

**CONTROLLING CRIMINALITY AND VIOLENCE IN FICTIVE WORLDS: AN
EVALUATION OF THE ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION
MECHANISMS VERSUS THE ENGLISH ADVERSARIAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM
IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART***

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Abstract

It is without doubt that Chinua Achebe's seminal novel, *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958 was the first literary text that launched Modern African Literature into the prestigious pedestal of World Literature. With this singular novel, the voice of Africa, from an African, and about Africa, was heard all over the world, as the novelist wrote back at the Empire. It boldly rebutted the Western writers' representation of Africa as a dark and primitive continent, inhabited by cannibalistic sub-humans. For more than six decades after its publication, *Things Fall Apart* has tenaciously occupied a prominent position among the list of canonical novels read in schools all over the world, and it is one of the few books to be found in every bookshelf of libraries in the four corners of the earth. Besides, the novel has received endless reviews from almost every field of human knowledge as it has been subjected to a plethora of critical discourses by writers, researchers, scholars, students and even the lay men. Literary critics, particularly, have used different literary theories to analyze it and to arrive at different conclusions about the novel. The present research, however, breaks away from that trajectory, but appropriate library and internet research methodology with the principles and provisions of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to examine the control of disputes, criminality and violence in the fictive world of the novel. The study precisely x-rays the control of disputes, violence and crimes with the traditional alternative dispute resolution versus the English adversarial judicial system presented in the novel. Again, the literary language that foregrounds the two systems would be thoroughly examined. After the evaluation, the findings would unveil the system that is superior in the control of dispute, crime and violence in the fictive settings of the text.

Introduction

It is stating the obvious to say that in the past, Western philosophers, historians, cartographers, and literary writers had presented Africa as a savage continent peopled by savages and cannibals. For instance, to the narrator of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Charles Marlow, there is something diabolical about the Dark Continent, Africa, with its blazing sun, wild and turbulent rivers and its savage population that any white man that wants to sail to Africa, a company doctor must, first of all, "measure the crania of those going out there"(18). Due to the abominable environmental and human conditions in Africa, most of these "emissary of light". (20), the lower apostles that undertook such dangerous journeys into the heart of darkness for the purpose of "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (19) never returned because "changes take place inside them" (19). As if this dismal representation of Africa by Marlow while still in Europe is not enough, he goes on to narrate his personal experience of the continent and its people to his listeners thus:

We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steam toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories.

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but therefore you could look at a thing monstrous and free. **It was on unearthly**, and the men were – No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of their remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly, Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of their being a meaning in it which you – you so remote from the light of the first ages – could comprehend (67-69).

The ignominious representation of Africa, Africans and their languages pervade the literary texts of Western writers. Therefore, the uncivilized and savage people need the redemptive presence of colonizers in order to be civilized. And this is what the Nobel

laureate, Nadine Gordimer, calls in her criticism of the horrors of Apartheid in South Africa a tapestry of lies” (12), and Chinua Achebe, particularly, calls Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, a malignant novel that is different from a benevolent fiction. In his ‘Truth of Fiction’, he makes it clear that benevolent literature “does not enslave; it liberates the mind of man. Its truth is not like the canons of an orthodoxy or the irrationality of prejudice and superstition, it begins as an adventure on self-discovery and ends in wisdom and humane conscience” (105).

Achebe, like his contemporaries, that is, the first generation of African writers, take to pieces the evil of colonization with their exposure to Western writing and epistemology as they write back to the empires. To Henry Louis Gates, the main purpose of African writing is to expose the evil of colonization and to launch the continent into the culture of modernity (1985). Modern African Literature which is an integral part of World Literature is an “adequate means of organizing human experience” (Abiola Irele, 39), and which is produced in the crucible of colonization presents the “trauma and drama of the imposition of European rule on the continent” (Simon Gikandi, 2004). Not only that the writers show that physical and psychological trauma and alienation accompany colonization of Africa and Africans, but African culture is misunderstood and misrepresented. The European colonizers used such words like *savage* and *primitive* in describing it (Isidore Okpewho, 1992). Besides, Bernth Lindfors sums up the damage of colonization thus, “Contrary to Western mythology, Europe did not bring light, peace and justice to the Dark continent, it brought chaos to what had once been a well-ordered world” (135).

This well-ordered world which colonizers bring chaos to is the primary focus of Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*. With its publication in 1958, Achebe is seen as the father of Modern African Literature with its depiction of the evil of European colonization in Africa. Since its publication, the text has been translated into several languages of the world, found in most libraries in the world and occupies the prestigious position of a canonical text on African literature. And since its publication, it has attained the status of what Frank Kermode calls “perpetual modernity” like William Shakespeare’s works. In other words, for a writer or a literary work to occupy this enviable position, it must “continue not only to be read but also to be talked and written about” (Biodun Jeiyfo 34).

Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* has continued to be read and reread, interpreted and reinterpreted, analyzed and reanalyzed infinitely by different scholars, researchers and students with different skills, knowledge and experiences. Some of the recent forays into the text include Chika Unigwe’s discovery of the transformative power of the text in her personal life and writing career. According to her:

Things Fall Apart tells the story of a civilization and a community completely disrupted by the coming of the white man. Its protagonist, Okonkwo, is a warrior, a proud man whose life is completely ruined by the clash of civilizations which is brought by the English colonizers. For the first time in my life, I read a book which showed that my ancestors had a history before colonization, and a world that was complete on its own and which did not seek validity outside its own community. For the first time, colonization was presented as an intrusion, and not as something I ought to be grateful for” (34-35).

