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AFRICAN SOCIETY AS SEEN IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS*  
*FALL APART* AND KAAKYIRE AKOSOMO NYANTAKYI'S  
*ANCESTRAL SACRIFICE*

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## **Dédicace**

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## **Abstract**

Colonization took over the resources, labor, and our ways of living in the colonial African territories, and imposed socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures on the Africans. The effects of colonialism do not happen only in the real life but also in written fiction and are also shown in motion picture. These effects are clearly depicted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi's *Ancestral sacrifice* which present to us a close and real picture of the past and present African life with all aspects of life with immediacy and force.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*I plead sickness*

*I am an orphan,*

*I am diseased with all the giant*

*Diseases of society,*

*Crippled by the cancer*

*Of Uhuru*

*Far worse than*

*The yaws of*

*Colonialism,*

*The wall of hopelessness*

*Surround me completely,*

*There are no windows*

*To let in the air*

*Of hope!<sup>1</sup>*

Okotp'Bitek wrote this eternal verse to express his disgust about the externally-driven solutions which matched the internal inefficiencies to hold up the development of his dear continent and reverse to the hope of independence. Gone are the days when the shades of colonialism were the unending preoccupation of Africans, especially those living on the black

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<sup>1</sup>Okotp'Bitek, *Song of Prisoner*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House (1971) p.50.

continent. They have faced issues in ways that not only explain how indigenous cultures are absorbed by Western standards but how limited in vision their leaders have been.

Again, there is usually a high level of economic disparity between the governing class and the citizenry as the former often appropriate to themselves the resources of the State. Through his book *African Social and Political Philosophy*, Okolo B. Chukwudum has pointed out that:

Africa remains comparatively the less developed of all the continents in terms of production and sustenance of critically significant social goods such as physical infrastructure, telecommunication facilities, food supply, electricity, medical and health services, education, shelter, employment and other vital materials for human and personal and social change.<sup>1</sup>

The above quote depicts in clear terms the pitiable and dismal condition of Africa. She has been subjected to various forms of naked slavery, exploitation, colonization and neo-colonization in the last fifty years or so. The emergence of a greedy, selfish and corrupt elite ruling class at independence has created another problem of development for African countries.

Africa was the cradle to great civilizations which predated most other civilizations. But like the history of other civilizations, they declined mostly without successor civilizations. Unfortunately, the recuperation process from the declined civilizations was stopped by the worst international abuse of human right in human history. Thus Africa lost humanity and they were massively exported to the other continents through the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. This trade was that of exporting women and men in their prime from the continent. That was the greatest displacement of human resource in the history of humanity and its effect was a human resource gap and deficit. Human capital was therefore not only short in quantity but also in quality resulting first in retardation and later in retrogression of

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<sup>1</sup>Chukwudum, Okolo B., *African Social and Political Philosophy*, Nsukka, Fulladu Publishing Company (1993). p. 103.

African development. In “Art in a Society in Transition”, an article written by the prominent Ghanaian Professor of literature Kofi Anyidoho, he observed that:

Africa is a homeland that history has often denied and contemporary reality is constantly transforming into a quicksand; a land reputed to be among the best endowed in both human and natural resources and yet much better known worldwide for its proverbial condition of poverty. Africa the birthplace of humanity and human civilization now strangely transformed into expanding graveyards and battlefields for the enactment of some of the contemporary world's worst human tragedies.<sup>1</sup>

It is an address to denounce that the African continent , day in and day out, is racked by disasters, afflictions, macro-economic crisis and dysfunctions, debt overhung, corruption, high level of illiteracy, squalor, disease, hunger and other negative and destabilizing conditions thrown up by imperialism in conjunction with the unpatriotic ruling class who receives their development instructions from the West. And they have failed terribly in addressing the ravaging socio-political and economic problems that have surrounded it.

If literature is a reflection of society, then, it gives shape, direction, and even area of concern by the social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the bloody background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background<sup>2</sup>.

Apart from Ngugi waThiog'o, other African writers namely Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi see a writer as a sensitive voice in their society. He represents the voice of the voiceless and it is literature that serves as the medium of his expression. It is non-existent to discuss literature without making reference to society.

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<sup>1</sup>Anyidoho, Kofi, *Art in a Society in Transition*, African Quarterly on the Arts, Vol11 N°4,(1999) p.76.

<sup>2</sup> *Homecoming*, quoted in Cook and Okenimkpe: *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His writings*: London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, (1983) p.19.

Through *A Theory of literature*, a book by René Welleck and Austin Warren who stress the very close relationship between literature and society:

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation. Such traditional literary devices as symbolism and metre are social in their very nature. They are conventions and norms which could have arisen only in society. But, furthermore, literature 'represents' 'life'; and 'life' is, in a large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary 'imitation'. The poet [the writer] himself is a member of society, possessed of a specific social status: he receives some degree of social recognition and reward; he addresses an audience however hypothetical. Indeed, literature has usually arisen in close connexion with particular social institutions; and in primitive society we may even be unable to distinguish poetry from ritual, magic, work, or play. Literature also has social function, or 'use', which cannot be purely individual.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, in the early post-independence period, several poets, playwrights and novelists sought to consolidate national unity and consciousness by producing works which celebrated the past as the announcer of a glorious future. Through *Things Fall Apart* which was published before the independence of Nigeria and *Arrow of God*, Chinua Achebe demonstrates an example of this among other African writers. The celebrations of the past was followed by critical analyses of the present, as other African writers produced unsentimental portrayals of social and other problems which became manifest quite early after the attainment of independence. In Ghana, Ayi kwei Armah wrote *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born*. But as the euphoria of independence continued to wear off and the peculiar problems of many countries in the continent became difficult to solve, many African writers felt the need to add socially relevant issues to their works by giving attention to the threats and challenges of the societies. Chinua Achebe and Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi focused on moral and social corruption, and the tension between traditional and modern modes of living in *No Longer at Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Ancestral Sacrifice*. Other writers dealt with the growing scourge of prostitution, the conflict between tradition and modernity, and the negative effects of western religion, the trauma of the anti-colonial struggle and its aftermath, as well as the failure, incompetence and corruption of post-independence.

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<sup>1</sup>Welleck, René and Warren, Austin, *A theory of Literature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books (1982) p.94.

In the pre-independence era and the sixties, issues of colonialism were pointed out. In more recent times, contemporary realities are dealt with in African fiction- the complicated issues of corruption, regional chauvinism, leadership crises and autocratic rule. Ernest Emenyonu approves of this notion through his work *Literature and National Consciousness: Calabar Studies in African Literature* when he points out that:

African literature [and] indeed the literature of black civilisation in modern times has moved...to the literature of assertion and emancipation which also includes self-examination. David Carroll<sup>1</sup> claims that African writers are deeply engaged in re-educating society. This education is made necessary by the long period of colonialism and its attendant effects which have significantly eroded their continent's traditional humanistic values. Thus, he explains, African writers have employed literature in one of its traditional roles to explore and open up new or neglected areas of experience by clearing the ground of prejudice and preconception.<sup>1</sup>

An African artifact that does not succeed in addressing issues of socio-political or historical significance is considered to be out of the range of African aesthetics. Chinua Achebe also repeats this view through *Hopes and Impediments*, another piece of his works when saying:

Literature whether handed down by word of mouth or in print, gives us a second handle on reality, enabling us to encounter in the safe manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats to integrity that assail the psyche in the real life; and at the same time providing through the self- discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with the threats whether they are found within problematic and incoherent selves, or in the world around us.<sup>2</sup>

Through this quotation, Chinua Achebe tries to give the importance of literature on the African society, whether it is handed down orally or through books.

Wole Soyinka, another prominent Nigerian writer also is clear about the advantages to be derived from literature's unhidden concern with society in *Art, Dialogue and Outrage*, a book he has written. He says:

A literature that can concern itself with social experience becomes in a manner of perception, an ideological perception. It is this form of literature that holds the most

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<sup>1</sup>Emenyonu, Ernest, *Literature and National Consciousness: Calabar Studies in African Literature 4*, Ibadan, Heinemann (1989) p.22.

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, Chinua, *Hope and Impediments*, London, Heinemann (1988) p.117.

promise for the strengthening of the bond between experience and medium since it pradvnts the entrenchment of the habitual, the petrification of the imaginative function by that past or present reality upon which it reflects.<sup>1</sup>

Other critics have acknowledged the interrelationship between not only literature and society, but also between the writer, the critic and the characters represented in the literary works. The reality of the literary product is formed within the environment from which it grows and the aspects of society reflected in it.

I have chosen the topic mentioned below in order to reveal certain aspects of the African socio-political ways that existed before the arrival of the Europeans and how their arrival has affected our social and political organizations through the institutions that they set up to bring down our different ways of living or the social norms and values of the African continent.

The main objective of my research work which is entitled “*The effects of Colonial Institutions on the African Society as seen in Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart and kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi’s Ancestral Sacrifice*” is to show the development of the African continent from the points of view of certain African writers and critics. This will help to elude the past social African norms and how the advent of the Europeans through their “civilizing mission” has affected everything that it has touched in Africa like a dreaded disease. I will first examine the pre-colonial Africa with its institutions, then the colonial Africa, and in the end I will make a brief comparison to bring out the various ways the encounter with the foreigners has changed everything that we have established from time immemorial. So my aims to carry out this research work are as follows:

- To show the importance of the social, political and the economic institutions of the African continent before the arrival of the missionaries who paved the way for the other European missions which led to the colonization of the continent;

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<sup>1</sup>Soyinka,Wole, *Art, Dialogue and Outrage*, Ibadan, New Horn Press (1988) p. 64.

- To show that the advent of Christianity in Africa is just a lubricant to soften our traditional beliefs and to propel the foreign cultures into our everyday ways of living;
- To paint a vivid picture of colonialism in Africa through its institutions to bring down the political institutions that existed before they arrived.
- To depict the various ways colonialism has swept through our lives and its consequences on the development of the African continent.

So, in order to meet up with these expectations, my research work will base on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi's works, especially on *Ancestral Sacrifice*; writings that describe pre-colonial and colonial black Africa. But from time to time, I will refer to writings and critiques to rejuvenate my work by adding new ingredients to it in order to bring down the perception that too much have been said or written about the first and the second generation of African writers. Like his senior Chinua Achebe who is a native of Nigeria, Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi, a native from the Eastern part of Ghana, his work has attracted many people all over the world and this has given him a great esteem.

In addition to that, apart from the introduction, the literature review and the conclusion, this research work is subdivided into two main parts: Part One is entitled "*The Pre-Colonial African Society*". This part consists of three chapters which deal with the religious aspects of the pre-colonial African society; the social organization of the primitive society; and the political organization of the rudimentary Africa. Part Two which is entitled "*The Colonial African Society*" deals with sub-headings that also take into account the arrivals of the Missionaries in Sub-Saharan Africa and colonialism and its institutions set up by the conquerors, and a brief description of how the missionaries and colonialism have affected the various aspects of the social, political and economic life of the African society, especially the social values of the continent.

The main aim of this research work is to demonstrate that it is still possible to adopt new societal reforms in Africa. Africans must learn firstly their history because by learning about their past is a basic foundation that needs to be melted with the present status which will mold their future. This is in the view to guaranteeing a good development of the continent. As a matter of fact, another prospective result of this work is to show the importance of the impacts of colonial institutions on the African continent which have destabilized the strong foundation of the continent. The new societal reforms would have reshaped the continent if proper care has taken after the aftermath of colonialism.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Much work has been done on pre-colonial African societies in attempt to determine what modes of social organization developed there. What types of contradiction marked their evolution and what were their particular characteristics compared to the modern conception of African societies.

Africa during the post-colonial period had various routes to push forward its development agenda. The first was for Africans to embrace the era of socialist revolutions throughout the world and supplant colonial economies centrally planned and managed socialist states and economies.

The second option was to go back to the traditional or pre-capitalist forms of production and societal reform. This second option has been celebrated by most of the educated elites of the newly independent African countries who aspired to modernize the economies of these countries and create national political communities. This was because the very compositions of post-independent countries territorially and ethnically were artificial colonial constructions.

In his article “Colonial Boundaries of Africa: The Case of Ethiopia’s Boundary with Sudan”<sup>1</sup>, WondwosenTeshome argued that pre-colonial African boundaries and maps had nothing to do with historical societal formations and alliances of the indigenous African people. Thus, it would be territorially impossible to go back to pre-colonial institutions.

Contrary to what WondwosenTeshome has mentioned above, other African intellectuals like Cheikh Anta Diop and George Ayittey try to depict through their various works such as *L’Afrique Noire Pre-Coloniale*<sup>2</sup> by the former and *Indigenous African Institutions* by the latter, the various ways Africans could have been prosperous when they

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<sup>1</sup>Teshome, Wondwosen, Colonial Boundaries of Africa: The Case of Ethiopia’s Boundary with Sudan, *Ege Academic Review*. 9 (1) 2009: 341-343.

<sup>2</sup>Translated by Hanold Salem in English as *Precolonial Black Africa*, New York, Wesport, Laurence Hill & Company, 1986.

link the present status of the continent to that of the past. These books are an attempt to provide a better, modern understanding of Africa and its people- not for cultural rehabilitation or romanticism but for practical reasons.

Akinola Allagbe (2011) tries through his unpublished Maîtrise dissertation titled *Igbo Traditional Marriage in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Flora Nwapa's Efuru*, to point out the effect of colonization on the Igbo traditional marriage. He depicts through his dissertation, the various ways in which colonization has affected the traditional system of setting marriage and he has come out with certain solutions in solving that.

Mathieu D. Tossou (2015) also stipulates through his unpublished Maîtrise dissertation, *The Emergence of Christianity in Africa in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's The River Between*, that most of the studies about African civilization and literature have only been focused on the comparison of African traditions and Christianity and he focuses his research work on the elements from traditions and cultures which have eased the way to the emergence of Christianity in Africa and its impacts.

Akinola Allagbe and Mathieu Tossou are aware that there was conflict, but not as predominant as it was in the colonial era. What is happening now is a silent takeover of some traditional advent by the church. Traditional marriage ceremony has now changed to engagement. Child naming has been moved from the family house to the church. Puberty rituals are now a thing of the past, thanks to the church, and the result is the rampant teenage pregnancy. Mathieu Tossou makes it clear that the Christian-Traditional conflict is there and it will continue to be there as long the Christians continue to condemn custom, culture and tradition. Traditional Africa has not vanished; it is still the home of the real African People.

Africa has undergone a substantial change. Still, much mythology and misconception enshroud Africa and its people. An enduring myth claims that the pre-colonial Africa had no

viable institutions. Through this research work, I try to depict the indigenous systems of governance and other social institutions that existed in Sub-Saharan Africa before the arrival of the Europeans, with the colonial and post-colonial systems that were forced on the black continent and analyse the effects of these systems on Africa's inability to move forward.

It is my hope that this research work on black Africa is an enlightenment to Africans who wish that Africa must abandon the economic and other models of the West and build upon its own indigenous institutions in order to improve its prosperity.

**PART ONE: THE PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN SOCIETY**

The history of Africa is the story of the origins, political, economic and social organizations and the cultures and civilizations of Africans. In this chapter, I will briefly describe in various ways, the aspect of Africa before the coming of the Europeans' advent into Africa called "the Dark Continent" as it is mentioned in Joseph Conrad's controversial work, *Heart of Darkness*.

In "The Role of a Writer in a New Nation", an article in which Achebe states that his first priority is to inform the world that "African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless . . . , that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity"<sup>1</sup>. However, Achebe does not idealize the pre-colonial past, for he knows that it cannot survive unaltered in a modern world; instead, he encourages his readers to explore continuities with the past that can coexist with modern society.

Before colonization, Africa was a vast continent with little kingdoms and some of these kingdoms were turned into empires. All my research will be based on Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi's *Ancestral Sacrifice* and through it; I show the social, political and economic organization of Africa during that time. But, Nyantakyi's characters make use of folklore to make their arguments forceful and effective. These characters also help in criticism and mockery. They illustrate moral values. Accordingly, One-third of *Ancestral sacrifice* is dedicated to the painting of the way of life, the cults and traditions, beliefs and social rules of the villages of Asana and Suhyen before the arrival of the white man. Although the adventures related in the novel are fictional, they depict, to some extent, the real happenings of the time in Akanland. *Ancestral sacrifice* is history transformed into literature. Therefore it is worthwhile to take a closer look at its historical background and relevance, which is what I have dealt with in this paper, with a special focus on the role and effect of the Characters.

