

## The Allegory of Colonisation: (Re) Theorizing Dehumanization in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Cite: Rutere, A. M., & Mutie, S. (2024). The Allegory of Colonisation: (Re) Theorizing Dehumanization in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *LIFT: The Journal of Literature and Performing Arts*, 3, 25-40.

### Abstract

*This paper examines symbolism in Achebe's **Things Fall Apart** to unravel the two faces of colonisation in Africa. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, colonisation, on the one hand, is a symbol of conquest, subjugation and marginalisation of Umuofia clan and Igbo society by West and arguably, on the other hand, a symbol of the similar process for Africa. Therefore, this paper uses Historicism as an ideological praxis to examine the Umuofia-Igbo's colonial encounter with the West while drawing some parallelism to Africa's colonisation by the West. Artistically, Achebe has delved into the history to present colonial encounter with Africa, especially the Umuofia-Igbo society, the latter's reactions to this crippling process and the far-reaching consequences on its social, political and economic organisation. In Achebe's thinking, reflections and presentation "Things Fell Apart" for Umuofia-Igbo in the aftermath of this encounter. This paper contends that Africa's encounter with the West from the late 18th century to the early 20th century is a similar narrative. Thus, Achebe utilizes proverbs, allegorical forms and anecdotes among other stylistic devices to underline symbolism to advance the colonisation narrative in Umuofia-Igbo and Africa at large. Indeed, the focus of this paper in most part is on the allegory of colonialism: The Double Edged Symbolism of Colonisation in Achebe's **Things Fall Apart**. Ultimately, the paper reiterates its central argument that colonisation in whatever form is racist, exploitative, impoverishing and dehumanizing to the colonized.*

**Key Words:** Double-Edged, Symbolism, Umuofia-Igbo, Colonisation, Proverb, Allegory, Anecdote

## Introduction

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) is an icon of literature, especially African Literature. His fame soared globally after writing his groundbreaking novel, *Things Fall Apart* (hereafter referred to as TFA) in 1958. He distinguished himself as a novelist, essayist, poet, playwright and a well-grounded critic of literary works. Also, he was an advocate of African culture and history. He firmly believed that if culture and history were revisited objectively, they could set the foundation of decolonising the biased colonial literature and history about the colonised. Achebe delved into his Igbo people's culture and history to deconstruct European writings that depicted Africans as savages and therefore, uncivilized. TFA is, therefore, portraiture of the devastating encounter between Westernism and African traditions. The encounter had both negative and a few positive effects. Achebe has written other notable works like *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966) and the critical masterpiece, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), and the stylistically nuanced *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). In these works, Achebe revisits his Igbo people's culture and history and Nigeria at large to buttress his indictment of colonialism and postcolonialism as the crippling processes in Africa and beyond.

In defense of African culture and literature, Achebe contends in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* that art has ever been at the service of man. Therefore, "[O]ur ancestors created their myths and told their stories for a human purpose" (p.19) and "any good story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose" (p.20). According to Achebe, art is rightly anchored in people's culture, and there is no art for art's sake. Further, Achebe underlines the centrality of the artist in society. Using the analogy of the novelist, Achebe is, Sunday Etim observes as quoted in Ojinmoh (1991): "[F]or Achebe, the African novelist as the teacher has three primary functions concerning his society; as a historian, rescuing its past; as a critic, analyzing its present; (and) as a mentor, helping to guide it towards its future" (Emenyonu 2004, p. 253). Achebe looks at art as a liberational tool, and therefore for him, art should be committed and geared towards changing society for the better. Hence, in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Achebe reiterates "[T]he writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. He should march right in front. For he is after all - as Ezekiel Mphahlele says in *African Image* - "the sensitive point of his community" (p. 72). Indeed, the artist should be among the front soldiers fighting for social, political and economic justice in the society. In a nutshell, Achebe is appreciated as a forthright writer. And in the introduction of *Achebe: The Man and His Works*, Rose Ure Mezu notes "[S]peaking with Achebe in 1996, and finally meeting him in July 1999 increased my appreciation of the writer's great intellectual

gifts. Achebe as a man is gentle and soft-spoken with a keen listening ear, rollicking humour, great wit suffused with sensibility and, yes, humility (Mezu 2006, pp.13)“ Evidently, these attributes manifest powerfully in the presentation of his novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

