigenous religion is also important, because it is generally acknowledged that God is the originator

of humanity, despite the fact the exact method of that creation may be different from place to place (p.120). Muzorewa states that to be a human being is to share a sense of a community.

Some African religions believe in one supreme God who created the world and all that is in the world. Other African religions believe that there are more than one God. However even in these religions, usually one of the Gods is claimed to be the supreme God who was responsible for creating the world.

2. 6.2 The Divinities

Next in rank to the Supreme Being, God, are the divinities who are brought to life by the Supreme Being. Among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Orisa- nla is one of the divinities and the next in rank to God, but created by God, who left the universe in their hands to be refashioned. All the divinities are functionaries and act as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and the rest of the universe, including human beings. They have no power of their own, except what the Supreme Being permits them to do.

2. 6. 3 Ancestor Veneration

According to African indigenous religion, the final and aspiration of each and every person is to reach the spirit world of one's ancestors, to be venerated by one's descendants as an ancestor and eventually be reincarnated.

Oborji (2002:24), in his book, *In Dialogue with African Traditional Religion*, points out that in African traditional religion; ancestors are venerated by their descendants. They are regarded as part of the elders of

the families with enhanced powers to bless, protect or punish the families. However, they are invoked to share at gatherings, ceremonies and ritual communion and they are seen as symbol of peace, unity and prosperity in the family.

African people believe that their ancestors are close to God when they have walked in this world, and the life is eternal. Paris (1995:52) states that in African world view there is no death in the sense of radical separation from either family or the tribal community. Rather, Africans believe that life is eternal and that its motion is not linear but cyclical. To them, the temporal movement of human life is continuous cyclical process from the realm of the spirit to that history...to speak of such process as death is a misnomer. Rather, departure from physical life marks a transition from the state of mortality to that of ancestral immortality.

Furthermore, Mbiti (1969:72) explains that the ancestors live on a realm of the spirit world, in a state of existence that he calls the "living dead" According to him this connotes both continuity and transition from temporal life. The "ancestor spirit" lives the same length of time as the time as that which they spent on earth.

In African traditional religion, ancestors serve as intermediaries between their families and the divinities. Awolalu(1979:61) states that" ancestors are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics, and activities....They are regarding as presiding spiritually over the welfare of the family".

Most African religions firmly believe that after death people continue to live through their spirits. These spirits are often called ancestral spirits which remain very interested in what happens in their families and communities.

2. 6.4 Spirits

Spirits are the next in hierarchy. They are believed to be apparitional entities that belong to different categories and not divinities. Adamo (1983:66), in his book, *The Church in African Traditional Beliefs*, states that spirits are anthropomorphically conceived as if they are abstract beings, and that they are capable of becoming anything, such as objects or human beings and can also melt into vapour at any time.

Further, Olupona and Rey (2008:99), in their book *Orisa Devotion as World Religion*, point out that in African indigenous religion, it is generally believed that everything has spirits and that these spirits also have categories. There are ghost-spirits, spirits of witches, the guardian spirits and diviner spirits. Such belief in these spirits permeates the life of Africans and should be taken seriously.

In African indigenous religions it is believed that between all-powerful God and humans is a pantheon of spirits. These spirits are directly engaged in the lives of human beings, and can act as intermediaries between God and humans. Traditionally, spirits are thought to share some of the same characteristics of angels in the Christian, Islamic, and Jewish traditions. African people think that good spirits help people and protect against illness and assist humans by providing rain needed for crops....etc.

However, not all spirits are good; some spirits are viewed as evil and are believed to be responsible for illness, premature death, and other forms of suffering and misfortune.

2.7 The Role of African Religions Leaders

In African religious traditions, there are different religious roles; these include priests, rain-makers, and healers (diviners, herbalists). These various roles may be served by the same person, in other traditions different persons may serve each position. However, in most African religion traditions women and men serve as priests and healers.

2. 7. 1 Priest

The role of priests varies between religious traditions. One of the most important functions is to officiate at religious ceremonies and rituals, which are of great importance in maintaining religious and cultural traditions.

In addition to guiding the followers and performing rites and ceremonies, priests have the authority to perform sacred acts for the population. They act as a link between masses and their deity. One important functions of a priest is to perform sacrifices, whether human or animal to a god or goddess.

Rituals, ceremonies, celebrating birth, planting and harvest, or commemorating the life of a deceased ancestor are vital to maintaining a close-knit community. Such rituals also help to reinforce values and appropriate behaviour within the community. Priests, who officiate at these rituals and ceremonies, play an important role in promoting a strong and united community.

In some religious traditions, priests are affiliated with a particular spirit or group of spirit. They may be in charge of a special shrine dedicated to the spirit, and can officiate at special ceremonies that

commemorate that spirit. For example, in many African religious traditions, there are special shrines to commemorate the founding ancestor of the community. In addition to officiating at special ceremonies to celebrate the ancestor, the priest(s) serves as the voice of the ancestor spirit, communicating advice and admonition to the community.

2. 7.2 Rain Makers Roles

In vast areas of East, West, Central and Southern Africa, farmers are depending on rain for their farms. Throughout these regions, rain is an important focus of religious practice.

Many religious traditions in Africa view misfortunes, such as drought to be the result of inappropriate behaviour on the part of the community members, or of descriptive impact of bad spirits. Rain-makers are special priests who are responsible for finding out the cause of droughts and deciding remedies to the problems that have caused them. Once the draught has been identified, the ancestral spirits will provide a rain-maker with a remedy. The remedy usually involves changing an inappropriate behaviour that is believed to have caused the drought.

2. 7.3 Healers

A healer is defined as a person who heals people, especially a person who heals through prayer and religious faith.

Healers, who are often referred to as traditional doctors occupy an important place in nearly all African societies, good health is believed to be the result of appropriate behaviour accords to the values, norms of traditions of the society. One of the primary causes of illness, then, comes from inappropriate behavior. Illness can also be the result of the work of bad spirits.

In either case, illnesses have a spiritual basis that requires a spiritual remedy. In most African religious traditions, there are two methods of healing. In some traditions, these two methods are practiced by the same healer; in other traditions, there are separate practitioners. To be a practitioner (healer or medicine man) of either type of healing takes time and effort.

2. 7.3.1 Herbalist

Herbalist healers go through rigorous training through which they learn about the healing properties of a wide variety of plants. When they finish their training, herbalist healers will be able to prescribe herbal remedies for different illnesses.

2. 7.3.2 Spiritualists /Diviners

Diviners treat illness primarily through facilitating the direct intervention of the spirit world. If an illness is believed to be caused by inappropriate behavior on the part of the patient, a remedy or cure for the illness can only be thought through spiritual intervention. While a herbal healer uses plants to treat diseases, a diviner seeks input from the spiritual world to understand the cause of illness and prescribe a cure.

In addition to treating specific illnesses, African healers-herbalist and diviners- also practice preventative medicine. Patients may come to the healer seeking protection from misfortune. Or people undertaking a long journey may want a remedy that will provide safety on their journey. Another patient may want a remedy that will provide wisdom and clarity in making important decision.

2. 8 Literature as A reflection of the Society

Literature is a mirror of society and life because it is a reflection of what happens in our environment and it exposes life. That is so certain, because literature and all its forms (novels, poetry, articles and stories) are like mirrors that reflect how people live, think and beliefs.

Abugu Benjamin contends that literature reflects the good values of the society and also its ills and problems with the intention of making the society realize its mistakes and make amends. It can also be meant to teach the society.

Part (B): Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This part attempts to review the published literature and researches that are relevant to the field of study.

When *Things Fall Apart* was published Achebe announced that one of his purposes was to present a complex dynamic society to a Western audience who perceived African societies as primitive, simple and backward. Unless Africans could tell their own story by themselves Achebe believed that the African experience would not be told even by such well-known writers like Joyce Cary in *Mister Johnson*.

Cary worked in Nigeria as a colonial administrator and was sympathetic to the Nigerian people. Yet Achebe thinks that Cary along with other European writers such as Joseph Conrad misunderstood Africa. Many European writers have presented the continent as a dark place inhabited by people with impenetrable, primitive minds. Achebe along with many African writers and critics think that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* depicts Africans as savages and barbaric, and they consider this reductionist portrayal of African as racist. In "Image of Africa", Achebe says-

Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as "the other world," the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality (p,3).

Achebe accuses that Conrad portrays the African world as "a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European at his peril "(9). Conrad does not resort to the original image of

Africa, and the images he uses belong to the stereotypical images produced by "Western imagination."

In an interview published in 1994, Achebe explains that his anger about the inaccurate portrayal of African culture by white colonial writers does not imply that students should not read works written by Conrad or Cary. On the contrary, he urges students to read such works in order to better understand the racism of the colonial era.

Achebe also kept in mind his own African people as an audience. In 1964, he stated that his goal is to help his people regain belief in themselves and put away the years of denigration and self-abasement. He would be quite satisfied if his novels did no more than teach his readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.

2.2. 1 Africans' Traditions and Customs in Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe wrote his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 in reaction to the European negative view of African culture. It is one of the first African novels in English to receive critical acclaim. In it, Achebe has successfully depicted complex and advanced African (Igbo) social, political and religious institutions as well as artistic traditions. He has vividly portrayed African (Igbo) traditions and customs, a government system, a system of money and a judicial system.

2.2.1.1 The Igbo Family and Social Structures

For the Igbo, an ideal family must be based on mutual respect for each other, showing reverence for all dead fathers, and the unity of its members. The father is not only the provider for the family, but also the defender of its honour and teacher of his sons, for example, Okonkwo, the main character of the novel, drives his wives and children to work hard.

On the other hand, the mother's main duty is to add to the family line by bearing healthy children and also to please her husband. Children are the inheritors of the future and are raised to continue reserving the values of the older generation. Shmoop Editorial Team (2008) confirms that the family unit is the most fundamental elements of the united society and its structure and can be expanded to fit a whole community or even a pantheon.

Dr. Mahanta (2014:33), in a research paper asserts that the Igbo people organized themselves in matrilineal –lineage groups organized along the lines of descent from father to son. Relationships were based on blood ties, and each person traced his or her descent to three groups. First, is the person who belonged to the smallest social unit known as Uno, or house. This represented the natural family, consisting of a man, his wife or wives, and their children. The second group was the Umunna, or lineage, composed of a number of related houses. Finally, was the group of a lineage that formed a compact village or town.

In addition, readers are introduced to another Igbo social structure in *Things Fall Apart*. That is the Igbo people require that a person's successes are the only measure that determines the degree of respect that a person should have and the titles that he gets in village of Umuofia. The main factors for a man's success are the amount of wives and barns that he has.

This is emphasized when Achebe writes, “Okoye was not a failure like Unoke. He had a large barn full of yams and had three wives” (page6).

Achebe explains the concept of title in Igbo community, which is taken when a man has reached a certain economic status and buys his recognition through initiation fees to others who share that title. So, titles are some things that are earned during a man’s lifetime, depending on his successes. There are four titles to be gained in the Igbo society; each one is more expensive than the other. Achebe shows this custom in *Things Fall Apart* (1958:8)

“There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo’s village who had three huge barns, nine wives, and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but one title which a man could take in the clan”.

The privilege of having a title is to gain respect; having a title shows that one’s is an accomplished citizen of Umuofia. Peters points out that, when Ezeudu died: “Because he had titles, he had to be buried after dark with only a glowing brand to light the sacred ceremony” (page123).

A man with titles like Ezeudu was placed significantly higher in the social structure of Umuofia than someone like Unoka, Okonkwo’s father, who has never acquired any title in his life.

2.2.1.2 The Igbo Marriage Customs

Marriage also served to bring households, lineage, and even towns or villages together. The Igbo regarded it as the cornerstone of their whole social structure. This gathering is vividly shown in chapter twelve, in Achebe's words:

One the following morning the entire neighborhood wore a festive air because Okonkwo's friend, Obierika, was celebrating his daughter's uri. It was the day on which her suitor (having already paid the greater part of her bride-price) would bring palm-wine not only to her parents and immediate relatives but to the wide and extensive group of kinsmen called umunna. Everybody had been invited –men, women, and children.

Discussions leading to marriage were taken seriously and they involved not just the immediate families of the bride and the groom but also their entire lineages.

Dr. Mahanta states that in Africa, marriage was a fundamental aspect for the survival of the societies and followed by a certain principles. Polygamy was common. However, in the traditional societies of Africa, young people were not free to marry the girl of their own choice. The parents were the ones who chose for them, according to the relationship that united them with the family of the bride. People adopted marriage in order to fulfill social requirements.

The ceremonies that accompanied marriage were various. The way marriage was viewed is close to the depiction in *Things Fall Apart*.

In *Things Fall Apart*, marriage is essentially sealed according to a precise ritual of real world. The theme of polygamy recurs in the novel. The negotiations resemble verbal battles between the influential of different families. Achebe uses literature as a social document where he records or preserves the customs, traditions or experiences of his society like a historian.

Furthermore, having many wives in a household enhanced not only a man's status but also the prestige of the first wife. As the head woman of the household, she shared every title that the man might acquire. She presided over household deliberation, in which most of the men would prefer not to be involved, except in emergencies. Junior wives enjoyed the security and prosperity that the large household provided.

2.2.2 The Igbo Government and political System

European writers contend that one of the reasons for the invasion of the African countries was to introduce civilization that would replace the savage ways of ruling the African countries. Achebe responded to them by depicting the true image of Africa. He depicts the African people and their deep-rooted social institutions in an indigenous African society, showing how in their culture and traditions, they are particularly concerned about justice and fairness.

The African people are not ruled by kings or chiefs but by a kind of democracy, where the males meet and make decisions by consensus and in accordance with an "Oracle" that should be written down. The claim of the Europeans that they brought democratic institutions to the rest of the world is false. For what they brought actually upset this deep-rooted African system of ruling.

"They asked who the king of the village was, the villagers told them there was no king." We have men of higher title and chief priest and the elders", they said" (Achebe, 105).

When they first arrived in Mbanta the missionaries expected to find a king. Indeed the Igbo people had for ages evolved their ruling system. Each village had a legislative assembly for which people was called, and everyone was free to give his opinion. This democratic process made the highest honours open to every free man.

This is further explained by Veas (on his website) who pointed out that the government of Igbo people is closely related to their religious beliefs. The elders of the society are responsible for maintaining order in their society. For instance, when Okonkwo accidentally killed a boy in the funeral ceremony, it was the ones who acted to enforce the punishment and maintain order. This act simply means that guided by their own wisdom to carry out the will of god.

A more direct way of interpreting the implication of this incident is through the Oracles. They receive messages from the god and tell the people what the gods want. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chielo was the oracle who interpreted that the gods wanted Ikemefuna to be killed. Since the Igbo people would not dare to oppose the gods, they had to obey what the oracle had decided.

Furthermore, the "Egwugwu" are very important part of the traditional Igbo government system. They are the nine spirits of the founders of the villages, hence their paramount important to the Igbo people. At time of dispute the elders cannot decide, the Egwugwu are summoned to resolve the issue. For example, in chapter ten of *Things Fall Apart*, we are told how the Egwugwu emerge to hear a series of legal cases.

The Igbo used to live in autonomous villages and towns ruled by their elders, title men and Egwugwu before the arrival of the Europeans. Kumar (2012:133) confirms that Igbo people have a democratic type of governance in which every person of the clan is considered to have equal importance and the consent of every person is a must for any decision. Every person is free to give his personal opinion and there is no restriction to vote for or against any particular decision.

Gassma asserts that all the Igbo members of the village used to gather at the marketplace when important decisions are needed to be made such as war. This is depicted in *Things Fall Apart* (p11), where the village is summoned following the murder of a woman by a neighbouring village.

Whenever an 'ogene' is heard crying, every man of Umuofia must be on alert, and whenever there is any call for a meeting the whole Umuofia is bound to gather at the marketplace.

Not only Umuofia but also the neighboring villages have a well-established social system which works on a democratic basis for government. The benefits and losses of the war are always carefully calculated, and no life is easily sacrificed if there is any option to escape a war. When a man from Mbaino village kills a girl of Umuofia and the people of the latter declares a war against those of the former and there is an option to avoid it, Umuofia does not start the war directly. Its people demand compensation; a virgin and a young man. After consideration, Mbaino is deterred by the Umuofia, and expecting defeat, they prefer a compromising to going to war. Kumar thinks if this Igbo customs of negotiating and compromising had been known to the Europeans, they would not have been led the two world wars.

In the Igbo society, every crime is punished, and no one can escape the law of the clan.

Crimes are divided into two types: "male and female". A male crime is that which a clansman commits openly and bluntly while a female crime is one that is committed by mistake. The punishment for a male crime is decided depending on the nature of the crime but for a female crime the punishment is to expel the accused from the clan for a maximum period of seven years. As narrated:

The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female, because it had been inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years (124).

