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British Chauvinism and the Assertion of the African Personality in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe'nin *Things Fall Apart* Romanında İngiliz Şovenizmi ve Afrikalı Kimliğinin İnşası

 Mahamadou SIMPARA*

 Aboubacar Sidiki COULIBALY♦

Özet

Bu makale, Chinua Achebe'nin *Things Fall Apart* adlı eserinde İngiliz şovenizmi ile Afrika kimliği arasındaki etkileşimi incelemektedir. Çalışma, sömürgecilik dönemi sırasında ve sonrasında Afrika'ya yönelik sömürgeci algıları sorgulamaktadır. Araştırma, postkolonyal ve okur tepkisi teorik çerçeveleri içinde nitel içerik analizi yöntemini kullanmaktadır. Achebe'nin anlatısı, Afrika'nın ilkel olduğu yönündeki Avrupamerkezci klişelere karşı bir karşı söylem olarak sunulmaktadır. Roman, sömürgecilikle bozulmadan önceki İgbo toplumunun haysiyetini, tutarlılığını ve karmaşıklığını vurgulamaktadır. Sömürgeci söylemin, yerli halkın özgüvenini sarsarak Afrika mirasına aykırı kimlikler dayattığı gösterilmektedir. Achebe'nin eseri, sömürgeleştirilmiş toplumların yaşadığı ikilemi ve melezliği ortaya koymaktadır. Yazarın entelektüel gelişimi, sömürgeci eğitim sistemi ile İgbo sözlü gelenekleri arasındaki gerilimi yansıtmaktadır. Achebe, atasözleri, deyimler ve yerli gelenekler aracılığıyla Afrika kültürünün zenginliğini teyit etmektedir. Roman, hem edebi bir başarı hem de kültürel bir savunuculuk işlevi görür. Afrika anlatılarını küresel söylem içinde konumlandırarak emperyalist kibrine meydan okur. Sonuç olarak, *Things Fall Apart*, dünya çapındaki okuyucuların sömürgeci çarpıtmaların ötesinde Afrika tarihi ile ilgilenmelerini sağlayan pedagojik bir araç olarak ortaya çıkar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrika Kimliği, İkilem, Şovenizm, Yapısöküm, Melezleşme.

Abstract

This paper examines the interplay between British chauvinism and African personality in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It interrogates colonial perceptions of Africa both during and after colonisation. The study employs qualitative content analysis within postcolonial and reader-response theoretical frameworks. Achebe's narrative is presented as a counter-discourse to Eurocentric stereotypes of African primitiveness. The novel highlights the dignity, coherence, and complexity of Igbo society prior to colonial disruption. Colonial discourse is shown to destabilise indigenous self-esteem and impose identities antithetical to African heritage. Achebe's work reveals the ambivalence and hybridity experienced by colonised societies. His intellectual development reflects the tension between colonial schooling and Igbo oral traditions. Through proverbs, idioms, and indigenous customs, Achebe affirms African cultural richness. The novel functions as both literary achievement and cultural advocacy. It situates African narratives within global discourse, challenging imperial arrogance. Ultimately, *Things Fall Apart* emerges as a pedagogical tool, enabling readers worldwide to engage with African history beyond colonial misrepresentations.

Keywords: African Personality, Ambivalence, Chauvinism, Deconstruction, Hybridise.

* Dr., Yambo Ouologuem University of Bamako, Department of English, simpara250@gmail.com, Orcid Nu: 0009-0008-6456-8902, Mali.

♦ Prof. Dr., Yambo Ouologuem University of Bamako, Department of English, aboubacarscouly@hotmail.com, Orcid Nu: 0009-0006-3846-7994, Mali.

Introduction

This paper undertakes an analysis of British chauvinism and African personality in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Numerous studies have examined Achebe's seminal novel. For instance, Irele, in his reading of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), asserts that the text "provided an image of an African society, reconstituted as a living entity and in its historic circumstance",¹ thereby challenging Eurocentric discourses that had dismissed African cultures as primitive. According to Irele, Achebe's portrayal of Okonkwo and his community underscores the dignity of African traditions, even as they confront colonial disruption. Similarly, Kosasih contends: "Through *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe wanted to give insights to the world that Africans have their own traditional and cultural identity in order that Europeans become more appreciative of Africa".² Taken together, these interpretations affirm that Achebe's work functions both as a critique of colonial arrogance and as a defense of African cultural identity. Nevertheless, no scholarly study has consistently examined British chauvinism and African personality through the combined lenses of postcolonial theory and reader-response theory in the manner proposed by the present research.