### **Historical Context and Historicism Theory**

*Things Fall Apart* is set in the period that colonialism is establishing itself in Nigeria in 1890s. The plot of the text focuses on the rise and fall of Okonkwo, a true disciple and custodian of the culture of Umuofia clan of the larger Igbo society of Eastern Nigeria. Okonkwo is the symbol of Igbo society; hence, his own personal struggles, his clan tribulations and marginalisation in the context of the encroachment of British colonialism on Igbo society is the master narrative of the text. The resistance to British domination, especially the incapacitating missionary work and crippling colonial rule articulates the inspiring admirable African resilience anchored in the rich culture and complexities of Igbo society. Achebe has this sense of the African experience and indeed uses *TFA* to fictionalise the true history of Igbo people, which the Europeans attempt to erase. Precisely, the push of Okonkwo to wage a lone battle against Europeans and the frustration that propel him to commit suicide underscore the conquest and subjugation of Igbo society and the similar narrative for Africa during colonial period. Consequently, the use of historicism theory as an ideological praxis to read Achebe’s *TFA* is at the core of this paper that makes a daring and critical attempt to relook and present Africa’s encounter with European colonialism and the attendant effects of this experience.

Locating itself within historicism theory, this paper aims to establish the extent to which a literary text leans on history in its construction. As Hamilton (1996) argues, Historicism\ as a theory and expression is a “critical movement insisting on the prime importance of historical context to the interpretation of texts of all kinds” Otd. in Ahmad, 2012, p.10). Simply, Historicism shows how history has informed the writing of the text. Historicism considers the material culture of the people as part of that history; hence, the reflection of this culture in people’s social, political and economic lifestyle is not exclusive. The reader or the critic is supposed to use detailed information about the historical time the writer constructed the text and evaluate how the time reference’s goings influenced his/her writings. Precisely, a literary critic will use Historicism because this theory as Hamilton (1996) reiterates basically “doubles back on itself to explore the extent to which any historical enterprise inevitably reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written” (Quoted in Ahmad, 2012, p.10). Arguably, since these interests and biases are appropriated in the

construction of literature, the subject needs critical interrogation. In the same vein, this paper provides the historical and geographical setting to locate the selected text. Further, the input of Achebe's sense of African history, especially the colonial experience is a significance that informs in the construction of the text. Even further, the traditional Igbo culture, which Achebe has admirably grasped greatly, is the literary bedrock of the text. Therefore, the brief insight to the history and culture of Igbo society fictionalised in TFA gives the reader a good perspective of the core argument on the encounter of Africa and European colonialism.

New Historicism as a derivative of Historicism and as articulated by scholars like Jacques Derrida and Stephen Greenblatt moved a notch higher to propose that a text should be studied and interpreted about the history of both the writer and the critic. Veenstra (1990) underlines that Stephen Greenblatt came up with 'Poetics of Culture as an equivalent of New Historicism. In words of Veenstra:

Poetics of Culture seeks to reveal the relationship between texts and their sociohistorical contexts. Cultural Poetics assumes that texts not only document the social forces that inform and constitute history and society but also feature prominently in the social processes themselves which fashion both individual identity and the socio-historical situation (p. 174).