Also, Obinna U. Muoh in “Achebe and the reconstruction of Igbo History” argues that Achebe’s trilogy – *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God* – all chronicle Anglo-Igbo encounter through colonization of the Igbo and its implications on the Igbo. He calls the three novels historical fictions which are from historical sources that not only document some events but are capable of being interpreted. To him, *Things Fall Apart*, particularly is:

...contextualized as a historical source ‘book’ of Igbo society and culture. Achebe’s story was based on actual events of Igbo history, which was set on the 19th century development in Igbo society and manipulated to fit a fictionalized narrative accessible to a wider readership (47).

With the use of theoretical model of New Historicism, Azuka Onwuka examines the Igbo cosmology in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. He claims that three items – kolanuts, palm wine and yam – stand out in the two classics. He suggests that the three items are very crucial in the fictive worlds of the novels; however, the superiority of yam over the others cannot be overstressed. In his finding:

Yam is the most important and prestigious crop of the traditional Igbo society presented in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, its role goes beyond that of staple food. By playing its role as food, source of wealth, source of power and items for rituals, it creates social stability” (62).

Again, the novel has been subjected to feminist reading by Oguejiofor V. Omeje who appropriates the theory of Discourse Structure of Conversations to examine the stabilizing influence of Uchendu, Okonkwo’s maternal uncle, in stabilizing Okonkwo’s emotional and psychological traumatic exilic experience in his seven years’ sojourn in Mbanta as his punishment for manslaughter. He suggests that Uchendu who is advanced in age is inclined to tell reminiscent anecdotes to Okonkwo, his immediate family and other characters in the world of the text (2019).

Having reviewed a few recent scholarly and critical essays on *Things Fall Apart*, the present research differs markedly from all of them as it uses the trending issue of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to analyse the world of the novel to prove that colonial writer’s presentation of Africa and Africans as a world of chaos is false and not proven by facts presented by Achebe in his seminal and canonical work. In fact, the English adversarial judicial system introduces chaos in the fictive settings of the novel.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms versus the English Adversarial Judicial System in *Things Fall Apart*

From the beginning of the novel, the omniscient narrator presents a sane society, where the characters that inhabit the fictive world of the text avoid disputes with their neighbours, no matter the level of provocation. It is a world where the powerful, the warriors and the wealthy co-exist harmoniously with the weak, the cowardly and the abject. It is a world where Okonkwo’s improvident and debt-riddled father, Unoka, can dismissively send out his more powerful and successful creditor, Okoye, whom he owes two hundred cowries thus:

'Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each is one hundred cowries. You see, I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under it. I shall pay my big debts first' (6).

In this pre-colonial Umuofia which the narrator presents, the people maintain good neighborliness. Despite the provocative statement of Unoka to his creditor, Okoye does nothing, but simply "rolled his goatskin and departed. To Okoye and the other characters in pre-colonial Umuofia, there is no dispute between the two men, though Okoye "was asking Unoka to return the two hundred cowries he had borrowed from him more than two years before" (6). In a situation where dispute or conflict would arise, the people, particularly the elders, who are present would resolve it before it escalates. This is the case where Okonkwo insults Osugo who contradicts him in a kindred meeting to discuss the next ancestral feast. Okonkwo brusquely tells him, "This meeting is for men. The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he had called him a woman" (21). Everybody at the meeting sides with Osugo and Okonkwo apologizes to him, when the "oldest man present said sternly that those whose palm kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (21).

It is obvious that the pre-colonial world of Umuofia with the others in *Things Fall Apart* is a world that abhors personal revenge or vendetta or self-help. Despite the fact that Nwoye joining the new religion is a heavy loss to Okonkwo, as he sits in his hut, "A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his matchet, go to the church and wipe out the vile and miscreant gang" (122), but he refrains from such an action. And even after his detention in the white man's prison with other elders of Umuofia, and he kills the head messengers out of personal revenge, he realizes that the clan would not go to war. Not only that the clan had allowed the other messengers to escape, but the men are asking, 'Why did he do it?' (163) Not only that the white man's colonial adversarial court system and the military armament have cowed down the warlike men of Umuofia and the surroundings clans, but it is not a collective decision to kill the head messenger.

The world of Umuofia is not a world of violence and bloodshed. It is not a world where their customs are bad, obnoxious and unnatural, **as the white colonizers and their arrests think and say**. They have a system for resolving disputes and conflicts that would invariably lead to social disorder, violence and crimes. This system is inexorably tied to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, which unfolded, particularly when the very existence of the community or family is threatened. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are indigenous to Africa and it has been described as "processes and techniques that fall outside of the judicial process" (Ajogwu 1). The processes often "consist of a variety of approaches to early intervention and dispute resolution where disputants are encouraged to reach negotiated settlement before a neutral third party (Alternative Dispute Resolution Guide 2020). One of such alternative dispute resolution mechanisms is arbitration. Fabian Ajogwu describes arbitration as:

... the fair resolution of a dispute between two or more parties by a person or persons other than by a court of law. It is the reference of a

dispute by parties thereto for settlement by a person or tribunal of their own choice, rather than a court. The basis of the arbitration is the consent of the parties to submit or refer the dispute to arbitration. The strength of arbitration lies in the enabling law that confers it with the sanction of enforcement once a final award is made in a judicious manner (2013:5).

