

# Disintegration of Society and Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*

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**Abstract:** Chinua Achebe's novels record a full-blown, civilized human society with its strong bonds of community and in this dissertation I will be considering two of his novels; *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow Of God* to show how the European colonial power and their so called modern Christianity create chaos, confusion, catastrophe, and complete fragmentation in the pattern of the traditional Igbo culture, religion, history, and society in the name of pacification.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Alienation, Disintegration, Igbo, Society, Culture, Religion, Conflict.

## Introduction:

The dominant theme of the major African writers has been an assessment of the impact of Africa's contact with the West. Both the social and cultural implications of this contact remained the major concern of most African writers. Characteristically this meeting of Africa and Europe has been presented as a conflict. As we see in the works of Chinua Achebe, one of the Africa's leading novelists. He has been the recipient of numerous honors from different parts of the world, including over twenty honorary doctorates from universities in Britain, the United States, Canada and Nigeria. He received the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize in 1959 for his contribution to African literature, the Nigerian National Trophy for literature in 1960, the Jack Campbell-New Statesman award, Nigeria's highest award for intellectual achievement and so on. Achebe's influence on his fellow Nigerian writers is considerable. According to C.L Innes, Achebe's influence is most apparent on younger Igbo writers such as Nkem Nwankwo, John Munonye, Chukwuemeke Ike, and Flora Nwapa. These writers follow Achebe in "choosing for their settings traditional or changing rural communities, exploring the theme of the conflict between old and new values." (Chinua Achebe, 19)

Achebe has written five novels: *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of Savannah* (1987). Achebe's greatness as a writer lies in his ability to embody the political, historical, as well as cultural sensibilities of his people. His first novel *Things Fall Apart* is the most celebrated work. Over five million copies of the book have been sold, and it has been translated into thirty languages. It deals with the pre-colonial society of eastern Nigeria. It examines traditional Igbo society prior to and at the point of its confrontation with European colonialism. The same theme of the clash between the traditional society and (modern) European society is continued in Achebe's second novel *No Longer at Ease* and third novel *Arrow of God*. And his last two novels, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* are mainly concerned with contemporary domestic issues of corruption, despotism, and the natural outcome of colonialism in the modern nation of Nigeria.

Helen Tiffin feels that the "conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" is integral to the post-colonial novel (*The Empire Writes Back*, 9). One of the most debilitating effects that the British had on other nations during their expansionist period was the engendering of alienation in the people of those nations. When the British arrived they brought with them new customs, a new religion, and new laws; everything that defined the indigenous people as a society was to be swept away in favor of the new order. The British tried to impose their own values and judgments on the locals and this resulted in their being cut off from their own history, religion and customs, leaving them alienated from everything that made them distinct as a culture.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I have discussed the traditional Igbo culture and society and in the second chapter I have chosen to begin my investigation with the novel *Things Fall Apart*. What becomes clear from reading this novel is that the pre-colonial era of eastern Nigeria had vibrant communities and the societies were religious and very cultural in their own way. They had political and social institutions which provided the required guidance in smooth running of their affairs. These institutions were threatened and later destroyed with the arrival of Whites and Christianity. The destruction of such societies is personified by the death of the protagonist Okonkwo, who hangs himself because he cannot see any chance of coexisting with European intruders. The title of the novel is taken from Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" in which the poet expresses his view on the course of history and Christianity.

In the third chapter I will be considering *Arrow of God* in which Achebe again went back to the past to capture, both the traditional Igbo society of Nigeria and the Western machinations in the 1920s, to show how they determined the destiny of Africa. In that sense, the novel became the direct successor to his first novel *Things Fall Apart* because it took up the threads of African history from where *Things Fall Apart* had dropped them; and in many ways, it gradually magnified the major issues which were introduced in the first novel.

## Igbo culture and society:

In every society, there are traditions and practices which the people hold not as a mark of their identity but which are like bonds that bind them together. In this respect the Igbos are not left out. And needless to say that without these practices the people will lose their identity which is the very essence of a community. It is in this regard that Kenalemang exerts that without culture Igbo society is as good as dead. (*Things Fall Apart: An Analysis of Pre and Post-Colonial Igbo Society*, 19.)

