



Things Fall Apart: An Analysis of Pre and Post-Colonial Igbo Society

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Abstract

Chinua Achebe (1930- 2013) published his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) in 1958. Achebe wrote TFA in response to European novels that depicted Africans as savages who needed to be enlightened by the Europeans. Achebe presents to the reader his people's history with both strengths and imperfections by describing for example, Igbo festivals, the worship of their gods and the practices in their ritual ceremonies, their rich culture and other social practices, the colonial era that was both stopping Igbo culture and also brought in some benefits to their culture. TFA therefore directs the misleading of European novels that depict Africans as savages into a whole new light with its portrayal of Igbo society, and examines the effects of European colonialism on Igbo society from an African perspective. Hence this essay is an attempt to show an insight of pre and post colonialism on Igbo society. It is argued that the interaction between the whites and the Igbo people had both negative and positive consequences. It is evident in Achebe's novel that the Europeans greatly influenced the lifestyle of Igbo society.

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Introduction

The novel *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) (1958) is written by the late Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) who was a Nigerian author. The setting of the novel is in the outskirts of Nigeria in a small fictional village, Umuofia just before the arrival of white missionaries into their land. Due to the unexpected arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia, the villagers do not know how to react to the sudden cultural changes that the missionaries threaten to change with their new political structure and institutions. Hence, this essay aims at analysing the effects of European colonisation on Igbo culture.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century most European states migrated to Africa and other parts of the world where they established colonies. Nigeria was amongst other African nations that received visitors who were on a colonising mission; introducing their religion and culture that is later imposed on Igbo. The culture of the people of Umuofia (Igbo culture) is immensely threatened by this change.

Achebe's primary purpose of writing the novel is because he wants to educate his readers about the value of his culture as an African. *Things Fall Apart* provides readers with an insight of Igbo society right before the white missionaries' invasion on their land. The invasion of the colonising force threatens to change almost every aspect of Igbo society; from religion, traditional gender roles and relations, family structure to trade.

Consequently, Achebe blames the white missionaries' colonial rule and/or invasion for the post-colonial oppressed Igbo culture; this oppression can be seen in terms of the oppressed social coherence between the individual and their society. Furthermore, Achebe educates readers extensively about Igbo society's myths and proverbs.

Before Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*, all the novels that had been written about Africa and Africans were written by Europeans. Mostly, the European writings described Africans as uncivilised and uneducated persons. The Europeans, seeing that they thought of themselves as more advanced than Africans, were determined to help Africans shift from the old era into the modern era of civilisation and education.

Heart of Darkness, for instance, by Joseph Conrad was one of the most read novels around the time of its publication in 1899. Conrad described Africa as a "wild, 'dark', and uncivilised continent" (Sickels 1). Following Conrad's novel in 1952 was *Mister Johnson*, a novel by Joyce Cary. Like *Heart of Darkness*, *Mister Johnson* was also quite a popular read;

its reviews suggest it was a more popular read than *Heart of Darkness*. According to Sickels, *Mister Johnson*, describes the novel's protagonist Mr Johnson generally as a "childish, semi-educated African who reinforces colonialist stereotypes about Africa" (1).

Based on the descriptions of Africa and its people by both Conrad and Cary, it comes as no surprise that Achebe and other African writers began to emerge and tell their story of Africa and its people. Not only were Conrad and Cary's novels a misrepresentation of Africa, they were also humiliating to its people. It is through the insights of *Things Fall Apart* that the world became more appreciative of Africa and its people and at the same time the truth surrounding the stereotypical ideas that once existed about Africa began to appear in a much clearer light.

Achebe writes *Things Fall Apart* to encourage his fellow countrymen to take advantage of the educational system that the missionaries introduced to them so as to better their lives. He is determined to take the modern African Literature genre to greater heights as well as to prove to the Europeans the value of the African culture. The novel was published during a period when a lot of writers emerged from Nigeria; among them are Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri.

These writers all play an influential role in modern African Literature, both in their countries, and internationally. However, Achebe was the most successful writer of the lot because he "has been critical of the role of Christianity in Africa, his criticism has been regarded generally as moderate and his creative work has won almost universal praise for its objectivity and detachment" (Sharma 85). In fact, he is "one of the writers of his time with fluency in the English language" (Jiffynotes.com 1). Nonetheless, this does not imply that Soyinka and Okri were not successful in their writing careers.