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<sup>1</sup>Chinua Achebe: "The Role of the Writer in the New Nation", Nigeria magazine. N°81(1964), p157.

Like Nyantakyi, Dr. Coovi Innocent Datondji, in his article “Literature and Development: How The Study of African Literature in Schools and Universities Can Help Social Development in African Countries” quoted Alioune Diop by making a very simple comment about Africa’s past and this may surely show that Africa had a glorious past but not always the best. Like other great civilizations, there is always something to write home about and these things were not always the shiniest ones, but both writers hope a shining future for their dear continent in the midst of other nations or continents.

“We Africans need to know the meaning of an ideal, to be able to choose it and believe in it freely but, out of a sense of personal necessity, to relate it to the world. We should occupy ourselves with present questions of world importance and, in common with others, ponder upon them, in order that we might one day find ourselves among the creators of new order.”<sup>1</sup>

Diop has come to the same affirmation of Nyantakyi’s perception of the African past. Again, Nyantakyi wanted to convey through his novel the beauty of Africa’s past. But, certain people advocate a return to pre-colonial values today and others have not hesitated to indicate that they do not intend to revive the past as it was, they want to integrate into modern life only what seems valuable from the past. Their goal is neither the traditional African nor the Black European, but the modern African. However, Nyantakyi does not idealize the pre-colonial past, for he knows that it cannot survive unaltered in a modern world; instead, he encourages his readers to explore continuities with the past that can coexist with modern society.

In *Ancestral sacrifice*, here again through his characters, Nyantakyi tries to depict the pre-colonial life on the western part of the black African continent. The aim is to show that the people of Africa had a social and political culture of their own before the arrival of the Europeans from their continent to the Dark Continent. Despite centuries of association with European Christians and Muslims, Africans have retained much of their cultural heritage. African societies had their own religious beliefs, social practices pertaining to all the stages of

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<sup>1</sup>qtd. In M.G. Cooke: *Modern Black Novelists*, p.23

life, and even festivals. Secondly, the so-called Dark Continent was composed of many political organizations before it came under the colonial rule. These included centralized states, non-centralized societies and theocracies. The theocratic societies are highly depicted in *Arrow of God*.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, most Africans were farmers. They usually lived in hamlets or villages composed of extended families and clans that we know as lineages. Depending on the ethnic group evolved, extended families and lineages were either patrilineal or matrilineal. Many Africans lived in stateless societies with no government other than that provided by extended families and lineages. In extended families, nuclear families or in some cases polygamous families acted as economic units. Elders in the extended family had great power over the economic and social lives of its members.

In the African villages, people used forced earth or mud to construct small houses, which were round or rectangular in shape, depending on local tradition. The houses usually had thatched roofs, or, sometimes in the forest, they had palm roofs. Most people reared animals in their houses as supplement for their farming product.

“Asana was a small but very popular village with a population of about one thousand. Few of the houses at Asana were built of blocks, covered with roofs that bounced signals from the sun, and furnished with modern facilities. Some of these houses, like the Catholic Church, the mission house, the school, and Mrs. Little’s house, could be seen through the nim trees which lined the main road that snaked its way from Suhyen to the village. The palace and the Stool-House stood in the centre of the village. They were built of bricks and iron sheets that were purchased out of the sale of Stool land. The rest were built of river mud beaten into small rectangular shapes. Bamboo poles served in the place of iron rods for strength, and raffia leaves woven together in mats roofed the buildings. Unlike many villages’ streets, the streets at Asana were wide and well kept. They connected to each other, and there were enough gutters for proper drainage.”<sup>1</sup>

As far as the culture is concerned, there are many people who think that the pre-colonial African societies were static with everybody following the tradition without any

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, Kaakyire A., *Ancestral sacrifice*, Chicago, Spectrum Press U.S.A (1998), p.12.

opposition. This may be a very wrong view because in African society through *Ancestral Sacrifice* moral values are always preached and can be termed as ‘do the right thing’.

The African past was led by slave trade and white domination, and the writers reconstruct the West African pre-colonial era through its religious and cultural practices.

## **Chapter One: The Social Organization**

The clan system is central to African social organization. Africans have always been, and still are organized into matrilineal and patrilineal clans. African lived in quarters and they are known by the houses in which they come from. In *Things Fall Apart*, the nine villages of Umuofia form Okonkwo's clan.

In the olden days each person was known by the clan or house to which he or she belonged. In the matrilineal system, each person belonged to the clan of his mother. On the other hand, in the patrilineal system a person belonged to the clan or the house of his father and should inherit there, even the throne. Members on the same clan or house think of themselves as brothers and sisters and they do not have the right to intermarry. This has been part of African culture. "This is our land, and we will do whatever it takes to preserve the culture. Whether it is good or it is bad, it is ours<sup>1</sup>". The people of Asana believe firmly through the above illustration that they must protect themselves from foreign influences which destroy the foundations of their community which hold them together.

### **1.1. The succession**

In African matrilineal society, political office and property is inherited through the female line. A typical example can be seen in the Akan system. In this system, if a man dies he is not succeeded by his son but by his brother or sister's son. But even in a matrilineal society respect for the father is great because it is believed that a child inherits his manly qualities from his father. I have even heard that in some tribes a man's children belong to his wife<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:15

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, Chinua, *Things Fall Apart*, Heinemann, African writers Series (1958), p. 52.

In patrilineal societies, on the other, inheritance is through the male line. Sons and daughters inherit their father's property as well as his political office. A brief description of succession in African traditional culture is given by Chinua Achebe through his novel *Things Fall Apart* during Okonkwo's exile and this is expressed through his uncle Uchendu.

"Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are only his mother's kinsmen. He does not belong here. He is an exile, condemned for seven years to live in a strange land. And so he bowed with grief. But there is just one question I would like to ask him. Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme?" We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to his mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka- "Mother is Supreme". Why is that?"<sup>1</sup>

The above illustration is a typical example of the importance of a woman in a patrilineal society which is best described through *Things Fall Apart*. But an account of the story of the Akan matrilineal system of inheritance is given through *Ancestral sacrifice*,

"It's a long story, but I'll make it brief, Obeng said. "The first chief of our village was said to have offended the gods and had become so sick everyone thought he would die. He was advised to pacify the gods with human sacrifice if he wanted to live. He had five wives and twenty-one children, so he consulted his wives and asked them to sacrifice one of his own children for his life, but by the next morning all the five wives had escaped with their children. It was his sister who offered her son for sacrifice to save the chief's life. So before he died, he ruled that his nephews, not his children, should inherit his wealth. That's how nephews came to inherit from uncle."<sup>2</sup>

This fictional account of the matrilineal system of the Akan people in southern Ghana is a tradition which is passed from one generation to another. The story happened longtime ago before the epoch of Obeng who is not prince but the heir to the throne because of the tradition. As the nephew of the king, he is even more entitled to the throne than the king's children.

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958:96.

<sup>2</sup> Nyantakyi, 1998: 40.

## **1.2. The family**

At the center of Africans' social life is the family. In Africa the family means not only the parents and the children but also a whole lineage. Among the Akan of Ghana, the family includes all the maternal relatives while in the patrilineal societies the family included all the members of the paternal lineage. It is important to note, however, that all groups recognize both paternal and maternal relatives as blood relations. Thus since the family in Africa embraces many more persons than in some other civilizations, it is legitimate to refer to members related by blood relations as the extended family and not the nuclear one.

The history of 'family' in *Things Fall Apart* is related to the solidification of blood and its members are related in one way or another. Each person is related to the smallest unit: house. This was a natural or a nuclear family, consisting of a man, his wife or wives, and their children. After the nuclear family, we have the lineage, composed of a number of houses. Finally a group of houses formed a village or a clan. During his exile, Okonkwo has taken his family of three wives and eleven children to seek refuge in his motherland<sup>1</sup>.

In the traditional system, Okonkwo, the husband, was usually the family head who lived in an obi, in which he received his guests. Each wife lived in her own house with their unmarried children. When adult males married, they raised their own homestead, usually in the vicinity of the lineage. Adult females, on the other hand, married into other villages, they became members of other families. There had to be no blood ties between marriage partners, a principle was strictly observed.

## **1.3. Marriage**

The idea of marriage was not only the union between the two families which should result in the production of children with a character that will not destroy the good name of the

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958:93.

boy's family, but terrible diseases should not also be introduced into his family. That is why a complete investigation is carried out by the boy's family to see whether the girl is suitable for their boy.

When the boy's parents were satisfied with the results of their investigation, they approached the girl's parents with the "knocking" or "notification" drink. But before this was accepted, the girl's family, in turn, thoroughly examined the background of the boy. The acceptance of the 'knocking fee' indicated that the prospective son-in-law had good qualities and that they came from a family with a good reputation.

The following statement has already illustrated what is mentioned. This is a part of conversation between Nana and Obeng in Nyantakyi's *Ancestral Sacrifice*:

"If I agree to marry you, you will go by the traditional way. If you tell the chief now, he will tell my grandmother. If she agrees, she will put pressure on me to agree. Which means I won't have the choice to say yes or no. I think you are rushing... and you want me to hurry with a decision to marry you?"<sup>1</sup>

Marriage is an important social institution in Africa. Indeed, an individual was regarded as worthless and incomplete if he remained unmarried and childless.

The literary illustration that best depicts the importance of a child in a marriage is the novel of Asare Konadu, *A Woman in Her Prime*. It describes the hardships that Pokuwaa, the heroine has to go through to get a child, even at the cost of her own life. Hers is not good plight to be in and no wonder that her husband himself,

"Had called on great Tano (the god) to make it possible for Pokuwaa to bear a child. The thought that she had divorced two earlier husbands because she couldn't have a child with them had come strongly to him then and he had vowed to do everything he could to help make the sacrifice a success. He was very anxious to save his own marriage with this woman."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 51.

<sup>2</sup>Konadu, Asare, *A Woman in Her Prime*, London, Heinemann Educational Books (1967) p.14

In pre-colonial days, African societies were polygamous ones. Men were free to marry as many women as they could afford to. In those days, marriage was not an affair between two individuals but a contract between members of the extended families. For instance, when a young man saw a girl whom he wanted to marry, he informed his parents, whose duty was to investigate the background of the prospective in-law's family. This was done to ensure that the girl came from a family with a good reputation, that no members of the family are not quarrelsome or thieves, and that there was no hereditary or communicable disease in the girl's family. In Chukwuemeka Ike's *Toads for Supper*, the hero's father says something to illustrate the importance or the role of the family in the marriage of their offspring:

“She is a girl everybody likes. I have not heard of her passing any elderly person on the road without saying a word of salutation. She has been brought up very well, and under our own eyes. As you know, she has lived with us many years of her life and your mother has taken every trouble to train her into respectful and obedient wife for her son. We know the history of her ancestors which is as good as ours; there has been no trace of madness, white skin or any other evil disease in their family. Her father and I have been friends from our youth. Her mother and your mother are very good friends. We believe that our children will live happily together.”<sup>1</sup>

The next stage was when representatives of the two extended families assembled and prescribed ‘fees’ in the form of money, drinks and a trunk filled with cloths and other valuables which were given to the bride's father by the bridegroom's. After this, representatives of both families met on an appointed day to finalize the marriage. The man paid the dowry and gave more presents including special money paid to the bride's mother for bringing up her daughter so well from babyhood. Other sums of money were also paid to the bride's brothers before they would symbolically allow their sister to be taken away. A brief account of traditional marriage is given through is given by Achebe through *Things fall Apart*:

“Very soon after, the in-laws began to arrive. Young men and boys in single file, each carrying a pot of wine...Obierika's relatives counted the pots as they came. Twenty, twenty... then more pots came. Thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five... After the pot-bearers came, Ibe, the suitor, and the elders of his family...Then the bride, her mother and half a dozen other women and girls emerged from...Obierika presented kola nuts to his in-laws.

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<sup>1</sup>Ike, Chukwuemeka, *Toads for Supper*, London, Fontana Modern Novels (1965) pp. 83-84.

His eldest broke the first one. 'Life to all of us,' he said as he broke it. 'And let there be friendship between your family and ours.'<sup>1</sup>

In the evening of the same day, some elderly women from the girl's family, carrying a lamp, took the new bride to the husband's house. If it was the girl's first marriage, these old women would go to the husband's house at dawn the next morning to find out whether or not the bride had been a virgin. The night was already far spent when the guests rose to go, taking their bride home to spend seven market weeks with her suitor's family<sup>2</sup>.

We also know that, in the olden days, girls were given in marriage before they reached the age of puberty. This was generally done to cement the ties of friendship existing in the two families. Such marriages were sometimes unsuccessful since girls normally refused to accept the prospective husband when they reach the age of puberty. They preferred the boys of their own choice. However, some of such marriages proved successful.

In his unpublished maîtrise dissertation titled *Igbo Traditional Marriage in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Flora Nwapa's Efuru*, Akinola Allagbe made an important observation when pointing out the reverse of an arranged marriage between two families as I stated above. Akinola gives an example from *Things Fall Apart*, Ekwefi cannot marry Okwonkwo because he is too poor to afford her bride-price and she gets married to her first husband, Enene. But a few years later, when Okonkwo struggles hard to become a respectable and rich man in his village, Ekwefi deserts Enene for Okwonkwo who is now capable of refunding the bride-price of her first husband<sup>3</sup>.

#### **1.4. Childbirth**

As I have already mentioned, the importance of children in marriage has been depicted through many African novels. In Kaakyere Akosomo Nyantakyi's *Ancestral Sacrifice*, there is

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe: 1958: 83-84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1958: 85.

<sup>3</sup>Achebe, 1958:77-78.

a comic scene which also portrays the importance of having children in African sociological context.

“How many children do you have? I know there are many children in your house, but how many of them are from the tip of your penis. Father Goodsman’s face had suddenly changed... “I don’t have any children of my own” Father Goodsman had said. The elders looked had looked each other in the face with surprise. They didn’t believe he was telling them the truth. They did not know that the father had taken a vow not to marry. “You don’t have children and they call you a father?... He had no idea it was their polite way of asking whether he had no children because he was impotent.”<sup>1</sup>

Africans regarded a marriage which resulted in the birth of children as a successful one. On the other hand, a marriage without children was seen as a curse and almost invariably ended in divorce. For this reason; the birth of a child was a joyous occasion which was marked by special ceremonies. Achebe tries to share this African experience when writing the following passage in his novel *Things Fall Apart*:

“Her husband’s first wife had already had three sons, all strong and healthy. When she had borne her third son in succession, Okonkwo had slaughtered a goat for her, as was the custom. Ekwefi had nothing but good wishes for her. But she had grown bitter about her own Chi that she could not rejoice with others over their good fortune. And so, on the day that Nwoye’s mother celebrated the birth of her three sons with feasting and music...”<sup>2</sup>

During the first seven days after the birth, the baby was confined to a room. On the eighth day, the families of the parents assembled early in the morning, usually in the father’s house, for the outdooring ceremony. It was marked by the pouring of libation, firstly to thank the God the Creator of all things and, secondly, to invoke the spirits of the ancestors and the god the father served, to protect and guard the baby. In certain clan the ceremony was brief and this brevity of the ceremony was due to the fact that the naming ceremony was not done on the eight days; they waited for some time to ensure that the child is coming to stay<sup>3</sup>. There was very high child mortality rate those days, due to the lack of adequate ante-and post-natal medical care but people at that time thought the diseases were afflicted by evil spirits.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:15.

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, 1958:57.

<sup>3</sup>Achebe, 1958:55.

On the other hand, they did not only outdooring but they also named the child on the eight days. The child was given a name followed by drinking and eating which lasted for the greater part of the day. The naming ceremony was usually performed by an elderly member of the paternal family. The child was given a family name which was usually that of the baby's paternal grandparent or an important member of his father's lineage. As a mark of respect or gratitude, the father might allow his child to be named after a member of his wife's family or a friend outside the extended families. In the olden days, the child bore his own name throughout life and not his father's name. Many African writers depict the naming ceremony through their works. For instance, the naming ceremony of Elewa's son in the *Anthills of the Savannah* and that of Baako's nephew in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragment* are palpable advent to show the celebration of the new comers to a family in the African traditional system.

The actual naming ceremony was usually brief and solemn. The person performing it put a drop of water on the baby's tongue followed by a drop of alcohol. He did this many times and on each occasion he admonished the baby to be truthful throughout life by saying if he says water, then it must be water, if he says alcohol, and then it must be alcohol. This is to indicate that in traditional African society, truthfulness was regarded as an important ingredient in a person's character. Liars were treated with great contempt in the African societies.

