

Cultural Imperatives and the Dynamisms of an Effectual Society in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, as a landmark novel, has generated great literary productions. Both African and non-African scholars and critics have studied this classic novel from various literary and cultural angles. This study re-examines the dynamisms of the cultural heritage of Umuofia (The fictive world of the text) with a view to establishing that these cultural practices delineate Umuofia as a self-sufficient and an effectual society. Within this culture are found such cultural barebones like industry, resilience, kinship, friendship, strict sense of justice, among others. These universal human and social attributes mark Umuofia (Igbo/Africa) as a self-sufficient society with progressive-minded citizens, who had no need of external intervention before their contact with the Europeans. Beyond that, Umuofia's rich cultural practices espoused in this study could be seen as an indictment on the cultural values of most contemporary African societies who undermined these traditional core values and became Eurocentric in their cultural leaning. This paper, therefore, advocates a conscious reappraisal of the Igbo (African) cultural heritage taking a cue from the cultural matrix of Umuofia in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in order to reinvent our cultural values that can support an affectual society in contemporaneity.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, cultural imperatives, dynamisms, Igbo/Africa society, self-sufficient, *Things Fall Apart*, Umuofia.

Introduction

The decision to write an article on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* came with great difficulties considering the popularity of such a master-piece among scholars and critics. The novel undoubtedly has been viewed by many critics as a strong statement against the distorted or misconceived image of Africans in European novels. This view is clearly articulated by Mpalive-Hangson Msiska cited in Asika (138) when he avers that:

Conceived as a response to the denigration of Africa in colonist novels such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939), *Things Fall Apart* stretches the novel form to create a space for the authentic African subject and his or her world. It seeks to go beyond the colonial depiction of grunting 'savages' and 'cannibals' with no language or cultural and historical links to their physical environment and as such, it reverses her colonial gaze in order to reveal an essential humanity that the colonial novel either deliberately aided or repressed or was incapable of articulating. (138)

Msiska's elucidation, that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a conscious reversal of the 'colonial gaze in order to reveal an essential humanity that the colonial novel... repressed or was incapable of articulating', sits well with this study. The focus of this study, therefore, will be to burrow into the cultural fabrics of the fictive world of the novel in order to reveal a putatively vibrant and self-sufficient society that coming of the Europeans ruptured. A society that her cultural practices sustained her institutions before her contact with the Europeans.

Similarly, Bernth Lindfors (2014) believes that *Things Fall Apart* and others of its kind contributed ‘...to the reconceptualization of the continent’s past, present, and future, and perhaps more importantly, to the liberation of Africa’s imaginative energies’ (82). He further acclaimed Achebe as a true pioneer who led others to ‘perform such marvels of enlightenment’ (82-83). This ‘marvel of enlightenment’ is what Achebe (1982) in one of his critical essays, having exclaimed that a novelist is a teacher, explains thus:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans...their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty...above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period...The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. (Achebe, 8)

The explorations of these philosophies of great depth that informed the cultural matrix of Umuofia will engage this study. This is necessary because according to Lindfors (2014), this story offers a fresh perspective on Africa’s colonial history. Lindfors’ (2014) assertion above is informed by his view that the European writers have described Africa as dystopian jungle where primitivism holds sway. Consequently, the coming of the Europeans to Africa is erroneously celebrated as a divine intervention which was so beneficial to the natives that they will forever be grateful for. This claim obviously served as a catalyst that produced Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe (1982) in one of his essays stated that one of the major reasons why he writes is to tell his people that the European civilizing mission was not a salvific one because African ‘past - with all its imperfections - [is] not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God’s behalf delivered them.’

Lindfors (2014) equally collaborates Achebe’s stand above when he avers that “British colonialism has not been a blessing but a curse, causing havoc in what had once been a pacific haven, intelligently governed and guided by the wisdom of the past. (85)” Intelligent governance and the wisdom of the past that Lindfors mentions are proofs of a dynamic culture that supported Umuofia and her neighbours before the Europeans put a knife on what held them together which resulted in social discombobulation.