Okonkwo, the most powerful and esteemed member of the clan and almost their ruler commits a crime of a female type. While participating in a funeral ceremony, he kills a boy by mistake. Despite his power, esteem, and importance he is punished and expelled from Umuofia for a period of seven years. His houses (iare) are destroyed and his animals killed. In any other society a person like Okonkwo may escape the punishment or may be exempted of it. But in Umuofia all are equal.

The Igbo subscribed to the principle of direct participation in the government. According to Obadike (2008), their entire social and political structures revolved around the idea of cross-cutting ties. The five most important cross-cutting institutions were councils of elders, age groups, councils of chiefs, women's associations and secret societies.

2.2.2.1 The Council of Elders

This is a very important centre of power in the Igbo society with a much authority and control in a democratic way. Matters related to lineage

were discussed at the meetings of its elders, "ndisi or indichie", with the assistant of adult members of the lineage. In inter-lineage disputes, the elders from the affected lineages would meet to discuss, with the oldest man in the gathering presiding.

Edward (1978), mentions that the authority of the lineage head was derived from the group's respect for him as the oldest living representative of the founding ancestors. He was the custodian of the ancestral lands, the keeper of the ritual objects that symbolized political authority, and the group's spiritual and temporal head. Even though he was the religious, executive, and judicial head of his lineage, he would not act without their approval. No action would be taken until an issue had been fully argued at the lineage meeting and some degree of consensus achieved.

2. 2.2.2 Age- Groups

Age groups associations were known as "Ogbo or Out" and composed of men (or women) who were of about the same age. All residents of a village or a town born within a few years of each other belonged to the same age-group, with separated sections' for men and women. The associations were named after a major event that was taking place at the time of its member's birth; for example, there were "Biafran war age group", "ogba aya Biafra" (those born between 1967 and 1970), the "Second World War age –group", "Ogbo aya Hitler" (1939-1945). The exact age- span in an age group varied from town to town, but the most common were the three or five-year intervals.

William (1973) pointed out that this age–group system enabled societies without written records to remember past events. It also helped them assign special duties and responsibilities to the different segments of the community, in accordance with the principle of seniority.

The junior age-group (age 15 and below) did minor jobs like fetching water, cleaning footbaths, sweeping the streets and town squares, and running errands.

In the middle age-groups (from age 16 to about 40) men were fighters and formed the fighting forces. In the event of a war, each group acted as a separate regiment, under a leader who belonged to an older age-group.

The senior male age groups (whose aged 40 and above) were responsible for judicial matters. They usually decided when a town or a village should go to war, how an offender should be punished, when the various agricultural cycles would open and close, and when the natural festivals would be held.

The age- group system promoted respect. Juniors deferred to seniors and expected the same treatment when they advanced to higher grades. The members of a group together and the friendships they cultivated in childhood remained intact throughout their life.

2.2.2.3 Acquisitions of Titles

The Igbo people emphasized personal achievement; hereditary succession to titles would have contradicted notions of leadership and fair play. Only some Igbo men managed to acquire prestigious titles that would enable them to be recognized as great men or chiefs. Titled chiefs formed their own councils and represented their communities to outsiders.

Dr. Mahanta explains that though the most of the Igbo men eagerly sought about admission into the council of the chiefs, not all of them could succeed. Every Igbo man began his life as an apprentice as in the case of Okonkwo, the main character in *Things fall Apart*. A very young boy accompanied his father or uncle to the farm and rendered as much

assistance as he could. As he grew older he realized that marriage, wealth, and the acquisitions of titles would enable individuals to advance socially.

Okonkwo worked hard in his cultivation though he was the greatest wrestler of the nine villages. Until a man could attain certain titles, he would not dress in certain ways, or take a piece of kola nut before other people which shows the essential status of the person in the society.

Ohadike says that acquiring higher titles demanded the payment of expensive initiation fees, accompanied by elaborate feasting and dancing. Throughout Igbo land, a man who failed to progress beyond the most junior titles was a man without status in the eyes of his people. Whatever his age is, they looked upon him as a boy. Okonkwo's father is the example of the fate of the idle men in Igbo society notwithstanding his artistic taste and tragic end.

He points out that: "the highest title in many Igbo communities (and the one alluded to Okonkw's village) was ozo (or any of its variants: eze, nze, alo, and ichie)". To qualify for the ozo title, a man must have acquired the junior titles and discharge all the duties normally assigned to the members of the junior titles' groups. He must have accumulated enough wealth and completed the ceremonies connected with the second burial of his father's. Thus, no man could attain a status that might equal or exceed that of the father's during his life.

At the secular level, the highest title spared its holder the indignity of manual labor. It guaranteed him a seat in the council of chiefs, and reserved for him portions of fees paid by new initiates into the title association and gave him the right to certain portions of livestock sounding salutations such as *igwe* (His Highness) and "*Ogbu efi*" (he who slaughters bulls).

The ozo title lost its appeal in the twentieth century when the colonial officers stripped traditional Igbo chiefs of their powers and then subordinated them to British –appointed warrant chiefs and Western-educated Africans.

2.2.2.4. Women's Associations

Igbo women had their own clubs, age-group associations, and title associations that complemented those of men. They controlled certain aspects of community life showing the balance in the masculine and feminine existence. Women were perceived to possess superior well-being and headed many of the traditional cults and shrines. In Things Fall Apart the oracle is served by a priestess. Women also gained status by getting wealth through trading, farming, or weaving, and were treated as "ndiogalanya", which means wealthy persons.

Dr. Mahanta confirms that like an Igbo man, every Igbo woman began her life as an apprentice. From an early age a girl would assist her mother at home, on the farm, or in the marketplace. She would learn from experience that hard work, marriage, and membership of certain associations would enable a woman to advance socially.

He points out that in the Igbo societies, one of the most important women's associations was otuomu (the omo society), headed by a female functionary, known as Omu. The desire to join this prestigious association acted as an incentive for hard work and thrift, for only women who had enough wealth to pay for the initiation ceremonies was admitted. According to Obadike, the members of Omu society acted as a pressure group in political matters and imposed fines on men and women who

disturbed the peace of the marketplace. They punished quarrelsome women and those who broke certain taboos, like those prohibiting adultery.

The Omu society attended the meeting of the councils of the chiefs and elders and participated in discussions that concerned the welfare of the citizens. Though they would not take part in the war by themselves, they could use their own discretion and decide when to urge the male warrior chiefs to start one.

In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe underlines the aspects and variety of the nineteenth century Nigerian Igbo social life before the intrusion of colonization in 1885.

The Igbo people led a meaningful life relying on their traditions and culture. The colonial encounter crashed out the positive traits of the religion for the sake of what they called modernization and enlightenment. The real intention was to impose Christianity and European culture.

2.2.3 Igbo Women's Roles

Women played important roles and got powerful positions in the Igbo traditional religion. Piper (2006) points out that at first glance, the women in the Igbo society may seem to be an oppressed group with little power and this characterization is true to some extent. Because the reader learns that the Igbo people allowed wife beating. The novel describes two instances when Okonkwo beats his second wife, once when she did not come home to make his meal. He beats her severely and Okonkwo is punished only because the beating was during the week of peace.

He beats her again when she referred to him as one of those “gun that never shot.”

When a severe case of wife beating is submitted to the egwugwu, he took the side of the wife, but at the end of the trail a man wondered, "why such a trifle should come before the egwugwu"(page 89).

However the reader can easily realizes the important roles of women and their powerful positions. A good example is the role they play in the Ibo religion. They usually take over the role of priestess. In chapter thirteen, the narrator tells that during Okonkwo's boyhood, "the priestess in those days was woman called Chika. She was full of the power of her god, and she was greatly feared" (page17). The present priestess is Chielo, "the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the hill and the Caves" (page49).

Another instance in the novel is when Chielo comes to take Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma. Okonkwo pleaded with her and tells her to come back in the morning because Ezinma is sleeping now. But Chielo ignores his plea and shouts at him that Agbala wants to see his daughter. The priestess screams. 'Beware, Okonkwo!' she warned" (page101).

In no other instance in the novel can the readers encounter such an act of plea by Okonkwo. The woman priestess not only orders Okonkwo to hand over his daughter, but also threats him as well. The ability of a woman to occupy the role of a priestess and a spiritual leader reveals and indicates that women were being present in the Ibo society.

Another example is the reverence for those women who represented Ani, the earth goddess, whose influence on the life of the people was greater than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. In addition, she was in close communion with the departed fathers' of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth.

Piper thinks that it seems logical that a society that views its female members as inferior beings would not represent their most powerful deity as being a woman. For a female spirit to possess such an important role in the success of the yam crops is indicative of the actual deep-rooted power of women.

The idea of associating women's power to nature is underlined in Chapter fourteen, when Okonkwo returns to his mother's clan during his exile. Reproaching him for his sorrow about having to come to live with his mother's clan, Uchenda says to Okonkwo:

"It's true that a child belong to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme" (134).

Uchenda's words reveal that women are viewed as the foundational pillar of the clan and its people. They are the basis that can be relied upon; they are the nurturers and caretakers of the people. In addition to these notable examples of the power of these women, it can be observed that women perform various roles throughout the novel. It is they who weeded the farm three times at definite periods in the life of the yams, "neither early nor late". This task is an extremely important one, for if it is not carried out on specific time the yam crops will fail.

Also women play their role as educators of their children. This is done in part through the ritual of storytelling, as is described by the narrator: "Low voices, broken now and again by singing, reached Okonkwo from his wives' huts as each woman and her children told folk stories"

(page 96). It is through storytelling that the children learn important lessons about the human condition.

To sum up, at first glance, the role of women in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* may appear to be unfairly limited in so far as their authorities and powers are concerned. It can be concluded that the women of the clan hold some very powerful positions: spiritually as priestess, symbolically as representative of the earth goddess, and literally as the nurturers of the Ibo people, the caretakers of the yam crops and the mothers and educators of the Ibo children.

2.2.4 Traditions and Customs in Arrow of God

Arrow of God offers its readers with a complex exploration of the socio-cultural values of the Igbo people. These are associated with time, family structure, greetings, virginity, marriage, hospitality, religion, food, occupation, festivals, names, etc.

The time markers in Igbo societies are the sun and the moon. According to Adedimeji (2012:16-18) in his essay, *Culture and language in African literature*, twelve moons make a year and four market days make a week. Cock-crow signals the beginning of day and nightfall comes by sunset. Cosmic bodies (the sun and the moon) and birds help in determining time. Achebe succeeded in underscoring the fact that Africans had their own means of tracking time before the invention of clocks and the contact with the Europeans.

2.2.4.1 The Moon (Onwa)

The Igbo society in *Arrow of God* did not have access to the calendar, watch or clock but they did not lose count of the months, sequel to the adherence to the promptings of the moon. In addition to this general

relevance of the solar component, its appearance means many things to the people of Umuaro in the novel. It is a cue to the eating of one of the twelve sacred yams, which on its own is a signifier of hope of harvest.

Ezeulu went into his barn and took down yam from the bamboo platform built specially for the twelve sacred yams.....he had already eaten three and had the fourth on his hand. He checked the remaining ones again and went back to his obi, shutting the door carefully after him (2).

However, its position or shape on appearance means a lot of things to the people. Thus it makes the sighting of the moon an exciting as well as an anxious moment. It can be a doyen of good fortune or a harbinger of evil. If the moon is not properly sited at appearance, it sends sinister feelings down the people's spines as it is obvious that all is not well that month. The dialogue between two of Ezeulu's wives following Ezeulu's announcement of the appearance of the moon stresses this notion:

Matefi: Moon may your face meeting mine bring good fortune.

Ugoye: Where is it? I do not see it. Or am I blind? Matefi: Don't you see it beyond the top of the ukwa tree? Not there. Follow my finger. Ugoye: Ohoo, I see it. Moon may your face meeting mine bring good fortune. But how is it sitting? I don't like its posture.

Matefi: Why? Ugoye: I think it sits awkwardly-like an evil moon. Matefi: No, a bad moon does not leave anyone in doubt. Like the one under which Akuata died. Its legs were up in the air.

The Igbo calendar has four market days that make up one week, Eke, Orie, Afo, and Nkwo. Each day is a signifier of various actions and activities. Most of the major events in the Igbo culture like ritual cleansing, sacrifice,

and marriage and so on cannot take place on certain market days. The narrator thus explains:

Everybody in Igbo land knows that Okperi people do not have other business on the Eke day. You should have come yesterday or the day before, or tomorrow or the day after. Son of our daughter, you should know our habits (22).

The sacredness that is associated with these market days varies from one community to another and from deity to deity. On such days, it is speculated that the spirits in charge of the market, water or farm land would not wish to be disturbed, so everybody stay at home or goes to other places. This is analogous to the Christian observance of Sunday or Saturday as the day of rest.

2.2.4.2 African Traditional Means of Communication

In Igbo villages, and before the arrival of the white men, the important messages are passed by beating the ogene, which is a traditional medium of communication in Igbo land. It signifies many things to the Igbo people and every sound is peculiar to the beat. It may signify a call for war, to announce a new moon, an emergency, a call to duty or to announce the death of a prominent member of the community.

At the sound of the ogene, all members of the community are expected to respond immediately and make their way to the village square where the specific reason for the beating is relayed to the people.

Achebe underlines this custom in *Arrow of God*, chapter one, when Ezeulu, the chief priest of ulu, beats the ogene to announce the new moon: "He beat

his ogene Gome Gome Gome Gomeand immediately children's voices took up the news on all sides"(p.2).

There are announcers who assist the community in sending messages to all people while beating the drum, as is shown on This was shown on page 65;

"That very evening his sex assistants came to him for their orders and he sent them to announce each man in his own village that the feast of the Pumpkin leaves would take place on the following"(p.65).

Another reason of beating the drum is to summon the elders for a meeting; this custom is portrayed in chapter13, page 143:

"As soon as the messenger and his escort left Ezeulu's hut to return to Okperi the Chief Priest sent word to the old man who beat the giant ikolo to summon the elders and ndichie to an urgent meeting at sunset. Soon after the ikolo began to speak to the six villages. Everywhere elders and men of title heard the signal and god ready for the meeting".

The Ikolo (the drum) is beaten as a form of traditional ritual as well as to pay tributes to dignitaries. "The Ikolo now beat unceasingly; sometimes it called names of important people of Umuaro, like Nwaka, Nwosisi, Igboneme and Uduezue. But most of the time it called the village and their deities. Finally it settled down to saluting Ulu, the deity of all Umuaro.

2.2.4. 3 Virginity in the Igbo Community

In Igbo societies, one of the most distinctive marks of unmarried women's chastity is virginity. So a woman, who lost her virginity by having sex with another partner before she gets married, brought an eternal disgrace to herself and her family as well. Achebe underlines this Igbo custom and its value in chapter 12 of the novel:

"Every girl new of Ogbanje Omenyi whose husband said to have sent to her parents for a machet to cut the bush on either side of the highway which carried between her thighs"(p.124).

This means that Ogbanje has found to be quite experienced, that is to say she was not a virgin. Of course, no woman would want the message that the husband of Ogbanje sent to his mother-in-law; a request "for a machet to cut the bush on either side of the highway which she carried between her thighs. The husband was very sad and disappointed to discover that his new wife already deflowered.

On the other hand, a girl who reserved her virginity brings honor to herself and to her family. Presents such as goats, cows, etc will be given to her and to her parents.

"She could go without shame to salute her husband's parents because she had been 'found at home'. Her husband was even arranging to send the goad and other presents to her mother in Umuezean for giving him unspoilt bride"(p.124).

2.2.4.4 Hospitality

Social rituals are an important aspect of any culture, and they can be very helpful in revealing the core values of any society. Sharing kola nuts is perhaps one of the most important practices in Igbo society. This is why kola is reckoned as symbol of hospitality.

In Igbo culture, hospitality plays a huge role in making and keeping friends. The basic and the most common items of entertaining visitors are kola nut, white clay and palm wine. Palm wine would be made, and the white clay is used to draw lines of personal emblem.

Uduzie welcomes the mission from Umuaro village by saying, "but I must offer you a piece of kola nut"(p.22). But they refused, which is a sign of hostility. Then Uduzie tried to give them white clay to draw lines with by saying:

"I know what it is like. Here is a piece of white clay then. Let me agree with you and leave the kola nut until you return"(p.22).

Again the men declined. By refusing the kola nut and the white clay, the mission had rebuffed the token of goodwill between host and guest. Therefore, their mission must be brave.

Another Igbo custom is that a guest is expected to paint his big toe with the chalk, and bring along his horn (for drinking palm wine) as well as his multi- purpose goatskin bag.

