

***In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful***

**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**College of Languages**

**Research on:**

**The Influence of Traditional Proverbs on the African Novel with  
Special Reference to Chinua Achebe's Novels 'Things Fall Apart'  
and 'No Longer At Ease'**

**تأثير الامثال التقليدية علي الرواية الافريقية باعتبار خاص لروايتي جنيو اجيبي " الاشياء  
تتداعي " " ولاراحة بعد "**

*A Thesis submitted to the Department of English, College of Languages,  
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for PhD. Degree in English  
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**Submitted by: Mohammed AL Hassan AL Madani AL Faki**

**Supervised by: Dr. Mahmoud Ali Ahamed Omer**

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1. Theoretical Frame work:**

Proverbs and proverbial expression are used greatly in all languages and the daily conversation would seem rather dull without them. They also have great contribution to literature as they are a mark of the non literal use of language. Proverbs constitute special source of social literature.

Proverbs are used by all nations in all ages; they range from the classical wisdom to the twentieth century cynicism of those who can teach. Proverbs are defined as a distinct and memorable statement that contains advice, warning, prediction or analytical observation.

Proverbs have categories and each category is divided into groups that express various aspects of the main theme, and they reveal some interesting contradiction. Some proverbs are simple folk saying these have only a literal meaning. Some are broader and more philosophical, aspire to deal with the great mysteries and paradoxes of life, others are metaphorical.

Proverbs as a system greatly reduce the need to explain the meaning of speech, but, a short explanation is provided where the meaning is obscure or ambiguous. Archaic and dialect words are also explained or translated if their meaning can not be understood from the context. Proverbs had been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and it is inevitable that slight variations in their usage exist in general. Many proverbs are based some what loosely and some are literary in African communities and these sources are acknowledged only where they are of particular interest or relevance.

The original of African proverbs is given with some measure of certainty, and it's usually impossible to pinpoint its origin Wa Thingo (1972:23)

Literature is a product of people in society and product of the cognations and value of society. Social institution, superstructure manifestation of a fundamental material process of ideas creation and values within limits prescribed essence of language. Literature is one of instruments that sharpens and mobilizes social consciousness in pursuit or negates qualitative change. It makes an instrument for the preservation or subversion for the existing order

In East Africa events proverbs were unfolded much earlier; they resulted in the production of fiction throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century of much larger body of significant writings in English. The principal difference between the two regions was the absence of what in East Africa of a group comparable with the nineteenth century Creole communities of East Africa. Osmane (1983:85).

Proverbs are used intensively in African Fiction, yet some readers ignore their value and use in the process of reading and appreciating literature. Literary works are a product of a definite form of social practice at the material level. It's in the nature of literary work to appropriate its determinants in the form of concrete experience. African literature and arts have a primary commitment to freedom; the primary responsibility of art is to be listed in the service of freedom.

### **1.1. Objective of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to analyze identify and the effect of proverbs in African Fiction through the diagnosis of some works of African writers with special consideration to Chinua Achebe. African literary theory is an object of intellectual enquiry in its own right than a particular theory in which views on history of its time. The theory is concerned with human meaning, value, language with broad, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies, problems of power and sexuality, interpretations of past history, and versions of the present and hopes for the future.

### **1.2. Hypotheses:**

It is hypothesized that: African literature has special flavor and full of cultural traditions that specify African people.

Chinua Achebe had highly demonstrated

### **1.3 Questions of the Study:**

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study:**

The study is significant because it helps reader to understand African fiction and the role of traditional and cultural aspects of African novel, besides it helps in giving an insight about the influence of colonizers on the literary production of African writers , particularly Chinua Achebe.

#### **1.5 Methodology of the Study:**

This study uses a qualitative data collection method. Data has been gathered from different sources that consist of primary and secondary sources. The constitute a number of critical and theoretical responses to African fiction in general and the writer in question.

### **1.5. Abbreviations used in the Study:**

There are some abbreviations that refer to the study; here is a key to these abbreviations:

ITC: International Trade Community.

TFA: Things Fall Apart.

AOG: Arrow of God.

NLE: No Longer at Ease.

AMP: A Man of the People.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Intellectual currents of African literature**

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#### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2-2. African Literature before the nineteenth century:**

Before the end of nineteenth century, the African writers started early writings. The beginning of Fiction by the English language which had come to them in the luggage of slavers, traders, missionaries, administrators and imperial carpet beggars of all kinds. Writers had made a strong and distinctive contribution to the forms of easy works and they had already demonstrated their skill in appropriating the language of the invader to the task of self – expression and self – identity. This work laid foundation for use of English language as a vehicle of indigenous literary expression along side the African Languages.

It was the same generation of men who had been instrumental, along with their European colleagues in making African Languages available as a mode of written expression, by constructing the first effective orthographies and compiling dictionaries and grammars of various African Languages.

They had founded, edited contribution to the many indigenous African Languages and English Language.

African English writing had made oral model of relaying on the traditions, give scope for a wide variety of other oral genres, such as songs, proverbs and etymologies in historical framework of their narrative. Carbal (1980:17-22).

### **2-3: African Literature between WW1 and WW2**

During the period between and after the two world wars many African writers and Journalists emerge in West Africa and maintained this tradition of intellectual and social critique. African intellectual increased in desire for knowledge, they worked with matured consideration by long expressions in the manner, customs and habits of the peculiar people of Africa. Negro Civilization has some thing positive to contribute to world culture and did not need to go through the process of European acculturation before being able to make this contribution. Works by African and European scholars in recent time increasingly insists on the ongoing viability and power of verbal art in Africa. Arts have a recognized tradition and history of practice in African societies and whose artist's status is well established as the recently vaunted status, involved in being an African English Language writer. There is an increasing recognition that indigenous Language of Africa continue to function. Rodney (1981: 244).



## **2-4: Postcolonial African Literature**

The books of Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Amilcar Cabral's "National Liberation and Struggle", and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's "Writing Against Neocolonialism" reveal the political, economic, and social circumstances that formed the sensibility of most African writers. Those works illuminated the various types of mentalities or ideologies that inform African literature. In addition, these works help the reader determine if a novelist's portrayal of African society fully reflects its social relations, political arrangements, and economic factors or not. These critical writings also help in the debate on the definition of African literature. For they bring out the historical connections that make it possible to analyze African literature dealing with pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases of African history.

Rodney, Cabral and Ngugi claim that African literature exists in a historical continuum. For example, neocolonialism prevails today in Africa because of the continuation after independence of the economic, political and social practices established by colonialism. An analysis of the economic, political and social contradictions created by colonialism is, therefore, necessary in understanding and effectively countering neocolonialism. For the contradictions created by colonialism are still realities in contemporary Africa's development.

Walter Rodney's "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" analyzes the colonial relations of production and the economic and political contradictions that produced Africa's underdevelopment and continue to plague Africa today. Rodney, who describes colonialism as a "one-armed bandit," claims that colonialism, more than anything else, underdeveloped Africa. According

to him, colonialism laid the roots of neocolonialism in Africa by creating Africa's economic dependency on the international capitalist system. The introduction of capitalist relations of production and distribution, for example, the International Trade Commodity (ITC) exchange systems and values created such dependency. Rodney (1981) asserts that "previous African development was blunted, halved and turned back" by colonialism without offering anything of compensatory value.

Many works of African literature record the kind of exploitation Rodney (1981) describes in Mayombe, for example, the Narrator notes that "My land is rich in coffee, but my father was always a poor peasant . . ." In Dembos, men lived wretchedly in the midst of wealth. Coffee was everywhere, hugging the trees. But they stole it; sweat was paid for with a few worthless coins. Pepetela (1983: 118-56)

Meka, the protagonist in Ferdinand Oyono's "The Old Man and the Medal", and the other peasants grow cocoa for export to France; In Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart", the opening of a trading post and selling of yams, marks the beginning and entrenchment of the capitalist money economy. Similarly, in Mongo Beti's "Mission to Kala", "The Poor Christ Of Bomba and King Lazarus", the production of cocoa for export marks the beginning of an international capitalist economic order, so detrimental to Africa. "Mono-culture," introduced by colonialism, made the African producer helpless in the face of capitalist maneuvers. There was little development of local industry which is a trend that persists in contemporary Africa. In *I will Marry When I Want*, Gicaamba says:

I wouldn't mind, son of Gathoni,

If after selling away our labor,

Our village benefited.

But look now at this village!

There is no property, there is no wealth. Wa Thiong'o (1988: 36-7)

Rodney writes that "roads were built to make business possible" and argues that "any catering to African interests was purely accidental." For instance, in Mongo Beti's "Remember Reuben", the colonial road in Ekoudom is a symbolic means of the oppressive exploitation of the African. The narrator says that "the road was a world apart from ours, and it was chance alone which had made it brush against our city; it was certainly not by any wish of ours . In Ferdinand Oyono's "The Old Man and the Medal", the road, constructed by forced black labor, symbolizes the visible exploitative means linking Africa to Europe. Rodney notes also that the social services in colonial Africa reflected the pattern of domination and exploitation geared toward the well-being of the settlers. In Mayombe the narrator says:

*You earn twenty escudos a day, for chopping down trees with an axe . . . And how much does the boss earn for each tree? A pile. What does the boss do to earn this money? Nothing, nothing . . . So, how can he earn many thousands a day and give you twenty escudos? What right has he? This is colonialist exploitation.*  
Pepetela (1983: 19)

What the narrator notes above, claims Rodney, is what resulted in the underdevelopment of Africa.

Rodney observes that the African dependency upon the European also ultimately produced neocolonial class stratification and Africans who manipulated the colonial economic structures for their own benefit. In

Mission to Kala, the colonial authorities nominate the chief of “Vimili” who goes on to live an opulent life at the expense of the people.

The colonial Administration who had nominated him in the first place buttered him up. In return, he obeyed their commands like a robot and knew they would not throw him out. In the days of the forced labor gangs he had been feared by everyone because he betrayed fugitives to the authorities and acted as an informer. He used our traditional tribal hierarchy as a vehicle for his underhand intrigues, and flouted our laws and customs when he no longer needed them. Beti: (1964:18)

Like the chief of Kala, he works in league with the colonial administrators to exploit the local society. Medza's father also becomes rich from collecting money and livestock from his insolvent debtors. He is, to Medza, an epitome of the successful grafting of western hypocrisy and commercial materialism onto a first rate African intelligence. This class of petty accumulators and the educated black people form the basis of neocolonialism. They are the progenitors of characters like Gitutu Wa Gataanguru and Kihauuha Wa Gatheera in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, the corrupt civil servant, Obi Okonkwo, in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, the honorable M. A. Nanga "the bush politician" and the young intellectual, Odili, in Achebe's *A Man of the People*, the railway freight clerk in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, and Ahab Kioi Wa Kanoru and Ikuua Wa Ndikita in Ngugi's *I will Marry When I Want*. Beti: (1964:18-20).

## **2-5: Idioms and proverbs:**

Once a scholar quipped: “What is great about proverbs? Anybody can utter them.” Somebody retorted “OK, tell one!” “Eh” and then he ponders. It is very hard indeed to condense so much wisdom in so few words. Proverbs has been and remains a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another. The reason behind the efficacy of the proverb is that it is an aphorism, a wise saying based upon people’s experience, and is a reflection of the social values and sensibility of the people.

A collection of the proverbs of a community or nation is in a real sense an ethnography of the people, which if systematized can give a penetrating picture of the people’s way of life, their philosophy, their criticism of life, moral truths and social values. At the level of individual units of aphorisms, proverbs fits into the syntax of speech as a figurative expression, and a stylistic device with the desired semantic force. Even poets nowadays do use it. Collectively and in an important general sense, African proverbs are literary forms which offer the traditional artist, speaker, philosopher and priest a veritable medium for the projection and fulfilment of a variety of socially desired goals.

Whenever there is doubt about an accepted pattern of behaviour, whenever there is doubt about a stipulated line of action, whenever traditional norms are threatened, there are always proverbs and indeed tales or myths to vouch, illuminate and buttress the wisdom of the traditional code of conduct. The value of the corpus of societal proverbs lies not only in the way they strengthen tradition, but in the

variety of ways in which they may and do contribute to the life continuity of the given society, and the individual who lives in it.

In terms of form, the proverb is a graphic statement that expresses a truth of experience. Its beauty and source of delight is that what it says is readily perceived and accepted as an incontrovertible truth. The truth presented in the proverb is not a logical, a priori or intuitive truth; it is often an empirical fact based upon and derived from the people's experience of life, human relationship and interaction with the world of nature. The proverb, as a short popular saying in form, expresses its truth of experience or observation in a strikingly figurative language. It is marked by its epigrammatic terseness and by the readily acceptance of its truth.

We as writers can effectively spice up our stories, plays and poems with proverbs, and do as much as convey traditionally accustomed wisdom as we pass across our message and varying themes that centres on our unique African environment. And while we deliberate more on its usage, we should place our minds on the works of Chinua Achebe, the great novelist, and Wole Soyinka, the talented playwright, and salute the richness of their works occasionally spiced up with proverbs both from the Igbo and Yoruba cultures, particularly as seen in "Things Fall Apart" and "Arrow of God" by Achebe, and "Death and the King's Horseman" by Soyinka.

So it is now a wake up call for we writers to dialogue with our grandparents and dig out as many rich proverbs we could get. For with old age comes wisdom. And like they say 'what an old man has seen sitting down, a child can never see it, standing up.' And we can even go further to interview our parents and wise uncles that have many a tale to tell on history and cultural ideals, from which we can fetch enough wisdom from. For "Half of a Yellow Sun" wouldn't have been so real if Chimamanda had not done such enlightening interviews that could broaden a writer's horizon, and make his or her work not limited by scanty none relatable

detail. So I urge everyone to look into that creative mind, and harvest as many proverbs you can get, that you probably must have taken for granted.

Idioms are not a separate part , the language which one can choose either to use or to omit but they form an essential part of the general vocabulary of English African languages. A description of how changing will help to place idioms in perspective.

Most words of idioms come from the English of especial subjects such as science and technology, psychology, politics and economics, words which already existed can also take on what one user on a particular meaning in a particular situation. For example; “to lock some one out” means to lock a door in order to prevent some from entering. The verb has special meaning in the context (refuse to let the person in). Idioms exist to express new ideas and combination of two or three existing words e.g. to freeze wages its politics and economics and it means , to stop increasing in wages , the same idea is found in to “ freeze prices and a price – freeze” .

Idioms can be formed by changing a verbal phrase into a noun as in a lock – out or by changing a noun into a verb such as “check – up a walk – over – a hand over – a hand out – a set up” . Idioms are to give words new grammatical functions because English is flexible, and to make the form of words, used shorter and more direct. They are short cut in language and more popular. (e.g. newscast ( news + broadcast ) .

Idioms make people become more flexible and tolerant about what is considered to be correct or acceptable usage in present day English.

They can appear in formal style and in slang. An idiom is a number of words which are taken together, to mean something that different from the individual words when they stand alone.

The way in which the words are put together is often odd, illogical or even grammatically incorrect. It is extremely unwise to translate idioms into English from one's own native language. Mastery of idioms comes only slowly, through careful study and observation, through practice and experience, but practice makes perfectness.

By comparing proverbs to what idioms make language vivid and clear, for the learner user will be exactly how and when to use these comparisons.

Finally a word about the wisdom of proverbs, proverbs must not be mere platitudes. But they do not chafe to be true. Folly wisdom is often contradictions, perhaps it is a mistake to regard proverbs as sources of accumulated wisdom, they are better seen as collection of tags that enable thoughts to be communicated and changed without the effort of formulation to be used in appropriate situation.

## **2-6: Chapter summary:**

The trouble with African Fiction is not that of a definition, it has to do with large task of freeing knowledge about African Fiction from constrictive embrace of bourgeoisie intellectual mystification.

One can perceive African Fiction as manifesting itself in a variety of modes of production ranging from the oral to the written and electronically transmitted and most widespread among the mayoralty of African peoples who inhabit the rural areas and urban slums.



The survey is intended to encourage the appreciation and understanding of traditional and ideological African society in Fiction which may simulate the interest in continued and more through sophisticated understanding.

**Chapter Three**  
**Chinua Achebe's Biography and Style**

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### **Chinua Achebe's Biography and Style**

#### **3-1. Who is Chinua Achebe:**

Albert Chinualumogu Achebe is one of the most well known African authors of his generation, he was born in 1930. He is the son of Isaiah and Janet Achebe and was married to Christie Chinue Okoli in 1961., a Christian churchman, in Nigeria., and has four children: Chinelo, Ikechukwu, Chidi, and Nwando. He attended Government College in Umuahia from 1944 to 1947 and University College in Ibadan from 1948 to 1953. He initially intended to study medicine, but switched to literature. He then received a B.A. from London University in 1953 and studied broadcasting at the British Broadcasting Corporation in London in 1956. Killian (1973:30).

