CHAPTER III: THE TRIBAL INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE COMMUNITY: Achebe’s Trilogy – *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*

One of the distinctive marks of pre-colonial Igbo society lies in the precedence of the communitarian protocols over the impulse of the individual. The concluding words of the novel *Arrow of God* “that no man howsoever great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgement against his clan”\(^1\) becomes also the dictum in any conflict with the community. Among the Igbos, a person’s obligation to the society calls for cooperation and individual’s submission to the counsel of the elders, the precepts, and laws of the land, which are established for the common good of the society. This means the subordination of an individual’s own interest to that of the community. The main characters of Achebe’s novels are projected as always feeling the endemic tensions of conflicting cultural values – the incessant discord between public loyalty to the gods and goddesses of the clan and private loyalty to the family. Achebe’s problematization of the individual agency of his tribal characters vis-a-vis the social mandate of the community in disturbed social situations compels one to closely examine the relationship between individuality and communitarian demands.

Achebe’s understanding of tribal society closely resembles the conception of pre-industrial societies among certain sociological thinkers,
especially Durkheim. According to Emile Durkheim, a prominent sociological thinker, society has a reality of its own over and above the individuals who comprise it. Members of the society are constrained by ‘social facts’, by ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him. In his view members of a society appear to have little or no control over his own actions, as his actions are controlled by the social system. This typology is true of most pre-industrial societies which still retain the belief in the priority of social order over and above the individual aspirations of the members. Durkheim views ‘collective solidarity’ or group cohesion as fundamental to the survival of a community. And this is ensured by the presence of ‘collective conscience’ which consists of common beliefs and sentiments. Without this consensus or agreement on the fundamental moral issues, social solidarity would be impossible and the individuals could not be bound together to form an integrated social unit. Without such social obligations backed by moral force, the cooperation and reciprocity which social life requires would be absent. If narrow self-interest rather than mutual obligation was the guiding force, conflict and disorder would come about. In Durkheim’s words, “For where (self) interest is the only ruling force each individual finds himself in a state of war with every other. The collective conscience therefore constrains individuals to act in terms of
the requirements of society and it is essential that Society has to be present in the individual.”2 This theory on society has been found applicable and is directly relevant to the study of unaffected tribal societies.

The pristine tribal society often witnessed the conflict between the individual and the community. But the social system also provided for the resolution of conflicts. Encounter with a superior culture (Western culture, for instance) often altered social relations at the cost of social harmony of the natives. This, in turn, produced crisis within an individual and his relationship with his society, and often the well-intentioned individual is hedged against the community whose system he tries to uphold. A careful reading of the narrative history of the Igbo society in Achebe’s trilogy manifestly shows the conflict between the individual and the community as an important area of study that needs critical examination.

Traditional life in pre-colonial tribal society subsisted on the collective solidarity of people who shared common customs and beliefs and an identical worldview. They were linked by blood or marriage ties and were, by the close-knit nature of their social relationships, deeply involved in one another’s lives. The value which sustains the society is collective responsibility, the responsibility of the group for the lives and
well-being of the individual members. In social relationships, anything that disrupts the orderly life of the community is deemed fit to be set right or removed. There is a tremendous respect for customs and tradition. The group and its interests always take precedence over the individual and his self-interest though individual achievements are venerated. The individual values most admired are sociability, prowess, courage, integrity, piety and industry. Some allowances may be made for temperamentental difference.\(^3\) And all these qualities are directly linked to the greater good of the society which individual interests must seek to fulfil.

As recorded in Achebe’s traditional novels, the impact of Western cultural incursion undermined the collective solidarity and tradition of the natives and thereby also the ideological matrix that held the pre-colonial traditional society together. The introduction of Christianity, for instance, alienated the converts from their traditional loyalty to the community, their tribal deities and their ancestors, and with that went the strongest sanction for individual action, social attitudes and behaviour. The collective conscience was therefore split and the community could no longer speak with one voice. The early Christian converts neither appealed to clan authority nor responded to its appeal. As neophytes, they were obsessed with their own self importance and were thus
contemptuous of all non-initiates. They called themselves “people of the church” and the non-Christians “the people of nothing” or “the people of the world” thereby excluding themselves from their ‘blood brothers’ or clan for the first time. The new-found faith had given them the courage to differentiate and separate themselves as a matter of prestige, mainly because of their new bond with the privileged white man and also due to the demands of the new faith.

But this is not to say that conflicts and groupism were absent in the past history of the Igbos and that the West alone is to be blamed for their entire national predicament; the leaders of the clan often quarrelled about one thing or another. For instance, in Arrow of God there was a long-drawn-out dispute before face marks were finally abolished, and the conflict between the high priests of Ulu and Idemili was well known throughout the village of Umuaro, and there were other disagreements of more or less serious nature before and since the issue of face marks. It was said that even children in their mother’s belly took sides in some disputes. But it can be safely said that it was after the Igbo people were alienated from their culture under foreign influence that issues for conflict within the society were multiplied and its intensity aggravated many-fold.

Achebe objectively handles the conflicts between the traditionalists and the Christians with skill and fair-mindedness. He does not see it as a
question of black versus white or of evil-minded foreigners subverting a perfect native way of life. He might have been tempted to do so at a time of militant nationalism (when the novel was written), but it would also have been too simplistic, indeed unrealistic. So, he adopts the more difficult and complex but realistic procedure of probing into his subject at the deep social and psychological levels, showing characters who are sincere in their convictions and who, because of their commitment to a creed or a way of life, cannot easily understand why things should be different from the way they want them to be.

The rapid spread of Christianity in Igboland is shown to have been facilitated by the structural weakness of the traditional Igbo society. In Umuofia of Things Fall Apart, after converting a handful of people, the missionaries built churches and afforded to send evangelists to the surrounding villages within a matter of few years. Though the activities of the missionaries cause pain to the leaders of the tribe, they console themselves with the hope that the white man’s ‘god’ will not last long. Besides, none of the converts were men of importance; they were mostly peopled with the kind of persons known locally as efulefu, worthless or empty men in the eyes of the society. To Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, the new converts were the ‘excrement’ of the clan and the new faith a ‘mad dog’ that has come to eat it up. Such frivolous attitude has helped
Christianity to establish itself firmly in Igboland. Through the character of Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, Achebe rightly points out how the local tribesmen themselves were responsible for the disintegration of the clan: “We have shown the white man the way to our house and given him a stool to sit on. If we now want him to go away again we must drive him away.” In other words, Ezeulu’s use of common personal pronoun ‘we’ shows that he admitted his share in the collapse of the traditional social structure. Ezeulu later learns that the white man’s religion is like a leper: “Allow him a handshake and he wants to embrace.”

One of the most sensitive and notable areas of conflict in Igbo society lies in the father-son relationship. This relationship is solidly grounded on their religious belief, especially the cult of the ancestors. A man is reverent and obedient to his father, who, when he died and joined the rest of the ancestral dead, would continue the family tradition. So, a father would bring up his son in the best tradition of clan customs and usages, and worked hard to provide him with basic necessities, because when he died his spirit would draw sustenance from the sacrificial offerings which his living son would make him. More important still is the performance of the proper funeral rites which is assigned to the eldest living son of the deceased. Achebe’s persistent harping on this theme shows his grasp of the inner dynamics of the traditional system. In Things
*Fall Apart*, for instance, Achebe makes Okonkwo’s distraught misapprehension of his eldest son’s defection to the Christians assume the prospect of annihilation:

> Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye’s steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect. He saw himself and his fathers crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days, and his children the while praying to the white man’s god.\(^9\)

The relationship between father and son was crucial to the existence of the traditional system because it is the foundation of the ancestral authority upon which the continuity of the institutions, common values, attitudes and sentiments of the traditional culture depended. The introduction of Christianity therefore alienated the converts from their traditional society and got themselves excommunicated from them. The elders of the community were presented in extremely difficult and helpless situation in matters relating to the new converts: they could not strike at the Christians because in doing so they would only be hitting their own clansmen. The traditional religion and Christianity are diametrically different in their doctrines; while Christianity insists on the existence of one God, the traditional religion believes in the existence of many gods and goddesses. In the late nineteenth century, when the first contact with Christianity was recorded in the novel, the meeting of the two religious systems was a confrontation. The conflict resolved itself
through the mass defection to the white man’s camp, not necessarily due to genuine faith in God.