The central problematic of this study resides in the persistent questioning by former colonies regarding the benefits and assets derived from their prolonged subjugation to Western civilization. In other words, these now independent nations continue to ponder whether the imitation of colonial manners provided them with any substantive tools for achieving genuine political, cultural, and intellectual autonomy. In response to this impasse, postcolonial theory emerged as a framework to interrogate the social conditions of ex-colonial societies. Among the most significant contributions to the development of this intellectual movement in Africa is Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958, prior to the independence of most African states. It is a novel which provides a counter discourse to eurocentrists' depictions of Africa and designs the actual architecture of the African personality epitomized through the character of Okonkwo.

The main objective of this paper is to examine British chauvinism and African personality in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through the dual lenses of postcolonial theory and reader-response criticism. By employing these theoretical perspectives, the study seeks to provide a nuanced and crafted analysis of the novel's thematic concerns. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, as its primary corpus is a literary text, and utilizes a content analysis design to extract and interpret the relevant data. Structurally, the work is divided into two sections: the first explores Achebe's intellectual development within the tension between colonial and indigenous beliefs, while the second investigates how Achebe exposes the dynamics of multicultural chauvinism in *Things Fall Apart*.

Achebe's Intellectual Development Amidst Colonial and Indigenous Chauvinisms

Chinua Achebe was born in an Africa that needed "to be civilised" (colonised) by the European civilisers/colonisers. The western chauvinistic theory was displayed everywhere and in everything. That theory portrayed Africans and their societies as inferior, primitive, or incapable of history and reason. Africans were shown to be "savage, tribal, mob behaviour, ill-educated, irrational, child-like, criminal, excessively sexual, filthy, amoral and irreligious".³ These needed to be redressed. Africans had to be tamed and educated and Africa had to be developed.⁴ That was, in fact, true because when Achebe was born, he saw white men in his society and they were not miserable. While he was growing up, most of key social institutions were conducted by the whites in his society and in the neighbourhoods. Achebe found that all the things in his society were being destroyed and replaced by the supremacist white's.

¹ F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 15.

² Marcella Melly Kosasih, "A Stylistic Analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, V. 4, N. 5, 2019, p. 1348.

³ Robert Johnson, *British Imperialism*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2003, p. 91.

⁴ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinemann Educational Publishers, London 1996, p. 169.

White Europeans were portrayed as “superior beings” and were enjoined to civilise Black Africans, who were positioned at the lowest rank of the social ladder. Colonial discourse became the most dominant and pervasive narrative among indigenous populations. This is highlighted at the end of chapter six “when the missionaries burst into song. It was one of those gay and rollicking tunes of evangelism which had the power to plucking at silence and dusty chords in the heart of an Igbo man. The interpreter explained each verse to the audience, some of whom now stood enthralled”.⁵ The message was effectively disseminated and was gradually taking hold of the masses. The first person captivated by the message was Okonkwo’s first son Nwoye. “It was not the mad logic of Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion; something felt in the marrow. ... Nwoye’s callow mind was greatly puzzled”.⁶ Africans began to imitate Western European behaviours, having been systematically instructed to do so. They were persuaded to abandon their traditional ways of life in favour of the practices introduced by new “civilisers.”

For example, “Nneka, the wife of Amadi” who was twins born woman has long been stigmatised with witchery and bad spirit has found “a good riddance” with Mr. Kiaga, the white missionary from her superstitious people.⁷ The missionaries, in turn, took pleasure in this mission, believing themselves to be the most capable and divinely chosen to undertake it. For instance, the joy of Mr. Kiaga was unmeasurable when Nwoye, Okonkwo’s son, came to inform him that he is leaving his father for the missionary school and church in Umuofia. He even said “blessed is he who forsakes his father and his mother for my sake”.⁸ The implementation of white civilising mission was working successfully.