#### **3. 2. Life and Background of Chinua Achebe**

The life of Achebe was full of many incidents and characters that had a great effect not only on him as a person but also on the style of his writing as well. Achebe was born on November 16, 1930 in Ogidi in the eastern region of [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010 *Published by Canadian*

*Center of Science and Education* 99 Nigeria to a father who was an evangelist and church teacher. His maternal grandfather, like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, was a wealthy and distinguished community leader. Achebe received B.A. degree from university college Ibadan, in 1953. During the next twelve years he worked for the Nigerian broadcasting corporation. In 1961, he married Christiana Chinwe Okoli. During these years Achebe wrote his first four novels, beginning with his most famous *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, and ending with *A Man of the People* in 1966. By 1966, Achebe had become a distinguished member of the international literary community. However, his career was interrupted by the outbreak of the war in Biafra. Achebe joined the Biafran's ministry of information and played a diplomatic role in raising money for the Biafran cause. Bound as he was by emotional ties and personal commitment to his country's fate, Achebe had no time to write novels. All he could manage were short poems, which were published a year after the war was over in 1971. After the war, Achebe's career was taken up primarily by the academic world. In 1972 he was a senior research fellow at the institute of African Studies at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. From 1972 to 1975, he was a professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, from 1975-1976 at the University of Connecticut. He then became professor at the University of Nigeria Nsukka and ten years later, he was again at university of Massachusetts. In March 1990 Achebe was involved in a serious car accident that left him confined to a wheelchair. After nearly six months of recovery in various hospitals, he accepted an endowed professorship at Bard College in New York. For the next several years he turned his energies increasingly to the academic world teaching, editing and writing political and critical nonfiction.

### ***3.2. The Effect of Background life on Achebe's works.***

*Things Fall Apart* focuses on the early experience of colonialism as it occurred in Nigeria in the late 1800's, from the first days of contact with the British to the

widespread British administration. Achebe is interested in showing Ibo society in the period of transition when rooted traditional values are put in conflict with an alien and more powerful culture that will tear them apart. Achebe paints a vivid picture of Ibo society both before and after the arrival of white men, and avoids the temptation to idealize either culture.

### **3.3 Things Fall Apart and No Longer At Ease : Origin and Contribution.**

Achebe takes the title of his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, from W.B Yeats's 1921 poem *The Second Coming*, which prophesies the end of the present era and the entrance on the world's stage of another that is radically different. *Things Fall Apart* treats the early moments of that transition in an Ibo village. Achebe creates a mythic village whose history stretches back to a legendary past. Chapters are devoted to the daily routines of the people, their family life, their customs, games, and cruelties, their ancient wisdom, their social order, and legal practices.

Achebe remains a realist since he identifies also certain flaws in the customs and in the people.

In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe presented to us a different perspective of life. He accomplished this by introducing to us an African tribe named Ibo. There were tremendous differences between these people and the Europeans at the time. That is precisely why Achebe wrote this novel. He wrote it so that readers can learn about his beloved African culture. Another reason why he wrote? it is to show how easily a way of life can be destroyed.

*Things Fall Apart* is about the fall of the African tribes with the colonization of Europeans. Lastly, Achebe wrote this novel to set a good example for his fellow Africans, so that they can follow his example and receive a good education.

Achebe wants to promote modern African Literature. He wants to impress all of those who may misperceive his native African culture.

Things Fall Apart is Achebe's first novel and was published in 1958, a time often called the Nigerian Renaissance because in that period a large number of very strong Nigerian writers began to create a powerful new literature that drew on the traditional oral literature, European literature, and the changing times in Nigeria and in Africa at large. Writers as varied as Ben Okri and Wole Soyinka developed in the context of the ideas and energy of the Nigerian Renaissance, but Achebe is considered one of the earliest and best novelists to have come out of modern Nigeria, in fact one of the top English-speaking novelists of his time anywhere.

### ***3.1 Political Settings in Africa and Achebe's Things Fall Apart.***

When England sent colonizers and missionaries to Africa, it had great effect on African tribal life, and on Chinua Achebe. Achebe became slightly interested in British culture, and began reading English writings; only to be disgusted with the message British authors were trying to get across. Achebe learned that English authors saw Africans as inhumane savages that needed to be saved. Angry with the English writings, Achebe decided to answer back by writing his first novel, Things Fall Apart, in 1958, to counteract the distortions of English literature about  
[www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010  
100 ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750 Africa. In Things Fall Apart, Achebe tells the story of an Ibo village of the late 1800's and one of its great men, a warrior named Okonkwo. Okonkwo is a champion wrestler, a wealthy farmer, a husband to three wives, a title holder among his people, and a member of the select Ekwugwu, whose members impersonate ancestral spirits at tribal rituals. However life changes dramatically for the Ibo society and Okonkwo with the arrival of British colonizers and missionaries, also known as the white man.

The order of the Ibo society is disrupted with the appearance of the white man in Africa and with the introduction of white religion. Okonkwo, who is looked highly upon by his people, is unable to adapt to the changes that accompany colonialism. He tries to live the traditional Ibo life; however the arrival of the white man into his society causes him to fall apart. In the end of the story, Okonkwo, in frustration, decapitates an employee of the British, then commits suicide which is a sin against the tradition to which he had clung to. The conflict in the novel, vested in Okonkwo, derives from the series of crushing blows which are leveled at traditional values by an alien and more powerful culture causing, in the end, the traditional society to fall apart. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe recreated the tragic consequences that took place due to the clash between the Ibo society and the white man. By using a character such as Okonkwo, he showed how even the strong willed people of the Ibo society were unable to overcome the British influences.

Traditional way of living for the Ibo society was rapidly changing in the early 1900's due to European colonialism. Many Nigerians were being absorbed by the British and straying from their traditional beliefs and values. With the advent of the white man there was a loss of native values such as communal harmony, placing society above self, respect for the aged, and reverence for achievers, which resulted in the absence of self analysis and a stable code of ethics in the society of pre-Independent Nigeria. Lured by western education and well paying jobs, the youth of the country did not hesitate to stoop to the levels of immorality and dangerous permissiveness.

### ***3.2 A Multi-Thematic Novel of Conflict and Weakness.***

In *Things Fall Apart*, we see a conflict early in the novel between Okonkwo and his father, Unoka. Okonkwo thought of his father as a failure. Okonkwo did not take anything from his father starting the real world with nothing. Okonkwo's goal in life is to obtain great wealth and to have many wives and children. The people of

Okonkwo's village considered this as a great status symbol. His greatest goal is his desire to become one of the powerful elders of the clan. Okonkwo saw his son, Nwoye, as gentle and forgiving. Okonkwo thought of these qualities as weak. Okonkwo also saw his son as lazy and wanted him to be a success like himself. Okonkwo's hard work pays off and helps him become one of the village's most respected members. Okonkwo establishes three out of four titles that are possible in the tribe.

Some of the conflicts contained religion, social life, education, and others. The Ibo people have a very different religious lifestyle than the British people. The Ibo believed in polytheism, the worship of many gods. The Ibo god that created the world and others is Chukwu. The Ibo had a group of nine ancestral spirits, which they called Egwugwu. The women of the Ibo people were monogamous believers. "“Every year’...’before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land”” (Achebe 17).

This is how religious the people of the tribe are. They worship all gods and believe that every god helps or harms them. When the Christian religion is introduced, many people of the Ibo became interested in this new religion.

The most interested of the tribe were the people with the least titles. The British told the Ibo people that worship of polygamy is senseless and that there is only one god. “Your gods are not alive and cannot do any harm,’ Replied the white man. ‘They are pieces of wood and stone” (Achebe 105).

The man of the family has his own hut, which he lives in. The hut is also called an “obi” (Achebe 14). The woman shares a hut with the children of that same family. The tribe has a group of elders that have achieved a high status and help to keep order in the village. The elders ruled because it was thought that they are filled with knowledge.



Women in the novel were depicted as not equal. Okonkwo even told himself once “he could remember when men were men” (Achebe 184). This is the time when the tribe does not choose to fight the missionaries.

The British destroyed many aspects of the Ibo culture. The “ebu” was one of the first to go. The ebu is the government system that the Ibo people incorporated. They also forced the natives to change their lifestyles. The British took over Umuofia, while introducing hospitals, courthouses, and jails. With the introduced court system, the missionaries are protected and only the Ibos are judged. The schools that the British built in Umuofia taught the native people to read and write in the white man’s culture (Achebe 181).

Okonkwo’s life finally fell completely apart as his body is found dangling from a tree. Okonkwo committed suicide. The reason that he did this is because he was ashamed of what the Ibo society was becoming. The British were taking over the whole culture, from taking the land to creating new beliefs. Some critics find Okonkwo’s [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010 *Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education* 101

suicide ironic because suicide in the Ibo society is one of the worst acts a person can commit. Few civilizations were able to withstand the threat of Westernization. The force was too powerful, strong, and sophisticated for such common people to fight. Achebe tells the story with an understanding and personal experiences in both English and Native cultures. Achebe realized that neither of the cultures are bad, but they are simply different. Throughout the novel, Achebe makes it clear the Ibo experience and love the natural world, and he uses metaphors to show their intimacy with the land. He writes, "Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break" (Achebe 21-22). There are many sequences such as this in the novel, which show the stark beauty of Nigeria and

what the people lost as the British built up and modernized the country. The natives

were used to living off the land, while the British were not even interested in conserving or valuing the land. In *Things Fall Apart*, though gender plays a significant factor in determining one's responsibilities, seniority does

play a small factor. Women usually had domestically oriented jobs and complimentary positions to men. In the Ibo culture, women were expected to give birth to sons to prolong the survival of the tribe. A woman's main role was

being a good loyal housewife. They were expected to look after the children, clean and have the meals ready by the time their husband at home. If they did not do all of their responsibilities, it was fair game for their husbands to beat

them. Wife beating was considered a common solution to disobedient women, and was allowed by the Ibo tribe. Chinua Achebe describes two instances of wife beating in *Things Fall Apart*. The first instance is when Okonkwo

beats his wife, Ojiugo, and another involves a tribesman, Uzowulu. Okonkwo beats his wife first as a punishment for not having dinner prepared for him, for plaiting her hair instead of cooking dinner for him and his children. Any other time, people would not have come over to see why a woman was screaming, but this was during the Week of Peace, and to beat someone during the Week of Peace was unheard of. Okonkwo did not care though. He thought that she needed to be punished anyway.

Later, the priest called Okonkwo, and explained to him that he had greatly upset the gods, and in order to prevent them from pouring their wrath on the village, he had to bring many things to the Shrine of Ani.

Uzowulu had been accused by his sister-in-law of beating his wife too much. Once, he beat her while she was pregnant and she miscarried. This trial was brought before the Eegwugwu, or jury, because it was a more severe case. The Eegwugwu ruled in favor of Uzowulu's wife, and he was ordered to bring a pot of wine to his

in-laws and beg for his wife to return. After the case was over, one elder said to the other, “I don’t know why such a trifle should come before the Egwugwu,” said one elder to the other.’ Don’t you know what kind of man Uzowulu is?

He will not listen to any other decision,’ replied the other.” (Achebe 94) The elders knew that Uzowulu would still beat his wife after but it was a ritual of the Ibo, to bring serious cases of wife beating before the Egwugwu. The Ibo also assigned other important roles to women as well as housewife. They painted the houses of the Egwugwu, and every Ibo man’s first wife was paid more respect than his later wives were. During the palm wine ceremony at Nwakibie’s Obi, none of the other wives were allowed to sit or begin to drink until Nwakibie’s first wife arrived.

When Okonkwo was exiled from his village of Umuofia, and forced to return to his motherland, his mother’s family accepted him, and helped him to adapt to his new village, despite his nasty attitude. A speech was given by Okonkwo’s uncle, directed at him, shortly after he arrived. He asked Okonkwo if he knew why they often name their children Nneka, meaning, “Mother is supreme.” Okonkwo did not know and shook his head. After laughing at his ignorance, Okonkwo’s uncle Uchendu explained to him why they did this. He explained to Okonkwo that one’s mother is always there for her children. He said, “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” (Achebe 134) He was trying to tell Okonkwo that a man will be happy and sad throughout his life, but when things get really bad, one’s mother is always there to take care and comfort him.

The women of the tribe are seen as soft and female, and it is not good for the men to exhibit these traits, it means they are weak; at least this is how Okonkwo sees the women in his life. He is so desperately afraid of appearing weak to those around him, that he will do anything; even kill those close to him, to appear

manlier. This may not be the way much of the tribes see their women, but Okonkwo is different. He is so afraid he will end up a failure like his father that he cannot see beyond the outside of people. Women are weak to him, and so, to appear weak to others is to appear effeminate, and there is nothing worse to this man. Early in the novel, Okonkwo's son, desperate to please his harsh father, learns he can no longer listen to the women when he is considered to be almost a man.

Achebe writes, "But he now knew that they were for foolish women and children, and he knew that his father wanted him to be a man. And so he feigned that he no longer cared for women's stories" (Achebe 38). Nwoye wants to please his father, but his father continually berates him for his womanly traits, like kindness and gentleness. Okonkwo sees these traits as weak and dreadful, and because they were the traits of his father, he despises them in his son, whom he sees as effeminate and weak. It is sad, because he alienates his son and literally [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010 102 ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750 drives him to the white man's religion, he also cannot see the goodness and decency in his son, and so dismisses him, just as he dismisses the rest of the women in the novel. Throughout the novel, the theme of weakness comes up often, and always in comparison to women. Okonkwo is afraid to ever appear weak, and that is his tragic flaw. He could not see the goodness in his father, and so, he has allowed no goodness in himself. He is harsh to his children and his wives, and he does not learn or grow from his mistakes. He is the tragic hero of the story, but the women are also tragic, because they are so ignored and unloved by this strong man who cannot give of himself at all. However, the women do not need to be validated by Okonkwo; they are secure in their own strength, and in the strengths of the goddesses who are an important part of the culture.

In fact, "The Ibo people believe that the mother plays a major role in society. The movements and confrontations in the Ibo society, described by Achebe, do not

militate against the position of women in society" (Egar 36). Thus, Okonkwo's harsh treatment of his wives would not be popular in his village, and while the men may not have said anything, it did set their minds against him. Okonkwo could only see violence as the solution to any problem, and that was not the way many people of his tribe thought people should act. In fact, many of the other Ibo admire him but distrust him at the same time. Achebe writes, "Indeed he respected him for his industry and success. But he was struck, as most people were, by Okonkwo's brusqueness in dealing with less successful men" (Achebe 19).

It is interesting to note that all of the tribesmen did not feel as Okonkwo did, although many of them certainly agreed with his assessment of women as the weaker sex. During his exile, another Ibo, Uchendu, encourages Okonkwo to experience his feminine side, and allow himself to feel, or he will surely be doomed. However, Okonkwo is so fearful of appearing weak that he cannot listen to anyone. He cannot learn from his past, and grow to his future. Okonkwo is so set in his prejudices against femininity, that he cannot see how strong the women of his tribe really are, and how he could learn from them. In reality, the Ibo women rioted in the early 1900s, after the white men began their takeover of Nigeria. It was the women who stood up to the invaders, and so, Okonkwo misses an opportunity to learn much from the strong women around him. In fact, Okonkwo misses many opportunities throughout the novel, and that is why he is a tragic figure. Okonkwo's treatment of his wives, from beating them to ignoring them, also represents the brutal way the white man colonized Africa. The British missionaries in *Things Fall Apart* seem harmless enough, but they are bringing a new way of life that will someday erase the way of life the Ibo people know during the novel. British imperialism in Africa was all about money and power, and millions of people were thrown off their lands and forced to give up their rural ways. Some of the Ibo see this coming, and are afraid of the white man's encroachment.

While the missionaries were only there to convert the heathens, the white man in Africa was generally cruel and unyielding. The District Commissioner represents this prejudicial look at the natives, and his treatment of them is not that different from the treatment Okonkwo gives his family. It is diffident, violent, and disinterested, and that is the same way the District Commissioner handles the natives he hopes to dominate. Thus, the women in the novel are a symbol. They are a symbol of outdated beliefs, such as women are subservient to men, but they are also a symbol of the white man, and his indifference to the suffering created by his encroachment on the natives' land, and way of life.

The novel, especially the beginning, spells out in great detail many of the intricate customs and celebrations of the Ibo, and reading the novel illustrates just what these people lost when the white man came to Africa and forced them to adapt or die. One character warns Okonkwo about the whites, "We have heard stories about white men who made the powerful guns and the strong drinks and took slaves away across the seas, but no one thought the stories were true" (Achebe 99). Okonkwo could not adapt, and so he left his family to fend for themselves when they needed him most.

In the end, Okonkwo mourns "for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women" (Achebe 129). Even at the end of his life, Okonkwo cannot take responsibility for his own actions. He has driven away and disowned his son, he has alienated his wives and children by beating and berating them, and he has even gone into exile. Yet, he is still desperately afraid of appearing weak like a woman. He does not learn from his experiences, and he does not learn that there are far worse things than appearing womanly.