Apart from Kola nut, another very important cultural practice which is almost disappearing is the offering of Nzu (chalk) to visitors. Daniel (2014, 22) states that in the Igbo cultural mold, tokens which are necessary signifies are more often used in expression of intents than words. Even when words are used, they are sparingly applied and do not come in plain

languages but in riddles and proverbs, especially when the issues have sweeping implications and involve elders.

As soon as a visitor is given kola nut, next he has to explain his purpose of the visit, which he may be permitted to speak out but until it is clear that his intentions are good. This can only be demonstrated by the use of nzu. The owner of the house presents his visitor with a piece of chalk to make this known. If the visitor draws all upright lines and paints his big toe with the chalk before rolling the chalk back to the host, it means that the stranger's visit is generally peaceful and devoid of any intention for provocation. It could mean a visit for a chart, solidarity or expression of concern in case there is an initial reason for the visit.

As he said this, he reached for a lump of white clay in a four-sided wooden bowl shaped like the head of a lizard and rolled it on the floor towards Akuebue who picked it up and drew four lines with it on the floor. Then he painted the big toe of his right foot and rolled the chalk back to Ezeulu and he put it away again in the wooden bowl(94).

In this excerpt, the reader is introduced to an important cultural observance with Ndi-Igbo. Without saying a word, Akuebue makes the purpose of his visit understood.

On the other hand, if a visitor rejects the chalk or draws flat lines, his purpose could be interpreted as serious or dangerous. If this is the case, the host would remain apprehensive until the visitor reveals what the issue was. The host may also go as far as arming himself or inviting more people around before the stranger opens his mouth. This idea is fully explored in the novel as the Umuaro emissaries meet with their Okperi hosts. A dramatization of the story may aid understanding:

AKukalia impatiently: "we have an urgent mission which we must give the rulers of Okperi at once". Udezue..."I do not want to delay your mission, but I must offer you a piece of kola nut. Akukalia:'Do not worry yourself. Perhaps we shall return after our mission. It is a big load on our head, and until we put it down we cannot understand anything we are told'. Udezue: I know what it is like. Here is a piece of white clay then. Let me agree with you and leave the kola nut until you return. But the men declined even to draw lines on the floor with the clay. After that there was nothing between host and guest, their mission must indeed be grave (p 22).

The drawing of the chalk lines could be used to indicate the signature of individuals, especially that of the titled men. Each titled man has a peculiar way of representing himself by using the chalk. This practice is accentuated in the visit of the leaders of Umuaro to Ezeulu:

Ezeulu presented a lump of chalk to his visitors and each of them drew his personal emblem of upright and horizontal lines on the floor. Some painted their big toe and others marked their face (p205)

This further explains the differences between the lines Akuaebue drew when he visited Ezeulu and the lines Ezeulu as a titled man and chief priest drew when he paid back the visit.

Ezeulu picked up the chalk and drew five lines with it on the floor- three uprights, a flat across the top and another below them. Then he painted one of his big toes and dubbed a thin coat of white around his left eye (111).

The painting of the toe signifies that the visitor stepped into the house of his host in peace and intends to sustain the peace.

2.2.5 Positive and Negative Traditions in No Longer at Ease

In *No Longer at Ease* Achebe deals with the progress of the society of Umuofia since the death of Okonkwo of his first novel. The days are no longer the days of the titled elders and eminent warriors. The protagonist of the novel Obi Okonkwo, who is the grandson of the Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*, lives in a world very different from that of his grandfather's.

Rao, (1993:83) in his book, *Indian Response to African Writings*, expresses his belief that the story of Obi Okonkwo, is the story of many young men in his country. His tragedy is the tragedy of that period in the history of Umuofia and Nigeria when the people lost their traditional ways of life and values that used to bind them together. The village was no longer a self- sustaining community. People had immigrated to the cities in search for the ways of life the Europeans had brought into the country. The present society is governed by Western ideas such as Christianity, education and a government job along with all the aspects and style of a modern life.

In *No longer at Ease*, Achebe is demonstrating the negative consequences of neglecting African (Igbo) traditional religion and replacing it by Christianity. The Igbo lost their moralities, traditions and customs which used to organize their way of life as shown in his first novel *Things Fall Apart*. In *No longer at Ease*, Achebe successfully depicts the spread of corruption in Nigeria after independence. Obi Okonkw, the main character of the novel, takes a job with the Scholar board and he is immediately offered a bribe by a man who is trying to obtain a scholarship

for his sister. When Obi rejects the offer, he is visited by the girl herself who implies that she is ready for sexual favors.

In his two novels it is shown that the most distinctive marks of unmarried women's chastity is virginity. A woman, who might lost her virginity by having sex with another partner before getting married would bring shame on herself and her family. This is clearly stated by Achebe in Arrow of God:

"Every girl new of Ogbanje Omenyi whose husband said to have sent to her parents for a matchet to cut the bush on either side of the highway which carried between her thighs"(p.124).

2.2.5.1 The Osu Caste System

The word "Osu" literally means "outcast," and members of this group were social pariahs and would be treated accordingly. The history of the Osu caste system in Nigeria and southern Cameroon can be traced back to an indigenous religious belief system, practiced by the Igbo tribe. It is the belief of many Igbo traditional people that the Osus are people historically owned by deities, and are therefore, considered to be a 'living sacrifice,' untouchable and sub-human(similar to the Roman practice of homo sacer).

This system received literary attention when it is treated as the main plot of No Longer at Ease. The Osu people used to marry and socialize themselves within their own group. The practice continued to this day. An ordinary Igbo person would not marry or permit any of his relations to marry an Osu. Any member of the society who might be an Osu would be infested and regarded as Osu. It can be said the only aspect of Igbo

traditions that keeps the Osu segregation intact is marriage. An Osu could only marry a fellow Osu. It is a taboo of the Igbo clan and abhorrent for an Osu to marry a non- Osu

This has been portrayed in *No Longer at Ease* (102). Consider the following passage which aptly describes, how Obi's father and the other people in the village concept of the Osu, despite the fact that they converted to Christian:

"The Bible says that says that in Christ there are bond or free." 'My son,' said Okonkwo, 'I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think'. Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory. It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that, my son.

The Osu system varies from one community to another. Slattery (1998) explains that the Osu system began in the Owerri –Okigwi region in southeastern Nigeria and those within the system were dedicated to a deity with the purpose of serving him; often a particular village, lineage, or individual that had been experiencing sickness or difficult times would dedicate his slave (Osu) to the god with the hope that the slave would carry out the sins of the person who dedicated him.

Chinua Achebe communes on this bad customs by saying:

"It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her

great-great- great- grandfather had been dedicated to serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of time”.

Slattery mentions that though a group of despised slaves, they could not be sold or killed, as they were protected by their deity, and others feared incurring the wrath of the gods. This system of Osu was legally abolished by the Eastern Nigerian government in 1956, though many of these practices still continue in the country's present-day society.

The Osu caste system is an obnoxious practice among many African societies which have refused to go away despite the impact of Christianity, Islam, education and the human right culture.

The system in Africa varies from one community to another. Africa countries that still have caste systems within their borders include Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and others.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Thematic Representation

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is of two parts; the first primarily focuses on the research method and explains the procedures that are used in collecting the data and sources of the study. The second portrays and deals with the thematic representation of these three selected novels written by Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *Arrow of God* (1964), and *No Longer at Ease* (1960).

3.1 Part (A) Research Method

As pointed out in chapter one, this research adopts the descriptive and analytical method. The main data for this research are collected and obtained from Achebe's three novels that are analyzed by mainly focusing on traces of Nuba and Igbo religions, traditions and customs, and their way of life as reflected in the novels. This is followed by drawing comparisons between them in the following chapter.

In addition to that, the study makes use of historical and anthropological sources along with published papers, articles and references that deal with Igbo and Nuba traditions and customs as depicted in Achebe's these three selected novels. Nonetheless, the study investigates the impact of other cultures.

3.2 Part (B): Thematic Representation of Achebe's Selected Novels

3.2.1 Introduction

This second part deals with the thematic representation in Achebe's three selected novels by underlining the main themes of these novels.

For many authors, theme is the driving force of the novel during its creation. Even if the author doesn't consciously identify an intended theme, the creative process is directed by at least one controlling idea—a concept or principle, belief or purpose significant to the author. The theme (or themes) guides the author and controls the story and the acts of the characters; how they behave, the language they use and the emotional effects that are created.

The most common themes of African literature centre on oral tradition and storytelling. Topics that African literature focuses on include struggles between different generations, and the questions of identity.

Ali .A. (1935) mentions seven conflicts as the most vital and common themes of African Literature:

The clash between Africa's past and present, between individualisms and community, between what is indigenous and foreign, between socialism and capitalism, between development and self-reliance and between Africanity and humanity. In addition, there are some other themes that deal with social problems such as corruption, the economic disparities in newly independent countries, and the rights and the roles of women.

However, African writers do not only use literature for aesthetical purposes, but also for teaching their children. Joseph (1996:304) notes that whereas European views often stressed a separation of art and content, African awareness is included and is one main objective.

Literature can also mean artistic use of words; solely for the sake of art. This view does not radically separate art from teaching. African writers, taking their cue from oral literature, use beauty to help communicate important truths and information to society. Indeed, an object is considered beautiful because of the truths it reveals and the communities it helps to build.

Thus, African literature seeks to project the challenges facing Africa from the pre-colonial past, through the colonial period, right to the present post-colonial era. It describes the lives of the traditional Africans, their practices, ethos and mores. It analyzes the conflicts that colonialism engendered in the system and discusses the crises underpinning the modern states of Africa.

In essence, the literary artists, endeavours seek to portray the Africans as peoples like other people of the world, with their own dreams, values, customs and weaknesses. African literature is concerned with reviewing the past, assessing the present and projecting a better future for Africa. It educates, informs, entertains and documents African ways of life.

3.1 The Main Themes in Things Fall Apart

Achebe takes the title of his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), from W.B Yeats's poem, *The Second Coming*, which prophesies the end of the present era and the entrance on the world's stage of another which is radically different. Achebe's message in this novel is already made obvious in its title. His intention is to describe the falling apart of the African

(Igbo) culture. As one of the Igbo natives, Achebe underlines the impact of the imperial colonists on African traditions and customs by stating that "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 162).

The story takes place in the late 1800s, in an Igbo village, Umuofia, Eastern Nigeria. In it the author uncovers the violent social conflict that resulted from British colonialism after the arrival of the missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century. A mythic fictional Igbo village is depicted whose history stretches back to a legendary past. A considerable part is devoted to the daily routines of the Igbo people, their customs, wrestling competitions, their social order, their ancient wisdom, marriage customs, funeral rites, and legal practices. This longstanding structure and tradition of the Igbo culture is ripped apart when confronted with the completely disparate followings of the Christian Church.

Achebe's main achievement in this novel is that of accurately rendering a complex picture of the African cultural traditions and identity from inside the tradition itself; that is, by telling the story of the Igbo people that can speak for itself and sees life from the perspective of the Nigerian people and not from that of the outsiders. The most important message of the novel is clearly the demise of the Igbo culture, religion and beliefs and their way of life under the powerful influence of white European culture. Achebe is inclined to say that even a society with as strong foundation as the Ibo people in Umuofia can have vulnerable.

3.1.1 Portrayal of African Traditions and Customs

The novel has several major themes. One of these themes is the portrayal of Africans (Igbo) traditions and customs and their way of life before the arrival of the Europeans to Africa. To show and support this theme, Achebe includes detailed descriptions of the Igbo justice codes and the trial process, the social and family rituals, the marriage customs, religious beliefs and practices, wrestling matches and funeral ceremonies and harvest festivals. In addition to that, Achebe introduces his readers into Igbo traditions and customs by extensively using Igbo language, proverbs, metaphors, speech rhythms, and their ideas into this novel. The novel documents the way of Igbo life, the readers learn much about Igbo customs and traditions; depicting Igbo life is a central part of the novel.

Achebe used the first novel to prove that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but they had a philosophy of their own, one of the great depth and beauty, that they had dignity.

3.1.2 Using Language to Show Cultural Differences

Another main theme, in *Things Fall Apart*, is the use of language, which is a sign of cultural differences and the conflict between the Ibo people culture and traditions and the changes that are taking places. By using Igbo language, Achebe illustrates that Africa is not as backward and uninteresting as many colonial writers presented it. He depicts the originality and formality of the Igbo language. In addition to translation of proverbs, stories and songs from Igbo language, he shows how intricate it is to translate directly into English. A good example of this-and also an illustration of how many different dialects and languages are there in Africa, is when the missionary come to Mbanta:

"He spoke through an interpreter who was an Ibo man, though his dialect was different and harsh to the ears of Mbanta. Many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used words strangely" (p.102).

By using English, Achebe faces a problem. How can he present the African heritage and culture in a language that never be describe it adequately?

Lilix (2008) explains that the reason that let Achebe writing in English:

"The fact that Achebe chose to write the book in English and not in his native language is also of signifance. It clearly shows that he intended the book to be read by the West as well as his fellow Africans. His intention with this was once again to elevare and change the West's view of Africa".

3.1.3 Social Disintegration and Change

Another main theme is the Igbo social disintegration and change. This is expressed in the novel in many different ways. For example, before the end of the novel, readers witness the events by which Igbo society begins to fall apart. Religion is threatened; Umuofia loses its self-determination, power and unity. Hence the very basic of tribal life are threatened. This fact is the most painful for the reader, who must have been sympathetic towards Igbo life. After learning much of its positive side, re-releases that such Igbo life no longer exists.

3.1.4 Gender Role in Igbo Society

One of the minor themes is the question of gender. Much of the action in the novel revolves around structured gender roles. Basically, the entire life is gendered; including the crops that men grow and characterization of crimes. In Igbo culture, women are the

weaker sex, but they are also endowed with qualities that make them worthy of worship. They are capable of bearing children. Their most important roles are: to make a pure bride for an honorable man, to be submissive to husband, and to bear a lot of children. On the other hand, the ideal man provides for his family materially and has prowess on the battlefield.

The protagonist in the novel is greatly concerned with being hyper-masculine, while at the same time devaluating everything feminine. Much of the gender theme in the novel centers around the idea of balance between masculine and feminine forces-body and mind/soul, emotionality and rationally, mother and father. If one is in imbalance, it makes the whole system haywire.

3.1.5 Justice and Fairness among Igbo communities

However, justice is another powerful preoccupation of the novel. In Igbo communities, justice and fairness are matters of great importance. They have complex social institutions that administer justice in fair and rational ways. But the coming of the British has upset that balance. Although the British claim that local laws are barbaric, and use this claim to impose their own laws, Africans soon notice that British law is hypocritical and inhumane. The final events leading up to Okonkwo's death underlines the miscarriage of Justice under the British District Commissioner.

3.1.6 The Concept and Practices of Igbo Religion

In the novel, the introduction of the concept and practice of the Igbo religion to the readers, especially Europeans, is one of the great and essential themes that Achebe endeavours to stress. The Igbo gods are mostly manifestation of nature and its elements. This is quite logical in view of the fact that events are set against an agricultural society that depends on the regularity of seasons and natural phenomena that are important for survival. The people worship the goddess of the earth and are always careful to avoid committing sins against her for fear of vengeance and the wiping out an entire generation.

The Igbo ancestors also take on a divine nature to some extent. Family plays such a central role in Igbo life that the spirits of their ancestors are consulted for almost every decision and even serve as judges in legal trials (in the form of masked elders). Hence the Igbo emphasis on numerous gods those are associated with nature and also on ancestors.

On the other hand, in the novel sin defined as a crime against the gods. For example, transgressions occur when a member of society violates the most intimate bonds of family, especially with regards to one's children or insult an ancestral spirit. These sins are met with quick and severe punishment, often including animal sacrifices, exile from one's fatherland, a heavy fine, various symbolic gestures of atonement, or even death. Only when such payment is made can justice be served. If the punishment is not doled out, not only is the sinner subject to divine wrath, but the entire community will suffer.

3.2 The main themes of Arrow of God

Arrow of God is a political and cultural novel by Achebe published in the early twentieth century when the British government officials and Christian missionaries began to arrive in Nigeria. In this novel, two cultures are seen to confront each other. Achebe portrays the disrupting effect of the imposed power system. Conflicts within the Igbo society and the repercussions from external invasion have combined to bring disaster to the Igbo society and cause disintegration from within in the process of reorienting itself to the Christianity. Not only will that lead to the assimilation of Western values and beliefs but also to the eventual loss of the Igbo cultural identity.

Arrow of God, Achebe's third novel is an intricate and complex narrative. The major conflicts in this novel develop around Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of the god Ulu, a god created by the Igbo people almost a century before when the six villages of Umuaro united to withstand the Abam slave raiders.

