

**A POST-COLONIAL INSIGHT TO
CHINUA ACHEBE'S AFRICAN TRILOGY**



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To My Mother

ANAND MENON

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**Bridge Center
2015**

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About the Book

The book is aimed at analyzing Nigeria's foremost important storyteller Chinua Achebe's famous African Trilogy in terms of the recent socio political developments of the land. A post-colonial study, that enables the reader to understand how brilliant a visionary Achebe was foreseeing many such developments even decades before. The study in the book helps to envision many of the present day trauma and crises as a resultant product of the colonial assault that tore the land and it is a fact based investigation into how 'things' did 'fall apart'.

Anand Menon

Chapter I

Introduction

To help (the) society regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement... it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. Here my aims and the deepest aspirations of my society meet. For no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in our soul. The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front.

Chinua Achebe

Most of the modern day countries have witnessed their land being colonized. Colonialism and post-colonialism are two of the most frequently used terms of the last century. 'Colonialism', according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, comes from the Roman word 'colonia' meaning 'farm' or 'settlement'. Thus, 'colonialism' is a settlement in a new country. Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world, but everywhere, it locked the original inhabitants and the new comers into the most traumatic and complex of relationships in human history. The process of 'forming a refined community' as proclaimed by the white colonizers, in the new land, necessarily meant unforming or reforming the communities that existed already. This involved a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions.

Marxist thinking on the subject draws a clear distinction between the earlier and modern colonialism; the modern colonialism being a established alongside capitalism in Western Europe. Modern colonialism did more than extracting tribute, goods and wealth from colonized countries it conquered; it restructured the economies of the latter drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural

resources between the colonized and the colonizer. This flow worked in both directions. Slaves, indentured laborers, raw materials etc. were transported to manufacture goods in the metropolis or in other locations for metropolitan consumption, but these countries also provided captive markets for European goods. The slaves and indentured laborers were taken from Africa and Asia to America and the West Indian countries to work in the plantations that produced sugar for European consumption. Materials like cotton, in its raw form, were taken from India and other such European colonies to England in order to manufacture clothes. These garments were sent back to Indian captive markets for selling. Thus, the colonized country's own production suffered to a great extent. Regardless of the direction of the flow of human beings and goods, the profit always traveled in one direction – towards Europe, the so established 'home' of civilization.

Marxists, thus, view colonialism as the midwife that helped the birth of European capitalism. Without the colonial expansion, the transition to capitalism could not have taken place in Europe as easily and swiftly as it happened.

Modern European civilizations of the world were made possible using force in the form of technological superiority. But force functioned only as a temporary means of control. Colonialism functioned as a discourse that is at the same time, the discursive apparatus of religion, western education and other means of social control worked hand in hand to establish the White superiority in order to legitimize the continuation of the colonial presence. Discourse, as Foucault theorizes it, is a system of statements by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, disciplines and values upon dominated groups. As a social formation, it works to constitute reality not only for the objects it appears to represent but also for the subjects who form the community on which it depends.

Colonial discourse is greatly implicated in ideas of the centrality of Europe' and 'assumptions about history, language, literature and 'technology'. Colonial discourse is thus a system of statements that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonizing powers and about the relation between the two.

Ashcroft et al, 14

Colonization was supported or perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require beseech and domination.

Colonization operated under the assumption that Europe represents the only course of progress, whether in Africa or Asia. Europeans could see the colonized space only in terms of '*paired opposites*' or '*binary opposites*'. Frantz Fanon in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* talks in depth about this assumption of '*binary opposition*'. All the colonialists who were '*white, beautiful, educated, masculine, civilized, Christian*', were collectively opposed to all the natives of the colonies, who were '*black, ugly, uneducated, savage, feminine and pagan*'. For the colonialist, there was only one way of progress that was technological; only one civilization, that was European; only one religion, that was Christianity. Thus, colonialism functioned as a system of knowledge and beliefs about the state of colonization and also a system of statements that can be made about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Frantz Fanon goes on to give a thorough going analysis of the consequences of colonialism in his work. He describes the colonial system as a '*Manichean*' world where everything is represented in terms of a Manichean division along the binary axes of the colonizer/colonized, good/evil, civil/barbaric, white/black etc. '*Manicheanism*' is a term adapted from '*Manichean Heresy*' of the third century AD which propounded a dualistic theology, according to which Satan was represented as a co-eternal with God. Matter was evil and God by His very nature could not intervene in the world of evil matter. Thus, Christ could not have been born into flesh and had to be only spirit – a heresy against the doctrine of the Christ's dual nature as both Man and God. The implication that the two realms of spirit and matter were always and eternally separate and could never be linked shows an extreme form of binary structure. It is this that the contemporary postcolonial usage references.

The concept was popularized by Abdul Jan Mohammed. Jan Mohammed uses this uncompromisingly dualistic aspect of the concept to describe the process by which imperial discourse polarizes society, culture and the very being of the colonizer and the colonized into Manichean categories of good and evil.

This binarism is crucial in the cultural construction of reality in the colonial world. The colonialist does not view the new world as one '*with a difference*', but as the opposite of what is human or civil. The radical division into paired opposition leads to a sort of psychological marginalization. The colonial discourse, which is dependent upon notions of rule, color and culture, thus creates conflicts in the colonized.

Edward Said in his *Orientalism* describes how the colonial orient was created as the cultural '*other*' of Europe.

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity, a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting happenings and landscapes, remarkable experience etc.

Edward Said, 8

The Orient has been a foil to Europe and European culture gained strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self. Said regards Orientalism as a counter discourse strategy of Europe to dominate the East. As a discourse, it is owned entirely by the Europe and offer no space or voice to the Orient. Said shows how the West's imperialist images of its colonies govern its hegemonic policies. Said's analysis of Orientalism as a discourse is rooted in Fanon's notion of binarism which negates the '*other*' and privileges the '*self*'. The '*Other*' is antagonistic to '*Self*' and hence there is perpetual tension. Through various discursive strategies, the West has constructed the image of the Orient as '*Other*' both in Western and Eastern minds.

Such a concept of '*cultural hegemony*' is a purely Western creation. Hegemony, initially a term referring to the dominance of one state within a confederation, is now generally understood to mean domination by consent. This broader meaning was coined and popularized in the 1930's by Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci, who investigated why the ruling class was so successful in promoting its own interests in society. Fundamentally, hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all. Domination is thus exerted not by force, nor even necessarily by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy, education, media etc. The term is useful for describing the success of imperial power over a colonized people who may far outnumber any

occupying military force, but whose desire for self-determination has been suppressed by a hegemonic notion of the greater good, often couched in terms of social order, stability and advancement, all of which are defined by the colonial power.

Hegemony is important because of the capacity to influence the thought of the colonized is by far the most sustained and potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions. An *'empire'* is distinct from a collection of subject states forcibly controlled by a central power by virtue of the effectiveness of its cultural hegemony. The consent is achieved by the interpellation of the colonized subject by imperial discourse so that Euro-centric values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes are accepted as a matter of course as the most natural or valuable. The inevitable consequence of such interpellation is that the colonized subject understands itself as peripheral to those Euro-centric values, while at the same time accepting their centrality.

Post-Colonialism is a response to and reaction against this distortion of reality, this calculated destruction of evidences of a pre-colonial existence of the colonized through an ideological discourse, thereby denying them their rights to know their history and culture.

Postcolonial literatures function as a counter discourse, which is inevitable to uphold the identity of the colonized as equals to the West, as human beings. Over the past few decades postcolonial studies has emerged both as a meeting point and battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories such as Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Marxism, Cultural Ethnography etc.

The emergence of anti-colonial and *'independent'* nation states after the end of colonialism is frequently accompanied by a desire to forget the colonial past. This *'will to forget'* takes a number of historical forms, and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations. Principally, *'postcolonial amnesia'* is symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start in order to erase the memories of colonial subordination. As it happens, histories, as much as families, cannot be freely chosen by a simple act of will, and newly emerged postcolonial nation states are often deluded and unsuccessful in their attempts to disown the burdens of their colonial inheritance. The mere repression of colonial memories is never, in itself, equivalent to a surpassing of or emancipation from the uncomfortable realities of the colonial encounter.

In response, post-colonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of '*Re-visiting*', '*Re-membering*', and crucially interrogating the colonial and pre-colonial past. The process of returning to the colonial scene discloses a relationship of reciprocal antagonism and desire between the colonizer and the colonized. And it is the unfolding of this troubled and troubling relationship that we might start to discern the ambivalent pre-history of the post-colonial condition.

The past is not simply a reservoir of raw political experiences and practices to be theorized from the detached and enlightened perspective of the present. It is also the scene of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of the colonized subjects. Thus, in its retrieval of the colonial and pre-colonial past, post-colonialism needs to define itself as an area of study which is willing not only to make, but also to gain theoretical sense out of the past. That is where '*Historical Revisionism*', in which a writer revisits history from a point of view, which is truly of the colonized victim, becomes a vital tool of postcolonial resistant reading and writing. The revisit to history is to assert what has been distorted by the white imperialists and re-educate the values that once existed, and to regenerate a culture that has been cruelly destroyed. Thus writing the story of the subaltern is a weapon to stand against those who relegated his existence and to show that the '*subaltern can speak*'.

Subaltern is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci, meaning '*of inferior rank*'. He uses it to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Since the history of the ruling classes is realized in the state, history being the history of states and dominant groups, Gramsci was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes. Gramsci claimed that the history of the subaltern classes was just as complex as the history of the dominant classes, although the history of the latter is usually that which is accepted as '*official*' history. For him, the history of the subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic, since they are always subject to the activity of the ruling groups, even when they rebel. Clearly, they have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions.

The term has been adapted to postcolonial studies from the work of the Subaltern Studies group of historians, who aimed to promote a systematic discussion of subaltern themes. The notion of subaltern became an issue in

postcolonial theory when Gayathri Spivak critiqued the assumptions of the Subaltern Studies group in her essay '*Can the Subaltern Speak?*' Her point is that no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks. Clearly, the existence of postcolonial discourse itself is an example of such speaking, and in most cases, the dominant language is appropriated so that the marginal voice can be heard.

So, the subaltern writer skillfully uses the language or the mode of representation of the imperialists to suit their purpose of '*writing back to the empire*'. In that task, a postcolonial writer's primary concern is the redemption of the relegated culture.

European colonialism did reach almost all continents. Among the geographic territories, one can say that Africa was, and still continues to be, the worst victim of European colonization. Though countries like India from Asia have undergone the same bitter experience, the availability of written history, traditional stories, epics, myths and other religious texts saved them to a great extent from being completely '*lost*'. They could retain a sense of their pre-colonial glory, history and more significantly, however affected or '*hybridized*' the culture and heritage in the ancient flavor. But in Africa, the falcon could not hear the falconer and the center could not hold... and eventually things did fall apart.

Though the word '*Africa*' seems to imply one place and one people, in reality, the continent is made up of over eight hundred ethnic groups which are quite different from one another. Each ethnic group has their own language, culture and history. The boundaries of modern African states which the European colonizer created are just one, very recent layer of African identity.

Historically the trade of slaves and gold along the West coast of Africa was conducted by African middlemen at the coast. No significant British incursions were made into the continent until the nineteenth century, yet, by the dawn of the twentieth century, only Ethiopia and Liberia were not under European control.

The imposition of colonialism on Africa was formalized by the coming together of the empire-building European powers; Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain, to divide Africa up among themselves at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885. This event, commonly called '*the partition of Africa*',

was originally conceived as part of a strategy to co-ordinate the ongoing scramble among the major European powers for what was then regarded as the '*Dark Continent*'. Ironically, the attempt to mediate the conflicting claims and counter claims over the portions of Africa that each major European power wanted for exclusive commercial and administrative control quickly led to one of the most catastrophic events in the continent's history: termination of autonomy or self-rule, and transformation of traditional village life enjoyed by African people all over the continent until then. The discovery of gold and diamond collection and the availability of cheap or forced '*free*' labor, help to explain the motivation of the Europeans.

Without doubt, the most surprising aspect of the European occupation and domination of Africa is that, it came about as a remote consequence of schemes brought to bear to facilitate the abolition and suppression of slave trade and slavery. Precisely at this time, Africans were beginning to enjoy the fruits of legitimate trade as natural products such as cotton, ivory, gum or copal, honey and coffee, and starting to effectively replace human beings as the main stay of the external economies, resulting in widespread distribution of wealth among all classes of African societies. A combination of factors joined hands to make European powers unable to resist the idea of taking actual political control of the African continent. Not the least significant of these elements were calculations relating to how European powers could monopolize and maximize profits from these external trades with Africa. But this was well hidden under the proclaimed mission regarding the '*burden*' of '*bringing the torch of civilization*' and enlightenment to the dark corners of the world.