His son, Nwoye, is happy in his life with the whites, but Okonkwo cannot even accept that happiness. He is a sad figure, and it seems right somehow that he

commits the ultimate act of weakness, suicide, because it is clear from the beginning of the story that Okonkwo cannot learn and grow. He cannot adapt to change, even when the old ways no longer work. The only thing that he can understand is violence, and it is the only thing that he thinks solves problems and makes a man a man. Achebe puts it this way, "Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his *obi*, and he told them stories of the land, masculine stories of violence and bloodshed" (Achebe 52). Okonkwo [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010 *Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education* 103 represents all men in society who are so obsessed with their own manliness that they can never allow themselves any emotion, caring, or concern. Sadly, these archaic attitudes are still not uncommon in today's society, and Okonkwo illustrates just how outdated and ridiculous they really are. The women of the tribe are often silent, and they play a very minor role in the novel. This is true of the society as well. Achebe did not even give some of the women names. Women were simply not as important in Ibo society as men, but they did have some vital roles, and some of the men knew they could learn from the women. Okonkwo did not, and so, he could not survive in a changing world, that included men *and* women gathered together to try to hold on to a way of life that was swiftly disappearing. In conclusion, the women of the tribes in this novel show how women all over the world have been treated in the past. They are seen as less than men; soft, weak, and only good enough to work in the fields and take care of the house. Yet, women are the backbone of any society, because not only do they perform much of the work, they bear and raise the children, and keep the society viable and successful. Many of the men in this novel, like Okonkwo, are foolish, and in the end, not strong enough to bear up to their new lives. The women of the novel are strong, and it is clear they will survive, no matter what.

A man's alienation means his dehumanization, his estrangement from his own community, society and eventually from his own self. In the words of Sidney Finkelstein alienation is "a psychological felt toward something seemingly outside oneself which is linked to oneself, a barrier erected which is actually no defense but an impoverishment of oneself". (Joseph, 106-7) The protagonist as an alienated human being or outsider is a re-current character in post-colonial writing. The protagonist in such writing began to alienate from his culture, community and society due to some alien forces and western-education. The depiction of alienation and rootless ness forms a continuing thematic concern not only to Achebe but also to the writers like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Ishmall Roid, Ngugi Anita Desai, Arun Joshi Nyantara Sahgal, V.S Naipal etc. Frantz Fanon in "*Black Skin, White Marks*" locates alienation within the colonial situations, and maintains that the colonized is alienated not only from his colour and the traditional community, but from his very being as a black person because the Black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the Whiteman. Thus such people become strangers in their own nation and are called black white men. After getting western education and Western thinking there began a transformation of the native in to something other himself-a westernized native. Native people began to adopt western practices and culture. They forget their own identify. They started mimicry of the white men and their culture. This alien civilization and their education bring a sense of alienation in Nigerian youth. Achebe describes the pathetic situation faced by those born at the crossroads of culture and therefore unable to allegiance neither to their own native values nor to the values inherited by them by being exposed to the Western materialism. The protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, grandson of Okonkwo, the tragic hero of *Things Fall Apart* is also a product of alienation from his own community, society and culture. It was due to his western education and new ideas and way of life developed by his education. He tries to negotiate



between his communal living and new way of thinking but never succeeds. In the words of his friend Joseph, “his mission house upbringing and European education had made him stranger in his country.” (Achebe, 77). His father is the rebellious son of Okonkwo who left home for Christian Church and was educated in mission school. The novel begins after things have fallen apart; Nigeria is between societies. Obi no longer belongs to the old society. He receives a similar education and is selected by Igbo community to study in England. After getting western education he considers himself an independent youth, with a Western concept of government and administration. The title taken from Yeats poem “The journey to Magi” itself explains the psychic dislocation experience by the protagonist and the general confusion that has spread in Africa as well. Obi is “no longer at ease, in the old dispensation”. The story is about the practical difficulties of Obi as an ordinary individual separating himself cleanly from the past while adapting to the glitter and temptations of the new. Achebe comments on the character of Obi, “His abortive effort at education and culture, though leaving him totally unredeemed and unregenerated, had nonetheless done something to him-it had deprived him of his links with his own people whom he no longer understood and who certainly wanted none of his dissatisfaction or pretension. (Ghosh, 45) *Colonial Conflicts leads to Alienation and Rootlessness in Achebe’s No Longer at Ease* [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org) .

The novel directly deals with distress and difficulty of Nigerian youth amidst contemporary social, economic and political problems of Africa. In the words of Innes, *No longer at Ease* is the story of a young man who, educated by the British, attracted by much of what British civilization has to offer, employed by the British, seeks to live up to a new inflated image created by his position, falls into debt, takes bribes, is caught, tried and convicted. (Achebe, 42) The novel begins at the end of Obi's career with his trial in the High Court of Lagos and with the question of Judge: how a young man with his education and brilliant promise could have done this and the rest of the novel, a long retrospect of Obi's career seeks to answer this question. Achebe gives us two opposite views on Obi's action one of European's and other of members of Umuofia Progressive Union. Mr. Green Obi's boss, explains his disgrace and announces in his club, "the Africa is corrupt through and through" because for centuries Africa „has been the victim of the worst climate in the world and of every imaginable disease. Hardly his fault. But he has been sapped mentally and physically." (Achebe, 3) For Green and the other members of the British club, Obi and all Africans belong to a race apart, whose psychology and mentality is permanently alien. Then we are switched to the view of Obi's fellow villagers, for whom Obi is permanently a kinsman, a brother against whom anger „was felt in flesh, not in the bone". (Achebe, 4) The members of U.P.U of Lagos branch are not interested in African corruption but are more concerned with the downfall of Obi, to whom they sent to England for higher studies. They too are baffled by Obi's action but in their case it is his naivety that troubles them. Obi is not blamed for accepting the bribe, but criticized for having stooped for the petty amount involved as the president says, "it was a thing of shame for a man in the senior service to go to prison for twenty pounds. He repeated twenty pounds, spitting it out. (Achebe, 5) All of them pity Obi's naivety and indiscretion in doing, what everyone does without finding out how it was done

and they think “He should not have accepted the money himself. What others do is tell you to go and hand it to their houseboy.” (Achebe, 5)[8] David Carroll describes the differences of these two cultures of which obi is the hybrid product in these words, To the Europeans it is inconceivable that someone who has had the privilege of a Western education should not adhere to the rules of conduct it enshrines. To the Africans of Umuofia it is disturbing that their most learned offspring, who has been educated for the glory of the clan and to look after their interests, should be so incompetent in the elementary conventions of bribe taking.(Carroll, 63) After it the novel takes a form of a long flash back. And we as readers are introduced with the time of Obi’s departure from his village to the University in England. Obi is sent to England by Umuofians because they not only want the education brought by the missionaries, but also a degree from English University which can provide Obi a European post. Obi leaves the village as a hero and the Reverend Osamuel Ikedi says that the departure of Obi is the fulfillment of the prophecy: The people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death to them did light spring up. These men were great in their day. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns of large number of wives and children. (Achebe, 7) Today greatness has changed its tune. Greatness is now in the things of white man. Now Umuofia sent their son to bring knowledge, „In times past, Umuofia would have required of you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads. But those were days of darkness from which we have been delivered by the blood of the Lamb of God. Today we send you to bring knowledge. Remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”(Achebe, 9) Umuofians are happy when they arrange this educational trip for Obi. At this occasion a village elder remarks, “We too have changed our tune. We are the first in the entire nine villages to send our son to the white man’s land.”(Achebe, 49) U.P.U that has financed Obi’s education expected him not only

to repay that scholarship but return the favor in form of some activities for betterment of the community. But they don't realize that "the knowledge which brings power also brings detachment and alienation..." (Carroll, 65) The above passage clearly shows the effect of colonial powers on the traditional life of Igbo people. The things which were the symbols of greatness in traditional life have now lost their value. Obi notices right from the time he lands in Nigeria that his country is no longer the Nigeria of his dreams but it has already advanced in corrupt practices such as taking bribe. When he returns from England, in the second chapter we find the contrast perception of Obi about Lagos before and after his trip to England. First as a young member of the village community, he accepts the romantic accounts of this place, the nearest thing to Europe where „there is no darkness... because at high the electric shines like the sun“. But on his return for him Lagos is a scenario of dead dogs, bad smell and sewage. Here was Lagos, thought Obi; the real Lagos he hadn't imagined existed until now. During his first winter in England he had written a callow, nostalgic poem about Nigeria. It wasn't about Lagos in particular, but Lagos was part of the Nigeria he had in mind. *Colonial Conflicts leads to Alienation and Rootlessness in Achebe's No Longer at Ease* [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org)

„How sweet it is to beneath a tree At even time and share the ecstasy Of jocund birds and flimsy butterflies; How sweet to leave our earthbound body in its mind, And rise towards the music of the spheres, Descending soft with wind, And the tender glow of the fading sun. He recalled this poem and then turned and looked at the rotting dog in the storm drain and smiled. „I have tasted putrid flesh in the spoon,” he said through clenched teeth. „Far more apt.” At last Clara emerged from the side street and they drove away. (Achebe, 14-15) So Obi’s conception of Nigeria has changed and a sense of alienation has taken place in him. His alienation is apparent first to the members of U.P.U at the celebration function of Obi’s return at Lagos. They become disturbed by Obi’s appearance in shirt sleeves, even his fellow traveler came well dressed in black suit. They also become surprised by his unimpressive speech of thanks and by his strange system of value as he says that his education is for service, not for white-collar jobs and comfortable salaries. The secretary of progressive union tries to regain control on Obi and he reminds him that he has sent to England for further studies in accordance with the usual practice by his kith and kin by their hard earned money. In return they expect him to bring honour and prosperity to their village. They now expect to enjoy, „the great honour Obi had brought to the ancient town of Umuofia which could now join the comity of other towns in their march towards political irrendentism, social equality and economic emancipation”. “The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying “Ours is ours, but mine is mine.”( Achebe, 28) But later in novel Obi quickly feels that the demands being made upon him are unacceptable, and he is an alien with a different set of values. For him, “the demands of the two worlds seem irreconcilable, his western education has made him „beast of no nation...” (Innes, 44). At his return he is stable enough to thwart the practice of accepting bribes in his personal life. So when he travels home on his

first visit to the village, he becomes surprised to see this corrupt custom in Nigeria. He expresses his disaster and he and his friend Christopher theorized about bribery in Nigerian public life and argue about Nigeria's future. For Obi the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from universities. He says in the colonized language, „What an Augean stable!“ he muttered to himself. „Where does one begin? With the masses? Educate the masses?“ he shook his head. „Not a chance there. It would take centuries..... (Achebe, 40). Obi sees a dream to remove the corrupt practices, when he journeys home he has certain definite ideas regarding his future. He gets a more triumphant welcome at his home than Lagos. The villagers welcome him as a returning hero, without any suspicion of his cultural dislocation. The village greets him in same terms as they send him to England. The conflict is also seen in the attitude of Obi's father towards the villagers as they say that Christianity has made him blind because he is the only man to fail to see that on such happy occasion he should offer wine, a cock and little money to the chief rain-maker in Umuofia. The old man also says that kola nut must be broke in thanks to their idols as Obi has returned from the land of the spirits. But Isaac, Obi's father says that this is a Christian house and Kola nut is not sacrificed here to idols. As Carroll clears out, “The crisis of Obi's return indicates clearly that however thoroughly the Igbo and Christian ingredients are mixed they will never coalesce. On the slightest pretext they separate and regroup for open conflict.” (Achebe, 73) In Obi's house we also observe this contrast of religions. From his childhood Obi experiences that his parents have always stressed on different values and culture. On the one side his father always insisted upon the Christian education but on the other side his mother tried to educate him with her native tales. After it the story again shifts from the village scene to Lagos where Obi joins his job. This middle part of the novel moves with in each chapter from his office to varied scenes of city life. We are

introduced with Mr. Green Obi's boss, who is thorough colonialist, and believes in the supremacy of the white race. But his work ethic is beyond reproach, he sees the pursuit of duty as an end in itself is quite divorced from personal interest of any kind. Obi even after his dislike towards Mr. Green admits that, ... he nevertheless had some admirable qualities. Take, for instance, his devotion to duty Rain or shine, he was in the office half an hour before the official time, and quite often worked long after two, or returned again in the evening. Obi could not understand it. Here was a man who did not believe in a country, and yet worked so hard for it. Did he simply believe in duty as a logical necessity? (Achebe, 96).

Later Achebe unfolds two main events first Obi's acquisition of a car and second his girlfriend Clara's revelation that she is an Osu (an outcast). Obi knows that neither his parents nor his people will agree with the idea of marrying an Osu as they have already warned him when he was leaving his village. The first event becomes the chief cause of Obi's financial problems. He has to pay the installments of his car and also refund the money to U.P.U. The U.P.U is also delighted by Obi's achievements his job and his new car. Having *Colonial Conflicts leads to Alienation and Rootlessness in Achebe's No Longer at Ease* [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org) .

invested in his career at great sacrifice, they now look forward to the rewards, and it is Obi's duty to make these as ample as possible. As an old man says, „That is why we say that he who has people is richer than he who has money... „We now have one of our sons in the senior service. We are not going to ask him to bring his salary to share among us. It is in little things like this that he can help us. It is our fault if we do not approach him. Shall we kill a snake and carry it in our hand when we have a bag for putting long things in.”(Achebe, 72) On the one side Obi has assured himself that he cannot give up the car because that would be letting down to the Clan. Obi has decided to request the members of Umoufia Progressive Union for granting him some more time before he began to start returning their money. The Union agrees to Obi request, but the president takes the opportunity to give Obi some advice on how to manage his finance, and says that he should not make any relationship with an Osu girl. At this Obi storms out in a rage as he thinks that he has his own right to make his own choice without interference. He has decided that he will not give up Clara, for him it was either Clara or nobody. In his view the clan has no right to interfere in his personal affairs. He refuses to be controlled by outdated tribal practices; he is an individual who must be allowed to exercise the supreme choice of his own wife. The words about Clara get back to his village and his father summoned him home. His pressures and complications grow up when he declares that he wants to marry Clara an Osu. His parents oppose the idea of Obi. His father's reaction is unexpected: His father laughed. It was the kind of laughter one sometimes heard from a masked ancestral spirit..... And the meaning of that laughter was clear: I did not really think you would know, you miserable human worm!”(Achebe, 120) When Obi argues with him that they are Christians and cannot accept the Osu prohibition because in Christianity there are no bound, no free. His father replies, „Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into



you 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. We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters." (Achebe, 121)[22] Even Obi holds his mother in high regard and is constantly aware of her sacrificing nature. Yet her vehement disapproval of his intended marriage to Clara has him in shocked dismay as his mother declares, if you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I am no more... „but if you do the thing while I am alive, you will have my blood on your head, because I shall kill myself." (123) Obi was shaken by his mother's response and his engagement with Clara had now turned into utter despair. He was amazed at the thoughts that posed to his mind at this time of greater crises in his life; His mind was troubled not only by what had happened but also by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challenge it honestly. Obi feels himself in utter confusion and he thinks that he can neither accept his parents' values nor reject them. He was suffocated by the cultural orthodoxy of the elders. He feels isolated from his community and it seems that Achebe's concerns, obviously, lean towards the community rather than the individuals as S.A. Khayyoom remarks about this isolation of individuals in African Novels, The isolation of the individual in African novel makes him typical and representative of his society.... It is the will of the majority that consciously contributes towards a coherent and organic African society. But the problem for a sensitive, self-conscious creative being is how to decline himself from his group and to assert his individuality. (Khayyoom, 26)

Obi gets hurt from his parents' behavior. He retreats and shuts himself away from his family, from his community, knowing fully well that his behaviour is hurtful. So he returns to Lagos and at his return he sees problems building up when he

comes to know about Clara's pregnancy. Clara also feels humiliated at the familial and social rejection that she not only breaks off the engagement but also decides to abort her child. Obi essentially abandons his responsibility towards her in his weak, halfhearted respect for his family's wishes. After her abortion Clara disappears from Obi's life and finally Obi's hears of his mother's death. Both the incidents affect the moral and emotional world of Obi. Obi's absence from the funeral is called a thing of shame. He in his financial crisis stop paying to U.P.U. and he also fails at his job, as he resists self-righteously various bribes until his financial situation and morals finally collapse. Unfortunately, he is as clumsy here as in his personal relations. He is arrested and sentenced to prison. So the novel ends, as it began, at the trial where Africans and Europeans alike are dismayed by this sudden debacle of Obi's career. Obi wants to clean Nigeria of its evils and his intentions are ideally good, but he fails to carry them out in his life because of the negative change in values. From such heights of heroic ideals Obi stoops to accepting bribe, himself. The society Obi functions in is one, where the processes of history have destroyed the traditional values. There is no set moral code nor are there any models for emulation and a young man like Obi is left to himself to solve his moral problems. As it is clear that Obi in his anxiety to fulfill his obligations to his family and tribe and play his role *Colonial Conflicts leads to Alienation and Rootlessness in Achebe's No Longer at Ease* [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org).

well in the aristocratic circles of Lagos, runs in to debts and succumbs to temptation eventually. Obi's fall symbolizes the failure of educated youth of Nigeria and raises considerable alarm about the future of the nation. Thus the crucial problem of a pre-independent society is posed in the novel that due to western influence native youth are disinherited from their own folk culture, and exposed to the alien value. He has come with the double world, the native and the European. In the words of Abiola Irele: Obi's dilemma is contained in the conflict

between his developed intellectual insight and his lack of moral strength to sustain it... His weakness of character is reflected in his inept handling of his human relationships and of his material problems; he is an individual with no sense of order.... Obi is never really prepared to engage in any sort of sustained effort, with the result that he flounders through his life. (Cook, 85)

### **3. 4. Things Fall Apart and Symbolic notions.**

The woman's treatment by the Ibo men is similar to the Ibo treatment by the whites, and so, they serve as a reminder by the author that there are always weak and strong in a society, and the weakest members may not be the most obvious, or the most vocal. In the novel the religion is very important to the survival of the tribe and the people often work together for the betterment of the tribe. There are also individual aspects in the Ibo society. Each person has his own chi, or personal god. This personal god is to watch over a person and protect them. Some people have a stronger chi than others do, and they will achieve a higher standing in the society. This is very important to some of the people in the tribe, and Okonkwo is one of those people. He does a lot to help better the Ibo society, but he also wants to have a high standing in the Ibo society for himself. *Things Fall Apart*, written by Chinua Achebe in 1958 just before Nigerian independence, demonstrates the violent societal conflict that resulted from British colonialism and arrival of the missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century. The longstanding structure and tradition of the Ibo culture is ripped apart when confronted with the completely disparate followings of the Christian Church. Achebe demonstrates that even a society with as strong a foundation as the Ibo people in Umuofia can have a vulnerability for which it has not prepared. As the natives clearly stated in the novel about the Imperial colonist: "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 162).