The Chief Priest Ezeulu, who is the ritual and religious leader of Umuaro (the Igbo fictional village) is responsible for safeguarding the traditions and rituals of the people. For example, Ezeulu watches each month for the new moon. He eats a sacred yam and beats the ogene to mark the beginning of each new month. It is only the Chief priest who can name the day for the feast of the Pumpkin leaves or for the new yam feast which is the yam harvest.

On the one hand, there is the conflict between the local British administration as represented by Winterbottom, the District Commissioner and the native Igbo authority which is represented by Ezeulu, the Chief priest. On the other hand, there are internal politics of Umuaro and the conflict between the supporters of Ezeulu and those of his rival, Ezidemili.

On yet another level, there is the conflict that takes place within Ezeulu himself, a conflict between personal power, the temptation to constitute himself into an "arrow" of God, and the exigencies of public responsibility.

Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to study Christianity with white missionaries, led by Mr. Goodcountry. The father's initial motive is so that Oduche will learn the wisdom of the white men. Later he realizes that if the white men take over the country, as it seems obvious, one of his own sons will be in the inside circle.

"I have sent you to be my eyes there, he says.

The conflict engendered by the decision of sending his son and his own truthfulness eventually lead to the disruption of Igbo tradition and custom: first in the sacrilegious attempt on the sacred python's life by his son, Oduche is instructed by Mr. Goodcountry to kill the sacred python. He places a python in a footlocker but the snake is discovered and released unharmed. Even though everyone in Umuaro knows that Oduche is responsible for this desecration of a sacred symbol Ezeulu does not punish him. This incident further fuels the divide between Ezeulu and his enemies. Shortly after this accident, Ezeulu is summoned to Okperi to Government Hill for a meeting with Winterbottom who wants to make Ezeulu a puppet chief. The British attempted to instigate a policy advanced by Lord Lugard Governor General of Nigeria from 1912 to 1919. The idea of indirect rule allows the colonizers to rule the people through appointed native chiefs. Before Ezeulu leaves for Okperi, his enemy Nwaka draws attention to Ezeulu's friendship with the white men who are taking the Igbo land.

Ezeulu angers Winterbottom by delaying his departure for Okperi, and on his arrival on Government Hill he is imprisoned. Winterbottom falls ill and is in hospital. Assistant District officer Tony Clarke makes the offer to

Ezeulu that the British administration would like to make him the ruler but he declines to be a white man's chief. This causes the anger of the British administration and Ezeulu is detained for two months. During imprisonment Ezeulu cannot eat the sacred yams or announce the new moons.

Angry with his people for letting the British detain him, Ezeulu refuses to eat the sacred yams. When he is released he stubbornly moves the New Yam Festival forward two months. By refusing to announce the feast, the yams cannot be harvested and they rot in the fields causing famine. Ezeulu says:

"You all know our custom; I only call a new festival where there is only one yam left from the last. Today I have three yams and so I know that the time has not come."

The people become divided between their loyalty to Ulu and their loyalty to the survival of the community.

The ensuing conflict within Igbo people gives way to a mass exodus to Christianity which offers a way out by asking people to harvest their crops, shun Ulu and its priest and bring offering to the Church. The fall of Ezeulu is a symbolic fall of Igbo traditional culture before the European culture. And thus, the Africans cannot withstand colonialism and traditional religion loses to Christianity which becomes more strengthened at the end of the novel.

According to Mahfouz, *Arrow of God* is an artistic repudiation of the colonial defilement of African values and traditions, the failure of the British in appreciating African values and collapse of traditionalism before the triumphant jackboots of modernity typified by Western cultural and religious practices.

Apart from the dominant theme of the clash of cultures and the eventual defeat of African religion by Christianity, Achebe passes across minor themes through his characters. Ezeulu largely symbolizes truth (he witnesses against his people) and self-control (unlike Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, he has a remarkable control over his anger – "my friend don't make laugh" summarizes his suppression of his anger. He ever tolerates his children). So for whatever his fault is, Ezeulu is a symbol of truth, native intelligence, pragmatism, self-control and tenacity.

Obika, his son, is a symbol of admirable youthfulness, impulsiveness and courage-thought Ezeulu's counsel to him is instructive:

It is praiseworthy to be brave and fearless, my son, but sometimes, it is better to be a coward. We often stand in the compound of a coward to point at the ruins where a brave man used to live. The man who has never submitted to anything will soon submit to the burial mat (p.11).

Akubue is a symbol of good friendship- a friend in need and a friend indeed; a friend that doesn't shy away from calling a spade a spade, a quintessential friend that stands by Ezeulu through thick and thin.

In addition, Achebe underlines other main themes in *Arrow of God*. For example, the description of Igbo tradition and customs, the practices of Igbo religion, competition, revenge, power, masculinity, and respect and reputation.

Traditions and customs dictate the lives of people of Umuaro, the Igbo village. Seasons are punctuated by ritual, and festivals are managed by the priests with the various deities associated with each village. The overall deity, Ulu, provides the important purification rites as well as feast associated with the rhythms of agriculture. In *Arrow of God*, readers see

that these traditions are undermined by the coming of Christianity, the power of the British colonial office, and, most importantly, by Ezeulu's inflexibility and insistence on adhering to tradition. Ezeulu insists on waiting a full month to eat sacred yam, even though that means he can't call the feast of the new yam for another three months. Meanwhile, the people's crops are rotting in the fields and people are starving to death. The elders of Umuaro offer to take the punishment on themselves, but Ezeulu refuses. Hence Ezeulu, stubbornness leads to the starvation of the people of Umuaro.

Arrow of God shows how Igbo spirituality religious life dies an ignominious death when confronted by Christianity, which is backed by the white man's military and political power. Indeed, Christianity came to be identified with the source of power. When the people of Umuaro are struck with famine because the chief priest's refusal to break the tradition, the catechist at the church offers protection so that people can harvest their crops. Ezeulu's son's death is interpreted by the people as punishment by Ulu on their priest. Thus Ezeulu's power is broken, and Umuaro turns to the Christian God for help.

Arrow of God revolves around competition between Ezeulu's wives for his attention; between Ezeulu, the chief pries of Ulu, and Ezidemili, the chief priest of the lesser deity Idemili; between the communities of Umuaro and Okperi; and between Ezeulu's village and that of Ezidemili's village. However, the most important competition is that between the god Ulu and the Christian's God. This fight is always in the background, and readers are intended to realize that Arrow of God is an illustration of saying "when two brothers fight, a stranger reaps the harvest." As the region rolls in division,

Christianity quietly steps in and takes the respect and place of honor that had previously belonged to the god Ulu.

There is also the theme of reaction and revenge. Indeed, the plot of *Arrow of God* is precipitated by revenge. If Umuaro hadn't wanted to claim ownership of that land, they wouldn't have sent an emissary to Okperia who was clearly bent on starting a war. That emissary causes his own death, but Okperia fails to send a courteous message about it, so Umuaro has to respond by starting the war. Just as entire regions seek revenge, individuals seek satisfaction for real or perceived wrongs: Ezeulu seeks revenge on the people of Umuaro, who fail to give him proper respect as the priest of Ulu. His revenge results in famine and, ultimately causes the demise of his own deity.

The role of power is another theme; a lust for power motivates many of the characters in *Arrow of God*. As the British administration's power rises, the men in Umuaro discover that their power is diminishing. All the men discover that their power is limited when the British administration steps in and stops the war with Okperi. Meanwhile, Nwaka and Ezeidemili accuse Ezeulu of desiring power in order to mask their own attempts to unseat him and usurp his place. Ezeulu punishes the people of Umuaro because they have not accorded him proper respect. The power struggle between Ezeulu and the people of Umuaro gives the Christian catechist, Mr. Goodcountry, the opportunity to win converts. The novel concludes with Ezeulu's power receding as Christianity takes precedence.

In this novel the role of masculinity in Igbo society is one of the main issues. Manhood in Igbo life is marked by stages of life-marriage, fatherhood, gaining titles, becoming an elder. A man accrues respect, rights, and power as he moves through the stages of life. Though Obika may drink too much, he is still admired as a man because he is handsome

and has physical prowess. Edeogo, on the hand, is steady and dependable, but not flashy; he gets little respect from the people of Umuaro.

Respect and Reputation is another important theme, they are highly valued in both Igbo and British cultures. The careers of colonial officials are built on their reputations, as are the careers of men in Igbo culture. In both cultures, titled men and elders have more power than young men or men who lack titles. Consider Wright's and Clarke gossip about Winter's; their intend to destroy his reputation, and enhance their own image. Ezeulu feels the sting of the people's lack of respect, first when they ignore his opinion and go to war with Okperi and finally when they continue to blame him for the white man's arrival. Ultimately, it is the destruction of Ezeulu's reputation that causes the people of Umuaro to embrace Christianity.

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3.3 The main Themes in No Longer at Ease

Although *No Longer at Ease* was published several decades after *"Things Fall Apart"*, it continues to project many of the themes of Achebe's first novel. For example, the clash between European culture and traditional culture has become entrenched during the long period of colonial rule. Obi, the main character in *No Longer at Ease*, struggles to balance the demands of his family and village for monetary support while simultaneously keeping up with the materialism of Western culture.

Moreover, Achebe attempts to depict a family continuity between Okonkwo in *"Things Fall Apart"* and his grandson Obi Okonkwo in *"No Longer at Ease"*. Both characters are confrontational, and have some self-destructive tendencies. However, this aggressive streak manifests itself in different ways. Whereas his grandfather was a man of action and violence, Obi is a man of words and thoughts to the exclusion of action.

People have different points of view, when comparing Achebe's two novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*. Mackary(1961,10) expresses his point of view by saying, "this second novel of Chinua Achebe is better than his first, and puts this Nigerian at the forefront of West African writers."

Learner (1961, 233) says that, *No Longer at Ease* was widely praised for its realistic and vivid depictions of life in Lagos in the early 1960s.

Just like Achebe's first and third novel, *No Longer at Ease* also contains various themes. Shmoop editorial team on its website pointed out to the following themes:

3.3.1 Identity

Obi's identity is shaped by two dual forces: Western culture and values and Igbo traditions and customs, beliefs and values. Though Obi embraces Western values as evidenced in his nominal adherence to Christianity, it can obviously be seen that by so doing he alienates himself from his traditional Igbo culture. For Obi to identify with Western culture means that he rejects a number of cultural traditions, including polygamy, paying a bride –price, honoring a man because of his many titles that he earned through competitions, religious observance,...etc. Embracing Western culture means embracing many positive and negative things that came with the Industrial Revolution.

Obi sees himself as a pioneer. He attempts to change the corrupt system of bribery and nepotism, and he wants to marry a girl who is traditionally committed to taboos.

3.3.2 Duty

Obi's downfall is related to the many expensive duties that he suddenly and voluntarily shoulders, after his return home from England. Suddenly, he takes the responsibility of providing his parents' retirement income, paying his brother's school fees, repaying the Umuofia Progressive Union for the scholarship that he was given to continue his college education, and the expensive of keeping up the social appearances and obligations of a man of his position. This last duty involves buying and maintaining a car, keeping a boy to cook and shop for him, and dressing appropriately for social functions.

3.3.3 Lies and Deceit

According to *No Longer at Ease*, corruption is an integral part of the Nigerian civil and business system. In order to get a job or scholarship, bribery seems to be a necessary step. Obi, a young man educated in Great Britain, believes strongly that education is the key to ending corruption. Ultimately, though, he too succumbs to temptation when he discovers that his salary is insufficient to meet all his financial obligations.

3.3.4 Society and Class

Education is critical for social position and status in Nigeria, as is shown in *No Longer at Ease*. With education, one's salary may jump to five times the amount one might obtain without education. In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi discovers this fact after becoming a part of the educated elite. Hence the conviction that education provides a person with privileges, wealth, and admiration. But he soon discovers that it is impossible to maintain the lifestyle expected of him as a senior civil servant while

fulfilling his duties to his parents and the Umuofia Progressive Union. The more money he spends to maintain his lifestyle, the more money he needs.

3.3.5 Family

In Igbo culture, family has broad definition. Not only are Obi's parents and siblings are considered his family, but all his kinsmen and women who come from his region are also part of that family. This means that Obi has a strong social network and support system; his family and social obligations are extensively various. Obi ultimately finds his duties as a member of the Umuofia and as a member of his own family to be burdensome.

3.3.6 Marriage customs

Obi has come to believe in Western ideals of marriage. Accordingly, he thinks that he should be free to marry the girl of his own choice, and at his convenient time. But he happens to fall in love with a girl of an "untouchable" caste. His family and friends oppose his marriage because it means a revolution in marriage traditions. He is unwilling to go against these traditions and customs to become rejected and isolated. Ultimately, he acquiesces to the wishes of his friends and family.

3.3.7 Dreams, Hopes and Plans

All characters in *No Longer at Ease* have their own dreams and hopes which they want to fulfill. Unfortunately, these are often in conflict with the reality of their life situations. Obi, wishes to be part of the elite, but he hopes to do so without succumbing to corruption. He also wants to marry Clara, even though Igbo culture forbids him to do so. Isaac and Hannah Okonkwo, on the other hand, want to see their son be a good Christian and to use the power of the written word to succeed. But they cannot let go of the part of their culture that forbids marriage to an Osu.

Ultimately, Obi's family and kinsmen prevent his marriage to Clara, and he succumbs to the temptation of accepting bribes. Obi's dreams, hopes and plans are a complete failure.

3.3.8 Love

Obi infatuation with Clara blinds him to the reality of their situation. Ultimately, *No Longer at Ease* appears to suggest that love is not a weapon that can defend two individuals against disapproval, social stigma, or cultural customs. Love fails to be stronger than cultural and familial expectations.

3.3.9 Principles

Obi came to absorb Western values and customs during his study in England. Hence his belief that he can choose his own wife that education is a cure for corruption. Although Western values and culture had been destructive to Igbo culture at times. *No Longer at Ease* seems to suggest that the collective energy of Igbo values and traditions has the power to defeat newly acquired Western values.

Chapter Four

Traditions and customs of Africans

4.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to explore and reveal how successful Achebe is in portraying and documenting Africans and their way of life through his fictional works. As has been pointed out in previous chapter, this chapter surveys the Igbo tribe traditions and customs; including their religious concept and practices, their funeral ceremonies, annual harvest festivals, wrestling matches, marriage rites, the role of women in their societies, and the naming system as shown in Achebe's selected novels. Further, the research also explores the impact of Europeans culture on Africans (Igbo) traditions and customs.

Achebe is first and foremost concerned about the Europeans' wrong and biased view of Africa, its people and its literature, especially that by Conrad who portrayed the Africans as savage and uncivilized. This is one major reason that prompted Achebe to write in retaliation. Through his selected novels Achebe's intention is obviously to refute this totality wrong view of the European writers. Hence Achebe's depiction of the highly civilized cultures and traditions of the Igbo people were response to the European writers' wrong presentation of Africa.

However, He is also attempting to remind his people of the Igbo past and the cultural heritage that they possess.

4.1. The Concept and Practice of Igbo Indigenous Religion

Like most indigenous Africans, the concept of Igbo traditional religion is based on the belief that there is one creator, known as Chukwu, who created all things on the universe. However, the creator can be approached by other numerous deities and spirits in the form of natural objects.

According to their traditional religious beliefs, Chukwu created the universe and the human beings together; then, he dwelled above and beyond the heavenly dome. The Igbo do not feel his presence in their daily lives, for they believe that Chukwu went far away from human beings after creating them. Thus, their lesser deities are more present and active in their living affairs, although they claim that these lesser deities get power from Chukwu.

Achebe depicts the concept of Igbo religion in *Things Fall Apart* (1958:179), chapter twenty one, through a debate between two characters, the white missionary, Mr. Brown and one of the elders of the Igbo clan, Akuna. These two men debate the forms, actions and attitudes of their respective gods.

"You say that there is one supreme God who made heaven and earth," said Akuna on one of Mr. Brown's visits. "We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made all the world and the other gods."

"There are no other gods," said Mr. Brown "Chukwu is the only God and all others are false. You carve a piece of wood-like that one" (he pointed at the rafters from which Akuna's carved IKenga hung), "and you call it a god. But it is still a piece of wood."

"Yes, " said Akuna. " It is indeed a piece of wood. The tree from which it came was made by Chukwu, as indeed all minor gods were. But He made them for His messenger so that we could approach Him through them. It is like yourself. You are the head of your church."

As illustrated in the quotation above, Igbo people believe that there are other deities beside the great god, Chukwu, to help him. As Akuna explained to Mr. Brown, below Chukwu, there are the non-human spirits, deities, and oracles. They claim that these lesser gods and goddesses get their power from Chukwu, and act as intermediaries between him and human beings.