Achebe presents the inevitability of conflict and change in the traditionalistic Igbo society by introducing the combine forces of Christian missions, administration and trade to draw the natives away from the traditional system. The survival of the missionaries in the Evil Forest marks the triumph of the new faith over the traditional belief system. Besides emotional, psychological and spiritual appeals, the missionaries use material enticement to win new converts, combining aggressive evangelism with provision of modern, literate education and dispensaries. Later on it was the turn of the different villages and clans to vie for plumb government posts and political positions, aggravating the division within the Igbo society. The inter-village war of Umuaro and Okperi was taken advantage of by the colonial government to impose their rule upon Ezeulu’s Umuaro. The Chief Priest who honestly stood as the witness in the dispute was summoned to become a paramount chief under the colonial government. The matter reached a feverish pitch and the division of the tribal society became total when Ezeulu was made to suffer in the hands of colonial officials. As mentioned before, the moral corruption of the people in *A Man of the People* goes to the extent that the brand name of Britain became a matter of pride for the native wearer of
foreign goods. So Achebe sees three forces operating against the traditional system: the Christian missions, the British administration and the introduction of European-type trading stores which combined to overthrow the traditional way of life. The narrator in *Things Fall Apart* rightly points out: “The new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people’s eyes and minds.”10 In other words, the influence of the white man was so strong that the ordinary clansmen were devastated, for it affected the most fundamental, and therefore most cohesive factors in the traditional system. Even more significantly, the traditional social framework became inadequate to regulate the conflicts and stresses which arose from the culture contact. Traditional customary laws became ineffective, not only because their religious basis was undermined by Christianity but because the colonial administration monopolized the use of coercion, and thereby weakened the capacity of traditional societies to pressurize them to conform to it. The conflict between the new converts and traditionalists in Achebe’s first novel show that the ultimate judicial sanction lies with the new administration, for the clan is not allowed to defend itself against the misguided onslaught of Christian converts. So, the persons involved in the killing of the sacred python and the unmasking of an *egwugwu* (a masked spirit of the dead and also a central influence in judicial execution) that strikes at the very heart of the traditional system cannot be given exemplary punishment
befitting the seriousness of the crime against the clan. The mere burning
down of the local mission-house was not severe enough for regaining
respect for the tradition, but was provocative enough for the local British
administration to intervene on behalf of the ‘culprits’.

Over and above the conflict of systems and values, there is also the
more fundamental and more intractable conflict of personalities. In
Achebe’s traditional novels, an individual is distinguishable, apart from
his physical characteristics, by his proper name and praise name, title
name and perhaps some alias as well; it must be observed that he is less
an autonomous individual in the western sense. His individuality is
largely predetermined by social inductions; his social status and his
specific position within the social hierarchy are defined by the society. He
is born into a clan already bearing an ancestral stamp, for he is supposed
to be under the tutelary influence of one of his ancestors whose name he
bears. He will, if he lives long enough, beget children who will continue
the life of the clan. He is therefore a mystic bond between the dead and
the living. He is born into institutions which have been perfected and
sanctioned by checks and balances. He cannot change these institutions
because they derive their charter from past usage and the authority of the
ancestors. In this sense, the individual has real existence only in terms of
the general social framework of the community.
A man’s individuality within the traditional society is further determined by a series of ritual initiations from one status to another, and within each status his general behaviour is determined by the behavioural expectations attached to the particular status. The roles attached to any status have been determined by customary usage and protected by social, jural and supernatural sanctions. The hold of kinship on the development of the individual personality is also crucial. A man’s actions, especially if they are blameworthy, are regarded as a reflection on his kinship group. For this reason, the group ensures social conformity and this in turn helps to curb the development of an adventurous spirit without which true individuality cannot emerge.

Obviously, temperamental differences occur and allowances are made for them. Ruth Benedict observed about individual temperaments and cultural integration:

No culture yet observed has been able to eradicate the differences in the temperaments of the persons who compose it. It is always a give and take. The problem of the individual is not clarified by stressing the antagonism between culture and the individual, but by stressing their reinforcement. Thus, their relation to individual psychology...

Achebe must have been constantly aware of this psychological factor in his works. Okonkwo’s short temper and his impatience with laziness and social failure are recognized and borne with, but when they drive him to
break certain religious and social taboos, he is made to feel the full rigour of the community’s repression.

The social and political institutions of the traditional society have perfected the art of ensuring conformity from individual and discouraging deviations and subversion of the common will. The careers of important characters like Okonkwo and Ezeulu illustrates the primacy of the group over the individuals who compose it. They are shown to be powerful in their communities, but in their conflicts with their communities the primacy of the latter is soon established. In the case of Ezeulu, it is shown that the individual cannot find fulfilment outside the protective wing of his community. Ostracism is the most dreaded as it is the most effective of all penal sanctions available in the traditional society. The beating of his wife during the Week of Peace and the inadvertent killing of a boy taught Okonkwo lessons on the severity of social sanctions on the individual members of the community, howsoever great they might be.

Social homogeneity and conformism are so strong within the traditional society and this often produces conflict between individual drives and aspirations and the collective sentiment of society. Powerful characters like Okonkwo and Ezeulu would have lived and died peacefully within the traditional society but for the damaging impact of European culture. Once the equilibrium of the traditional society is upset
by this impact, conflicts arise which the traditional framework is unable to cope with, at least at the initial stages. The conflicts then provoked the traditional characters to exhibit magnified traditional roles against the new spiritual threat posed by the new faith. They, therefore, become the champions of tradition against modernity or change. So Okonkwo and Ezeulu attained full individual stature in the confrontation between the traditional and western cultures. They showed individual foresight and mental independence. Okonkwo is one of the first people in Umuofia to realize the nature of the threat which faces the traditional way of life as a result of the establishment of the missionary outpost in the village. His defeat and tragedy are but inevitable because he does not understand the immensity of the power he is up against - an empire larger and stronger than the world has ever known. Ezeulu’s tragedy is also the result of his inadequate understanding of the white man’s might. His sending of one of his sons to the mission school as an observer in the enemy camp is a sagacious move which unfortunately contains the seed of his own defeat. The important thing, however is that, faced with a totally new challenge, the traditional character becomes dynamic, adaptable and resourceful. He retains the background of beliefs and values which are commonly held, but he strikes out in his own way, in defence of the collective heritage. He attains growth and liberation even though he ends up being defeated.
The presence of conflicts in the society predetermines the presence of contradictory impulses, within or without the native culture. The immediate cause of the conflicts in Chinua Achebe’s novels lies in and springs mostly from the tragic consequences of the Africa’s encounter with Europe. His novels deal with the social and psychological conflicts produced by the incursion of the white man and his culture into the hitherto self-contained world of African society, and the disarray in the African consciousness that has followed. As an artist serious with his purpose, Achebe has consciously chosen the tragic mode, as opposed to the comic treatment, in handling his themes of conflicts – conflicts between the traditional tribal and the civilized west, the individual and the community, male and female representations, the occidental and the Oriental, of tribalism and modernity, and so on. This approach demands the development of the individual characters as well as of the situations.

Of all the conflicts found in the novels of Chinua Achebe, the conflict between the Individual and the community becomes the most important point for initiating a discussion at the backdrop of the contemporary Igbo society, its problems and of the tribal societies elsewhere. The immaculate tribal society of the Igbos is known for its emphasis on group solidarity, without which their very existence is in danger. The novels of Achebe can be seen as the negative progression of
the individuals away from the community, consciously or otherwise, with
the increasing penetration of the invading culture into the land and psyche
of the natives. After the entrenchment of western influence on the
individuals and society, the tribe can no longer speak with one voice
because they are divided and confused. The enlargement of the widening
gap between the colonized mind and ethos of a tribal world view
therefore becomes an issue that the novelist consciously struggles to
grapple with in his Trilogy – *Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God* and *No
Longer at Ease*

The communitarian aspects of African socio-ethical thought are
reflected in the features of the social structures of African societies. The
sense of communitarian living is characteristic of African life and this
feature defines the tribal world. The primary instinct of a small stable
tribal people lies in the will of the tribe or family, expressed or implied,
which permeates the whole being of the individual members. This
unparalleled loyalty is also the determining factor in every decision
pertaining to individual tribesmen. The traditional clansmen, therefore,
constantly acts contrary to their better judgment, and at times, even
wrongly, because they firmly believe that they have no alternative: they
dare not oppose the wishes of the people, symbolized by the *ndichie.*
Though some individuals may have independent thought, there is seldom
independent action, probably never where other members of the tribe or family are involved, however remotely. The colonial rule had distorted and altered this self-sustaining system into one in which there is no longer any fixed law or custom: while the unwritten laws of the natives were undermined by the colonial government, the western laws neither had legitimacy nor relevance in the eyes of the people. They followed them for the simple reason that they could not challenge them directly. An elder in *Things Fall Apart* questions the very foundation of colonial rule when he asked:

Does the white man understand our custom about land?
How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad…

The callous attitude of the white man towards native customs, and the forcible introduction of their own system disturbed the life-world of the Igbos. The white man’s mission to civilize the ‘savage’ tribals blinded them to the noble aspects of tribal culture; they found the stateless society of the Igbo society anarchic and confusing. They were unaware of the democratic balance that *ozo* (titles) achieved and maintained, and they had no idea of a divine idea based on *Ani*, the Earth goddess and her compassionate care for the living and the dead. They only saw that the people were maddeningly difficult to deal with; proud, confident, self-
satisfied, disinclined to proper humility, disdainful of any authority save their own.