Onwumere and Egbulonu (2014) also assert that *Things Fall Apart* ‘reveals culturally that the Igbo community is ordered around a hierarchy of male elders who serve as collective leaders in both the secular and spiritual realms’ (161). These scholars’ circumscribed recognition of cultural element is myopic because beyond the hierarchy of male elders, the social institutions of Umuofia echo cultural spit that gives life to that society. However, their assertion that the novel ‘is the projection of the Igbo people’s culture and world view’ (161) remedies their earlier claim. In agreement to this view, Igwedibia and Dieke (2014) aver that *Things Fall Apart*’s significance is ‘because it represents the most memorable account in English of an African culture...’ (94). This notion (musings) about *Things Fall Apart*, being a site of cultural heritage is unarguably a common feature in the majority of the literary productions that it has elicited. Achebe, equally, at various fora acknowledged this novel as a cultural artifact designed to educate and give the African readers confidence about their cultural heritage. Stella Okoye-Ugwu, in her own essay entitled “Going Green: An Ecocritical Reading of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*”, cited Achebe’s standpoint on this classic novel as captured below:

...Achebe in his bid to correct the misrepresentations of Africa by the white imperialists insists that Emmanuel Obiechina is right when he says that ‘the purpose, implicit or explicit’ of the African writer is ‘to correct the distortion of West African culture, to create the past in the present in order to educate the African reader and give him confidence in his cultural heritage.’ (Achebe cited in Stella Okoye-Ugwu, 155)

Many other critics have studied *Things Fall Apart* within the scope of the discourse of culture and beyond. A great number of these essays leaned on postcolonial discourse and this has greatly enriched African literary traditions. The cultural essentials gleaned from Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* will be discussed below as integral part of the social structure of that fictive society. A few characters and incidents will be examined from the text

to delineate a culture-propelled society that reasonably appears self-sufficient before the intervention of the Europeans.

Industry: The ‘Strength of the Arm’ and the Social Status in Umuofia

Umuofia as a cohesive society undoubtedly has some flaws like every other human society but in general it has through its socio-cultural posture imbued her citizens with some unique behavioural traits that mark it out as a dynamic and progressive society. The spirit of industry evidently is a shared norm in Umuofia because it is even recognised within her cosmology. Unoka’s encounter with Chika, the priestess of Agbala, gives credence to this claim. It will be recalled that when Unoka experienced repeated failure in his farm, he goes to consult this oracle probably to proffer solution to his predicament. The priestess of Agbala sternly rebukes him in the excerpt below:

...You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arms. You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machet and your hoe. When your neighbours go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms; you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man. (14)

The priestess in her response above detailed the prevalent spirit of industry among the people of Umuofia. She says that when a man fulfils his spiritual obligation, the strength of his arm will then determine his harvest. Although this is a highly religious society yet the priestess emphatically states that religion cannot take the place of hard work. Religious obligation is a sine qua non in that society but the social institutions encourage and imbue the spirit of hard work in the citizens. Hence, the priestess tells Unoka that he is a lazy man because while his neighbours spare nothing with regards to hard work and dexterity in making sure that they make good harvests he idles away in self-deceit. This cultural behaviour found in Umuofia is no longer common in our generation among so many societies. Hard work is no longer a virtue since great population of the youths prefer an easy way out by wasting their time on frivolities, claiming they are working smart or some wear the garb of religion to cover their incurable laziness. But the priestess clearly states that fulfilling religious obligation cannot be a replacement for hard work.

Okonkwo who stands for the younger generation of Umuofia at the beginning of the narrative demonstrated this spirit of industry which eventually distinguished him in the entire Umuofia. He is so industrious that he has already cleared the farm before going to seek for share-cropping opportunities from Nwakibie (17). Okonkwo’s poor background never deters him from aspiring to be successful in life and he sees hard work as the only route to a successful life. This optimism must have been nurtured by the culture of hard work that is a common-place thing in their society. Therefore, “during the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost” (11). He is so obsessed with hard work that “...he was always uncomfortable sitting around for days waiting for a feast or getting over it. He would be very much happier working on his farm” (30). Such spirit of industry that is sustained by resilience is lacking in our society today that is why meritocracy has been substituted with mediocrity virtually in every sphere of our existence. Today many people desire wealth and success without the readiness to work hard for it rather many seek shortcuts to attain success or recognition in today’s society. This never happened in Umuofia. Theirs was a society that encourages hard work through her social systems.