### **1.5. Adolescence and Initiation**

The transition from childhood to adolescence was also marked by a number of ceremonies. On reaching manhood, for instance, a boy's father procured him his first gun. This was done to show that the boy had reached the age of bearing arms, and was liable to be called upon in the time of war. And it should be remembered that in those days everybody was expected to take arms in defense of his village, town or state.

“Okonkwo was inwardly pleased at his son’s development... He wanted Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father’s household when he was dead and gone to join the ancestors. He wanted him to be a prosperous man, having enough in his barn to feed the ancestors with regular sacrifices...That showed that in time he would be able to control his women-folk. No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man...So Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his Obi, and told them stories of the land-masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent...he knew his father wanted him to be a man... And when he did this he saw that his father was pleased....so Nwoye and Ikemefuna would listen to Okonkwo’s stories about tribal wars or how, years ago, he had stalked his victim, overpowered him and obtained his first human head...”<sup>1</sup>

From then too, the youth was deemed to qualify to pay taxes and other levies, take part in the weeding of the path leading to the gods’ shrines in the villages or towns and to join secret (ozo) society reserved to adults<sup>2</sup>.

Another aspect of the ritual that marked the puberty in the life of a young African is the rite of circumcision. And this is well described in chapter three and four of NgugiwaThiong’o’s novel *The River Between*. In it, he depicts, at some extent, the importance of circumcision in the Gikuyu way of life. He says:

“Circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept the people together, bound the tribe, it was the core of the social structure and something that gave meaning to man’s life, end the custom and spiritual bias of the tribe’s cohesion and integration would be no more.”<sup>3</sup>

Girls enter womanhood when they reach the age of puberty. On attaining, the age of puberty in traditional African society, a girl passed through some rites before she was regarded as having attained womanhood. From that period onwards, she could marry. Some rituals consisted of training the girls in order to enable them to become good housewives, mothers, and useful members of the society generally<sup>4</sup>. But in Nyantakyi’s *Ancestral Sacrifice*, he gives an account of how puberty rites are made in Akanland. He puts it in this way:

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958: 37-38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1958:131.

<sup>3</sup>WaThiong’o, Ngugi, *The River Between*, Oxford, Heinemann, UK (1965) p.79.

<sup>4</sup> Ike, 1965: 83-84.

“For six days Nana Boatemaa was confined to the house and AwoYaa Akoto gave her instruction on duties of a woman. Early on the sadventh day, Nana shaved her armpits and her genitals and AwoYaa Akoto trimmed down her long, black hair. The news was spread around the village, and girls of her age who had experienced the puberty rituals rushed to congratulate her. At noon they blindfolded her and led her to the village river. Amidst puberty rhymes they pushed Nana Boatemaa into the river, and still blindfolded, she struggled her way out. The girls stripped her naked, and with a new sponge and a new towel, they gave her a bath. After that she was drenched to the skin with shea-butter lotion. They clothed her in woman cloth and blindfolded her again. They led her from street to street chanting puberty rhymes. People ran from their houses to take a peep at the new woman. She would grow to become a queen-mother, some said; she had such charm and beauty.”<sup>1</sup>

In other communities, girls reaching the age of puberty were sent to selected ladies who kept their wards in huts and instructed them in the skills of house-keeping, motherhood, housecraft and other industries such as spinning, weaving, basketry and religious observances,

“Back in the house the female members of the Council of Elders asked her to sit on asedwa. Taking their turns, they advised the new woman on how to behave herself. She should not play whore so that a wealthy, responsible man would pick her for a wife. AwoYaa Akoto puts beads around her ankles, wrists, and neck. It was now time to swallow the hard, boiled egg so everyone stepped back. It was the most difficult part. Its success or failure could determine the new woman’s chances of having or not having children...Naana Boatemaa was made to feast alone and when the feast was over, the elders congratulated her, and, gradually, everyone left.”<sup>2</sup>

Those who have successfully gone through the rites have to show the community that they have passed the tests with flying colors. Then the community welcomes them to the world of adulthood. By doing this, they rejoice at their new status since they are now fit to marry or be part of the community’s important affairs.

## **1.6. Funerals**

The funeral of the deceased in African society was the responsibility of the extended families. The members of his extended maternal and paternal families had an important role to play. On the death of an unmarried person, the extended families bore the funeral expenses. If the deceased left a spouse, the surviving partner, or the children if they were of age, bore the responsibility of providing the coffin and the clothes for the burial. When a child died, the

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:17-18.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:18.

father shouldered the cost of the coffin and shroud. But in accordance with social practices which knit the African extended families closer than in many other societies in the world, all adult members of the extended families contributed towards funeral expenses.

“The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and also when an old man died, because an old man was close to the ancestors. A man’s life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors.”<sup>1</sup>

The above illustration is the perception of the African psychological thought about death that Chinua Achebe tries to paint a vivid picture of through his novel.

But in *Ancestral Sacrifice*, the unique funeral experience that is describe in it concerned Bob Little, the Christian boy who dies in the sacred forest and this death has united two communities which were divided owing to religious differences. The advent of this session of the funeral is described as follow:

“The drum chanted funeral dirges behind Nana Barima and his Village Council of Elders who now slowly approached, with faces dull and pale, as if the village had just come out of a lost battle. Adults and children were all mournfully dressed, Obeng Boama held Nana Boatemaa who wanted to throw herself down and cry.”<sup>2</sup>

Africans have believed in life after death from time immemorial. For this reason, after the corpse of the deceased had been put in the coffin ready for burial, it was the practice to put cloth, money, gold dust and gold ornaments in the coffin for the deceased to be used in the next world. The coffin was sealed and carried away after the head of the family had poured libation. In some parts of Africa the successor of the deceased was appointed before the final obsequies or rites. Before the final departure to join the ancestors, and to come back later, the members of the family want the deceased to take revenge if the death is caused a living on the earth. They also asked the deceased to come back with a more successful life when he comes again.

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958:87.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:139.

“If you had been poor in your last life I would have asked you to be rich when you come again... If you had been a coward, I would have asked you to bring courage... If you had died young, I would have asked you to get life... So I shall ask you to come again the way you came before. If your death was the death of nature, go in peace. But if a man caused it, do not allow him a moment’s rest.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the belief of Africans, the spirit of the deceased hovered around for forty days after his death before he finally joined his ancestors in the next world. On the fortieth day, therefore, a parting ceremony was held to bid him farewell. A year after his death another ceremony was held to open his ‘trunk’ and his valuables were shared among members of the extended family.

### **1.7. Festivals**

In traditional African societies, a number of festivals were celebrated. In those early days, the festival was given a special prominence in the organization of social life because people saw its potential as a way of communicating or affirming the values of the society and of strengthening the bonds that hold its members together. In traditional African societies, the festival was seen as a communal celebration in which members of society participated on different levels. But with the advent of Christianity, the perception of festivals was seen differently in communities, the traditionalists and the Christians.

“Tuesday morning was bright and crisp with the promise of a new day. Preparation for the first segment of the Ohum Festival, the purification of the Stool, began at dawn. Family members met to either settle petty family squabbles or discuss matters of family concern. Some form of activity was going on in almost every home. Although the Christian converts were not part of the festivities... Fred had led her to the palace last year to take some pictures of the fonton from drummers and dancers and she had come to see if he could lead her this year.”<sup>2</sup>

Festivals in Africa originated in many different ways. They dramatized sacred myths and legends or actual historical episodes. As religion permeated the whole of traditional society, aspects of it were found in practically all festivals. One of the principal functions of a festival therefore was that of affirming the spiritual values that inspired the people’s way of

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958:88.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:25.

life – the values which influenced the scope, form, content and intensity of their religious behavior. A festival might stress the collective rites around the gods of a given society or focus on nature as a force to be revered and a source of material well-being. Here below is what the narrator let us know about the new yam festival:

“The Feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofia was in a festive mood. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a great part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more; she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth.<sup>1</sup>”

Besides the affirmation of spiritual values, the activities of festivals usually included ones intended to strengthen the social bonds that bind the members of a community or kin group.

“The Feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. New yams could not be eaten until some had first been offered to these powers. Men and women, young and old, looked forward to the New Yam Festival because it began the season of plenty- the New Year. On the last night before the festival, yams of the old year were all disposed of by those who still had them. The new year must begin with tasty, fresh yams and not the shriveled and fibrous crop of the previous year.”<sup>2</sup>

Another important role of festivals is that of providing opportunities for the collective renewal of the arts as a form of community experience or as an expression of group consciousness. For this reason, the program of festivals were arranged in such a way as to culminate in a major public advent in which artistic expression was given full scope. They might take the form of drumming and dancing sessions which gave scope for dramatic expressions, or durbars at which the music of the court could be enjoyed.

## **1.8. Medicine**

Africans, like other human beings throughout the world, have been afflicted by all kinds of diseases and illnesses from a very long period. In pre-colonial Africa the diseases and

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958: 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 1958: 58.

the illnesses which were common were malaria, fever and venereal disease. These diseases were new to the Colonizers and that is why it was said that Africa was the grave of the Whiteman because these diseases killed many of them when they came later to colonize us.

During this period, many African believed that diseases and illnesses were caused by the gods and the spirits of the ancestors. The ancestors were believed to be constantly watching over the activities of their living relatives. They punished those who broke the customs or failed to fulfill their obligations to the kinfolk. In *Things Fall apart*, Achebe has painted a vivid picture of this when writing:

“The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to consult it. They came when the misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers. ... Sometimes a man came to consult the spirit of his dead father or relative. It was said that when such a spirit appeared, the man saw it vaguely in the darkness, but never heard its voice. Some people even said that they had heard the spirits flying and flapping their wings against the roof of the cave.”<sup>1</sup>

There are stories still circulating in certain part of Benin Republic about some illnesses and even deaths caused by the ancestors. Some priests often declare that such occurrences are due to non-compliance with the will of the ancestors.

These diseases were treated by medicine men. These medicine men used different herbs for treating various kinds of diseases and illnesses. Their knowledge about the efficacy of herbs was acquired from their elders. For instance, the botanical name for *fofo* (African aspirin) is *aspilia Africana* which is the best medicine ever known<sup>2</sup>. As he took his machete and went into the bush to collect the leaves and grasses and barks of trees that went into making the medicine<sup>3</sup>. Fathers usually taught their sons the use of certain herbs and roots to treat particular kinds of diseases. For this reason, certain households came to have expertise in, for example,

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958:12.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:10.

<sup>3</sup> Achebe, 1958:54.

“There is no better medicine for rashes and itching than fofo, the Shrine priestess said. When I tried it and it didn’t help, I knew something was wrong. Tell her severely, she told the elders. If she does not tell what she’s hiding, she will bury her children one after the other before the ban on the eating of the new yam is lifted. It is important that she speaks now.”<sup>1</sup>

African traditional healers apparently did not think of the idea of curative measures but the practice of curing was widespread. However, leprosy, which was considered to be highly contagious, was treated at the outskirts of the villages or towns. But in *Things Fall Apart*, it was not considered as something that could not be treated and that is why everybody who had leprosy was considered as an *Osu* or outcast and it is mentioned that the polite name for leprosy was ‘white skin’<sup>2</sup>.

The most beautiful aspect of the traditional medicine which had been practiced from time immemorial till today in some remote parts of Africa is the delivering of babies. This expertise is done by elderly people, mostly women. These midwives, who learnt their trade from the older generation, were also accomplished herbalists. Normally a pregnant woman stayed in her own house and visited the midwife either for examinations or to obtain medicine to relieve her of any discomforts. After birth, the midwife would cut the umbilical cord and ensure that the woman did not retain the placenta as this might result in the death of the mother. In the case of new mothers the midwife would teach her how to bath, rub and handle the baby for several days before she was allowed to go to her own house.

Furthermore, another aspect of the traditional medicine which needs to explore in terms of medicine is that Africa warriors used to wear coats stitched with amulets which were supposed to deflect the enemy’s bullets. Such amulets were produced by the medicine men and they are made of with concoctions of certain herbs and animal parts, and were used to inflict also harm and injury on one’s enemy. Achebe proved the existence of such a thing when he mentions that:

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:112.

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, 1958: 53.

“Before he (Okonkwo) had gone to bed he had brought down his war dress, which he had not touched since his return from exile. He had shaken out his smoked raffia skirt and examined his tall feather head-gear and his shield. They were all satisfactory, he had thought.”<sup>1</sup>

On other hand, there were charms that could be used also to harm one’s enemies. Alternatively, these charms could also be used to make up the mind of a girl to marry a man she did not love or like.

The fetish priests, priestesses and their assistants, who understood the language of the gods and the ancestors and who also had knowledge of the efficacy of certain herbs, roots and barks of trees for treating various ailments, were the principal traditional healers. The illustration of this example through *Ancestral Sacrifice* is of capital importance in the knowledge of an African traditional doctor,

“Just he was about to knock at the witch doctor’s gate, he heard a strange, heavy and yet not loud noise. He stood still at once. It was not a vibrating noise, yet rushing and powerful, something huge, in violent, hushed motion. Softly, frozen with fear and anxiety, he knocked at the gate. When it was answered Ataala asked to see Salifu but the apprentice told him his master had travelled. He asked if he could be of help and when Ataala told him about the dream and the noise, the apprentice said it was a very bad omen to be around deaf mutes.”<sup>2</sup>

Before they could administer the medicine to the patient, they asked him or members of his family to produce a hen, a goat or a sheep to make the appropriate sacrifices aimed at appeasing the gods and the ancestors. It was made clear that unless the spirits were satisfied, the afflicted person might not get well.

It is clear that traditional medical practitioners had clear ideas about their trade. They had notion of physical cures and treatment. They used green leaves, barks of trees, charms and talismans to treat ailments and to pradvent people from being attacked by evil spirits such as witches. They were conversant with the beliefs and thought systems of their people and so they resorted to magico-religious acts in the treatments of diseases and illnesses. The

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958:143.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:64.

treatment of Ogbanje (an evil child that died many times and reborn again and again by the same mother) by Okagbue is a worked by an expert in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. He broke the link between the child and the evil world. An example of ritual performance is given in *Ancestral sacrifice* to give an insight into the religion by treating the childless married ladies. Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi describes:

“Special libation was poured for the married-but-childless, and after that the yet-to-married were also blessed. A large bowl of herbs in cold water was in front of the priestess. As the adowa music continued to play, people went in turns to the priestess and she washed their heads, faces, and feet and made them drink a spoonful of another herbal concoction from a cooking pot.”<sup>1</sup>

It must be noted that Africans diligently attended to the sick and they might pradvnt many diseases or illnesses, if the traditional medical practitioners either did not know or failed to stress the need for hygiene because the diseases attacked people that lived in dirty surroundings. In other words, the non-existence of pradvntive medicine in pre-colonial Africa accounted for the prevalence of many communicable diseases.

However, the traditional medicine must be investigated properly so that its findings will be used to complement modern medicine. Herbalists, fetish priests and priestesses should be made aware of the fact that many diseases can be avoided if people live in a clean environment, eat good food and drink good water. A typical example is that the many diseases that have afflicted many Africans for the past hundred years of years have disappeared from many parts of Africa due to insistence on personal hygiene and cleanliness. Africans claim that river water tastes better than pipe water<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 100.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:9.

## Chapter Two: The Religious and the Political Organizations

The colonial conquest and imposition of European rule shattered the old political and religious organisations which in the past had been closely joined because of the ruler's sacred powers. The denigration of traditional African cultures and religions and the destruction of indigenous political organisations laid the foundation for the decline of traditional religious communities.