Briefly, the novel *Things Fall Apart* takes place in a late-1800s Nigerian Ibo village of Umuofia, prior to the arrival of the first Christian missionaries and British officials. The main character, Okonkwo, represents the tragic hero who has status, prestige, bravery, wealth and a strong desire to succeed to make up for his father's failings.

However, as a tragic figure, Okonkwo's human flaws contribute to his downfall. More broadly, however, Okonkwo represents every man who must have a strong enough self-image and personal integrity to battle new ways and customs from a competitive culture.

Religious beliefs were deeply engrained in the Ibo culture, including a supreme God, known by various names in

Ibo land such as Chukwu (the great God). Because Chukwu was all powerful, prayer and sacrifice was usually made to the lesser and more accessible spirits who continually were part of human affairs. Other divinities came from various areas of the natural world included Amadioha (lightning), Igwe (the sky) and Anyanwu (the sun). Before the influence of Europeans and Christian missions, most Ibo practiced some form of ancestor worship, which believed to gain success in the day-to-day world. This could be accomplished in a number of ways including participation in the secret men's society, Mmo. The second level of initiates was responsible for carrying out the funeral ceremonies for the deceased and inducting the departed spirits into the after-world, so that they would stop causing mischief in the village.

"Now and again an ancestral spirit or egwugwu. Appeared from the underworld, speaking in a tremulous, unearthly voice and completely covered in raffia," Achebe (114) recalls about a funeral rite of the elderly Ezeudu.

The role of the dead was fundamental in the Ibo religion. The principle of living man, his soul is obi or Nkpulobi, the heart, or the kernel of the heart. The *muo* of a dead man was not only made up of this soul isolated from the body, as Christians

tend to believe. Instead, the Ibo spirits had a Para-body. The world of the spirits was a shadowy mirror of the real world, although with continual gloom, where the social hierarchy of the Ibo clan continued to exist.

[www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt) English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010

104 ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750 The Ibo and Christian religions differed in a number of other ways. The differences in the Christian religion were not easy for the Ibo to incorporate into their traditional beliefs. The missionaries often wrote about the alternating waves of conversion and backsliding. To the individual who believed in many spirits, the conflicting creeds of Christianity were difficult to accept. The doctrines of the Incarnation, Atonement and Trinity were especially difficult to incorporate, especially the first two that appeared to contradict the spiritual nature of God, as noted by in *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 137) as the “mad logic of the Trinity.” On the other hand, “The white man was also their brother, because they were all sons of God” (Achebe 134). The question thus arose, how could they be brothers yet have religions that were so disparate? This made them question what was actually true. Whose religion was right, who's wrong? The mixed feelings were exacerbated by the British who told the Ibo people that their customs were bad and their gods were not true gods at all. This created the beginning of a lasting rift between fellow clansmen and relatives who now differed in their beliefs. Those who first converted to Christianity were members not fully a part of the clan life. For example, the first woman convert was Nneka, who had to discard four sets of twins. Her husband and his family were becoming critical of her, so she fled to join the Christians where they would accept her present pregnancy. Most of the clan considered this a “good riddance” (Achebe 141). There was also the gentle Nwoye, who had been shunned because of his “less manly” ways and finds answers in the poetry of Christianity (Achebe 137). The missionaries also forced the Ibo to break with their strong past and not ass on their

stories to the next generation. As Achebe writes, “Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe 10). This would be equivalent today of destroying all written and visual communication. Ironically, one of the main differences between the two cultures was the degree of allowance to kill. In fact, the British almost kill off an entire village in vengeance of the murder of one white man (Achebe 129). The Western tradition condoned people to fight each other over religion, such as in the Crusades, but the Ibo tradition forbade them to kill any present clan member. This was an abomination. Wars against other clans only took place when truly justified. In his novel, Achebe recognizes the art of writing by showing the range of human traits—good and bad. He does not portray the Ibo clan as perfect in terms of when violence was allowed: This is where the writer’s integrity comes in. Will he be strong enough to overcome the temptation to select only those facts which flatter him? If he succumbs he will have branded himself as an untrustworthy witness...We can pretend that our past was one long, Technicolor idyll. “We have to admit that like other people’s past ours had its good as well as its bad sides” (Achebe 1978, 9). Okonkwo’s level of prestige is shown by bestowing on him the duty of looking after Ikemefuna, a young boy from a neighboring village, who was sacrificed to avoid warfare and bloodshed. Ikemefuna is murdered for the sins of the clan, similar to the crucifixion of Jesus or, depicting the Old Testament, God’s request to kill Isaac. Similarly, newborn twins were killed as a dishonor to the culture.

The missionary enterprise often seemed like an attack on the very structure of Ibo society, a society that had withstood myriad of challenges over centuries of time. Before the European colonial powers entered Africa, the Ibos “had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, in that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity” (Achebe, 1978, 8).

The political functioning of the tribe was alien to the British colonists, who believed that all civilizations progressed as theirs had from tribes through monarchy and finally to parliamentary government. When arriving in Mbanta, the missionaries expected to meet a ruling king (Achebe 138). When finding no power with whom to work, the British set up its own political system that delegated rules from the English throne through district commissioners to native court messengers who did not in any way belong to the village government. “These court messengers (nicknamed “Ashy-Buttocks”) were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and high-handed” (Achebe 160).

Okonkwo inflexible traditionalism pitted him against his gentle son Nwoye, who joined the Christian European missionaries. In the novel, Okonkwo had to participate in a ceremonial human sacrifice and endure a seven-year exile after his gun accidentally killed the son of the deceased warrior Ezeudu. He also lost part of himself when he lost Ikemefuna. Upon returning to the village, he found it torn apart by Western Imperialism. Finally, he commits suicide after decapitating a white messenger who violated his authority. Okonkwo’s demise was brought about by breaking the sacred laws of the clan as well as unsuccessfully fighting against the unjust system of the colonists. He stands as a representation of his entire clan and other similar cultures who, through the centuries, have lost their traditions through the assault of Imperialism. Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* demonstrates that humanity, in both its best and worst cases, is represented in all cultures. Thus, it is imperative for any society that wants to survive to be prepared with all types of cultural intrusions. Ibo is strong as a just and democratic society, a moral code, economic base and arts and music. The society’s Achilles’ heel is that it did not recognize it had to build in a fail-safe power to combat even stronger outside forces and the ability to meet and

adapt to radical change.

### **3.5. Achebe's stylistic merits.**

In his novel *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe draws a lively portrait of a Nigerian people, the Ibo, at the end of the nineteenth century, when the British colonization began in Africa. Chinua Achebe's main achievement in the novel is that of accurately rendering a complex picture of the African cultural tradition and identity from the inside the tradition itself, that is, by telling a story of the Ibo people which speaks for itself and which sees life from the perspective of the Nigerian people and not from the outside. The most important message of the novel is clearly the gradual demise of the Ibo culture, of its traditions, customs and religion under the powerful wave of white European civilization.

This message is already enclosed in the title of the novel: Achebe describes in his novel the falling apart of the African culture. The Christian white missionaries in the novel, Mr. Brown and Rev. Smith, are a major cause of the things falling apart. It is obvious that Achebe, without being critical of Christianity as a religion, criticizes the methods that were used by the white colonizers to undermine the African culture. While the conversion tactics used by the two missionaries are very different; Mr. Brown is moderate and tries to establish a relationship with the people while Rev. Smith is overzealous and intransigent and instigates major conflicts inside the Umuofia clan both contribute to the same end: the falling apart of a culture. Thus, Mr. Brown's moderation in his conversion tactics is obviously contrasted with Rev. Smith's zealotry. Mr. Brown, the first who comes as a missionary, tries to temper some of the intemperate converts, such as Enoch for example, and thus keeps some of the conflicts inside the clan at bay. Also, he builds a school and a hospital for the village and tries to maintain peaceful relationships with everyone. He can be said to be successful in his practices



in as much as he gains the respect of most of the members of the clan: “Mr. Brown preached against such excesses of zeal, and so Mr. Brown came to be respected even by the clan, because he trod softly on its faith”(Achebe 163).

By contrast, Rev. Smith is portrayed as intransigent and limited in his views, seeing things as either black or white, that is completely banishing the inferior African culture and religion and trying to bring it out of darkness into the light: “[He] saw things as black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as a battlefield in which the children of light were locked in mortal combat with the sons of darkness. He spoke in his sermons about sheep and goats and about wheat and tares. He believed in slaying the prophet of Baal” (Achebe, 130). Rev. Smith encourages all the overzealous practices of the converts and causes Enoch to eat a python that was considered sacred by the clan. All these conflicts inside the Ibo people are irremediable wrongs that obviously cause the eventual demise of the culture itself.

Thus, the tactics of conversion used by the two missionaries are indeed contrastive, since Mr. Brown has taken some understanding while Rev. Smith has none, but they are not entirely opposite. There are many instances of the author’s sarcasm with respect to the good intentions of both of the missionaries. First of all, the names he gives them put them on an equal footing: Brown and Smith are both typical, nondescript British names. Also, they both have the same obvious end in their missions: to submerge the African culture under the superior white one.

Achebe uses ironical, indirect devices to portray both of the methods used: Mr. Smith is seemingly a superior character who is greatly distressed by the ignorance of the people that he is trying to convert to the new religion and who believes, in contrast with Mr. Brown, that only a few, superior and overzealous elect people can have access to real faith: “Mr. Smith was greatly distressed by the ignorance

which many of his flock showed even in such things as the Trinity and the Sacraments. It only showed that they were seeds sown on a rocky soil. Mr. Brown had thought of nothing but numbers. He should have known that the kingdom of God did not depend on large crowds. Our Lord Himself stressed the importance of fewness...Our Lord used the whip only once in His life – to drive the crowd away from the Church.”(Achebe, 169) On the other hand, Mr. Brown seems to have an overall positive contribution to the African community.

Nevertheless, the author ironically implies that there is indeed only a difference in method between the two missionaries, and the decline of the Ibo culture already began under the more lenient government of Mr. Brown. For example, the school he builds can be seen as another way to indoctrinate the clan. This school is in fact the cause of other conflicts inside the Ibo community, since by attending this school an Ibo could become a court messenger that is someone that would report and give out information from inside the clan to the white governors:

“Mr. Brown's school produced quick results. A few months in it were enough to make one a court messenger or even a court clerk. Those who stayed longer became teachers: and from Umuofia laborers went forth into the w.ccsenet.org/elt English Language Teaching Vol. 3, No. 3; September 2010 106 ISSN 1916-4742 E-ISSN 1916-4750 Lord's vineyard. New churches were established in the surrounding villages and a few schools with them. From the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand.” (Achebe, 166).

Moreover, it is hard to speak of success with any of these missionaries, since the author shows that what is achieved through the conversions and the indoctrination is merely a deepening of the gap between the two cultures, the white and the African. The Ibo people do not understand the new religion, but merely associate it with their own views of the world, a fact that shows the complete inadequacy of

preaching it in the first place: "It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow" (Achebe, 137).

The irony of Achebe is obvious: through various methods, exemplified by the two missionaries, the white man insinuated his own culture in the African culture. Mr. Brown's soft tactic and Mr. Smith's loud one, have essentially the same effect of creating confusion and conflict among the Ibo people and thus, by bringing them apart, undermining the African culture itself: "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart." (Achebe, 152) The conclusion is thus: Mr. Brown uses soft methods to convert the Ibo people, while Mr. Smith is a true religious tyrant, but both of them serve the same end eventually and bring destruction on the Nigerian tribe. Neither of them succeeds in anything more than causing things to fall apart by trying to civilize the Africans.

To emphasize the importance of this impact on the Ibo by the European autocracy, at the end of *Things Fall Apart* the narrator reveals the sorriest irony of all: the District Commissioner's mental absorption with a book he is writing, which he hopes to title *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. It was not that the British had pacified the violent primitives. Rather it was that they had been too pacified to cope with the less pacified Western cultures.

The ending of the novel is a culmination of the author's irony: the District Commissioner intends to write a novel on the events that had taken place 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* (Achebe, 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 the complex African culture. Okonkwo's tragedy described in Achebe's novel is thus the tragedy of the Ibo 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 colonialist who were convinced that the African were savage people who needed their salvation, while Achebe's novel proves exactly the opposite, through the insight into real African tradition.

### **3-6. The new literature:**

Since the 1950's, Nigeria has witnessed the flourishing of a new literature which has drawn sustenance from both traditional oral literature and from the present and rapidly changing society, writes Margaret Laurence in her book *Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists*. Thirty years ago Chinua Achebe was one of the founders of this new literature, and over the years many critics have come to consider him the finest of the Nigerian novelists. His achievement, however, has not been limited to his continent. He is considered by many to be one of the best novelists who write in the English language.

### **3-7: African literature and Chinua Achebe:**

Unlike some African writers struggling for acceptance among contemporary English-language novelists, Achebe has been able to avoid

imitating the trends in English literature. Rejecting the European notion "that art should be accountable to no one, and needs to justify itself to nobody," As he puts this in his book of essays, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Achebe has embraced instead the idea at the heart of the African oral tradition: that art is, and always was, at the service of man. The ancestors created their myths and told their stories for a human purpose. For this reason, Achebe believes that any good story, any good novel, should have a message, and should have a purpose.

Achebe's feel for the African context has influenced his aesthetic of the novel as well as the technical aspects of his work. As commented in *Introduction to Nigerian Literature*: "Achebe was the first Nigerian writer to successfully transmute the conventions of the novel, a European art form, into African literature." In an Achebe novel, King notes, "European character study is subordinated to the portrayal of communal life; European economy of form is replaced by an aesthetic appropriate to the rhythms of traditional tribal life." Cook (1980:13-58)

#### **2-8: Research Methodology**

The study has adopted the descriptive method through which the collected data and the related issues concerning the current status of the topic of study are explained. In gathering and presenting the data.

#### **3-9: The Literary works of Achebe**

Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) has received wide acclaim. It deals with the colonial impact on Igbo culture. Igbo society, as well as the book's main character, Okonkwo, is unable to adapt to the arrival of the British, who impose a cash economy and Christianity on them.

Eventually, this vibrant, functioning society collapses and disintegrates under these new pressures, as does Okonkwo.

A later novel, *A Man of the People* (1966) describes an unnamed post-colonial African country. It deals with the problems of political representation in a corrupt nation. It also deals with the problems of finding a collective will in an ethnically diverse, economically stratified nation. The main part of the story centers on the political battles between the main character, Odili, and his former teacher, Chief Nanga, the corrupt and charismatic "man of the people".

His most recent novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), deals with the problem of military regimes in contemporary Africa, and is a continuation of the story laid out in *A Man of the People*. It centers on a dictator, Sam, the ruler of this fictional African country. As Sam becomes more megalomaniacal, his limited ability to rule diminishes even further. He eventually destroys even his boyhood friends, and is finally overthrown.

Much of Achebe's work is politicized. His novels are not "art for its own sake". In addition to his famous novels, he has written numerous essays, as well as several children's stories.

*Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann, 1958.

*A Man of the People*. London: Heinemann, 1966.

*Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann, 1987. Reboussin (2005:10).