Indeed, Stephen Greenblatt would reject T. S. Eliot's view of poetry as a solitary enterprise to argue that a poem should be regarded as poetry but not ignoring the crucial feature which gives it meaning; and this is the sociohistorical context. Thus this approach underlines that any interpretation of a text cannot be objective because it is influenced by personal culture or biases of the writer and the critic. Indeed, there cannot be a watertight historical account of a text. By implication, this theory calls upon the critic to be critical to the historical material he/she uses to evaluate a text. The contexts and derivatives of social, historical, economic, cultural and intellectual domains which influence the construction of a text should be adequately interrogated to constitute an informed opinion. As it were and operating within the tenets of Historicism Theory, this paper will examine the double-edged symbolism of colonisation in Achebe's TFA within the historical times the text is set and the writer's interpretation of the historical engagement between his Igbo people and colonialism. Indeed, this paper has used the core tenet of New Historicism to critically take stock of history and material culture of Igbo people and interrogate them in view of the literary criticism established by eminent scholars on *Things Fall Apart* to buttress

researchers' interrogation of the text and presentation of an informed argument on the encounter of Africa and European colonialism.

### **The Literary Trajectory of *Things Fall Apart***

TFA by Achebe is a portrayal of Igbo society in precolonial and colonial periods. Achebe as an historian writer in the rank of Ngugi wa Thiong'o has aptly fictionalized the history of Igbo society and further given its life experience from an authoritative position since he lived it. Okonkwo, the protagonist, is a representative of the Umuofia clan, a subset of Igbo society. Okonkwo starts his life from a humble beginning, a son of a pauper called Unoka who is a lazy and perpetual beggar. However, through hard work, mainly farming and tending the king crop-yam, he rises to success as a good farmer, wrestler, warrior and becomes a revered member of Umuofian society. He is a member of *Egwugwu*, a unit that administers justice in the community. Although not very explicit in the novel, Okonkwo is a qualified member of *Ndichie*, a council of elders that make significant and binding decisions in Umuofia. Okonkwo has several wives and children. He has several barns of yams, and occasionally is very generous in giving yam seedlings to deserving farmers.

Nonetheless, Okonkwo's life is dominated by fear of being thought a coward and lazy like his father, Unoka. Indeed, many times he is impatient with less successful men and those that exhibit cowardice. He rules his home with an iron fist. By all means, Okonkwo achieves a lot at his tender age. As the saying goes 'he had washed his hands and now he could eat with kings.' Although Umuofia clan has excesses like killing innocent twins, sacrificing young people like Ikemefuna and oppressing women, the clan lives in tranquility until the Whiteman's coming undermines its social, political and economic life, especially using the Christian religion. Okonkwo is among the people that despises the new religion and advocates for war against the intruder. However, before his ideas are actualised. Okonkwo is banished to exile for seven years in Mbanta, his motherland, for inadvertently shedding a clansman's blood, the sixteen-year-old son of Ezeudu. Ezeudu is a famous warrior, and after his death, the Umuofia clan organises a fanfare sendoff that involves grandeur shooting. During this shooting, Okonkwo's gun explodes and kills the son of the dead man. This action is abominable and rare in Umuofia. Therefore, to cleanse the land for this shameful act, Okonkwo is sent to exile in addition to having his fellow Umuofians descend into his homestead and destroy his hard-earned property. Okonkwo leaves for exile with nothing but his wives and children. His exile is a significant loss equated to removing a fish from water to dry land.

Nevertheless, Okonkwo survives due to his resilience and determination. Uchendu, his uncle, encourages him to soldier on and even gives him land and yam seedlings to start a new life. During the exile, Obierika, a close friend of Okonkwo pays him several visits and briefs him about the drastic changes taking place back home in his absence. Among the changes is the unthinkable influx of people and especially men of titles to the new region. This development irks Okonkwo that he plans for revenge once he is back to Umuofia. Okonkwo's humility in Mbanta is commendable though he never feels the stay is complete without the action he knows back home. He does not marry off any of his daughters in Mbanta despite many offers for a hand in marriage. He looks forward to marrying them off in Umuofia. Indeed, Okwonko is set to make a significant homecoming.