In his novels, Achebe shows that there was order beyond this apparent anarchy. The *ndichie* (village elders) gathered all Umuofia for great discussions and deliberations affecting the whole clan, such as war or land dispute with a rival village. The novels also record that at such times their ancestors themselves rose up from the earth for mortal arbitration. The deity *Agbala*, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, spoke through his priestess the will of the Earth in communal and domestic matters. The priest of the Earth goddess enforced time-honoured principles of behaviour. In Igbo belief, the clan is composed of the living and the dead in the form of spirits who continue to intervene in the daily affairs of the village. Above and beyond the powers of ‘Earth’ (an Igbo god), the clan and other gods and goddesses was *Chukwu*, the great and unknowable God.

In the traditional Igbo society, the community exercises its authority over the individuals through various agencies: the great assembly of Umuofia, the ancestral *Egwugwu*, the priesthood of the various *Alusi* or gods, the decision-making of *ndichie* and *Agbala*, all these elements govern the ‘stable’ pattern of Umuofia. Within this order and unity, there is the belief in duality that pervades all things. This idea
of duality is inescapable, as Achebe himself expresses it, “whenever something stands...Something Else will stand beside it.”¹³ This uncertainty is central to the understanding of the tribal life of the Igbo people. According to their belief, nothing is absolute; everyone and everything is counterbalanced by the existence of equally powerful forces. For instance, no one can become extremely powerful because the culture provides the means by which his power will be counterbalanced or clipped.

Again, the concept of chi is important to understand the individual mind of an Igbo and his connectedness with his self and the community. Different meanings are attached to the term. Chi is a generic word for ‘god’; it literally means ‘day’. It is believed to be a part of Chukwu, the almighty God or the Supreme Being. It is one’s personal god, with one at all times, in all places, under all conditions. In his books, Home and Exile, Achebe explains chi as the “presence of God, in attendance of every human being... more powerful in the affairs of that person than any local deity or the conspiracy of any number of such deities against that person.”¹⁴ Chi as a personal deity becomes established when a child is old enough to be his own person. It is the first title that a boy may take and thereby establish his own relationship with the world, independent of his father’s chi which he had shared earlier. Chi is a highly ambiguous but an
immensely interesting word. On the one hand, it is said that if a man said ‘yes’ strongly enough, his *chi* would say ‘yes’ too.\(^{15}\) On the other hand, a man could not rise above the destiny of his *chi*.\(^{16}\) Later in life, Okonkwo was a man whose *chi* said ‘nay’ despite his own strong affirmations, as is evident from the killing of his adopted son. In a sense, one is, and is not, in control of his fortune. *Chi* may be bad in the sense that it does not give one a good life. Unoka’s *chi* was bad throughout his life, and it even led him to his death by the abominable swelling in the Evil Forest. Okonkwo’s powerful affirmation convinced him that his own *chi* was good. But then he doubted his *chi* after he was forced into exile, but as time came for his return, he became successful again and believed that his *chi* might now be making amends for the past disaster.\(^{17}\) Still, Nwoye defected to the Christian camp, and then Okonkwo hanged himself and followed his father Unoka to an abominable death. The *chi* of the father and son gave them both the same bad destiny. That is, at least, one sense of *chi* in the novels which Obi Okonkwo, in *No Longer at Ease*, also shares with his forebears.

In a more complex level, Achebe seems to connect Okonkwo’s *chi* to the repression or violation of his inmost self. In this sense ‘chi’ connotes conscience or free will of an individual Igbo. Achebe links Okonkwo’s *chi* to the coming of the boy Ikemefuna into his care:
If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his *chi* or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his *chi* says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his *chi* agreed. And not only his *chi* but his clan too because it judged a man by the work of his hands. That was why Okonkwo had been chosen by the nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies unless they agreed to give up a young man and a virgin to atone for the murder of Udo’s wife. And such was the deep fear that they treated Okonkwo like a king and brought him a virgin who was given to Udo as wife, and the lad Ikemefuna.\(^\text{18}\)

This, however distantly, may suggest that the boy becomes the battleground for Okonkwo’s own fight with his *chi*. His direct involvement in the killing of the boy who calls him ‘father’ becomes a fight against his own self and his *chi*. Warned by old Ezeudu not to have a hand in the execution of the pronouncement of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves, and against his own conscience Okonkwo struck the boy with his own hands for fear of being considered weak. Robbed of inner peace, Okonkwo began the downward journey because of his own flaw in character. Had he listened to his conscience, he would have escaped the fight against his *chi*.

Again, the concept of *chi* is often used in Igbo proverbs in relation to pride. It is a crucial proverb that says, “a man does not challenge his *chi* to a wrestling match.”\(^\text{19}\) After Okonkwo beats his wife Ojiugo during the Week of Peace, he is in fact repentant but he refuses to show that feeling. Consequently it is said of him when he had endangered the
whole clan that he was like the little bird *nza* who, after a big meal, so far forgot himself as to challenged his *chi* to a single combat.\(^{20}\) The outcome of that challenge is not told, but Achebe provides the gist of the story elsewhere. In an essay, ‘*Chi in Igbo Cosmology*’\(^{21}\), he tells about the proud wrestler who throws every spirit until his own *chi* appears, thin as a rope. The wrestler laughs and goes to knock him down, but the other lifts him clear off the ground with his little finger and smashes him to death. This approximates the story Nwoye likes of *eneke-nti-oba* (literally meaning ‘swallow with the ear of the crocodile’; i.e. deaf) who challenges the world and is thrown by the cat.\(^{22}\) *Chi* always has agents to work for him. What Umuofia sees as Okonkwo’s challenge is his supposed failure to repent his violation of *Ani’s* sacred Week of Peace. The more profound – and true – challenge is his repression of his love for Ikemefuna.

In the novel, Okonkwo’s position in the matter of the Ikemefuna’s death appears paradoxical. When Obierika tells him what he had done will not please the Earth and that it is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families, Okonkwo protests. It is true that the goddess *Ani* had ordered the death and he was merely her messenger. But Obierika only says that, were it his son who was to die, he ‘would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it.’\(^ {23}\) If the paradox can be resolved, it must
be done in terms of *chi*. The converse of the proverb about affirmation might be that if a man says ‘no’ strongly enough, his chi says ‘no’ also. Okonkwo had that within him which says ‘no’ to the killing of Ikemefuna, and says ‘no’ very profoundly. It may be that Ani asks no one to defy his own *chi*, and abominates whoever does. “My father, they have killed me!” Ikemefuna cried as he turned for help to Okonkwo, and Okonkwo cut him down. From that moment Nwoye is permanently alienated though the coming of the Christians is years away. Okonkwo, by his own account, becomes ‘a shivering old woman’ for a few days before he reasserts his masculine arrogance. In the novel, he commits three overt crimes against *Ani* – he violates the Week of Peace, he inadvertently killed Ezeudu’s son, and he hangs himself. But none of the crimes appears to be so great as his violation of his inmost self. Obierika might have given Okonkwo a better answer invoking the principle of dualism, to resolve the paradox. Achebe, in his essay on *chi*, quotes the proverb, ‘a man may worship Ogwugwu to perfection and yet be killed by Odu.’ Okonkwo comes near the truth when he thought of himself as a ‘shivering old woman’- he denies his inner feeling which he saw as a sign of his weakness. So Okonkwo chose to repress what he saw as a female trait in him – even his guilt.
Again, \textit{Chi} is in some measure an instrument in the civil order. It parallels the clan, in that what \textit{chi} affirms, the clan affirms too, and just as no man can win in a conflict with his clan, no man can be victorious over his \textit{chi}. Loyalty to self, in this sense, implies loyalty to one’s kinsmen. The mechanisms of civil order hitherto described have dealt with them each initially as a means of governance, of control. Both \textit{chi} and kinship, in contrast represent the individual and communal loyalties that make the mechanisms possible. In a governmental sense, they are passive, but without them governance is precluded and order is impossible. What \textit{chi} is to the individual, kinship is to the clan.

On the greater scale than Okonkwo’s passion is the struggle of the man with his fate symbolized by his ‘\textit{chi}’. His ambition and impatience drive him on to calculate on a larger scale than others, to demand more of his fate and to force the pace. Ironically, the reversals begin with his own son, who is the very antithesis of his father. In the immediate context of the novel, the conflict is created out of the gradual breakdown of a normal relationship between father and son, and Nwoye’s final alienation from his father which prevents a resolution. The final breaking of the filial bond is directly related to the killing of Ikemefuna:

As soon as his father walked in, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the snapping of a tightened bow. He did not cry. He just hung limp…Nwoye had heard that twins were put in earthenware pots and thrown away in the
forest, but he had never yet come across them. A vague chill had descended on him and his head seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way.26

This incident is also related to the wider issues of the boy’s reaction to his society. Nwoye is presented all along as a sensitive young man whose psychology turns against certain insensate customs of the village, particularly the casting away of twins in the forest. In fact, Nwoye’s later defection to Christians has double significance – it is at the same time an act of revolt against his father as well as the rejection of the society he embodied: and it is essentially as such that Okonkwo himself views his son’s gestures:

Now that he had time to think of it, his son’s crime stood out in its stark enormity. To abandon the gods of one’s father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye’s steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation.27

Nwoye thus stands as a symbolic negation for his father, the living denial of all that Okonkwo stands for. At the societal level he embodies the rebellious spirit of the modern youths against the clan. In connection with the diminishing respect for tribal customs and traditions, an elder of the clan instructed them:

We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. You may ask why I am saying all this… But I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one voice. And what is the result? An
abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter’s dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you. I fear for the clan.  