Ogbaa (1999) confirms this Igbo religion belief in his article as in the following quotation:

" The Igbo believe that their gods, goddesses, and oracles are sons and daughters of Chukwu who are powerful and intelligent beings that roam the world but have their permanent homes in the rivers, mountains, caves, forests, and trees, which worshippers regard as the shrines of individual divinities".

However, in Igbo traditional religion, each one of these lesser gods and goddesses has a shrine of his/her own. They also have priests or priestesses who protect their shrines, divine their wills, and accept sacrifices brought to them by their worshippers. There was no shrine to Chukwu, and no sacrifices made directly to him. He was conceived as the ultimate receiver of all sacrifices made to the minor deities. These minor gods claimed an enormous part of the daily life of the people.

Different regions of Igbo land have different versions of these minor gods. Below are the most common Igbo gods, as shown in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*:

In chapter three, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe introduces his readers to the Igbo god Agbala. Agbala (the Oracle of the Hills and Caves) is a god who could tell the future and speak to the spirits of one's departed ancestors from his cave in the Igbo village.

"The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers."

This Igbo Oracle was called Agbala and many Igbo people would come to consult him even though the journey was very difficult and entailed entering a small hole, and crawling on one's belly until sighting the priestess. According to the narrator nobody had ever seen Agbala as he talked to people through a priestess, who is a woman in the village called Chielo. This is one of the most important religious positions in Igbo communities that is held by women. Chielo is a conduit to Agbala's wisdom and prophecy and therefore gains much respect among her people.

Another Igbo god depicted in *Things Fall Apart* is Ani, the earth goddess and harvest. Thus, many people in the Igbo village sacrifice animals to Ani to entice a good harvest for the year. Unoka, Okonkwo's father stood before Ani's priestess and began his story:

"Every year," he said sadly, "before I put any crops in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land. It is the law of our father".

As mentioned, Unoka, consulted the Oracle of Hill and Caves, asking why he always produced bad harvests each year in spite of his sacrifices and planting procedures. During his story, Chika (the priestess of the Oracle) interrupted him angrily and told him that he had not offended the gods, but in his laziness, he took the easy way out by planting on exhausted land. She told him to go home and "work like a man".

In addition, Igbo people claimed that their god Ani. is associated with fertility both of human beings and the land. According to Faghfori (2012: 18), Ani is the most powerful deity in Igbo religion. She is in charge of fertility of the womb and of the soil. She is the mother of earth because she bears in her womb the dead living ancestors. She is also the arbiter of morality and ethical conduct. Therefore, violation of morality like adultery, killing of one's clansman, or giving birth to twins, are offenses against Ani.

As is shown in *Things Fall Apart* the Igbo believe that killing one's clansman is a crime against the earth goddess (Ani) which Okonkwo has committed, and so he must atone by taking his family into exile for seven years, according to tradition.

"The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female, because it had been inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years"(124).

Therefore, Okonkwo gathers his most valuable belongings and takes his family to his mother's natal village, Mbanta. According to the mandates of Igbo religious tradition, after Okonkwo and his family have left the clan, a group of village men, in accordance to traditional justice, invade

Okonkwo's compound, and burn his buildings and kill his animals to cleanse the village from his sin.

However, Achebe portrays some bad Igbo religious customs which they think are crimes against the earth goddess, Aní. In *Things Fall Apart* (125), we are told that:

"Obierika was a man who thought about things. When the will of the goddess had been done, he sat down in his obi and mourned his friend's calamity. Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offense he had committed inadvertently? But although he thought for a long time he found no answer. He was merely let into greater complexities. He remembered his wife's twin children, whom he had thrown away. What crime they had committed? The Earth had decreed that they were an offense on the land and must be destroyed".

Immediately after Okonkwo's buildings have been burnt, sitting at his obi Obierika questions why a man should suffer so much for an accidental killing. He then mourns the deaths of his wife's twins, whom he was forced to throw away. Wondering what crime they committed.

The Igbo god, Aní, is the most omnipresent deity in Igbo religion, whose presence is always felt. Remarking on the Igbo people's belief in the presence of Aní in their everyday, Ogbaa (1999:131) says they feel he is present when they plant their crops, bury their dead kinsmen, wrestle in the village ilo (playground), dig up the earth and turn it into mud for building homes, take oaths or make pacts between clans and villages.

Also, in *Things Fall Apart* readers learn that Anyanwu, the sun god, is the one who makes crops and trees grow. Igwe is the sky god, though he is not appealed to for rain however, for rain is the full time profession of the rain

makers, the Igbo religious men who were thought to be able to call and dismiss rain.

In Arrow of God, Ulu is depicted as a god created by the Igbo people almost a century before when the six villages of Umuaro united to withstand the Abam slave raiders. Here is how the traditional mythological material which is the central myth of Ulu, is given account by Achebe:

In the very distant past, when lizards were still few and far between, the six villages-Umuachala, Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwugwu and Umuisiuzo- lived as different peoples, and each worshipped its own deity. Then the hired soldiers of Abam used to strike in the dead of night, set fire to houses and carry men, women and children into slavery. Things were so bad for the six villages that their leaders came together to save themselves. They hired a strong team of medicine –men to install a common deity for them. This deity which the fathers of the six villages made was called Ulu (14).

Ezeulu, the main character of the novel, is the chief priest of the god Ulu. He is responsible for safeguarding the traditions and rituals of the Igbo people. For example, each month, he watches for the new moon, he eats a sacred yam and beats the ogene to announce the beginning of each new month. Only the chief priest can name the day for the new yam feast, which ushers in the yam harvest. Ezeulu considers himself "merely a watchman" for Ulu.

Another Igbo god portrayed in the novel is IDemili, Nwake is the Chief Priest of Idemili, the leader of cult of the python. In the narrative, the readers are told that Idemili is from the sky and was there at the

beginning of things. The readers are told that Idemili means ' a pillar of water' holding the clouds in place.

It is worth adding that every person in Igbo society has a personal god known as Chi, the concept of chi is frequently mentioned in *Things Fall Apart* and in some instances in *Arrow of God*. The chi is an individual's personal god, whose merit is determined by the individual's good fortune or lack thereof. Achebe explains the concept of personal god in *Things Fall Apart* by saying that a "man could not rise beyond the destiny of his chi."

On the other hand, Chigachi (2009) in his article, *Man and His Chi: The Igbo of West Africa*, defines Chi as one's guardian spirit bestowed on him at birth by Chukwu (the almighty god); adding that one may excel or fail only with the consent of one's chi. This is made obvious in *Things Fall Apart* as in the following dialogue between Okonkwo's wife and her friend Chielo, the priestess of Agbala:

"Is it true that Okonkwo nearly killed you with his gun?"

"It is true indeed my dear friend. I cannot yet find a mouth with which to tell the story."

"Your chi is very much awake, my friend."

They both believe that Chielo was not shot dead because her chi was awake.

In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, It is stated that Chi is the personal spiritual guardian of a person, and that Chi as a personal providence is a divine agent assigned to each human from cradle to the coffin. Chukwu will assign one's chi before and at the time of birth, which remains with the person for the rest of his/her life on earth. Chi determines one's successes, misfortunes, and failures throughout one's life time.

In addition to their gods, the Igbo believe in a variety of spirits whose god will depend on treating them well. Forests and rivers at the edge of cultivated land are said to be occupied by these spirits. For example, Mbataku and Agwo are the spirits of wealth, Ikoro is the drum spirit, EKwu is the hearth spirit, which is woman's domestic spirit.

Furthermore, the Igbo also believe in the existence of the EKwensu, the equivalent of Satan, whose prime occupation is to lead people astray. Readers are told about this belief in *Things Fall Apart* (122):

"Sometimes he turned round and chased those men, and they ran for their lives. But they always return to the long rope he trailed behind. He sang, in a terrifying voice, that Ekwensu, or the evil Spirit, had entered his eye".

Obadike (2008), in his book *Igbo Culture and History*, points out that Igbo people believe that Ekwensu uses people to commit crimes against other people and then turn punishes the same person who have served him. Ekwensu has several servants who help him to carry out his evil thoughts. One of them is death itself, the malicious being who would visit a man on the day he enjoys his life the most. Ekwensu is Chukwu's principal enemy and at the same time his faithful servant. Acting on the powers bestowed on him by Chukwu, he would cause an evil to suffer or die in a strange manner.

Achebe in his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* has successfully portrayed African indigenous religion by focusing on his native Igbo traditional religion. Taking Africa as a whole, there are five important elements that go into the making of African traditional religion: belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors, and

practice of magic and medicine. These five beliefs are vividly shown in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

These fictional descriptions by Achebe are believed to be quite realistic, especially so when they are considered with the reference to the Nuba tribes of Western Sudan. In their ancient traditional religion and before their conversion to Islam and Christianity, the Nuba people used to have the same Igbo belief about the god who create the earth, heaven and all human beings, and how the god control the world. Research has shown that the Nuba Tira have the same belief. This fact has been confirmed by Avajani (2012;45) who states that:

"The Nuba Tira believe that there is one God the Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, but he has many spiritual beings who work for Him. He rules the world through human mediators, who are believed to be the Nuba Tira's ancestors, called iddanga lamizatte nanyu kalu yamitta (the living dead who have gone ahead in the land of living).

Like Igbo communities, Sudanese Nuba, in the Nuba Mountains, in their ancient traditional religion, believed in lesser gods beside the Almighty God. Nuba tribes have these lesser gods and goddesses who come to be known in the various local languages of the tribes. It is pointed out by him that in the Nuba Tira religion, Elo Kazinyen is the god of sun. According to Fajak, the Nuba Tira clan claims the power of a god called sun, who makes magic through spear, knife, and axe. On the other hand, Elo is the god of winds; Elo Kezononono is the god of storms....etc.

4.2 Igbo Funeral Ceremonies as Shown by Achebe

In most cultures around the world, death is believed to be an inevitable end. But according to African indigenous religion, people are believed to have come to the earth not to live forever; they must go back to their original abode where they belong, they do not consider themselves as permanent dwellers upon the earth. Thus, their funeral ceremonies have complex and elaborate rites; including the banging of drums, dancing and gun firing. Nehring (2002), in his article Burial rites of the Igbo Culture, states that:

"Among the Igbo of Nigeria, death is traditionally highly ritualized event filled with the deep mourning. The traditional burial rites involve not one, but two funerals whose main intention is to safely escort the deceased from the realm living to the spirit world. After a successful second funeral can the deceased pass from the time of "ita okazi"—a period of torment—into state of peace and contentment".

Anthony (2014), in his article, Death in Igbo African Ontology, classifies death among Igbo society into three types: good death, bad death and violent death. All three deaths are portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*.

The first type, good death, is that of a person who reaches an old ripe age and attains a life of accomplishment before dying. Death at an old age is regarded as a blessing, and is celebrated with feasting. The sons and daughters of the deceased have the duty to ensure that the deceased is given a befitting burial that would send him to the world of the ancestors.

This type is vividly shown in *Things Fall Apart*. When Ogbuefi dies, the Igbo people of Umuofia celebrate his death with lots of food, drinking and dancing. The nine representatives of the ancestral spirits, the egwugwu, and various types of masquerades come to pay their last respect. There are gun

salutes, the beating of drums and the brandishing and clanging of machetes. Ogbuefi is given a befitting burial because he is one of the oldest men in Umuofia. He is qualified to be an ancestor and to reincarnate.

Bad death includes those who die of swollen body, leprosy, small pox, cholera, suicide or those who are killed by an anti wickedness deity, like Amadioha through lightning. All these kinds are not given full funeral rites. Onoka's death is an example; who is so ill-fated that even his death is an undignified one. He dies of swelling of the stomach and his limbs. Therefore, he could not be buried, he is taken into the evil forests and left there to die, according to the customs.

However, there is no fitting funeral ceremony for a person who commits suicide, even at an old age. No one is allowed to cry publicly for the deceased. Finally, cleansing ceremonies are held by the family of the deceased so that such an evil will not happen again. The elders would offer sacrifices for peace in the land and for the extinction of such thought and illness from it. An example of this type of death is provided in *Things Fall Apart*, chapter twenty five, where Achebe recounts the conversation between Obierika, Okonkwo's friend and the District Commissioner:

"Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo's body was dangling, and they stopped dead. "Perhaps your men can help us bring him down and bury him," said Obierika. "We have sent for strangers from another village to do it for us, but they may be a long time coming."

The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive customs. " Why can't you take him down yourselves?" He asked. "It is against our custom," said one of the men. "It is an

abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers." "Will you bury him like any other man?" asked the commissioner. "We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it. When he has been buried we will then our duty by him. We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land." Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at his friends dangling body, turned to the District Commissioner and said ferociously."That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog.....". He could not any more. His voice trembled and choked his words". (Things Fall Apart 207;208).

Okonkwo was a great warrior and wrestler, and took the ozo title in Umuofia, fought very hard to preserve his tradition and ended up committing suicide, the most horrendous of all offenses against the earth goddess. His clansmen as a result of his crime could neither touch his corpse nor bury him with all the rites as they did when Ogbuefi Ezeudu died.

To further highlight the seriousness of committing suicide among the Igbo, Ukwu and Ikebudu(2013) explain that if suicide was committed by hanging from a tree, not everyone was permitted to touch or to bring the corpse down from the tree, able-bodied men in the community will cut down that tree, firstly, so as to prevent another person from committing suicide on the same tree. Secondly, because the tree is regarded as an "evil" or "bad" tree.

The third type of death (violent death), is usually the death of a young person who dies from a violent accident or killed. Those who die this way

are said to have a bad personal god, *chi*, this kind of death is usually believed to be caused by a deity as a punishment for an offence. A good example of this type is Ikefuna's death in *Things Fall Apart*(57):

"That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." Okonkwo was surprised, and was about to say something when the old man continued. "Yes, Umuofia has decided to kill him. The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umuofia as is the custom, and kill him there. But I want you to have nothing to do with it. He calls you his father."

According to Anthony, in the case of bad death, the dead person will receive a befitting burial as a result of his age and achievements, a ritual of cleansing could be performed. Such person in spite of his died bad death, will become an ancestor after the appropriate rites have been performed.

These funeral rites and beliefs in death which are depicted by Achebe through his fictional works have realities in African ancients' traditions including Nuba and Igbo life. The Nuba tribes of Nuba Mountains share the same Igbo belief mentioned earlier. They believe that death is not an end, there is a life after, thus when a person dies, their funeral ceremonies are highly ritualized. Yunis (1922), gives the following example of death rituals among Daju community in Nuba Mountains:

In the death ceremonies, the celebration was shared by men enjoying merissa (wine) and meat, followed by the whole party dancing under the baobab tree. Believing that by marching out of the village death was removed from the village and thrown into the forest, the whole party, according to traditional customs, maintained that everybody in the village should run without stumbling or stopping and without looking forwards.

Should anyone have the misfortune to stumble, fall or look backwards, he was sure to die during the coming year. Having left the village in a westerly direction, they returned from the west, running, supposedly, away from death and trying to reach their houses as quickly as possible, expecting there to find perfect health.

This Nuba's death ritual is similar to Igbo's death ceremony to a certain extent and different in some respect. Both communities used to drink wine and enjoy eating meat during their funeral ceremonies. The Igbo do not have the custom of running towards the village and leaving the bad death bodies behind the forest.

Another example of a burial ceremony, was reported by Nobbs (1938), it is involved the obsequies associated with the burial of Mak Lima at Dungor, seven miles south of Heiban. Mak Lima had been the chief of Dungor for twenty years, but had lived in Attoro following a military expedition by the Condominium authorities against Dungor (Uru). He was buried together with five goats of the same size, which were killed by beating with a heavy stick, water and grain to provide adequate food and company for his journey in the after-life. This act indicates their belief in another life after death and this is typically the same custom that Igbo have, they make animal sacrifices at their burial rites.

4.3 The Role of Priests and Priestesses in indigenous African Religion

The priests and priestesses play important roles in the religion and social life of Igbo societies. In Igbo religion, the role of the priest or priestess is to care for the needs of the god. According to Achebe, only the priest is allowed to enter the sacred area of the temple or cave and approach the statue representing the god. This role is vividly depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, chapter 11, when Chielo, in her role as priestess, informs Ekwefi and Okonkwo that Agbala, the oracle of hills and caves wants to see their daughter.

However, in *Arrow of God* Achebe portrays the role of priest in Igbo traditional religion. Ezeulu, the main character in the novel, is the chief priest of Ulu, a god created by the people of the six villages of Umuaro. As chief priest, Ezeulu, is responsible for safeguarding the traditions and rituals of the people. For example, Ezeulu watches each month for the new moon. He eats a sacred yam and beats the Ogene to mark the beginning of each new month.