Resilience: ‘When a Man Says Yes, His *Chi* Says Yes Also’

The spirit of industry explored above is not always sustained without challenges that naturally come with discouragement. The resilient attitude of many characters in this novel point to a cultural heritage that is common among this fictive community. Resilience is the other side of the coin of Umuofia’s cultural heritage. This quality is typified in Okonkwo’s refusal to succumb to the reality of his poor background. Okonkwo’s presentations to Nwakibie, when he goes to seek his support through share-cropping, portrays the former’s

poor background. This never discouraged Okonkwo because "...in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed" (15). Okonkwo, like his kinsmen, demonstrates resilience by enduring such 'slow and painful' beginning. The culture of resilience prevents him from succumbing to the natural disaster that almost ruined his chances of ever making it as a farmer at his first attempt with share-cropping. The narrator graphically paints Okonkwo's resilient spirit in the face of a devastating climatic change that resulted in excessive rainfall and scorching heat which adversely affected his crops in these words:

Okonkwo remembered that tragic year with a cold shiver throughout the rest of his life. It always surprised him when he thought of it later that he did not sink under the load of despair. He knew he was a fierce fighter, but that year had been enough to break the heart of a lion. 'Since I survived that year,' he always said, 'I shall survive anything.' He put it down to his inflexible will. (19-20)

Furthermore, Uchendu, Okonkwo's maternal uncle, confirms that resilience is a cultural thing among them when he counselled Okonkwo during his period of exile in Mbanta. Okonkwo, who inadvertently kills late Ezeudu's son during the former's burial, almost caves in to despair and discouragement. But Uchendu's resilient-spiced words nudged Okonkwo out of despondency. Uchendu's 'no retreat, no surrender' spirit is embedded in these words, "I had six wives once. I have none now... Do you know how many children I have buried ... Twenty-two. I did not hang myself, and I am still alive..." (107). And to remind Okonkwo that the world or the path to success is so uneven, he sings the song below which indicates that no one is spared of misfortune but with resilience, one overcomes:

*"For whom is it well, for whom is it well?
There is no one for whom it is well." (TFA, 108)*

A closer examination of this song exposes the ingrained philosophy that keeps the society going irrespective of the hard challenges that mark their existence. Uchendu's advice, to the 'mourning' Okonkwo, is that whatever you see on your path in life should not deter you from moving on and pursuing your dreams. This belief that one should not back down because of severe challenges of life portrays the spirit of resilience that characterises the life of this community. Also, the spirit of resilient is contained in this common proverb among the people of Umuofia - "But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also" (21). Although Umuofia community believes so much in the existence of the supernatural, at the same time they take up responsibilities for their existence. And this requires one to 'stubbornly' and tenaciously hold on to one's dreams which is only sustained through resilience.

Justice: Let The Kite Perch and Let The Egret Perch Too

Umuofia's culture has some dark shades because some cultural practices like the killing of twins, taking a person with a particular illness to the evil forest to die in solitude, among others, amount to the violation of the rights of her citizens. Some of these cultural practices are so harsh and as such appear to undermine the proactive sense of justice embedded in their other cultural practices. Be that as it may, it will not be out of place to say that Umuofia maintains an admirable legal cum justice systems that protect the interests of both the society and her members. This justice system that seeks to enthrone equity and fairness is encapsulated in a proverb used by Nwakibie in praying for Okonkwo while breaking the kola nut: "Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break" (15). So, the cultural practices of Umuofia people are weaved around justice systems that ensure fairness and equity. A good example can be seen when the nine Egwugwu masked spirits, responsible for the administration justice in the land (137), presided over the trials of Uzowulu and his in-laws and other land cases.