Thus, the years between 1892 and 1904 saw the forcible imposition of colonialism by Britain and other European powers. Britain possessed virtually all of the area, now known as Nigeria – a region to which it was assigned during the partition and which it ruled until 1960. Within the same period, other parts of Africa were being opened up to occupation by various other European powers.

In the view of eminent African historical Adu Boahen, colonial conquest was a bloody affair that took the lives of countless Africans in addition to displacing many others from their homes. But aside from its obvious brutality, colonization also unleashed other far reaching, long term traumatic consequences; it altered dramatically, the cultural, economic, social and political climate of the continent.

The British colony, Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Nigeria is now, one of the most populated countries in the world and is the largest democracy in Africa. Nigeria has a population of over twelve crore and there are Muslims, Christians and other indigenous religions. But Muslims and Christians with fifty percent and forty nine percent of the population respectively dominate the pre-colonial religions of the land. Though they belong to these religions, primarily they belong to four ethnic groups – Yoruba, Igbo or Ibo, Hausa and Fulani. But the conquest of the Fulani kings over the Hausa territory of the North during the pre-colonial era, resulted in a cross ethnic mix and the ethnic group of the Northern Nigeria is known as Hausa-Fulani now.

The Igbos or Ibos, of the Southern and Eastern Nigeria, were of hundreds of tribal clans. These many diverse clans had their own dialects, culture, political and governing systems etc. The Igboland, the home of the Igbo people covers most of the South-East Nigeria. This area is divided by the Niger River into two unequal sections - the Eastern region and the Mid-Western region. The river, however has not acted as a barrier to cultural unity; rather it has provided an easy means of communication in an area where settlements claim different origins. The origins of the Igbo people has been the subject of much speculations, and it is only in the last six decades that any real work has been carried out in this subject.

The Igbo culture and its resultant form of literature bear the qualities of African literature in general and the Nigerian experience in particular. The term '*African literature*', for instance, covers a vast and complex body of creative literary works. It is essential therefore, to divide it into different categories which are widely accepted:

- a) Traditional African Oral literatures which include indigenous modes of narration that are being increasingly marginalized as a consequence of the invasion of literacy.
- b) New literatures written in African languages which primarily include recently developed indigenous vernacular writing.
- c) Modern African literatures written by indigenous African writers in languages not indigenous to Africa, especially English, French and Portuguese. Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'O in his *Decolonizing the Mind prefers* to call them '*Afro-European*' literatures.

The best known of African writers belonging to this third category are from Nigeria, and the most prominent among them all, is Chinua Achebe, who

died quite recently. He was the golden feather on the crown of African literature. During his life time, he grabbed almost all the prestigious awards in his country and his continent. In 2003, he was awarded with the Man Booker Prize. He broke into the scene with his landmark debut novel – *Things Fall Apart* (1958). This was not just a milestone in Nigerian literature, but also in the entire world of African literature. Though Amos Tutola, the author of the well-read novel *The Palm wine Drinkard*, wrote in English, Achebe was the first to achieve worldwide acclaim.

Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 at the village of Ogidi in the then Eastern region of Nigeria, now Anambre state, and he grew up there during this deeply troubled transitional period. He was a son of the native catechist and was brought up as a devout Christian. He received primary education at St. Philip's Central school, Akapkogwe, and then entered the college in Umuahia. Later, he was enrolled at the University of Ibadan, first as a medical student, and later he changed his course of study to Literature.

This period saw bitter and contentious developments in the midst of revolutionary changes threatening to sweep away their native customs, a large number of Igbo people held on tenaciously to those traditions and so '*farming and trading*' remained the major occupations. As indicated by Achebe in his essay '*Named For Victoria, Queen of England*', the failure to understand, much less engage with, these highly elaborated techniques of colonial control that Achebe himself has unwittingly highlighted is stunning. It points to the underhand methods by means of which imperial values were created and transmitted. Colonization made its unsuspecting subjects no more able to think clearly, than zombies would under the degrading control of another person, robbing them of capacity to engage in any form of resistance whatsoever. Mind control was an effective instrument used by colonial rule to strip its subjects of the primary condition of their humanity. The poison by acculturation packaged and hidden behind the pull of the West, that Achebe never suspected, reveals the subtle methods by which cultural imperialism has worked: by imperceptibly conditioning the minds of its subjects toward a state of oblivion.

Being the son of a Christian catechist, Achebe was given a strict Christian upbringing, but most of the other people around him lived a traditional life. They performed all of their traditional and ethnic rituals and sang hymns in their prayer. The colonial situation of Africa had a great influence upon the lives and education of most of the African writers like Achebe, and it became a

subject matter of their novels too. He studied the works of Joseph Conrad and Graham Greene during his university days and the reaction of Achebe to the representations of African people and African culture in these novels has had a great impact on his writings. Achebe of course, did not believe in the stereotypes that English writers have created about Africa in their works. To uphold his native, indigenous identity, Chinua Achebe changed his name from Albert Chinuamogolu Achebe to Chinua Achebe when he joined the University of Ibadan.

He has always been trying to create a New Africa, which is closer to reality. He was a writer with a strong political commitment. Achebe's first statement on the social responsibility of the African writer was made in a lecture entitled '*The Role of the Writer in a New Nation*' delivered to the Nigerian Library Association in 1964. For him, the African writer should be both a cultural nationalist, explaining the traditions of his people to a largely hostile world, and a teacher, instilling dignity into his own people. Achebe reaffirmed this stance in his paper entitled '*The Novelist as a Teacher*'.

Chinua Achebe refused to believe that African writers could be alienated beings from their own societies. In Africa, the society expects the writer to be its leader. The period of subjection to alien races has brought disaster upon the African psyche. All over the continent, people still suffer from the traumatic effects of their confrontation with Europe. Thus he is involved in a process of '*writing back to the empire*', projecting the identity of his culture and society. Thus, he is attempting at re-writing the canon. Achebe proves to be a huge success in his task.

The evidence is overwhelming that Achebe's formal education evaded the local experience and made no cultural accommodation of the indigenous model of learning in his early upbringing. The education at colleges featured primarily the works of Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and J. M. Synge, the English curriculum promoted expressive modes not always compatible with the Igbo narrative traditions with which Achebe was more familiar. Hence, when he began to write, the young Achebe chose to make the African oral tradition the greatest single model for his creative writing, within which he attempted to assimilate his European – language literary inheritance that he could not entirely discountenance.

Chinua Achebe wrote five novels – *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer At Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964) *Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of*

Savannah (1987). The first three novels are together called '*The African Trilogy*' by critics. He focused his attentions to children's stories. This was surprising because after being a novelist who acclaimed worldwide attention, he stopped writing such socially relevant novels altogether. He had his own reasons for it. The decision was taken under the influence of a close friend who asked him to write for the children. By writing for children, telling them the folk tales and mythical fairy tales of the ancient Nigeria, Achebe is instilling the spirit and knowledge of the '*real*' Nigeria into the younger generation. His attempt again is one of re-education. Here too, he hasn't deviated from what he calls the '*applied art*'. His writings carry this mission throughout his life. But unfortunately, Chinua Achebe met with an accident in 2000 and was living in the United States ever after to receive better treatment. He was half paralyzed after that motor accident and never recovered properly from it. The tragic news of his death shocked not just the Nigerians or the Africans, but the entire world. He was the mouthpiece of the marginalized and persecuted victims. Though his physical death took place on the night of 22, March, 2013 in a hospital in Boston, his voice remains as vibrant as it used to be through his novels and other writings.

Achebe's '*African Trilogy*' is a venture of revisiting the past and emphasizing the fact that the roots of the present day Nigeria lie in their colonial encounter. *Things Fall Apart* is set in the early decade of the twentieth century, when the British administrators and the Christian Missionaries, after several futile attempts to make inroads to Nigerian cultural and social establishment, finally succeeded in it. This was followed by *Arrow of God* in the chronology of the time of setting though it is the third novel in the order of publishing. '*Arrow of God*' is set in the 1920's when Lugard's Indirect Rule policy was there in place. The colonial power has grown wider and mightier by that time. It shows how the native culture and traditions '*died*' to accommodate the imbibed substitutes provided by the West. Ezeulu's tragedy in *Arrow of God*, far from being a personal tragedy is one of the total social order and tradition. The last novel *No Longer at Ease* is a continuation of the first novel, but takes place after a few decades. The story tells the story of an intellectual boy who got education from England. This hero, Obi Okonkwo is the grandson of the hero of the first novel, Okonkwo. Obi, in sharp contrast to Okonkwo is a hybridized Nigerian of the new age, while Okonkwo remained adamant to his traditional beliefs. But the tragedy of Obi is a message that the

colonial encounter has left them in a tight spot where the life leads a Nigerian more often than not, to failures. The Nigeria shown at the threshold of independence in *No Longer at Ease* is one engulfed in corruption and the loss of culture along with the hybridization of the society combine well to harm the country from that period onwards.

Thus, through his '*African Trilogy*' Achebe travels through the history of Nigerian colonization starting from the very beginning of colonial missions to the wake of independence. He is not just revisiting the history but is trying to educate his folk what the real story was and how they '*fell apart*'.

Achebe's works, including the three novels of the trilogy, cover a variety of subjects. But they express three basic themes. First, he always rejects the idea that Africa is considered as Europe's foil. In his famous article '*An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*', he stated that in European works like *Heart of Darkness*, the relationship of Africa to Europe is like the picture to Dorian Gray. Europe projects its deformities upon Africa, so that it could always remain clean. Achebe gave a new importance to his matter in novels. If Africa is not a foil to Europe, it must prove this matter by creating new alternate second theme. This stage forms the second theme. The third theme is the importance of literature in the social and political field. Achebe has always asserted that this is one of the most important roles of literature.

The first novel of Achebe *Things Fall Apart* is easily the most famous and widely read African novel in English. His novels constituting the trilogy explores the traumatic effects of colonialism, but Achebe resists the temptation to portray his tribe's past in a romantic or sentimental terms, rather he adopts a '*realistic*' approach in the hope of countering the stereotypical representations of indigenous Nigerians made familiar by the novels of Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, John Cary and other western writers. His novels played a major role in African self-understanding; it is because of this that his *Things Fall Apart* became the first novel by a native writer to be included in the syllabus of African secondary schools.

Some African critics have questioned Achebe's method of writing in a borrowed Western genre and more specifically, the language of the colonizer. A powerful instrument of control used by the colonizing powers is the instrument of language. Language forms a huge part of the culture of a people - it is through their language that they express their folk tales, myths, proverbs, history. For this reason, the imperial powers invariably attempted to stamp out

native languages and replace them with their own. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out in *Postcolonial Studies Reader*; there are two possible responses to this control - rejection or subversion. (Ashcroft et al, 25) While Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is famous for advocating outright rejection of the colonialist language, believing that this rejection is central to the anti-imperialist struggle, Chinua Achebe has chosen the idea of subversion rather than rejection. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, his writing '*displays a process by which the language is made to bear the weight and texture of a different experience. In doing so it becomes another language.*' In *The African Trilogy*, Achebe uses the language of the colonizer to convey the Igbo experience of that colonization. The idioms, proverbs and imagery of these books all invoke his Eastern Nigerian culture, forcing the reader to accept on Achebe's (linguistic) terms, the story he has to tell. Achebe uses the written word brought by the colonizer to record and recreate the world of oral words obliterated or denied by them. To quote Achebe in length,

My books appear in English because it is Nigeria's national language and the language through which I can reach most readers, both in Nigeria and worldwide. Within Nigeria's boarder, there are two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and distinct languages, and even more dialects (Basu, 27).

In such a multi lingual country, English does serve as a bridge or link language. Any reader of *The African Trilogy* comes away with at least a limited knowledge of Igbo words and phrases. Proverbs also play a large part in all three books. The English translations provided by Achebe are a personal rendering, attempting to invoke the spirit of the proverb, while retaining faithfulness to the phraseology and terminology. Oral and communal storytelling traditions are very much a part of the Igbo culture, and Achebe has stressed in the past how these have been an inspiration to him, and admitted that he continually appeals to this oral tradition in his writings, wanting to record and therefore preserve it.