But after seven years of exile, Okonkwo returns home to find that the white man had dared his people too much. Even gathering to discuss any matter was outlawed. Umuofians had even to pay taxes. Enoch, the stubborn convert unmasks an *Egwugwu*, and in return, the *Egwugwus* raze the Whiteman's church to the ground among other cleansing pursuits for Enoch's mischief. In retaliation Okonkwo and other elders are tricked and arrested, molested and humiliated by the local white administration. Upon their release, a meeting to counter the white man's excesses is urgently called. During this meeting, a court messenger is sent to stop the gathering as an illegal meeting when Okonkwo in rage draws his sword and kills the messenger. At this point, Okonkwo is expecting the beginning of a full-blown war against the white man. Unfortunately, his people turn to him and blamed him for his 'hasty and ill-advised' action of killing the messenger. On realising that his people are not ready for war, Okonkwo leaves the meeting and goes home where he hangs himself. This again is a terrible act, and after that, he is to be buried like a dog as his friend Obierika says, accusing the white man of pushing Okonkwo to this shameful point. In brief, TFA is an exposition of the encounter between the Umuofia clan and by extension, the larger Igbo society and colonialism that manifested in incapacitating Christianity and imposition of other incompatible cultural values. The text also examines the admirable, inspiring resistance to the aggressor by Umuofia-Igbo society that lost the battle, while showing reasonable effort to defend its identity and regain its fame.

### **Narrative of Colonisation in Africa**

Colonisation in whatever phase was a devastating and incapacitating experience in Africa and beyond. It ruined the social, political, and economic setups of the colonised. Arguably "[T]he major impact of colonialism in Africa is that it brought about the under-development of African territories

in many different ways” (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012, p.51). The perpetrators of colonialism were mostly the Europeans. In Africa, Europeans came as traders, missionaries, settlers (farmers) and administrators. Notably, Europeans benefited a lot in the despicable slave trade, especially the Atlantic Slave Trade. The trade involved the capture of slaves in Africa and their sale in the Americas, commonly referred to as the West Indies, where slaves were in high demand in plantations. European slave dealers would come from as far as Mali, Songhai, and Nigeria where greedy local rulers had many slaves which they gave out in exchange for token goods like clothes, bracelets and salt with Europeans. Also, Europeans took precious minerals like gold, copper and iron. In pursuit of slaves and the aforementioned minerals, villages and kingdoms were raided and destroyed.

Further, Europeans instigated and militarily supported intertribal wars and in return would get captives of the war as slaves. At the closure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans’ appetite for Africa increased; thus, making their leaders meet and discuss how to divide Africa into colonies. This culminated to the infamous Berlin conference. Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain got colonies in Africa. It is only Ethiopia and Liberia that remained independent but indirectly controlled by Italy and America respectively. Therefore, the Berlin conference of 1889 was the official launching of colonisation in Africa.

By any description, colonialism in Africa and beyond was a crippling process that had long-lasting consequences on the colonised. As Bulhan (2015) puts it “[... its development and expansion affected the thought, behaviour, and generally the life of colonized peoples” (p. 241). Thus, the subject of colonialism has been critiqued a lot in history and literature, mostly its intent and impact in Africa. Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o have enormously revisited history to indict colonialism as interference on traditional African society. Rutere (2010) notes that “[N]gugi’s literary works explore controversial but pertinent issues about the history, culture, religion, and economics of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Kenya. So, for the most part, Ngugi uses the experiences of his Gikuyu ethnic group to illuminate these issues” (p.70) In the same vein, this paper reiterates Achebe immensely leans on the similar history of his Igbo to indict colonialism and postcolonialism for undermining African society. Achebe and Ngugi commonly maintain that colonization destabilized the African culture and in the long run made people dependent caricatures. The two writers and others have also criticized neo-colonialism, the offshoot of colonialism, which undermines the post-colonial African society following the unholy alliance of the ruling African elite and former colonial masters. As Rutere (2010)

observes, “[T]hus, the grounding of postcolonialism in Africa was possible because it was embraced by African ruling elite cultured into the colonial game of plunder and oppression” (p.72). Postcolonialism has wrecked many economies in Africa and undermines socio-political institutions that perpetuate poor governance and culture erosion.