According to civilisers, they were enjoined to spread their abilities throughout the world. They have always shown and said that; even if, some other people saw in that as a pretext to invade other places. Views were different at that point. When the European missionaries have placed the aim of their presence in the foreign lands (colonies) in the canvass of civilisation some other people called it colonisation. When the white ‘missionaries or civilisers’ set out to transfer their knowledge to the untamed, they were vied by their host countries as colonisers and later imperialists. The furious tempo of Okonkwo after learning that his son has gone with the missionaries can explain that.⁹ “The stories were already gaining ground that the white man had not only brought a religion but also a government”.¹⁰ Their civilising mission became to be drawn as a colonisation.

Achebe would have learnt from pro-colonists like Marc Ferro that: ‘colonization was the ‘power’ of a people to “reproduce” itself in different spaces. It was the emphasis on being able to dominate, and to retain a distinct identity that made colonisation distinct from immigration.¹¹ Or he might have also heard the Gladstonian Rhetoric that says “The object [of colonization], was to reproduce the likeness of England, as they were doing in Australia, New Zealand, North America and the Cape, thereby contributing to the general happiness of mankind”.¹² Those kinds of colonial/civilizing discourses were everywhere when Achebe grew up. And it was normal because the colonisers really thought they were superiors to anyone else and had the divine right to subdue every other under their system so that the mankind could be saved in this life and the afterlife. It was colonial nationalist thought that arose from the predatory instinct of every living being.

The aforementioned discourse was indispensable to the colonisers, serving as a deliberate instrument to destabilise the self-esteem of the colonised. Its principal aim was to secure acquiescence to the imposition of an alien culture within newly subjugated territories. The repercussions for self-concept were profound, for it not only directly undermined indigenous

⁵ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 138.

⁶ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 139.

⁷ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 142-143.

⁸ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 144.

⁹ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 144.

¹⁰ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 146.

¹¹ Johnson, *British Imperialism*, p. 59.

¹² John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York 2009.

cultural identity but also sought to superimpose an identity fundamentally antithetical to the native one. Achebe bore witness to these realities, recognising that his people had been reduced to subjects under colonial domination. The discursive strategies of the colonisers, moreover, attained a position of hegemony.

However, Achebe was also aware that the system was diarchic shared between the District Commissioners and Kotma.¹³ Even though the white colonisers controlled the key administrative institutions, the Africans had still some traditional rules that resisted change such as traditional religious leadership and organisations of traditional feasts that remained in the authority of heads of families like Okonkwo. Even though colonial schools and churches were put in place, traditional initiations rites and storytelling resisted. These are apparent throughout all the works written by Achebe. Despite the fact that Achebe was raised within the colonial system of living (school, church and English language), he has blended all his works with implacable Igbo identities. Salcedo highlighted that Achebe “grew up surrounded by a complex fusion of Igbo traditions and colonial legacy”.¹⁴ He is an archetypal product of hybrid culture of a colonial society and his *Things Fall Apart* has legitimately represented that.

Unquestionably, Chinua Achebe had received initiations into his own culture via the elders’ storytelling. He was born and grew up “in Igbo town of Ogidi where training in a particular culture’s oral arts and skills is an essential part of children’s traditional indigenous education on their way to initiation into full humanness”.¹⁵ According to *N’Begué* in Aboubacar Sidiki Coulibaly’s novel, *Le monde Africain doit se réveiller*, “le conte, comme toutes autres formes traditionnelles de la littérature africaine, était principalement utilisé par nos anciens et aînés pour nous socialiser et éduquer afin que nous soyons des bons citoyens en grandissant”.^{16, 17} Furthermore, “since olden times, storytelling within the African culture has been a way of passing on traditions, codes, values of acceptable behaviour, as well as upholding and preserving good social order”.¹⁸ Africa is well known with its fireside storytelling and the white colonisation has even pushed that forward because the elders sought to preserve their legacy in face of the rapacious western domination. For example, *N’Bégue* (the protagonist) advance that his grandmother, *Macho*, taught him many experiences through which the colonisers have used to unstill Africa.¹⁹ According to him, the white men have neglected nothing of their power in Africa that could hinder their destruction of indigenous culture unless they could not.

Achebe had his mother and sister as storytellers. They were the sources of his embracing the root of his culture. Like Achebe, for example, *N’Begué* has drawn a timescale of his socialising process into his native culture beside frequentation of western school. He recalled that he had literally gone through multiple schools at the same time. His first school started from birth to six years old and was taught by his mother that he termed as primary school. That school was about initiation to social norms and values. The second school was ensured by his father. It started from seven years old and focused on social apprenticeship of becoming a real man by learning about male social responsibilities. He termed this step as secondary school. This continued until his eighteenth after which he entered the practical side of his social growth when he could be, by then, judged for every act.²⁰ *N’Begué* showed that these steps of social education were common everywhere in Africa and applied to every child that grew up in Africa.