The constitution of these masked judges (Egwugwu) is done in such a way that each village within the clan is represented by an elder who is well versed in matters and customs of their land (71). This careful selection of the members of the jury ensures the delivery of well-informed judgment in all matters. Moreover, these masked spirits will after listening to the complainants, retire to their chambers to consult among

themselves on the cases tabled before them as the narrator says here, “The nine egwugwu then went away to consult together in their house. They were silent for a long time” (74). The long period of time spent in consulting among themselves in their chamber is to make sure that due considerations are giving to the core values of their community in order to avoid any form of miscarriage of justice. The core trial procedure is akin to the modern-day court proceedings hence, the court trial system brought by the Europeans to administer justice had been in existence before they contrived their self-serving civilisation mission to Umuofia (Africa). It is also important to note that from the discussions among the people (audience) during the period of recess at the trials, that before a matter will come before the masked spirits it would have gone through the family and umunna for a settlement (75). So, matters that come to the masked spirits are the ones that the kinsmen could not handle. Hence, this can be compared to cases that are handled by the appellate courts in our modern world.

Furthermore, the laws of Umuofia are sacrosanct and as such, no one is above the law in that community and this strengthens their sense of fairness and respect for the law. This strict adherence to the laws or customs of their land portrays Umuofia as a stable and progressive society where both the high and lowly cohabit in harmony. This is why when Okonkwo breached the law of their land by beating one of his wives during the Week of Peace, he is rebuked by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, and punished according to the laws of the land irrespective of his social status. Also, the primary purpose of the law in Umuofia and most societies is to prevent crimes and gross misconducts and to correct offenders. Okonkwo’s behaviour after paying the required fine depicts their law as an effective one because Okonkwo is said to be ‘inwardly ... repentant’ and showed remorse for his offence (24-25). This justice system that seeks to be just is also seen when Okonkwo is banished for some years because he inadvertently kills Ezeudu’s son during the burial ceremony. The supremacy of their law compels Okonkwo’s closest friend, Obierika, and other members of their clan to burn down his house after his banishment. Obierika’s helplessness and uneasiness in participating in carrying out the prescribed punishment against his bosom friend is captured in this excerpt, “It was the justice of the earth goddess, and they were merely her messengers. They had no hatred in their hearts against Okonkwo” (99). So, everyone is equal in the eyes of the laws of Umuofia and that consciousness is so overwhelming that even the relations and friends of Okonkwo have to participate in burning down his house in order to ensure that justice is done.

Umuofia, therefore, could be adjudged a saner society than many modern societies where the justice system is easily compromised depending on who is involved. Okonkwo could not use his affluence to influence the penalty due to his offence neither does Ezeani give any considerations to his status as a popular elder in Umuofia. Our society has a lot to learn from umuofia if truly we are desirous of a progressive society.

Also, it is observed that the customs or laws of Umuofia are dynamically progressive. It is not static or stagnant as could be gleaned from the story told by Ogbuefi Ezeudu to the two elders that visited him. He says that over the years the punishment for breaking the Week of Peace has been made mild because according to him, his father told him that, “he had been told that in the past that a man who broke the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died. But after a while this custom was stopped because it spoilt the peace which it was meant to preserve” (25). So, these laws are reviewed and amended whenever the occasion demands so. This clearly foregrounds the dynamic nature of their judicial system that makes Umuofia an effectual society.

And lastly, Umuofia’s sense of fairness and justice guides them in their relationship with their neighbours. They will always meticulously consider every matter to determine the adequate actions to be taken as the narrator states here, “And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle ...” (10). And in pursuant of justice and fairness, even with their neighbours, in some serious matters that may lead to war, emissaries are sent to the ‘offending’ community to mediate in the matter so as to avert war with its concomitant effects. Okonkwo has been sent on such missions by his clan (9-10). And this often averts wars and contributes to the stability of their society.

Kinship: We Come Together Because it is Good for Kinsmen to Do So

Umuofia enjoys a strong social support system that is eminently provided by the high value they attached to kinship. Theirs is a society that is not structured on monarchy or kingship. The elders, who are known members of various families, superintend the affairs of the whole community as has been seen earlier in this essay. The family institution in Umuofia is the base structure for that society and expands to kinsmen. Every village in Umuofia is made up of groups of kinsmen and these kinsmen called *umunna* can easily trace their origin through many generations to a common ancestor. So, relationship among kinsmen is like a covenant because they acknowledge the purity of their blood line. This is the reason why marriage among kinsmen is never allowed and the kind of relationship found here is like that that exists among siblings. It is, therefore, a close-knit familial relationship that provides social support among her members. They often own vast communal land where any family member can go and farm depending on his strength.