He is considered by many critics to be one of the best contemporary African authors and has written several works since the late 1950's. The total account of Chinua Achebe's writings includes:

- *Things Fall Apart* (novel) 1959

- No Longer At Ease (novel) 1960
- The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories 1962
- Arrow of God (novel) 1964
- A Man of the People (novel) 1966
- Chicke and the River 1966
- Beware Soul-Brother and Other Poems 1971
- The Insider: Stories of War and Peace from Nigeria 1971
- How the Leopard Got His Claws 1972
- Lament of the Deer 1973
- Girls at War (short stories) 1973
- Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems 1973
- Morning Yet on Creation Day (essays) 1975
- The Flute 1978
- The Drum 1978

All of Achebe's writings display three concerns: "first, with the legacy of colonialism at both the individual and societal level; secondly, with the fact of English as a language of national and international exchange, thirdly, with the obligations and responsibilities of the writer both to the society in which he lives and to his art." Killian (1973:33).

*"In all great compounds there must be people of all minds - some good, some bad, some fearless and some cowardly; those who bring in wealth and those who scatter it, those who give good advice and those who only speak the words of palm wine. That is why we say that whatever tunes you play in the compound of a great man there is always someone to dance to it."*

The above quotation is quoted by Nwabu Nnebe from an incited work by Chinua Achebe. From:  
<http://www.lioness.cm.utexas.edu/Igbo.dir/proverb.htm>

### **3-10: Chinua Achebe on the Role of the African Writer**

*In 1964, Achebe was confronted with the idea that African writers should deal with the here-and- now rather than the past. His answer: "It is inconceivable to me that a serious writer could stand aside from this debate, or be indifferent to this argument which calls his full humanity into question. For me, at any rate, there is a clear duty to make a statement. This is my answer to those who say that a writer should be writing about contemporary issues--about politics in 1964, about city life, about the last coup d'etat. Of course, these are legitimate themes for the writer but as far as I am concerned the fundamental theme must first be disposed of. This theme--put quite simply--is that African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in Ibo that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them. After all the novelist's duty is not to beat this morning's headline in topicality, it is to explore in depth the human condition. In Africa he cannot perform this task unless he has a proper sense of history.*

When Chinua was asked about relation of his art, morality, and politics he says:

There is an adequate revolution for him to espouse to help his society regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of the denigration and self-abasement. And it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. Here, is his aims and the deepest aspirations of his society meet. "For no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound



in our soul . . .” The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact the writer should march right in front . . . he would not wish to be excused.

*I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones set in the past) did no more than teach my 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. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who care? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind. And I don't see that the two need be mutually exclusive.*

Killian (1973:22)

And he returns repeatedly to the topic of colonization, its impact, and its legacy:

Without subscribing to the view that Africa gained nothing at all in its long encounter with Europe, one could still say, in all fairness, that she suffered many terrible and lasting misfortunes. In terms of human dignity and human relations the encounter was almost a complete disaster for the black races. It has warped the mental attitudes of both black and white. In giving expression to the plight of their people, black writers have shown again and again how strongly this traumatic experience can possess the sensibility. They have found themselves drawn irresistibly to writing about the fate of black people in a world progressively recreated by white men in their own image, to their glory and for their profit, in which the Negro became the poor motherless child of the spirituals and of so many Nigerian folk tales.

Rondy(1981:260)

## **2-7: The influence of education religion, and culture on African literature**

### **3-11: Colonial Education**

Rodney discusses at length the role of education in producing Africans to serve the colonial system and subscribe to its values. He notes that class stratification, which leads to neocolonialism, begins with the linking of colonial education to material gain. Rodney (1981:263) points out that education is crucial in any type of society for the preservation of the lives of its members and the maintenance of the social structure. The most crucial aspect of pre-colonial African education was its relevance to Africans in sharp contrast with that which was later introduced (that is, under colonialism). The main purpose of colonial school system was to train Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole . . . Colonial education was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment.

In *Mission to Kala*, Medza's colonial education makes him a privileged political and economic functionary in a colonial system that militates against the interests of his own people. Colonial education, therefore, creates a black elite to succeed it and perpetuate its political and economic interests in the post-independence period.

In discussing the role of colonial education, Rodney shows that the roots of neocolonialism lie in colonialism. This links African literature of the two periods because neocolonialism is the result of a historical process of class formation by colonialism. According to Leys (1975:275). . . Absolutely central to neocolonialism, is the formation of classes or strata within a colony

which are closely allied to and dependent on foreign capital, and which form the real basis of support for the regime which succeeded the colonial administration." The neocolonial situation in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is a legacy and a logical consequence of the situation depicted in Beti's *Mission to Kala*. Rodney also observes that the colonial machinery created a military elite that later became military dictators in the post-independence era. A good example is Sam, the military despot in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. Rodney also observes that the educated Africans were the most alienated Africans on the continent. At each further stage of education, they were battered and succumbed to the white capitalist system, and after being given salaries, they could then afford to sustain a style of life imported from outside that further transformed their mentality.

Colonial education did more than corrupt the thinking and sensibilities of the African, it filled him/her with abnormal complexes which de-Africanized and alienated him/her from the needs of his/her environment. Colonial education has thus dispossessed and put out of the control of the African intellectual the necessary forces for directing the life and development of his/her society. The narrator in Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger*, for instance, is culturally alienated because of his Western education. In *Mission to Kala*, Medza's role model is America. Medza cannot make decisions in relation to the needs of his society nor have a new vision relevant to African society:

Then, to make my ideas more intelligible, I decided to illustrate them with an example. I found myself (somewhat to my surprise) telling these simple people about New York. It was child's play to describe New York, probably because the only knowledge of it derived from the cinema. (Beti: 1964:65)

Colonial education taught Medza everything that is irrelevant to his African life. In Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, Lucifer similarly feels alienated from his homeland because of his colonial education. In *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*, P'Bitek (1985:117) laments a situation in which colonial education emasculates the emerging African elite: my husband's house is a dark forest of books . Their manhood was finished in the classrooms, their testicles were smashed with big books." In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi observes that the lack of congruency between colonial education and Africa's reality created people abstracted from their reality. Little wonder, therefore that the negritude poets try to achieve disalienation through identification with Africa, African values and African origins. They yearn for their lost identity and the lost African heritage. Leon Dumas writes that the whites "have stolen the space that was mine. Tchicaya U'Tamsi laments that the whites have left the blacks in a dark corner somewhere . . . gone are the forests where sung and danced the inspired priestess . . . the great Western world holds me in fee . . . Something in me is lost forever." . P'Bitek (1985: 117)

### **3.12: Christianity education, and colonial administrative systems:**

Rodney also analyzes the interrelationship between Christianity, colonial education, and administrative systems. In *Homecoming*, Ngugi says that to gain "acceptability and perpetuation, the colonialists enlist the services of Christianity and Christian oriented education ... To capture the soul and the mind ..." Ngugi (1981:19). In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the newly converted Christians renounce their traditional lifestyle, thus advancing the cause of colonialism. In Oyono's *The Old Man and the Medal*, Meka gives up his land to the priests:

*And now lived in a small wretched hut in the village which  
has given its name to the mission and lay at the foot of the  
Christian cemetery. Oyono (1967: 9)*

In Houseboy, Toundi renounces his natural father in favor of Father Gilbert, the head of the colonial church. In Beti's *The Poor Christ Of Bomba* and *King Lazarus*, father Drumont and father Le Guen respectively use Christianity to consolidate their control over the indigenous people and thus maintain the security of the oppressor. Gicaamba in *I'll Marry When I Want* notes this;

Religion is not the same thing as God.  
When the British imperialists came here in 1895,  
All the missionaries of all the churches  
Held the Bible in the left hand,  
And the gun in the right hand.  
The white man wanted us  
To be drunk with religion  
While he,  
In the meantime,  
Was mapping and grabbing our land  
And starting factories and businesses  
On our sweat. Ngugi (1982: 56-7).

The European exploiters, oppressors and grabbers use Christianity as a tool to explain the manifest contradictions portrayed in African literature because of the working out of broader historical forces.

Cabral (1980:42) defines the relationship between culture and colonialism, explores the relationship between culture and social class. Cabral's analysis aids the reader's understanding of African literature by putting into its proper historical perspective the crisis of identity and its implications portrayed artistically by many African writers. Cabral (1980: 141) defines culture as the result of economic and political activities as they appear on the ideological and idealist levels. Culture has its basis in a society's level of productive forces and in the character of the dominant mode of production. Thus, culture is the result, with more or less awakened consciousness, of economic and political activities, the more or less dynamic expression of the type of relations prevailing within that society, on the one hand between man (considered individually and collectively) and nature, on the other hand, among individuals, groups of individuals, social strata or social classes."

Culture may be dynamic, but only in the sense of being a continuing record of a society's achievements and an important element in sustaining resistance to foreign domination. Cabral (1980: 141)

### **2.13: Colonialism and the destruction of Culture:**

Colonialism denied Africa the right to cultural development and self expression and set up a state of siege that it justified with theories about cultural assimilation. In Oyono's *Houseboy*, colonial culture plays the role that Cabral (1980:141) observes above. The implications behind Toundi's question, "what are we black men who are called French?", pervade the whole novel. He asks this when he becomes aware that his "French identity", imposed on him by colonialism, identifies him with the colonial culture and values of his oppressors. In Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, old

Mandengu and Garabha's drums with Uncle Kuruku's ndungu become symbolic vestiges of an African culture besieged by colonialism. In Oyono's *The Old Man and the Medal*, colonialism perpetuates cultural imperialism by setting up "whiteness" and its values as a superior quality that deserves emulation. Cabral's conclusion that National Liberation is an act of culture parallels Ousmane's views in *Man and His Culture* that, in tempestuous periods like that of the anti-colonial struggle, the only artistic expression is the armed struggle. Liberation struggle to Cabral rejects cultural domination by the foreign power by denying the culture of the oppressor. Thus, Cabral argues that the tie between a people's identity and the reproduction and maintenance of the social system of a specific set of institutions affects both culture and the people's intimate sense of selfhood. Colonialism by "denying to the dominated people their own historical process, necessarily denies their cultural process." Cabral (1980:142) In Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ Of Bomba* and *King Lazarus*, the structures that the colonialists introduce affect both to the people's culture and their sense of selfhood. In the two novels, Tala and Essazam societies respectively are culturally transformed by the introduction of the capitalist cash nexus, bourgeoisie religions, and European educational systems. Oyono, in *Houseboy* and *The Old Man and the Medal*, portrays colonialism as undermining and suppressing indigenous culture and its institutions. The alternatives colonialism provides for these are schools, stores, roads and hospitals -- structures that the colonialists use to impose and consolidate their own culture on the colonized thereby altering the African culture. Cabral argues that imperialist domination for its own security requires cultural oppression and the attempt at direct or indirect destruction of

the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people. (Cabral (1980:142).

It is also proved that culture reflects the aspirations of the "petty bourgeoisie," which, like those of all other classes, derives from their class.

The new African ruling middle class is underdeveloped, has no economic power, and, therefore, reflects the culture of the metropolitan bourgeoisie with whom it economically allied itself to exploit the own people. Members of the new African ruling middle class have assimilated the colonizers' mentality and regard themselves as "culturally superior." Their imitative culture reflects the political and economic dependence of this class on the metropolitan bourgeoisie and this has been the focus of many African writers who deal with the theme of cultural influence. In *Xala* and *The Last of Empire*, Ousmane criticizes cultural imperialism in the Francophone postcolonial state. In *Xala*, Ousmane satirizes Oumi N'doye's worship of everything from France. Ousmane also uses El Hadji Kader Beye's sexual impotence ("xala") to symbolize the lack of creativity and the economic impotence of the new middle class rulers who are not, in the words of Frantz Fanon, "engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labor; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and be part of the racket." El Hadji says to the Chamber of Commerce:

*Are we businessmen? I say no! Just clodhoppers . . . We are nothing better than crabs in a basket. We want the ex-occupier's place? We have it . . . Yet what change is there really in general or in particular? The colonialist is stronger, more powerful than before, hidden inside us . . . What are we? Clodhoppers! Agents! Petty traders! In our*



*fatuity we call ourselves "businessmen"! Businessmen without funds.* Ousmane (1976: 91-2)

In *The Last of Empire*, Ousmane (1976:93) portrays the young generation as avid to embrace the foreign colonial culture that the older generation had fought to remove. Mamlat Soukuba has an extreme fondness for clothes from Europe and America. This is a clear demonstration of cultural imperialism that the shoes and jackets that Meka buys in *The Old Man and the Medal* also symbolize. writes that the wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture contribute -from the black man's point of view-, to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi satirizes the worship, by the new middle class, of all that is foreign and their revulsion for all that is local. He portrays the new ruling class as reluctant to embrace the revolutionary culture of the masses because they have developed into an exploitative comprador class who want to remain unchanged. This artistic portrayal coincides with Cabral's objective analysis that the class character of cultures gives National Liberation a positive or negative appeal to each class.

Cabral (1980:144) believes that, essentially the colonial country and the neocolonial country suffer from the same problem: Violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces. According to him, National Liberation frees the nation's productive forces from all kinds of foreign domination. In other words, it destroys imperialist control. This helps to explain, in African literature, the initial failure by the writers to distinguish between juridical and economic independence. Anti-colonial African literature like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* tended to impute African society's

problems to color prejudice rather than class conflict. It was only after none of the promised benefits of independence occurred, that African writers began producing works; like Ngugi's 'Petals of Blood', that shows African society's contradictions to be rooted in class conflict. Cabral, believes that among the peasants, who are "the repository of the national culture," are also the source of cultural resistance. According to him, contact with the rich cultural tradition of the peasants may transform the mentality of the "petty bourgeoisie" and make them play a leading role in the struggle for national liberation. The bourgeoisie must thus commit suicide as a class and then align themselves with the peasants. There is no better, more graphic example of this than the closing scene in Ousmane's *Xala* where the beggars spit on El Hadji.

The quest for identity and cultural dignity is peculiar only to the petty bourgeoisie. This accounts for the negritude poetry of Senghor and other works of cultural national struggle. Cabral (1980:141-95) also shows that the culture of the people is a culture of resistance and struggle and that it historically opposes the culture of the oppressor that of counterrevolution and violence. Thus, in Oyono's *Houseboy* and *The Old Man and the Medal*, the colonized people's culture of resistance expresses itself in the illegal brewing of beer, in lying to whites and in manipulating the aggressive structures of colonialism to further the struggle. In Ngugi's *Matigari*, the main character wages a guerilla war against the neocolonial regime. According to Cabral, sees the armed liberation struggle is an act of making history bear fruit, the highest expression of the culture and the Africanism. At the moment of victory, it must be translated into a significant leap forward of the culture of the people who are liberating themselves. If this does not happen, then the

efforts and sacrifices made during the struggle will have been in vain. The struggle will have failed in its aims

Ngugi's book "Writing Against Neocolonialism" shows that African literature developed as a direct response to concrete historical conditions, which transformed the function and both ideology of the African writer and the artistic forms used. Ngugi argues that the African writers who emerged after the Second World War experienced three modal stages in their growth: (1) anti-colonial struggle, (2) independence, and (3) neocolonialism. Cabral (1980: 153).

### **3.14: The 1950s literature:**

The 1950s was the decade of hope during which most African countries gained independence as anti-imperialist movements triumphed. African writers born in this decade had an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, yet hopeful mood, which explains the assertive and optimistic nature of the writing of the period. Colonialism had tried to justify its oppression and exploitation by resorting to claims of racial superiority. The new African writer countered such claims by producing artistic works that showed that Africa had its own history, culture, and civilization that were equal if not superior to that of the imperialists. The writers saw their societies and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self abasement imposed on them by colonialism. The most representative works of this period include Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* set in Umuofia, an independent and "progressive" society before the intrusion and entrenchment of colonialism. However, while reshaping Africa's distorted history, Achebe does not idealize it. He shows that African

society had its own contradictions and spiritual crises before the intrusion of colonialism. Killian (1973:55-7)

### **3.15: Intellectual currents of Moral Critique:**

The rise of government by dictatorship throughout Africa, which characterized the 1970s, perpetuated the political, economic, and social practices of colonialism. The age of independence also witnessed the emergence of social classes and class contradictions, a kind of development that disappointed and shocked many African writers, who created artistic works expressing disillusionment with postcolonial African society. Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the novels most representative of this period did not fully grasp the source of the manifest contradictions. They mistakenly argued that the cause of Africa's lay in the new leaders' lack of moral direction. At this time, writers saw their role as that of transforming society and its leaders by means of moral enlightenment. The works of this period subscribed to a liberal humanist ideology that pleaded with the oppressed. In Oyono's *Houseboy*, the protagonist, Toundi, dies because of the oppressive neocolonial system.

The writers of this period intended the pathos and emotive power of their works to instigate the oppressors to initiate a political and economic reorganization of society in the interest of the oppressed. However, some critics maintain that the intentions of the pathos and bitterness of these novels were to whip the emotions of the people into revolutionary action. The artistic forms reflect the ideological content, for writers used satire and ridicule as corrective narrative techniques to enlighten their society morally. The despair that pervades these works, which portray the oppressed as trapped and helpless, arises in the writers' political misunderstanding.