Colonialism in Africa and beyond was a selfish and racist adventure that had far-reaching consequences on the colonized. In its nature “[C]olonialism is the direct and overall domination of one country by another based on state power being in the hands of a foreign power (For example, the direct and overall domination of Nigeria by Britain between 1900-1960)” (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012, p.46). Following the domination, colonialism maps out the complete processes of oppressing the colonized. Indeed “[T]he first objective of colonialism is political domination. Its second objective is to make possible the exploitation of the colonised country” (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012, p.46). Bulhan (2015) further indicts colonialism by saying that “[I]ts driving motivation was and is not the only pursuit of material exploitation and cultural domination, but also European self-aggrandizement to compensate for gnawing doubts on the wholeness and integrity of the self that, in different ways and intensity, assail people everywhere” (p. 242) with arrogance and immunity.

### **Double-edged Symbolism of Colonisation in *Things Fall Apart***

Simply put, symbolism is an extended image one perceives in the recurrent use of an item(s) in a literary work. The symbol would then represent an idea, quality, emotions and more often, the state of mind. A symbol indirectly suggests something to express an idea which could be real or abstract. This paper contends that in Achebe’s *TFA*, colonisation is a symbol of conquest, subjugation, and marginalisation of Umuofia clan and Igbo society by West and also a symbol of the similar process for Africa. Colonisation in Achebe’s view was a devastating and an incapacitation process for Africa and beyond; hence, he uses several but different images to present colonisation, while consistently indicting it. Indeed, in most part, Achebe’s reference to colonization connotes a process riddled with cunningness, exploitation, destruction, discrimination and domination of the colonized. Thus, Achebe utilizes proverbs, allegorical forms, and anecdotes among other stylistic devices to underline symbolism and advance the narrative of colonisation in Umuofia-Igbo and Africa extensively.

Active colonialism commences in Africa with the partition of the continent following the 1884 Berlin conference. The division of the continent is ill informed by false reports of explorers and missionaries about Africans. The



racist argument that gained popularity was to civilize Africa. The agency of undertaking what was referred to as whiteman's burden to rescue the dark continent and expose it to western culture, religion and mode governance was the argument of the explorers and missionaries. There was a big influx of Europeans to Africa following these reports and true to what Achebe fictionalizes in TFA.

Achebe uses the allegory of locust invasion to prefigure the gradual and destructive arrival of Europeans in Umuofia and beyond. The locust:

At first, a reasonably small swarm came. They were the precursor sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly moving mass like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia. Soon it covered half the sky, and the solid mass was now broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star dust. It was a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty (TFA, p.39).

Achebe uses symbolic language to describe the locusts. This paper argues the first small swarm of locust and the harbinger sent to survey the land would be likened to missionaries who first come to Umuofia to introduce their religion and capture the people's souls. They intend to confuse Umuofians to accept the new religion and anything related to that religion. In effect, Umuofians will abandon their religion, the core of their culture and being. The solid mass of locusts that come later would be taken to be European traders, administrators, and settlers who come in a significant number after the ground is prepared by the missionaries. This influx of Europeans happened, and before they start undermining Umuofia and Igbo people is narrated in chapter 18. The missionaries are now encroaching on Igbo culture. For instance, they are now rescuing twins thrown in the forest, accepting *efulefu* (worthless people) and *osu* (outcasts). The white man has even brought their government and built a place for judgment in Umuofia to protect his religion's followers. The luring charm of the white man is a new religion. Like the 'tremendous sight' of locust, it is full of 'power and beauty' which attract the despised lot in Umuofia.