However, all over the Igbo villages of Amuaro, only the chief priest of the god Ulu, can name the day for the feast. Consider the following description from *Arrow of God* (1965:66) of the role of the village crier when he shouts:

"GOME GOME GOME GOME. Folks of the village. The chief Priest of Ulu has asked me to tell every man and every woman that the Festival of the first Pumpkin leaves will be held on the coming Nkwo marked day."

In response to European writers, who misrepresented and mocked Africa and its people through their writings, Achebe not only gives voice to his characters but also depicts their real life responsibilities.

One of the pioneers in the Nuba studies is Nadel, who studied the religion and social and economic structures of the Nuba tribes, and visited the Nuba Mountains during the years 1938-1941, as representative of the colonial government in Khartoum. He (1941:85) states that:

"The religious life of northern tribes in the Nuba Mountains is dominated by a belief in spirit possession which crystallizes in special mediumistic cult, best described as shamanism. The spirit possession in the Nuba Mountains centres round certain individuals capable of forcing themselves into a state of trance and mental dissociation which is interpreted as a visitation of the spirit".

Nadel's statement that the Northern tribes of the Nuba Mountains believed that certain persons gained unusual power after they have visited by spirit/s. Calls to mind the power of Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, when she is visited by the spirits in Things Fall Apart (49), chapter six, as is obvious in the following extract:

"Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe that she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her."

Both cases seem to be identically similar. From Nadel's statement and Chielo's case it can be concluded that there is great similarity between the Igbo and Nuba belief. This kind of belief is similar to "shamanism", which is a religion which is based on the belief that the world is controlled by good and evil spirits and that these spirits can be directed by people with special powers.

To Nadel's description of the concept of Nuba priest, it can be added that the most popular name for shaman or priest in the whole region of Nuba

Mountains is called Kujur. Mohammed Haroon Kafi (2010), a Nuba politician, intellect and writer, describes Kujur as "a popular sacred spiritual person who conducts many spiritual deeds". Depending upon the tribe's language a shamanistic priest or Kajur, for instance, is called "abidi" in the Niming, "boil" in the Temein and the Dilling languages; "Kuni" in Kwalib and "ta Musala" in Kadugli.

Kujours and priestesses take the chief part in the celebrations of popular festivals known in the Nuba Mountains as Sibir(s) on which occasion they display their priestly functions in a most distinctive manner. The harvest festivals in the Nuba Mountains, on the other hand, are directed by the Kujur. The start is often announced by the Kujur climbing a hill above the village and burning a bundle of sorghum for all to see. Kujur is like a shaman.

4.4. Igbo and Nuba beliefs in Their Dead Ancestors

In many African indigenous beliefs including Igbo and Nuba, the goal of life is to become ancestor after death. This is why every person who dies should be given a decent funeral, accompanied by dignified honouring ceremonies. Lest, it is believed, the dead person may become a wondering ghost, unable to live properly after death and therefore becomes a danger to those who remain alive.

Throughout the Igbo land, there is deep belief that the ancestors protect their living descendants and are responsible for rain, harvest, health and children. The Igbo think that the spirits of one's ancestors keep a constant watch on them. The living show appreciation for the dead and pray to them for a well-being. Those ancestors who lived well, died in socially approved ways, and they were accorded burial rites in order to inhabit a suitable world among the dead, and mirror the worlds of the living. They are periodically reincarnated among the living and are given the name of "ndichie", which means "the returners". Those who died an unhappy death or lacked suitable burial rites can neither return to the world of the living, nor enter that of the dead. They wander homelessly to express their grief for causing harm to the living.

The "ancestors' belief," is obviously echoed in *Things Fall Apart* (chapter 13, page 122) as in the following extract:

"The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and also when an old man died, because an old man was very close to ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors."

Ancients Africans belief that those who have gone away are not dead, Africans (including Igbo and Nuba), believe that the link between the departed (dead) and the remaining (living) continues. This Africans deep-rooted belief that the link between the present living and dead continues, is exemplified by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, as Okonkwo still agonizing over the loss of his first son, Nwoye, to the Christians, calls together his other sons to instill them the gravity of their brother's decision to abandon the religion of his forefathers:

"You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head up among my people. If any of you prefers to be a woman, let him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so I can curse him. If you turn against me when I am dead I will visit you and break your neck. (172)

Ancestors' belief or rebirth which is widely spreads among the African communities and has been vividly depicted in Achebe's novels. It has relation with the life of Nuba of Sudan. This is especially true of the Nuba Mountains people. This has been observed by Avajani (2012) who counted that Nuba Tira tribe has the similar belief. To them, the Ancestors have the power to punish, discipline, bless, or curse people. They play the role of mediators (between God and His creatures) and have direct authority over the living generation.

However, Africans believe in life after death, which fact is demonstrated by giving a portion of what they are going to consume to the departed souls at the end of their funeral ceremonies.

4.5. Traditions That Decide Their Children Fate

The Igbo people have their own customs of compensation in murder cases. This is portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*. In one instance the author tells how Okbuefi, the powerful orator, gives the traditional opening of a thousand men gathering at the marketplace of Umuofia. After facing the four different directions, and raising a clenched fist, he yells, "Umuofia Kwenu," and all the men cry "yaa!". After greeting them a fifth time, he informs them that the neighboring village of Mbaino have killed a girl from Umuofia. The men discuss the case and decide to follow the normal course of action: they will issue an ultimatum, demanding a boy and a virgin as compensation.

Okonkwo is chosen as emissary. He is treated with respect, and he returns with a young boy and a virgin girl. The girl is given to the man whose wife has been murdered and the clan is not in hurry to decide the boy's fate.

A similar custom is to be found among Nuba Tira tribes, in the Nuba Mountains. The Nuba Tira traditions consider life as extremely precious and stipulate that compensation must be made in case of accident killing. Avajani states that in Nuba Tira's custom, if a human life is taken away by accident, it must be replaced by human life. The Tira community believes in life exchange as a ransom. If someone kills someone in the community, the family of the murderer would seek peace with the family of the killed by giving them a live child to replace the lost one.

The process goes through several stages and is carried out by the spiritual leaders of the two clans; it may include other spiritual leaders as well. After the period of mourning the process of ransom begins with sacrifices, prayers and reconciliation. Both families take food together, and then a girl or a boy depending on the lost life is handed over. If the family

of the murderer does not act in this manner then the family of the deceased would seek revenge. Some families would accept the murderer himself, if he or she is still young. Thereafter, the cycle of life continues as normal.

Some ancient traditions and customs of Igbo societies can decide the fate of children. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe informs the readers that the first convert in Mbanta (the Igbo fictional village) is a woman, whose four sets of twins have been thrown away. The Igbo believed that there was something abnormal and mystical about twins. This is similar to believing that with rain flood should not be expected. The birth of twins signifies excessive fertility which has to be checked. After leaving the babies in the bush to die, the mother has to attend extensive rituals that are to prevent her from bearing more twins. If appropriate measures are not immediately taken, the parents of twins and the entire community may suffer.

However, some Nuba tribes have traditions and customs which may decide the fate of their children. MacDiarmid (1924:125) points out that there is a custom which once existed among certain section of the Nuba, and according to it the population did not increase as rapidly as it should. That was the practice of burying children with their dead mothers. According to him, in some cases, the father could resist the custom, and the child would be allowed to live. But if the father of an infant was to die, the mother would keep the child inside the hut for two months for fear that the spirit of the father might want to take the child.

In response to European writers, who misrepresented Africa and its people, Achebe does not idealize his people's culture. He depicted its wrong side as well that needs to be corrected. Like any other societies around the world, Africans have some shocking customs in their past. "Bestiality" was a common feature of many societies around the world in the past. For example, the pre-Islamic communities in the Arabian

Peninsula used to bury their daughters alive for fear of shame, or poverty, believing that these girls might bring shame to their families through illegitimate sexual relations. This calls to mind the ancient Egyptians sacrificing young girls to the Nile to ensure good flooding and a prosperous year of harvest.

4.6. Igbo Marriage Rituals as Depicted by Achebe

The marriage ceremony in Igbo societies is a big and happy occasion on which all people of the village are involved, including the will-be husbands and wives, parents, relatives, friends and associates who may well come from neighbouring villages. Here is how such an event is depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, chapter 12:

"On the following morning the entire neighborhood wore a festive air because Okonkwo's friend, Obierika, was celebrating his daughter's uri. It was the day on which her suitor (having already paid the greater part of her bride-price) would bring palm-wine not only her parents and immediate relative but to the wide and extensive group kinsmen called umuma. Everybody had been invited men, women and children. But it was really a women's ceremony and the central figures were the bride and her mother".

A number of procedures are followed according to Igbo traditions; first, the groom proposes to the potential partner. After acceptance or consent, the would-be groom and his father will pay visit to the girl's father and carry presents; including wine and kola nuts. Then the fathers of the couple take things over and settle the price (dowry). Traditionally, cowries are paid.

However, the marriage ritual was very important in Igbo societies. Polygamy was allowed and customarily practiced; the more wives a man had the higher his societal image would be. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel has three wives. However, Achebe is inclined to show in *Things Fall Apart* how the social status of the Igbo individual depends on one's success and achievements. In Umuofia village, the main factors in a man's success are the amount of barns that he has and number of his wives. This is emphasized by Achebe when he introduces Okoye:

“Okoye was not a failure like Unoke. He had a large barn full of yams and had three wives” (*Things Fall Apart*; 6)

In Igbo societies, having several wives in one household enhances not only a man's status but also the prestige of the first wife. As the head woman of the household, she shares every title that the man may acquire. Usually, the first wife is the oldest and the most respected wife in the family. For example, the first wife must be the one to drink first, if the husband offers the wine. The first wife is also the only one allowed to wear an anklet to represent her husband's titles. Other wives would not be allowed to wear this. This is because the husband chose to marry her first, hence important place she occupies.

Polygamy is practiced and allowed in many African societies, including Sudanese Nuba, the reference of this study. Among Nuba tribes, in the Nuba Mountains, it is allowed for a man to marry more than one wife at the same time. Ebraheem (2001), in his book, (*Gulfan Tribe in the Nuba Mountains*), confirms this. He states that ALgulfan one of the Sudanese tribes in the Nuba Mountains, considered marriage as an essential part in establishing a family. Gulfun allowed a man to marry two, three, four or more wives at the same time.

4.7. The Igbo Naming System as Portrayed by Achebe

In Africa, names do not only identify people but are connotative of a promise, a vocation or a list of expectations. Therefore, a few months before a child is born, the would-be parents would draw up a list of possible names for the new born and to this list prospective grandparents, and friends may contribute. The appropriate names are selected depending on important family events surrounding the conception of the child and also the expectations of the parents from the child.

Achebe has successfully portrayed this unique African tradition of naming children in *Things Fall Apart*. Uchendu, Okonkwo's uncle, asks Okonkwo at their family meeting this question:

"Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or 'Mother is Supreme?' We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and not its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say-Mother is Supreme'. Why is that? "(133).

When he receives no answer, Uchendu provides his own by pointing out that when a child is beaten by its father, it returns to its mother for comfort. In the same way, Okonkwo, who is banished by his fatherland, takes refuge in his motherland.

The names Igbo people give to their children express and reflect their belief in Chukwu), the Supreme Being as they claimed. For example, an Igbo family might name a baby Amaogechukwu (God's time is the best), or Chukwukelu (God is the creator), or Chukwunyelu which means God gave me this wonderful gift.

The gender seems to influence the Igbo naming systems. Males are often given names that describe them as superior, godly and beneficial for the society; for example, Ala and Mba, which means deity and people respectively. On the other hand, the name Okonkwo implies pride and stubbornness (determined not to change your mind); Unoka (Okonkwo's father's name); means to home is supreme, which implies a tendency to stay home and a loaf instead of aspiring for fame and heroism.

Igbo women are usually given names that reflect traditional gendered roles which women are required to carry out. Usually, their names describe their virtuousness, goodwill and other soft skills. For example, Ezinma, Okonkwo's daughter's name, means the good one and her mother's name (Ekwefi means the pretty of the villages).

The Sudanese Nuba, in the Nuba Mountains, have their own characteristic names and traditional methods of nomenclature. According to Pick worth (1992:94-95), in some parts of the Nuba Mountains, there are only six names for the boys and six for girls. There are sometimes eight-place names among Ka Golo tribes. For example Dameek, Miri, Keiga,... etc. (males): Kuku, kafi, Tiyo, Tutu, Kuwo, Keki, Tisso/Tosso, Kanno; (females): Kaka, Tatto, Koche/KOssay, Kikki, Kuwo (pronounced differently from that of a male), Keki, Tisso/Tosso, and Kanno.

After the eighth child is born, the list has to be recommenced and the vacant place name will be given, depending on whether the new arrival is a boy or a girl. Consequently, the nine child will be called KuKu Mirayray (the second or junior), or Kaka Mirayray,etc. Several variations are also possible for the one place name, and anyone can use any variation at any time.

Although there is no similarity in the naming system between these two communities, each society has its own system and concept of naming its children and places.

4.8 Annual Harvest Festivals among Igbo Societies

The New Yam festival is one of the biggest festivals celebrated by Igbo people in Nigeria. The festival usually starts in the beginning of August after the end of the rainy season. Consider how the concept of the New Yam festival is described in *Things Fall Apart* (1958; 36):

"The feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofia was in a festivals mood. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And was more she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth" (36).

It can be concluded that the feast of the new yam in Igbo societies is meant to thank and praise the goddess of the earth, Ani. She is the most important local deity, because she is responsible for all fertility, arbiter of morality, and in close contact with the dead ancestors of the clan. The feast starts before the actual beginning of the harvest begins, because the people think it is important to thank the goddess before reaping the benefits she has brought. So, Ani is offered some of the new yams, and everyone must get rid of all the yams. New yam, which is the staple food of the region, could not be eaten before this event. The festival of the New Year is named after the life –giving crop (yam) that sustains the clans. Throughout Igbo

villages, the primary dishes are yam foo-foo and vegetable soup, and food is cooked in great quantities.

In addition to that, all yams from the previous year would be thrown away and all yam utensils were cleaned. The narrator:

"On the last night before the festival, yams of the old year were all disposed of by those who still had them".

The new yam festival lasts for three days. Before the ceremony starts, the new yams are given to the gods and ancestors. The ceremony is performed by the oldest man or the priest. Eating new yam is meant to show the communities' thanks to the gods for making their harvest so prosperous. On the first day of the festival, families pay tribute to their ancestors. A village man goes out to the farms to lift the new yams and give thanks in the village square. However, there are other rituals; that include various scarifies to the gods and the "spiritual cleansing" of participants in the festival prior to the consumption of the new yams. The festival also involves a wide variety of conviviality; for example folk dances, masquerades, parades, and parties. On the second day of the festival, the villagers gather to watch young men wrestling contests.

Achebe has vividly depicted real African annual harvest festival in his first novel and third novel. And this is believed to be one of the reasons that have made Achebe's novels have universal themes and widely read around the world.

Various people around the world celebrate the gathering of the harvest. For example, chusuk is a Korean harvest festival which is celebrated by the Koreans as thanks giving to their deities. The Chinese have harvest festival celebrated annually in honour of the harvesting of the rice and wheat crops.

However, the Nuba of Sudan have a harvest festival known locally as Sibir. Harvest festivals are very important in Nuba culture, and are given the generic name of Sibir, which may be translated to mean "joy" or celebration. These harvest festivals (Sibirs) are annual events all over the Nuba Mountains. They usually take place at the end of the rainy season and after harvest in November, as thanks giving to their deities through Kujur. However, there are various harvest festivals among various Nuba tribes and they are similar to Igbo in concept and timing. This has been confirmed by many sources:

Khamaldin(2008), in his essay Communal Festival, after a visit to Diling, states:

"Almost eight tribes of the Niemang had gathered at the Nitil Mountain in Dilling town to celebrate the harvest festival, known as Sibir, of the Nuba people living in western Sudan. This festival, held annually round about November, dates back to a time before the idea of a monotheistic God spread through the Nuba Mountains."

In the Nuba Mountains, the sibir festival is directed by the Kujur (the rain maker) of the village. The start is often announced by the Kujur, while climbing a hill above the village and burning a bundle of sorghum for all to see. Kujours and priestesses take the chief part in the celebrations of popular festivals known in the Nuba Mountains as Sibir(s) on which occasion they display their priestly functions in a most distinctive manner.