The historical events of the 1970s revealed even more clearly the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism that had begun during the 1960s. Writers began to understand that the roots of social contradictions and conflicts lay in class differentiations not color. Some works representative of this period include Ngugi's *The Devil on the Cross*, Pepetela's *Mayombe*, and Sahle Sellasie's *Firebrands*. These novels portray conflict in terms of class conflict and from the perspective of the oppressed the workers and the peasants. The writers delegate the revolutionary vanguard role to the people themselves. The authors were implicitly disgusted with the educated elite who can not initiate a struggle and bestow their faith in the peasants themselves or suggest ways to solve Africa's contradictions. The writer saw his or her role as that of instigating the people into a revolutionary struggle. There is also the realization that women are the most exploited in an aggressive society. Thus, Mumbi in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*, Sophie in Oyono's *Houseboy*, Adja Awa Astou in Ousmane's *Xala*, and Waringa in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, are all women exploited.

The socialist ideology form the basis for these works, the artistic forms of oral songs and other dynamic techniques show that they are directed to a new audience, the peasantry. The latter factor has led to a fierce debate about what constitutes African literature. Ngugi argues that writing in foreign languages perpetuates neocolonialism and that all African literature in English is really Euro-African literature and not African literature. Ngugi, in rebellion against foreign domination, wrote his novel *Devil on the Cross* in Gikuyu because "writing in Gikuyu does not cut me off from other language communities because there are always opportunities for translation.

Ngugi, overlooks the fact that something is always changed, added, or lost in translation. Ngugi's insistence on Gikuyu also raises the problem of the double audience in African literature: Since the writer wishes to address both internal and external audiences, there has to be a neutral language. That neutral language is English, but then, Ngugi considers English a colonial language. According to him, the African writer of the 80s has no choice but to join in the people's struggle for survival. In that situation, he will have to confront the languages spoken by the people in whose service he has put his pen. Such a writer will have to rediscover the real language of struggle in the actions and speeches of his people, learn from their great optimism and faith in the capacity of human beings to remake their world and renew themselves.

In saying this, Ngugi overlooks two problems. First, can writers say effectively, through a "native" language, what they have to say? We have to consider that sometimes we cannot find the right word to express what we feel. Indeed, Ngugi himself is not well versed in the Gikuyu he brandishes as a weapon against neocolonialism. Second, even if writers can say what they want effectively, there is no guarantee that the readers will decipher the intended message.

One cannot ignore what Ngugi says about language. There is nothing wrong in theorizing on the use of a "native" language in literature, which works well in the theater; the problem is in its practicality. The one point on which one agrees completely with Ngugi is his emphasis that African writers of the 80s should align themselves with the masses, even if it means risking jail or exile. For the only alternative would be for the writer to become a state functionary via self-censorship. In conclusion, a reading of the three articles makes African literature clearer and easier to understand for they bring out

the truth about African literature. They examine the political, economic and social circumstances that impelled the sensitivity and ideologies of African literature and writers on colonialism respectively. They also discuss the historical connections that make it possible to analyze African literature dealing with pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases of African history. One way forward is for the middle class to "betray the calling fate has marked out for it." That is, its subservience to the bourgeoisie of the motherland and the exploitation of its own people that leads to a psychic split. It should put at its people's disposal, the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities. On the other hand, there is a gradual globalization and consequent disappearance of the middle class. Scott Lash and John Urry (1993: 300), has resulted in western societies, from the decentralization of population and industry; the declining attractiveness of mass organizations; the increased emphasis upon the pursuit of sectional interests; the declining salience of class; and the transgression of fixed boundaries by a set of new cultural forms. In the light of this, another way forward is the formation of what is called organic intellectuals writers who are in touch with the masses as opposed to the traditional intellectuals of the ruling class who write from sequestration. Having said this, literature or art in general, needs to be freed from politics and history. It must address the question of change, it must deal with the vagaries of virtual reality versus the humdrum of societies. It must adapt and become spontaneous in its response to things as they happen in society. It must write about today for today is tomorrow. B. eier(1987: 170 - 92)

### **3.16:The Struggle against colonization:**

The general rhetoric of anticolonialism was reductive. It implied that there was only one struggle to be waged, and it was a negative one: a struggle against colonialism, not a struggle for anything specific. The register of anticolonialism actively sought abstraction, desiring above all to remain free of ideological factionalism. As today and tomorrow, make bondage, and freedom. It never paused long enough to give its ideal of freedom content. Specifically, it implicitly rationalized, exposed the movement to the risk of division. Typically, the radical anticolonial writers tended to romanticize the resistance movement and to underestimate even theoretically to suppress the dimensions within it. Their heavy emphasis on fraternalism blinded them to the fact that within the movement there were groups and individuals working with quite different, and often incompatible, aspirations for the future. Meredith (1994:12- 9)

Proverbs have role in African Fiction through works of some African writers such as Achebe & Wabongo; proverbs in their work are defined as memorable statement that contains advice, a warning or prediction or an analytical observation, idiomatic phrases and similes.

Proverbs in African Fiction concerned all aspects of African life, because by using proverbs among society it broad deeper beliefs about the nature of human.

Using proverbs in African Fiction included all aspects of life in African society in appropriate situation.

The reader of African fiction must at all time be alert to his pace of narration and ingredients of Art. The continuous flow of proverbs, striking in their sound and message, challenges, the intellect of the person.



Proverbs which were woven to testify to the historical contradictions that define the African situation of the black use to furnish by a dialectical theory of the literature, such as proverbs must pay attention to the complex relationship between literature and the equally complex set of relationship in its informing society. It must also study the various components of literary events. Literature theory is less and object of intellectual enquire in its own right which is very particular to view the history of people's time, and it must be in the least cause for surprising any body of theory connected with human meaning, value, language, feeling and experience will inevitably engage with boarder, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies interpretation of the power and sexuality and interpretation of past history. Amuta (1989: 105) argued in the theory of African literature about definition of African Fiction in using proverbs as follow;

*... you cannot cram African Literature into a small meat definition , I do not see African literature as on unit , but as a group of associated units . in fact sum total of all the national and ethnic literature of Africa ... Amuta (1989: 105 )*

proverbs used by Nugugi Wasongo represented African Fiction as Amuta (1989.206) insisted Afro-European literature writers must use their native language to give the African literature its own genealogy and grammar by using proverbs

*... Gibayu once said : The leopard did not know to search ; it was taught . true but it always had claws and power to scratch to kill its children ? or does it scratch to kill ... Amuta (1989.206).*

The implication of previous proverb is that one thing is certain what is done can not be and one, actions are bricks that to construct either good or evil heart.

However, to represent more using of proverbs Amuta (1989:210) mentioned in African literature.

African literature writers should express themselves in indigenous African language in order to reach the African masses. This shows that African literature early writing and the beginning of Fiction in Africa depended upon proverbs

*... In the ancient and Salubrious Town of Abetifi in the district of Kwaha , the relived , during the region of Nana Addobse Aman whose name was Obeng Akcrof through kind hearted , was as poor as approach any of his friend or relative for any thing . This earthly possession consisted of loincloth which was thread bare and small age. That followed him every where he went, this dog he called “poor-no friend ...*

Proverbs slanted to it include a distinctive local flavor in diction and text. Through technique and language. Curry (1991:132) employed the important of proverbs in

*... When in Igbo tradition some one wants to express and admiration for story he or she says that it is “sweat” It trigger of heartily laughter, one primary element that makes for his effect in a story is narrator’s putting salts for verisimilitude or historical or folkloric anecdotes. These are the salt with which stories are seasoned , just as according to Chinua Achebe proverbs are “ palm-oil with which words are eaten “*

Moreover using of proverbs adds the right amount of salt to make each dish .Curry (1991:47) pointed in African literature Today as follows:-

*... this is a familiar them in Nigeria post war Fiction but Ubsies handling of the theme is at one new and refreshing different and enlightening the uniquely humorous proverbs ...*

Process of proverbs is taken further Curry (1991:122) says

*... Writers are making increasing use of pidgin and Creolized Language, which reach the majority of urban populations irrespective of their original mother Tongue; hypos sing the stander language ....*

African literature concentrated on proverbs and the national questions, Amuta (1989:61) analyzed Chinua Achebe's style of using proverbs as follows:

*.... After the elimination of white rule shall have been completed his single most important in African in second half of the twentieth century will appear to be the rise of individual national states. I believe that African literature will follow the same patterns ...*

Olaniyan (1983:187) provided a deeper analysis of using proverbs in African Fiction, from the conceptual point of view, he points that;

African proverbs usage in fiction gives emphasis to its two component aspects the 'word 'and the 'world 'or more precisely, life style and 'language style '. A clear understanding Fiction in African therefore requires an examination of the life style and the language style. The form and context of literature.

Olaniyan (1983:191) remarked in African Fiction in local language.

*... the case for African Fiction in European language today largely rests on wider reader ship and wider currency , it would seem that the case for African Fiction in modern European language remains strong . The two factors given about – wider reader dialects – will continue to exist potentialities of African scene for literary expressions ...*

Olaniyan (1983:27) discussed the traditional social dimensions of African proverbs:

*... When speaking of 'traditional African society 'one is really referring to many different societies each of which is in some respects unique. Yet the sheer number and diversity of African societies force one to attempt some degree of generalization and categorization in order to superimpose a frame work for the study of African culture ...*

Curry (1991:76-77) argued that virtually all the authors in English – speaking Africa got their start in local periodicals with limited circulation for the important of the little magazine in sustaining and developing both new voices and established writers in the point of fact .

African Fiction needed, for there was a demand building up in Africa for set of books which were interest in literature, General Fiction in Africa was symbolic with that Educational marked created by decolonization.

Achebe (internet Mezu Article WTR spring summer 1995 page 1 of 5 under title of women in Acheb's work – Rose ure Mezu argued that the African Ibo insists proverbs as follow

*.... “ one does not climb the Iroko Twice “ Having succeeded in climbing the Iroko ( tallest and strong tree ) the climber should appropriate all that he find there , he may not able to do so again , the eagle , however , can both scale and soar above the tree over and over – Iroko represents the field of African literature ...*

*.... 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 spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man to day will be saying “we know tomorrow. ....*

Three topics will come into preview, namely, African proverbs and the implication of them in aspects of life. Distinguish words of African writers who decorated their words with usage of proverbs.

## **Chapter Four:**

## **Black Man's Culture in the Novels of Achebe**

### **Chapter Four**

#### **Black Man's Culture in the Novels of Achebe**

The crowning glory of Achebe's novels is undoubtedly his language. What sets him apart from other African writers is the fact that he is, by far, more successful than others in his flawless integration of language and content. He was able to accomplish the difficult task of transcribing the working of African psyche from one medium to another, from an indigenous oral tradition to an alien form of European origin without obliterating the freshness and vigor of the former, and despite the vast difference separating the two cultures.

Discussing the problems of the African writers writing in English, Achebe claims: The English of the African will have to be new English, still

in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. In his own fiction, he does not only meet the challenge and succeeds in creating English that is not only detached, stately, and impassive as described by critics, but also singularly unique. A whole range of human experience is brought before people's mind's eye by his consummate use of imagery drawn from both native and alien sources. He makes use of devices like proverbs, folktales, and religious tenets conveyed through prayer, speeches and song sequences. The artistic inter-play of form and content in Achebe's novels contributes to the understanding of the Ibo cultural ethic and aesthetics, creating delight. **Achebe thus fulfills the writer's responsibility to instruct by pleasing.**

Achebe's novels let people have a close and real picture of the past and present African life with all their pains, pleasures and puzzles with immediacy and force. As he affirmed, Achebe wanted to convey through his novels that, African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and above all they had dignity.

Besides trying to instill pride and self-respect among his fellow Africans, Achebe's novels also provide the world a mode of perceiving Black aesthetics. The wisdom and philosophy, the poetry and beauty of traditional Africa are impressively subsumed in the language of his fiction. According to Ibo culture, a good speaker is he who uses language, with skill and wisdom. For the Ibos the core of conversation is the appropriate use of proverbs. They believe, "Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten."

In all his novels Achebe makes prolific use of proverbs and popular adages. They reflect the good and the lean times through which their societies pass.

The society of Umuofia holds achievement and success in high regard. This is well expressed in sayings like,

“You can tell a ripe corn by its look.” (TFA: 16).

If a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings.” (TFA: 6).

A number of proverbs are based on spiritual wisdom of the Ibo culture. For example, “When a man says yes, his 'chi' says yes also.” (TFA: 19). The 'chi' in Ibo cosmology is the guardian spirit granted to every individual at the time of birth. It being a part of the individual's 'supreme creative essence', the 'chi' is entirely responsible for the fortunes and misfortunes of the individuals. Thus, when Okonkwo strived for prosperity, his 'chi' agreed. But when he started becoming aggressive, his 'chi' disagreed and precipitated his downfall. Mother is supreme.” (TFA: 94).

In the traditional society mothers are accorded respect. When a man falls into misfortune, as in the case of Okonkwo, he seeks solace at his mother's place. Thus during his exile, Okonkwo takes refuge in Mbanta, his mother's village. Also, the last rites of a man are performed by his mother's people. “If one finger brought oil, it soiled the others.” (TFA: 89).

This proverb shows the effortless spreading of anarchy among the natives after the advent of the white man. “You have the yam and you have the knife.” This saying is generally used with regard to a powerful deity. But leaders like Ezeulu and Nwaka are also hailed because they are rich, influential, and command the respect of the clansmen.



The resentment of the people towards Ezeulu's positive attitude to the whites finds expression in some proverbs as, "If a man kills the sacred python in the secrecy of his hut, the matter lies between him and his God." (TFA: 113).

Also, "When a handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing." (AOG: 13). When Ezeulu goes to the white man's prison, people's indifference to his predicament is expressed thus: "The lizard who threw confusion into his mother's funeral rite, did he expect outsiders to carry the burden of honouring his dead" (AOG: 125).

A man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards." (AOG: 59).

When Ezeulu fails as the keeper of the clan's safety people give vent to their anger by quoting some sayings such as,

No matter how strong or great a man was, he should never challenge his chi." (AOG: 27).

And, The man who carries a deity is not a king." (AOG: 27).

Also, Only a foolish man can go after a leopard with his bare hands." (AOG: 85).

Both Ezeulu and Okonkwo for their apparent arrogance are compared to, the little bird Nza who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his chi." (TFA: 22).

By the time we come to the Ibo society of Nigeria in No Longer at Ease, most of the traditional values have disappeared. However, some of the proverbs which explicate moral and spiritual wisdom remain with the people. Here are a few examples.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end."

Wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it." (NLE: 145).

the who has people is richer than he who has money." (NLE: 72).

The impatience and the foolhardiness of the Obi Okonkwo's are compared to that of "the young antelope who danced herself lame when the main dance was yet to come." (NLE: 10).

A Man of the People, Achebe's fourth novel has a number of proverbs that clearly trace the decline decay of the cultural values of the Nigerian society. Selfishness and greed for power and money are the characteristics of political leaders like chief Nanga. The general motto of the people and their leaders is,

Ours is ours but mine is mine."

Achebe is of the opinion that a wealth of culture is stored in the folklore of a race. He feels that it can provide answers and show solutions to the questions and problems of the people. Hence folklore which is an important feature of the Ibo cultures finds ample and appropriate place in the novels of Achebe.

Achebe's characters make use of folklore to make their arguments forceful and effective. It also helps in criticism and mockery. It illustrates moral values.

The importance of the 'chi' in Ibo cosmology is highlighted with the help of some fables. The story of the little bird Nza occurs both in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God. It brings home the fact that a man should never provoke his fate. He should know where to draw a line of limit in his pursuit of power. The same wisdom is evident in the story of the bird Eneke-nti-Oba (TFA: 38) and the story of the wrestler (AOG: 26).

Among the Ibos and excellent wrestler is who wins not only in the human world but also in the world of spirits. Okonkwo's ability at wrestling is aptly compared to that of the founder of the town who according to

folktale, “engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.” (TFA: 3).

The didactic animal tale appears in almost all the novels of Achebe. The tales of the wily tortoise (TFA: 38, 67) expose the wicked nature of beings. It also points out indifference and inconsiderateness of human beings (NLE, 149). The story of the mother kite shows the folly of the people of Abame in *Things Fall Apart* (TFA, 98). The story of the leopardess illustrates the ill effects of greed (NLE: 53).

Men's and women's stories illustrate male and female values. While Okonkwo's stories exemplify warfare and violence in order to inculcate courage in children (TFA: 53, 37), Ekwefi's stories of the mosquito (TFA: 53), Obiageli's unending chain tale (AOG: 65) are meant for entertainment.

Legend is one of the many elements that lend fascination to *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Several of them concern the origin of Ulu (AOG: 157), the legend of Idemili (AOG: 41), the legends of Egwugwu (TFA: 63; AOG: 199). These are a few of the many legends mentioned. Since market is important in the Ibo society, market legends are also mentioned (AOG: 19, 21). The popularity of the legends shows that the traditions of the clan are kept alive.