Loyalty to the new religion now supersedes loyalty to kinship or clan. And this misplaced loyalty opens and widens the gap of division and destruction within the community. The tragedy with the new converts springs directly from their fanatical allegiance to the church and its religious dogma rather than genuine love for Christ Himself.

As a novelist, Achebe has chosen to use the tragic means in presenting the theme of conflict between the community and the individual. He organizes his characters around series of events to reveal a tragic pattern. For tragedy implies the working out in men’s lives a tragic flaw that transcends the individual’s ability to comprehend or to arrest its pre-ordained course of events. This approach demands the development of the individual characters as well as of the situations. Especially in his earlier novels, Achebe strikes some profound tragic notes at both levels whereby the individual is hedged against the community in the struggle for survival. He employs the tragic mode to emphasize the point that the colonial encounter is catastrophic for the Igbos. So the first three novels of Achebe focusses particularly on the conflict between the individual and the Igbo community.
Things Fall Apart, as the title suggest, is concerned with the dislocation of the African society caused by the impact of Western colonialism. Achebe’s reconstruction of the Igbo village life is directed at revealing the forces at work both inside and outside traditional society that prepared the way for its eventual disintegration. His purpose is therefore not primarily to show its values – though this is an undoubtedly significant side line – but rather to show it as a living structure, as an organism animated with the life and movement of its members: and within this framework is contained the sphere of action which involves the personal drama of the characters themselves. To this end Achebe employs literary tools to examine the worth and dignity of his community before and after its collision course with an alien culture. Viewed from the perspective of a world in which various cultures are engaged in constant action and interaction, Things Fall Apart transcends the narrow confines of a group of villages and reflects the trauma of nations that seek to expand their horizons without sacrificing traditional values that are traditional and indigenous. The title of the novel is significant in the handling of Achebe’s presentation of the tribal world of the Igbos. It sets the mood for the novel, the mood of the self-contained unruffled society and totally unaware of the dramatic changes that are taking place with the arrival of the colonial power. The double level of action is realized through the relationship that exists between Okonkwo, the principal
character, and his society. In many ways Okonkwo represents his society in so far as the society has made the man in proposing to him certain values and lines of conduct. On the other hand, the man’s personal disposition, his reaction to these social determinations stemming from his subjective perception of them, prepares his individual fate.

Okonkwo is a man who has grown up in a community which, because of its passionate desire for survival, places its faith above all in the individual quality of ‘manliness’. And it is an irony of fate that make Okonkwo start off with a disadvantage on this score – the failure of his father to satisfy this social norm, which adds an urgency on his particular position to live down the shame of his father. This compels him to adhere to a social code which, taken to its extreme limit, transforms tribal value into a weakness:

Even Okonkwo himself became very fond of the boy – inwardly of course. Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it is the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength. He therefore treated Ikemefuna as he treated everybody else – with a heavy hand. But there was no doubt that he liked the boy. Sometimes when he went to big village meetings or communal ancestral feasts he allowed Ikemefuna to accompany him, like a son, carrying his stool and his goatskin bag. And, indeed, Ikemefuna called him father.29

In order to justify himself, Okonkwo pursues manly distinction with obsession that soon degenerates into egocentricity, until he comes to map out for himself very narrow limits of action or reflection:
Okonkwo rules his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo’s fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a boy he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was Agbala. This was how Okonkwo first came to know that Agbala was not only another name for woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness.\(^{30}\)

The passage shows the psychological aspect of the problem. Okonkwo’s way of shutting out everything else out of his view, aware only of himself, is an indication that his ambition has become a blinding passion of a pathetic kind. The stage is set in the very mind of the character for a tragic career.

As a result of his own mental attitude, Okonkwo’s relationship with other people in his community is thrown off balance. His own rigidity towards himself is reflected in his impatience with other members of his own community, and in particular with his son, Nwoye:

Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed. Okonkwo wanted his son to be a great farmer and a great man. He would stamp out the disquieting signs of laziness which he thought he already saw in him.

‘I will not have a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands.’\(^{31}\)
His insistence on manliness and the meaning he attaches to it amounts to fierceness or violence which is but a perversion of the quality he aspired to uphold. He now becomes a menace to his own society even within the limits of its code. On one occasion he contravenes a sacred custom by beating his wife during a sacred Week of Peace – he was “not the man to stop beating somebody halfway through, not even for the fear of a goddess.” And one of the elders, commenting on his action remarks: “The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish.”

In spite of a series of reversals in his fortune, Okonkwo is a man who is prepared to grapple with his fate and bend everything to his irrepressible will. His return to Umuofia from exile at Mbanta is the occasion for re-launching his struggle on a new footing to regain his lost place in the village. Enraged by the presence of the white man and his success in making converts, he is naturally involved in the attack on the Christian church that leads to the arrest and humiliation of those responsible. The impact of this incident on Okonkwo’s mind prepares the last phase of his tragedy:

Okonkwo slept very little that night. The bitterness in his heart was now mixed with a kind of child-like excitement. Before he 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.

As he lay on his bamboo bed he thought about the treatment in the white man’s court, and he swore vengeance. If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well. But if they choose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself.³⁴

Had the community stood its ground and fought unitedly, the white man might have been driven out of the land, and the village safeguarded from the invader. Okonkwo characteristically sums up the situation in terms of violence, and killed one of the messengers of the colonial administration in a fit of rage. And in his final defeat lies the utter futility of his action, his final realization that he has gone so far beyond reasonable limits in championing the cause of his society as to have lost touch with it:

Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discovered fright in the tumult. He heard voices asking ‘why did he do it?’ He wiped his matchet on the sand and went away.³⁵

There is defeat in the reactions of the clansmen who had lost the guts to defend themselves and the values they held dear.

The novel, therefore, can be seen both as the tragedy of one man as well as that of the community. Okonkwo’s suicide is a gesture that symbolizes the collapse of the old order which he represents. For Okonkwo’s inflexibility, his tragic flaw is a reflection of his society; his defect, though a deformation, derives from a corresponding trait in his society, an aspect of it pushed to its extreme logical frontiers. In the
novel, Achebe shows the Igbo community as one that has positive qualities of its own – the coherence and order of their social life, the intense warmth of personal relationships and the passionate energy of the religious life. As a detached artist, he also presents the suddenness with which the traditional edifice begin to show cracks and crumbles under the insidious forces acting beyond the power and control of the community themselves. It is thus significant that the earliest converts should include the outcasts and particularly the mothers of the unfortunate twins. A corrective theme is here attached to the whole portrayal of Umuofia – that of the liberating influence of the new religion. Consider for example the effect of Nwoye’s conversion upon the boy:

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in the darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul – the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul.36

It is clear that the novel turns out to present the whole tragic drama of a society, vividly and concretely enacted in the tragic destiny of a representative individual. This use of an individual character as a symbolic receptacle, the living theatre of a social dilemma is what gives Achebe’s novels their real measure of strength.
Okonkwo’s inflexible will comes in conflict with the flexible nature of his society. In fact, his desire to assert his individuality in a communalistic society is a major factor contributing to his fall. Unlike western cultures, the democratic system in traditional Igbo society demanded people’s conformity to social codes as ultra-democracy existed in that society at the expense of individual freedom.

Communal harmony or the bond of kinship which is fundamental to civil order in the Igbo society is maintained by courtesy and ceremony. Though practiced by men, these gentle observances are on the feminine side of the masculine-feminine scale. Courtesy in the novel is best exemplified by the rites of ‘kola,’ both literal and figurative. The literal use of kola is exemplified in the first scene of the novel, when Okoye visits Unoka. Unoka shakes hands with his guest, and then gets ‘a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk.’ The principal elements, kola and the chalk, are relatively unfamiliar outside Africa. The latter is white clay, sometimes called ‘cohise chalk’. It is used extensively in ritual, and ceremonially symbolizes peace. When Unoka asks his guest Okoye to break the kola, there is a bantering refusal, and Unoka, as host, breaks it. This little banter, customary in Achebe’s Umuofia and in Umuaro as well, reflects the fact that in many communities the guests breaks the kola. Okoye takes
the chalk and with it draws lines on the floor and paints his big toe. The lines are the visitor’s personal emblem. He paints his big toe with chalk as a symbol that he has taken the *ozo* title. If he had taken higher titles (he is soon to take the Idemili title, next after *ozo*), he would further mark his face. Ezeulu, in *Arrow of God*, circles his left eye. The kola and the chalk symbolize respectively the close bond between host and guest and their mutual benevolence. Okoye has, in fact, come on an unpleasant errand: he wishes to collect a debt. The ceremony ensures that the difficult subject will not arise in an atmosphere of rancour or antagonism. Okoye may or may not get what he wants (he does not), but the ceremony has precluded a quarrel. Okonkwo’s visit to Nwakibie is a little masterpiece in the demonstration of the ceremony. It also expands metaphorically the meaning of ‘kola’. Okonkwo is seeking the loan of four hundred seed yams, because his father’s farming produces no base upon which he can build his own. He has taken a pot of palm wine and a cock to present to his host, who has invited two neighbours and two sons to be present. Nwakibie gives his guests kola, with a prayer. When it was eaten, Okonkwo brings out his palm wine and addresses his host as ‘father’: ‘I have brought you this little kola’. The gift is to pay him respect, for he says, “a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.”  In this Achebe sets a motif that is greatly expanded in his second novel *No Longer at Ease*. When Obi, grandson of
Okonkwo, accepts his first bribe, the man places the notes on a table saying, ‘This is just small kola…. We shall make good friends.’\textsuperscript{41} Even the light conversation that accompanies the drinking of the wine is ceremonial: no serious topic that could misdirect energies would be raised. Ceremonial courtesy is thus functional in the civil society of the Igbos.