Thus, Chinua Achebe uses the colonizer's tool in his project of '*writing back*', and re-inscribing the indigenous values of the past. But there is a highly problematic relation that postcolonial literature has to its own past, and more significantly, to the writing of its own history. Where should a postcolonial writer locate past? Is it to be found in pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial

period? Can one neatly separate the different historical stands that traverse and intersect these various epochs? What historical stance should a postcolonial writer assume towards their own history, especially if he wishes to forge a sense of national identity after colonialism? Achebe seems to have answered all these questions in a different way to others – by writing three novels telling the story of the country from pre-colonial era to the post-colonial independent era.

The objective of this study is to analyze Chinua Achebe's African trilogy, i.e. his three novels – *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and the third one *Arrow of God*, as an exercise in historical recuperation rather than treating them as three novels portraying three tragedies, thereby enhancing the tragic effect of the life of Nigerian postcolonial days. Here, I intend to focus on Achebe's systematic effort to research on the roots of the present day crises of the country.

The study explores various methods adopted by Achebe to recreate a culture of the past which lived in a world of oral sounds and traditions, festivals, rituals and all. It focuses on establishing the truthfulness of the revisit to history and the study investigates the untold introspection into the roots of modern milieu of Nigeria such as religious conflicts and corruption. The study goes on from re-inscription of culture to re-investigating the past, Achebe's methods of re-education and regeneration.

Chapter II

Reinscription and Regeneration of the Orient Culture

When Europe came to Africa and said, 'You have no culture, no civilization, no religion, no history', Africa was bound sooner or later to reply by displaying her own accomplishments. To do this, her writers and intellectuals – stepped back into what you might call the 'era of purity', before the coming of Europe. What they uncovered there they put into their books and poems, and this became known as their culture, their answer to Europe's arrogance.

Chinua Achebe

Although Chinua Achebe's novels may appear to be exclusively concerned with the imposition of colonial rule and the traumatic encounter between Africa and Europe, they are at the same time works that seek to address the crisis of culture generated by the collapse of the colonial rule. Indeed, Achebe has constantly argued that the theme of colonial domination in Africa – its rise and influence – was made imperative in his works by his concern that the culture of colonialism had had such a strange hold on African peoples, especially on psychological levels, that its consequences could be continue to haunt African society long after European colonizers had left the continent. In one of his most influential statements on the role of the novelist in Africa, Achebe observed that, although decolonization had changed the African cultural landscape, it was foolish to pretend that Africa had '*fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontation with Europe*'. Achebe went on to argue that his role as a writer was 'to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of years of denigration and self-abasement' ('*Morning Yet on Creation Day*', Achebe). As the colonial rule had established its cultural authority by insisting on this racial superiority, Achebe's effort in re-inscribing

the pre-colonial Igbo culture is not just a romantic remembering, but its political intention ranges up to shattering the Eurocentric stereotypes regarding Africa by regenerating the culture. For Achebe, it is the only way of salvation for his people who are left in cultural turmoil.

Thus, the African writer should be both a cultural nationalist, explaining the tradition of his people to a largely hostile world, and a teacher instilling dignity into them. In this process, he has to confront colonial works which are the mouthpieces of the colonial authority of the Europeans and project a picture of his own cultural heritage in a new light. This is by no means an attempt to canonize his people's culture as the only '*right one*', but to tell the world that all cultures have dignities of its own and Africa was not a barbaric land sans culture, civilizations and history.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for example, is one such literary work that produces the picture of Africa as the '*other world*', the anti-thesis of Europe and therefore Civilization - a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality. The book opens on the River Thames, tranquil, resting peacefully '*at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that populated its banks*'. But the actual story takes place at the River Congo, the very antithesis of Thames. The River Congo is quite decidedly not a River Emeritus. It has rendered no service and enjoys no old age pension. We are told that '*going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginning of the world*' (Conrad, 11).

Conrad is not just saying that one river is good and the other is bad; it is not the differences that worry Conrad, but according to Achebe, it is the lurking hint of kinship, of common ancestry. The Thames too '*has been one of the dark places of Earth*' (Conrad, 2). It conquered its darkness, of course, and is now in daylight and at peace. But if it were to visit its primordial relative, the Congo, it would run the terrible risk of hearing grotesque echoes of its own forgotten darkness, and finally victim to an avenging recrudescence of the mindless frenzy of the first beginnings.

Chinua Achebe calls Conrad, a '*thoroughgoing racist*'. In a way of thinking in which the White racism against Africa is normal, this aspect is often glossed over and the manifestations of this racist in him goes unquestioned in his criticisms. But Achebe, Africa's son, felt it was high time to expose him. His essay '*An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*' is devoted to this task. Writers like Conrad and their Euro-centric texts eliminate the African

as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield is shown, which is devoid of all recognizable humanity; into which the wandering Europeans enter at his peril. Achebe felt that it was total arrogance from the part of the European writers to reduce Africa to the rate of a land full of sub-human or beastly beings. This dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world must be challenged by going into the inside and uncovering the 'humanness' of Africa and projecting their culture. Achebe's African Trilogy is a dedicated attempt to do that.

The reactions from the colonialist critics when the first novel of the trilogy, *Things Fall Apart* was published are quite interesting. One article by a literary journalist Honor Tracy was titled '*Three Cheers for Mere Anarchy*'. Achebe in his essay '*Colonialist Criticism*' talks of it. The article by Honor Tracy questions Achebe's stance as a cultural politician:

...these bright Negro Barristers... who talk so glibly about African culture, how could they like to return to wearing raffia skirts? How would novelist Achebe like to go back to the mindless times of his grandfather instead of holding the modern job he has in broadcasting service in Lagos?

Basu, 33

There are three principal parts here: the raffia skirts and '*the mindless times of his grandfather*' standing for the inglorious culture and past of Nigeria; the modern job at Lagos which is a part of the civilization that Europe brought to Nigeria and the skeptical novels like *Things Fall Apart* which for colonialist critics, are Africa's ingratitude returns to the light of civilization. But what Achebe and compatriots aimed by writing about their cultural heritage was not that meant by Honor Tracy. But it was a consolation to the troubled minds which find themselves in a current of cultural and psychological torments.

Culture can be defined as the learned, accumulated experience of communities and it consists of socially transmitted patterns of behavior. According to the anthropologist Cliff Greety, culture is an ordered system of meanings and symbols in terms of which social interactions take place. Most ancient cultures, even those in possession of a script, have displayed a phonocentric preference. Henry Louis Gates Jr. records the process whereby European phonocentrism reverses its speech-writing hierarchy to set up a new

logocentrism as it is confronted with the orality of other cultures. Writing thus became Europe's chief weapon in inferioritising other cultures as the central argument of enlightenment of language as the tangible sign of reason, is modified to locate reason solely in the written word. Anjali Gera quotes Henry Louis Gates Jr. as follows:

*Without writing no repeatable sign of the workings of reason or mind could exist.
Without history no community, no thought consistently from Vico to Hegel could exist.*

Anjali Gera, 9

Gates Jr. cites several examples of how racism seized on writing to deny privilege, status, and even humanity to the black slave. He also shows how the greatest figures of Western philosophy contradict themselves by denigrating African cultures for retaining that very phonocentric advantage they otherwise valorize. He argues that for Hume, writing was the ultimate sign of difference between animals and humans. He considered the blacks to be: '*naturally inferior to the whites*' as he could find in them '*no arts, no sciences*'.

Similarly, post-colonial critics, implicating the written text in the ideologies of imperialism and colonization, have demonstrated how it has served as an instrument of silencing and control. Bill Ascroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, in their introduction to *Postcolonial Studies Reader*, speak of the recurrence of the trope of writing as violence in postcolonial criticism. Edward Said uncovers the working of the power/culture nexus in the creation of the knowledge about the cultural otherness and its exclusionary procedures by examining the canonical texts of Europe.

For postcolonial writers the task of challenging this western philosophy poses a difficulty of another level. Because they have to prove them wrong and at the same time, project a different picture of their world and their lives. When a writer like Achebe is writing in English, this is, a tall ask, because he is inscribing his culture in the language of the ones who dehumanized it. The question arose that, how can a writer write the self in the language of the other without being a part in the '*othering*'? But great thinkers like Achebe thought otherwise. They can project themselves as equals only if they communicate the idea to the other. Writing in one's own language, inaccessible to the other will

only comfort you, but if you want to reply and convey a message, it must be done in a language which both can understand, which is in this case, English. Any reader of *The African Trilogy* comes away with at least a limited knowledge of Igbo words and phrases. Some words such as *obi*, *chi*, *osu*, and *egwugwu* become assimilated very quickly into this knowledge through the way in which Achebe scatters them casually through the text. Others, which occur less frequently, require translation or a few words of explanation, such as *ilo* (the village playground), or *agbala* (woman, or 'man without title'). The *English* translations provided by Achebe are a personal rendering, attempting to invoke the spirit of the proverb, while retaining a faithfulness to the phraseology and terminology. Oral and communal storytelling traditions are very much a part of the Igbo culture, and Achebe has stressed in the past how these have been an inspiration to him, and admitted that he continually appeals to this oral tradition in his writings, wanting to record and therefore preserve it.

The issue of language is also raised directly throughout *The African Trilogy*. There is a telling exchange between Obierika and Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*:

*Does the white man understand our customs about land?
How can he when he does not even speak our tongue?*

Achebe, 145

Achebe is at pains to point out the way in which language can act as a barrier between two cultures. Around thirty years later, in *Arrow of God*, language is still a barrier to communication, yet the Igbo have been forced to realise that the acquisition of English is crucial to understanding the white man and his religion. Ezeulu sends his son to Oduche to be educated at the missionaries' school, reminding him of the importance of

...knowing what the white man knew: If anyone asks you why you should be sent to learn these new things, tell him that a man must dance the dance prevalent in his time.

Achebe, 165

The outcome of this kind of thinking is seen in the various attitudes towards language in *No Longer at Ease*. Those who have command over the English

language are admired. When Obi is asked to speak at the Umuofia Progressive Union, his speech is delivered through Igbo and also through English, but his audience *'still seemed highly impressed. They liked good Ibo, but they also admired English'* (Achebe, 24). Obi's feelings towards the language of the colonizer are not so clear cut. While in England he pursues a degree in English, yet:

He spoke Ibo whenever he had the least opportunity of doing so... But when he had to speak in English with a Nigerian student from another tribe, he lowered his voice. It was humiliating to have to speak to one's countrymen in a foreign language, especially in the presence of the proud owners of that language. They would naturally assume that one had no language of one's own.

Achebe, 54

While Achebe himself may share some of these feelings, he is adamant today that *'the language situation is not solved by taking doctrinaire decisions'* such as a decision to banish the English language from Nigeria, for example. He is aware of the practical implications of such a decision, admitting *'You cannot administer Nigeria as it is for one single day without English'*. The literary situation may not be as simple as the administrative one. However, Achebe has highlighted the complexity of his multi-lingual society, and his belief that the all-embracing Igbo culture is in fact based on complexities such as these. In The African Trilogy, he has turned this idea around. By combining poetic English prose with Igbo words, phrases and images, he has attempted to make English all-embracing also. Rather than rejecting the colonizer's language, he has used it as a medium through which the experiences of the colonized can be communicated.

The Igbo are a profoundly religious people who believe in a benevolent creator, usually known as *Chukwu*, who created the visible universe (*uwa*). Opposing this force for good is *agbara*, meaning spirit or supernatural being. In some situations people are referred to as *agbara* in describing an almost impossible feat performed by them. In a common phrase the Igbo people will say *'Bekee wu agbara'*. This means the white man is spirit. This is usually in amazement at the scientific inventions of the white man.

Apart from the natural level of the universe, they also believe that it exists on another level, that of the spiritual forces, the *alusi*. The *alusi* are

minor deities, and are forces for blessing or destruction, depending on circumstances. They punish social offences and those who unwittingly infringe their privileges. The role of the diviner is to interpret the wishes of the *alusi*, and the role of the priest is to placate them with sacrifices. Either a priest is chosen through hereditary lineage or he is chosen by a particular god for his service, usually after passing through a number of mystical experiences. Each person also has a personalised providence, which comes from *Chukwu*, and returns to him at the time of death, a *chi*. This *chi* may be good or bad.