The elaborate description of the various ceremonies gives us a chance to have a closer look at the well-developed sense of the symbolic view of religion in the ancient societies. They also lend charm to the narrative as do the stars to the night sky. Some interesting ceremonies include the appearance and proceedings of the Egwugwu (TFA: 63, 84; AOG: 199), the first coming of Ulu (AOG: 71), the Idemili festival (AOG: 39). The

ceremony of Akwunro (AOG: 94) and the ceremony of Ogbazulubodo (AOG: 23).

Another element that contributes to the success of Achebe's fictional art is his subtle use of English to suit the African sensibility. Ezeulu's speech to Oduche has a distinct African 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 spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying 'had we known' tomorrow." (AOG: 45-46).

The same speech if written in formal English as shown by Achebe is not half *I am sending you as my representative among these people --- just to be on the safe 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."*

The language acquires naturalness despite frequent allusions to African terms mostly because he is adept in integrating the African panorama into English. His use of the customs provides an example as seen in the description of the treatment given to a guest. Upon entering a friend's Obi, a guest is seated either on a goatskin mat or on an earthen stool. Then he is given a piece of chalk with which he draws his emblem on the floor and paints his toe or face. The bond of goodwill is complete with the passing of the kola around, and sharing its contents (AOG: 61, 94, 191; TFA: 5; NLE: 47).

The description of Okonkwo's obi and shrine (TFA: 10), Ezeulu's shrine (AOG: 209) tells us of their architecture. Simultaneously there are

human sacrifices (TFA: 43), mutilation of a diseased Ogbanje child (TFA: 55), the Osu practice (TFA, 111), the belief in juju medicine (TFA: 79; AOG, 147; AMP: 85), the belief in reincarnation (NLE, 48), the spirit possession (TFA: 70: 72; AOG: 225), the belief in the divinity of a python (TFA: 112; AOG: 48), the belief of running over a dog for good luck and the taboo of running over a duck (NLE, 14), cast a shadow on the culture of the society.

Closely aligned to oratory are the salutation names. The naming system is important to the Ibos. Its importance is especially evident in Ekwefi's attempts to save the children by the name she gives. Nine die before one daughter Ezinma survives. She names the children in such a way as to break the cycle of Ogbanje children. A few were Onwumbiko, Death, I implore you," Ozoemena, May it not happen again," and finally Onwumna, Death may please himself" (TFA: 70). The naming system is shown to have importance in *No Longer at Ease* also. The respect shown to women is implied in calling a man Son of Our Daughter" (AOG: 22). Name calling such as ant-hill nose," long throat," descriptive phrases such as the tongue with which to tell the story" (TFA: 125), looking with the tail of his eye" (AOG: 158), or the sensitiveness of "a snail's horn" (AOG: 191) in addition to curses, prayers, blessings and traditional taboos as the custom of forbidding titled elders tapping palm wine, forbidding outsiders into the meetings of elders (AOG: 141) all contribute to give the reader a new experience of reading the same language.

The use of idioms lends Achebe's language and style a native flavour and force. Besides giving us a close and convincing picture of a society in transition, this technique helps his characters sound natural while speaking an alien tongue. A few such idioms deserve ones attention.

Frequent references to flora and fauna imply the proximity of the Ibos to nature.

Obierika's house is "as busy as an ant hill." (TFA: 78).

Okonkwo's hard work is "like pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes." (TFA: 16).

"The earth burned like hot coals." (TFA: 17).

Ikemefuna grew rapidly like "a yam tendril in the rainy season." (TFA: 37).

Yam is also used as a metaphor for manliness. It is evident in:

"Yam stood for manliness, and he could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed." (TFA: 23).

Kola is symbolic of prosperity.

"He who brings kola brings life." (TFA: 5).

Here are a few idioms from Arrow of God.

Ezeulu's power is like

the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his." (AOG: 3).

Women carrying pots are like a spirit with a fantastic head" (AOG: 19).

Obika and his friend "were like a pair of Night Masks caught abroad by daylight" (AOG: 79).

The new road made a man feel lost "like a grain of maize in an empty goatskin bag" (AOG: 80).

"like the lizard who fell down from the high iroko tree" (AOG: 115). Obika shivered "like the sacrificial lamb" (AOG: 82).

#### **4. The impact of the Whiteman's Culture on the Novels of Achebe:**

The impact of the white culture is visible in several similes and metaphors, right from Things Fall Apart.

"The bicycle is an iron horse" and "the white man is an albino" (TFA: 97).

The white man is the masked spirit of today" (AOG: 154).

"He is like Suffering" (AOG: 84).

"As daylight chases away darkness so will the white man drive away all our customs" (AOG: 84).

"He is also like hot soup and we must take him slowly, slowly from the edges of bowl" (AOG: 85).

The change in the society is indicated by parodying the whites and their culture.

After his return from England Obi is compared to a little child returned from wrestling in the spirit world" (NLE: 47).

Going to England has become as common place as going down to the village stream" (NLE: 42).

"Groaning and creaking like old machinery"(NLE: 31).

The gap in the decayed set of teeth looked "like a vacant plot in a slum" (NLE, 60).

In the final analysis, Achebe emerges as a writer of acclaim for his efficient use of European language to portray the gyres" that African life is made to whirl through".

His language a major component of his artistic strategy, which not only enriches the English language but gives the reader the experience of a whole culture. Achebe's fiction demonstrates his preoccupation with language, not simply as a communicative device, but as a total cultural experience. At this level, language is not merely technique. It is the embodiment of its civilization and therefore represents or dramatizes modes of perception within its cultural grouping.

#### **4.2The social influence in Achebe's writing:**

#### **4.2.1. Proverbs and the folklore in the Novel of Achebe (TFA):**

Proverbs seem to occur almost everywhere in Africa, in apparent contrast with other areas of the world. Relatively easy to record, they have been exceedingly popular with collectors. In other areas proverbs seem universal and in some African languages occur in rich profusion. Also many editors say that they doubt whether their collections are complete. The literary relevance of these short sayings is clear. Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw. In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs. The figurative quality of proverbs is especially striking; one of their most noticeable characteristics is their allusive wording, usually in metaphorical form. This also emerges in many of the native words translated as 'proverb' and in the general stress often laid on the significance of speaking in symbolic terms. Indeed, this type of figurative expression is sometimes taken so far as to be almost a whole mode of speech in its own right.

The literary significance of proverbs in Africa is also brought out by their close connection with other forms of oral literature. This is sometimes apparent in the local terminology, for proverbs are not always distinguished by a special term from other categories of verbal art. But even here there is often a practical connection between proverbs and other forms of oral literature. Chatelain pointed out that Kimbundu proverbs are closely related to anecdotes, so much so that anecdotes are sometimes just illustrations of a proverb, while a proverb is frequently an anecdote in a nutshell Chatelain ( 1894). As well, proverbs frequently appear in songs and poems. Written forms too sometimes make use of traditional proverbs. Proverbs are also sometimes connected with riddles. They also frequently occur in



general conversation and in oratory to embellish, conceal, or hint. Proverbs, in short, are closely interwoven with other aspects of linguistic and literary behavior. As well as these obvious and common ways in which proverbs overlap with other kinds of verbal art, they also appear in certain specialized forms. Their use in the form of 'proverb names' is one. Another connection is with bird lore. The cries attributed to certain birds can be expressed. There are also several cases where there are both a general term, covering both proverbs and other types of verbal art, and, in addition, a more precise term referring to proverbs only as a proverb or a song. The judicial proverbs, or can appear on the flags of military companies, as among the Fante Christensen 1958: 240. Most striking of all is the way the Ashanti associate a certain proverb with one or other of their many 'gold-weights' small brass figures and images originally used to weigh gold dust and worked with great skill and humour. Thus a snake catching a bird represents the proverb 'The snake lies upon the ground, but God has given him the hornbill' Another weight depicts two crocodiles with only a single stomach between them, representing 'Bellies mixed up, crocodiles mixed up, we have between us only one belly, but if we get anything to eat it passes down our respective gullets'—a famous proverb often cited when one individual in a family tries to seize for himself rather than sharing Rattray 1923: 312–3; also Paulme 1941; Plass 1967.

Certain of the direct associations between proverbs and other artistic forms such as metal work or drumming may be peculiar to certain African societies, but the general association of proverbs and other forms of literature is not after all very surprising. These close connections are perhaps particularly characteristic of an oral literature without a clear-cut distinction between written and unwritten forms, but the sort of way in which proverbial expression and other types of literary art (including the art of conversation) mutually enrich and act upon each other is something that is presumably a quality of most cultures. In this sense, then,

proverbs in Africa are not so very different from those in any literate culture, in both of which their main impact seems, in fact, to be in an *oral* rather than a written form. In neither case should they be regarded as isolated sayings to be collected in hundreds or thousands on their own, but rather as just one aspect of artistic expression within a whole social and literary context.

The close connection of proverbs with other literary forms raises a difficulty. How, particularly in an oral culture, can we distinguish proverbs from other forms of oral art? or indeed, from ordinary clichés and idioms, and from such related but different forms as maxims. Most of the published collections ignore this point of definition and by merely entitling their works 'Proverbs' often give the misleading impression that these sayings are clearly differentiated from other expressions or that they are in all ways equivalent to our idea of proverbs. The exact definition of 'proverb' is not an easy matter. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by 'shortness, sense, and salt' and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth expressed in it. Even so general a picture as this contains some useful pointers for the analysis of African proverbs. First, their form. They are picked out first and most obviously as being short; and secondly by the fact that even where the wording itself is not absolutely fixed, at least the main structural pattern is accepted in the society concerned as an appropriate one for this purpose. It will emerge that, in addition to terseness and relative fixity, most sayings classed as proverbs are also marked by some kind of poetic quality in style or sense, and are in this way set apart in form from more straightforward maxims. The question of 'popular acceptance' is, however, a more difficult one. If one of the marks of a true proverb is its general acceptance as the popular expression of some truth, we are seldom given the data to decide how far this is indeed a characteristic of the sayings included in collections of 'proverbs'. In many cases presumably the

sayings included are proverbs in this full sense. But we have in fact no way of telling whether some of the 'proverbs' included are not just the sententious utterances of a single individual on a single occasion, which happened to appeal to the investigator. The sort of terminology involved can sometimes provide a clue to the local attitude to 'proverbs'. As we have seen, there is sometimes a specialized term, sometimes not. This is not always made clear by collectors.

Even more serious is the frequent failure to consider when, how, and by or among whom common proverbs are used. Even where something about the general context is given we are practically never told in detail how a given single proverb was actually used. Yet, as will emerge, this may in fact determine its significance, the way in which it is appreciated locally, even its meaning.

Proverbs were significant to the Ibos because they provided wisdom. These proverbs explain the world to the Ibos, through teachings passed down through the years by their elders. This is reflected in *Things Fall Apart* when Achebe says "as the elders said" before most proverbs. Proverbs not only provide wisdom, they state the customs, social structure, family structure, and basic information about religion to the Ibos. Proverbs are just little bits of important information to the Ibos, passed down throughout generations. They can be thought of as elements of a "bill of rights" for them. A proverb is a short pithy saying that usually states a general truth or piece of advice. In the Umuofian society, proverbs are used very often in conversation and help people understand things better by presenting the truth and can also give them advice. Here are a few examples of proverbs used in *Things Fall Apart*, along with what they can be interpreted to mean.

#### **4. 2.2. Proverbs refer to the nature.**

Frequent references imply the proximity of Ibo to nature. The writer described Oknokwo's fame grown

- 1- “like a bush fire in the harnatla (TFA.3) and he drank plam wine from morning till night and his eyes were red and fierce like the eye of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor (TFA:44) . He felt like a drunken giant waling with limbs of a mosquito (TFA.44) Oknkwo felt as if he had been cast out his clan like fish onto dry sand beach panting (TFA.92).
- 3- Yam is used as metaphor for manliness as in “yam the king of crops was man’s crop” (TFA 16)  
“Ikemefuna grew rapidly like a yam tendrill in the rainy season .” (TFA: 5)
- 4- Imagery of fire is used for a greater effect . “Okonkwo is called rorring flame, and a flaming fire (TFA:108) , while his son is cold impotent ash “ (TFA.109) .
- 5- About Unoka father of Oknkwo embodied the epitome of failure and weakness and called “agabala “ Agabala could either mean a man who had taken no like or woman .
- 6- In Ibo society anything strong was linked to man anything weak to woman. Nawoye son of Oknokwo of his father Unoka , he described him a woman like his father, after hearing of Hawoye’s conversation to the Christianity .

Oknokwo ponders how he “ a flaming fire could have begotten as son like Nawoye, degenerate and effeminate” (TFA : 143 ) on the other hand , his daughter Ezinma “ should have been a boy , He favored her the most out of all of his children yet”. “If Ezinma had been a boy [he ] would have been happier” (TFA:63)

- 7- After killing Ikemefuna, Oknokwo , who can not understand why he is so distraught , ask himself “ when did you become a shivering old woman “TFA:62 .
- 8- When his tribe looks as if they are not going to fight against the intruding missionaries, Oknokwo remember “the days when men were men “(TFA: 184).
- 9- In keeping with Ibo view of female nature the tribe allowed wife beating. Oknokwo beats his second wife, once when she did come home to make his meal. He hits her severely even during the weak of peace. He hit her, when she referred to him as one of those “guns that never shot “(TFA: 89).
- 10- The first wife of man in the Ibo tribe is paid some respect . This illustrated by the palm wine ceremony at Nwakibie’s Obi  
“ Nwakibie had not yet arrived and the other wives could not drink before her” (TFA:22) .
- 11- The importance of woman’s role appears when Oknokw was exiled to his mother land , his uncle Uchendu noticing Oknokwo how he should view his exile.  
“ A man belongs to his gather land when things are good and life is sweat . But when where is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his mother land .” (TFA:100) . A man has both joy and sorrow in his life and when the bad times come his “mother is always there to comfort him” (TFA:134).
- 12- Ibo society tries to make thing to be conservative and respectful  
Achebe explained the role of father towards his family:

“He who brings Kola brings life”. (TFA:5) the implication is that a person who could produce more harvest can supply more Kola , this indicate life continuous .

14 Respecting elders, the way of how children study more knowledge

“Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it, shines on those who Kneel under them”. (TFA: 7)

15- Ibo’s elders say to there children more advices to carry them in right way

“If a child washed his hands could eat with kings”. (TFA:8)

The implication is that age must be respected among people.

16- Ibo society belief that, all people equal in darkness, because, no one see what is there “Darkness held a vague terror for these people, ever the bravest among them”. (TFA:9)

17- “A snake was never called by its name at night, because it would bear animals become even more sinister and uncanny in the dark ...”. (TFA:9).

“When the moon is shining the triple becomes hungry for awake”. (TFA:10)

18- A group work needs people to be mobilized with variant styles Drums, Blowing horns, rising fire at night.

“Those sons of wild animals have dared to murder a daughter of Umuofia”. (TFA:11)

The implication is that to describe other people as wild animal that means poorness. So Umuofia must be mobilized for war.

19- Achebe tries to teach Ibo’s children and Readers the importance of politeness in talk

“Hold your peace” (TFA:16)

The implication is that be quite when you talk to others.

- 20- This proverb shows the way of how Ibo society treat each other when they want to borrow something.

“A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness”. (TFA:17)

The implication is that Okonkwo came to his friend Obriika to borrow yam, but he tried to pay him respects and also to ask a favor,

- 21- Ibo society does any thing when they have reason. “A toad does not run in the day time for nothing” (TFA:19)

- 22- Titles and ranks are very important, for sake of being first in eating or drinking, and remains for whom they have “

“Who will drink the dregs, who ever has job in hand” (TFA:19) .

- 23- Among Ibo society proudness of doing distinctive tasks is important in the proverbs.

“The lizard that jumped from the high Iroko tree to the ground would praise himself if no one else did” (TFA:20)

- 24- “Since men have learnt to shoot without missing , he has learned to fly without perching”. (TFA:20)

- 25- Tradition of Ibo tribe show that a proud heart can survive, in a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride

“It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails alone”.