### 2.1. Religious Beliefs in Pre-colonial Africa.

Nowadays, the majority of Africans are the followers of the two most important religions imported into Africa, that is Islam and Christianity. In pre-colonial Africa, however, the story is different. In those early days Africans believed that the world was full of spirits. There was Supreme Being, Nyame or Nyankopon for the Akan, Chukwu for the Ibo, Mahu for the Fon and Mawu for the Ewe who was the creator of all things; below the Supreme Being were various or lesser gods; and then the ancestors. This knowledge of the Supreme Being and lesser gods, and the ancestors is described by Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi's *Ancestral Sacrifice*:

“With a medium-size gourd full of Akpeteshie (local gin) in his hand, he lowered his cloth and became bare on both shoulders. Raising the gourd and looking up, he said, “Supreme god of Saturday, you drink not, but we seek your presence. Mother Earth of Thursday, drink”, he bowed and poured a drop of the gin on the ground. He called the names of famous clans, famous shrines, famous rivers, dead relatives, dead war heroes, and, invoking their spirits, asked them to bless the land, multiply the killings of the hunters, double the harvest of the farmers, increase the wisdom of the wise, fertilize the womb of the barren, provide good health, prosperity, and long life to the chief and people of Asana.”<sup>1</sup>

Oladele Taiwo made an observation which underscores the central role that religion plays in the life of Africans:

“Religion in African society places great emphasis on supernatural agencies. The African himself is superstitious and believes very strongly in mystic rites. He reconciles himself to these forces and treats them with reverence and dignity. He believes that his very action is guided and directed by spirits. These spirits have a dual nature. Every object, animate or

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 28.

inanimate, natural or artificial is regarded with a feeling of awe, as having mysterious powers residing in it or as being the representative or habitation of a deity. Every fetish or object which is visible to the human eye but is inanimate to the devotee, and the second, the replica, which is not perceptible by humans, but which for the devotee, is the essence of life and the controller of the first. It is endowed with force and strong will-power, and which merely employs its superficial or inanimate counterpart directing or controlling the affairs of human life...<sup>1</sup>

African traditional religion is one of the starting points of the West African literature, and in most of the first generation of the West African writers' novels the topic is largely developed. Those novelists have observed many of the qualities and roles ascribed to traditional religion in the expression of the cultural identity.

### **2.1.1. The Supreme Being**

The belief in creator of all things was central to the religious thought of the ancient African. His existence needed no proof or demonstration. He was not worshipped and had no priest or intermediaries because everybody had access to him. He lived far away in the sky so if anybody wanted to speak to him, all he had to do was to speak to the winds. There is one supreme God who made heaven and earth. The Igbos also believe in Him and they call Him Chukwu. He made the entire world and the other gods. A typical example is described through Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* when writing:

“...We make sacrifices to the little gods, but when they fail and there is no one else to turn to we go to Chukwu. It is right to do so. We approach a great man through his servants. But when his servants fail to help us, then we go to the last source of hope. We appear to pay greater attention to the little gods but that is not so. We worry them more because we are afraid to worry their Master. Our fathers knew that Chukwu was the overlord and that is why many of them gave their children the name Chukwuka-“Chukwu is Supreme.”<sup>2</sup>

The Africans knew the existence of God before the arrival of the Europeans. This statement above is a speech made by an African, Akunna with Mr Brown (missionary).

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<sup>1</sup>Taiwo, Oladele, *An introduction to West African Literature*, Nairobi, Thomas Nelson (1981) p.127-128

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, 1958:129.

Mazisi Kunene on his side extends the idea of the uniqueness of the Ibo religion to the whole of Africa through a publication he entitled *The Relevance of African Cosmological Systems to African Literature Today*. After defining African literature as a celebration of man's life and all living creations in the cosmos, he affirms that:

“The gods are not worshipped in Africa but revered. They are participant in man's life as allies. They themselves may sometimes enlist the services of special men and women to convey their will. Man equally has the right to appeal for the destruction of a person enemy unless it can be demonstrated that the opponent has violated a fundamental ethic. The gods are forces that link men with the unknowable Supreme Creator. This does not mean that man must approach the Creator through them but rather that they are delegated by the Creator with specific creative and divine responsibilities. The gods utilize this potential on behalf of man. Man can appeal to them for gifts but their power is limited for man already has a direct relationship with the Creator through the agency of his ancestors.”<sup>1</sup>

### **2.1.2. The gods**

The gods were believed to be closer to the Supreme Being and derived their power and authority from him. They therefore served as intermediaries between the Creator and man<sup>2</sup>. The abode of the gods might be a big tree, a huge rock, a thick grove, a cave or a hole, a river, a lake or the sea; or the votaries must serve a wooden image or mound or mud daubed with the blood of animals, which was kept in a temple.

The gods were worshipped and they communicated with the people through priests, priestesses and their assistants.

“Nana Aduako, the Shrine priested, was in a trance when she appeared. She was tall, angular, hard-muscled, and hard faced. Her eyes were her most arresting feature; they were large, cold, and humorless. She was staggering at first, then suddenly, her body underwent a severe vibration. Two attendants stood by her to make sure she did not fall. Her feet were planted widely apart as she lurched back and forth from toe to heel. Her breathing doubled in speed, her eyes dilated and stared fixedly into the sky. The musicians played the adowa music to add rhythm and style to the ceremony. The linguist authorized the attendants to calm her, and when they did, he interviewed the possessing spirit. When he discovered that the possessing spirit was a priest, he knew it was time to begin the ritual bath.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kunene, Mazisi, *The relevance of African Cosmological Systems to African Literature Today*, E.D. Jones, London, Heinemann (1980) pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, 1958:129

<sup>3</sup> Nyantakyi, 1998:100.

Many African traditional priests would claim that he was chosen directly by his god when he became possessed while on a hunting expedition or when a community was performing the periodic rites for the god. The gods were besought to grant health, fertility, prosperity and protection from misfortune, harm or injury perpetrated by evil spirits such as witches.

### **2.1.3. The ancestors**

Africans believed that there is a world beyond, where all their ancestors live a life similar to life on earth. This conception was implicit in the funeral rites of certain Africans. The dead were buried with gold, ornaments and precious things in addition to receptacles, bedding, clothing and other necessities which would be needed in their new homeland. They were also given money to pay tolls when they have to cross rivers.

The ancestors were believed to be constantly watching over their living relatives. Hence in many households, the aged used to offer the morsel of food and pour drink on the ground for the ancestors before they themselves tasted them. The ancestors were supposed to punish those who broke the customary laws or failed to fulfill their obligation to the kinsmen.

“Obiako has always been a strange one, said Nwakibie. I have heard that many years ago, when his father had not been dead very long, he had gone to consult the Oracle. The Oracle said to him, your dead father wants you to sacrifice a goat to him. Do you know what he told the oracle? He said; ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive.”<sup>1</sup>

There are still stories circulating in some countries suggesting that deaths and sicknesses are caused by the ancestors. Some priests often declare that such occurrences are due to non-compliance with the ancestor's will. On the other hand, those who obeyed the customary laws and helped their kinsmen received help and blessings from the ancestors; their business and other undertakings prospered and many children were born to them. Nyantakyi tries to paint a vivid picture of this through his novel, *Ancestral Sacrifice*:

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958:15.

“...as she poured the gin on the floor in drops, she said ; I, Yaa Botwe, a native of Asana, swear by the spirit of our Ancestors that my heart dwells with my son in the sacred forest. That by swearing herein, I put myself under Ancestral oath to support the Ancestral Sacrifice and all rituals therein for a search in the sacred forest for my beloved... Supreme God of Saturday, Mother Earth of Thursday, I give you drink, and pray that my son be found and returned to me in good health. She attempted to pour the remaining drink ...”<sup>1</sup>

The traditional religion is very special because it turns round the ancestors. Nothing can be done without imploring the ancestors. It seems that these ancestors are the representatives of the living in the presence of the creator. Each activity, each movement starts with a praying to the ancestors. Everybody in the clan is obliged to pray to the ancestors when beginning an action: eating, drinking, planting, harvesting or farming. Even Unoka, Okonkwo’s lazy and improvident father in *Things Fall Apart* who was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow, prayed to his ancestors for life and health, and for protection against his enemies<sup>2</sup>.

Any West African critic who neglects religion in his writings is also neglecting an important, even indispensable literary work of the past, which has played a crucial role in the African’s quest to the present, and a direction for the future.

## 2.2. The political systems

“In precolonial Africa, when Africans controlled their own affairs and administered justice among themselves, the system of government, defined as ordering of human relations, was characterized by structural diversity and pluralism in political thought, political habits and institutions. The diversity of the system was a reflection of the pluralism of political philosophy espoused by Africa’s diverse socio-cultural groups... The variation in political philosophy, especially, revealed the social groups’s views about the nature of political authority, the rights and obligations of political authority.”<sup>3</sup>

Before Africa came under the colonial rule as administrative unit at the beginning of the last but one century, the continent comprised many states. Some of these states were quite small but others were large and powerful kingdoms. But some Africans had not lived in

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:123.

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, 1958: 5

<sup>3</sup>Ohaegbulam, Ugbaaja F., *Towards an Understanding of the African Experience from Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, University Press of America, Lanham (1990) pp. 97-98.

centralized states (as in *Things Fall Apart*). They lived under different political systems. In this section, therefore, I shall be examining the traditional political organization expressed through African literature and this goes under three headings: centralized states, 'stateless' or non-centralized societies and theocracies.

### **2.2.1. The centralized states**

The basic political unit in a centralized state was the lineage or family. The head of the family represented the family members on the village council. This village council was presided over by the chief. A number of these villages were grouped together to form a division headed by a divisional chief; a number of divisions came together to form a state headed by a head of the state or the king.

On each level, the chief was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, for defense and for the maintenance of adequate communication between his people, the ancestors and the gods.

At the top level of this political organization was the king. He was the chief judge, the high priest, chief administrator and commander-in-chief of the state's armies. The king-in-council made laws, declare war and peace, and administered justice in his state. Most kings had an annual festival for their stool and during these festivals all subordinate rulers were expected to be present, he offered sacrifices to the states gods and propitiated the ancestral spirits, asking them to bless his people and to bring them prosperity. He was in theory not only the owner of all the lands in his state but also was recognized as the father of the kingdom, being the link between the living and the dead ancestors. In short, he was the embodiment of the state's cultural heritage.

“He was led by the Stool carriers and flanked on his right by Baamuhene, the Stool-House overseer, on his left by Okyeame, the chief's spokesman; and the Village Council of Elders. The chief was clothed in a loom-woven dwenasa, its rainbow colours a perfect match for his gold necklace, bracelet, and anklet. His steps were in precise, noble fashion, and after

each step, he stopped and waved to the crowd. The talking drum drummer and the elephant-horn blowers sounded certain praise appellations to enhance and honour the nobility of the chief.”<sup>1</sup>

In pre-colonial Africa, the kingship was represented by the symbol of authority. In the southern part of the West African kingdom, the king’s symbol was represented by the stool in southern parts while on the other hand it was represented by the skin in the northern parts. There were also in Southern Ghana, for instance, the sword with which the heads of state swore an oath of allegiance to their people on the occasion of their enstoolment. The stool and the skin and the stated swords were regarded as sacred objects. Even this tradition continues today. In the modern Ghana when every four year, the new Head of State or the old one renew his office of presidency has to pay allegiance with the sword of the state.

The rulers in these centralized states were not autocrats those days. Although they appeared to be all-powerful, there were, in fact, several checks which warned them against using powers capriciously or in the dictatorial manner. Their principal advisers were the divisional chiefs who were also administrative heads of their district and sectional commanders of the state’s armies. George Ayittey through his book, *Indigenous African Institutions*, tries to give an account of how the power of a king or a chief is limited in the pre-colonial Africa,

Although in theory the chief rule for life, in practice and under normal circumstances he ruled only as long as his people allowed it- a distinction many observers failed to note. He could be destooled (removed) at any time if he failed to perform his traditional duties or if his people so wished, irrespective of how long he had been to office.”<sup>2</sup>

When one king fails to listen to the advice of his elders and the decisions of the council, his autocratic decisions may be a legitimate cause for destoolment or deskinning as the case may also be. The fact of the matter is that in spite of the fact that the king has great powers; the subordinate chiefs also enjoyed certain fundamental rights. For instance, they

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:29

<sup>2</sup>Ayittey, George. B. N., *Indigenous African Institutions*, Transnational Publishers Inc, U.S (1991) p.47.

held their lands absolutely, and their title was based on conquest or family acquisition through some other means and not upon a gift from the king. Thus, whereas the head of the state had absolute control over lands vested in his stool, he exercised no rights over the lands belonging to the subordinate chief,

“Like the youth, most of the village elders were not happy with indefinite suspension of the festival, but they had to stand behind their chief, whose ruling could not be reversed except by himself... a gesture that would certainly demean him. They would try to compel the boy’s mother to approach the Stool House.”<sup>1</sup>

Each state had a number of functionaries who performed specific duties. There were heralds who served as chiefs messengers and there were the so-called court criers who ensured order at a gathering of the chiefs and their people or during sessions of the court. An important state functionary was the ‘linguist’ whose symbol of office was the staff. His office was not hereditary in certain kingdoms. In other francophone countries this ‘linguist’ is known as a ‘Griot’. He was usually made a linguist because of his wisdom and great knowledge of public affairs. As chief spokesman of the state, he was expected to be well-versed in history and the customs and the usage of his people. Nobody could approach the ruler with any matter of importance without first consulting the linguist.

In *Things Fall Apart*, this type is not known and by that the Igbo system of governance did not allow the people to adopt the centralized system of governance. But few words about this system of governance are mentioned about through the colonizers. And that is the type of administration set by the invaders in the role of the District Commissioner who represents the Queen of England in her Dominion in the Igbo land of Umuofia. The District Commissioner spoke to them about the great queen, about peace and good governance<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998 :49.

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, 1958:142.

### 2.2.2. The stateless societies

Many of the indigenous inhabitants of the Pre-colonial Africa were not organized into political states during the pre-colonial period. They had no central government to make laws and to enforce them. Such powers rested with the head of each family. But there was an individual who exercised considerable authority over all these non-centralized societies. A description of the indigenous political arrangement of the nine villages of Umuofia will clarify this position through *Things Fall Apart* (History of the Okonkwo's village). The traditional political organization of the indigenous Umuofian was segmentary. The lineage was the basis of political organization. This lineage was headed by elders who became the leaders of his people, first had to have the custody of the lineage cult which was the source and sanction of his authority. An elder was socially and ritually responsible for the conduct of all members of the lineage. The members of the lineage claim descent from a common, remote male ancestor, a number of such lineages were subject to a high ritual authority.

Referring to the priestesses of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves in *Things Fall Apart*, a section of the indigenous Africans is essentially a religious personage who is responsible for law and order. She exploits the superstitious beliefs of the people and the awe in which they held her owing to her ritual status, to maintain peace within the settlements. But the Agbala has no extra-ritual machinery for the enforcement of his pronouncements. In other words, in Agbaladom the mechanism for social control consists of moral arbitration and what the people could do to help maintain peace.

The non-enforcement of stateless society is the easy downfall of the villages in the Igbo land, because there were no chiefs or kings to declare war against the oppressors as we have learned in history about those very powerful kingdoms such as the Kingdom of Dahomey which was a centralized state. These kingdoms did not give up easily to the

invasion of their kingdom owing to the fact that they had strong leaders who made the decision to go war against the aliens and their people followed without sweating.

The democratic aspect of the stateless societies makes it difficult for the people of Umuofia to take decisions. This is highly proved through Okonkwo when taking his decision to go into war is keen. When the idea of going to war is approved by his people, he carries a task or a decision which cost his life:

“As he lay on his bamboo bed he thought about the treatment he had received in the white man’s court, and he swore vengeance. If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well. But if they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself. He thought about wars in the past.”<sup>1</sup>

The white man’s knowledge of the political organization of the villages and towns in the Igbo land speeds up his conquest of the land. It seems that they have come first to explore the land with their missionaries and when they get to know about the land, they have carried their decisions in conquering the land without asking the people what suited them.

“They (missionaries) asked who the king of the village was, but the villagers told them that there was no king. ‘We have men of high title and the chief priests and the elders,’ they said. It was not very easy getting the men of high title and the elders together after the excitements of the first day. But the missionaries persevered, and in the end they were received by the rulers of Mbanta.”<sup>2</sup>

Each chieftaincy level had its own signs, symbols, and other paraphernalia of distinction. The highest honor was very exclusive. To qualify for consideration a candidate would have attained all the lower titles, amassed substantial wealth, and be the oldest living male in the extended family on his father's side. Titled men were assigned the front row at communal gatherings. They were the only ones allowed to speak at the council of chiefs or the titled, and their words carried great weight at communal deliberations.

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958 :143

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1958 : 107

### 2.2.3 The theocracy society

Politically speaking, certain African societies had no centralized states. Some societies were made up of independent clans and each under its own head. They were not governed by any principal man, but any town had its ruler. The rulers of these communities were fetish priests and priestesses. They did not only control the shrines but also wielded immense political power. Thus they may be regarded as priest-kings. Even in certain centralized and non-centralized societies, the kings or the elder had much less influence than the priests. The priest is a much respected man and settles through his fetish disputes, where the power of the king is inadequate and all are subject to his decision. In those communities, fetish priests were feared, honored and respected not only because they catered for the spiritual well-being of the people, but also because they were effective political officers in the land.