The disintegration of the Igbo community in \textit{No Longer at Ease} makes meaningful social and moral orientation very difficult, if not impossible. Obi Okonkwo is caught up in an immediate post-colonial situation which demands of him to create a firm moral order out of the flux of values in which he lives. His dilemma is contained in the conflict between his developed intellectual insight and his lack of moral strength to sustain it. Besides, kinship and its obligations are at the heart of Obi’s individual predicament as there is no higher obligation than one’s loyalty to the clan in the tribal society.\textsuperscript{42} The idea of corruption was supported overtly or covertly by the claims of tribal relationships, so that Obi’s private advantage was consolidated by admirable warmth of acknowledged obligation. According to William Walsh, Obi is not perhaps quite so much the victim as the moral by-product of an incoherent system supported by the community: or one which has not succeeded in keeping its connection with the past straight or has kept its
route forward open. Colonial education and its influence on the man’s psyche are partly to be blamed. On the plight of colonial elites, Aime’ Cesaire stated in 1956:

Whenever colonization is a fact, the indigenous culture begins to rot. And among the ruins something begins to be born which is not a culture but a kind of subculture which is condemned to exist on the margin allowed by an European culture. This then becomes the province of a few men, the elite, who finds themselves placed in the most artificial condition, deprived of any vivifying contact with the masses of the people.

In his novel Achebe focus his attention on the dilemma of the marginalized colonial elite. As a marginal man Obi Okonkwo bears the burden of alienation from his true self and the clan. His internalized foreign culture and his Igbo upbringing were directly brought into conflict, turning him into a confused individual lacking convictions in all matters of life. Like many other western-educated tribal youth, he is torn between his thinking which stems from communitarian living in Igbo community and the new ideas developed by his education and exposure to the western way of life. He has a national outlook which transcends the Umuofian barriers of caste, region and tribe, but the irony of the matter is that he cannot marry Clara because she too is an ‘outcast’ like him.

While strong-willed individual is a rule in the industrialized society in the West, the tribal world of Africa proclaims him either a wizard or a mad man. In the traditional African society, the contribution of an
individual to the life and welfare of his community receives high value; this implicitly makes non-conformists outcasts. For instance, Obi Okonkwo has been seen as a failure when viewed from western cultural standard. From the point of view of his western education, Obi is an utter failure: “I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this,”⁽⁴⁶⁾ (Italics mine) said the Judge. The same idea is conveyed by Mr. Green, his boss and one of the Crown witnesses: “The African is corrupt through and through.”⁽⁴⁷⁾ But a re-reading of Obi’s life from a tribal perspective generates sympathy for him rather than contempt, because one finds that his thoughts and actions are caused by forces beyond his control. To comprehend Obi and be, at the same time, truthful to Achebe’s account, one ought to see the complete picture. Robbed of his tribal surroundings and the warmth of family and friends, the low lives in high places of Logos got the better of him. Emmanuel Obiechina has understandingly analyzed Obi’s predicament when he writes:

Obi Okonkwo… is just one more innocent newcomer to Lagos with the best intentions, who strive briefly to resist the pressures of the city and its corrupting influence but is ultimately overwhelmed and pushed under like the rest. Even his ill-fated relationship with Clara, the poor osu girl, does not reveal anything of his intimate self to the reader. We only get a glimpse of this intimate self when in the serenity of his family home in the village of Umuofia we see him in a teasing and joking relationship with his sisters and his mother. This reveals an underlying harmony of relationship which can only exist between those who share sympathy and affection, and seems to show that the
development of individual character or its expression depends to a large extend on the atmosphere within which the individual subsists. An integrated environment such as that represented by a harmonious household is more apt to show individuals in their most intimate personal individuality than the vast urban environment within which they vanish into profound anonymity.48

Family, clan and kinship are primary to the Igbo individual for his existence. On the strength of this tribal standard, Achebe lampoons the western civilization in one of his essays on their need to be rid of their prejudices and learn their lessons from tribal living:

In my original conception of this essay I had thought to conclude it nicely on appropriately positive note in which I would suggest from my privileged position in Africa and Western cultures some advantages the West might derive from Africa once it rid its mind of old prejudices and began to look at Africa not through a haze of distortions and cheap mystifications but quite simply as a continent of people – not angels, but not rudimentary souls either – just people, often highly gifted people and often strikingly successful in their enterprise with life and society.49

Achebe shares the tribal sympathy of the Umuofians who choose to stand by Obi who according to them is an ‘only palm-fruit’. Umuofia will come to his rescue, especially when the opponent is the ‘Other’:

The men of Umuofia were prepared to fight to the last. They had no illusions about Obi. He was, without doubt, a very foolish and self-willed young man. But this was not the time to go into that. The fox must be chased away first; after that the hen might be warned against wandering into the bush.50

In the novel, the Umuofia Progressive Union is presented as a community of Igbo people who hail from Umuofia, but work as clerks or
in some other less important jobs in Lagos which they regarded as an alien land:

> We are strangers in this land. If good comes to it may we have our share.’ Amen. ‘But if bad comes let it go to the owner of the land who knows what gods should be appeased.’ Amen. ‘Many towns have four or five or even ten of their sons in European posts in this city. Umuofia has only one. And now our enemies say that one is too many for us. But our ancestors will not agree to such a thing.’ Amen. ‘An only palm-fruit does not get lost in the fire. Amen.’

Though they have moved to their capital city, their worldview is basically tribal. The established colonial relations drive the native at the corner of the new power structure. Since they do not have a say in the deliberations of the state, their allegiance to it cannot supersede their loyalty to the village community. So, they have pay for the education of Obi and expect him to work for the ‘selfish’ end of the clan:

> The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying “Ours is ours, but mine is mine.” Every town and village struggles at this momentous epoch in our political evolution to possess that of which it can say: “This is mine.” We are happy that we have such an invaluable possession in the person of the illustrious son and guest of honour.

The chairman thinks that the scholarship given by the union to Obi is “an investment which must yield heavy dividends” to the people of Umuofia. Obi is, at the same time pressurized into living like a European, following the logic of neo-colonialism: “to occupy a ‘European post’ was
second only to actually being a European.” The novelist makes comments through the narrator that:

A university degree was the philosopher’s stone. It transmuted a third-class clerk on one hundred and fifty a year into a senior Civil Servant on five hundred and seventy, with car and luxuriously furnished quarters. It raised a man from the masses to the elite whose small talk at cocktail parties was: ‘How’s the car behaving?’

The criteria for ‘manliness’ among the alienated Igbos have changed from one who is fearless to one who has money and car. Moral convictions and principles have no place for people like Obi in the post-colonial period of Nigerian history. All efforts at pursuing education have been veered towards the goal of becoming like an English officer, thereby making maximum personal gain. With the blind aping after the colonial ways, the indigenous cultural practices and traditions that have been governing the tribal world collapsed, thereby undermining everything good and noble in that society.

The whole novel is built around the profound gulf that exists between the individual and his community, between Obi’s western education and its practical relevance to his individual place in the society, between Obi and his mother who symbolized the traditional culture itself. Obi is something of an aesthete, but his culture is manifested in an attachment to things which are of no consequence in the real world.
Further on, Obi explicitly links up his idea of ‘intellectual foundations’ with a moral stand:

To most of them bribery is no problem. They come straight to the top without bribing anyone. It’s not that they’re necessarily better than others; it’s simply that they can afford to be virtuous. But even that kind of virtue can become a habit.56

But Obi turns out to be a man with a narrow sense of values, just as his western education is limited to a superficial aesthetic orientation. He is incapacitated to have deeper involvement with anyone including Clara, his family, Umuofians and fellow Nigerians. So, the application of his academic learning is restricted to specific delimitations, rather than to the total field of his social situation. This constitutes his major liability in dealing with the complex problems with which he is faced.