In the writing of *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes the history of Igbo; he does so by describing both the perfections and imperfections of their culture and traditions that made them different from Western cultures. For example, their beliefs in the power of ancestral gods, the sacrifice of young boys, the killing of twins and the oppression of women to name a few. In the novel, the reader is also made aware of the arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia as well as the reactions of Igbo to their arrival. Although the arrival of the missionaries had some benefits to Igbo, there were also a number of challenges that faced the future of Igbo.

My aim and focus is to analyse Igbo society as it appears in the novel, which is before and after the arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia; the effects of their arrival concerning Igbo culture, consequently leading to the clash of cultures between the two parties. I intend to incorporate one critical theory in analysing *Things Fall Apart*. I will draw on postcolonial criticism which is relevant for the analysis of the novel as it is concerned with Achebe's work in *Things Fall Apart*. Postcolonial criticism, for instance, is mainly concerned with literature critiques from countries that are colonies of other countries (Tyson 417). Because Achebe originates from Nigeria, a colony of Britain, some of the writing elements he uses in his novels such as language and style are influenced by that.

Reflections on Post-Colonialism

Most texts give the definition of colonialism before they define the meaning of the term post-colonialism. Colonialism as defined by *OED* refers to “the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically”. Therefore, post-colonialism is sometimes assumed to refer to “after colonialism” or “after-independence” (Ashcroft et al. 12) describing the wide range of social, cultural and political events arising specifically from the decline and fall of European colonialism that took place after World War II (McEwan 18).

Post-colonialism expresses the opposite idea of colonialism. Hence, post-colonialism literature is a consequence of colonialism. Through literature we understand the primary focus of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: a novel written by an individual who grew up under colonial rule in response to the effects of colonialism on his culture, Achebe writes back at the writings of European writers and the misrepresentation of Africa in their writings. A colonised individual is usually forced to follow the culture of their colony regardless if they are against it or not. Post-colonial writers usually write about how their rich native cultures were destroyed under the power of imperialism.

One scholar has suggested that although most countries have gained independence from their colonisers, they are still indirectly subjected in one way or another to the forms of neo-colonial domination (Ashcroft et al. 2). Post-colonialism continues to be a process of hostility and reform. This is seen in the development of new elites in post-colonial nations that are

often supported by neo-colonial institutions, as is suggested by the development of divisions within these societies that are based on discriminations as varied as race, language or religion.

In a heterogeneous society (a society consisting of many different ethnic and/or 'racial' groups, social classes, languages and/or dialects, and cultural traditions [Palmer]) post-colonial writers usually try to reassign new ethnic and cultural meanings to the groups of people that are treated as insignificant by their society. The literature also aims at inviting the colonised to work together collectively. If they work together and put their differences aside they are surely bound to overcome the pain of losing their culture. This will enable them to focus on ways that will help preserve the elements of their culture that still exist.

However, the literature does not show the colonised as victims of colonialism, but rather it shows that they are confused about their sense of belonging. Most colonised individuals do not know whether to follow their own culture or the culture of the coloniser. Because of this they find themselves combining some of the elements of the two different cultures which make them move back and forth in between their present and past lives, hence their confused sense of belonging. This back and forth movement in most instances leads to a miscommunication that can be meaningful.

Exposition on the Background of the Novel

Things Fall Apart is one of the most influential novels of its time, both on a local and global scale. In order to fully understand the novel and its contents, it is important to look into the history of the novel that led to its publication. When Nigeria became a colony of Britain in 1906, the country became exposed to the British political structure and its various institutions. Achebe was born in 1930 almost a quarter of a century after the British assumed direct control of Nigeria. Although Achebe's parents at that time had been converted to Christianity, his grandparents were still firm believers in their traditional culture.