There is a strong Igbo belief that the spirits of one's ancestors keep a constant watch over you. The living show appreciation for the dead and pray to them for future well-being. It is against tribal law to speak badly of a spirit. Those ancestors who lived well, died in socially approved ways, and were given correct burial rites, live in one of the worlds of the dead, which mirror the worlds of the living. They are periodically reincarnated among the living and are given the name *ndichie* – the returnees. Those who died bad deaths and lack correct burial rites cannot return to the world of the living, or enter that of the dead. They wander homeless, expressing their grief by causing harm among the living.

The funeral ceremonies and burials of the Igbo people are extremely complex, the most elaborate of all being the funeral of a chief. However, there are several kinds of deaths that are considered shameful, and in these circumstances no burial is provided at all. Women who die in labour, children who die before they have no teeth, those who commit suicide and those who die in the sacred month – for these people their funeral ceremony consists of being thrown into a bush. Their religious beliefs also led the Igbo to kill those that might be considered shameful to the tribe. Single births were regarded as typically human, multiple births as typical of the animal world. So twins were regarded as less than humans and put to death (as were animals produced at single births). Children who were born with teeth (or whose upper teeth came first), babies born with feet first, boys with only one testicle, and lepers, were all killed and their bodies thrown away in secrecy.

Religion was regarded with great seriousness, and this can be seen in their attitudes to sacrifices, which were not of the token kind. Religious taboos, especially those surrounding priests and titled men, involved a great deal of asceticism. The Igbo expected in their prayers and sacrifices, blessings such as long, healthy, and prosperous lives, and especially children, who were

considered the greatest blessing of all. The desire to offer the most precious sacrifice of all led to human sacrifice – slaves were often sacrificed at funerals in order to provide a retinue for the dead man in life to come. There was no shrine to *Chukwu*, nor were sacrifices made directly to him, but he was conceived as the ultimate receiver of all sacrifices made to the minor deities.

These minor deities claimed an enormous part of the daily lives of the people. The belief was that these gods could be manipulated in order to protect them and serve their interests. If the gods performed these duties, they were rewarded with the continuing faith of the tribe. Different regions of Igboland have varying versions of these minor deities. Below are some of the most common:

Ala – the earth-goddess, the spirit of fertility (of man and the productivity of the land)

Igwe – the sky-god. This god was not appealed to for rain however, that was the full-time profession of the rain-makers, Igbo tribesmen who were thought to be able to call and dismiss rain

Imo miri – the spirit of the river. The Igbo believe that a big river has a spiritual aspect; it is forbidden to fish in such deified rivers

Mbatuku – the spirit of wealth

Agwo – a spirit envious of other's wealth, always in need of servitors

Aha njuku or **Ifejioku** – the yam spirit

Ikoru – the drum spirit

Ekwu – the hearth spirit, which is woman's domestic spirit

Several religious festivals and traditional ritual practices are shown in the novels by Achebe to draw a clinical picture of the cultural life of the Igbo society. Some of them are; the festival of Pumpkin leaves, The New Yam festival, the annual festivals of particular villages etc. There are the annual festivals of Umuaro, Umunneoro etc portrayed in '*Arrow of God*' which successfully imparts the spirit of Igbo culture. It was a '*live wire*', a fully alive culture.

During the Pumpkin leaves festival, Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, the village deity of Umuaro, functions the cleansing of the whole village. During such time Ezeulu is dressed as '*half god, half man*', which he always believes he is. Ezeulu is dressed in a particular manner. Ezeulu is half-man and half-mmo or spirit, a '*fact*' asserted repeatedly, as also the visual reminder through the spirit half of him being painted over with chalks on all religious and ceremonial

occasions. Half of what he did was done by this spirit side, it is said. We are also told that one of Ezeulu's praise names was *nwa-anyyanwu* or the child of the Sun-god.

The Oracle of the hills or caves, spoke through his priestess the will of the Earth in matters communal and domestic. The priest of the Earth enforced time honoured principles of behaviour. Above all, the clan itself ruled all: the living with the dead in the Earth, were both part of a mystic unity and an eternal order. Beyond Earth, clan, and gods is Chukwu, the great and unknowable God. The clan is male. As in Achebe's own Ogidi, the nine villages of Umuofia and the six villages of Umuaro have a common ancestor. Each village has the ancestor who is a son of the great ancestor.

The clan manifests its authority in various ways. The first manifestation in the novels is the great assemblies of both villages. The will of the clan is collective, so it must be appealed to by means of persuasion of the many, not the few. Without Oratory, without art, the clan could not function in crisis. The collective will of the clan cannot be invoked by one individual alone. Not even great Orators like Ezeulu, Ezeugo, Okonkwo have that power.

A second manifestation of the will of the clan is the ancestral *egwugwu*, which act as judges in the court of law and solve issues of the clan. The decision taken by the *egwugwus* are not questioned by anybody. A third manifestation of the clan lies in the priesthoods of the various *alusi* or gods. Another manifestation of the will of the clan is the decision making of the *ndichie*, particularly the highest ranking elders among them. The best example of this is found in the '*Arrow of God*', when ten men visit Ezeulu. One of the visitors says to Ezeulu, '*I want you to look around this room and tell me what you see. Do you think there is another Umuaro outside this hut now?*' Ezeulu replies '*No, you are Umuaro*'. (Achebe, 247) The last manifestation of the will of the clan, the last element in the male governance pattern of the traditional village is the pronouncements of the Oracle.

The personal god or Chi, is in some measure an instrument in the civil order. It parallels the clan, in that what Chi affirms, the clan affirms too, and just as no man can win in a conflict with the clan, no man can be victorious over his '*chi*'. Chi requires observances while kinship, fundamental to civil order, is maintained by courtesy and ceremony. The courtesy in the novels is best exemplified by the kola rites. The principal elements, kola and chalk used for drawing lines are relatively unfamiliar outside Africa. Chalk ceremonially

symbolises peace while kola is shared celebrating the ethics of sharing and hospitality. Together they symbolise close bond between host and the guest and their mutual benevolence.

Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* was not the first novel to deal with the colonial experience from an African perspective of the twentieth century though is widely regarded as being the most successful: *Achebe's novels Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God are worthy of close analysis not simply because it offers insight into the purely structural or syntactic dynamics of European colonialism, but also because of its visionary exploration...of the pre-colonial Igbo people.* In the text Achebe offers to the European reader the very cultural roots of the Igbo people, all their customs, beliefs and historical past, in a wonderfully unbiased approach, inviting an innocence to the author's prose that presents their ultimate ruin, upon the arrival of the Christian colonists, as being all the more distressing.

In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the characters themselves are symbolic vehicles of the tragic movement. The uneasy rivalry between Ezeulu and Nwaka runs like a brooding dissonance through the even flow of Umuaro's history, brilliantly reconstructed – the marriages, the births, the deaths, and other petty vicissitudes of a regular train of life. Achebe presents the picture of a total universe over which the gods Ulu and Idemili are pitched in a deadly conflict against each other through their protagonists. And later when Ezeulu decides to carry the struggle against his rivals to avenge humiliation at the hands of the white men, it is possible for him to see the struggle as something larger than a personal issue: *'it was a fight of gods. He was no more than an arrow in the bow of his god'* (Achebe, 183).

But the Christians are at hand; whose God is also making a bid for the loyalties of the people of Umuaro. The moral of the situation is brought home with the attempt of Oduche to kill the sacred python. In the same way as the python is imprisoned, struggling for life, so are the gods of the land in the reality circumscribed by a new religion.

The new order is represented by the white man, who has brought his administration, his civilization and his god – *'The White man, the new religion, the soldiers, the new road, they are all the one and the same thing'* (Achebe, 144), observes one of the men. On the purely secular level, the novels represent a critique of colonisation: observing the attitude of Wright, the road manager, is a relevant example of its early approach. But more important than

this is the emotional tangle created by the meeting of the two different cultures, two different sets of values, the friction between two ways of thought. The incident in which Obika is whipped by Wright affords an occasion for drawing out the elements of the situation – the hostile, humiliated incomprehension of the Africans, the haughty insensitiveness of the Europeans. Characters like Moses Unachukwu, after wisely comprehending the situation acts wisely than the ‘wise’ white men; their hybridity is a form of survival tool.

The world is like a mask dancing, if you want to see it well, you do not stand in the same place.

Achebe, 176

People like Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Obika stood firm at the same place. Even the act of sending Oduche to the white man’s school was not a fitting act. People like Moses, Nwoye or Isaac Okonkwo saw the world moving away from their ancestral concepts of the world; they put on a suitable mask and started to dance accordingly. This way of survival eventually resulted in the downfall of the traditional Igbo and other traditional religions and cultures of Nigeria.

It is true, of course, that Achebe presents the society as one that had positive qualities of its own. The coherence and order that make social life one long ceremonial, the intense warmth of personal relationships and the passionate energy of the religious life, all these reveal the other side of the coin. He does not represent the pre-colonial Igbo society as one with no faults. He is extremely sincere in the cultural portrayal of the Igbo society. The texts being written nearly half a century after the period in which the novels are set may have allowed the author this impartiality. This idea of neutrality comes from the authors inclusion of such surprising social traits, to a European audience at least, as the abandonment and mutilation of twins who were considered evil to the Igbo people, inter-tribal wars (the heads of vanquished foes were retained as trophies), and the acceptance of excessive domestic abuse as long as this did not occur during a week of peace

He shows what were the main flaws his community had, which directly or indirectly helped the cause of the European colonizers to penetrate into the traditional community and flex its muscles by operating from within rather than from the outer world. If the social structure is reconstructed carefully – with a fondness that at least reveals, if it does not betray, the author’s

attachment to his social background – so also is the suddenness of the final bolt that strikes it carefully prepared for the disastrous effect it is going to have, the cracks in the edifice where the falling apart begins being efficiently shown up. It is thus significant that the earliest converts should include the outcasts, especially the Osus and the mothers of the unfortunate twins.

The system of the Igbos clearly functioned in an androcentric manner, though they considered the safety of their women very important. Any twins, if born so, are thrown in the forests. And children who bear relationship to the previous child who died young are given an unfair treatment, and more often than not, are cruelly executed. Ezinma, the child of Okonkwo, is lucky to escape this fate. But it happens rarely. People like Okonkwo considered their obligation towards the society and the Oracle as supreme. That strong commitment led Okonkwo to cutting the head of his adopted son Ikemefuna, though he loved him more than his own son Nwoye by that time. Nwoye couldn't justify this act and he drew much more away from his father and thus from his community and religion. The Igbos were highly superstitious, Obika's belief that he has seen an evil spirit, the firing of gun to flee the dangerous spirit causing lethal diseases etc. were some of such superstitions that we come across in these novels. But even after the so called '*civilisation*' was brought in, the superstitions do persist and in a '*modernised*' way. The new religions failure in teaching the basics is quite evident. In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi wonders why so many dogs are run over by vehicles in the advanced city of Lagos. A cab driver reveals the secret behind it. They are deliberate '*accidents*', because the drivers believe that the blood of dogs is a good sign for the vehicles. Such beliefs on omens, superstitions were deep rooted in the psyche of the natives.

The mothers of the unfortunate twins other, outcasts like the Osus and people like Nwoye who got disturbed with the Igbo system found an alternative in the new religion – Christianity, brought by the Europeans. Thus the Churches began to get more converts without any sincere attempt to teach them their religion. The decline of the traditional religions begins there, leaving them as a negligible minority in the new nation.

A correlative theme is here attached to the whole portrayal of Umuofia and Umuaro – that of the liberating influence of the new religion.

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that had captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the

marrow. The hymn about brothers sat in the darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul – the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul.

Achebe, 110

This account of the reason for the conversion of Nwoye is a process of throwing light into the flaws of the Igbo culture. In this is at least one important meaning of his novels. The civil order and culture are destroyed not only by the colonial invader. Without the new power, it is true that Umuofia and Umuaro could preserve itself regardless of internal stress. But the invader made it possible for the distressed to find relief outside the clan, and in that condition stress became intolerable.

Chinua Achebe's aim is realism not romance; he offers to us the Igbo people and their society in an especially objective manner, his attempt in re-inscribing the Igbo culture has a sound purpose – i.e. to seek redemption of what they lost. But the culture of the past also had some faults which should be ousted and the rest which constitute the major share of the pre-colonial culture needs to be imbibed to find solace in the turmoil of the present day. Thus, Achebe's effort in regenerating the lost orient culture is a service for the post-colonial Nigeria.