¹³ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 170.

¹⁴ Francis Xavier Robles Salcedo, “Tracing the development of Chinua Achebe’s philosophy on sustainable development in his major novels”, *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, V. 14, N. 4, 2025, p. 99.

¹⁵ Kudakwashe Tuwe, “The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African communities in New Zealand”, *African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)*, p. (n.p).

¹⁶ Translation: “The folktale, like all other traditional forms of African literature, was mainly used by our elders and seniors to socialize and educate us so that we would grow up to be good citizens.”

¹⁷ Aboubacar Sidiki Coulibaly, *Le monde africain doit se réveiller*, Al Qalam éditions, Bamako 2024.

¹⁸ Tuwe, “The African Oral Tradition Paradigm ...”, p. (n.p).

¹⁹ Coulibaly, *Le monde africain ...*, p. 10.

²⁰ Coulibaly, *Le monde africain ...*, p. 25.

The purpose of these initiatory practices was the preservation of Africanity. Although parents could not halt the sweeping tide of universal change ushered in by Western colonialism, they endeavoured to equip the younger generation with sufficient cultural armour to liberate themselves in due course. The transmission of indigenous knowledge thus became an act of hope and determination, sustaining the belief that a day would come when Africans would be freed from colonial domination. On that day, men and women within Africa and the diaspora would be prepared to recount their own version of events. This constituted an African form of chauvinism: the construction of an "African personality," signifying Africa's contribution to world history, African histories narrated by Africans, African institutions distinct from those of the colonisers, African theatres, curricula, and media under African control. Chinua Achebe embodied this African personality, and his *Things Fall Apart* juxtaposed the two competing chauvinisms.

Clash between British's Chauvinism and African Personality in *Things Fall Apart*

No matter how a man masters swimming, he will never know water better than a fish. That is the case of the interlopers' perceptions and descriptions of Africa and Africans in the absence of Africans themselves. As literature has always been an intellectual means of communication, Chinua Achebe seized that opportunity to wittily convey some messages to the knowledge of the world, particularly to Euro-colonisers. He did that through the production of books and articles. *Things Fall Apart*, his incomparable novel, has sprung the intellectual critics and theorists on feet from 1958 onwards. Approvals and disapprovals everyone wants to say something about its masterpiece.

Achebe's novel describes Africa from its pre-colonial period, especially Nigeria when people were living in harmony, to the coming era of the British interlopers with their evangelical Christianity. The book portrays the Igbo society in a manner as much clearer until one might doubt its fictionality. Portraits of social structures are vivid. The introduction of interlopers and the resistance of newcomers are ideally logical. Achebe's empirical mastery of the colonial society helped him exhibit the facts with verisimilitude. However, the title of the book denotes a biased stance in its depiction. It denotes that things had fallen or were falling apart; those things were nothing more than African societal things. Achebe had grown up with both of the cultures (African and colonial) and had learnt the jingoism in both of them.

Wherever two instances of chauvinism met, the result has been intense conflict breaking peace stalemate. It only brings chaos and destructions. The contact between pre-colonial African culture and colonial culture had not hurt only *Okonkwo* (the main fictional character), it had also had profound effects on real colonised people. When the colonisers started to build churches and schools in the Igbo society, the people like Okonkwo started to suspect threat of displacement. In defence, he even killed one of the Mr John's messengers.²¹ Thus, the two customs have started to clash and that is where Achebe received the inspiration of his *Things Fall Apart*.²² However, many may see this book by Achebe as a commonly told story but it is, in fact, about a complexity in his own mind. It is an expression of depression and delusion that can only be understood by its readers and may help him and many like him. Achebe and many people that were raised during colonisation became victims of colonisation. Many of first African literary writers were caught under this situation. They were being hybridised. They were ambivalent about what to choose. Was everything in colonisation bad or were there some positive points in it? That is even why the founding fathers of African decolonisation movement were not agreeing on a coherent plan.