Some of the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, apart from arbitration, which would be seen to have been used in the settlement of disputes and conflicts in the precolonial world of Umuofia, include negotiation, mediation, etc.

For example, when the wife of Ogbuefi Udo was killed by Mbaino men, the republican Umuofia summons all the adult members of the clan to a meeting at the market square to take a collective decision that would be enforced by the whole clan. On the day of the meeting, despite the fact that Umuofia has a famous war medicine, more and stronger of warriors than its weaker neighbor, Mbaino, they decided to pursue the course of negotiated settlement. They sent its greatest warrior, Okonkwo, as a negotiator, an imperious emissary, with an “ultimatum motive asking them to choose between war on the one hand, and the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation” (9-10) on the other. At Mbaino, the culpable men, including Ikemefuna’s father, negotiated with Okonkwo in “low tones” (12). In order to avoid war with the more powerful Umuofia, they handed Okonkwo a virgin to replace the murdered Ogbuefi Udo’s wife and a lad, Ikemefuna, as compensation and a property of the whole clan, whom the clan kept in Okonkwo’s custody until he is sacrificed as a scapegoat to the gods. It is glaring that the alternative dispute resolution mechanism of negotiation settled the dispute with Mbaino that would have led to war and bloodshed on both sides.

Moreover, Okonkwo’s sacrilegious desecration of the Week of Peace by beating his wife, Ojiugo, is an abomination against the whole clan. The beating is not a personal injury to Ojiugo, because the narrator says, “Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger by his youngest wife, who went to plait her hair at her friend’s house and did not return early enough to cook the afternoon meal” (23). In other words, if Okonkwo does not beat her during the sacred week of peace, he would not have committed any offence. However, since the beating is done within the most sacred week in the clan, the mediator between him and the clan, the Chief Priest of Ani, and an Ombudsman warns him, ‘You have committed a great evil’ (24). And he spells out the gravity of his offence thus, ‘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’ (24). And he sanctions him thus, “You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries’ (24). Through the alternative dispute resolution method of mediation, where the mediator is independent and impartial, and justice is dispensed with timeously, the offender, Okonkwo, is reconciled with the community for, “Okonkwo did as the priest said. He also took with him a pot of palm-wine because inwardly, he was repentant” (25). By the sanction placed on the offender for his abominable act, and his fulfillment of the sanction and repentance, the clan also averts the calamity the earth goddess would have unleashed on it.

The narrator also gives the reader a glimpse into Okonkwo’s household, where he beats his second wife, Ekwefi, a few days to the New Yam Feast. There is no sanction because it is not a sacred week but it is within this period that he would have committed

his first murder. After beating his wife, he goes into his hut to get his gun, and the beaten wife derisively “murmured something about guns that never shot” (31). He fires the gun at her, but she narrowly escapes being killed by the whisks. She is “very much shaken and frightened but quite unhurt. He heaved a heavy sigh and went away with the gun” (31).

The reader is also presented with, almost in a cinematographic manner, the killing of Ikemefuna, the common property of the whole Umuofia, whom the clan puts in his custody for three years. This is a boy who calls him “father” and has mentored his son, Nwoye. At the invasion of the clan by locusts, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves decrees that the boy should be sacrificed at the outskirts of Umuofia. Old and wealthy Ezeudu forewarns him, ‘That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death’ (45). Despite this warning from brave and wise Ezeudu, Okonkwo accompanies the men on the journey, and he is the one who actually kills Ikemefuna because, “He was afraid of being thought weak” (49). He persuades himself that the killing of Ikemefuna is an act of manliness and it has been ordained by the oracle, but his very close friend, the more thoughtful Obierike warns him, ‘... And let me tell you one thing, my friend. If I were you I would have stayed at home. What you have done will not please the earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families’ (53). Though he does not see his killing of Ikemefuna as “murder” and no punishment is levied on him by the clan, he suffers temporary emotional and psychological crises after the killing. However, the permanent damage to his life and household is the desertion of Nwoye, who joins the new religion and denies his father. There is no doubt that Ikemefuna’s killing leads inevitably to his suicide and the catastrophe that overruns his household. In other words, the gods exerted retributive justice on him for the death of Ikemefuna. As the people believe, ‘It is not our custom to fight for our gods,... If we put ourselves between the god and his victim we may receive blows intended for the offender...’ (127).