The colonial occupation in Africa was not cozy for Africans. The racist and exclusive colonial rule was highly resisted through overt and covert means which in most part were violent. Resistances were in most cases defeated given the might of the colonial aggressor. The Umuofians as Achebe presents in TFA find themselves in a similar situation: they could not at first counter the European invasion because of the might of the latter. Achebe reports the robustness of the locusts thus: "[A]nd, at last, the locusts did descend. They settled on every tree and every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and

covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke away under them, and the whole country became the brown earth colour of the vast, hungry swarm" (TFA, pp39-40). Indeed, the locusts are many and heavy that they break every tree branch and their intimidating presence is explained in the way they cover the land which "became the brown earth colour of the vast, hungry swarm". The innocuous eating of locusts by Umuofians is equivalent to their ignorant embrace of Whiteman's decoys like religion, education and medicine only to mention but a few. The destruction of the vegetation by locusts and the insects becoming a delicious dish foreshadows the imminent disintegration of Umuofia-Igbo culture after the onslaught of colonialism and subsequent white settlement. The fracturing of the Umuofia-Igbo society after the encounter with Westernism is what Achebe aptly refers to as 'Things Falling Apart' and explains his choice of the text title. Note that the white man is shrewd, cunning and calculating. When he came as a missionary, he was given the evil forest to build his church. The people thought that he would not survive. But peacefully with his religion and feigned foolishness, he survived to lure many souls to his religion. He put a knife on the things that held people together, and they fell apart unceremoniously. After all the mismatch of his religion and that of the Umuofia-Igbo people symbolizes Western's and traditionalism's incompatibility and thus marks the inevitable clash of the two competing cultures.

Using Christianity, the Europeans lured the Africans to the trap of colonial domination; hence violent resistance to the oppressor and attempted restoration of the African way of life would in some cases be foolhardy and ill-advised. To underline the evil behaviour and vengeful colonialists' tendencies, Achebe through Okonkwo's uncle Uchendu gives some anecdote of Mother Kite and her daughter's story. The first time the daughter took the duckling, her mother asked her to return it if its mother did not say anything but maintained some silence. The reason being that there could be something ominous about that silence. When the daughter in return took the chick, her mother asked her what its mother said. "[I]t cried and raved and cursed me". The mother confidently told the daughter "[T]hen we can eat the chick [...]" "[T]here is nothing to fear from someone who shouts" (TFA, PP.99). This story is cited by Uchendu to underline the foolishness of Abame people in killing a white man who did not say anything and that after tying his iron horse (Bicycle) on a tree. Days passed by, and Abame people assumed all was well until one market day the white man came in big numbers, suddenly surrounded the market and killed everybody - to revenge the earlier killing of one of their own.

True to History colonialism was established with violence and wanton destruction of African social, political and cultural institutions. Wiping off Abame shows colonial ruthlessness. It cannot be taken for granted the white man who had earlier come was for peace. He was a precursor sent to survey the terrain. When he was killed, and his iron horse, a symbol of conquest, tied on tree, the people of Abame were, in essence, immobilising the spirit of the dead in case it came back to take the horse and go back to call for help and revenge on them. No wonder the complacency in assuming all was well until they were fatally attacked. The colonial revenge and deceit also manifest when the elders, including Okonkwo, are arrested, tortured, and asked to pay a big fine of 250 cowrie shells to secure their release following the destruction of Enoch's compound and the Reverend James Smith's church by *Egwugwus*. Even further, the reaction and the attitude of the District Commissioner to the Okonkwo's suicide underline colonial ignorance and stupidity about this great Umuofia and its people. He wondered and enquired from Obierika why such a man took that action of killing himself. However, Obierika suddenly turned to the white man and said ferociously "[T]hat man [Okonkwo] was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog" (TFA, p.147). The death of Okonkwo symbolizes the conquest and subjugation of Umuofia-Igbo society to the colonial rule. No wonder, Okonkwo's suicide could only give the District Commissioner material to complete his book. "He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*." Although the text will be biased, for the local colonial administrator the book is a testimony of success and justification of taking the white man's burden to civilise the so-called primitive people, mainly the colonized, by all means in his disposal.