It would seem, then, that the power of these priest-kings was backed by force but based on ritual and moral sanctions. Most of these communities when they were moving to their recent dwelling, they were led by fetish priest because they had no chiefs to lead them during their trekking. These leaders who were the fetish priests came to wield both political and religious power in the farming, hunting and fishing settlements which they established. The priests and priestesses of these deities ensure that all communal taboos are observed, all communal calendars are followed, all oracular messages are delivered, and all necessary sacrifices are promptly carried out. The spirit of the individual, roughly a destiny guide (or guardian angel) in English, is called the chi.

In *Things Fall Apart*, we have read many passages where the supremacy of the gods is revered. For instance, the priestess (Chielo) suddenly screamed. 'Beware, Okonkwo!' she

warned. ‘Beware of exchanging words with Agbala (god). Does a man speak when a god speaks? Beware!’<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the supreme deity, there are three types of beings in the Igbo pantheon, all of which play significant roles in the lives of characters in *Things Fall Apart*: gods and goddesses, lineage and village oracles, and spirits attached to individuals. Nature and cosmic deities are recognized and worshiped universally. Prominent among them are Ani, the earth goddess; Amadiora, the god of thunder; and Ekwensu, the god of uncertainty.

Every village or federation of villages appoints priests and priestesses to lead the sacrifices to these deities and also to ensure that all infractions of their desires- both the commonly known ones and those revealed through divination-are punished. Lineage and village oracles and deities vary, and are propitiated only by the concerned communities who inaugurated their worship in response to unmet needs and wishes that might have arisen at different points in their history.

A typical example is painted during a funeral in *Things Fall Apart* when Okonkwo misfires his gun and kills one of the dead man's children. The gun salute is necessary to honor great men like Ezeudu. Although the killing is unintentional, the earth goddess has to be appeased. That night Okonkwo leaves Umuofia with his family in tow. The following morning men from Ezeudu's part of town descend on Okonkwo's property in their war gear. As traditions require, “They set fire to his houses, demolished his red walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn”<sup>2</sup>. For the next seven years Okonkwo and his family live in Mbanta, his mother's place of origin, where his uncle and other members of his family welcome him and give him land to farm.

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1958: 72.

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, 1958:89.

The ritual aspect of the chief's position, especially his mystical powers over rainfall, came to be more important. Among, the African during that period, therefore, the crucial unifying factor was a carefully balanced system of religious obligations. In *Things Fall Apart*, Religion is the guiding principle for Ibo people and it influences all political and social decisions. The example, they “never went to war unless its case was clear<sup>1</sup>”, which involves the religious advice.

The European occupation of the African continent was followed by the imposition of centralized administration. All these political organizations were replaced by the rule imposed by the colonial administration with the backing of the imperial power. We can sum up that the African people clearly had a rich culture of their own before the arrival of the Europeans. Their societies had their own religious beliefs, social practices pertaining to all stages of life. Our continent was composed of many political states or organizations before it came under European colonial rule. These included centralized states, non-centralized societies and theocracies.

In pre-colonial Africa, among other things:

“...a person was born politically free and equal and his voice and counsel were heard and respected regardless of the economic wealth he possessed. ...there were traditional checks and balances including sanctions against any possible abuse of power. In fact, traditional leaders were regarded as trustees whose influence was circumscribed both in customary law and religion. In traditional African society, an individual needed only to be a mature member of it to participate fully in political affairs.”<sup>2</sup>

By comparing those traditional or indigenous African political systems with that of the colonial, and more importantly with that of the post-colonial, one can understand what was distorted and destroyed. Conclusion can be drawn that with the advent of Whiteman in Africa, there are lot of changes and when colonial institutions were established, the pre-colonial Africa is no longer exists and there is a new Africa: the colonial Africa.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, 1958: 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ayittey, George, B.N., *Africa Betrayed*, Palgrave Macmillan, (1992) p.63.

**PART TWO: THE COLONIAL AFRICAN SOCIETY**

“The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place<sup>1</sup>”. Ironically with this reference from Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, one may say that the journey of the colonization began through this; I mention this because the great explorers had to leave their countries to discover or to explore whatever they want to see. This is speeded up after the 1885 Berlin Conference where the European power unilaterally decided to share the “cake” among them and this is nothing but Africa. The consequences of this decision are well known today and colonization took place in three main stages with the famous three “Ms”: the missionaries, the merchants and the military forces.

According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, colonialism is defined as the belief in and support for the system of one country controlling another. Colonialism is in fact the policy of taking full or partial control of another country, occupying it with people from the conquering country and exploiting it economically. Ngugi waThiong’o tried to define colonialism in his own way through his book *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. Ngugi sees the stage of colonial conquest as the first phase of the modern period in Africa. He then describes the principal characteristics of the era as,

“Economic and political institutions are moulded on those of the metropolitan power. The aim is to create the good docile native - a willing source of raw material and cheap labour. And if he is not willing? One can always rely on the police and the army to do a little pacification. So that through fear of the Bible or the sword the native at first acts as if he accepts the situation. The educational institutions - remember the Church - attempt to strengthen his faith in the status quo. The native is a clean slate on which anything can be scribbled. He is subjected to a constant barrage of suggestions that Western culture is all.”<sup>2</sup>

Briefly, I would like to describe the various ways these triple M have affected the African ways of living before the civilizing missions in converted comma. It is no wonder that Jomo Kenyatta made a very powerful observation by saying that:

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<sup>1</sup>Achebe, 1988:46

<sup>2</sup>waThiong’o, Ngugi, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*, London, Heinemann (1972) p. 55.

“When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible.”<sup>1</sup>

And this saying is indirectly backed up by Basil Davidson, the writer and the presenter, when showing an old man who makes a very important declaration when talking about the missionary, Charles Daniel Helm through the documentary film *Africa: The bible and The Gun*. He says:

“Helm... the first missionary who came was called Helm. And when he said “Let us pray” ... we were told to shut our eyes. We were suspicious about what he might do to us, so we peeped through our fingers... to see what was going on...”<sup>2</sup>

From the two quotations, we can notice that there is contradiction because in the first quotation Africans naively trusted the missionaries who tried through their *Holy Bible* to corrupt them with the verses from the Bible. But in the documentary film, when the missionary asked the Africans to shut their eyes, they smartly knew that something would happen that is why they had to peep through their fingers to see the white man. So we can conclude that in the first quotation Africans close their eyes while praying and the white quickly shifted the land to the Bible and from the second quotation, the shifting would be difficult since the eyes were not closed. But other remaining “Ms” have to be used to conquer them.

This land acquired by the white settlers has been the sources of the poverty for most of the indigenous Africans. Firstly Africans are always hospitable naïve that is why they gave out their land easily to the white settlers who later started to oppress them and start to confiscate the land from them. These aliens started to exploit the land to enrich themselves without thinking about the conditions of Africans. The destruction of the African culture is part of their hidden agenda that is what AwoYaa Akoto, a character in *Ancestral Sacrifice* has

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted from [www.wikeqote.org](http://www.wikeqote.org).

<sup>2</sup>Davidson, Basil, et al, *Africa: The Bible and the Gun*, Chicago, Home Video Select: Public Media, IL (1997).

tried to express in a few words before things get completely annihilated. At Asana, the village in *Ancestral Sacrifice* which symbolizes any village in Africa which experienced the “3Ms”.

“We all hope so. It’s just that these white people have come to destroy the order of things in this village. How could you lose your son and refuse to do what it takes to get him back. Sometimes I wonder what kind of god they worship. I have been asked to keep talking to her until she has a change of heart. I don’t know how long that will take, but I’ll do my best.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the unforgettable passages in Ngugi waThiong’o’s novel, *Weep Not, Child*, shows the atmosphere and the excitement of a strike-meeting held by African people in Kenya. This meeting is projected as it was part of the easy agitation that unintentionally turned into the armed struggle called Mau Mau by those who opposed it. Ngugi paints a picture through Kiara, an organizer from Nairobi, who speaks to the crowd:

“All the land belonged to the people- black people. They had been given it by God. For every race had their country. The Indians had India. Europeans had Europe. And Africans had Africa, the land of the black people....Who did not know that all the soil in this part of the country had been given to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their prosperity?...He told them how the land had been taken away, through the Bible and the sword. ‘Yes, that’s how your land was taken away. The Bible paved the way for the sword! For this, he blamed the foolish generosity of their forefathers who pitied the stranger and welcomed him with open arms into their fold.’<sup>2</sup>

The coming of the Missionaries had paved the way to the other two “Ms” for the ‘civilizing mission’ which on the other hand was the pavement of the master plans that had affected the various ways of living before their arrival. The encounter with the Europeans had changed the civilization of the continent and other institutions were installed. The sense of racial superiority felt by Europeans also made them want to export their culture and civilization to Africa. They used their self-imposed ‘civilizing mission’ as a powerful argument in support of their colonial ambitions.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:53.

<sup>2</sup>waThiong’o, Ngugi, *Weep Not, Child*, Oxford, Heinemann, UK (1964) p.55.

The story continues in the documentary film, *Africa: the Bible and the Gun* with the same old man mentioned in Basil Davidson's presentation: "... *We were told: "now you have surrounded, you must pay taxes". If you had one child, you could keep one beast. One beast for every child, that's how it was*<sup>1</sup>." It means that colonization has taken over the missionary activities which were the foundation of colonization because the old man started his story with his encounter with the missionary Helm but they later were asked to pay taxes because they were surrounded by foreign powers.

Like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi's *Ancestral Sacrifice* points out that Africans have received peacefully the white men who in turn deceived them and they conquered them by setting up a government which also in turn, has destroyed our traditional cultures. In *Ancestral Sacrifice*, Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi writes:

"The last time the Shrine became angry was when the Elders allowed these strangers to settle here without first consulting with her. The palace had to pacify the Stool House with three sheep before the anger died away. As it turned out, these strangers proved to be wolves in sheep's clothing. He who has seen does not see twice, and it is the fool whose testicles are stamped twice."<sup>2</sup>

As I have said earlier, the main objective of my work in this chapter is centered on the institutions brought by the arrivals of the Europeans into Africa and the institutions brought by their "civilizing mission". Examples of these institutions are the church, the school, the new system of governance and trade, just a few to mention.

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<sup>1</sup>Ralling and Harries, 1997

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 95.

## **Chapter Three: The Church and the Educational Systems**

The educational system was virtually in the hands of the Missionaries who ensured that the learning process in schools encouraged and in some cases demand the conversion of beneficiaries of the system into Christianity.

### **3.1. The Church**

The church has played by and large a prominent role in helping the mother countries when conquering Africa. This is done through the preaching of the Holy Bible. It is in this sense that Africans have been highly sympathized with the new faith in order to be accepted or to get salvation. By doing this, the church started to win many heathen by promising the heaven where they could have the everlasting life.

In order to divert people from their former ways of living the new faith had to demonize every aspect of the African culture and they use this as a psychological jumping board to brainwashing the conquered Africans for Christ as if Africans are only people on earth that do more harm than good in every aspect of their religion.

In this chapter, a light must be shed on how the Europeans predominantly saw the African culture and society in the nineteenth century. Some prominent aspects of the African culture must be featured in the way that the missionaries have dealt them. Thus it will be shown how the cultural characteristics affect the relation between the local people and the white newcomers.

The church and colonization have two different aims basically: the missionaries depended on the support of the imperial power. In the protectorate treaties between the indigenous people's governments and the colonial powers administration there was usually a stipulation that guaranteed the protection of all white clergymen of the Christian religion. We

can see a typical example in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; the Umuofia elders are imprisoned by the District Commissioner for burning down the church.

The missionaries are explorers who have been sent by the colonial administration. They depend on the financial aid the imperial power has granted them. Hence they inevitably wear the prestige of being connected to imperialism. The colonizers certainly have profited from the church which has inculcated the Christian faith that would soften the indigenous people of Africa. This policy has not been done only through the Christian faith but also through their educational work. This co-operation between the local people and the Europeans has prepared the soil for the establishment of a colonial government.

### **3.1.1. The effect of Christianity on the African people**

Christianity has had many effects on the life of African people since they believed in the impact of their work and strived to change the indigenous society. It is evidently seemed that what the missionaries did cause a number of fundamental changes in the lives of the Africans both positively and negatively. These missionaries challenge the belief of the Africans by telling them stories those they unheard of. They reject their customs and values, and they condemn their gods. The community splits up as a consequence of their influence. And by the time they will wake up, the colonizers establish their suppressive government.

Nevertheless, despite the obvious Eurocentric and westernized bias in Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi's novel, *Ancestral Sacrifice* and Basil Davidson, Christopher Ralling and Andrew Harries' documentary film, *Africa: The Bible and the Gun*, they contain a lot of important or crucial information on the pivotal roles played by the missionaries in destroying or controlling the minds and the behaviors of African societies in adopting new lifestyles imposed by the Europeans colonialists.

With the advent of Christianity which is new culture in the eye of the indigenous African, this new culture contact in colonial countries has important impacts on the languages, and on the other patterns of cultural norms and religious etiquette of the African societies.

### **3.1.2. The positive aspect of Christianity**

According to Derek Wright, every civilization gives way to another due to its inability to contain all human impulses within one enclosed scheme of value, and will consequently be replaced by all that it overlooked or undervalued, all that its own heritage had incapacitated it from understanding. From this view of the things, the missionaries through their works had also done some good things to the African people.

For instance, through the Christian system of education, a lot was done to improve many aspects of the African's lifestyle. Sanitation is one of these aspects in which many were done to improve upon on the life of Africans. Even though Africans were good in treating various diseases or ailments, they did not have the notion of pradvencion through a hygienic environment. But with the advent of the missionaries into Africa, a lot has done to change the mentality of their new converts and most of the students admitted in their schools.

The work of the missionaries through the printing of the *Holy Bible* and the distribution of religious tracts would have boosted the literacy development in Africa. Because, to enable Africans to read these religious literatures shared by the Westerners, they might have a certain level of understanding of what is written therefore the importance of reading is very necessary. The church through the missionaries contributed to literacy through the establishment of the mission schools. The Christian contribution that has undoubtedly the most universally appreciated in Africa over the past centuries is the school.

The first task of the missionaries was to set up mission schools and learn the local language of the areas where the mission stations were established and they put it down into

writing. The following step was to the opening of the schools to the indigenous Africans where the basic of reading, writing, arithmetic and hygiene were inculcated into the Africans firstly in the local language and then later in the European language. This was one form of literacy provided by European missionaries in Africa and this has greatly affected positively the Africa socio-economic and political life. Because, most of our first generation of African leaders were taught in these mission schools set by the European missionaries.

The missionaries also introduced a number of few crops into Africa. As it is said earlier, before the advent of the Europeans into Africa, Africans were used to a certain types of goods which they cultivated to satisfy the need of their families and they sold the surplus on the local villages. But with the advent of the missionaries into Africa, they had brought with them new sets of crops which were mostly cash crops and they mostly encouraged their converts and urged their catechists, congregations and new graduate students of their schools to farm these crops in order to provide the rural population with a regular source of income and raised their standard of living.

The Christian missionaries popularized scientific medicine. The popularization of scientific medicine contributed to the relief of human suffering and improved the quality of life.

Another way in which Christianity has contributed positively to the well-being of the Africans on their continent is through the process of colonization which has led to decolonization through the introduction of Christianity into the colonial spheres. Christian missionaries enthusiastically spread messages about love and the brotherhoods of man, even though these messages were different from the racial discrimination and economic exploitation that were often a fundamental part of colonialism. Thus, Christian leaders unintentionally provided moral and spiritual support for demands that colonial domination should be ended.

When the missionaries arrived, they asked for land to build their churches and their quarters. By building these, the Christian suburban towns became model settlements. The Christian quarters had well-laid streets which were imitated surely in the non-Christians quarters and villages, resulting in improved sanitation. The new architectural styles introduced by the missionaries were also adopted in the indigenous townships. Houses were properly ventilated through the provision of large windows and roofed with shingles instead of thatch.

The Christian religion inculcated new moral values, attitudes, beliefs and habits which were beneficial in the long term. These included discipline, dignity of labor, honesty and other moral values. However, the Christian religion was far being a complete blessing to the people of Africa.