It is under these circumstances that Achebe then came to know of both the British culture as well as Nigerian culture. Since neither of them understood the other's culture and neither of them was willing to abandon their own beliefs to follow the beliefs of the other, it can be assumed that there was a lot of tension. Aware of this, Achebe said, - "in an interview that the conflict that existed between these two cultures created sparks in his imagination" (Sickels 1). This resulted in the birth of his novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Achebe became successful in pursuing a good education and was awarded a scholarship in furthering his studies as a medical student; however, he later changed courses to become a major in literature. The change came as a result of his curiosity, as well as the curiosity of other young Africans who were exposed to education, as to why the Westerners have suddenly developed an interest in their land and were now more than ever determined to enlighten it.

Achebe's main concern in two of his publications namely *Things Fall Apart* and *The Arrow of God*, seems to be the introduction of a new religion as well as its destructiveness in society (Alimi 121). In the novel *Things Fall Apart* the people of Umuofia are separated into two groups immediately following the arrival of the white missionaries in their land. The first group of people are Igbo followers and the second group of people are followers of the white missionaries. Converts to Christianity choose to abandon their own religion, traditional ways of life and fellow people to follow the white man and his ways.

Things Fall Apart is all about the “collapse, breaking into pieces, chaos, and confusion” (Alimi 121) of traditional Igbo culture that suffers at the hand of the white man's arrival in Umuofia along with his religion. The views about life that the white men have are totally different from the views that the Igbo have.

What seems utterly appropriate and acceptable in traditional Igbo culture does not appear so to the white missionaries. They are quick to want to change certain elements of traditional Igbo culture that according to them are inappropriate and unacceptable. However, in so doing, the white missionaries fail to see that these “inappropriate and unacceptable” elements of traditional Igbo culture are what keep the Igbo together and at peace with each other.

For instance, in traditional Igbo culture it is required for a “real” man to wed two or more wives. The women of the clan are aware of this and have accepted this ritual; in some cases the first wife can even suggest to her husband to look for a younger wife. The younger wives are also expected to respect the first wife. These women along with their husbands live together in peace and help each other with taking care of the children and other household chores. However, the white missionaries are against polygamous marriages, based on some scriptures (for example, Malachi 2:16) found in the New Testament that forbid Christians against such an act.

Another example is that in Igbo culture the killing of children or persons is a normal practice, as long as the reasons of the kill are in line with the practices of their religion. For instance, Igbo religion says that twins must be killed because they are a sign of the work of the devil, small boys should be sacrificed to the gods as a sign of peace offerings, and so forth. However, the fifth commandment teaches believers that only God has the power and authority to decide when the life of man shall end and nobody else.

The obvious cultural clash that exists between the white missionaries and Igbo in *Things Fall Apart* is one that also emerges in *The Arrow of God*. An additional theme featured in *The Arrow of God* is that of “internal division in the tribe” (Alimi 121). The people of Umuaro become divided on their own without any external influences; this creates a very strong sense of hatred among them and the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that once existed is lost.

One of the similarities between these two novels is that both the people of Umuofia and Umuaro are divided as a result of the conflict that is caused by the arrival of white missionaries in their villages. While the division among the people of Umuofia is caused by the influence of the white man the division among the people of Umuaro is not. Here, Achebe shows the readers that although the missionaries are to be blamed for the destructiveness of their religion to Igbo society, readers should also consider that tribes can also become divided on their own, hence the blame should go both ways and not just to the Europeans.

In both novels Achebe uses regionally inflected language to describe the lifestyles of his characters as well as the environment where the plots are set respectively. *Things Fall Apart* and *The Arrow of God* are “both novels that are rich with Igbo proverbs that Achebe translates into English for the benefit of his readers who are unfamiliar with Igbo” (Alimi 121). Achebe timelessly uses proverbs in these novels both to preserve Igbo culture and language as well as to show their value not only to him, but the entire Igbo community.

A proverb is defined as a “condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people” (“Proverb,” *Advanced English Dictionary and Thesaurus*). According to “Akporobaro a proverb is a brief common statement that is usually adopted by cultures to teach its people about the principles of right and wrong using as few words as possible. He goes further to describe it as a means by which ideas can be vividly expressed and illustrated” (Alimi 124).

Most of the text in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* chiefly features in the use and explanations of the complicated Igbo myths and proverbs that the Europeans fail to acknowledge. Throughout the novel Achebe craftily uses his characters to speak in proverbs when they address one another. The use of proverbs is very important in conversations as the Igbo believe them to be a fountain of wisdom and of respect.