The word "Igbo" seems to have no meaning other than the name for the people and their language. G.T Basden surmises that it is "probably an abbreviation of a longer name connected with an ancestor long since forgotten" (*NigerIbos*, xi). Igbo customs and traditions are based on its religion and cultural history. The Igbo are identified by subgroups as the Nri, Awka, Aro, Orlu, Igala or Owerri Igbo. These are the names of their towns or clans. In his works, Chinua Achebe seeks to portray the ways of life of the Igbo authentically. His objective approach to the telling of the story of his people affords one the opportunity to see the Igbo from the inside. Through Achebe's use of language, it is apparent how unique the Igbo's culture is. By using traditional Igbo words, folktales, and songs into English sentences, the author shows us that African languages are comprehensible. Achebe is noted for his inclusion of proverbs from Igbo oral culture into his writing:

"The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did."(TFA, 17)

In the Igbo society, a man is known for his own achievement and activeness. As a result, material wealth and masculinity, especially bravery, are highly honored by the society. It is understandable, then, that social class is also defined by the combination of material possessions and masculinity or bravery. To be specific, what social class a person belongs to is determined by the number of barns of yams and wives he has, and by his behavior in war. Those who are most masculine and possess the most material wealth acquire the most titles in the society. The more titles one has, the more respect one will win, the more advantages one will enjoy over others. To those who cannot make ends meet or are "feminine", the Igbo community shows little sympathy and less patience. As we see , men who have not shown their valor in war or taken any titles, like Okonkwo's father, Unoka, are also called "agbala", the another name for woman. This is because they cannot demonstrate the existence of the male principle in their lives. Every individual Igbo should balance both the male and female principles in themselves to maintain their positions in the society.

The Igbo community is egalitarian and democratic. It proclaims that a man is "judged according to his worth and not according to the worth o f his father" (TFA, 6). Actually, this is the case with Okonkwo, whom the Igbo society embraces with receptiveness and understanding. He is a very impressive masculine character. In the beginning of the novel he is introduced as a man of wealth and great success, having three wives. When he was still young, he had won the fame as the greatest wrestler around the nine villages. So it proofs his masculinity and manliness. He is no doubt not judged by his family or his father Unoka, but by his own ability and worth. Thus, it appears that in the Igbo community, people do have equal opportunities. If one works hard to produce enough yams for his household, one will gain respect, take titles, and may even become a lord of the clan. However, the fact that cannot be neglected is that these privileges are not extended to every member of the Igbo community. The women are at the bottom of this hierarchical society. The value judgments in Igbo society are based on a male-female principle. Male is good and female is evil. The best way to discourage a man is to call him a woman. When a man suits a woman, he negotiates a bride price using "a small bundle of short broomsticks", showing that women are only treated as properties and commodities in Igbo society. Even crops in Igbo society are divided by such norms: women's crops are coco-yams, beans and cassava; the king of crops is yam, which stands for manliness (TFA, 25, 34, 35). So, balancing of the male and female principle is reflected in Igbo society. If the social status of women is very low or even if they are at the bottom of the Igbo community, there are others who even do not belong to any social group. They are actually "classless." There are the social outcasts, or osu, whose social status is no more than that of a slave. They are totally rejected by and cut off from the regular life of the community. As the novel *Things Fall Apart* reveals the plight o f an osu thus:

"He [Osu] was a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart-a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by the free-born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste-long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was taboo to him. An osu could not attend an assembly o f the free-born, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any o f the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the Evil Forest." (TFA, 111)

The Igbo society is also rooted in religion. It believes in Chukwu, the supreme god, and the minor gods and goddesses, such as 'chi' a man personal god. Again the goddess of earth, Ani, without whose blessing there is no harvest. "The Feast of the New Yam" for instance, is held to give thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Every year the Igbo people celebrate the event before the harvest commences. On the occasion, a large number of people are fed with vegetables soup, fresh yam foo-foo and so on. They had a sharp sense of community; 'The Week of Peace' comes at the end of the carefree season and before the harvest and planting season. During the 'Week of Peace' one has to live in complete peace no matter what the circumstances. Many a superstition runs through the Igbo society as we observe regarding the twin-born babies in *Things Fall Apart*. They believe that it is a sign of evil omen. For this reason, they cast away the twins in the 'Evil Forest' as soon as they are born. Similarly Okonkwo's father's ailment invites the same consequences and he is not buried with the traditional respect and rituals because a diseased person in the society is left in the forest to die. The oracles and their chief priests, who are in the position to interpret religious doctrines, belong to the ruling class. The oracles are special agencies through which the wishes of the gods are made known to the public. They have tremendous power, which includes deciding when a war is to be waged against neighboring clans. So absolute is the belief in the inscrutability of the gods that no one dares to question their authority as pronounced by the priests, even if this means following an order to throw away one's twin babies or sacrifice one's own son.