Another alternative dispute resolution mechanism which is used in the settlement of conflicts in pre-colonial Umuofia is arbitration. In a divorce petition which Mgbafo’s husband, Uzowulu, files against her and her brothers, the highest masquerade cult in Umuofia, the *egwugwu*, is the arbitral tribunal. Its composition is very interesting and makes for their independence and impartiality. The narrator says that the masquerades are the “spirits of the ancestors” (71), but “each of the nine *egwugwu* represented a village of the clan” (71). The trial in the matrimonial matter follows the due process of natural justice where all the parties present their cases and witnesses are called to testify before the masquerades and the crowd that gathered. It is also interesting to note that the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms employed for the settlement of disputes and conflicts have the primary purpose of reconciliation and restoration of relationships. According to the arbitral tribunal’s judgment delivered by the Evil Forest, ‘Our duty is not to blame this man or to praise that, but to settle the dispute’ (75). In their impartiality, they delivered a judgement (an arbitral award) when they tell the two sides to the dispute what they should do to restore their relationship again. To Uzowulu, Evil Forest tells him, ‘Go to your in-laws with a pot of wine and beg your wife to return to you. It is not bravery when a man fights with a woman’ (75). To Odukwe, Mgbafo’s brother, Evil Forest directs that, ‘if your in-law brings wine to you, let your sister go with him’ (75). The masquerade cult is the highest arbitral body in Umuofia and its decision

is final. The conversation between two elderly observers to the arbitration is provided below to justify this position:

‘I don’t know why such a trifle should come before the *egwugwu*’, said one elder to another.

Don’t you know what kind of man Uzowulu is? He will not listen to any other decision’, replied the other. (75)

The arbitral powers and jurisdiction of *egwugwu* is not limited to matrimonial cases but extends to other cases and this is reflected in the ensuing statement that, “As they spoke two other groups of people had replaced the first before the *egwugwu*, and a great land case began” (75).

In the commission of homicide – manslaughter – the divine law of the Earth goddess must be enforced by the aggrieved family. After the inadvertent killing of Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s son during his funeral, it is a divine decree that whoever sheds the blood of a clansman inadvertently must flee into exile for seven years. Another punishment for such an offender, which Okonkwo is subjected to, without any discrimination and partiality is:

... a large crowd of men from Ezeudu’s quarter stormed Okonkwo’s compound, dressed in gabs of war. They set fire to his houses, demolished his walls, killed his animals and destroyed his barn. It was the justice of the earth goddess, and they were merely her messengers. They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo. His greatest friend, Obierika, was among them. They were merely cleansing the land which Okonkwo had polluted with the blood of a clansman (99-100).

With these stringent measures levied against an offender, it is clear that African culture is misrepresented and misunderstood by the white colonizers. The African societies may seem to them to operate with unnatural and obnoxious customs, but these customs have within them restraining rules with their enforcements that control the outbreak of anarchy, bloodshed and self-help that punctuate savage societies.

In fact, Achebe’s omniscient narrator in *Things Fall Apart* presents colonized Umuofia as well as other clans whose custom the White colonizers abhor the Whiteman’s adversarial judicial system that is punitive, chaotic, partial and corrupt. It is during Okonkwo’s exile in Mbanta that Obierika and his two companions bring to Okonkwo, Uchendu and the others the sad news of the human and environmental genocide the colonizers levied on Abame for the killing of a lone white man. There is no dialogue with Abame and no proper court process, but a military expedition is led against the clan and its people are massacred – both the guilty and the innocent. This incident can be contrasted with the peaceful resolution of the conflict between Umuofia and Mbaino for the murder of Ogbuefi Udo’s wife in precolonial Umuofia. While Umuofia and Mbaino used peacefully negotiated settlement to resolve the conflict, the white colonizers used self-help. The result of the self-help is not only that “Abame has been wiped out” (110), but the “few survivors” fled to Umuofia. The environmental impact of the destruction of Abame is unprecedented in the world of the novel as, “Their clan is now completely empty. Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the colour of blood. A great evil has come upon their land as the oracle had warned” (112).

The catastrophic fall of Abame makes possible the colonization of the other clans. And with colonization taking root, all the systems in the clans' republic method of administration, the Traditional African Religion, the informal educational system, the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms – give way to the colonial order. For instance, the white administrator introduced the English adversarial judicial system, and to him and the new converts, 'But he says that our customs are bad; and our brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad' (141). However, lack of independence and impartiality of the white man's system of justice are seen in the manslaughter of Oduche during a fight – Oduche dies seven days after he sustains a grievous injury from the fight, and Aneto has already prepared to flee into exile as the custom of Umuofia specifies:

But the Christians had told the white man about the accident, and he sent his *kotma* to catch Aneto. He was imprisoned. He was imprisoned with all the leaders of his family. In the end Oduche died and Aneto was taken to Umuru and hanged, the other people were released, but even now they have not found the mouth with which to tell of their suffering (141).

From this narration, the English adversarial system in the colonized world does not conform to the principles of natural justice, that is, that Aneto's own side of the case should be heard by a proper court trial. Again, like the military expedition at Abame, punishment is the primary goal and both the guilty and the innocent are punished in the English adversarial system of justice. The same situation plays out in the house of Okonkwo after he committed suicide. The narrator says:

'Take down the body', the Commissioner ordered his chief messenger, 'and bring it and all these people to the court' (165).

The white man's method of administration is also riddled with corruption and partiality. The corruption in the judicial system is seen in the land dispute between Aneto and Oduche as Obierika tells Okonkwo after he comes back from exile, 'The white man's court has decided that it should belong to Nnama's family, who had given much money to the white man's messengers and interpreter' (141). The same corrupt practice in the dispensation of justice is witnessed in the levy which the District Commissioner imposes on Umuofia after the clan razed Enoch's house and the church building in Umuofia. He tells the six elders of Umuofia whom his men disarm and detain that, 'I have decided that you will pay a fine of two hundred bags of cowries. You will be released as soon as you agree to this and undertake to collect that fine from your people' (155). However, the court messenger tells the "people that their leaders would not be released unless they paid a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries" (156).