Achebe has used proverbs to underline Umuofia-Igbo understanding of their cosmos. They are the spiritual and moral compass used to navigate the people's social political and economic domains. Rutere and Samjumi (2011) aver that "[A] proverb is a pithy and witty expression whose acceptance increases through proper and frequent use in the society. A proverb expresses truth on the one hand, while on the other, it encapsulates wisdom" (p.1). It is further argued that Achebe uses proverbs in his works to reiterate his people's love of values and ideas underlined in the proverbs, which established some unity of purpose in the society.

Consequently, Gogoi (2017) asserts that "[Achebe] gives expression to the philosophy of the Igbo world through the proverbs and myths. He shows that the community could exist as a unified entity because of their firm adherence to the values and ideals embedded in their proverbs and other aphoristic

structures" (p.53). Nevertheless, the overall essence of the proverbs in most societies was to ensure that social harmony prevailed at all times. Consequently, it is imperative to examine a few Umuofia-Igbo proverbs that inculcated wisdom and by extension the philosophy of taking caution in any endeavour that would further explain their understanding of intrusive colonialism and its pragmatic approach to reach out to them long before the undermining of their culture and the subsequent conquest and marginalisation.

To explain the influx of Umuofia-Igbo people to the new religion, Achebe explains the power of the colonialism in winning the souls of the people before subduing them to Western culture. The bad practices of Umuofia-Igbo like the killing of the twins and innocent children like Ikemefuna among other excesses drove Nwoye and others to embrace the new religion; hence, it can be understood that "A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing". The white man's offer of asylum to the troubled souls is pragmatic because his ultimate goal is to undermine the Umuofia-Igbo culture. And Obierika's conversation with Okonkwo about the people, including Okonkwo's son Nwoye who are breaking ranks and joining the new religion is telling.

"The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart" (TFA, pp.124-125).

The center can no longer hold things together, and in the same vein, Umuofia-Igbo society is no longer the same after the colonial invasion, conquest and subjugation. Precisely, things have fallen apart for this once proud and robust society. The society has to be quick and pragmatic in dealing with the white man before it is too late, argues Okika in the meeting called to chart way forward after the six elders are arrested and humiliated for demolishing Enoch's compound and the Church. Like Eneke Ntioba the bird, it has to be cautious since "[M]en have learnt to shoot without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twig." (TFA, p.144). Okika cites the aforementioned proverb and proceeds to add "[W]e must root this evil. And if our brothers take the side of the evil, we must root them out too. And we must do it now. We must bale this water [white men and their sympathisers] now that it is only ankle-deep...". Unfortunately, these words mislead Okonkwo to kill the court messenger rashly and falsely assumes Umuofia will engage in full-blown war against the offending white man.

Arguably, Africa's colonisation took a similar trajectory as Umuofia Igbo from the outset of colonisation, when explorers cum missionaries came to Africa to survey the land and report back home. Using the pretext of stopping the slave trade and alternatively spread Christianity, the missionaries gave an account of the horrific trade and primitive practices of the natives. The two approaches were incompatible to their life, especially Christianity. However, at close analysis, the pioneer Europeans in Africa had ulterior motives for surveying Africa and later inviting other fellow Europeans to exploit it. Like locusts in TFA, they came in numbers as traders and farmers and would need security by inviting the administrators to protect them. As it is waggishly put, the missionaries lured the natives to close their eyes for prayers, and when they opened them at the closure of prayers, they found new developments. The colonial flag had been hoisted to stamp authority and worse still their land had been taken. The natives now would be required to work in that land and pay the taxes to that administrator. The prophecy of European's arrival in Africa has been cited in many literary texts - for instance, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o leans on Mugo wa Kibiro's prophesy in *The River Between* where the colonisers are referred to as butterflies and their railway line, an exploitation instrument as 'iron snake'. As a phallic symbol, the railway line was to penetrate Africa's interior to exploit its resources. Further, David Rubandiri, in his poem "African Thunderstorm" equates colonial encroachment to Africa to the turbulent wind that tosses things anyhow and causes disturbance, confusion and anxiety to African people.