Things Fall Apart is the result of the cultural shock that Achebe received while growing up in, both, Nigeria as well as in Britain. Achebe grew up to find that his parents had been converted to Christianity but his grandparents were still firm believers in their traditional culture. He was himself raised in the two cultures that were antagonistic but actually irreversible for his success. His book is not a criticism of colonisation but a comparative exhibition of precolonial African culture beside colonial African culture. According to Lame Maatla Kenalemang

²¹ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 193.

²² Lame Maatla Kenalemang, "Things Fall Apart: An Analysis of Pre and Post-Colonial Igbo Society", Unpublished Conference, Karlstads University, Sweden, Date: 11 January 2013.

“However, the literature does not show the colonised as victims of colonialism, but rather it shows that they are confused about their sense of belonging. Most colonised individuals do not know whether to follow their own culture or the culture of the coloniser”.²³ For example, this is plain in the attitudes of Nwoye and Enoch (the son of the snake priest). For intertextuality purpose, the foregoing point is similar to what we encounter when reading *Sous l’orage* by the Malian author Seydou Badian.²⁴ In this novel, Badian appears torn between two irreconcilable perspectives: on the one hand, the Western mentality that insists on the rights of children and women; on the other hand, the African conception that situates children and women within traditional social roles. He seems unable to choose decisively between these two visions, between rights and roles, between Western individualism and African communalism.

This study is designed to underscore key elements that many readers identify as central to the potential of *Things Fall Apart* in advancing Africa’s reinsertion into global human culture. Achebe, in fact, explores three foundational dimensions of society and civilisation which constitute its true backbone. The strength of any civilisation is determined by these dimensions: linguistic vitality, coherence in governance, and the degree of cultural sophistication. Within this research, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is analysed to highlight these three riches of pre-colonial Africa and to juxtapose them with their counterparts under colonial rule.

Firstly, Achebe proudly shows in *Things Fall Apart* the wealth of African language. In that, the major characters in this book are all African and all of their speeches are also African idioms and proverbs. Here, Achebe stresses the richness of that language (Igbo’s) by saying that Okoye, a character, “said the next half a dozen sentences are in proverbs”. Among Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten”.²⁵ It is obvious that such a cultural way of language use is to be concise and it is impossible without a well organised language. Again, the book is full of non-translated but understandable Igbo words to well describe their customs. Hence, we can be sure that this was cunning by Achebe to convey a message to European colonisers. In Achebe’s own words, Joseph Conrad used Marlow in his *Heart of Darkness* (1899) to dehumanise African people as “the others or kinships,” as “dumb, speechless characters”; “the antithesis of European”.²⁶ So, having a character like Okoye, this stereotype must be demystified. The ambivalence at this point is that he still wrote this book in English instead of Igbo language. Whether the colonial language is a legacy of colonisation or not, it is the reader to judge. This shows the complexity in the attitude of Achebe himself.

Then Achebe, again, describes the Igbo societal rules as a proud governmental system which will be fallen apart by the coming of euro-interlopers. There was neither monarchical nor coercive fundamentalist or oligarchal system, but solidarity, kinship and self-making were at the centre of everything. That is plain via the personality of Okonkwo (the protagonist). A man from zero to hero, Okonkwo, is harsh and stubborn in his character but when he breached the social law he is banished out of his father-town.²⁷ That is what we call justice and respect of rules, or let say, *the rule of law*. The fact that he accepted the common punishment was due to his discipline. And the way his mother-town kinsmen, led by uncle Uchendu, sheltered him and his family, the way his friend Obierika assisted him are unique respectful humanitarian acts. As a response to European view of African’s barbarism “He [Achebe] brilliantly places his characters within an ancient civilization with a labyrinthine system of governance and laws” stated by Linda Strong Lee.²⁸ In Africa, no one was above the rules. The commitments were sacred. But this organisation could still not prevent from being subdued into western colonisation. Had Achebe maintained an unequivocal conviction in the efficacy of African modes of social organization, the disintegration

²³ Kenalemang, “Things Fall Apart: ...”, Date: 11 January 2013, p. 7

²⁴ Seydou Badian, *Sous l’orage, suivi de la mort de Chaka*, Les Presses Universelles, France 1957.

²⁵ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 25.

²⁶ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Classics, London 1899.

²⁷ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 117.