### **3.1.3. The negative aspect of Christianity**

The Christian missionaries converted the people from their old ways and religious beliefs and practices by using ultimate force of canny manners. The attractiveness of the new faith to all those who found themselves disadvantaged in some way under the old one; later on, it is also the attractiveness of the mission school, due to its connection to the colonial government. And although the missionaries showed some aggressive traits, the empowerment of the laws is always to the colonial power.

In the European way of dealing with the local people, there is development of dialogue to confrontation to suppression. But the ethics of Christian faith prevent the church from going any further than provocation which may be against the religion. Certain moments during colonization, it is no more a religious conflict between the indigenous Africans and the Christians but a political conflict between the clan and the colonial government.

As already indicated, Europeans came from a culture that practised monotheism. Christianity, therefore, was intolerant of African polytheism and forms of worship. European

Christian missionaries sought to instill faith in one God, in the concept of resurrection and divine judgment, and in new moral values. They look upon African gods as representing the devil himself. Traditional priests were considered as the worst people in the community, and African non-Christians were condemned as ‘poor blind folks’ who lived in ignorance of God and his law. It was clear that what the missionaries wanted was not merely an enlightened, just and humane society.

Ngugi waThiong’o comments on the disruptive influence of the missionaries on the African life in this manner through his book, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* when writing:

“Christianity as an organized religion is corrupt and hypocritical: besides acting as an agent of imperialism. It exercised a highly disruptive influence on African life and was the chief villain in alienating the African from his own culture.”<sup>1</sup>

He makes an observation of the conditions that affect the central theme around which he develops his novels and paints a vivid picture in telling manners of cultural exploitation of the Europeans on the Africans.

For instance, in Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi’s novel, *Ancestral Sacrifice* the heathens also tended to isolate Christians from contact with their traditional culture which the missionaries considered to be to be an impediment to civilization and progress. In time, the Asana Christians imbibed the missionary prejudice against traditional culture. Consequently, they refused to participate in the festivals of their people and other cultural activities. Many African writers were sensitive about the loss of African culture and glory of the rich heritage. We must be reminded of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* which tries to sum up the African religion thus:

“How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were

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<sup>1</sup>Ngugi, 1972:31.

amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer be like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”<sup>1</sup>

This means that the people that were unified are now divided with the introduction of the new religion by the white missionaries who did this just to implant their ideologies and to subdue the Africans in a way that would ease their doctrines which paved ways to the colonial governance. These religious conflicts are well defined through the novel *Ancestral Sacrifice*:

“Apart from religious differences which sometimes divided them, the people of Asana had very much in common. They were united in a common cultural heritage until the catholic missionaries arrived. When the missionaries established a school and a church, everything changed like a sudden shift of wind. The Christian converts began to condemn Ancestral worship and called on the village chief to abolish it, and that started the conflict between the traditionalists and the converts.”<sup>2</sup>

In their determination to enforce a new morality they have condemned polygamy, social permissiveness among Africans. Coming from societies in which authority has become increasingly absolutist, the missionaries have sought to enforce religious laws in their congregations against what they have considered to be the ungodly manners of living. Monogamous marriages become the rule rather than the exception for African Christians. Adultery and fornication are punished with the expulsion from the church. The insistence on monogamous marriage disrupts several pre-existing polygamous households. (One man, one wife)

There is another point that needs to be mentioned. The missionaries comport themselves as if God is racist so the people without European name would not have access to the paradise because they asked Africans to change their names to European ones. A typical example is illustrated through his *Ancestral sacrifice*:

“Can’t we wait for a while? One sister said. “Sister Frema is on her way.” She meant Martha Freeman. Before she became a convert, she was called AmaFrema. She adopted

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958: 158.

<sup>2</sup> Nyantakyi, 1998:12.

Martha when she was baptized and decided to Europeanize her surname by spelling it Freeman.”<sup>1</sup>

From the above quotation, it is meaningful to say that nothing is good about Africa, even the names since Africans have to Europeanize their name to suit the desire of the Europeans. But several Africans have understood the pride in their indigenous African names that is why just before or after the independence they have decided to get back their African names. Examples are Kwame Nkrumah who was called Francis; Chinua Achebe had Albert as his Christian name, Ngugi waThiog’o as James, just a few to mention. And the only thing good things about Africa are its resources such as gold, diamond, uranium and the petroleum products.

### **3.2. Education**

Education is very important in every society. It helps maintain the social norms and structures of the people of every type of society. This same education promotes social change. The great part of education is informal, being received by the young from example and behavior of elders who are the role models of the society. By normal ways education grows out of the environment and the learning processes are directly related to the regular ways designed by the society. But when the missionaries came, they did not think that Africans had education and their first aim is to educate the Africans. A typical example is given through Father Goodsman’s saying in *Ancestral Sacrifice*. He says: “We came here to work with you. Our main aim is to educate your children so they can compete with the outside world in the future<sup>2</sup>.”

The imperialist powers did not introduce education into the ‘Dark Continent. These people rather introduced a new type of formal education that substituted the ones that existed

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:54-55.

<sup>2</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:14

before their arrivals on the continent. The principal objective of the colonial system of education was to train the indigenous people to help them to administer the local administration by employing the Africans at the lowest ranks.

Education has been universally recognized as the basic feature and engine of growth. It is also a tool to fight poverty and it through education that we have the foundation for higher standards of living. Education is an important weapon in the long run to eliminate poverty. It gives people knowledge and information which bring in turn changes in the way people think, feel and act. The importance of Education cannot be undermined.

Education has also been identified as methods used by the European colonizers to overcome and to exploit the native Africans. And this same education was later used to fight against the white colonizers to acquire independence from them. So the European type of education introduced in Africa has had positive and negative effect on the continent.

This section of my research work is centered on pre-colonial and colonial education. In fact the most crucial aspect of pre-colonial education and its relevance of the African cultures before the introduction of the colonial system of education and its impacts in the life of the Africans from that time up to date.

### **3.2.1. Education in pre-colonial Africa**

Before the wind of colonization blew on Africa, Africans acquired their education not through the school system. Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi makes a brief observation of how our forefathers were wise without the book knowledge through one of his characters, Dabo. “Our forefathers saw no schools and knew no books. Yet they passed on from generation to generation much more wisdom than can be found in any books. Let us burn them all.<sup>1</sup>” The author of *Ancestral sacrifice* want to say even though our grandfathers did not have formal

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 94

education, they still have wisdom through the informal which was handled down from one generation to another.

In pre-colonial African societies, the pre-colonial African education was centered on the community through different means. There was no separation between education and the productive activities. The child learned progressively by observing and learning from the elders of the community where he lived, in order to fit into the society progressively. That was the type of education that the pre-colonial Africans inculcated into their children.

Some aspects of the pre-colonial education may be said to be formal, because there were programs specifically designed by the teachers who were the elders of the community to suit the students who were the youth in the community. The programs were gradually designed for the child according to the age in order to initiate him to the ritual of the society when he or she to come to the age needed for a specific ritual or work. Even in later stages in life, the youth becoming adult learned progressively by joining other secret societies or brotherhood. Some communal educations dated back in pre-colonial Africa, examples are the hunting sections, the religious rituals and the traditional medicine which are laid down from a family or a clan from one generation to another.

Before the advent of the Europeans to the African continent, history has asserted that in pre-colonial Africa literacy was so popular that there were universities in certain African countries like Egypt, Morocco and Mali. This is to show that there was standard education in Africa before the arrival of colonization in Africa. This is confirmed through Walter Rodney's book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

“Along the Nile, in North Africa, in Ethiopia, in the Western Sudan, and along the East African coast, a minority of Africans became literate, producing a situation comparable to Asia and Europe before the latter part of the 19th century. As in other parts of the world, literacy in Africa was connected with religion, so that in Islamic countries it was a Koranic education and in Christian Ethiopia the education was designed to train priests and monks. Muslim education was particularly extensive at the primary level, and it was also available at the secondary and university levels. In Egypt there was the Al-Azhar University, in

Morocco the University of Fez, and in Mali the University of Timbuktu-all testimony to the standard of education achieved in Africa before the colonial intrusion.”<sup>1</sup>

This is to say that even before the introduction of the European system of education, the African continent has developed a very high system of education not only in the Northern part of the continent, but also in the Sub-Saharan part of the continent. Walter Rodney later continues to say that in the Yoruba state of Ketu in the 19th century, there existed a school of history, where a master drilled into the memories of his pupils a long list of the kings of Ketu and their achievements<sup>2</sup>. Of course, reliance on memory alone placed severe limits on education of that type, and that is why education was much more advanced in those African countries where the use of writing had come into being.

### **3.2.2. The Colonial System of Education**

The new type of education by the missionaries, on one hand, stimulated values and practices which amounted to informal education. The colonial system of education was not an educational system which was designed to give young people confidence and pride as members of the African Society but it rather inculcated them the values of the imperialist powers that seemed to be superior to that of the Africans. In *Ancestral Sacrifice*, Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi shows the link between the school and the missionary. He mentions this:

“Gradually, the Christians refused to associate with traditionalists, although they allowed all children in their schools. Tension heightened when they would not take part in communal labour and refused to recognize the power of the chief because they said he associated with the Stool-House which contained an Ancestral Shrine that was believed to protect the souls of the villagers. In revenge, the traditionalists withdrew their children from school and stopped them from watching foreign films with the claim that the children might be brain-washed.”<sup>3</sup>

The colonial system of education taught the indigenous people how to read, write, and calculate in the Europeans’ languages. In addition to that, there were other subjects that were

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<sup>1</sup>Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington D.C: Howard University Press (1972) p.17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1973:16

<sup>3</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 12.

added such as History and Geography of the colonialists. Chinua Achebe gives a typical example through his novel *Anthills of the Savannah*, when he mentions:

“... Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us. Except that our fathers were not very famous in the invention line. But what does it matter? The French taught their little African piccaninnies to recite: our forefathers, the Gauls... It didn't stop Senghor from becoming a fine African poet...A true descendant of the Mandigauls!”<sup>1</sup>

But before the above quotation, Achebe once criticized the British approaches to teach their culture in their colonies through his novel *Arrow of God*, he compares the British manners of teaching to that of the French. He says:

“... Well, never mind. We British are a curious bunch, doing everything half-half-heartedly. Look at the French. They are not ashamed to teach their culture to backward races under their charge.”<sup>2</sup>

From this point of view, we can deduce that the various European nations had their different techniques of inculcating their culture to their various colonies and this had greatly affected the methods of ruling their colonies because certain European nations like France wanted to eradicate the culture in the French colonies so that these colonies would adopt theirs which was better than that of us which were regarded as backward.

Apart from that, other practical things or subjects such as gardening, sanitation and personal hygiene were taught in order to let the new students live a decent life like the Europeans did.

Since it was said Africans had no history before the Advent of the Europeans on the continent, there would be no African history that were taught in the colonial schools and the only things that were taught in schools were the ‘Great Men’ of Europe. Examples of these great men were the Kings and Queens of Europe. From the colonial system of school's curricula, one learned the great advents and historical developments and the learners were

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, Chinua, *Anthills of the Savannah*, Heinemann, Pearson Educational Limited (1987) p.38.

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, Chinua, *Arrow of the gods*, London, Heinemann Educational Books (1964) p. 36.

taught the European colonial wars of pacification, the evolution of their constitutions, and the growth of their empires. The *Holy Bible* was part of their literature. A reference of this is given through Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, when the book that was written by the then District Commissioner in *Things Fall Apart*, George Allen has been lent to Tony Clark by Captain Winterbottom. Through George Allen's book, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, one can read the British attitude to imperialism and to the indigenous people in the colonies. The last chapter headed 'The Call' displays the enthusiasm and missionary zeal of an administrator in the British Civil Service:

"For those seeking but a comfortable living and a quiet occupation Nigeria is closed and will be closed until earth has lost some of its deadly fertility and until the people live under something like sanitary conditions. But for those in search of a strenuous life, for those who can deal with men as others deal with material, who can grasp situations, coax events, shapes destinies and ride on the crest of a wave of time Nigeria is holding out her hands. For men who in India have made the Briton the law-maker, the organizer, the engineer of the world, this new, old land has great rewards and honourable work. I know we can find the men...it is our greatest pride that they do- albeit tearfully-send us fearless and erect, to lead the backward races into line. "Surely we are the people!" Shall it be the Little Englander for whom the Norman fought the Saxon on his fields? Was it for him the archers bled at Crécy and Poitiers, or Crowell drilled his men? It is only for the desk our youngsters read of Drake and Frobisher, of Nelson, Clive and men like Mungo Park? Is it for the counting-house they learn of Carthage, Greece and Rome? No, no; a thousand time no! The British race will take its place, the British blood will tell. Son after son will leave the Mersey, strong in the will of his parent today, stronger in the deed of his fathers in the past, braving the climate, taking the risks, playing his best in the game of life."<sup>1</sup>

The first schools since the advent of the Whiteman on the continent were set up by the missionaries. And when these missionaries won the ground for the colonial administrations, the latter sought to design a specific type of curricula that would suit their interest by working the African mind psychologically in such a way that they would not think about their dignity as true sons or daughters to go against them. Once again, through Kaakyire Akomoso Nyantakyi's *Ancestral sacrifice*, a character in the name of AwoYaa Akoto makes this observation which points out how the school wants to destroy their culture. She says:

"I knew it, and I have always warned that these people are here for one reason: true. I have always felt it my bones, and if we don't stand up to them, we will one day put our hands on

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1964: 33.

our heads and scream buei! buei! buei! If the animal sees you it won't bite, it won't show you teeth."<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the foundation of Western education in Africa was laid by the Christian missionaries who were eager to use literacy training to introduce Christianity and win converts or the African heathens to their religion. Various missionary groups were continuing to use education as a tool for expanding religious activities and enlarging their own sphere of influence. It was frequently believed by Western missionaries that traditional religious beliefs and practices were inferior, and traditional customs had to be done away with before the acceptance of Christianity.

Since the elders in the communities would be hard to convince, there is the need to turn to the young ones of the communities. This could be done through the schools set up by the white missionaries and the teaching would be in the colonizer's language and the *Holy Bible* was the source of literature. Once their children have gone to school, they begin to show interest in the strange religion of the white missionaries, religion which denies the truth of African religious beliefs. This philosophy did not happen without resistance or problems, and gave for instance rise to the process which can be seen as religious syncretism in religious beliefs today.

Although the missionaries' main task was to make people accept the Bible and its teachings, Christianity was turned into an ideology which could be used to convince people not to resist white domination.

### **3.2.3. The impact of education**

Education is the most obvious factor of the changes in the traditional pre-colonial organizations. The whiteman's system of education has changed the perception of African

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998: 13.

ways of living because by learning from the new system of education introduced by the colonizers, they easily forget the old ways that we are used to before getting into the new school.

Through his article, “Conquest of the Mind”, Jason A. McGarvey gives a brief account of how the colonial system of education has affected the life of Africans. He writes about a man from Tanzania whose name is Semali who is highly educated. In this article, he paints a vivid picture of the real life experiences of Semali during colonization. He writes:

“Education is slavery of the mind...While I was growing up in what was then called Tanganyika; we had already been under colonization for nearly a century – first by the Germans, and then the British after the First World War. The colonial school I attended did not teach me to be a member of Chagga society. Although I had certain knowledge system as a member of the village, I read, wrote, and spoke things at school that did not fit into village life. I always wore two different hats. I developed this double-consciousness so well that I did not realize it. In order for the colonizers to exploit the Chagga for labor they first needed to establish themselves as the authority. Since authority traditionally rested in the hands of the Chagga elders, the colonizers needed to begin dismantling Chagga cultural traditions. The main tool for doing this was the colonial school. The colonial school was set up to instill the values and practices of the colonizers on the indigenous people so that the indigenous people would open up their land and their minds to market economies. In order to establish control over these economies, the colonizers had to first establish control over the socialization of the people. As a result, the colonial schools began socializing the children in ways that conflicted with their traditions. The children began to lose faith and respect for the elders as authority figures, and began to see the colonizers as the authority...”<sup>1</sup>

This is a typical history of the effect of colonialism on the African socio-political and economic organizations since the African’s encounter with the imperialists. This has become a conflict between generations and communities. The old and the young generation see things differently to the point that there is always some misunderstanding.