The weakness of Obi’s character is reflected in his inept handling of human relationships and his material problems: he is an individual with no sense of order, whose incapacity is contrasted with the strength of character of his hardly literate ‘fellow Umuofians’, which permits them to make great sacrifices on behalf of a man who turns out to be weaker than them. In keeping with the time, Obi is never really prepared to engage in any sort of sustained effort, with the result that he flounders through his life. Such is his mental make-up that minor problems, instead of strengthening him, carry him irresistibly to a point of dissolution. The crisis is afforded by his disagreement with his family over his choice of
Clara, an *osu*, for a wife. Against an irrational caste system that demands of him a firm rational stand, against the pressure of a moral problem that calls for individual resolution, Obi has nothing to offer but abdication. The conflict that opposes him to his father provokes him to anger and resentment, and the unsoundness of his position does not escape him. In one of his rare moments of introspection, he manages to grasp the nature of his problem: “His mind was troubled not only by what had happened, but by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challenge it honestly.”

In Achebe’s novels individual women characters are given equally important roles. Mothers are accorded respect in the Igbo traditional society. As long as the going is easy the presence of mothers, or for that matter any other woman character, are slighted or taken advantage of in the male chauvinistic culture. But when tragedy strikes, man seeks solace at his mother’s village. And the last rite of a man is performed by his mother’s tribesmen. In an interview with Kalu Ogbaa, Achebe talks about the strong bond that exists between Obi and his mother: “... the relationship of blood between Obi and his mother... is an important key to an understanding of the story...” Obi’s rejection of his mother’s plea is almost equivalent to the rejection of the will of the community, as mother is one of the main vehicles for cultivating the cultural norms and
folkways, cautioning her children against social taboos. Obi’s submission on the issue of Clara and his subsequent betrayal of her (and the cause involved in her problem) opens the wide road to his moral decline. He knows what is right, but is unable to stand up for it. Obi’s fall, then, is the result of the practical dissociation between the intellectual and the moral poles of his awareness. The events and outside factors in his situation furnish the framework in which the conflict between the two evolves, and it is the nature of the effect of these two factors upon his individual consciousness which constitutes his tragedy. Achebe makes it clear that Obi is torn between two sets of values. The result is his spiritual disintegration. In this sense, the novel itself is a social comment on the modern situation in Nigeria (and even of Africa), on the plight of the westernized elite and the human problems posed by the fast tempo of social change.

Achebe seems to build the character of Obi as a type, signifying the bigger picture of Nigerian politics. James Booth observes, “Obi typifies on the individual level the situation of the Nigerian state as a whole.” Like the state, he is divided in his loyalties between tribalism and modern nationalism. Again, like the state which fails to fulfil its political ideals, his dream of becoming a detribalized modern Nigerian remains unfulfilled. As Nigeria’s industry and commerce cannot provide a
reasonable standard of living to its people, Obi’s income is inadequate to meet the expectations of the community to live a life of luxury. So, “Obi must do as the nation which he typifies does; he must live beyond his means.” Thus, like his nation, Obi is trapped by the forces of neo-colonialism, and his fate mysteriously chained to history, his destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country. He is both a historical witness and an entrapped participant in the chequered history of the Igbo tribe.

The character of Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* is a reflection on the contemporary ills of tribal society. The story of Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* deals with conflict of values over moral issues in an African state in the 1960s. It depicts the ills of contemporary Nigeria, shorn off all the glory and beauty that characterizes Achebe’s earlier portrayal of the nation and its culture. The role of colonial education and Western culture, and their disaffecting impact on the tribal mindset is one reality that resists complete erasure. The alienation that Obi suffers shows his moral decline that begins with the move away from the family, the clan and his traditional self. The family is a central institution in African tribal life and the place of the individual is necessarily subordinate to it. Obi’s desire for Clara who is an *osu* is a transgression of the Igbo codes of conduct and the series of disjunctions that he encounters in the course
of the novel renders him impotent as he is unable to create a balance between the forces at work in his life. But what is a violation in a cultural context may not be justified in another and the reconciliation that he tries to bring about is paradoxical to say the least. The predicament that he is in – between the twin forces of acceptance and rejection – is equivocal in nature and the crisis of indecision that he faces, makes him a kind of African Hamlet torn between extremes, but this time the problem is not merely the flaw in one’s character, but rather the conflict of identities and beliefs about what constitutes one’s existential being. The alterity of the ego in Obi’s inner consciousness is a symbolic play of the contradiction that transformed the entire generation of Nigerians who tried striking new roots by blindly following the external cultural patterns of the master race.

Obi’s conflict arises out of a self-realization that is constantly at odds with the consciousness of his existential being. His ambivalence arises out of his sense of dislocation that he finds himself in. He finds the rigid mindsets of his own people a problem that could hardly be wished away. The outdated customs that his community followed – the payment of the bride price, marginalization of the osu community – are evils that his altered consciousness could not accept. On the other hand, the influence of the West, the role of secular education and training in the
sciences is regarded as a welcome process but at the same time, the blind aping after foreign manners and customs becomes a matter of common derision. This is not to say that Achebe’s Obi is a blind follower of the West. He is in a way a projection of the changing consciousness of Nigerians on the eve of independence.

The impact of western culture changes Obi’s entire attitude to life. Achebe’s critique of Western civilization is inherent in his conceptualization of Obi who becomes a complete failure and total misfit in both the worlds. Through Obi, Achebe probes the dilemma of contemporary Nigerians who were caught between an alien system of living and the paradox of changing context where the tribal values were no longer competent enough to inspire an indigenous consciousness and thereby create an identity whose impulse was Afro-centric. The spiritual world of the Igbos, their ancient customs and practices, their gods and spirits, the community - orientation of their lives, their values and ideals – everything was torn apart by the forces of the so-called enlightenment of the western world. It is Obi’s education that makes him a complete misfit and his double alienation occurs due to his inability to understand his own people and adjust to the changed circumstances of life.

Achebe’s comment on the characterization of Obi is interesting: his abortive effort at education and culture though leaving him totally
unredeemed and unregenerate, had nonetheless done something to him – it had deprived him of his links with his own people whom he no longer even understood. The emphasis on the transmutation that Obi undergoes reflects the criticality with which Achebe regards the Postcolonial condition. The strengths and weakness of Obi make him a paradoxical figure, hardly able to handle the contradiction between two opposing worlds. And again, there is hardly any simplified version of morality that can justify completely the fall of the protagonist.

Obi’s character at times seems more pathetic than heroic. Although he has the potential of standing up for what he believes in, he fails to complete the task(s) he has set out to do. His dilemma arises from the sense of belonging that he naturally harbours but he is unable to articulate a worldview that would have given him the moral strength that he needed to combat the evil around him. Western education and the programmes of emancipation of natives had within its core a latent racism that Achebe is trying to unravel through the failure and ultimate breakdown of Obi.

The novel develops the theme, initiated in *Things Fall Apart*, of the impact of the British imperial-colonial rule on Igbo traditional life. Set in western Nigeria during the period of the entrenchment of colonial rule, it tells the tragic story of the individual Ezeulu who in trying to reconcile the demands of his god, and his quest for personal power brings calamity
on himself, his family and his community and inadvertently fosters the religious dominance of Christianity. The theme of this novel continues from where *Things Fall Apart* leaves off. It is indeed appropriate that this should be so, for this novel is a development not only from the point of view of the human interest but also of the style. Achebe has elaborated on the previous theme in such a way as to give it a more sustained character. Consequently in this novel we have a more profound and significant treatment of character and situations than the previous two novels.

According to Emmanuel Obiechina, the conflicts in *Arrow of God* build up around Ezeulu who is the ritual and religious leader of Umuaro. On the one hand, there is a conflict between the local British administration represented by Winterbottom and the native authority represented by the Chief Priest. On the other hand, there are the internal politics of Umuaro and the conflict between the supporters of the Chief Priest and those of his archrival, Idemili. On yet another level belongs the conflict taking place within the Chief Priest himself, a conflict between his personal power, the temptation to constitute himself into an ‘arrow’ of God, and the exigencies of public responsibility. At the family level, there are domestic tensions and crises in Ezeulu’s own household, the tensions and stresses between the father and his grown-up sons and between the children of different mothers in his polygamous household vying for the
succession to their father’s office. Notably, not all these conflicts and tensions spring from colonial contact. Personal deficiencies and mistaken judgments have something to do with some of them. The intervention of fate and chance also plays a part.62

In *Arrow of God* Achebe has woven the two movements of the individual and community drama through the characterization of Ezeulu and how the lives of the individuals converge around a tragic event. On the one hand, the internal division of the village of Umuaro is polarized around the person of Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, and that of his ambitious rival Nwaka, and on the other hand, the conflict of cultures represented by the misunderstanding that opposes Ezeulu to the colonial administration in the person of Captain Winterbottom. The external stature of Ezeulu reposes upon the firm foundation of a stable coherent mental structure. The strength of his moral frame is demonstrated in his forthright stand against the ‘war of blame’ that his community plans against their neighbouring village Okperi. He is also a man of superior intelligence, whose understanding of things surpasses that of his followers. He alone in Umuaro understands the nature of the dilemma posed by the presence of the white man in their midst, ushering in an age of new adjustment –

“the world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in the same place. My spirit tells me that those who do not
befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow."63

He therefore towers above the other characters in terms of his personality. The only other figure that stands out from the ordinary is Winterbottom. Around these two figures are paired off two other characters who play an important part in Ezeulu’s fate – Nwaka, his zealous rival, whose moral obtuseness is a foil to the bold outlines of Ezeulu, and the diffident, sensitive Clarke, Winterbottom’s subaltern whose psychological development is of great significance in the context of the novel.