Chapter III

Revisiting and Retelling the History

As far as I am concerned, the fundamental theme of my writings must be first disposed of. This theme – put quite simply – is that African people didn't 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 people all but lost in the colonial period. 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 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.

Chinua Achebe

D.S Izevbaye in his article 'Time in the African Novel' points out that '*history and reality have no order of their own apart from that assigned to them by the human mind*' (Pandurang, 75). Knowledge and the transmission of '*truth*' have always been regulated by particular groups for particular ends. The tales of traditional oral narrators and praise-singers also had their own ideological purposes. With the consolidation of the colonial rule, control of the dissemination of truth and knowledge was appropriated by the colonial administration, and used to promote an ideological justification of their own colonial expansion. Their '*history*' promoted the concept of a great Imperial empire that stretched from Cape Town to Cairo '*heavily infused with assumptions about racial superiority that buttressed the colonial domination*' (O'Reilly, 36). Simultaneous to the projection of the success of imperial invasion and conquest, there is a parallel denial of the pre-colonial African past. The

presentation of Africa to the '*West and Africans themselves may be discussed in terms of 'Africanism', an ideological construct which like Said's discourse of Orientalism, was a branch of Western academic charlatanism*' (Barry, 187).

What the African came to know of his continent came from a judicious selection of negative misinformation regarding their savagery, wars famine, drought the jungle and the tribe.

Taking overt advantage of the absence of a written documented African past, the people of the Sahara, unlike the oriental civilizations of the East, were denied the right to have had a history. Western historian philosophers like Hegel and Hume placed pre-colonial Africa under a shadow of historical skepticism and equated the past with '*one long night of savagery*'. For Hegel, Africa simply did not exist as Europeans did; nor did it have a past.

In this main portion of Africa, there can be no history. There is a succession of accidents and surprises. There is no goal, no state there that one follows, no subjectivity, but only a series of subjects who destroy each other. There has yet been little comment upon how strange a form of self-consciousness this represents.

Anjali Gera, 13

This view of the continent as having no culture comparable in depth with that of the West was used as a prop to build up the European hegemony. Renowned Senegalese ethnologist and historian Professor Sheikh Diop accused his Western counterparts of the '*willing suppression of facts and the falsification of historical evidence for the deliberate propagation of untruths for political and racial motives*' (Gera, 14).

Extensive research into black historiography done by Diop and his counterpart Chancellor Williams refutes the widespread colonial notion of Africa entering history only upon contact with Europe. Their success at substantiating the presence of a rich African heritage before the advent of imperialism has had a very important influence upon the modern African intellectuals. That the colonial interlude is to be regarded only as a tragic aberration in Africa's long history, and the idea of the existence of a past independent of the white presence, becomes a key factor in the creation of the new master narrative of history.

When the writer as artist-historian takes on the challenge of interrogating European versions of the past forcing, the reader to reconstruct a given apprehension of '*received historical truth*', for history must be considered as details recorded or remembered by a process of selection and omission. What emerges is a stress on two types of history – two different representations of history, of '*truth*'; the '*official*' and approved history that had the seal of legitimacy from the imperial center, and the '*real living history*' that emerges from the people themselves in the form of legends, stories, myths and songs.

Having made a distinction between the two modes of historical representation, challenging the method of the narration of '*historical*' details becomes as important as the history itself. The opting for an oral expression of history also safeguards the narrative from claims to sure knowledge, a charge laid against Western master narratives of history.

The first missions were opened by the Church of England's Church Missionary Society (CMS). Other Protestant denominations from Britain, Canada, and the United States also opened missions and, in the 1860s, Roman Catholic religious orders established missions. Protestant missionaries tended to divide the country into spheres of activity to avoid competition with each other, and Catholic missions similarly avoided duplication of effort among the several religious orders working there. Catholic missionaries were particularly active among the Igbo; the CMS worked among the Yoruba.

Due to high cultural and tribal diversity of Nigeria, the missionaries could never quite be sure what to expect in different regions, or what sort of welcome they would receive. In many areas, their task must seem formidable. They specifically came to Africa to completely change the lives of the natives. This, they argued, was the whole point of conversion - everything had to change. From a Post-colonialist's viewpoint, this has often resulted in them being fiercely attacked for seeking to completely erase the pre-colonial Africa and start afresh.

The missionaries completely overlooked any cultural richness that existed in Nigeria. They arrived with the same straightforward views as the colonial employees were later to possess. They were absolutely convinced of the superiority of Europeans as an undeniable fact against the assumed inferiority of the natives. Indeed the missionaries could be seen as the first colonial propagators of Manichean Opposition ideology, from the outset using

it as one legitimising factor for their presence in Africa. This resulted in a potent attitude of patronisation towards the natives. Indeed, they often found the Africans themselves, the very subject of their duties, to be utterly repulsive both in appearance and behaviour.

This is not to say that the missionaries were not dedicated to what they felt was their duty in Nigeria, and Africa as a whole. Many made sincere efforts, often putting their lives in danger to accomplish their goals. In Chapter 15 of *Things Fall Apart*, the reader is informed of the first white man to be seen on his 'iron horse', who was eventually killed by the natives after they consulted their oracle. Yet, the underlying forces at work behind the missions, as well as their inextricable links with commercial activities should never be overlooked. From the outset, the missions were seen as ideal vehicles for gaining the trust and confidence of the tribal leaders, before the real interest moved in. It could be argued that the missions were one part of the wheel of business and economics that starting to turn in Nigeria, while a substitute for slaves was sought. The humanitarian touch they seemed to bring disguised these motives behind a facade of peaceful and beneficent civilisation. It would be naive to assume that the missionaries were innocently unaware of the drastic consequences their opening of the African heartland would bring. In this sense they must, at least in part, be held answerable for the colonial predicament of Nigeria.

The missionaries spent the early days in the market place and travelled through the villages to preach the gospel. They asked the tribals who their king was. But the villagers told them they have no kings. '*We have men of high titles, elders and chief priests*'. It was impossible for the missionaries to get all of them together. They gather only at the call of the chief priest of the village. So they asked for a piece of land and the chief priests gave them the condemned forests where they bury the evil spirits, people who died of really evil diseases, leprosy, small pox, etc. and the '*unfortunate twins*'. By giving that part of land, they thought that their superstitious beliefs regarding the forest would turn true and the churches of the new religion will be wiped out. They were hospitable enough because it was not their custom to turn the requests of a stranger to the land down. But the church stood the test of time and it was a vindication of the new religion over the superstitions of the native religions.

Other than embracing the outcasts, *efulefu* the good for nothing people who are condemned in the clan, the unfortunate twins etc, they employed

opportunistic devices to spread their roots in these villages. A fantastic example for such an opportunistic stand is given in the *'Arrow of God'*, the Christian preachers and catechists were strong in the matters regarding the principles of Christianity and they were adamant to object the traditional practices of the natives.

Because of the slow progress of the mission, the missionaries started hard work using the native converts. In *'Arrow of God'*, we can see that even after serious works from the part of its catechist John Jaja Goodcountry, the St. Mark's church in Umuaro could get only a few converts. He managed to increase the number of students in the catechism class from a mere fourteen to thirty – with one baptism there and three in the parish church at Okperi. They failed to field any candidates for confirmation. But it was hardly surprising considering the special nature of the Igboland.

The church tried all sorts of things to woo the natives to the new religion. But most of the people turned a blind eye towards these advancements. But when a crisis has struck people like Mr. Goodcountry found it a blessing and an opportunity sent by God. The Christians used to sing – *'Leave your yams, Leave your cocoyam, And come to church'*. The natives then called the new religion 'the seed of foolishness'. But during the church time churchmen changed their stand upside down. Mr. Goodcountry planned it to perfection. He arranges his church's harvest service on a Sunday; whoever made his thank offerings to the real God could harvest his crops without the fear of Ulu. He goes on to tell his followers:

Let them bring as many yams as they wish according to the benefits they received this year from the God. And not only yams, any crop or livestock or money.

Achebe, 273

Moses justifies this by saying”

If Ulu, who is a false God, can eat one yam, the living god who owns the whole world should be entitled to eat more than one.

Achebe, 274

This kind of varied tactics were adopted by the cunning diplomatic missionaries to win as many converts as possible. The church took time to educate those who were willing to convert to the new religion. But occasionally they were quick to give Holy Communion or holy feast as the natives call it, to someone who holds a high status like titles. This is a simple political strategy of using the influential persons to suit the cause of the missionaries. Achebe skilfully represents these opportunist moves of the missionaries which led to mass christening in a tough place like Igboland.

The British found it difficult to get to the people even though the Christianity was winning them people. The rule with interpreters and Kotmas proved less efficient because these people were lowly placed in the tribes so most of the people showed no respects to their orders. So bringing some respectable native figures to the administration was the need of the hour especially in South-Eastern territory.

Realizing this General Lugard initiated the Indirect Rule system. Britain governed Nigeria via this system in which native leaders continued to rule their traditional lands so long as they collected taxes and performed other duties ensuring British prosperity. Uncooperative or ineffective leaders were easily replaced by others who were more compliant or competent, and usually more than willing to enjoy the perks of government. Britain was thus saved the huge economic and political cost of running and militarily securing a day-to-day government.

Indirect rule operated relatively smoothly in the north, where the British worked with the Fulani aristocracy, who had long governed the Sokoto caliphate and who were able to administer traditional Islamic law alongside British civil law. In the south, however, traditions were less accommodating. In Yorubaland indirect rule disrupted historical checks and balances, increasing the power of some chiefs at the expense of others. Moreover, although the Yoruba kings had long been powerful, few had collected taxes, and citizens resisted their right to do so under British mandate. In the southeast, particularly in Igboland, many of the societies had never had chiefs or for that matter organized states. Consequently, the chiefs appointed by Britain received little or no respect. In Nigeria's culturally fragmented middle belt, small groups were forcefully incorporated into larger political units and often ruled by '*foreign*' Fulani, who brought with them alien institutions such as Islamic law.

The British carried out a few reforms, including the gradual elimination of domestic slavery, which had been a central feature of the Sokoto caliphate. They also provided Western education for some of Nigeria's elite; however, in the main Britain limited schooling as much as feasible.

Britain redirected almost all of Nigeria's trade away from Africa and toward itself, a move that undermined the northern region's large, centuries-old trade across the Sahara. Britain further changed the economy by introducing new crops and expanding old ones, such as oil palm, cotton, groundnuts, and cacao, almost all of which were sold for export. Iron and tin were also mined, and railroads were built to transport products. Because Britain required Nigerians to pay taxes in cash rather than goods, most Nigerians had little choice but to grow cash-yielding export crops or to migrate seasonally to areas where paying jobs could be found.

The problems of colonial governance in this period are striking. Contemplate the differences in the cultural values of the European and the colonized. Consider the differences in power between the two groups.

Indirect rule was the plan to use existing tribal structures and traditions as conduits for establishing rules and regulations while English officials worked behind the scenes and could exercise a veto power. This was not the only approach to colonial rule in Africa. The French employed **direct rule**, the idea that, because of these differences, European officials should call the shots for themselves by establishing and administering the rules and regulations for their African colonial subjects.

This difference between French and British policies is exemplified through the conversations between Captain Winterbottom and his deputy Toni Clarke. Winterbottom fancies the French model where they carry out what they wish without many considerations. But creating goodwill as well as ensuring safety was the serious concerns of the British administrators. So they employed Indirect rule to ensure more cooperation from the natives. But not all colonials were in favour of it. This caused a flaw in the officiating function. When people like Ezeulu turned their back towards the offer made by the Colonial masters they were forced to bring willing men from North to be appointed as the paramount or warrant chiefs. Anyway the system proved a big flop, but before this realisation struck the colonial officials the adverse impacts it created on the people was deeply ruining the traditional society and keep on doing the same even now in the independent Nigeria.

After giving a true picture of what has happened in his home land during the pre-colonial and colonial period of Nigeria's history, he goes on to show how things were in the 1950's when Nigeria was on the threshold of independence. The story of Okonkwo's grandson Obi in the third novel of the African Trilogy, *No Longer at Ease*, is very much a similar tragedy. But unlike Okonkwo who stood firm by the traditional values, Obi was the victim of the Europeanised values. However, this tragic story is not aimed at the purgation of feelings, but instead tells what was working behind such a tragedy and is an urge to the people to understand these faults and correct themselves.