According to McGarvey in the “Conquest of the Mind”, Semali’s village began to fall apart when the colonizers gradually replaced the African traditions with the colonial education. As their culture disappeared, he sees the importance of the Africans to be self-reliant. McGarvey writes:

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<sup>1</sup>McGarvey, Jason A., “Conquest the Mind”, Pennsylvania State Research, U.S.A (1997) p. 18

“Traditionally, village elders were responsible for passing the social values and customs of our community on to the children,” tells Semali. “However, children were not taught using the same methods that the colonial schools later used. Rather than reading books and taking exams, the children in the village ‘learned by doing,’ what is called mtato, or ‘imitative play’”. “The philosophy of this type of learning is known as apvunda,” he continues. “Through apvunda children are not merely taught abstract pieces of knowledge to be memorized for exams, but instead are taught knowledge that was necessary in everyday Chagga life. This knowledge extends into three practical areas: social duties, social values, and spiritual beliefs.”<sup>1</sup>

Most of the educated Africans turn to live like the white men and in the end, they turn down the African traditional values. But on the other hand, some of them tend to the traditional life when they come back to their root, which is their village.

Above all, several African theorists think that the colonial system of education has done more harm than good and it is in this perception that the famous Kenyan activist and writer Ngũgĩ waThiong’o through his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* shows his anger toward isolationist feelings colonial education causes. He states:

“The process annihilates people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves.”<sup>2</sup>

As most of the African writers, Ayi Kwei Armah from his book *African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?*, tries also to say something about the colonial system of education and he directly attacks the educated Africans who went the school of the colonial powers and took over after these people had gone. They were able to fight the imperialist powers because they had learn too much from them and they had sent them back to their countries, they copied them blindly without giving them the ‘*Uhuru*’ that they deserved but the only thing they do is about their interests. For Armah, the trouble comes from the educated few Africans:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 1997: 18.

<sup>2</sup>Thiong’o, 1981: 21.

“The successful African leader is likely to have gone quite far up the ladder of assimilation set up for his benefit by the white man. The system is quite overtly one of the progressive isolation of the subject: a heroic adventure, in literary terms. The desire to excel in competition with one's peers in a colonial situation becomes enlisted in an incentive system that offers increasing rewards in proportion as the competing individual draws nearer the colonialist ideal.”<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the colonial education has made a lot changes in the life of the Africans. It is in this view that David C. Woolman through his article “Educational Reconstruction and Post-colonial Curriculum: A comparative Study of Four African Countries”, (an investigation in Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and Nigeria) tries to demonstrate how the European nations through this put in their best to separate the African students from their local communities. He observes:

“Western education in African conditions was a process of psychological de-ruralisation. The educated African became ... a misfit in his own village... when he graduated ... his parents did not expect him to continue living with them, tending the cattle or cultivating the land.”<sup>2</sup>

Another critical examination of the European education was conducted in 1964 by Godfrey N. Brown on the British in West and Central gives also an account of how the British policy of education on the life of Africans. Brown’s article entitled “British Educational policy” in West and Central Africa states the way African people expected much from the British at first but they were soon disappointed over the end results. The education that was given to the indigenous people did not meet their needs. He writes:

“Why do you teach our children only to use the Native axe and knife, and pravent us using saws and hammers? Why do you tell us to make wooden spoons? Do you not want us to climb the ladder of civilization? We buy metal spoons from the store. Is it wrong for our children to want to have chairs and beds and be like the European? It is not easy to tell our children ‘No, you must want to be Native’; ‘No, you must make spoons because it is hand and eye training’; ‘No, the Pass Laws are not all bad because they are made to protect you’.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Armah, AyiKwei, *African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?*, Paris/Dakar, PrésenceAfricaine (1967) p.16.

<sup>2</sup>Woolman, David C., “Educational Reconstruction and Post-colonial Curriculum: A comparative Study of Four African Countries”, *International Education Journal*, Vol2, N°5 (2001) p.210.

<sup>3</sup>Brown, Godfrey N., “British Educational policy in West and Central Africa”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol2, N°3 (1964) p. 2.

Significantly, the colonial education is the source of most of the evils that our society has developed with and most of the African writers have through one character or another tried to depict the way Africans show one way or another some discomforts about the indigenous beliefs. The colonial education has not become something new to certain Africans even those living downtown in the villages. Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi's *Ancestral Sacrifice* has described this through the following passage:

“Look how we suffered before we got them to teach traditional studies to our children. These people and everything of theirs must go. We should not let ourselves be trapped in the mould of education which I think is designed to make us hate not only ourselves, but also everything that is ours. It will be very wrong for us to permanently depend on them for book knowledge. After all, before the deer discovered its hollow habitat under a tree trunk, it slept.”<sup>1</sup>

Africans have been disenchanting before and they have noted the recurrent gap between promise and colonial plans for education, land reforms and health. Meja Mwangi's character Old Mwaniki spoke about such promises in the novel *Carcase for Hounds* from Kenya. The old man talks despairingly about a promised school for children:

“They learned nothing. Only how to read and write. And in anticipation of things to come, they were taught how to handle a pruner at school. A tree pruner like their fathers used!”<sup>2</sup>

Just as Mwangi's old man is depicted to have serious doubts about the value of colonial education, there is another character, the main character in Charles Mangua's novel *Son of Woman* who is Dodge Kiunyu also cursed the colonial education even though he is presented as having a great deal to say regarding the value of education in an independent Kenya. Like the Old Mwaniki things do not look bright for him because the educated African prefers a white collar job rather to concentrate on blue collar jobs before getting what they really want. He says:

“That's me. Plain broke. Broke as a dry twig. Broke as hell. Not a thing. Nothing. Damn it. And I am a graduate. That's what I am. A graduate. University of London Geography

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:94.

<sup>2</sup>Mwangi, Meja, *Carcase for Hounds*, London, Heinemann (1964) p.60

Honours at Makerere and I can't get a job. That's how helpful education is. Very helpful. Gosh! I am hungry.”<sup>1</sup>

European power used education as a foundation for both political and economic reasons. Colonizing nations held that belief of white race superiority to let the European nations educate and bring civilization to the inferior African people, and this notion was exploited by the colonial powers. In order to achieve social control over the Africans, the European nations misused education. Colonial system of education was used to remove the colonized people from their indigenous learning and beliefs. Colonizers had made the African people to be useful and qualified personnel for their economic development. Moreover, for colonizers education was a means to win converts to their religion.

To some extent, the process of colonization ultimately created the seeds of its own destruction. When Western nations conquered and ruled the African nations as colonies during the previous centuries, they undermined the traditional ways of life that had existed, and as a result the traditional rulers began to lose their power. In their place came a new generation of African leaders, men like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Patrice Lumumba in Congo and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, who were often Western-educated and sufficiently aggressive to vie the power of the colonial rulers. Before they attended University in Europe or America, the leaders attended mission schools in their various countries and these schools were headed by the missionaries. This generation of African leader was able to appeal to people and lead national independence movements.

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<sup>1</sup>Mangua, *Charles, Son of Woman*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House (1971) p.15.

## **Chapter Four: The implementation of colonial rule**

In order to exploit and control the natural resources of Africa and Africans in general, the European powers had to set different institutions to help them in dominating the colonies. The first intention is to have the political control over the pre-colonial states, the African kingdoms. By taking control of the political powers of these kingdoms, they had to dismantle these kingdoms first. These had led to the various wars of resistance that we heard about in the history. Secondly, after these kingdoms had been dismantled, the next action is to exploit the raw materials or even the human resources of the continent in miserable ways that would be easy for the continent to recover from.

As I have mentioned above, education has played a great role in brainwashing the African mentality and most of the educated people are prepared to build the ideas of colonialism by working for the colonial government by letting their various nations pauper through exploitation while the metropolitan nations would be getting richer and richer in the competing world of the European continent.

According to Aimé Césaire, one of the fathers of Negritude, through his work “Discourse on Colonialism”, he thinks that there are no equal relations but the ones of domination and submission between the colonizers and the colonized. He paints a lively picture of what knocks into his eyes in the colonies:

“I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and, in a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries, “boys”, artisans, office clerks, and interpreters necessary for the smooth operation of business ... between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Césaire, Aimé, “Discourse on Colonialism”, New York, Monthly Review Press (2000)pp37-38.

The imposition of the political control of the European nations on Africa was the beginning of the colonialism. Colonialism had changed everything in Africa especially in terms of governance, economy, justice and culture.

#### **4.1. The governance**

European colonial rule in Africa not only represented the imposition of a new form of government but it was also part of a project of the fundamental reordering of African society. This project of new governance led to new forms of economic interactions, gender relations, and social norms by incorporating aspects from both the imposed European and indigenous African orders.

“But apart from the church, the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where the district commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial. Many of these messengers came from Umuru on the bank of the Great River, where the white men first came many years before and where they had built the centre of their religion and trade and government...”<sup>1</sup>

The implementation of the colonial rule created a new form of society as the indigenous African social norms and its methods of organization were faced with the European colonial ideologies and their mode of control. Though the interaction between the Europeans and the Africans had been going on for centuries in many ways along the various colonies in Africa, most Africans did not come directly into contact with the White oppressors and confront European culture until the late nineteenth or even early twentieth century.

This act of setting up the colonial government by the Europeans has crushed all previous forms of social organization on the African continent. Crawford Young in his essay, “The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective”, he emphasizes the brutality and the violence of the colonial encounter coupled with the colonial ideologies of superiority and

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958:125.

exploitation<sup>1</sup>. However, despite this violence inflicted on the African people, the colonial project was in reality much less coordinated and far less successful than the concept of Civilizing Mission implies.

Here again, Valentin Yves Mudimbe through his work, *The Idea of Africa*, suggests that:

“the goal of colonialism was to replace African ‘memories’ with a new ‘idea of Africa’, it failed miserably as political, social and historical currents of pre-colonial African societies continued to shape these societies throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the grandiose various across the continent, certain similarities existed among several pre-colonial African societies concerning the political organization, methods of interaction, and gender relations in the way that would have affected the civilizations of the indigenous Africans.

The colonial government was not only content of robbing the continent from its human and material resources, to maintain and consolidate its power over its colonies; it has to annihilate the indigenous cultures and values (religion, language, dressing codes, etc.) and replace them with modified and totally ambivalent ones. That is why every aspect of our culture and values has been reshaped to suit the need of the European nations. We can also say that everything in Africa has been diluted to render them powerless to enable the conquerors to impose their rules on us without any further resistance.

It is with a great disgrace that the European conqueror in the name of Captain Winterbottom’s attitude toward the indigenous Africans has nothing to write home about through Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*. He praises the French conquests in Africa:

“Their attitude to the native ruler is clear. They say to him: “This land has belonged to you because you have been strong enough to hold it. By the same token it now belongs to us. If you are not satisfied come and fight us.” What do we British do? We flounder from one

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<sup>1</sup>Young, 1994: 77-140

<sup>2</sup>Mudimbe, Valentin Y., *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press (1994) p.9.

expedient to its opposite. We do not only promise to secure old savage tyrants on their throne-or more likely filthy animals skins-we not only do that, but we now go out our way to invent chiefs where there none before. They make me sick”.<sup>1</sup>

From this quotation, one can see the different aspects of colonialism of the French and the British. The French has their ‘Direct Rule’ which is appreciated by Captain Winterbottom and in this colonial administration one can see that the French established directly a colonial government headed by French colonial administrator who tried dismantled the African kingship. On the other hand, the British colonial administration had its plans which were to maintain in the centralized states the African rulers who the British colonial administration painted as “savage tyrants”. Through these “savage tyrants” rulers they would have imposed their rules indirectly to the indigenous Africans. But in the non- centralized states, the need of making a chief was necessary in a way to confuse the Africans by using this new system of governance which they never experienced before.

By making comparison between the two colonial administrations, the British and the French, the latter imposed their rules directly to the indigenous Africans while the former imposed their own indirectly through the “savage tyrants” rulers in the centralized states and by nominating chiefs in places where they never had centralized states. At the end of this, we can deduce that Chinua Achebe depicts fictively the British Indirect Rule and the French Direct Rule through his novel, *Arrow of God*.

#### **4.2.The judicial system**

The colonial judicial system has been criticized because the colonizers knew nothing about the African manners of solving certain conflicts or they did not know how to approach the solutions to the African culture. The African culture for these foreigners is barbarian. With the seizure of control over the political power, it was therefore easy for them to implement their laws contrary to African traditional ways or manners of doing their judicial

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1964:36.

service. So the laws that they instilled in African were the laws that they applied to the judiciary service of their various nations. For instance, the British had their own laws which they had applied to the Anglophone colonies in Africa while France had its own laws for Francophone colonies.

“But stories were already gaining ground that the white man had not only brought a religion but also a government. It was said that they had built a place of judgment in Umuofia to protect the followers of their religion. It was even said that they had hanged one man who killed a missionary.”<sup>1</sup>

When we consider Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the laws of the clans were detained by the elders and the lawsuits are brought before the Egwugwu, the masked spirits of the ancestors that played a prominent role in solving conflicts in the ancient traditional Igbo society<sup>2</sup>. These Egwugwu were the judges of the traditional courts. They heard the plaintiff and the defendant and they solved the conflicts according to the norms of the traditional society. When they solved the problems by giving the final judgment, we never heard about any appeal. So conclusion can be drawn that the traditional judicial court was so good and the efficacy in it so clear to the people at that time that there was no need to write home about.

But with the advent of the Whiteman on the Igbo soil, everything has changed, the Egwugwu traditional court is replaced rapidly with the Whiteman’s own which in the eyes of the Umuofian people is not credible to be. But these are powerless to change the course of things because colonization has already taken root in their midst and some people among these are in favor of everything which is brought to them by the colonizers. Even if they want to protest, there is special police force in the name of the court messengers who would silence them because they are trained to silence the indigenous Africans in the name of the District commissioner whose power was irrevocable. The Queen of England is the highest judge and priestess and her laws must be implemented in the courts of her dominions. The District

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1958:112.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1958:93

Commissioner has to make sure that the laws of the Queen of England are efficiently carried out in her dominion. To execute and to keep order, he has trained an army of court messenger to do what that is expected from them to keep the laws of the Queen.

Even the fearful Egwugwu is powerless before the Whiteman's court and new government. The Egwugwu, the former judges of the traditional court may be sent to the Whiteman's court if they allegedly make a sentence which is not in good position to suit the Whiteman's court. The traditional judicial system in the African setting has gradually given way to the European court in Africa during colonization.

In general, the political organizations of the African continent in the pre-colonial period were in multiple forms: the centralized and the non-centralized states, and the theocracy state. Each of these organizations had its own judicial system. For instance, in the centralized states, the royal court was in charge of the laws and the court with the help of the prominent people such as the ministers and the chiefs. And in the theocracy state, it was the chief priest or priestess who tried to implement the laws of the gods when a lawsuit was brought before the court of the gods. After these African states were conquered by the European nations, the judicial system of the African states was no more needed and it also needed to be substituted by the laws of the conquerors' nations. The African laws and court became useless in the sense that the former rulers were even jailed because they unconsciously went wrong against the laws instituted by the new masters. Most of the time, the instituted laws were obvious to the former rulers. The narrator gives an account of the colonial judicial system by mentioning:

“Nothing! Excerpt perhaps God's intervention. I thought the government could step in our behalf, but I was wrong. The Stool act of 1865 pradvnts the government from interfering. They advise me to sit down with the natives and try to meet each other half-way.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:96.

These problems continued even after the advent of the independence. The new African leaders did not think of going back to the old judicial system of the continent because they had been educated in the Whiteman's school and they copied and pasted their manners of doing thing which they thought are good for the new nations. In most of the cases, the laws instituted by the Europeans favoured those who were close or faithful to their new regime. A typical example is depicted through Chinua Achebe's *Things fall Apart* when Enoch willingly desecrated the Egwugwu and he went without being punished by the Whiteman's court.

The setting of judicial courts by the colonizers has changed the course of the judicial affairs in the life of the indigenous Africans. The system of Egwugwu which played a great role of police has been replaced by the arrogant colonial police officers who were mostly fellow blacks from other regions where the Europeans settled before they continued their conquest to the hinterland of the continent. In Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, the policemen are referred as Captain Winterbottom's 'small boys'. They were semi-literate Africans and they expressed themselves through Pidgin English.