From the onset of the novel Achebe makes readers aware of the importance of proverbs in conversation. When Okoye pays Unoka a visit to ask him to settle his debt, and although Unoka is late with the payment, Okoye does not lash out at Unoka about his overdue debt. Rather, the neighbours share a kola nut, give thanks unto the ancestors and then go on to discuss the debt by speaking in proverbs (3). This maintains good relations between the two neighbours even though they are discussing such an issue that usually causes conflicts between people.

The difference between Achebe's novel and other colonial novels is that his novel thoroughly examines Igbo society as he portrays them in a manner in which shows all aspects of Igbo culture and not only the desirable aspect of their culture. He also predicts of the future of Igbo and where they are headed if the white missionaries are to be successful in taking control of Umuofia.

With the use of the English language, Achebe is successful in fully detailing the life of Okonkwo who at the beginning of the novel is a very famous young man in all the nine villages of Umuofia. However, as the novel develops and white missionaries begin arriving in Umuofia along with their government and institutions, Okonkwo who tries to protest the change is in the end buried without respect or dignity and his fame is soon forgotten because of the greatest sin in Igbo religion that he commits by taking away his own life.

One of the main reasons that *Things Fall Apart* was successful is because of its detailed descriptiveness of Igbo culture as seen from the perspective of its author, who had an insider outsider position as a result of being raised in a Christian household, which meant that he was not allowed to participate in traditional Igbo rituals although he was Igbo (Owomoyela 18). Owomoyela further asserts that "Achebe presents a thorough understanding of narrative organisation and style, and a keen observation of and absorption with day-to-day happenings, not through the lenses of the anthropologist, but through the clear insight of one who was involved with and felt at one with his culture while at the same time inculcating western

ideas”. And it’s for these reasons that Achebe is able to fully convince his audience of the ideas in his novel.

Plot Summary of the Novel

The title *Things Fall Apart* was adopted from William Butler Yeats’ poem ““The Second Coming”” (1921). The poem foresees the end of the present age and the world’s approach to another phase that is completely different:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed the tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

(Yeats: 1921)

Things Fall Apart is centered on the life of the protagonist of the novel, Okonkwo. As the novel develops Okonkwo accidentally kills a man and he and his family are exiled from Umuofia. During his exile white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and change the village. When Okonkwo returns to his village he sees the major transformations that Umuofia has undergone during his exile.

Unhappy with the change, Okonkwo and other villagers come together to drive the white missionaries out of their land. Their efforts are in vain as the missionaries send their messengers to abort the meeting. Okonkwo kills one of the messengers and in shock at his actions the villagers let the other messengers escape. The messengers report back to the missionaries and they take off to bring Okonkwo to justice only to find him dead.

Discussion

Fundamental to the Age of Imperialism was the “scramble for Africa” period of the 1880s to the 1890s. The Europeans became hungry for Africa's natural resources, resulting in their arrival into Africa as well as their hostile takeover of the land. During this period many European countries set colonies in Africa. One of the reasons that the Europeans had for colonising Africa was their claim to civilise the primitive African minds as a humanitarian act. Soon African states were dominated by European power be it economic, political or social.

The Europeans held a Eurocentric view of the world; firmly believing European culture to be superior. Eurocentrism therefore perceives Europe as the core of civilisation and of humanity. Eurocentrism had racist tendencies which granted an inferior status to the non-whites. In order to give his people back the pride that they once had, Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*. Language is also a very important element to Igbo. It gives them a sense of belonging and they also use it as a means to preserve their culture and heritage. And although language is important to Igbo, it ultimately leads to the fall of their society.

Igbo is a society that also appears to be sceptical about change. They refuse to send their children to school where they stand a chance to be able to read and write in the English language. Despite Mr Brown's efforts to show the villagers that they need to learn English because they are now being ruled by the District Commissioner and other white missionaries who only communicate in English, the villagers still remain reluctant in educating their children (Achebe 128).