The greatest injustice of the English colonial legal system is attested by the partiality of the white District Commissioner, who doubles as an administrator and a judge. Despite the fact that the clan is provoked to anger by the unmasking of the *egwugwu* by one of the Christian converts, Enoch, which is an abomination never seen before in the clan and which propels the band of masquerades that act as the clan's ombudsman to burn down Enoch's house and the church, and despite the fact that the clan has endured several unbelievable abominations from the newly converted natives

like the killing and eating of the royal python, which is a sacred religious totem of the clan, the District Commissioner hears only Mr. Smith's side of the story and passes judgment without hearing the other side of the clan that is involved in the conflict with the church. As he exhorts them before he imposes his sanctions on them:

'...We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall come to your rescue. But we will not allow you to ill-treat others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own country under a great queen. I have brought you here because you have joined together to molest others, to burn people's houses and their place of worship. That must not happen in the dominion of our queen, the most powerful ruler in the world' (154-155).

The six leaders of Umuofia whom he detains are humiliated and treated in an undignified manner. The omniscient narrator shows the result of the white man's court, where he judges cases in ignorance thus:

They the [court messengers] guarded the prison which was full of men who had offended against the white man's law. Some of these prisoners had thrown away their twins and some had molested the Christians. They were beaten in the prison by the *kotma* and made to work every morning cleaning the government compound and fetching wood for the white commissioner and the court messengers. Some of the prisoners were men of title who should be above such mean occupation. They were grieved by the indignity and mourned for their neglected farms (139-140).

It is clear from this narration that the white man's colonization in the fictive world of Umuofia and the other clans brings with it a blight through its military expedition and the adversarial court system. The pre-colonial Umuofia and the other clans enjoy a more peaceful co-existence between its indigenes, the indigene and his clans and between the clans due to the dispute resolution mechanisms used in the settlements of conflicts.

The literary language that foregrounds the peaceful pre-colonial and chaotic colonized fictive world of the novel

Literary language cohesively encapsulates the message of the writer, and its removal renders the artfulness of the entire text a nullity. The relationship between the two is like the relationship between the human skeletal system and the mass of the muscles that cover it or between the brain and the cranium that covers and shields it from danger. In this text under study, Achebe's presentation of the evil of colonization in Africa and, by extension, in other colonized territories, is forcefully brought to the reader through the language that thrust literariness on *Things Fall Apart*. First of all, he presents a pre-colonial and agrarian world of Umuofia and other clans that use alternative dispute resolution mechanism for the settlement of conflicts. This is a world where the members of the clans, particularly the elders, who are the custodians of the values, laws and mores

urge the exercise of restraint in one's words and actions. The advice for restraint is encapsulated in proverbs. For example, when Okonkwo insults and humiliates Osugo at a meeting of the kindred, the oldest man whose responsibility is to keep the peace admonishes Okonkwo with the proverb that "those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (21). Even though, he and the others know that Okonkwo's wealth is as a result of his hard work, he reminds him of the need to be humble and to avoid utterances that would lead to conflict with his neighbor. Again, when the same Okonkwo commits a sacrilegious act by beating Ojiugo, his third wife, during the Week of Peace, Okonkwo's erratic action is viewed by his enemies thus, "They called him the little bird *nza* who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his *chi*" (25). To them, his wealth is now the reason for him to desecrate the custom of the land sanctioned by one of the highest deities in the land, the Earth goddess. The importance of these two proverbs is that they both portray people's world view when the sources of wealth are attributed to divine providence. Therefore, there must be an exercise of restraint in one's words and actions in dealings with others.

Pre-colonial Umuofia clan believes that wealth, position and power can also be taken away from those they have been given to by the supernatural beings, if they commit abominations. Therefore, one has to be cautious of one's actions so that they and their families do not suffer retributive justice. After the killing of Ikemefuna, Obierika warns Okonkwo that, "What you have done will not please the earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families (53). Okonkwo does not see his killing of Ikemefuna as murder, but exonerates himself with this proverb that, 'A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm' (53). In other words, the Earth goddess cannot punish him for carrying out her order that Ikemefuna should be sacrificed as a scapegoat for the invasion of locusts in Umuofia. However, there is the retributive justice as Obierika forewarned him when the irony in the "guns that never shot" (31), and a gun "that had not killed a rat" (31) when, during the funeral of Ezeudu, "Okonkwo's gun had exploded and a piece of iron had pierced the boy's heart" (99). With the manslaughter he has committed, he has to go into exile for seven years, and his whole world; wealth, power, position and influence in Umuofia and the surrounding clans collapsed. The omniscient narrator foregrounds his gruesome exilic experience thus:

His life had been ruled by a great passion to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it. Then everything, had been broken. He had been cast out like a fish on a dry, sandy beach, panting (104).