However, Sadig (2005; 22), states that among Katla Nuba tribe's customs in the Nuba Mountains, there is the annual harvest ceremony which takes place in November every year. Before the start of the harvest ceremonies, no crop can be reaped until all the customs associated with it

are exhausted. These customs include meeting of the entire community at Kujur's homestead, each one carrying a he-goat, a sheep, a hoe, a coil or a bracelet made of copper. The goat and sheep are offered to Kujur in recognition of his economic power and social status in the tribes, whereas the coil symbolizes the courage of the tribe and its ability to defend itself against its perceived enemies. As for the hoe, it indicates cultivation as an essential means of economy among the Katla Nuba tribesmen. The bracelet, on the other hand, represents women and their noble role in the Katla society.

A big harvest feast is then served; drinks are consumed profusely and prayers are said as thanksgiving to God for the success of the harvest season; requests are made for the prosperity of crops in the next season. Whoever does not abide by these social customs and norms will be severely punished. Like Igbo people, Katla Nuba believe that breaking the rules of this customs could infuriate God, and consequently the failure of crops in the next season will be inevitable.

In the Nuba Mountains, there are other ceremonies and customs which are very similar to Igbo's traditions and feast such as the Festival of Painting (Sibir al-jeer), which is mostly performed by men. It is a highly popular and favorable ceremony to the Nuba of Kau-Niaro hills. It is practiced by men, and the painting ritual which is accompanied by ritualized wrestling is the most stylish celebration.

Nuba Women, on the other hand, take part in the Festival Scars (Sibir al – Washam). Sharp tools are used including needles or the blades of knives to make some permanent drawings on women's bodies in order to make them beautiful. Those cultural facets and elaborate scarification are also meant to show some kind of courage and stamina, and as a treatment for some illnesses. Special scars can also be cut on the stomach of pregnant women

provided that the conceived children are legitimated. The Nuba, however, are proud to go naked to show either their scars or paintings.

Igbo women, on other hand, have the same custom of painting and decorating when they are welcoming the new yam festival by painting their houses, themselves and their children. Achebe depicts this painting custom in *Things Fall Apart*, Chapter five:

"The festival was now only three days away. Okonkwo's wives had scrubbed the walls and the huts with red earth until they reflected light. They had drawn patterns on them in white, yellow and dark green. They then set about painting themselves with cam wood and drawing black patterns on their stomachs and on their backs. The children were also decorated, especially their hair, which was shaved in beautiful pattern".

4.9 The Week of Peace

The week of peace is an annual event which is very important in many African communities including Igbo and Nuba, and is followed by the sowing season of all crops. According to custom, before planning their crops, the people must enjoy a life and atmosphere of peace with their neighbors and family members for a whole week. In Igbo societies, this is meant to honour Aní, the great goddess of the earth. It is ordained that if this peace is broken, the people will not receive the blessing of Aní and their crops will not grow. In *Things Fall Apart*, chapter four, Achebe shows how important this week is to the Ibos in the incident of Okonkwo's beating of his wife Ojiugo, during the week of peace. Accordingly, Ezine, the priest comes to Okonko and tells him:

"You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plan any crops in

the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You have committed a great evil". "Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her." (22).

The Igbo people thought that it was the first time for many years that a man had broken the sacred peace. Even the oldest men could only remember the one or two occasions in the dim past.

The Katla Nuba people of the Nuba Mountains, who live in a village located south-west of Dilling, observe a ritual custom that requires them not to sow their crops before offering wine and sacrifices to their Kujur. Overlooking this will not result in a good blessing harvest. This belief is similar to that of the concept of the week of peace in Nigerian Igbo land which is depicted in *Things Fall Apart*.

This is further supported by Domville (1927), who says that due to the importance of agriculture in their livelihood, the Katla community reserves a great deal of ceremonies for it, starting with rainfall. In a communal gathering, the village elders and women converge to Kujur's house, offering sacrifices and pouring libation to god to bless the agriculture season.

4.10. The Igbo Wrestling Matches

Wrestling is the most popular and exciting sport among boys and young men, and great annual contests in every part of the Igbo community. It is a sport which is widely spread in most African countries. One of the reasons that make wrestling an essential part of Igbo culture is viewed as a test of manliness through potential leaders may be recognized, and in some cases disputes can be solved.

The wrestling matches represent the greater part of Achebe's documentation of Igbo Life. *Things Fall Apart* (1956), opens with the introduction of Okonkwo, the young man who is famed throughout the nine villages for his physical strength that has led to his personal achievements. At age of eighteen he brought honour to his village by overthrowing Amalinze, the cat. Here Achebe underlines the importance of wrestling among Igbo society.

"Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights(Things Fall Apart; 1)"

It can safely be concluded that in the Igbo land, the great wrestler not only brings honor to himself when he defeats someone but also honor to his village. However, Igbo people believe that a man should stand out and fight

his aggressors whoever they are, human or spiritual. To them, it is always a privilege for young men to have the courage to engage in a wrestling match, whereby one can distinguish himself and attain statues in his community.

However, throughout Igbo land, each village has its own wrestling ground, and each year, the community gathers to watch wrestling matches. Here is how one such contest is depicted in *Things Fall Apart* (1958:47):

"The contest began with boys of fifteen or sixteen. There were only three boys in each team. They were not the wrestlers; they merely set the scene."

Any competitor that is carried out and if his legs are not touching the ground is declared defeated. The crowd roars and claps for the winner and he will be taken by his team supporters.

"These young men from the victorious boy's team ran forward, carried him shoulder high and danced through the cheering crowd. Everybody soon knew who the boy was. His name was Maduka, the son of Obierika."(47)

In addition, young women are active supporters of their favourites teams while wrestling is taking place. They shout their praises and songs.

"They sang his praise and the young women clapped their hands:

"who will wrestle for our village?

Okafo will wrestle for our village.

Has he thrown a hundred men?

He has thrown four hundred men.

Has he thrown a hundred Cats?

He has thrown for hundreds Cats.

Then send him word to fight for us"

These wrestling matches throughout Igbo land are usually accompanied by music and drumming.

In response to European writers, who described the Africans as savage and uncivilized, Achebe does not only depict Igbo religion and their way of life but also their sports. He has successfully depicted real African sport through his fiction.

In the Nuba Mountains, wrestling among the Nuba of Sudan is a seminal part of their culture with both social and religious purposes. Boys make preparations for manhood through wrestling competitions. In the Nuba Mountains, great and successful wrestler like Okonkwo, emerge and achieves a higher status. Among the Nuba tribes, wrestling is not only a sporting occasion but a social event in which every member of the community takes part, even the young children.

4.11. African Justice System as Depicted by Achebe

In refuting to European writers' view of Africa and its people, Achebe is inclined to show that Igbo people like many Africans have their own traditional political and administrative systems. Priests, men of titles and the elders were responsible of taking decisions on domestic and social matters. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe depicts how the elders of Umuofia have taken decision regarding the daughter of Umuofia, who has been killed by a man from Mbaino. The dispute is settled by providing the two options of either accepting the offer of taking a young man and a virgin in compensation or going to war.

Achebe shows that the Igbo people have Egwugwu; the masked ancestral spirits, who are the community leaders of various villages in charge of settling the social dispute between the two families and other social matters on the occasion of the new yam festival. This is an example of the traditional system of justice in Igbo community land. In view of the fact it is based on local customs and values, and its decisions are prompt and fair. Its procedures are characterized by face to face interaction in which everyone is given the chance to be heard. This is exemplified by Egwugwu who settles the domestic problem between a woman called Mgbafo, who is accompanied by her three brothers, and her husband, Uzowulu, with his relatives. Uzowulu steps forward and presents his case in front of Egwugwu:

"That woman standing there is my wife, Mgbafo. I married her with my money and my yams. I do not owe my in-laws anything. I owe them no yams. I owe them no coco-yams. One morning three of them came to my house, beat me up and took my wife and children away. These happened in the rainy season. I have waited in vain for my wife to return. At last I went to my in-laws and said to them, 'You have taken back your sister. I did not send her away. You yourself took her. The law of the clan is that you should return her bride-price.' But my wife's brothers said they had nothing to tell me. So, I have brought the matter to the fathers of clans. My case is finished. I salute you."(1958:82).

Then Odukwe, one of the brothers of Mgbafo and the eldest of the all ancestral spirit, presents their case in front of Egwugwu; he describes Uzowulu as a wicked person who beats his wife frequently. Thus he presents the case of his sister;

"Last year when my sister was recovering from an illness, he beat her again so that if the neighbours had not gone in to save she would have been killed. We heard of it, and did as you have been told. The law of Umoufia is that if a woman runs away from her husband her bride-price is return. But in this case she ran away to save her life.(83)

After hearing the both sides and their witnesses. It is decided to settle the dispute by telling the husband (Uzowulu) to go to his in-laws with a pot of wine and beg them to return his wife. That is how law and order are maintained within the clan.

Likewise, and as in many Africans communities, including the Nuba of Sudan, the disputes which occur in a village are settled publicly. The Igbo people's well- established judicial system was suppressed by the British colonizers without any consideration of their values and customs.

4.12. The Impact of Europeans Culture on African Traditions

Achebe is the dominating voice in African literature. He seems to set a literary standard of his own in *Things Fall Apart*. Actually, all his works, including *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*, voice his concern about the loss of native culture in the flood of imported Europeans values. So, Achebe is inclined to underline the effects of western customs and values on traditional African societies in most of his works.

In *Things Fall Apart*, after realistic depictions of the pre colonial Igbo life, Achebe moves on to show how the Christian missionaries and colonial rulers denigrated the philosophy of the native people. In their attempt to spread Christianity, the missionaries, the harbingers of colonial rules, stripped from nature and environment all the spiritual meaning held deeply

by the Igbo. They tried to persuade the local people to embrace Christianity by establishing that the Igbo religion was pagan and all their religious beliefs were baseless. The missionary Mr. Brown tried to convince Igbo that there is only one God, and all their other deities are nonsense. He said: "You carve a piece of wood and you call it a god. But it is still a piece of wood." (179).

Achebe's attempt is to repair some of the damage that has been done by the earlier Europeans. However, Achebe does not simply idolize the Igbo people way of life; he also presents its weakness which needs to be changed. He simply depicts the injustice of the Igbo society, no more or less than what happened in Victorian England. Indeed, the Igbo are a patriarchal society; they fear twins, who are abandoned immediately after birth and left to die of exposure. Thus, the first woman convert in Mbanta has had four sets of twins who have been thrown away. Those who initially convert to Christianity are members of the clan who have not been fully incorporated into clan life, such as the *Osu*, the outcasts, who have to live in a special section of the village and forbidden to marry a free person or cut their hair. They are to be buried in the Evil Forest when they die. So, when they learnt that the church accepted twins and other matters seen by the clan as abomination, they joined the new religion.

On the other hand, Nwoye, the gentle son who cannot accept Okonkwo's harshness and specially his killing of Ikemefuna, finds in the poetry of Christianity the promise of brotherhood. Achebe makes it clear that it is the poetry rather than the rationality of Christianity that wins Nwoye's "callow mind" (147).

The British also imposed their authority through fright trade, education and treachery. The Igbo were afraid of the white men because of the massacre they committed at Abame, and the ability to survive in the Evil

Forest of Mbanta, made them think that the white man has a strong medicine. However, Igbo traditional law which does not allowed the killing of a member of their clan prevents them to kill the converts to Christianity. OKonkwo returns to his village in Umuofia, after seven years of exile, and finds that the Christian church has won many converts, including respected men who have renounced their traditional titles. The white men have established government courts of law in Umuofia, where those who break the white man's law are prosecuted, and a prison has been built.

Okonkwo wonders why his fellow Umuofians do not use violence to rid themselves of the white man's church and oppressive government. His best friend, Obierika tells him that they fear their fate to be like Abame which was destroyed by the white intruders. He also tells Okonkwo about a person from the village who was hanged by the new government because of an argument over a piece of land. Obierik points out that any violence will pit clansmen against one another, because many clan members have already joined the church. He starts to reflect on how the white men settled in quietly with their religion and then stayed to govern harshly, without ever learning the language or customs and without listening to reasons. The resentment of Okonkwo and the helplessness of the clan against the growing power of the white man are aptly summarized in the version of Obeirika who clearly proclaims:

"The white man is very clever who came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan no longer acts like one. He has put a knife on things that held us together and we have fallen apart." (Things Fall Apart:133)

As a result of this deteriorating situation, Okonkwo, one of the greatest men of Umuofia, commits suicide for the sake of his own honour and dignity.

Another reason that forces Igbo to accept the British administration is their desire for wealth: the Igbo find that learning the white man's language soon makes one a court messenger or a town clerk in the trading stores set up by the British. Finally, many of them have come to believe in what Mr. Brown has told them that the leaders of the land will be those who learn to read and write.

The clash between the African traditions and the white man's modernity is presented by the author with a mildly comic irony. Achebe has very clearly delineated how the white man came with his religion and established government and developed trade and spread education to replace the African traditions and customs.

Things Fall Apart is a tragic story of the decline and fall of the African (Igbo) tribal life with Okonkwo as its representative. It is declared by him that the white man has put a knife on the things that held them together and they have fallen apart. The title of this novel, is taken from "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats. The particular reference is to the lines: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

What Achebe means to say is that the binding forces of the Africans gods, beliefs, customs and festivals were all destroyed. And it was his duty and other African writers to reeducate, regenerate and rejuvenate the African societies.

In his third novel, Arrow of God, Achebe explains how the Igbo traditional Customs have been destroyed by the Europeans. The harvest and planting of Igbo chief food yam depended on the appearance of the moon

in the night sky. The task of tracking the lunar movement to mark the passage of time and declare the harvest and planting season was carried on by Ezeulu, the protagonist of the novel, who was the chief priest of the Igbo god Ulu, if Ezeulu failed to declare the sight of the new moon, no harvest or plantation would be carried out. As the colonial rulers could hardly understand the gravity of Ezeulu's role in the community, they imprisoned him for two months because he refused to be appointed as the warrant chief. This resulted in his failure to keep track of time and declare the harvest season.

Consequently, the whole village is struck by famine, because of Ezeulu's delay of declaring the harvest season. The Christian missionaries offer to save its people through conversion. Though the villagers have been restored to life, the harvest and planting of yam are destined to lose their spiritual significance under the impact of Christianity.

In *Arrow of God*, the teacher, Mr. Goodcountry, is an African from the Niger Delta, who urges the new converts of Umuaro to prove the sincerity of their faith by killing pythons, symbols of heathenism as well as being "the snake that deceived our first mother, Eve"(47). The more conservative members of the congregation balk at this idea, but Oduche, Ezeulu's son, decides to prove himself by killing the sacred python. In fact he only has the courage to lock the snake in his box. "The python would die for lack of air, and he would be responsible for its death without being guilty of killing it"(50). But the struggles of the python in the box draw the attention of his family; his father opens the box and the sacrilege is discovered. The story quickly circulates, and by evening a messenger comes from Umunneora and tells Ezeulu that: "Ezidemili wants to know how you intend to purify your house of the abomination that your son committed"(54). Ezeulu's answer bade to say: "Go back and tell Ezidemili to eat shit."

Everyone in Umuamo including children knows about the consequences of killing according to custom; that he must placate Idemili by arranging a funeral for the snake similar to man's funeral. But there was nothing in the custom of Umuaro for the man who puts the snake into a box. Ezeulu was not saying that it was not an offence, but it was not serious enough for the priest of Idemili to send him an insulting message. It was the kind of offence which a man should put right between himself and his personal god (60).

So, the authority and power of both Igbo gods Ulu and Idemili, and consequently the faith of the people in them have been undermined. Ulu's strength is called into question after Nwaka's ability to flaunt him, and Idemili's python becomes the butt of children jokes. Ezeulu hears his youngest children chanting: "Eke nekwo only uka! Nekwo only Uka! Nekwo onlye Uka!", which means "Python, runs! There is a Christian coming". Ezeulu asks it means and they reply: "Akwuba told us that a python runs away as soon as it hears that. Ezeulu broke into a long loud laughter. Nwafo's relief beamed all over his grimy face. Did it run away when you said it? It runs away fiam like an ordinary snake" (205).

The situation is similar to that at the end of *Things Fall Apart*. The Igbo cultural values and religious belief which have held them together are being undermined because it is the first time that these beliefs have been tested and found wanting. So when Ezeulu refuses to call the New Yam Festivals, the missionaries tell the villagers to harvest their crops in the name of Christian God. This is the end of the Igbo traditional god Ulu, who is the created symbol of the unity of the six villages, and as his cult falls so does the social structure that has maintained him.