(TFA:23) The implication is that Okonkwo’s father tries his patience beyond words . “Looking at a king’s mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother’s breast”. (TFA:24)The implication of his

- proverb is that who had risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortune to be one of the lords of the clan.
- 26- This proverb shows self-judgment in Ibo tribe “When a man says yes his chi says yes also”. (TFA:25) The implication is that Ibo people have a proverb that says a man can be judged by his hand’s work.
  - 27- Customarily Ibo tribe use to build fire by blowing breath . “You will blow your eyes out”. (TFA:38).The implication of this proverb is that when some body began to build a fire by using blowing with his / her breath, it is matter of protection to eyes lies in this proverb.
  - 28- Ezeudu was the oldest man he said to Okonkwo about Ikemefuna “ that boy calls you father , don’t a hand in his death ”. (TFA:51)  
The implication of this proverb is that people of umofia alarmed Oknokwo to have nothing to do with it, because Umofia has decided to kill Ikemefuna.
  - 29- Obeying goddess message carried by ancestors spirits among Ibo society-Okonkwo said ,“The Earth can not punish me for obeying her messenger “ “Achebe’s fingers are not scalded by piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm. “ The implication is that to obey goddess to Okonkwo it is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families.
  - 30- Ibo tribe prefer their children to keep on fathers work so. “You were very much like that yourself”. (TFA:64).The implication is that, young’s do like their fathers or their mothers .
  - 31- Ibo tribes use to count coins for marriage and should be paid immediately. “we had not thought to go below thirty but as the dog said, if I fall down for you and you fall down for me , it is play ,



- Marriage should be play and not a fight” .(TFA:66). The implication is that, agreement should be settled for bride-price.
- 32- When a woman has children she has right to do any thing in home without permeation from her husband. “The woman lies on top of the man when they are making the children”. “White men like piece of chalk “
  - 33- About the leaves become smaller after looking  
“That was why the snake .lizard kills his mother”.
  - 34- Traditionally Ibo tribe they produce of themselves in sermonizes by saying, as Okonkwo said, “I am Evil forest, I am Dry-meat that fills the mouth, I am fire –that-burns without faggots”.
  - 35- Women of Ibo tribe use to lie children on their back while they work, walk and when they work in kitchen, and so the child be happy. And did not know how long the distant, or the way. “A baby on its mother’s back does not know that the way is long.” (TFA:92)
  - 36- Crowdness in Ibo tribe, be in play ground or open market after any call from drum’s sound “There are so many people on it that if you threw up a grain of sand it would not find away to fall to earth again.”. (TFA:103)The implication is that this indicates crowd people, great number of people in one place of the open market.
  - 37- Day of open market, in an opportunity for everybody to enjoy, said old man “Honest men and thieves they can steal your cloth from off your waist in that market,”. (TFA:105)The implication is that any open market can swelled all people in variant manner.

- 38- In sermonizes Ibo tribe use to bring much pots of wine so some one said “They dare not bring fewer than thirty pots of wine.” “I shall tell them my mind if they do “ Achebe (1958:105)
- 39- Ibo elders say “If one finger brought oil it soiled the others”. (TFA:114) The implication is that if a person committed a crime the worth loose on all the land and not just on the offender.
- 40- Ibo people were necked, when the heavy frozen water fall it harm people so “The most of the water of heaven”. (TFA:118). The implication is that, this indicates solid drops.
- 41- Foreign language always stranger to Ibo so they hear pronunciation in wrong way “He seemed to speak through his nose”. Achebe (1958:126). The implication is that , white men’s language to people of clan are not clear .
- 42- “There is something ominous behind the silence .” (TFA:127)  
Implication of this proverb is that there is that there is nothing to fear from someone who shouts.
- 43- “There is no story that is not true.” the implication is that , word has no end and what is good on people is an abomination with others .
- 44- Ibo society has excuse with whom they married newly. “Never make an early morning appointment with a man who has just married a new wife”. (TFA:128) The implication is that, a person who married a new wife has excuse of being late.
- 45- White men broad Christianity to clam, and changed life style by recruiting convert ants. “Living fire begets cold impotent ash.” (TFA:140) The implication is that Okonkwo was a flaming fire , how then could he have begotten a son very weak .

- 46- People in the clan replace each other, so Ibo society believe in that by this proverbs “The clan was like a lizard; if it lost its tail it soon grew another”. (TFA:156)The implication is that, man’s place was not always there waiting for him, as soon as he left some one else rose and filled.
- 47- in African drums are important for many signing, dancing, calling and so on. “As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him” (TFA:167)The implication is that, if a person danced a furious step and so the drums went mad.
- 48- Dignity is more important in Ibo tribe for there identifications. “He may refuse to do what he is asked; he does not refuse to be asked” (TFA:174) The implication is that Ibo tribe does not refuse a call, but they not deny to what is forcing them.
- 49- In Ibo society, no work with of reason “When ever you see a toad (jumping) in broad day light, then know that something is after its life.” (TFA:182)The implication is that behind any fear jumping dangerous.
- 50- Studying keep person steadily doing his work automatically. “The bird was asked why he was always on the wing and replied “Men have learnt to shoot without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twinge. (TFA:183) "The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them." (page 8)
51. "If a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings." (page 8)
52. "A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness." (page 19)

53. "An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb." (page 21)

54. "When a man says yes, his *chi* says yes also." (page 27)

55. "Every man whose arm is strong was expected to invite large numbers of guests far and wide." (page 37)

56. "A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm." (page 67)

57. "When mother crow is chewing grass, its young ones are watching its mouth." (page 70)

58. "If one finger brought oil it soiled the others." (page 125)

59. "Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water." (Chapter 1)

Meaning: Simply put, this proverb was intended to mean that Okonkwo was fast and agile. this particular proverb is a good example as to how some were intended by to give people a better understanding of a person by simply giving a metaphorical saying that a person could easily visualize.

60. "Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten." (Chapter 1)

Meaning: While this proverb is more complex than the first, it still can easily be interpreted. It is essential for the reader to know that palm-oil is a very important item in Umuofian society, and is used to cook and is also used as a fuel source. eating the words simply is a poetic way of saying to take them in, or to gain knowledge. Basically, this one means that proverbs are an

essentially words of wisdom.

61. "Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them." (Chapter 1)

Meaning: Unoka decided to use this complex saying to say that he will pay his biggest debtors, or people he owes money to before the debtors that he owes less to, most likely as a way to express his gratitude for the generosity of those who lend him more.

62. "If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings." (Chapter 1)

Meaning: In the Umuofian society, if you are able to remove the footprint of your ancestors, you would be able to aspire to anyone you wished in the society. Okonkwo could not be respected due to his father until he became the notorious warrior that he was.

63. "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for walk." (Chapter 2)

Meaning: For the people of Umuofia, the moon was very important. The influence and effect of the moon on the people in the tribe was so strong that if the moon shines on them, even a cripple could walk. This was an extreme way of saying that the moon gave the tribe the power to do anything.

64. "Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to other, let his wing break." (Chapter 3) Meaning: This proverb is rather complex, but it basically means that Okonkwo was ashamed of his father and was afraid of having the same misfortune of his father and the same end.

65. "A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness." (Chapter 3) Meaning: According to this proverb, if you respect greatness, you will become great yourself. In addition, this proverb means

that in Umuofia that successful men respect greatness.

66. "A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing" (Chapter 3) Meaning: This proverb could mean a multitude of things, however it is quite apparent that the mean meaning is that something strange will not happen for no reason at all. Obviously, a toad does not usually run in the daytime, unless something happened, and the reader can infer that the proverb means that everything happens for a reason.

67. "An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb." (Chapter 3) Meaning: This proverb means that someone is uneasy if something is said that affects them personally, whether it was a joke or not, they cannot laugh about it.

68. "The lizard that jumped from high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did." (Chapter 3) Meaning: This is a simple proverb. Even if nobody appreciates what you have done, you will remain proud of yourself since you know your accomplishment was successful.

69. "Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching." (Chapter 3)

Meaning: Essentially, if Nwakibie gave yams to every man who asked, many of the yams would be wasted by their lack of effort. The yams did not mean as much to someone who had not rightfully earned them. Basically, someone must know how hard someone worked for something in order to respect the property themselves.

70. "You can tell a ripe corn by its look" (Chapter 3) Meaning: Branching off the previous proverb, Nwakibie could tell that Okonkwo is ready to

receive his gift and not take it for granted. This means that none of the yams will be destroyed

71. "Looking at the king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother breasts" ( Chapter 4) Meaning: Although Okonkwo once was a little baby, it feels as he never could be so vulnerable, because now is so big and robust. It scares him to think that he could have ever been as vulnerable as he was when he was younger.

72. "Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble." ( Chapter 4) Meaning: This proverb is also rather simple. Basically, people who are blessed with luck by the gods, should be humble, and not criticize other people. They should not think they are better solely because they are more lucky.

73. "When a man says yes his chi says yes also." ( Chapter 4) Meaning: A man's spirit, or chi, will guide him and help him tackle any task that is at hand once he puts his mind to it.

74. "They called him the little bird nza who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his chi." ( Chapter 4) Meaning: This proverb could indicate that Okonkwo was ignorant and not humble. Okonkwo was said to be so prideful he would challenge his own chi. Even though being prideful would be a good thing, it would be bad to think a man could challenge his chi.

75. "A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm." ( Chapter 8 ) Meaning: Once again, we are shown that proverbs are complex and poetic ways of saying simple things. This one simply means that those who obey their parents will not be punished by their parents.

76. "When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth."  
( Chapter 8 ) Meaning: Basically, this proverb means that children copy their parents and learn everything they do from them. It is important for parents to set a good example, or else their children will not live up to their expectations.

77. "If one finger brought oil is soiled the others." ( Chapter 13 ) Meaning: Basically, if you do not treat yourself for sickness, whether it be mental or physical, you will pass it on to others.

78. "Mother is supreme" ( Chapter 14 ) Meaning: Your mother is extremely important as she is the one who gives you life.

79. "Never kill a man who says nothing." ( Chapter 15 ) Meaning: If somebody never says anything to you that offends you, then you never should do wrong to them. Only if they do something wrong that offends you should you take action against them.

80. "There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts." Meaning: Men who shout should not be feared, as that is the most they will do. They will never be the type of person to take physical action, therefore, you should not fear them.

81. "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash." ( Chapter 16 ) Meaning: If someone thinks too highly of themselves and their influence is too much, then the person alongside them will never be able to come as successful.



82. "A child cannot pay for his mother's milk." ( Chapter 19 ) Meaning: Basically, parents who think that their children should pay them back for taking care of them is ridiculous. This is because the parents are the ones that brought them to life and therefore they are responsible for them and should take care of them by nature.

83. "Men have learned to shoot without missing their mark and I have learned to fly without perching on a twig." ( Chapter 24 ) Meaning: Basically, external influences have a great enough effect on people to change their fate.

#### **4-3: African proverbs according to category**

##### **In Giving advice**

“He that thatches his house with turds shall have more teachers than researchers”. Lane (1983:5) the implication of these proverbs in African society is that people tend to offer advice rather than practical assistance to some in an unpleasant situation.

- Proverbs in corruption it is causes “Who keeps company with wolf “
- In Discipline “If the dog is not at home, he barks not”. Lane (1983:1) The implication is towards a man who will not express or protect himself out of his home.
- In Adversity “An ill marriage is a spring of ill future”. “Trouble brings experience and experience brings wisdom “ The penguin (1983:2)
- In advice – its limitation “Advice is a stranger, if welcomed he stays for the night, if not welcomed he returns home the same day”. Lane (1983:3)

- In good source of Advice “The egg shows the hen the place where hatch”. Lane (1983:5)

The implication is that advice of the young should not be despised

- In bad source of advice “Take the first advice of a woman and not take the second”. Lane (1983:5)

[The implication is that first advice, based on intuition, will be more reliable than the second which is based on inferior reasoning]

- Proverbs used in country love agriculture “Lime makes a rich father and a poor son”. Lane (1983:38)

[The implication is that liming the soil will provide important crops in the short term, but in the long term will damage the soil]

“So in the stop, it will be heavy at top” Lane (1983:39) The implication is that the advice here is to sow wheat in wet ground for maximum yield.

- Proverbs in fortune: Africans believe in some birds for fortune luck and indication of dryness. “When the cuckoo comes to the bare thorn, sell your cow and by you corn: but when she comes to the full bit, sell your corn and by you sheep “

[The implication is that the importance of experiences that inherited from African ancestors]

- proverbs in courage

By using proverbs African use to encourage their children to grow up to be brave and lead valuable life. “A bold heart is half the battle “ “Great things are done through courage than through wisdom “

“valour is born with us , not acquired . The weapons of the brave are in his heart”. Lane (1983:41)

- proverbs of cowardice; shame of cowardice “Better die with honor than live with shame”. Lane (1983:42)

It is value “It’s better to be a coward for a minute than dead for the rest of your Life “He that fights and runs away, may live to fight another day”.

- Proverbs of crime: African use proverbs in matter of crime to bread children steadily in life.

“He that eats the king’s goose shall be choked with feathers”. Lane (1983:44)

- Using proverbs in cruelty “If ever man would sweep before his door, the city would soon be clean”. Lane (1983:46)

[The proverb implies the value of cleaning and sweeping start from any door.]

- Proverbs in the matter of cunning handling the cunning “If you deal with fox, think of his tricks”. Lane (1983:47) [The implication is that thinking first and trusts second.]

- Proverbs of danger Its sources and against taking risk “Don’t go near the water until you learn how to swim”. Lane (1983:49)

- Proverbs of death: African believe in death “Death does not recognize strength”. Lane (1983:50)

The implication of proverbs is that death is stronger than every thing.

- Proverbs of deeds “By his deeds we know a man”. [The implication is that, real knowing of any person after his death]

#### **4-4: Chapter summary:**

Things Fall Apart all time is the best and maiden novel. Achebe attempted to show not only the culture of the native society but also the

reasons that caused it decay and downfall. So too in Achebe's novel the onslaught of white man among other things, caused the displacement of native societies, degeneration of native values and unending chooses in Africa.

Proverbial wisdom of Achebe's style was considered as an element that contributed to the success of Achebe's fiction art and the use of which suits the African sensibility and made distinct African style .

# **Chapter Five**

## **Summary, Results, Recommendations and Conclusion**

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#### **5-1: Summary:**

Proverbs are distinctive as African style and one believes that what is resulted from using proverbs as experiment due to African writers such as Armah , Achebe , Okara , Ama AtaAidoo , Ngugi , Tutola, all been pioneers in the project is great and valuable.

Proverbs represent the foundation of movement for Fiction writing. Proverbs for African writers are considered as distinct as writers lie in their stylistic innovations and thematic realism. They bring a fresh awareness of familiar themes and discuss contemporary social and culture issue, in the ways that show an intriguing understanding and perception of the varying alternatives.

#### **5-2: Results:**

African Fiction can be itemized under broad categories ; written and oral respectively .

##### **5.2.1. Written proverbs:**

1. Features and clarifies themes which are typically nationalistic, deriving from national experiences.
2. Assumes a combative stance and tone by calling on the people to fight and defend their existence as a nation there by, widening their political horizon and intensifying their consciousness.
3. African proverbs create a new style and generate a new home – grow audience. The writer turns his back on the oppressor and addresses his own people.

4. The writer is committed in a manifest over sense.

### **5.2.2. Oral proverbs:**

Proverbs are usually use by indigenous people more than civilizes, to indicate and refreshing intellectuality minds in both children and adults.

Proverbs usage in African Fiction represented especially important local development which gave voice to the concerns and interests of ordinary Africans in way which is more formal literary. The noting of indigenous influences on African Fiction was part of the project of defining the national status of the emerging Fiction, especially after decolonization.

### **5-3: Conclusions:**

Proverbs make fiction to be not only inviting but easy to read, and inimitable sense of humor which totally traps the reader. Sophisticated irony leaves the reader wondering about meanings, and motives in every human action, and authentic characterization which fixes the human being in the environment of the novel indelibly in the mind of reader.

Therefore, literary values are not after all very literary but derive from the class configuration of social values in general nor does the literary enterprise operate to the exclusion of other dimensions of the social totality. Genuine African literature should only be written in indigenous African language. Most mainstream African authors outside the a risk-speaking areas continue to use one or other of their adopted European Languages risk obscurity in a worthy, cause the great majority of first languages only orally and with no literature in them.

Written literature even in African languages is therefore still inaccessible to its potential audience unless directly used through drama and reading. The dilemma of the African author who , by accident of history uses English or

any other foreign language is dramatized by the plight of the black south Africa who though conscious of the limitations of his English , still burns the midnight oil acquire competence in that language. Because in his opinion he had to address the oppressor in the latter's own language. Primary audience do not speak or understand the oppressors and when he greets them in that foreign language he receives a contemptuous snub. This is worsen by the fact that his black audience is split into many language groups, so that in own native tongue he can only address one particular group.

Lastly the use of African English language has problems of its own, developed for centuries to express and reflect a particular culture. The language has to be naturalized into completely different environment and made to convey message in conflict with its native traditions. It is probably in the area of dialogue that the difficulties are most apparent.

#### **5.4: Recommendations:**

- African proverbs should be taught pensively specially in the colleges of English art.
- On the imaginative side, books should be established to express the African personality-Fiction, history, poetry, recording of the past and such things.
- Most of African traditional proverbs are absent from folk tale, proverbs needed to be included for more benefit.
- African schools should be prompted to be developed to a greater extent for teaching formal plots by using proverbs.
- African tales and fiction should provide useful reading matter of classes.



- Many of African motives which drove the mission presses, specially the project of modernization and Education in African value ideas African proverbs should be part of them.
- African proverbs should go clearly towards targets from and the operational practices of African traditions which can pioneer in directing African texts.
- The study of African popular proverbs and tradition emphasis the overlap among the audience for Fictional narration, instructional manuals and self-help.
- African proverbs Dictionary should be established.
- African writers need to be scoped for indigenous culture such as African Myth, proverbs, fables were changed.
- African fiction is needed, as there is a demand building up literature stocks in Africa for set of books which own interest is literature.

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# Dedication

I dedicate this work to the soul of my father, to my beloved mother, to my dear wife and kids and to my brothers and sisters.

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