The Igbo depend on their language to differentiate them from other cultures. They also depend on language to define their social rank in their society. Okonkwo, for instance, when being compared to his father Unoka is considered as a wealthy man and not only because he has married a lot of women or his household produces many yams but because of his strength that helped him defeat one of the strongest wrestlers in the village (Achebe 6). On the other hand, Unoka was a drunkard who had only one wife, not many yams and had no titles to his name by the time of his death (Achebe 6). The village had named him *agbala* a term Igbo use to refer to “women as well as to men who have not taken a title” (Achebe iii) consequently a man who deserves no respect from society because he is not “wealthy”.

Based on the definition of *agbala* it is evident that a man needs to gain the respect of Igbo society by fulfilling either one of the three requirements that are used to define the social status of a man. That is by either having more than one wife, producing many yams (which are determined by the number of wives a man has, as women are responsible for crop production) or by defeating the strongest man in the village in a wrestling match, which also determines the number of women he marries because families usually marry off their daughters to strong wealthy men.

However, even so readers are immediately aware of Igbo's ignorance towards the rest of the world. They are a secluded community with no knowledge whatsoever about the world outside Umuofia. At no point in the novel do the characters make reference to Nigeria or the rest of the world. It is interesting to note that the Igbo are not at all curious of other forms of life that lie beyond Umuofia.

Because the Igbo have only known Umuofia to be the only place in the world, and they do not show any interest in learning about other places outside Umuofia, it can be safely concluded that anything outside of their territory is disregarded, hence its non-existence to them. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that the Igbo deny their children the chance of mobility from Umuofia into the competitive world which the white man's education assures them; they even reject the white missionaries' attempts in teaching them the English language all in favour of their devotion to their native language.

Even before the white missionaries arrive in Umuofia, the Igbo already have their own judicial systems that are based on the knowledge that their forefathers have passed onto them about their culture. Their courts are spearheaded by the oldest men of the village, whose wisdom and knowledge is trusted in the power of their ancestral gods to guide them to give fair and unbiased ruling. However, one of the first things that the white missionaries do when they arrive in the village is to replace Igbo courts with theirs. This disadvantages the villagers as the white missionaries do not know the history of Igbo, their culture or their system of justice. It can be argued that this is one of the many mistakes that the missionaries make when they first decide to take over Igbo and their territory.

In this sense Igbo do not know what is lawfully right or wrong in the white man's courts. That is why the leaders of the village are surprised when they are imprisoned after burning the missionary church. The action by the missionaries in not considering Igbo laws and customs in their hostile takeover shows that they do not care about Igbo tradition or culture.

Rather, they appear to be so keen on forcing their own culture on the Igbo that they do not see that they are destroying Igbo culture and that they could learn from the Igbo to better understand them and their way of life.

This lack of consideration of the Igbo and their well-being from the Europeans further creates the drift that exists between the two cultures and drives them further apart from where they first started. It also raises the question of the intelligence of the white missionaries. How could a civilised and educated group of individuals who do not give themselves time to learn Igbo culture turn around and call Igbo uncivilised and uneducated? They certainly appear uncivilised and uneducated even though they claim to be. This is contradictory to the statements that they represent as the enlighteners of the village of Umuofia.

In fact, it seems that Igbo are more civilised than the missionaries themselves. In their traditional courts, for example, if two parties are at conflict with each other both parties are given the chance to tell their story before a ruling is taken as opposed to the case of the British courts. When the villagers commit any form of crime they are imprisoned without first being questioned whereas Igbo courts question those at conflict before a ruling is taken. For example, Okonkwo beats up his youngest wife during the Week of Peace (Achebe 124) for petty reasons and although wife beating is allowed in Igbo culture, she is given the chance to take the matter before the courts. Okonkwo is not found guilty for beating his wife but for doing so during the Week of Peace where acts of violence are not allowed.

Igbo is a compassionate yet violent society. This is seen through the character of Okonkwo who is generally a representative of the tribe. However, Okonkwo's actions show that Igbo only become violent when certain factors force them to be. For example, Okonkwo shoots one of the messengers who are sent by the missionaries to break up their meeting (Achebe 144).

He does this because he is tired of the white missionaries and the power of authority they have claimed over their village. Although it is not the best decision to be taken by him, it is understandable why he does it. Instead they let the other messengers escape and sit back and watch the missionaries take total control of their territory.