Examples of missionaries who traversed Africa, sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society are the famous David Livingstone, a Scot medical doctor who surveyed East and Central Africa before its colonisation. Henry Morton Stanley sent to Africa by the same society to look for the 'lost' David Livingstone. Stanley is indicted by David Rubadiri in the poem "Stanley Meets Mutesa" for ushering colonization in the Buganda Kingdom. For West Africa, the explorer Mugo Park would lay false claim to be the 'first man' to discover River Niger as if Africans who lived along that river had never seen it. A claim like this one was racist and demeaning to Africans. Further, it would justify the Eurocentric statement that Africa was a dark continent, and nothing was going on in the heart of darkness, as Joseph Conrad sensationally claimed in his book with a similar title. The likes of Conrad believed that in Africa, there were only inter-tribal wars. Still, history has proved that these wars were instigated and sponsored by white men as underlined in the colonial adventure in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, and that consistently there was heavy resistance like the *Maji Maji* and the *Hehe* uprisings and the *Mau Mau* resistance among many others.

Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) reiterated the urgent need to dismantle the evil and nefarious colonialism. He urged: “[N]ow, comrades, now is the time to change sides. We must shake off the great mantle of the night, which enveloped us and reach for the light. The new day which is dawning must find us determined, enlightened and resolute” (p.235). French colonialism had racially discriminated, exploited, impoverished and dehumanized Algerians socially, politically, and economically.

Further, colonialism in whatever form is indicted for robbing Africa of its resources. Walter Rodney describes, colonialism as a “one-armed bandit” which significantly and notoriously underdeveloped Africa; hence, any colonial catering of African interests, if any ever existed, was purely accidental (quoted in Omoregie 1-2) or an afterthought. In Kenya, women were highly humiliated during the *Mau Mau* period especially by Home Guards or African colonial police. Rutere (2011) observes that women “were also sexually, physically, and psychologically abused during colonialism. The colonial terror unleashed on women, especially during *Mau Mau* was devastating” (p.108) In the same vein Caroline Elkins, regrets that “[S]ometimes the Home guards took the initiative, squeezing and mutilating women’s breasts with pliers, pushing vermin and rifles into their vaginas, and forcing them to run naked around the inside of the post while carrying buckets of excrement on their heads. The women were also raped, often by several men, and this bizarre behaviour among many other misdeeds was condoned” (Elkins, 244).

### **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that Achebe is an icon of African literature, and he distinguished himself writing to indict colonialism and neocolonialism for undermining African society. His groundbreaking novel, *Things Fall Apart* catapulted him to fame, especially in the literary world using this novel to unveil the hidden atrocities of colonization in the destabilization of the African socio-cultural fabric. The text gives an incisive historical and scholarly portrayal of Igbo society in precolonial and colonial periods. In most part, the portraiture is through Okwonko the protagonist and a representative of the Umuofia clan, a subset of Igbo society. Historicism theory is used as an ideological praxis to evaluate Achebe’s message in the text. It is established that colonialism was a devastating and incapacitating experience in Africa and beyond. The invasion, conquest and colonisation of Umuofia-Igbo society is a similar process of colonising Africa; hence, the argument that in *TFA* there is a double-edged colonisation symbolism. Arguably, colonialism was racist, exploitative, impoverishing and dehumanizing in Africa and beyond. This is the reason why it was countered

through numerous revolutions in many regions of Africa. The way forward is to note that, all in all, colonialism invaded, lured, conquered, subdued and marginalised Africa. The colonizer's ultimate effect was the destruction of African society's social, political and economic fabric. Achebe foregrounds and unapologetically condemns this colonial intrusion in most part in *TFA*. Colonialism would later become the neocolonialism perpetuated by former colonial masters in alliance with the governing African elite in postcolonial Africa. Unfortunately, this unholy alliance has continued to wreck with impunity the social, political and economic domains in Africa.

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