²⁸ Linda Strong-Lee, “Reading as a woman: Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Feminist Criticism”, *African Studies Quarterly*, V. 5, N. 2, 2001, p. 29–36.

of Igbo society in his fictional narratives would not have ensued. His position, however, remained marked by ambivalence.

Furthermore, the African civilisation described in *Things Fall Apart* has been the most significant aspect in the novel. As Jan Mohammed stated “colonial literature is an exploration of a world at the boundaries of civilization; a world that has not been domesticated by European signification.”²⁹ Europeans were seeing African society as an uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable, and ultimately evil. But Achebe invites readers, as Strong Lee stated:

*To perceive Africans through an alternate lens. The Igbo [Ibo] society described by Achebe has definitive and complex social systems, values and traditions. Achebe presents customs such as the abandonment of multiple birth babies (twins), and the sacrifice of human beings as conventions and not barbaric, inhumane rituals.*³⁰

The mutilation of ogbanje (wicked changing child), throwing the corps of outcast in “dark forest”, the sacrifice of Ikemefuna and respect of ancestors are all social agreements and norms. Here we have the definition of belief, what you believe is your religion. But the commissioner disdains the gods and “chis” of Africans which were more logical than even his biblical one because we couldn’t see or hear his but for Africans at least it was possible for a human to take the character of a god by like Chielo (god of earth), who interfere between people and Chukwu, the Overlord”.³¹ Furthermore, Uchendu (Okonkwo’s uncle) reasonably accused people of Abame of being “fools” for killing the harbinger “never kill a man who says nothing”.³² Also, the commissioner humiliated all the leading figures of Umuofia in presence of their wives and children when they protested against the killing of their sacred snake. He oppressed them till the hero, Okonkwo, committed the most undignified and spiteful act of the clan which was “suicide.” Hence, Uchendu is an archetypal contrast of not only Mr Johnson but also the white interlopers.

To sum up, having lived within both British and Igbo societies, Achebe directly experienced the complexities and tensions arising from their cultural encounters. He was a student in Europe but he was born and raised in a “third world” country. Yet, he was a man of “colour.” He had heard and seen many prejudices against his world and he was eager to correct those misjudgements, but how? In that, *Things Fall Apart* came in hand as a gift of postcolonial literature to satirically respond Europeans episodic wrong prejudgements of Africa. This study interprets Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* as a subtle yet incisive challenge to Western representations of Africa and Africans. Achebe’s subtle critique begins with his emphasis on the richness of precolonial African languages, which directly counters the allegations of linguistic inferiority advanced by colonial powers. Following this linguistic exposition, Achebe highlights the sophistication of precolonial African systems of governance, positioning them in opposition to the interventions of white missionary interlopers. Through carefully constructed scenes, he illustrates the effective implementation of indigenous social governance and the community’s judicious resolution of conflicts, ultimately juxtaposing these practices against the colonial narrative of a civilizing mission rooted in Western exceptionalism. Indeed, when it comes to that word we may ask: “is a civilised European synonymous with a barbaric in Africa?” Or is it the European interlopers that taught Africans the system of barbarism from their civilisation? Since we have seen that the interlopers came to slaughter Africans by saying to civilise them. That was Achebe Chinua’s confusion related in *Thing Fall Apart* and it is up to the responses of readers to help guide both ambivalent authors and the future generation.

Conclusion

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* stands as a profound literary intervention against British chauvinism, dismantling colonial stereotypes that relegated Africans to the margins of

²⁹ Abdul R. JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature”, *Critical Inquiry*, V. 12, N. 1, 1985, p. 64.

³⁰ Strong-Leek, “Reading as a woman: ...”, p. 29.

³¹ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 170.

³² Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 131.

civilisation. By vividly portraying the coherence, dignity, and complexity of Igbo society, Achebe reasserts African personality within global discourse. His narrative does not merely recount cultural encounters but actively challenges Eurocentric paradigms, positioning African traditions as legitimate and resilient in the face of imperial domination.

The article demonstrates that colonial discourse functioned as a hegemonic force, destabilising indigenous self-esteem and imposing identities fundamentally opposed to African cultural heritage. Achebe's work, however, reveals the persistence of African personality through language, governance, and ritual practices. His ambivalence reflects the broader hybridity of colonised societies, caught between ancestral values and the structures imposed by Western civilisation. This tension underscores the complexity of postcolonial identity formation.