It could be argued that this is the case because their hostility, whether on a smaller scale or larger scale, has always been restricted within the boundaries of their land. Based on this statement it justifies why Igbo do not fight back against the white missionaries who take

refuge in their land and threaten to change all aspects of their culture. It is rather disappointing that Igbo not only welcome the white missionaries to their land but they also easily allocate them a piece of it.

The decision by the rulers of Mbanta to allocate land to the missionaries was the worst mistake the Igbo could make (Achebe 105). It gave the missionaries the impression that the Igbo are a weak society that they could easily influence with their culture. However, it can also be argued that the decision by the Igbo to keep the piece of land where the evil forest lay is an indication of the respect and loyalty they still have for their own culture (Achebe 105). But, because the Igbo fail to make known to the white missionaries the dark nature of the forest, any remorse concerning the new culture and religion is lost. Hence, the white missionaries remain unopposed and in control of Umuofia and its people.

As far as the Igbo are concerned the white missionaries are aliens because their origin is not known to them. They do not even understand the concept behind Christianity. This is because until now the nature of white people and their culture has existed outside of their language. To the Igbo it means it has simply not existed, and this ultimately leads to the doom of their culture as they are confused about how to react to this new religion.

Because the white missionaries are convinced that the Igbo are primitives they obligate themselves to civilise them even though the so called primitives do not ask for their help or to be civilised. They believe themselves to be the long awaited answer to the problems Igbo society faces and other literary scholars such as Edward Said of *Orientalism* (although not from the text itself) believe them to be cunning in wanting to take control of Igbo land and the lands resources by coming to Umuofia under false pretence of their true intentions which was to rule Umuofia.

The white missionaries arrive in Umuofia and almost immediately expect the people of Umuofia to submit to their authority and without any question. However, on the other hand, the missionaries serve as a ray of hope to the people that Igbo religion gives no favour to. For example, it is a common and acceptable practice in Igbo culture that twins are killed, boys are sacrificed or dead infants are mutilated, etc. (Achebe xxxvi).

Some villagers are excited to go along with the white men's idea seeing that it is the only way to escape from their own religion. Okonkwo's son Nwoye is among the first converts to Christianity (Achebe 107). This decision came after the sacrifice of Ikemefuna who was

almost a brother to Nwoye. Nwoye was totally against the decision made by Igbo to kill his brother, hence he protests against this act by joining the church and choosing to attend school. His father on the other hand is not at all pleased with Nwoye's decision to join Christianity. Although Okonkwo is disappointed in his son's choice he does not act on it. It is then assumed that Okonkwo somehow expected this kind of behaviour from his son as he always saw Nwoye as "weak and woman-like" (Strong-Leek 2).

However, Okonkwo ends up disowning his son, Nwoye after he abandons the Igbo religion. The decision by Okonkwo to disown his only son for following another religion is yet another example of Igbo's inability to deal with change, especially that which has not existed within the Igbo language. By abandoning his own religion, Nwoye disrespects his father in the worst possible way. However, because Okonkwo is unaware of the Christian culture he cannot act against his son. It is apparent that committing suicide is Okonkwo's way of going against Christianity. This act not only costs him his life but it also takes away the respect Umuofia once had for him.

Another convert to Christianity is a pregnant mother. She has watched her children on more than one occasion being put to death because they were twins and this, according to Igbo tradition, because it was uncommon and was the work of the devil. She converts to Christianity to protect her unborn child or children. Along with Nwoye and the pregnant mother, many outcasts of the village become passionate followers of Christianity because in "God's eyes (though in not in the eyes of the missionaries) they are equals to everyone else" (Akers-Rhoads 69).

The decision to follow Christianity by some members of Igbo society is greatly influenced by the suffering they had incurred from their own culture. Because they are so eager to get out of the pain and misery that Igbo religion had put them through, they do not realise that by joining the white missionaries they are actually making things harder for themselves in the long run.

Achebe is successful in making readers aware that although the effect of European colonialism challenges the culture of Igbo, the benefits of it can also be seen. Igbo society stands to benefit from the school and from other smaller things such as bicycles that the white men come with. Forcing Igbo people to abandon their own way of life to follow theirs seems to be the only factor that makes the white missionaries bad people in history.