### Social and cultural alienation in *Things Fall Apart*:

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is more than the tragedy of a traditional hero's downfall. It is a story about African tradition and African dignity, depicted through the life of the Igbo people. The protagonist Okonkwo is an Igbo farmer. He is wealthy, successful, and possesses a great deal of personal power and respect. As far as the village of Umuofia is concerned, Okonkwo is in full control of his life and of his personal world, and he is a man to be looked up to. However, this society also has certain weaknesses, one of which is that it is structured by a social class. Even though there is no king or queen at the top of this social class as in European social systems, the whole Igbo society is divided into different groups with quite different social and political positions.

The Igbo society is also rooted in religion. It believes in Chukwu, the supreme god, and his minor gods, such as the goddess of earth, Ani, without whose blessing there is no harvest. Thus, the oracles and their chief priests, who are in the position to interpret religious doctrines, belong to the ruling class. The oracles are special to the people of Umuofia. The chief priests prophesy when the spirits of gods are upon them. They have tremendous power, which includes deciding when a war is to be waged against neighboring clans. They also offer consultations to the people of the community. So absolute is the belief in the inscrutability of the gods that no one dares to question their authority as pronounced by the priests, even if this means following an order to throw away one's twin babies or sacrifice one's own son. The social class in the Igbo community is defined by the combination of material possessions and masculinity or bravery. To be specific, what social class a person belongs to is determined by the number of barns of yams, titles and waves he has, and by his behavior in war. The more titles one has, the more respect one will won, and the more advantages one will enjoy over others. To those who cannot make ends meet or are "feminine" the Igbo community shows little sympathy and less patience to them. Unoka, Okonkwo's father, for instance, is considered a total failure partly because he is poor, as his wife and children do not have enough to eat, and partly because he is a coward who "was never happy when it came to wars... and could not bear the sight of blood" (5). Thus, despite the fact that Unoka is an excellent musician and eloquent speaker, he is not accepted by Igbo society. Okoye, Unoka's friend, also a musician, is respected by the community, not because he is a musician, but because he has a large barn full of yams, and has three wives. Thus, a person like Unoka who has real talent as a musician, but no material achievement actually has no status in the society. In contrast, the titled people of Umuofia, such as Nwakibie, "who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children...and had taken the highest but one title which a man could take in the clan" (14). Ezeudu, the great and fearless warrior in Umuofia is "accorded great respect in all the clan" (40). A comparison between Unoka's death and that of Ezeudu highlights the way the society appraises their people of different social status. Unoka is an ill-fated man. He does not even have a grave, for

"he died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess. When a man was afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs he was not allowed to die in the house. He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die...Such was Unoka's fate."(13)

As for Ezeudu's death, the society's response is totally different:

"Ezeudu was a great man, and so all the clan was at his funeral. The ancient drums of death beat, guns and cannon were fired, and men dashed about in frenzy, cutting down every tree or animal they saw, jumping over walls and dancing on the roof. It was a warrior's funeral, and from morning till night warriors came and went in their age-groups. They all wore smoked raffia skirts and their bodies were painted with chalk and charcoal." (84-85)

In short, people with titles live affluent lives and enjoy great respect. But with the arrival of the British this all begins to change. As the title of the novel suggests, this is the story of a world that is falling apart; Achebe is referring to both Okonkwo's personal world and to the Igbo culture as a whole; neither one lasts very long after the white men's arrival.

I choose to begin my investigation with this novel for two reasons: first, the novel chronicles the first effects of colonization and secondly, the alienation that it engenders in a culture and society. And Achebe makes clear use of these two types of alienation that I wish to discuss throughout his novel.