Though at Mbanta, he works very hard in his exile and also gets recognition in the place of exile that he is one of the lords of the clan. However, the imagery of loneliness and desperation for survival in the simile of, "He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on a dry, sandy beach, panting" clings to him even when he returns to Umuofia from exile. The impossibility of reasserting himself in his clan is embedded in this simile that foreshadows his loss. Despite the wealth he has acquired at Mbanta, his coming back with his two beautiful daughters of marriageable age, Ezinne and Obiageli, his hope to initiate his sons into the prestigious *ozo* cult and to marry two new wives to mark his

return, all collapsed because there is a new order – the white man’s colonial order – that has taken over in Umuofia and forcefully collapsed the old dispensation before his exile. Okonkwo’s loss and irretrievability of his power and influence are foregrounded in the imagery in this proverb, “The clan was like a lizard if it lost its tail it soon grew another” (137). All his persuasions that the clan should wage a war against the colonial administration falls on deaf ears as, “The new religion and the trading stores were very much in the people’s eyes and minds” (145). Therefore, his beheading of the head messenger at the clan’s meeting is his own personal revenge and not the collective decision of the clan. He has to bear the consequences of that action which he did by committing suicide and the ignominy of an unbecoming burial as presented in the simile of, “You drove him to kill himself, and now he will be buried like a dog...” (165). But it should be noted that it is not only the white man that drives him to commit suicide, Okonkwo also acts outside the dictum of his society. He is a man without restraint, a man who adores violence and acts outside the periphery of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms provided in pre-colonial Umuofia, and so he could not survive under colonization that supplanted the old order. After all, he is not the only elder of Umuofia that is detained by the white man. There are five other elders who are also at the meeting at the village square. But he could not withhold himself for the clan to decide on how to resolve the crises between it and the white colonial administrator, whether to use any of its alternative means of conflict resolution or to go to outright war.

Chinua Achebe also through the omniscient narrator tells the story that what happened in the novel presents the world of colonization as a new, chaotic, and violent world order in the fictive environment of *Things Fall Apart*. Initially, colonization is foreshadowed as an unbelievable rumour or story. Their presence in distant land is portrayed thus in the conversation:

‘It is like the story of white men who, they say, are white like this piece of chalk’, said Obierika. He held up a piece of chalk, which every man kept in his *obi* and with which guests drew lines on the floor before they ate kola nuts. ‘And these white men, they say, have no toes’.

‘And have you even seen them?’ asked Machi.

‘Have you?’ asked Obierika.

One of them passes here frequently’, said Machi. ‘His name is Amadi.

Those who knew Amadi laughed. He was a leper, and the polite name for leprosy was ‘the white skin’ (59).

From the conversation between the men at the marriage ceremony of Obierika’s daughter, Akueke, there is the foreshadowing of the presence of the white men in Umuofia. The strangeness of their skin complexion is compared to a white chalk, and also compared to the leper, Amadi. They are also described as being toeless, because they wear shoes. The euphemism of leprosy as ‘white skin’ underscores the devastation which the disease of leprosy leaves on its victims and the same devastation and destruction will be levied on the colonized clans by the British rule. This same devastation is also foreshadowed by the descent of locusts into Umuofia, and at their descent, there is an ominous presence because, “suddenly a shadow fell upon the world”

(44). The effect of the invasion of the locusts like the coming of the white men is that, “Mighty tree branches broke away on them” (45). The “Mighty tree branches” that would break under the weight of the locusts is symbolic that men and warriors like Okonkwo that would not conform to the dictates of colonization and the new order would die. The symbolism that the white man’s presence would bring chaos and anarchy to the once peaceful clans is sustained in the story of the killing of one white harbinger in Abame. The Oracle at Abame warns them that ‘... other white men were on their way. They were like locusts, it said, and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain’ (111). The Abame people have to kill the harbinger to avoid the invasion of the clan by other white men; however, the ironic twist is that his killing brings about the military expedition of the clan that leads to genocide thereby, fulfilling the prophecy of the Oracle in comparing the white men with locusts. Their devastation of Abame is so chaotic, violent and anarchical, and defies all the known laws in the settlement of disputes and conflicts in the pre-colonial world of the clans. It also leaves in its wake deadly environment impact that is personified in the pollution that, “Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the colour of blood” (112). The massacre in Abame has physical, spiritual and environmental consequences such that the fish have to migrate to a peaceful and non-violent aqua region, where the ecosystem is not violated.

Apart from the military expedition of the colonial administration to conquer the belligerent clans, some white missionaries also use violent methods to spread The Christian gospel that supplants the old Traditional African Religion in the world of *Things Fall Apart*. Unlike Mr. Brown who uses a peaceful method that accommodates the people’s world view and cultural practices, his successor, Reverend James Smith is a Christian fanatic, “... who danced a furious step and so the drum went mad” (148). The proverb and the hyperbole of the eccentricity of the white missionary would also lead to the excesses of some of his Christian converts. The followers of the new religion, the priestess of Agbala metaphorically called, “the excrement of the clan, and the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up” (115) get empowered and eccentric under the new order. The new-found empowerment by the new dispensation enables men like Enoch, who is metaphorically called, “The outsider who wept louder than the bereaved” (148) to kill the sacred python and to unmask a masquerade. The latter’s abominable action brings the church into a great conflict with the clan and this eventually leads to the detention of the six leaders of Umuofia and the death of Okonkwo.