The British were sure that they would have to leave Nigeria by the sixties, so they were giving more participation to the Nigerians in the administration, so as to train them how to rule in the '*British model*'. Rev. Sam Okoli, the minister in the novel, and even Obi and others working in various government departments were the trainees. But the increasingly high popularity of government jobs encouraged many to sail to Britain and get educated there and win government post. Getting scholarships and all became key to this success, thus moral and financial corruption reached its zenith. Even the colonial officials were no exceptions. Nigeria was living a lifestyle strange to them, pub, dance, balls, cars, luxurious apartments. The natives could take even the white girls to their beds as Obi and his friend had tried in the novel. The purity of man-woman relationship which we see in the first two novels disappeared and relationships were getting sex-oriented. Young men took one girl for a day and another for the next as the young boys and girls who were introduced to the European way of living thought free sex was the sign of western liberation and more girls flew into the dancing clubs and all.

The city of Lagos, which the British made the capital, became the centre. People started to move away from their villages and started to settle there for money and opportunities. The mass industrialisation caused the loss of the natural forests and other characteristic features replacing them with roads and buildings. The chaotic life is the very story of this period and Nigeria was moving towards independence. The colonial officers were preparing for this change, as we can clearly see in *No Longer at Ease*. But Nigeria is clearly not at ease even after 1960.

Thus Achebe revisits the history of his country and gives a thorough going analysis of what actually happened through his fictional venture. The three novels *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease* picture

the history of Nigeria from the pre-colonial to the independent states going through the traumatic colonial experience. Thus setting the three novels of his *'African Trilogy'* in three different but crucial junctures of the history of the nation, Achebe wants to correct whatever untrue and cooked up stories that the colonizers used to represent the land. The challenge to these *'authorial'* flawed representations is clearly one of the finest examples of *'historical revisionism'* being cleverly employed as a tool in fiction.

Chapter IV

Re-Searching For the Roots of the Modern Day Milieu of Nigeria

He has put a knife on all the things that held us together and we have fallen apart...

Chinua Achebe

The things that held the Igbo tribe together were their close bonds of clan kinship, unified allegiance to their gods, and their democratic society. These were the very things that the English set out to attack, to *'put a knife on'*. Once they began this process, Igbo society was never to be the same again. Unlike other ethnic groups such as Oyo where there were professional historians in the palaces, none of such people existed in Igbo land as there were no equivalents of Oba and Alaafin over most parts of Igboland. To this end, the real historical origin of the Igbos is clouded by the different accounts of people who have written it in line with what they think and seen as the origin. But, there is a popular version which links the Igbo origin to Israel, because of the similarities between the Igbo culture and the ancient Hebrew.

Also according to oral tradition like that of Nri, the ancestor of the Igbo, that Nri descended from the sky and sailed down the river Anambra and arrived at Ageleu, met a group which had no living memory of their own and settled with them, as their population grew, some groups migrated to form settlements all around Igbo land. There are other accounts as well, like Onitsha who clings their origin to the Bini kingdom.

The Igbos are a segmentary and fragmentary people, because unlike other ethnic groups in Nigeria, they did not build any strong centralized state. They were simply regarded as a Chiefless people. The village was the center of government where final decisions were taken by Elders from every family in a

form of Gerontocracy. All lineage including Males and Females adults in the village also participated in its political process. The age grade and titled societies were the major instrument of government.

In *Arrow of God*, Captain Winterbottom understands this situation when he speaks to his assistant Tony Clarke against the people at the Head Quarters (i.e. governors). He is aware of the village oriented social governance of the Igbos. He says:

Oh, about six miles, not more. But to the native that's a foreign country. Unlike some of the more advanced tribes in Northern Nigeria, and to some extent Western Nigeria, the Ibos never developed any kind of central authority. That's what our headquarters people fail to appreciate.

Achebe, 44

Amala Oha is an institution of government as it is a form of general assembly. In this assembly, all adult male members meet to perform legislative functions. In ancient times, Amala Oha meetings were held in the village square. The decisions of the assembly in matters affecting the village or individual were final. The life of every individual in Igboland is highly respected, and recognition of an individual was not based on family background but on personal capabilities and age. The elders form the core of the village administration. The male population is divided into age grades corresponding with the youth, middle age or able bodied men and elders. Each age group has its own special rights, duties, obligation and responsibilities within the village.

Chinua Achebe's *The African Trilogy*, while an excellent piece of literature in its own right, can also be read as an excellent historical account of this process. This essay concerns the responses of Achebe's fictional characters to the very real actions taken by the British in their efforts to 'pacify' Nigeria, focusing on one aspect of this effort - the policy of creating 'Warrant Chiefs' and the subsequent era of corruption.

The Igbos was ignorant of the immense possibilities of money of a capitalist and material world simply because they were never capitalist in their history. The ethics of sharing and co-operation among the clansmen attributed to the purity of their economy. They never had a currency as such before colonization, it was cowries. And they even followed barter system. The cowries they earned were the result of their toil in the agricultural land and

they owned fields for cultivation and a piece of land to build their family compound. Kith and kin lived within that family compound and unity was the principal quality of the joined family set ups.

The respect earned in a society was not money oriented as in a capitalist community. Physical strength and achievements in fights and competitions helped in attaining public respect. The manifestation of strength was the sole way to glory in the Igbo society; the famous opening paragraph of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* tells us:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen, he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuafia to Mbaino..... That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time, Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire harmattan. He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a severe look.

Achebe, 1

War heroes and brave hearts led the way. Okonkwo's greatness in warfront is one of his great qualities as a 'man'. He was exactly the opposite of Unoka, his father.

He was not afraid of war. He was a man of action. Unlike his father, he could stand the look of blood. In Umuafia's latest war, he was the first to bring home a human head. That was his fifth head; and he was not an old man yet. On great occasions such as the funeral of a village celebrity, he drank his palm wine from his first human head.

Achebe, 9

The symbol of achievement was titles. Titles were the awards for being strong and also acting as a protector of the village and more importantly, of the clan. Titles were gained by hard work and service for the clan. It was not something you can go and bribe as the present day honors. In *Things Fall Apart*, we see Okonkwo striving to achieve all the four titles of the clan and become the most reputed among his clansmen. His father was a man who died without a single title, because he was a lazy goose.

When Unoka died, he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt any wonder why his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to his father's worth. Okonkwo was clearly cut for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and he had two barns full of yams, and he had just married his third wife. To crown it all, he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. Age was respected but achievement was revered.

Achebe, 6

For igbos art and other leisurely pleasures which does not involve physical application was always secondary. It was the 'manly' activities that counted. This is not a big credit for the society, but at least it is certain that you cannot sit and play your flute at home and earn the titles of the community. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu doesn't feel high of Edogo, who is an artist. He used to carve the masks. Though Obika was a drunkard and mere seeker of pleasure, he was physically superior to anybody else in Umuaro, and hence Ezeulu feels that Obika is the better one, because Ezeulu would rather have 'a sharp boy who broke the utensils in his haste than a slow and careful snail' (Achebe, 13).

The Nigeria of the modern day has turned capitalist and academic brilliance as well as white collar jobs became the sweet aspirations of a new generation of Westernized natives. They wanted to make money and live a life similar to that of the Europeans. The discussion regarding their city life during the meeting of Umuafia Progressive union asserts the same:

It's money, not work. We left plenty of work at home... anyone who likes work can return home, take up his machet and go into that bad bush between Umuafia and Mbaino.

Achebe, 72

With the Westernization of Nigeria by the British rulers, this attitude suffered a huge setback and a sea change took place. 'Learning book', the symbol of the White man's wisdom, has become a thing of pride. Thus, education at England and a Government job became the highest titles.

Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large numbers of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of

the white man. And so we too have changed our tune. We are the first in the nine villages to send our son to the white man's land.

Achebe, 49

Being made capitalist by a capitalist ruler, Nigerians found many means to attain this glory. The much used one was bribing the officials of the department and the members of the selection panel. Other than this corruption was spreading widely in almost all sectors of public life, including the much cherished purity of sexual relations. Girls were widely used by men without tying the knot, which must have been an abomination in the pre-colonial days. Moral corruption has a significant impact on the society as a whole, because it shapes the mentality that this can be done, and there is nothing wrong in it. All jobs, scholarships, admissions, tenders, services etc. were out in the market to be sold. The capitalist Nigeria of the new age started to grab whatever they can with both hands starting a new epoch marred by corruption in all sections of life. The root of this unbelievable shift is to be found in the early colonial decades where they implemented Indirect Rule and started to give the natives a share of the unjust profit they accumulate from the colony.

The instigation of Warrant Chiefs in Nigeria was a matter of necessity for the British and a source of bewilderment for the Nigerians. The British could not have governed in any other way - English officials demanded high salaries and frequent leave, and were emotionally and psychologically ill-equipped to deal with this new culture. The colonial budget could only afford a limited number of them. The success of colonization depended to a large extent on the co-operation of the Africans themselves with regard to government. What the British did not realize, however, was that peoples such as the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria were unfamiliar with the idea of 'chiefs' or 'kings' - in their society decisions were made on the basis of general consensus, which was usually achieved by protracted debate.

The system was counterproductive to the natives of Igboland. One such example is given in Achebe's 'Arrow of God'. Captain Winterbottom made strong opposition to the appointment of James Ikedi as the Warrant Chief of Okperi. But he was forced by the superiors to give this man the honour against his better judgement. James Ikedi was chosen simply because he was one among the very first people to receive missionary education in three parts. But as Captain Winterbottom feared within three months Winterbottom started to

hear rumours about this man's high handedness in receiving warrants. He had set up an illegal court and a private prison. He took any woman who caught his fancy without paying the customary bride price. More serious scandals were uncovered later. Chief James Ikedi had teamed up with a notorious and drunken road overseer who had earned the title 'Destroyer of Compounds' from the natives. They went around intimidating the villagers and telling them that unless they give them money the road would pass through their compounds. Anyone who had no money must borrow it from a neighbour or sell his goats or yams. Chief Ikedi took a large share of this illegal tax. Ikedi even tried to topple the social order:

The latest thing he did was to get his people to make him an Obi or king, so that he was now called His Highness Ikedi the First, Obi of Okperi. This among a people who never had kings before! This was what British administration was doing among the Ibos, making a dozen mushroom kings grow where there was none before.

Achebe, 71

This confusion at the refusal of the Ibos to accept positions such as this is well illustrated in Arrow of God:

'Well, are you accepting the offer or not?' Clarke glowed with the I-know-this-will-knock-you-over feeling of a benefactor. 'Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief, except Ulu' 'What!' shouted Clarke. 'Is the fellow mad? 'I think so sah,' said the interpreter. 'In that case he goes back to prison.' Clarke was now really angry. What cheek! A witch-doctor making a fool of the British Administration in public!

Achebe, 168

The selection of Ezeulu as a potential Warrant Chief is typical of the kind of selection regularly made by the British - a man who was already in the possession of real authority and wealth in his community. However, the responses of those chosen were not always as idealistic as Ezeulu's. Many Ibos jumped at the chance of some real power, safe in the knowledge that they were backed by British officials, and Warrant chiefs became notorious for their corruption and exploitation. Speaking of the Warrant Chief he has instigated in Okperi, Winterbottom exclaims:

The man was a complete non-entity until we crowned him, and now he carries on as if he had been nothing else all his life. It's the same with Court Clerks and even messengers. They all managed to turn themselves into little tyrants over their own people.

Achebe, 69

Court Clerks and messengers, as Winterbottom rightly points out, did share in the corruption of the Warrant Chiefs. One such incident is told in *Things Fall Apart*, where a land dispute between Aneto and Oduche ends up in the accidental death of Oduche. According to customary practices Aneto had to flee to his mother's land as Okonkwo had to do earlier in the novel. But here the British administrator's brought Aneto to trial and hanged him. And surprisingly the land went to third parties who bribed the Court Messengers and interpreters.

Only the clerks had the education to understand the mysterious workings of the court procedure and so were in a prime position to take advantage of their fellow Igbos through bribery and money lending. Communication between the Igbos and their self-appointed rulers was bad at the best of times, but the fact that the British officials almost never spoke Igbo only created a further atmosphere of uncertainty which the Igbo employees took full advantage of.

The British finally abolished the Warrant Chief system after the Aba Riots in 1929, when they were forced to re-examine their entire system of government, yet clearly the corruption that began in the era of the Warrant Chiefs created a situation in which it was the norm, and no amount of university education could rectify this. Elizabeth Isichei *A History of the Igbo People* examines this topic in detail, and comments:

...times of great uncertainty and change seem to encourage materialism. Men try to attain the psychological security which the social context of their time denies them by creating a little charmed island for themselves...