The novelist's intent in this novel is to demonstrate that the Igbo are a fully functional society. Rather than focusing on the differences between Western culture (or, for that matter, modern day Nigeria) and that of the Igbo. Achebe carefully draws his readers into the Igbo world and its rituals and customs from the first chapter of the novel:

"One day a neighbor called Okoye came in to see [Unoka]. He was reclining on a mud bed in his hut playing on the flute. He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk.

"I have kola," he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest.

"Thank you. He who brings the kola brings life..."

Okoye... took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe" (5)

This is a ritual which the reader will eventually come to accept as a matter of course whenever two of the Igbo meet; the sharing of the kola nut is as much a part of the Igbo way of life as shaking hands is in the West. Achebe is deliberately establishing the culture of Umuofia as complete and elaborate in its own right from the very beginning of the novel. Although the largest part of his readers will not understand obscure references to painted toes or the specifics of the New Yam Festival, these things speak for themselves. The Umuofians had a civilization of their own. The rituals and customs which play such a large part in the novel, brings the reader into this culture and make it seem real, vital, and complete in its own right; the absence of those rituals later in the novel heightens the reader's awareness of how the British have changed the Igbo way of life.

One of the first references to the white men's arrival we get when Okonkwo's friend Obierika casually visits the exiled Okonkwo in Mbanta. Obierika tells him that Abame, one of the Nine Villages, is "no more." Because the people of Abame killed a white man their village was attacked by "three white men and a band of other men," and the whole village was slaughtered on a market day. Okonkwo's reaction to the news is typical of a warrior: "They should have armed themselves with their guns and their machetes even when they went to market" (130). Two years after the news of Abame, Obierika also brings news about the arrival of missionaries to Umuofia through which the white man begins to make his presence felt:

"The arrival of the missionaries had caused a considerable stir in the village of Mbanta.

There were six of them and one was a white man. Stories about these strange men

had grown since one of them had been killed in Abame and his iron horse tied to the silk-cotton tree. And so everybody came to see the white man." (101)

The horror of the Abame incident lay deep inside the Igbo people. The annihilation of their neighboring town is felt very closely: it becomes an ultimate reference of what might happen to them if they behave "unwisely" in dealing with whites. And we see that how the missionaries ask from the Umuofians a piece of land to build their shrine and how they are granted a part of the "evil forest" with the hope that the white men will be destroyed by evil spirits. When none of the missionaries dies even after four consecutive days, the villagers are confounded; their faith in the traditional religion is weakened and soon the missionaries win three converts. There are others among the Umuofians whose beliefs are also shattered, but they are hesitant about accepting Christianity.

After hearing the news of the arrival of the whites, exiled Okonkwo perhaps sees the white man as an opportunity to strive again for the greatness that he almost had in the village of Umuofia. Okonkwo only stays to watch the missionaries in the hope that "it might come to chasing the men out of the village or whipping them" (103). But after his return from the exile, he deplores the changes in Umuofia. He thinks the people of Umuofia have all become "women," mainly because they have accepted the church and allowed their own people to convert to Christianity, and they also have allowed the white men to rule them. The white men have brought to Umuofia their own government along with the religion. Umuofia is no longer the same old place, and Okonkwo's return is not the glorious one he dreamed of during his exile:

"Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief.

He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart

and he mourned for the war like men of Umuofia, who had so  
unaccountably become soft like women." (168)

Division exists among the Igbo prior to the arrival of Whites and the missionaries, but it is heightened by their presence. The new religion attracts many members of Igbo society, mostly the efüiefu, "worthless, empty men" (101), but also Nwoye, Okonkwo's son. Nwoye had been "attracted to the new faith from the very first day," but he "kept it secret" out of "fear of his father" (106). These are examples of social isolation. The arrival of the white man magnifies the social isolation among the Igbo people in general, and between Okonkwo and his son in particular. Nwoye questions the value of the society and the authority and the strength of his father when he "had heard that twins were put in earthenware pots and thrown away in the forest, but he had never yet come across them. A vague chill had descended on him and his head had seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night, who passes an evil spirit on the way. Then something had given way inside him. It descended on him again, this feeling, when his father walked in, that night after killing Ikemefuna." (60). Ikemefuna's death also leads to Nwoye's estrangement from his father. With the coming of the church in the town, he finds an alternative in the new religion. He leaves his father, "never to return" and goes to see Mr. Kiaga, who is overjoyed at Nwoye's departure: "Blessed is he who forsakes his father and his mother for my sake" is his response. The social isolation grows even further when Nwoye decides that he will "return to his mother and his brothers and sisters and convert them to the new faith" (108).