Achebe's second novel, *No longer at Ease*, shows the nature and extent of changes that have been made by the colonial intervention in Nigeria. The

novel is set in the modern days just before Nigerian independence. Obi Knokwo, the main character, the grandson of Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*, and son of Nwoye, is the hero. Obi goes to England and receives an excellent education at a British University. This foreign education provides him not only with knowledge of an academic nature, but also with a new lens through which to view his indigenous society and its traditions. For example, he rejects some Igbo traditional practices, such as the caste system. He asserts the utter absurdity of the social norm which forbids him to marry his girlfriend Clara because she is Osu. As he observed, there are no such restrictions upon marriage partners in Europe.

The novel *No Longer at Ease* traces the long-term impact of British colonialism on Africa. So, Achebe's attempt is to underline the negative consequences of destroying African traditional way of life and values by the European government and missionaries. One of these negative results was bribery and corruption which became widely spread in government centre in Lagos and many part of the country. In the novel, a considerable number of people were involved men offer money, and some women might as well offer their bodies in return for favours and services.

Another negative result was that Igbo people lost their identity as a consequence of the British impact and the changes that took place. The culture and religion clashes between the two negatively influenced the Igbo who lost their traditional values and had to accept the new system and religion.

Achebe shows that the Igbo people had problems with accepting the Europeans' way of life and their new religion. The loss of identity and refusal of the new religion and system led Okonkwo, to commit suicide. But his grandson, Obi did not commit suicide actually, but he committed

suicide by betraying the whole and through his opportunism and selfishness.

4.13. Achebe's Style in Achieving his Literary Goals

Achebe is one of the most significant writers to emerge from Africa with a literary vision that has profoundly influenced the form and content of modern African English literature. He is completely different from many other African writers who struggled for acceptance by their contemporary English novelists; he was able to avoid imitating the trends in English literature. Instead, he used African oral traditions to transform colonial realities into fiction in order to create intellectual rejection of colonialism and the western thought and way of life.

In the selected novels of the study, in his capacity as Igbo by birth, Achebe has made use of the oral traditions, folk tales, proverbs and related narratives of his ethnic community in these novels. An excellent example is the inclusion of the folk tale- the sky and the earth. It is used by Achebe to emphasize the theme relating various aspects of masculinity and femininity. This is reflected through Nwoye's conception of such tales as women stories to avoid being associated with femininity, despite the fact that he likes the story but only fears the wrath of his father.

Also Achebe has made use of the proverbs, idioms, and similes of his own Igbo community to help his readers to make sound judgment of the community. However, the use of folk songs and traditional dancing is a common characteristic of his writing style. In *No Longer at Ease*, women are at one point heard singing the Igbo's song of the heart for Obi. In *Things Fall Apart*, a comparison of songs sung by the Igbo and Christian missionaries reveals a sharp contrast between the two. To sum up, Achebe's extensive use of oral traditions in his works is intended to

emphasize the morals and relevance of the cultural traditions to the modern society.

Furthermore, Achebe's other main feature of his writing style is attributed his mastery and extensive use of English literature. His choice to use the English language in writing his novels is itself ironic, for it is based on the fact that he was an opponent of colonization and any elements of neo-colonization. To reach most people around the world, he had to use English, which after independence became Nigeria's official language. His mastery of the English language has helped him alter the English syntax, idiom and usage, and create a completely new African approach to literature. Also, Achebe's education, his knowledge of English literature and exposure to European culture must have allowed him to capture at the same time the European and the African perspectives on colonial expansion, religion, race, and culture. This has had a great effect on the composition of the novel because this enables him to tell the story with understanding and his accumulative personal experiences in both cultures.

In most of his writing, Achebe uses various literary tools such as irony, symbolism, imagery, metaphors, language mastery and traditions of the Igbo people to portray real life situations of the typical and real Africans.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the irony of Achebe is obvious; as exemplified by the two missionaries; the white man insinuated his own culture in the African culture. Mr. Brown's soft policy and Mr. Smith's loud one, have essentially the same effect of creating confusion and conflict among the Igbo people. Thus, by bringing them apart, the African culture is undermined.

"The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were amazed 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."(152).

The conclusion is: Mr. Brown uses soft methods to convert the Igbo people, while Mr. Smith is a true religion tyrant, but both of them serve the same end eventually and seem to cause the destruction of the Igbo African tradition.

To emphasize the importance of this impact on the Igbo by the European autocracy, at the end of *Things Fall Apart* the narrator reveals the most shocking irony; that the District Commissioner intends to write a novel on the events that have been placed in Achebe's own novel:

"The story of this man who had killed the messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the novel, after much thought: The pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger"(191).

The novel that the Commissioner intends to write about Africa includes a small paragraph about Okonkwo's life proving the misunderstanding of the white people of complex African culture. Okonkwo's tragedy that has been depicted in *Things Fall Apart* is thus the tragedy of the Igbo culture itself that falls apart under the new dominating white wave. Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith are both instruments for this destruction. The pacification of the primitive tribes is a typical phrase for the colonialists who were convinced that the Africans were savage people who needed salvation, while Achebe's novel proves exactly the opposite, through the insight into real African tradition.

Things Fall Apart is probably the most authentic narrative ever written about life in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. It was first published in 1958 and thousands of copies are still sold every year in the United States alone. However, millions of copies have been sold around the world in its many translations. In addition, the novel has been adapted for productions on the stage, on the radio and on the television. Teachers in higher schools, colleges and graduate schools use the novel as a textbook in many types of classes from history and social studies to comparative literature.

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe uses proverbs not only as a satiric tool but also to express themes and perform other functions as well. Proverbs in Achebe's novels as observed by Yakubu and Jibrin (2012), "are as they used in real life". In Africa, proverbs are used by elders to scold, advice, and correct children. So, it is an aspect of everyday language which arms elders with the tools they need to perform their functions successfully in a society.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

In three selected novels which are sometimes called the African trilogy (series of novels that deal with Europeans interaction with Africans), Achebe is obviously responding to the Europeans misrepresentation of Africa. The main subject of Achebe's writings is the impact of the British colonization on the Africans' (Igbo) traditions and customs and the tragic consequences of destroying the traditions and customs of the indigenous people.

In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* the tragic fate of the protagonists is depicted. Okonkwo and Ezeulu are the makers of history. Achebe has created them as characters who are endowed with a deep sense of dignity whether in their traditional communal life or in their readiness to resist and fight the colonizers of their native land. Achebe believes that it is his duty as a writer to help his people to regain belief in themselves and overcome the state of disappointment and disintegration and endeavour to create the dynamic spirit of their community.

Things Fall Apart contains three parts; the first part divulges the lifestyle and traditions and customs of Igbo people; how they were happy with their religious customs and beliefs, socio-political system and with their Igbo conventional culture before the arrival of the white missionaries and colonizer. The second part is about the protagonist's (Okonkwo) years of exile in accordance with the religious customs.

The third part is about the return of Okonkwo to Umuofia where he found the missionaries and colonial administrators who settled in the African land as missionaries of civilization and a new religion. Indeed they had their own political plan and objective; to extend the boundaries of the British Empire and rule over the Igbo tribe. To sum up, *Things Fall Apart* mainly deals with social, political, religious and cultural systems and the suppression of Igbo people by the colonizers of their land.

Things Fall Apart attempts to repair some of the damage done by the European to the Africans. However, Achebe does not simply idolize the Igbo people way of life; but also underlines its weaknesses which had to be addressed and a change that would overcome the situation. He depicts the injustice of Igbo patriarchal society which was dominated by outmoded traditions and beliefs, such as the community's fear of twins who are to be abandoned immediately after birth and left to die in a ditch.

In *No longer at Ease*, Achebe explores the aftermath of British colonization and the long lasting consequences of the breaking down of the traditional African societies. The title of this novel is taken from a poem written by T.S Elliot, in which he describes the professional, social and moral decline in Nigeria just before independence. Obi, the grandson of Okonkwo, returns to Nigeria after he has completed his Education in England. He genuinely intends to contribute to the creation of a better society in Nigeria by combating social illnesses such as nepotism, corruption and bribery, which have widely spread in the society.

The novel opens with the trial of Obi Okonkwo on a charge of accepting bribes. He stands in the dock awaiting justice in accordance with Western legal system. The British judge is shocked when he learns that the accused is one of the beneficiaries of Western education.

Achebe is inclined to weight the materialistic gains of Western education against traditional African values, concluding that the individual should hold strongly to his values and failure to do so has naturally led to his downfall and the death of his community's dream. Finding himself at the crossroads of cultural changes, Obi is caught between his inherent values and those he is exposed to because of his Western education. He is influenced by traditional Igbo culture where he grew up, the Christian teachings of his father, the idealism of English literature which he studied in England and the corruption and sophisticated lifestyle of Lagos. But he is not at ease anywhere.

To develop the narrative and make it more interesting, and convey his message to the audience, Achebe uses various narrative techniques such as symbolism, imagery, allegory, proverbs, folktales, and irony.

In his *Arrow of God*, the python symbolizes the old gods and the conflict between Christianity and Igbo religion. The python is the Igbo religious icon which the missionaries ordered the new Igbo Christians to kill. Another symbol used by Achebe is the incident in which Captain Winterbottom stopped the war between the two Igbo villages of Okperi and Umuaro. He destroyed all the guns of Umuaro except for a few which he kept as memento. This act can symbolically mean taking away the manhood of the men of Umuaro. By taking away their weapons, they can no longer decide to go to war.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the imagery of fire is intended to create more effect. Okonkwo is called Roaring Flame and a Flaming fire "(108, while his son is cold, impotent ass" (109).

In *No Longer at Ease*, the written word, symbolizes the power of the Europeans, of Which Achebe tells us outright. Isaac Okonkwo, we are told, has embraced it earlier.

Mr. Okonkwo believed utterly and completely in the things of the white man. And the symbol of the white man's power was the written word, or better still, the printed word. (13)

Mr. Green symbolizes the colonial mentality, which is aware that some Africans may be intelligent but he assumes that African culture is inherently inferior to European culture, which he believes is the "curse" that the Africans can in no way escape.

Achebe used his first novel to prove that the Africans did not come to know about culture with the intrusion of the Europeans and that their societies were not mindless. Indeed, they had a philosophy of their own, and they had dignity. To achieve his objectives, Achebe uses irony in rendering the narrow perspective of the District Commissioner, his inability to grasp the genuine dimensions of Okonkwo's destiny, his ignorance and political interests.

In *No Longer at Ease*, modern ironic approach is applied to the hero's fate. It is the same kind of tragedy that the hero so passionately looked for. It can be concluded that *No Longer at Ease* indicates that Okonkwo's tragedy has not reached its end, and that the tragic destiny it implies continues through the next generations.

In the third novel, *Arrow of God*, Achebe explores how Igbo spirituality and religious life disappear, and how it ignominiously died when it is confronted by Christianity, which was supported by the white man's military and political power. And this is why Christianity is always identified with the source of the power. When the people of Umuaro are

faced with famine because of the chief priest's refusal to break the traditions, the catechist at the church offers protection for the people to harvest their crops. When Ezeulu's son Obika dies the people interpret that Ulu is punishing his priest. With Ezeulu's power broken Umuaro turns to the Christian god for help.

Since the main object of the research is to explore the extent of which Achebe has succeeded in depicting real African traditions and customs through his fictional works, it is only appropriate at stage to turn our attention to the Nuba of Sudan and expound their traditions and customs, and explain how far they can be regarded as real and similar as those of Igbo's. Meanwhile, the general characteristics of indigenous African traditions and culture have revealed and compared.

The results of the research show the close similarities between these two African communities. Also, it indicates that Africa has a rich and deep rooted heritage of traditions and culture, which used to organize the way of life.

These results definitely support Achebe and other African novelists in their argument with European writers, including Josef Conrad, and Joyce, who present African communities in their novels as mindless and primitive, and assume that they had no culture of their own.

Chinua Achebe is totally different from most African writers, who were keen to be accepted by the Western writers. Instead, he used the oral traditions and exploited them to transform colonial realities into fiction, and receive substantial intellectual response. Achebe Advocates a conscious rejection of an imposed European identity and provides a true and real image of Africa and its ways of life.

One of the reasons that helped his novels, especially the first one, *Things Fall Apart*, win global acclaim is Achebe's use of universal themes, themes which strike chords that resound through time and across linguistic barriers. The clash of cultures, opposition to change, traditions and customs, masculinity versus feminists, and fatal character flaws are the main themes of the novel.

However, Achebe's intelligent and wise use of African proverbs helps him in creating a unique style and giving a native flavour to his writings. This has also enabled him to inform his foreign readers of the richness, and vitality of African traditions and customs.

Another element that contributes to the success of Achebe's fictional art is his subtle use of English to suit the African sensibility. An excellent example is Ezeulu's speech to his son, Oduche, which has a distinct style:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirits tells me that those who do not befriend the white man will be saying had we known' tomorrow.' (AOG, 45-46).

The same speech if written in formal English may be as follow:-

I am sending you as my representative among these people-just to be on the save side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight.

5.1. Conclusion

Literature is one of the best means for sharing thoughts, facts, ideas, and stories both fictional and none. The last four or five hundred years of European contact with Africa produced a body of literature written by European writers, who looked down on African literary and cultural heritage. The people of Africa were portrayed as barbaric and uncivilized. In response to the European writers' biased and degrading attitude, many African writers stood out to refute the European negative image of Africa and provide a true and a positive one. Achebe's writings were forefront, and he endeavoured to lay the bare facts. His efforts are vividly shown through the novels that have been selected for this research. In them he shows Africa to be dwelled with civilized men and women, and their deep-rooted religions, traditions and social systems.

In his attempts Achebe is intent on reconstructing historical and political events of the recent past of his African (Igbo) people whose land has been invaded by the Europeans.

It can be concluded that there are considerable similarities between the two communities in religious beliefs, marriage rituals, harvest festivals, and funeral ceremonies. These similarities definitely support Achebe and other African writers in their argument with their European counterparts, who contend that the Africans have no culture of their own.

Igbo and Nuba believe that there is one creator, the almighty, who created the universe. But they claim that there are other lesser gods and goddess and spirits, who help the almighty god. However, they think that their dead ancestors protect their living descendants, punish, or bless them as the god the almighty's mediators. They also believe in life after, thus

their funeral ceremonies are highly ritualized; including drumming, animal sacrifices, and dancing.

Other similar religious customs are those of compensation in cases of murder. Taking away the life of human being must be replaced by another living in compensation. This is obvious in the story of IKemfun in *Things fall Apart*. A boy and a virgin girl are given to Umuafia by the neighboring village as compensation. This is not only fictional event that Achebe has created, but really practiced custom by the Nuba tribes of Sudan, in the Nuba Mountains.

In their traditional marriage customs, the two communities are known for their practices of polygamy in which a man is allowed to marry as many wives as he wishes. The priests and priestesses play important roles in religious and in social life. They play a major part in the celebrations of popular harvest festivals which are held annually. The harvest festivals in the Nuba Mountains are directed by the Kujur, and likewise the priest Ezeulu's role in *Arrow of God*.

The study reveals that Africa has a great and rich religious system, which had organized people's way of life spiritually, socially, and politically.

5.2 Findings

The main findings of the study that have been arrived at, after analysis are as follows:-

- Achebe has vividly portrayed real African traditions and customs along with some real Africans social problems; such as Osu caste system, which is a real social problem in many African countries including Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory coast, Chad, Somalia, Liberia, and Niger.
- Achebe has successfully depicted in his two novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* the role played by African women in their societies as educators to their children, priestesses and so on.
- The results show the similarities between the two communities (Igbo and Nuba) in their religious concepts, harvest festivals, wrestling matches, funeral ceremonies and ancestors belief. These similarities indicate that Achebe has successfully succeeded to vividly depict African traditions and culture through his novels.
- One important custom which is shared by the ancient Igbo and the Nuba is the customs of compensation. A murdered person must be compensated for by a human being from the murder's clan. The story of IKemfun in *Things Fall Apart*, a boy and a virgin girl are given to Umuafia by neighboring village in compensation; not only are fictional events depicted by Achebe but also the real custom of the Nuba of Sudan.
- In *Things Fall Apart*, the European's hidden motives for social and economic dominance are uncovered.
- According to Achebe, the ideological mission of African writing is to retrieve the wrongs of the past and reclaim Africa's dignity that was

swashed by the negative representations of European writers, and counter the false truths and the universalities of Western thoughts.

- Irony and proverbs are tools of satire that Achebe has used in these selected novels, Achebe uses proverbs not only as a tool of satire but also to express themes and serve other functions.
- Many misrepresentations of Conrad's portrayal of African cultures and people are refuted and corrected.

5.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that students of English literature, linguistics, history, religious, and comparative studies to take up researches on the cultural and linguistic aspects of the life of the Nuba of Sudan. It is also recommended that they keenly study European literatures and undertake comparative studies to bring out the similarities and underline the differences with the intention of promoting mutual understanding and establishing global peace.

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