The individual characters in Arrow of God are symbolic vehicles of the tragic movement. The uneasy rivalry between Ezeulu and Nwaka runs like a brooding dissonance through the even flow of Umuaro’s history, brilliantly reconstructed – the marriages, the births, the deaths, and the other petty vicissitudes of a regular train of life. Achebe presents the picture of a total universe over which the gods, namely Ulu and Idemili, are pitched in a deadly conflict against each other through their protagonists:

He (i.e. Ezeulu) knew that the priests of Idemili and Egwugwu and Eru and Odo had never been happy with their secondary roles since the villages got together and made Ulu and put him over the older deities. But he would not have thought that one of them would go so far as to set someone to challenge Ulu.64

And when later he decides to carry the struggle against his rivals to avenge humiliation at the hands of the white man, it is possible for him to
see the struggle as something larger than a personal issue: “it was a fight of the gods. He was no more than an arrow in the bow of his god.”65

While Ezeulu is caught up in this internal rivalry, the Christians are at hand whose God is also making a bid for the loyalties of the people of Umuaro. The moral of the situation is brought home with the attempt of Oduche, Ezeulu’s Christianized son, to kill the sacred python. In the same way as the python is imprisoned, struggling for life, so are the gods of the land circumscribed by a new order. Achebe’s symbolism is skilfully sustained throughout, from the overt dramatization of the internal conflict to the children’s innocent commentary on the situation, until the final moment in Ezeulu’s divination hut:

As Ezeulu cast his strings of cowries, the bell of Uduche’s people began to ring. For one brief moment Ezeulu was distracted by its sad measured monotone, and he thought how strange it was that it should sound so near – much nearer than it did in his compound.66

The white man has brought his administration, his civilization and his god – as one of the characters observes that the white man, the new religion, the soldiers, the new road are all one and the same thing.

At the purely secular level, the novel represents a critique of colonization. But more important than this is the emotional tangle created by the meeting of two different sets of values, the friction between two ways of thought, resulting in the hostile, humiliated incomprehension of the Africans, and the haughty insensitiveness of the
Europeans. One source of Ezeulu’s tragedy stems from his uncured illusion that the white man are friends of the Igbos, as the fact can be seen in the impersonal attitude of Winterbottom towards him.

With remarkable insight, Achebe has painted the picture of a traumatic situation. It is an ambivalent position in which the people of Umuaro find themselves. Loyalties are shifted back and forth, compromises are made and unmade. The story of Nwadika and the behaviour of the messengers sent out to arrest Ezeulu reveal the ludicrous aspect of their dilemma. As a result of their frustration, they are left confounded in their social and spiritual awareness. “We must grope about until what must happen does happen,”67 says one of the men in a particular context, unconsciously summing up their total position.

Tragically enough, it is a pity that the conflict should be resolved in such tragic circumstances by Ezeulu, the only character in the novel who has tried to deal with it in an honest and intelligent way. It is a poignant moment when he realizes that his foresight in sending Oduche to school – to be his eyes and his ears – has resulted in his loss of the boy’s loyalty and the intensification of ill-will between him and the Priest of Idemili. And yet this is only a minor aspect of his tragedy. When Ezeulu turns his resentment for his humiliation at the hand of the white man against his own people, he commits a serious error of judgment. The fact remains
that Ulu’s loyalty is primarily to the clan or community, not exclusively to the priest alone. In apparent obedience to the god, Ezeulu defied the clan repeatedly. He opposed the war with Okperi which brought Winterbottom to break the guns. He testified in favour of Okperi, and against Umuaro, in the land dispute. Finally, the priest refused to sanction the yam harvest which is the ultimate challenge comparable to his daring his own *chi* to battle. At the crisis, Ulu crushed his priest and – by plan or accident – yielded power to the Christian God, saving the clan. Meanwhile, the combined forces of the white man and his gullible followers have destroyed Ezeulu and this has contributed to the devastation and destruction in the course of Umuaro’s history.

The cracks in the traditional system which had developed in *Things Fall Apart* have grown into an unbridgeable chasm in *Arrow of God*. Though a great deal of action in the novel is concerned with the determination of the Chief Priest to bridge the chasm, he fails because of his inadequate grasp of the situation and so he is constantly surprised with every unveiling event. In the later novels, the main characters become more accommodative of the changes that take place within the traditional culture and the conflict between the individual and the community has become less intense as the will of the society has become a thing of the past. The new era in Igbo history witness the emotional, moral and
political bankruptcy of the general public. The situation therefore becomes

It is interesting to note the manner in which the clan or community in the traditional society asserts its authority over the individual members. This will be discussed by referring to the scenes and events in *Things Fall Apart* where the village community manifests its authority over the people on various occasions. As briefly mentioned earlier, the traditional Igbo society exercises its authority over the individuals through its agencies, such as the great assembly of Umuofia, the ancestral Egwugwu, the priesthood of the various *Alusi* or gods, the decision-making of *ndichie* (elders) and *Agbala*.

The first manifestation of the community’s will is found in the great assembly of Umuofia in the second chapter of *Things Fall Apart*. With some exaggeration, Achebe says that there must have been about ten thousand men in the market place. To this big community gathering, Ogbuefi Ezeugo bellowed four times the cry ‘*Umuofia kwenu*’ (‘Umuofia united’) to which ten thousand men answered “Yaa!” each time. After so greeting Umuofia in four directions, he bellowed ‘*Umuofia kwenu*’ a fifth time and on the crowd’s reply, he accused Mbaino, an adjacent village, of murdering a daughter of Umuofia, then threw his head down and gnashed his teeth in anger. Ogbuefi Ezeugo is a fully theatrical orator in a land
where oratory is a highly esteemed art. The will of the clan is collective, so it must be appealed to by means appropriate to persuasion of the many, not the few. Without oratory, without art, the clan could not function in crisis. The collective will of the people cannot be evoked by one man alone. Not even so great a speaker as Ezeugo had that power. When he concluded his report of the crime, ‘Many others spoke, and at the end it was decided to follow the normal course of action.’ Okonkwo’s killing of the court messenger is just what the first speaker of the day, Okika, has been demanding: “If we fight the stranger we shall hit our brothers….But we must do it…We must root out this evil…And we must do it now….”

In the great assembly, all the clansmen enjoy equal right to express his opinion on any issue pertaining to communitarian concerns. And the decisions of the assembly become the law which no law-abiding citizen will dare to challenge. The decision of the clan in the case of the murder at Mbaino invokes the principle of traditional justice.

Again, the will of the clan is manifested through the ancestral egwugwu, the ‘spirits’ of the dead clansmen. Achebe makes it quite clear that the egwugwu are masked ordinary men. The women ‘might have noticed that the second egwugwu had the springy walk of Okonkwo.’ But the women did not speak of this. The fact is that everyone perceived them including the impersonators not as mortally masked men but as
transcendent and transubstantiate beings— the living presences of the dead fathers of the nine villages of Umuofia. However, the egwugwu were much dreaded by all the people because of the power that they exercise, and more so due to the sacredness of their office.

In addition, the will of the Igbo community rests in the priesthods of the various alusi or gods. Only one such priest is prominent in Things Fall Apart— Ezeani, who enforces the will of Ani, the Earth goddess, when Okonkwo violates the Week of Peace. In the novel, the role of the priest appears to be muted by the novelist. However, the office of priesthood is central to Arrow of God, and in that novel Achebe explores the powerful position of the village priest over the people.

The fourth manifestation of the will of the clan is the decision-making of the ndichie, particularly the highest ranking elders among them. The best example of this is found in Arrow of God, when ten men visit Ezeulu. All had taken three titles and one had taken the fourth and the highest. Only two other men of Umuaro had taken the fourth title, and neither could be present. One of the visitors says to Ezeulu, ‘I want you to look around this room and tell me what you see. Do you think there is another Umuaro outside this hut, now?’ Ezeulu replies, ‘No, you are Umuaro.’

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The last manifestation of the will of the clan is *Agbala*, the Oracle of the Hill and Caves. The Oracle is a transitional manifestation, in that he is served by the priestess, a female, and his name is the same as the word for woman – especially a strong woman. Thus there is an undefined association between the deity and the priestess. To this Agbala, people ‘came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what their future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers.’\(^7\) The priestess Chielo and her predecessor Chika were, when not in the power of the god, ordinary women. Little is said of Chika. ‘She was full of the power of her god’\(^7\) Achebe says in his comment roughly translating her name, *chi*, ‘god’; *-ka*, ‘power’. Chielo, whose name implies knowledge of the thoughts of her deity, is a widow with children who shares a shed in the market with Ekwefi, Okonkwo’s second wife. The Oracle was consulted by those who knew all that there was to know about the priests. If Agbala remained in all his wisdom, mystery, and power among those closest to him, then the priest must have spoken and acted for the god in full, and in good faith.