Isichei, 149

Achebe treats the problem of corruption in 1950s Lagos in the second novel of the trilogy, *No Longer at Ease*. Despite his aspirations to avoid the temptation

of corruption, Obi eventually succumbs, finding it financially impossible to live up to the inflated image created by his position in the Civil Service. He also loathes the idea of disappointing the Umuofia Progressive Union by not appearing as wealthy as he should be.

Having made him a member of an exclusive club whose members greet each one another with 'How's the car behaving?' did they expect him to turn round and answer: '*I'm sorry, but my car is off the road. You see I couldn't pay my insurance premium?*' That would be letting the side down in a way that was quite unthinkable.

Obi is quite convinced by his own statement that those at the top of the Civil Service have '*worked steadily to the top through bribery*' (Achebe, 189) and that it is ironic that he is reported to have read a paper to the Nigerian Students Union in London theorizing that '*the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from the universities*' (Achebe, 38).

Obi, with all his weaknesses was a young boy who was determined to make significant contributions to his homeland Nigeria. He was bold to refuse bribes. But others like the president and vice president of Umuofia Progressive Union, Joseph, the bus driver and people like them find no fault with it. When the presence of Obi in the bus prevents the policemen from accepting the bribe, the bus driver blames Obi for it.

'Why you look the man for face when we want give him two shillings?' he asked Obi. 'Because he has no right to take two shillings from you' Obi answered. 'Na him take I no de want carry you book people. Why you put your nose for matter way no concern you? Now that policeman go charge me like Ten shillings'

Achebe, 39

In Nigeria the government was always '*they*', for it had nothing to do with the people. It was an alien institution and people's business was to get as much as possible from it without getting into trouble. The Vice-President of the Umuafia Progressive Union talks of '*seeing people*' to get Obi a government job, the President felt that there was no need for it since the selection panel was headed by the White men. But ironically the White men take bribes too, '*They eat more than black men nowadays*' (Achebe, 30).

But Obi remains firm on his theory which advocated a policy against accepting bribery though he was in the Scholarship department which was the centre of bribery, thanks to the newly risen trend of giving extra respect to whomever works in the Government service. When Mr. Mark approached him to help his sister gets a scholarship to go to England and study there. But Joseph felt that Obi is wrong here. For him, it *'may cause more trouble by refusing a bribe than by accepting it'*. His role model is a minister who *'famously'* revealed his mind in an unguarded, alcoholic moment that the trouble was not in receiving bribes, but in failing to do the thing for which the bribe was given. But for Obi, it is *'stuff and non-sense'*. It was easy to keep one's hand clean. Just say *'I'm sorry, Mr. So and So, I cannot continue this discussion. Good morning.'*

To Obi's shock, he is visited by Miss. Elsie Mark, the sister of Mr. Mark. For her the scholarship was so precious and she wanted it at any cost. She came there for nothing else but to offer her body for Obi's physical pleasure as a bribe to arrange her scholarship. Obi realized this from the advancements of the girl, though perplexed; he gathered his better senses and refuses to do any unjust favour. He drove her to the town and just wished her good luck. But the girl hinted at meeting the board members and presenting her feminine body to them as a bribe before leaving. Obi asked her whether it was that important. It indeed was! Because of the new way of living none can live with pride and comfort unless at least one in a family has a Government job. For Government job in both junior and senior services, education in England was the primary requirement. As Achebe says in *No Longer at Ease*:

A university degree was the philosopher's stone. It transmuted a third class clerk on one hundred and seventy, with car and luxuriously furnished quarters at nominal rent. And the disparity in salary and amenities did not tell even half the story. To occupy a 'European' post was actually second only to being a European.

Achebe, 84

Obi reached his position on his own, so he valued the virtues. But the majority didn't even bother to think about it. And being forced to keep up with the expectations of a hybrid 'babu's' life Obi was in a tight financial position. Clara's pregnancy, his losing of fifty pounds that Clara gave him, the bribe he had to give to the doctor for Clara's abortion, the death of his mother etc. put him in

the most difficult of corners. And circumstances did change him. This is not just a personal tragedy, but the tragedy of a rising generation in Nigeria. Obi when encountered with his first instance of 'not refusing' a bribe, shouts in anger, anger with himself. But later on, he embraces whatever he declined earlier on:

You dance very well he whispered as she pressed herself against him breathing very fast and hard. He put her arms round his necks and brought her lips within a centimeter of his. They no longer paid any attention to the beat of the high life. Obi steered her towards his bedroom.

Achebe, 153

He took money, slept with schoolgirls who wish to get scholarships to go to England and became an 'Old Nigerian' who was condemned by him earlier on. What Achebe points out is that the colonial hang over has made purity of living an impossible dream and corruption is not so surprising when their mentality is tuned in such a way.

The central theme of *No Longer at Ease* is the distance between what is said to be and what is. It is bitterly exposed in Mr. Green's tired and cliché-ridden sermons on the effects of the climate on the 'African character'. And equally unacceptable is the suggestion of Umuofia Progressive Union President that Obi's crime is not that he has accepted a bribe, but that he has not taken 'time to look round first and know what is what'. The proverbial morality of the tribe is no clear guide in this new world, as the language of the president and union's society clearly shows in *No Longer at Ease*.

The president said 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. 'I am against people reaping where they have not shown. But we have a saying that if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one'(Achebe, 5).

The relativity of the presidential morality is neatly caught in the shift from the Christian to the Igbo aphorism. Mr. Green, president of the union, Obi is all caught between two worlds, and the language and events of the novel analyze their dilemma with clarity and compassion.

Everybody wondered why. The learned judge could not comprehend how an educated young man and so on and so forth. The British Council man, even the men of Umuofia, did not know. In spite of his certitude, Mr. Green did

not know either. Obi becoming corrupt was '*incomprehensible*'. But the answer is clear - Colonialism, quite apart from tearing apart a culture which was truly democratic, had created a new set of attitudes towards material wealth, and for the Igbo people and their neighbours it had created a situation from which there was no turning back.

Other than the wide spread corruption across all sections of life, one big blow to Nigeria in the post-independent era is the fact that they are culturally neither here nor there. They have accepted Christianity and western culture and started to deviate from the indigenous traditions, but some inherited character trait which is the after-effects of a pre-colonial culture lingers on and they cannot define where they are and what they are. This is an extreme case of cultural hybridity which started with the spreading of missionary teachings and conversion. The term '*hybrid*' used above refers to the concept of hybridity, an important concept in post-colonial theory, referring to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures; '*integration*' may be too orderly a word to represent the variety of stratagems, desperate or cunning or good-willed, by which people adapt themselves to the necessities and the opportunities of more or less oppressive or invasive cultural impositions, live into alien cultural patterns through their own structures of understanding, thus producing something familiar but new. The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as as oppressive. '*Hybridity*' is also a useful concept for helping to break down the false sense that colonized cultures - or colonizing cultures for that matter - are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features.

The representation of these uneven and often hybrid, polyglot, multivalent cultural sites reclaimed or discovered colonized cultures searching for identity and meaning in a complex and partially alien past, may not look very much like the representations of bourgeois culture in western art, ideologically shaped as western art is to represent its own truths about itself.

The early forms of hybridity as well as assimilation and mimicry did not seem as complicated since the Christian religion was a new one even then. But during the 1950's and 60's when Christianity is well established, such issues persisted in the cultural context of Nigeria, the story of Obi Okonkwo, the grandson of the old hero Okonkwo is a brilliant example of this. Like Achebe, Obi lived on the '*cross-roads*' of culture. And a cultural identity was difficult to

attain. When he returns from England, Isaac Okonkwo (Nwoye) asks him if he had time to read Bible when he was in England. Obi lies that he did it occasionally, but he actually wanted to say aloud to his father that he did not believe in his God, i.e. Christ. But it is interesting to see that how they change their stances when a matter regarding their personal lives turns up.

Obi fell in love with Clara, and he enjoyed a passionate affair with her. He was damn confident that he was going to marry her; it was just a matter of telling his parents and getting their consent. But Clara was an Osu. Those who belong to Osu were considered as outcasts by the Ibos. But Christianity embraced even Osus and tried to bring them into the front line. Isaac Okonkwo, being a devout Christian and catechist is very much experienced and well versed in the doctrines of the new religion. He talks so highly of the principles of Christianity when he is with other non-Christian Ibos. He refuses the prospect of breaking kola nut as a sacrifice to the deity on the occasion of Obi's return from England. But when it comes down to his son marrying an Osu girl, he changes all his theories and takes a stand which is deep rooted in Igbo indigenous culture. An Osu is someone dedicated to the worship of a single deity other than Chukwu, the supreme God of the Ibos. So from time immemorial, the Ibos relegated the Osus as people of a dubious origin; outcasts. This attitude is showing when Isaac Okonkwo and his wife talks firmly against Obi's decision to marry Clara. Joseph and the president of the Umuofia Progressive Union feel the same spirit. Obi on the other hand was against Christianity. But when his plan of marrying an Osu girl was mercilessly rejected by the Ibo parents, he defends his case using the terms like 'the light of civilization' that Christianity brought to Nigeria etc. He claims that the new religion and civilization had rescued Africans from utter darkness. This kind of a complex lack of identity as well as hybrid culture has thrown the new generation of Nigerian in a serious mental and cultural turmoil.

The posting of the warrant chiefs during the Indirect Rule period was a double blow to Nigeria. It dismantled Nigeria's religious harmony forever. General Lugard was firm in constituting the Indirect Rule and the appointment of Paramount Chiefs was a significant part of this initiative. The colonial administrators in regions like the Southern Nigeria found it an uphill task to recruit the natives. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu poses one such difficulty. The igbos were resilient, so they put up a brave front exactly like Ezeulu. The British rulers were adamant too. So they employed another method which cast a lasting spell

on Nigeria's social life. They tried and succeeded in the same mission in the Northern areas where Muslims are dominant. The Muslims co-operated with it since they are used to a native, fellow Muslim leading them. It was the way they lived too. So there was absolutely nothing new in it for them. But as far as the Igbos are concerned '*Igbos never knew kings*'. The rulers then decided to bring the Northern Muslims belonging to the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group to the Igboland and made them the Warrant Chiefs. It was so humiliating to the Igbos to be led by a Muslim. The Muslim chiefs in turn tried to make a blend of the colonial rules and Islamic Shariah rules in Igboland. This infuriated the Igbos. They went on protesting and by the time there. But it wasn't required. As soon as the missionaries succeeded in '*taking away*' the natives of the indigenous religions and converting them, the role of the Warrant Chief was given to the converted Christians. As anyone can guess, these people who live in a hybrid mentality threw the Muslim rulers out of the Southern region and restored Igbo pride.

The Muslims will obviously feel irritated, though they had no claim over the land before. The Northern region was a complex territory, because they were predominantly Syrian merchants. They were aware of the immense possibilities of money and were capitalist in a sense. So they could embrace colonial policies and get on with it from the very outset itself. But the Igbos were late in accepting the colonial authorities. They realized that 'the White man has come to stay' only after a show of resistance. Their resistance included bloody fights and burning Christian churches. Surprisingly, these resistant groups underwent conversion and the Muslims never did. They had their written text Koran, and clinged to their religious faith. Thus, the root of the religious conflict was well established at that point in time itself. Mass conversion during the period in which Nigeria was on the threshold of independence took the dislike between the two groups to another level – hatred. This is showing in the following dialogues that we see in *No Longer at Ease*.

'Who owns this place?'

'I think a Syrian. They own everything in Lagos' said Joseph'

Achebe, 30

Such reactions of dislike towards one another were growing slowly into another level which was bound to 'explode'.

*I suppose so', said Marie, 'but surely it's time someone stopped all the Moslem holidays. Nigeria is a Moslem country you know'
'No it isn't. You mean the North.'
They argued for a little while longer.*

Achebe, 140

This argument between Marie Tomlinson and Obi Okonkwo is reflective of the dislike getting intensified between the regions; North and South, and more dangerously between the two religions; Christian and Muslim.