When referring to Chinua Achebe's novels, the setting of the colonial judicial system started from the novel *Things Fall Apart* where the colonial authorities started to take place with the District Commissioner and his court messengers who play a prominent role in their ways to solve conflict in the novel contrary to that of the indigenous Africans. But in *Arrow of God*, the colonial judicial has taken place with Captain Winterbottom with his "small boys" police force. The power of the white man is highly shown in this novel, when the colonial administration tried to stop a war between the village of Umuaro and Okperi. He writes:

"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...The white man, not satisfied that he had stopped the war, had gathered all the guns in Umuaro and asked the soldiers to break them in the face of all,

except three or four which he carried away. Afterwards he sat in judgment over Umuaro and Okperi and gives the disputed land to Okperi.”<sup>1</sup>

During colonization the European nations did not only set up a colonial government, they also set up other institutions to render their colonial administration very strong in the way that the indigenous ones will be powerless before them. They thought everything about Africa is backward and in this backwardness they had to implement a new judicial system to solve the conflict that they made worse with their different techniques or approaches. These had made the saviors of the continent which they had turned into joysticks which they could easily handle through their judicial system of solving things.

### **4.3. The economy**

Despite all attention paid by the colonial officials, the colonial period saw the creation of a very large number of the mixture of social norms and institutions imposed by the Europeans ideals became interwoven with those of many African societies. With the establishment of new taxes and wage labor, millions of people migrated to urban center, where the cross-breeding of society was acute. As most pre-colonial African societies were predominantly rural, the urban environment challenged many traditional practices such the communal labor and the socialism ideology.

The most disruptive change in the colonial period was the shift to a capitalist market economy based on money. It is in this regard that Achebe makes a very important observation through his novel *Thing Fall Apart* when the narrator says:

“The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofa.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Achebe, 1964:28.

<sup>2</sup> Achebe, 1958:128.

### 4.3.1. The economy in Pre-colonial Africa

The economy in pre-colonial Africa was based on productions such as hunting and gathering, agriculture, mining and simple manufacturing. Most people in pre-colonial Africa were involved in agricultural production. It is also important to take a note that agriculture formed the mainstay of the indigenous Africans in the pre-colonial past. In the field of this enterprise, food production was greatly part of Africa and Africans' life, hence like most traditional African societies; there was self-sufficiency in food supply.

“...hunters who had gone hunting the night before were dressing their kill for the full moon sale. The market square cleaners were busy sweeping and arranging tables and benches for the traders. On full moon markets day, people came to trade at Asana from both nearby and distant village. Getting the market square ready was thus difficult, but the cleaners worked with devotion. They chanted and sometimes danced as they worked. The kenkey sellers brought their voluntary contribution of heavy balls of nkran-dokono, shito, and kyanam which were served to the cleaners for breakfast.”<sup>1</sup>

Peasants and farmers in pre-colonial Africa would produce for their own use and may have little to trade for some foods. But farming was firstly for subsistence. There was no conception of production for the global economic market. The land belonged to anybody in the pre-colonial Africa, farmers had rights over the land to use but they could not sell the land mainly because there were no buyers either.

Trade is also another factor of economy in pre-colonial Africa. Trade during that period was within the continent and it did not go beyond the continent itself. It consisted of local exchange known as barter. Local trade was commonly highly organized. Market days rotated between different villages and in some cases the markets were organized on neutral land between the villages. It was noted that trade within regions was supported by regional currencies, such as small imported sea shells or locally produced cloth.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:16.

Africa's economy before the arrival of the Europeans was largely rural and agricultural as it is mentioned above. The majority of the people were farmers growing cereals, bananas, plantains, yams and palm oil. Livestock like cattle, goats, sheep, goats and fowls were also kept. In the forest hunting was an important supplementary economic activity. Along the water bodies and the sea coast fishing and salt making were the principal activities.

Besides agriculture and fishing, people engaged themselves in the manufacture of a range of handicrafts: textiles, metal goods such as metal tools and ornaments. This wide range of products was exchanged at local markets in the villages or carried along well-established trade routes for exchange in regional markets. In certain area, goods were exchanged by barter or by the use of gold dust and salt also.

The pre-European trade did not end abruptly with the coming of Europeans. It continued well into the eighteenth century. In the last quarter of the fifteenth century the Europeans participated in the coastal trade between the coastal towns and their neighbors. The Slave trade contributed to the rise of a class of wealthy indigenous African merchants who played leading roles in the sadventeenth and eighteenth century coastal society and among the strong powerful African kingdoms.

Conclusion can be drawn that Africans were no strangers to commerce before the advent of the Europeans into their continent. Long before then they were exchanging among themselves with local agricultural and industrial products. It is also clear that between a certain period of time, Africans responded to the European demand for gold, ivory and other tropical goods by concentrating on the production of these commodities for export.

### **4.3.2. The economy of Africa during colonial era**

The colonial economy in most countries in Africa was structured to improve the economies of the colonizing countries or the metropolitan European powers. It has been noted that Africans were in commercial contact with the outside world before the Europeans arrived on the coastal shores of the African continent.

Trade in Africa during colonial era was firstly set up on the coast and it was done between the European merchants and the African middlemen. These people exchanged goods such as gold, ivory and other tropical goods from Africa for European goods such as cloth, knives, kettles and many more. Certain European nations tried to monopolize the trade on the African coast and this had led to wars among the Europeans.

An immediate effect of the trade during the colonial area was the construction of lodges, forts and castles on the coasts of Africa. These settlements were meant to protect the people from attacks by their enemies, both Europeans and Africans, and to serve as warehouses where their trade goods would be kept for safety reasons. Because of this trade, the coastal villages became great commercial centers which drew a large numbers of people from the interior to the coast.

These trade posts emerged on the coastal towns as centers of power backed by the guns of the European settlements led to the disintegration of the African kingdoms with the new trade introduced in term of the Atlantic slave trade. This was possible with the selling of the firearms to the different African kingdoms which waged wars against one another in searching for control over the trade with the Europeans. The war among the African kingdoms had led to the captives sold into slavery.

The Atlantic slave trade, of course, not only caused widespread instability and depopulation but also completely distorted economic and social relations in Africa. Many

able-bodied people such as farmers, fishermen were all carried off into slavery in the Americas and the West Indian islands. A major consequence of the development of the European trans-Atlantic slave trade, therefore, was the underdevelopment of Africa in the political, economic and social fields. This underdevelopment continued during the colonial period when the European subjected the human and natural resources of the country to intensive exploitation and oppression.

This trade in gold and ivory mutually benefited the Europeans and the Africans in terms of exchanging goods for import and export. The trans-Atlantic slave trade uprooted many Africans from their ancestral homes and resettled them in foreign lands, thus creating what is called the Africa Diaspora. This Africa diaspora has contributed greatly to the culture and civilization of the New-world. Finally we must note that for the continent of Africa, the trans-Atlantic trade was more harmful than good. It discouraged the development of our handicraft industry and productive effort; it encouraged inter-ethnic wars and raids and brutalized our people

#### **4.3.3. The impact of colonial trade on Africa**

The economic policies set by the colonizers in Africa, for instance, discouraged indigenous industrialization, but on the other hand promoted export crops and mineral production to feed the European factories. The colonies in Africa served, not only as ready consuming sources of cheap raw materials to feed the growing industries in Europe, but also as trading post for European merchants and traders, and at the same moment supported the importation of the finished products because the Europeans wanted an outlet for their own manufactured goods in order to prevent declining domestic consumption, and falling rate and profit at home.

E.A Boateng has made a very fruitful observation about the main purposes why the colonizers vision about African's economies would be that fair through his book entitled *A political geography of Africa* where he states:

“Owing to the greatly superior economic and technological advantages which the developed nations enjoy, they are still in a position to determine or even to dictate to a large extent, the economy fortunes of the developing nations which depend on them for the very things, such as capital goods, technical know-how and entrepreneurial skills, which they need in order to modernise and upgrade their fragile economies.”<sup>1</sup>

In the scheme, what mattered most was how the colonial economy could benefit the colonizers. The ending of colonial rule in most colonies in the African continent has not resulted in a complete control of their economic affairs, not even their political affairs. They are independent states only in the name. We can observe from this that many African countries' history in which the achievement of political independence does not automatically lead to economic independence.

Europeans were attracted to Africa by the gold, ivory and other tropical goods trade, and in their eagerness to obtain these products, they introduced a wide range of attractive goods into the African economy. Among them were European textiles, guns, gunpowder and alcohol. While the textiles improved the living standards of the people, guns, gunpowder and alcohol proved socially harmful. The guns and gunpowder made inter-ethnic rivalry and conflict more violent than before. Life became insecure for ordinary able-bodies who were often kidnapped by armed men, or taken captive after inter-ethnic wars. We have heard stories about white men who made the powerful guns and the strong drinks and took slaves away across the seas, but no one thought the stories were true<sup>2</sup>.

The large-scale importation of alcohol encouraged alcoholism among Africans. Many Africans soon became addicted to gin and brandy which gradually displaced palm wine,

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<sup>1</sup>Boateng, 1978: 78.

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, 1958:101

Akpeteshie and other locally brewed spirits that they used to celebrate advents. With the advent the alcoholism in African societies, it would be probably that the crime rate would be increased.

Apart from Chinua Achebe who mentions indirectly the effect of slavery through *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* as part of the economic activity set up by the Europeans and certain healthy men in Africa, Ayi Kwei Armah writes a novel which depicts the two types of slavery that Africa had faced in the hands of the Arabs and the Europeans. Armah paints a vivid picture of slavery through his novel *Two Thousand Seasons*:

“The first wish of the white men is this: they have our land, of the beauty... These metals it is the white men’s wish to take away from us,..., This is the white men’s second wish,” Isanusi continued. „They have been told of the forest here and of the grasslands; of the birds and animals we have roaming the land. It is the white men’s wish to have us help them kill these birds for food. The elephants they say... There is a third wish the white men have made. Land they want from us, but not the way guests ask the use of land. The white men want... Listen to their fourth wish. The white say they have heard we have many people here- too many, they say- and that our women’s fertility is reported a wonder among them. It is their wish to take numbers of our people away from us. They say these numbers would in the new places beyond the sea work on land as fertile as ours here...”<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation has drawn a vivid picture of the ways the slave trade has come to Africa. Europeans had many ideas in mind when they set foot on the African continent. They, first of all, wanted the raw materials of the continent by trading with Africa. And it is with some of the materials that they brought to the continent such the weapons and the ammunitions which quickened the widespread devastation of the human resources of Africa. A typical result from the slave trade is the decimation of the population of the African continent and this has enriched the European continent and the New World which benefited from the massacre that Africa has gone through in the hands of trade with the white race.

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<sup>1</sup>Armah, Ayi Kwei, *Two Thousand Seasons*, London, Heinemann (1973) p.82-83

## **CONCLUSION**

This research work has argued that African culture underwent many changes since its first contact with the European world through the missionaries and the other institutions of European imperialism. The indigenous Africans were extremely varied and diverse before the arrival of the Europeans. In their former situation, they were organized in different aspects of socio-political and economic forms which suited their ways of living before their encounter with foreign powers in which eyes our manners of doing things were complex so after their conquest they had to inculcate into us new styles of living in the sense that we had to adopt and adapt to superior cultures which were theirs.

The destruction of traditional African values by the European imperialism and the conversion of Africans to Christianity are two factors that lead the continent to its current state. Many African writers try to reform their society through their writings but this reform proves to be inefficient when facing the sequels of the European Imperialism. The social and cultural norms of African society have ceased to be the foundation of our ways or manners of living. Lewis Nkosi, another African writer points out through his book *Home and Exile* the radical nature of the change in Africans. He observes that:

“First there has been a change in the social organisation which has resulted in more emphasis being placed on the individual rather than the communal. Hence the art of communal celebration is being replaced by lonely artistic creation - by an individual vision, so to speak. For the first time the African artist is confronting the community as an individual (even an alienated individual) whose vision may not conform to that of the statesman, the political or the religious leader.”<sup>1</sup>

From Lewis Nkosi’s observation, one can deduce the social organization of the African continent before the arrival of the European. The African social organization was that of communal and with the introduction of Christianity and the other imperial institutions, the communal organization of Africans had turned into individual European systems. Communal

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<sup>1</sup>Nkosi, Lewis, *Home and Exile*, London, Longman (1965) p. 104.

responsibility before self-interest which is our cultural pride. If we lose that, we lose our self-respect<sup>1</sup>.

Another important aspect of African literature in reeducating the African continent after years of denigration under the imperial powers is through African writers and their writings. For instance, Chinua Achebe tried to reply to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which depicts the African traditional life as a savage one. Chinua Achebe believed that Joseph Conrad did not understand our ways of living since the latter perceived the African culture with an imperialist mind. In his book, *Home and Exile* Achebe describes his writings as part of a "process of re-storying peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession<sup>2</sup>". He later explains his restless effort in his social and political role through another piece of his writings, *Morning Yet On Creation Day* that he wanted "to help [African] society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement<sup>3</sup>". These are the ways Chinua Achebe tried to contribute to the reeducation of African peoples. It is not with reserve that Simon Gikandi backs up Chinua Achebe's writings when saying through his book, *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction* that:

"Achebe's seminal status in the history of African literatures lies precisely in his ability to have realized that the novel provided a new way of reorganizing African cultures . . . and his fundamental belief that narrative can indeed propose an alternative world beyond the realities imprisoned in colonial and postcolonial relations of power."<sup>4</sup>

The destruction of African socio-political and economic organizations has been briefly summarized through *Osiris Rising, A Novel Africa Past, Present and Future*, a novel written by the prominent Ghanaian writer Ayi kwei Armah. It is through an article entitled "Who We

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:42

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, 2000:79

<sup>3</sup>Achebe, 1975: 17-72

<sup>4</sup>Gikandi, Simon, *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction*, London, James Currey (1991) p.3.

Are and Why” in the novel that summarizes the real scourges affecting the African continent.

The article mentions this:

“For centuries now our history in Africa has been an avalanche of problems. We’ve staggered from disaster to catastrophe, enduring the destruction of Kemet, the scattering of millions ranging the continent in search of refuge, the waste of humanity in the slave trade organized by Arabs, Europeans and myopic, crumb-hungry Africans ready to destroy this land for their unthinking profit. We have endured the plunder of a land now carved up into fifty idiotic neocolonial states in this age when large nations seek survival in larger federal unions, and even fools know that fission is death. It may look as if all we ever did was to endure this history of ruin, taking no steps to end the negative slide and begin the positive turn. That impression is false. Over the disastrous millennia there have been Africans concerned to work out solutions to our problems and to act on them. The traces these makers left are faint, because in the continuing triumph of Africa’s destroyers the beautiful ones were murdered, the land poisoned. Now wherever future seed seeks to take roots it strikes sand... We are after the intelligent action to change these realities. For we intend, as Africans, to retrieve our human face, our human heart, the human mind our ancestors taught to soar. This is who we are, and why.”<sup>1</sup>

To some degree, the decolonization process ultimately created the seeds of its own destruction. When the European nations conquered and ruled colonies during previous centuries, they undermined the traditional ways of life that had existed, and as a result the traditional rulers began to lose their power. The leaders of the land in the future would be men and women who had learned to read and write as it is said in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*<sup>2</sup> has showed its significance when in the places of former illiterate traditional rulers came a new generation of leaders, who were often western-educated and sufficiently aggressive to challenge the power of the colonial rulers. This new generation of African leaders was able to appeal to people and lead national independence movements.

The first generation of African leaders wanted to act in a way to annihilate everything that was built by the European nations and that will have negative repercussions on Africans. But fictionally, Nyantakyi tries to show how Africans wanted to delete everything that will remind us of the existence of the white men on their land through his novel *Ancestral sacrifice*. He points this out:

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<sup>1</sup>Armah, AyiKwei, *Osiris Rising, A Novel of Africa Past, Present and Future*, Senegal, Popenguine: Per Ankh (1995) p.10.

<sup>2</sup>Achebe, 1958: 181

“Every opinion expressed so far is highly respected. We all agree that the white man and everything he stands for must be destroyed. To destroy them in such perspective, however, is to remove the basis, the prop, and the very evidence that some strangers ever lived with us. Don’t you think our children and grandchildren deserve not only to hear, but also to see evidence of the white man’s presence?”<sup>1</sup>

Another way in which colonization has led indirectly later to decolonization was through the introduction of Christianity into colonial areas. Christian missionaries enthusiastically spread messages about “love” and the “brotherhood of man”, even though these messages were incompatible with the racial discrimination and economic exploitation that were often a fundamental part of colonialism. Thus, Christian leaders unintentionally provided moral and spiritual support for demand that colonial domination be ended.

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<sup>1</sup>Nyantakyi, 1998:94.

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