But before Okonkwo’s death, elderly, sensible and thoughtful members of the clans are aware that the members of the clan who have joined the new religion pose greater danger to the coherence and existence for the clan than the white strangers. **This is envisaged in the proverb of one of the elders of the descendants of Okolo** at Okonkwo’s farewell feast at Mbanta after his seven-year exile. He forewarns them that, ‘a man can now leave his father and his 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’ (134). The simile of the hunter’s dog turning on its master in the description of the new converts that turned against the other members of their clan is borne out of the incapacity of the clan to fight the white man. These converts and the clansmen who are now part of the white man’s administration are traitors that would betray the people. Obierika tells Okonkwo that not only ‘... our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that

our customs are bad” (141) with the white man, but ‘they help him to uphold his government’ (140). It is easy for them to drive the two white men in Umuofia away, but such clans men, ‘... would go to Umuru and bring the soldiers, and we would be like Abame’ (141). Abame, therefore, becomes a symbolic clan that represents the white man’s unnatural and chaotic justice system that enables colonization to take root in all the clans. For the clans that do not go through the trauma of military expedition, he uses the subtlety of his religion as symbolized by the divisiveness of the knife in the proverb, ‘He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart’ (141).

But despite the fact that the clan has fallen apart, and “the Christians had told the white man about the accident, and he sent his *kotuma* to catch Aneto” (141), the clan cannot continue to fold its hands in the face of the continuous and unprovoked assaults from the Christian converts. At the commission of a heinous abomination against the clan by Enoch’s unmasking of an *egwugwu*, “The band of *egwugwu* moved like a furious whirlwind to Enoch’s compound and with machet and fire reduced it to a desolate heap” (150). The imagery of the ferocity and destructiveness in the simile and personification of the masquerades’ movement foregrounds the uncontrollable anger in the masquerades for the unmasking of one of them. It also means that the spiritual realm can no longer keep silent before the unholy and unwholesome meddlesomeness of the Christians whom they have tolerated for a long time. This revenge from the spiritual realm is also reflected in, “Ajofia laughed in his guttural voice. It was like the laugh of rusty metal” (151). Ajofia’s eerie and unnatural laughter as seen in the simile above shows that Mr. Smith is addressing a spiritual being whose purpose for coming to the church premises must be fulfilled. Before the band of *egwugwu* “went away the red-earth church which Mr. Brown had built was a pile of earth and ashes” (152).

The consequential action of the District Commissioner at the destruction of the church premises, once again, reflects the punitive nature of the English adversarial judicial system that abhors the settlement of disputes and conflicts through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. **The detention of the six elders and the imposition of fines on them and the clan results into submission of the clan to the white man’s colonization.** The danger that faces Umuofia is presented by the narrator in the simile of great fear and anxiety, “Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run” (156). Colonization, with its military armament and punitive and erratic English adversarial judicial system, has not only conquered and subdued the physical and human environment in the world of *Things Fall Apart*, but there is crises in the ancestral, spiritual and divine realms as foregrounded in the parallel structures below:

All our gods are weeping. Idemili is weeping, Ogwugwu is weeping, Agbala is weeping, and all the others. Our dead fathers are weeping because of the shameful sacrilege they are suffering and the abomination we have all seen with our eyes’ (162).

Chinua makes use of the masterful technique of narration, the omniscient narrator, who is all seeing and all knowing to tell the story of *Things Fall Apart*. And through this technique, he reveals everything, including the innermost thoughts of the characters. The narrator tells the reader about the fictive settings of the novel, Umuofia and Mbanta at pre-colonial and colonial periods. He does not present the precolonial account of the clans as romantic and rosy because there are cultural practices such as

human sacrifices, the dumping of twins as well as people with deadly diseases into the forest and human sacrifices to deities. In fact, life in that period is also presented as being brutish. However, he shows that life is not as anarchic as presented by the Westerners' accounts in their literary texts, which is presented to justify the colonization of the continent. It is obvious that colonization which the clans and characters in the novel are subjected to have made them suffer untold and unimaginable hardships. In the pre-colonial period, conflicts and disputes arise because, "Disputes are, generally, an inevitable part of human interaction" (Nwakoby, 1) whether at the level of individuals or family or intra-clan or inter-clan, the disputes are nipped in the bud before they escalate. The agrarian clans try as much as possible to keep off conflicts, and if by any chance they arise, one of the mechanisms of alternative dispute resolution, like negotiation, mediation, arbitration, is used to settle the dispute and restore the relationship of the individuals, families, villages or clans. But peaceful co-existence of the people that make for cohesiveness of the entities that make up the clans is largely emphasized, and these are encapsulated in the world view of the people through their proverbs and folktales, with which moral lessons are taught and learnt. For instance, old Nwakobie's proverb of 'Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching' (17), when Okonkwo comes to him to demand for eight hundred yam seedlings for crop-sharing with him shows not only the survivalist instinct in the individual and the wisdom of making sure that one is not engulfed in conflict with other members of his society, but avoids it by all means and at all costs. Nwakobie has learnt not to lend his yams to young men because many of them in their generation are very rascally and irresponsible and would waste his yam seedlings. However, Okonkwo who is also grounded in the tradition of his people has earlier in his request for the yam reminded him that even though he is a young man, he has a catalogue of achievements including being a wrestling champion to his credit. This message and its wisdom is encapsulated in Okonkwo's proverb, 'The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did' (17). Being aware, like Okonkwo reminds him that he started fending for himself at a very young age and would not waste his yam seedlings, makes Nwakobie to relent and promise to give him twice the number of yam seedlings he demanded from him. His trust in Okonkwo's ability to return the yam seedlings is also put forward to Okonkwo and the others present at the meeting in another proverb, 'As our fathers said, you can tell a ripe corn by its look' (17).