In my opinion the white missionaries take the wrong approaches in their attempts to help civilise Igbo society. If all of the white missionaries who arrived in Umuofia had the same character as Mr Brown, all would have not been lost in the village and the missionaries would have not been referred to as such bad people as they are today. At first Mr Brown arrived in Umuofia with the hopes that he will be able to convert most if not all of the villagers to Christianity as well as to introduce them to education.

However, soon Mr Brown also realised that he too could learn something from Igbo rather than him totally disregarding the little knowledge they had. He was an accommodating individual to all of the villagers (even to the non-converts) and did not force them to become Christians. “Whenever Mr. Brown went to Umuofia, he spent long hours with Akunna in his obi talking about religion through an interpreter. However, neither of them succeeded in winning the other to their belief, but they did learn more about their dissimilar faiths” (Achebe 126).

The wrong approach taken by the Westerners is seen in their attitude towards the Igbo of total submission and gratitude from them. Their arrival in Umuofia came unexpected and it did not help that upon their arrival they thought that because they were more civilised and educated they should be the ones to rule in Umuofia and not Igbo. By so doing they immediately unintentionally belittled the status and importance of Igbo in their own land. This is a great disrespect to Igbo and their ancestors, which is what angered and offended the Igbos the most. It would have been pleasant if the missionaries held the Igbo people at the same high standard they thought they were at.

Conclusion

In summary the fall of Igbo culture as well as the fall of Okonkwo cannot only be attributed to their strong belief system and rooted cultural heritage. The aim of *Things Fall Apart* is to explore the imperfections of Igbo culture as well as its strengths. Although Achebe presents these imperfections to readers that also contribute to the destruction of their culture; the main reason for the fall of the Igbo was caused by their inability and reluctance to learn English because they believed that they will never have to apply its usage in their everyday lives.

Also, because the missionaries were stronger than the Igbo with regard to their advancement in modern day life and education, they had a stronger influence as well as controlling power

of Igbo land and the Igbo themselves. The missionaries used a hostile approach in taking over the ruling powers of Igbo land from its natives by using their influence to spread their gospel and at the same time abolishing Igbo traditional customs and beliefs. Hence, the missionaries were particularly superior to Igbo just as the author explains.

The white missionaries saw Igbo as uncivilised individuals in desperate need of their help. Although the motive of the arrival of missionaries in Umuofia was to rule over its people, the missionaries should have also seen this as a way of a cultural exchange between the two. Because both Igbo and the missionaries had until now not known of the culture of the other.

The cultural exchange between the two could have benefited the Igbo more because they have not shown interest in knowing of the world that exists outside of Umuofia and had the white missionaries not arrived in their land, they would still be clueless of the existence of mankind elsewhere. It is without a doubt that the white missionaries believed themselves to be superior in comparison to Igbo, that is why they had some of the converts of Christianity be their messengers. The white men saw Igbo as a burden that they had to take care of by informing and educating them of things they did not know.

The white man believed his culture to be morally superior to Igbo culture and this caused a conflict between the two cultures. Although these problems seem resolved in the present time, they still very much exist and are causing a clash between the two cultures.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge both the benefits as well as the challenges that resulted from European colonialism on Igbo society. The Igbo greatly benefited from the introduction of school and education in their society that helped curb the rate of illiteracy in the village. Because of it, today most Igbo are literate individuals who have dilated their knowledge to be more “enlightened”. The Europeans also taught Igbo about their own culture, and although the Igbo found it difficult to transition from their own culture to that of a stranger, they learnt something new from it.

Nonetheless, there are challenges that face Igbo as a consequence of the arrival of the white missionaries. Igbo lost most of the values that tied them together as one; social coherence between the individual and society was lost, coupled with their traditional values and way of life. Because of the confused state of mind of Igbo not knowing whether to reject or embrace these changes it ultimately led to their fall mainly because of their loyalty to the language.

The arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia was to take over the ruling of it and because Igbo are a compassionate society that was also unsuspecting of the white men's intentions, they welcomed them into their land and also gave them a piece of their land not knowing that these men will be the cause of the collapse of their culture.

Without culture Igbo society is as good as dead, hence the significance of Okonkwo's death in the end. Like Okonkwo the Igbo committed suicide by not being suspicious of the white missionary's intentions in their land or questioning his presence.

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