The British rulers who did play a huge role by devising a sort of 'divide and rule' towards the end of their regime added fuel to it. They became more intolerant towards Northern Muslims who were once their friends in dealing with the Southern Ibos. But with the spreading of Christianity among Ibos, they became the White man's close aids. The North was ill-treated when the electoral constituencies were divided. Though the geographic territory of the North covered a wider area than that of the South-West combined, the Muslim populated areas didn't get as many constituencies as that of the Igbo-Yoruba territories in the division. The result was evident – Muslims never came into power. The present president of Nigeria Mr. Goodluck Jonathan is from the Christian sect which is a minority at least by a few percent to the Muslims who form 50 percent of the total population of the country.

Hence, the Muslims of the country were upset, and they were attracted by religious thinkers who advocated extreme views on the implementation of Islamic Shariah rules in the country. The pro-Christian government of Nigeria never appreciated such initiations. This resulted in the formation of the notorious Islamic terrorist outfit of Nigeria, Boko Haram. Boko Haram's founder was Mohammed Yousuf. Yousuf started Boko Haram as a religious school where Koran is taught. But the teaching gave way to training militants very soon and young Muslims were recruited to carry out terrorist operations. There was a series of bombings and explosions which halted the country's growth.

After the death of Mohammed Yousuf, Aboobacker took over as the leader of the group. He was an evil minded extremist and openly stated that killing others for Islam is God's order and one must find pleasure in it as

sacrificing goats or cocks for the almighty. This statement was immediately followed by the Christmas day explosions at the Churches which killed thousands. President Goodluck Jonathan ordered strict actions and the North is now a battleground and the Muslims belonging to the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group are now fleeing the country to other neighboring Islamic countries.

The unrest is now at its peak and the situation is worse than that of the Biafra Civil War days. This is when a glance into the past becomes significant. One can't tell what went wrong unless he is aware of the exact point in time – *'when the rain has started to beat'* them. This is what writers like Chinua Achebe are doing. There is hardly any Muslim character in Achebe's African trilogy. The only Warrant Chief in the Trilogy is *'His Highness'* James Ikedi. And the other one invited for that post is Ezeulu, the protagonist of the *'Arrow of God'*. Here Ezeulu's refusal and the non-cooperation of the Southerners are significant. Anyone who pays attention to this and tries to explore the history of Indirect Rule in Nigeria will understand how this reckless colonial policy contributed a big hand into the continuous unrest between the two religious groups in Nigeria.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The new dawn into which Achebe's new generation woke was brief, a conjurer's trick. Even as independence approached, the African states which Winston Churchill had characterized as being nothing but '*a mere geographical expression*' were still afflicted with the debilitating psychosis of their nineteenth century birth at the Berlin conference hosted by Bismarck.

Few African writers have ever been much more read and admired than Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. His first novel *Things Fall Apart* has figured in the literature of several countries and is translated to around sixty languages over the past six decades. With his other works in the genre of '*fact-based*' fiction, *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*, which followed the debut novel that formed a miraculous trilogy exploring the country's history gave him worldwide acclaim. Before Achebe wrote his novels, the dominant fictional model of representing Nigeria did not extend beyond stereotypical depiction of the continent as a landscape without men, a jungle inhabited by undifferentiated masses of savages. Though his novels appear to be exclusively about colonization and the trauma of that experience, they are seeking to address the crisis of culture generated by the same experience at the same time. He distils the unique essence of authentic African personalities and conveys that to his readers that the beating down' of older African cultures and languages, traditions, and philosophies must be halted. We must continue to recapture, revive these endangered cultures, languages and traditions... and this will require large scale intervention... This is a real emergency, and in my opinion requires bold action.

Achebe does that through a compelling narration that marks gender differentiation with memorably cast in-depth evocations of decision making and reasoning power displayed in activities such as household management, personal ambition, ritual observance, conversation, public debate play and work, and the personality differences that further manifest themselves as people go about the daily business of living in their complexly organized societies.

His venture beginning with an image which closely approximates the reality of an African culture as it existed at about the time Africa was being opened up to European exploration and occupation, this model makes it easier for readers to understand why the violent cultural clashes, which were progressively weakening the communalistic ethos of Africa, were so massively life-altering in their effects. Achebe is not exclusively pre-occupied with this drama of cross-cultural contact. But, writing concisely and wittily, he covers just enough about a decisive moment in the long and complex history of imperialism to enhance our understanding of the earliest phases of European conquest in West Africa. Examining the problems triggered by the imposition of external control and the resulting experiences of both a public and private nature, he reveals in comprehensive detail a range of deadly emotions – anger, anxiety, condescension, radical rage and gaping dissatisfaction, desperation, inordinate ambition, inferiority complex, traumatic fear or insecurity, male superiority, shame, grief, possessiveness, impulsiveness – alternating with isolated moments of tenderness, filial love, and male friendship and female companionship, all of which ultimately outweigh the negative passions.

By placing the cultural history of an Igbo people in the context of a struggle between order and disorder during the moment of European imperial invasion, Achebe not only vividly takes readers through the daily life of the people at a transitional period, he embarks on a delicately mapped excursion into the mind of an age, setting forth more compelling constructs of the hazards of the self-perpetuating force of ambition and desperate search for social rank within the rural setting than hitherto presented in fiction set in Africa, both African and non-African. His double framed yarn not only sheds fresh light on key aspects of the threatened culture of the people, providing insight into how they think of others and how a masterful portrait of the goals and hidden assumptions that underwrote the colonial mission.

There is a sense in which the sustained imaginative reflection upon Igbo society in Achebe's novels begins to tend toward a subversion of its ideological premises. It is as if Achebe's intellect and sensibility and his sense of artistic integrity had entered into contention with his primary affections for his cultural antecedents, thus bringing into peril his conscious project of bearing witness to the poetic quality of the universe in which they are rooted. For although it would be extreme to read Achebe's novels as the expression of a repudiation of the tribal ethos, as a form of recoil from the tribal universe, to consider the texts in light of its ambivalence is to recognize it for what it is: nothing less than an uncompromising reappraisal of the tribal world.

It is important to stress that this reevaluation has nothing to do with the diminished conception of African humanity and capacities constitutive of colonial ideology but arises as an immediate factor of the historical process represented in the novels. We appreciate the intense feeling of insecurity of the Umuofia and Umuaro elders as they sense the world with which they are familiar going out from under them. We sympathize, therefore, with the claim to cultural integrity defended by Okonkwo, Ezeulu and others, more so as the novels establish a parallel between their attitude and that of Mr. Smith, whose intransigence on behalf of the Christian cause mirrors that of Okonkwo on behalf of the traditional world. They are the true protagonists, embodying each in his own way the logic of the cultural conflict enacted in the novel, the logic involved in the drama of the colonial encounter. Moreover, this conflict is situated within the perspective of a cultural pluralism that is at first rehearsed in a good humoured way in the theological disputations between the Umuofians and Mr. Brown in the first novel of the trilogy, but which soon assumes an agonistic character in the confrontation with his successor, Mr. Smith; it is this later development that is voiced by one of the elders, Ajofia:

We cannot leave the matter in his hands because he does not understand our customs, just as we do not understand his. We say he is foolish, because he does not know our ways, and perhaps he says we are foolish because we do not know his.

Achebe, 134

But this balanced view of cultural relativism hardly represents the level of the novels' groundwork of ideas or the resting place of its ideological or narrative

progression. *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* complicates the issues so often raised in the context of debate within which it is usually situated, that of the Tradition/Modernity framework. They go beyond the series of dichotomies so regularly invoked in this debate as to have become platitudes: established custom versus change; cultural loss versus reproduction; accommodation versus revolt; acculturation versus cultural nationalism, and the like. These issues are obviously implicated in the total discursive range of the novels' narrative development, but they do not in the end constitute the real heart of the matter. For it is not enough to see *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* as simply a statement of cultural and racial retrieval, as a novel that embodies a discourse of nativism. Rather than a unilateral revaluation of the past, the central preoccupation of this novels, as indeed of Achebe's entire works, revolves around the deeply problematic nature of the relationship of past to present in Africa. What is at issue here, in the most fundamental way, is the bearing of that past upon the present, fraught as this is with implications for the future perspectives of the continent.

The British operated an efficient administrative system and introduced a form of British culture to Nigeria. They also sent many capable young Nigerians to England for education. The experience of Nigerians who lived overseas in the years preceding, during, and after World War II gave rise to a class of young, educated nationalists who agitated for independence from Great Britain. The British agreed to the Nigerians' demands and, in 1947, instituted a ten-year economic plan toward independence. Nigeria became an independent country on October 1, 1960, and became a republic in 1963.

With the British long gone from Nigeria, corruption and a lack of leadership continued to hamper Nigeria's quest for true democracy. A series of military coups and dictatorships in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s replaced the fragile democracy that Nigeria enjoyed in the early 1960s. In 1993, Nigeria held a democratic presidential election, which was followed by yet another bloodless coup. And so continues the political pattern for the troubled, violent, most populous country in Africa.

Nigeria, sank in corruption, political turmoil, and religious riots, is exactly the opposite of the peaceful, orderly and pure pre-colonial Nigeria. Thus Achebe's attempt in historical revisionism does not stop with a mere visit into the past and a critical evaluation of his country's encounter with the British colonizer, which may appear passive, turns his task active and lively by

extending it to the act of searching for the roots of the problems that place the independent Nigeria in a state where the Nigerians are 'no longer at ease'. Obi okonkwo's poem which he wrote while he was in London read as follows:

*God bless our noble fatherland
Great land of sunshine bright
Where brave men chose the way of peace
To win their freedom fight.
May we preserve our purity,
Our zest for life and jollity.*

*God bless our noble countrymen
And women everywhere.
Teach them to work in unity
To build our nation dear;
Forgetting region, tribe or speech,
But caring always each for each.*

Achebe, 67

When his dreams regarding his dear country shatter in front of him obi throws the piece of paper in which he has written this poem titled 'Nigeria'. The message of the poem is simple; it calls for the unity of different regions, races and also urges his countrymen to live with the values of the pre-colonial 'era of purity'. It is actually the intention of Chinua Achebe's writings. But like every young Nigerian, he was distressed and finishes his trilogy on a pessimistic note, where the dream of 'Nigeria as it used to be' is folded and thrown into a dustbin. In such a state, storytelling functions as a bridge between generations and as a means of passing wisdom from the very old to the young. But Achebe's probe into the roots of crises is one that is aimed to encourage the new generation of educated Nigerians to act with sensibility and fulfill their obligations towards the nation.

The message is loud and clear, for Achebe is not a cultural terrorist. What he is seeking is a humanitarian consideration for the traditional culture of the land, which was denied all privileges all of a sudden with the advent of colonization. There is a landmark statement by an Umuofian elder Ajofia which is quoted above which calls for a mutual understanding between distinct

cultures. As a support to this view, there is a great instance in the first novel of the trilogy, *'Things Fall Apart'*, where the White Christian Priest Mr. Browne went to the village and spent long hours with Akunna, one of the great men of the clan, and discussing beliefs and religion. Neither of them succeeded in converting the other, but it provided both with loads of knowledge regarding the *'other'*.

'You say that there is one supreme God who made heaven and earth' said Akunna on one of Mr. Browne's visits. 'We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made the entire world and the other Gods'.

Achebe, 138

In this way, Mr. Browne learned a good deal about the religion of the clan. What Achebe tried through his novels is the same – a healthy dialogue between the two cultures – the Western (the language he used) and the Orient (the culture he regenerated). He wants the Westerners to understand what actually constitute the lives of the *'African Niggers'* and at the same time he wants his people to unite and find the identity that they are fast losing. Achebe wanted all people bring forth all their gifts to the great festival of the world and its cultural harvest; and then mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings.

Peaceful co-existence between all racial and religious groups is my sincere wish for mankind.

Chinua Achebe

Both the African and European cultures should function in complementary terms, for Nigeria is a multi-cultural country by the time Achebe started writing. Achebe aims at bringing in a positive mood in the ever hostile relationship between the Nigerian clans and the White Europeans because vengeance and violence win nothing – his symbolic figure, Okonkwo, is indeed the example in this regard. His extreme reaction brought only downfalls, but at the same time, Nigerians must not forget their past, culture and all. So as a clever diplomat and thinker, he has taken a middle passage which meets all these requirements.

For Achebe, novel is a vehicle for self-discovery. Writing is an activity through which the African can define his identity and re-discover his historical roots. The self-defining function of the novel is, for obvious reasons, especially important to writers in a post-colonial situation, especially where the exposure to European culture has led to an undervaluing of traditional values and practices. If they fall back, they can't complain others for rushing forward. A man who does not lick his lips, can he blame the harmattan for drying them?

Achebe wants his society to move on with pride.

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