Achebe's intellectual development, shaped by both colonial schooling and Igbo oral traditions, epitomises the hybrid condition of African intellectuals. His narrative strategy, interweaving proverbs, idioms, and indigenous customs, affirms the richness of African civilisation while simultaneously critiquing the destructive arrogance of imperialism. In doing so, Achebe highlights the duality of cultural inheritance: the necessity of preserving Africanness while negotiating the unavoidable legacies of colonialism.

Ultimately, *Things Fall Apart* functions as both a pedagogical tool and a cultural manifesto. It enables readers worldwide to engage with African history and culture beyond colonial misrepresentations, while affirming African agency in the telling of its own story. Achebe's contribution lies not only in his literary artistry but also in his role as a cultural advocate, insisting on Africa's rightful place in global conversations. His ambivalent stance mirrors the complexities of postcolonial societies, yet his achievement remains clear. He re-centres Africa against the weight of chauvinistic domination.

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Extended Abstract

Chinua Achebe stands as one of the most influential African intellectuals of the twentieth century, whose literary and cultural interventions continue to shape postcolonial discourse. Emerging as a nationalist and patriot, Achebe was compelled to confront the realities of colonial imperialism and its enduring impact on African societies. His work is situated within the broader movement of postcolonial theory, which sought to articulate the voices of communities deprived of their cultural, political, and social rights under colonial domination. Achebe's dedication to this cause inspired generations of scholars, writers, and activists to engage with the complexities of African identity, history, and autonomy through literature.

Achebe's novels, particularly *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), are central to this intellectual project. Rather than offering direct denunciations of colonialism, these works juxtapose narratives that allow readers to discern the layered realities of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial African societies. Achebe's literary strategy was not to produce polemics but to craft nuanced depictions of Igbo life, traditions, and the disruptions introduced by European intervention. In doing so, he challenged reductive colonial perceptions of Africa as a continent without history or culture, offering instead a textured portrayal of African societies negotiating continuity and change.

This study undertakes a critical examination of the interplay between British chauvinism and African personality in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. At its core, the study interrogates colonial perceptions of Africa both during and after the period of colonisation, situating Achebe's work within the broader framework of postcolonial theory. The analysis is conducted through qualitative content analysis, employing postcolonial criticism and reader-response theory as complementary lenses. These frameworks enable a nuanced exploration of Achebe's narrative strategies, which function as counter-discourses to Eurocentric stereotypes that had long depicted Africa as primitive, ahistorical, and culturally deficient. Achebe's novel foregrounds the dignity, coherence, and complexity of Igbo society prior to colonial disruption. By presenting detailed depictions of language, governance, and ritual practices, Achebe challenges reductive colonial narratives and affirms the richness of African civilisation. At the same time, the study highlights how colonial discourse destabilised indigenous self-esteem, imposing identities fundamentally antithetical to African heritage. This imposition created a profound crisis of cultural identity, compelling colonised societies to negotiate between ancestral traditions and the structures introduced by Western imperialism.

Achebe's work reveals the ambivalence and hybridity that characterised this negotiation, reflecting the broader dilemmas faced by postcolonial societies in their pursuit of autonomy. Achebe's intellectual development itself epitomises this hybridity. Educated within colonial institutions yet deeply rooted in Igbo oral traditions, Achebe embodies the tension between assimilation and resistance. His literary technique, interweaving proverbs, idioms, and indigenous customs, serves both as a preservation of African cultural heritage and as a critique of imperial arrogance. In this way, Achebe demonstrates how literature can simultaneously resist domination and articulate cultural continuity. His narrative strategy underscores the importance of language as a repository of identity, governance as a marker of societal coherence, and ritual as a testament to civilisation.

Ultimately, *Things Fall Apart* functions not only as a literary achievement but also as a form of cultural advocacy. By situating African narratives within global literary discourse, Achebe challenges Eurocentric paradigms and insists on the legitimacy of African perspectives. The novel becomes a pedagogical tool, enabling readers worldwide to engage with African history and culture beyond colonial misrepresentations. Achebe's contribution lies in his ability to

dramatise the clash between colonial ideology and indigenous identity, while simultaneously affirming Africa's rightful place in world history. His work demonstrates that literature can serve as both a site of resistance and a medium of reconciliation, offering enduring insights into the struggle for cultural autonomy in Africa.

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