The social isolation within Okonkwo's family is mirrored on a larger scale within Umuofia, and it too is heightened by the presence of the missionaries. There are many examples of social isolation in the novel after this point, both between the missionaries and the Igbo, and among the Igbo themselves. Admittedly, there are examples of social isolation before the British arrive; there are the *osu*, or outcasts, and there is Uhendu's reference to men who are "afraid of [their] next-door neighbours". After the introduction of the missionaries into the Igbo culture, social isolation begins to escalate dramatically.

As the months progress, the discord that develops between Nwoye and Okonkwo widens to include others in Mbanta. The Christian church grows stronger, and more people from the Nine Villages are converted until there is a clear division between the locals. At first the Igbo are not too worried, but this quickly begins to change: Three converts had gone into the village and boasted openly that all the gods were dead and impotent and that they were prepared to defy them by burning all their shrines. "Go and burn your mothers' genitals," said one of the priests. The men were seized and beaten until they streamed with blood. (110)

Okonkwo tries to encourage people to resist the whiteman's power. One of the converts, Enock, desecrates one of the egwugwus by lifting its mask, which is considered one of the greatest crimes a man can commit. Upon that incident, the Mother of the Spirits weeps "as if the very soul of the tribe wept [weeps] for a great evil that was [is] coming — its own death" (TFA, 171-72). Such evil had not happened in the history of Umuofia. And subsequently people destroy the church to pacify the spirit of the clan (175). Two days after the destruction of the church, the six leaders of Umuofia, including Okonkwo, are humiliated under the power of the District Commissioner. This humiliation of the native leaders shows their loss of authority. They were released after paying heavy fine. They call for a meeting of the clan to retaliate this assault to their cultural pride. The whole clan except the converts gathers on the village 'ilo'. While the village elders and lords of the clan were discussing the measures of resistance, the court messengers arrive there and ordered to close the meeting. Okonkwo takes this opportunity and beheads the head messenger, thinking that the villagers would follow him as usual. But the villagers let the other messengers flee. Okonkwo hears people murmuring why he has done that? He discerns total disintegration of the clan in such a cold reaction of his clansmen. He cannot reconcile with such a situation and hangs himself to a tree in his backyard. With Okonkwo's suicide disintegration in the traditional Igbo culture is complete.

### Cultural conflicts and social changes in *Arrow of God*:

In his third novel, *Arrow of God* (1964), Chinua Achebe goes back to an Igbo village setting. For the leading character, the author has given us an aged man named Ezeulu. He is the chief priest of Ulu, the most powerful of all the deities of the six villages of Umuaro. This chief priest performs the following roles: (a) he interprets to Umuaro the will of the god, (b) he performs the two most important rituals in the life of the villages—the festival of the Pumpkin leaves and that of the New Yam. The novel is concerned mainly with the deadly struggle of Ezeulu, who strives to preserve his authority as a spiritual leader against rival elements within his tribe and against the impending influence of colonial intrusion, both missionaries and political officers. The events of the novel revolve around the main character as he tries to play his role according to tradition which at times is also under attack.

*Arrow of God* therefore is primarily a novel of conflict. There is the conflict between the traditional authority and the British administration: there is conflict between traditional religion and Christianity: there is conflict between the villages: there is even conflict within Ezeulu as he tries to test the limit or validity of his power. And these conflicts lead to the destruction of the social order in the community (Umuaro). However, the conflicts are linked with colonialism which is at the root of the conflict.