The society of the pre-colonial world of *Things Fall Apart* emphasizes the need for a conflict-free existence. As Nwakobie offers kola nuts to welcome his guests, he emphasizes the need for a peaceful co-existence or the spirit of accommodation that would not lead to conflicts or disputes in his proverbial prayer, 'Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too, if one says no to the other, let his wing break' (15). In this proverb of accommodation, there is a proviso that anybody who violates the peace which exists among the individuals would be overtaken by violence. Again, in the folk story which tells of the reason mosquitoes wail around the ear, Okonkwo recounts the folk story his own mother told him when he was a boy about the humiliation of the mosquito by the ear. According to the folk story:

Mosquito, she said, had asked the Ear to marry him, whereupon the Ear fell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. 'How much longer do you

think you will live? ‘she asked. ‘You are already a skeleton’. Mosquito went away humiliated, any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive (60).

This folk story, like other folk stories which are used in teaching morals to children, shows the importance of restraint and good social etiquette. This story emphasizes the need for peaceful resolutions of conflicts, and the powerful have to be careful about their treatments of the weak. Unresolved conflicts would linger and lead to persistent tension and disturbance in one’s life. Therefore, there is the need to resolve conflicts for a peaceful co-existence of every member of society.

The folklore of the quarrel between the Earth and the Sky, where: “long ago, and how the sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony Earth. At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men. Whenever Nwoye’s mother sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth’s emissary, sang for mercy. At last, Sky was moved to pity, and he gave to vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. But as he flew home his long talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell as it had never fallen before” (43).

This folktale not only explains the occurrence of natural phenomenon like drought as a result of climate change but also makes it clear that alternative dispute resolution mechanisms like mediation, negotiation, conciliation and arbitration are necessary and sanctioned whenever there is a conflict. Not only that it foregrounds the destructive consequences of conflicts but it also explains the reason the negotiator or mediator, the vulture, hovers and eats carcasses and anything around burning bushes. In the pre-colonial and pre-scientific societies that inhabit the world of *Things Fall Apart*, folklores are used to answer primary scientific questions.

Conclusion

There is no shadow of doubt that Chinua Achebe who in his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, thrusts to the glaring view of the whole world the evil of colonization in Africa and other colonized places, has redeemed the dismal image of Africa and its people as earlier presented by Western writers. Through the efficient use of the omniscient narrator, who sees all and tells all, as he beams his creative searchlight on his society in the world of the novel bringing out the negative and positive sides of his society despite the fact that there are obvious customs and rituals that must be overhauled, like human sacrifices, dumping of twins and persons with communicable diseases into the forest, the dedication of human beings to deities, which the colonizers invariably stopped. However, the methods of operation of the colonizers lead to physical, environmental and cultural genocide. In their zeal to stamp out everything African in the colonized territories, they destroyed the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, indigenous to Africa and replaced them with the English adversarial justice system which perpetuates corruption and brings injustice till date.

The study finally examines the literary language which gives literariness to the text and carries the weight of the message or vision of Achebe in the novel as the human

skeletal frame carries the weight of the muscles and other human internal systems. The proverbs and folklores with which pre-scientific societies articulate their world views and pass on moral lessons, Achebe shows that conflicts and disputes are avoided by the characters that inhabit the fictive settings and where they arise, they are resolved amicably and relationships restored, unlike the legal system of the colonizers that emphasizes punishment. After reading the work, the reader would realize that the English adversarial legal system that supplanted the traditional alternative dispute resolution mechanisms is inferior to the dispute resolution mechanisms in existence before colonization. But today, the whole world is adopting the African indigenous means of settlement of disputes because, “The inefficiencies of litigation call for alternative ways of resolving disputes... (Fabian Ajogwu, 1). These “alternative ways” are the ones also highlighted by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* to show that African societies are highly organized and not the chaotic entities inhabited by cannibals as presented by Western novelists like Joseph Conrad.

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The Leftovers

Beneath the endless stretches of wide boulevards,
 Beneath the lush flowers screening the gazing sun,
 Beneath the endless motorcades of tinted glasses,
 Beneath the exotic houses pointing their projectiles,
 To hug the bright-blue sky,
 Beneath the fattened bulging feet straddling to
 Antarctica luxurious offices

Beneath the RULERS waddling to wallow in
Sumptuous meals,
Beneath the Jackbooted dark-goggled, gun-trotting frozen men,
Beneath the follies of dizzying laws and decrees.

Live the LEFTOVERS whose dreams have been snuffed out,
Deadened cobwebbed faces peering from battered hovels,
Tattered shirts hanging like scarecrows on shriveled shoulders,
Crawling to the termite-riddled baggage-waste of
The city's rich,
To wage bitter wars with waifs on putrid food,
The mountainous rot the site of epic battles,
With the deranged leftovers of the city unbagged WASTE.