The importance of the collective in African society, the unity of the tribe and the adherence to the age-old principles of religious traditions create a society that has an essentially communal ambience. It is this
structure that Achebe and several other African writers attempt to recreate in their fictional works, as it is the high point of the civilizational impulse of their society. It is the focus on the will of the community as opposed to that of the individual that marks the tension in the fabric of the narratives trying to portray not only the individual’s assertion of beliefs but also the community’s fate in the process.

Recasting of the tribal history is crucial to rectify the flawed perception of the tribals in the eyes of the colonizers. The first phase of such writing necessarily deals with the creation of pre-colonial tribal world whereby through the twin faculties of memory and association, a writer is engaged in working out the identity of the pristine tribal glory-the unsullied, untarnished image of her past with her several gods and goddesses, rituals and taboos, languages, cultures and traditions, songs and dances, bounty and grace, health and well-being may be a romantic recreation of the primal world of peace and happiness – a kind of golden age posited to counter-point the humiliation, the squalor and ugliness of colonial exploitation. In the glorification of the African past, writers like Achebe made a conscious endeavour to show that the present problems are rooted in the past, the event of colonization to be specific. The issue of corruption in *No Longer at Ease* undoubtedly arise out of the colonial experience.
The complexity of the African experience can not be fully comprehended from the experience and understanding of western social and political structures alone. In an essay entitled “The Nature of the Individual and his Fulfilment”, Achebe focuses on the two realities of social man – “his individuality and his membership of a group”73 where he problematizes the question of which cultural organization is “better or more advanced”74 by saying that what matters is the “choice of destination”75 in accordance with what the social formation recognizes as the qualitative value or ideal to be achieved. He addresses the issue of the primacy of the individual vis-à-vis the society in western paradigm by locating it in a conceptual continuum that has its lineage in the Judaic tradition and by tracing the pattern of emergence of the politico-economic institutions; he rightly points out the process through which individuality got enthroned via biblical sanction.76 While he refers to the multiple historical movements like the renaissance and reformation and later the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century in America and France that led to the deepening of the roots of individualism77, he fails to see it in terms of the structural logic of a society that was in transition from the land-based feudal modes of production to that of an industrial one. The ahistorical assumptions behind a cultural critique that is fore-grounded counter-point the Western world’s “growing preoccupation with the self”78 and its phenomenal success by asserting supremacy over the
natural world with essentially non-western, particularly African mode of understanding that “true fulfilment is (always) other-centred”.79 The belief in the spirit-world versus the material and the physical is a tension that is highlighted by writers like Achebe and Soyinka. The belief in the life of the spirit as opposed to the material is the common ground shared by literature as well as the lived practices of the people in non-western communities. Living under extreme harsh conditions, suffering starvation, disease and death owing to the vagaries of nature increases the potential capacity of tribal communities to renounce. The ability to sacrifice renews belief in the collective self, the gods and the ideals that are always religious in form but secular in content by practicing austerities that are sometimes forced and sometimes voluntary and ultimately asserting that fulfilment is realized only “through the life of the spirit”.80 Consequently, we see how the notions of failure and success operate as themes in the novels of Achebe and how his protagonists become symbolic extensions of not only the social and the political but also “the spiritual in terms of the secular” as Satyanarain Singh points out in his reading of Arrow of God.81

In Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God Achebe, through the creative process of recollection and association, fore-grounds what the ancient world of the Igbos must have been like. However, his is not an
uncritical rendering, as what he attempts to do is re-create a useful past and in the process question the very nature of change or cultural transition. Addressing the issue of how the writer re-creates the past and why is it all necessary to do so, Achebe said:

When I think of this I always think of light and glass. When white light hits glass one or two things can happen. Either you have an image which is faithful if somewhat unexciting, or you have a glorious spectrum which though beautiful is rather a distortion. Light from the past passes through a kind of glass to reach us. We can either look for the accurate though somewhat unexciting image or we can look for a glorious technicolour.”\(^8^2\)

Achebe, of course, chooses the latter although he admits that “we cannot pretend that our past was one long technicolour idyll”\(^8^3\) and that it had both its good and bad sides.

In his novels, the sense of the collective that he attempts to present emerges as important as the individual protagonist and he attempts to uphold the entire flow of Igbo life through the portrayal of the rituals associated with birth, marriage, death and the rites of passage, festivals like the New Yam festival, Feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and ceremonies associated with pregnancy rites, egwugwu dances, wrestling matches, obhanje children, etc. If Ezeulu tried to explore and overreach the limits of his individual powers as opposed to the sanctions imposed by traditional society, Okonkwo tries to test the limits of his physical strength and courage by refusing to accept the flow of time. His qualities
as a man make him a respected leader of the Igbo community. But what he failed to contend with was the intrusion of new authority embodied in the person of the British District Commissioner. The accidental killing of a fellow clansman leads to his banishment from the village for seven years and after his return from Mbanta he realizes that the decay has already set in from within. In the feast that he arranges for his mother’s kinsmen on the seventh year of his exile to express his gratitude, “all the descendent of Okolo, who had lived about two hundred years before” assembled and in the festive gathering amid the mood of gaiety, there was a subtle sense of loss – the loss of the “grand old way”

The social order that so long responded to authority and the bonds of kinship is fast deteriorating. The communal fabric is in its death throes. Unlike the hope in rejuvenation in Yeats’ “Second Coming”, from where the novel gets its title, the future ushering in the dark phase of colonial rule anticipates merely an ironic reversal of the same. Okonkwo, in his decision to fight the march of history alone chooses his own end, and his fall becomes a metaphorical rendering of the fall of archetypal Africa, which is also commensurate with the fall from wholeness during the advent of colonialism during the 1890s when the Europeans with their band of missionaries, policemen, interpreters and coastal converts
changed the entire destiny of not only the Igbo people but that of the very continent.

The conflict between the individual and the community is the one reality that Achebe harped on again and again in his first three novels which forms one continuous stream, united by a common purpose revealed in the very nature of his narrative method. The distinctive quality of his style is sobriety – not simply the limited talent, but the disciplined economy of an assured artist. What appears as an elaborate evocation of the social customs simply serves as a realistic support for the human drama, relevant to the cultural context of his novels. Achebe has justly been called a chronicler of his people’s history, for in the last resort he is not simply dealing with the collapse of African society, but with its transformation. He is examining from the inside the historical evolution of the African society at its moment of crisis, and the inevitable tensions attendant upon this process. As a writer himself, Achebe paid close attention to the crucial relationship that exists between the writer and his community. In his scheme of things, the African writers hold the key to the future wellbeing of the continent. Therefore, the next chapter deals with the role and responsibility of the African writer towards the tribal community.
Endnotes:


10 Ibid., p. 163.


13 See Achebe’s *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, (London: Heinemann, 1975), P. 99. see also *No Longer at Ease*, p. 145.


16 Ibid., p. 119.

17 Ibid., p. 156.

18 Ibid., p. 25.


20 Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 28.


23 Ibid., p. 61.
24 Ibid., p. 59.


27 Ibid., p. 139.

28 Ibid., p. 149.


31 Ibid., p. 30.

32 Ibid., p. 27.

33 Ibid., p. 28.

34 Ibid., p. 179.


36 Ibid., p. 134.

37 Kola is the caffeine-rich fruit of the cola acuminate or *colas nitida* which functions like coffee (or, significantly, *coca-cola*) as a mild stimulant. Within the fruit rind are lobed clusters; a cluster, having usually three or four lobes, is broken to provide the pieces that are eaten. The taste is bitter, though the effect is refreshing.


39 *Ozo* titles are earned by individual Igbos for fulfilling their concept of valour in war or goodness shown to the community.


Ibid.


Ibid., p. 3.


Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, p. 5.

Ibid., p. 6.

Ibid., p. 29.

Ibid., p. 29.

Ibid., p. 84.

Ibid., p. 84.

Ibid., p. 18.

Ibid., p. 124.


As quoted in Om P. Juneja’s *Post Colonial Novel*, p. 68.


Achebe explains the meaning of an *osu* as a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart – a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by the free-born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste – long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was taboo to him. An *osu* could not attend an assembly of the free-born, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any of the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the Evil Forest (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 143).

Emanuel Obiechina, p. 233.

64 Ibid., p. 40.

65 Ibid., p. 92.


67 Ibid., p. 112.


69 Ibid., pp. 63-64.


71 Ibid., p. 12.

72 Ibid., p. 12.


74 Ibid. P. 205.

75 Ibid.


78 Ibid. P. 206.

79 Ibid. P. 213.

80 Ibid. P. 213.


83 Ibid. P. 9.


85 Ibid., p. 152.