Chief priest Ezeulu is responsible for safeguarding the traditions and rituals of the people for example Ezeulu watches each month for the new moon. He eats a sacred yam and beats the ogene to mark the beginning of each new month. Only the chief priest can name the day for the feast of the Pumpkin Leaves or for the New Yam Feast which is the yam harvest. Ezeulu considers himself merely a watchman for Ulu. The novel begins with a flashback to explain a disagreement between Ezeulu and Nwaka five years before. Umuaro as a community has been formed out of the fear of slavery-attack. Uniting six villages together was necessary to ensure their survival, and yet it became a source of bitterness for the ambitious leaders of every other clan. For instance, Nwaka from Umunneora and its priest, Ezidemili, are the chief political rivals of Ezeulu. Ulu's priest warns that Ulu will not fight an unjust war. The war is unjust and will be lost if the land was originally Okperi's because "the earth deity is generally conceived as favoring the people who originally occupied the land". According to Ezeulu, "my father said this to me that when our village first came here to live the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi who gave us a piece of their land to live in" (AOG, 17). But Umuaro wages war against Okperi claiming the possession of some part of the land, the political rivalry between Nwaka and Ezeulu becomes so obvious that their different opinions divide the people of Umuaro. Eventually Nwaka's opinion dominates the public mind and war breaks out. After four days, the war ends abruptly when the British get involved. Captain T.K.Winterbottom, the District Officer stops the war and breaks all the guns in Okperi and Umuaro. The European presence among them is now a reality. In *Things Fall Apart* the Europeans are resisted fiercely whereas in *Arrow of God* the villagers realize that they must come to terms with the British rule which is both powerful and permanent. The Abame incident which appeared in the first novel is also echoed throughout *Arrow of God* as a powerful metaphor for the horror of white men:

"The next day, Afro, saw the war brought to a sudden close. The white man, Wintabota, brought soldiers to Umuaro and stopped it. The story of what these soldiers did in Abame was still told

with fear, and so Umuaro made no effort to resist but laid down their arms." (31)

The white man, Winterbottom, also solves the problem which ignites the war; he gives the disputed land to Okperi. He also orders soldiers to break all the guns in Umuaro. Breaking the guns of the men of Umuaro is highly symbolic as it symbolizes that the Whites have taken away the manhood of Umuaro. Ezeulu was bitter about division among the six villages and later he speaks the truth to the white man and testifies against his people about land dispute with Okperi. And thereby he impresses Captain Winterbottom with his honesty. Ezeulu on his part was also impressed with Captain Winterbottom. All of this are told in flashback and foreshadow the future conflict between Ezeulu and his people which will destruct the community.

Five years pass and the life in Umuaro is back to normal. The Christian missionaries have entered the area and they have already made deep impact on the villagers. They have converted several natives to Christianity. The missionaries try to prove that the old and traditional African gods are ineffective. Umuaro comes into contact with the British administration. The new colonial rule begins to inform people about the advantage of the new system and modern education. Ezeulu wants to know how the white missionaries are converting the Africans. He sends one of his sons, Oduche to church to be his 'eyes' and 'ears'. But this disturbs his people who view such an action with alarm. Ezeulu, who has already established his friendship with Captain Winterbottom, had promised to send one of his sons to school. From Ezeulu's point of view the move is pragmatic and prudent. But to his people this is tantamount to a betrayal of the clan and its institutions. Ezeulu justifies himself by saying:

"The world is changing, I do not like it. But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba. When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied: "Men of today have learned to shoot without missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching." I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share -- My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the whiteman today will be saying had we known tomorrow." (144)

It is clear that Ezeulu is being broad-minded and realistic, realizes that the security of the future generations can only be ensured by those who have gone to school and learn the secrets of the whiteman. Oduche who had been reluctant to go to the Christian Missionary School finally agrees to go after his father talks to him. His progress in school is impressive. He falls under the tutelage of John Goodcountry whose teachings begin to have an impact on the young mind of Oduche. And by this time he has been baptized and named Peter, the rock on which the new Church is built. It is significant to note though with some irony, that if Oduche has become Peter, the rock, his immediate enemy becomes Ezeulu the chief priest who represents traditional religion which Peter must destroy. When Oduche becomes a committed Christian, he openly challenges the moderate, pragmatic and accommodating attitude of Moses Unachukwu. This open conflict precipitates chaos in Umuaro as Oduche is challenged by Moses to kill the sacred python. Oduche has already said, "It is not true that the Bible does not ask us to kill the serpent. Did not God tell Adam to crush the serpent which deceived his wife?" (AOG, 103) Oduche is determined to carry out the challenge. He decides to kill the sacred python by locking it in his box. The python would die of lack of air. The royal python is considered a very pious snake by the Igbo and they abominate the person who does anything to the snake. It is believed that the royal python belongs to the god Idemili. In this way the white Christian missionary tries to prove that their old gods are no more useful. When the high priest of Idemili comes to know that they have tried to kill the royal python, he sends a messenger to chide Ezeulu. The messenger also asks Ezeulu what he is going to do to purify his house, because his son was also involved in that terrible deed. Even though everyone in Umuaro knows that Oduche is responsible for this desecration of a sacred symbol Ezeulu does not punish his son. The incident further fuels the divide between Ezeulu and his enemies. Shortly after this Captain Winterbottom, the British Colonial representative in this part of Nigeria tries to make Ezeulu a Warrant Chief. The British attempts to instigate a policy of indirect rule which will allow the colonizers to rule the colonized people through appointed native chiefs. When messengers are sent to summon Ezeulu to Okperi, Winterbottom's headquarters, Ezeulu calls for a meeting of the men of Umuaro to discuss the issue. It is here that Nwaka openly challenges Ezeulu and accuses him of double dealing:

"But there is one thing which is not clear to me in this summons. Perhaps it is clear to others; if so someone should explain it to me. Ezeulu has told us that the white ruler has asked him to go to Okperi. Now it is not clear to me whether it is wrong for a man to ask his friend to visit him. When we have a feast do we not send for our friends in other clans to come and share it with us? And do they not also ask us to their celebrations? The whiteman is Ezeulu's friend and has sent for him. What is so strange about that? He did not send for the priest of Idemili? He did not send for the priest of Eru; he did not send for the priest of Udo nor did he ask the priest of Ogwugwu to come and see him. Does he want the white man to be his friend only by word of mouth? It seems to me that Ezeulu has shaken hands with a man of white body."(143)

The implication of this speech is that Ezeulu is solely responsible for the consequences of his friendship with the whiteman whose ultimate goal is the conquest of Umuofia. The result is that Ezeulu's position in the affairs of his society becomes shaky. His clansmen see him as undermining the basis of their traditional society: first by befriending a whiteman who symbolizes the forces which are destroying their society, second by sending his son to Christian Missionary School whose sole purpose is to destroy traditional religion. But just as Ezeulu rejects the white government's offer to be a Paramount Chief, it also causes the downfall of the Igbo culture in another way, because he was thrown in jail for his act of refusal, which was an 'offence' in the eyes of the British. Thus, Ezeulu is detained in a prison for four days at Okperi. Clarke and Winterbottom are under the impression that they are elevating Ezeulu from lower to a higher stage. They do not know that for Ezeulu, Ulu is the most valuable thing in his life and that his world-view is oriented on spiritualism. He cannot be false to his god. Thus when Clarke proposes through an interpreter, that he should become the Warrant Chief of Umuaro, Ezeulu replies: "Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief,

except Ulu"(196). Clarke cannot comprehend that Ezeulu is not merely a priest: he represent a way of life, political, social, religious and cultural. And he is detained for twenty eight days more to learn "to co-operate with the Administration" (268). During this time period Ezeulu misses announcing the new moon and eating the yams for two new moons. In this he sees his own and Ulu's revenge upon Umwaro for its lack of faith—he must announce the harvest two months late when the yams will have spoiled. The people of Umwaro regard Ezeulu as their enemy when he refuses to break tradition and eat the two remaining yams and announce the harvest, yet they are afraid to harvest without the official announcement—hunger and unrest grow. The Christian church invites a yam offering to its god who, it promises, will defend the people from Ulu. Towards the end, he views life as being bleak and terrifying. He cannot face the disintegration of his society. He is spared this humiliation by madness. We have experienced a very wise and pragmatic man losing touch with reality because of the pressures from a changing society.

## **Conclusion:**

*Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are the two novels through which Chinua Achebe portrays the beginnings of the colonial process, and details the cultural and social alienation. These novels depict life in rural setting before the coming of European influence, and the conflict that emerged from the coming together of the two cultures: traditional African culture and the (modern) European culture. Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* embodies Igbo masculinity, just as Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* embodies Igbo spirituality. Both novels are tragic in the sense that the protagonists' downfall symbolizes the disintegration of traditional Africa and its spirit as the result of British colonial incursions.

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