In Umuofia, like in many Igbo communities, *umunna* or kinsmen easily and readily rally round one of their own in all circumstances. They fight together and rejoice together, and sometimes come together just for the sake of having a kind of reunion that moisturizes and nurtures their fraternity. This is what one of the oldest members of Okonkwo's maternal kinsmen means when in his farewell speech to Okonkwo and his family from Mbanta said:

A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so... (133)

Kinsmen also come together to provide any required support for their own hence, "Okonkwo was well received by his mother's kinsmen in Mbanta" (103). Beyond that, he "... was given a plot of ground on which to build his compound, and two or three pieces of land on which to farm... With the help of his mother's kinsmen, he built himself an *obi* and three huts for his wives... Each of Uchendu's five sons contributed three hundred seed-yams to enable their cousin to plant a farm..." (103). These acts are clear demonstrations of the strength and value of kinsmen which provide both the psychological and material succour that Okonkwo needed for a soft landing in Mbanta after the misfortune that befell him.

Furthermore, during the occasion of Obierika's daughter's marriage ceremony, his 'relatives and friends...arrive... They sat in a circle and began to talk of many things' (92). Because of the closeness of kinsmen, communication gap rarely exists and this prevents misunderstanding and conflict. There is also a conscious effort to extend this form of familial relationship through marriage ties. This is deducible from the first prayer offered by the elder during this marriage when he says, '... let there be friendship between your family and ours' (93). The importance of relationships and friendships is emphasised as it came first among other prayer requests like fruitfulness and good behaviour by the new bride (93).

The effectiveness of kinship in Umuofia forecloses kingship and this provided the force of unity and oneness which serves as a stabilizer to their society. The blood line is seen as sacred because of the existence of kinship. This kinship system provides the platform for the socio-economic and the political wellbeing of each member of the community. Kinship in practice is very healthy because it promotes self-reliance and self-sufficiency since it effectively combines the basic ideologies of capitalism and communism. It encourages hard work and healthy competition that bring about prosperity and at the same time readily cushion any harsh socio-economic realities of her members as has been portrayed in the fictive world of *Things Fall Apart*.

True Friendship: The Catalyst for Socio-economic Stability

Friendship is another strong element of Umuofia's cultural heritage. Friendships traverse family, kinsmen, villages, Umuofia Community and beyond. Liberality of heart fertilizes the duty-bound friendship that exists between Okonkwo and Obierika. Because of the bond between the duo, "Obierika and half a dozen other friends came to help and to console him (Okonkwo) after he had inadvertently killed Ezudu's son during the funeral of Ezeudu. And under the cover of the night, against the law of their land, Obierika commandeered

half a dozen young men who, “each made nine or ten trips carrying Okonkwo’s yams to store in Obierika’s barn” (99). Obierika takes this risk in order to remedy Okonkwo’s calamity which will warrant the destruction of all he has labored for in life. But Obierika did all that because of the true friendship that exists between him and Okonkwo.

So, when Okonkwo finally goes into exile, Obierika sells some his (Okonkwo) seed yams and gives some to share-croppers. At the end of Okonkwo’s second year in exile, Obierika, accompanied by two men, who carry a bag of money each, makes a trip to Mbanta to visit his friend and give the yields of his yam to him. At Mbanta, Okonkwo said to Uchendu “This is Obierika, my great friend. I have already spoken to you about him” (109). Their friendship is known to other members of their families and this strengthens family ties. Uchendu, excited about their friendship and visit, quickly tells Obierika, that he knows his father Iweka and he had many friends there in Mbanta. He further tells them that in their days, “a man had friends in distant clans” (109). Okonkwo, who is not easily given to expressing his emotions, could not hide his excitement when Obierika at last said to him:

That is the money from your yams,’ he said. ‘I sold the big ones as soon as you left. Later on, I sold some of the seed yams and gave out others to share-croppers. I shall do that every year until you return. But I thought you would need the money now and so I brought it. (113)

The money is part of the profit Obierika has made so far from farming for Okonkwo while he is in exile at Mbanta (109). The friendship seen in this novel is not self-seeking but selfless. It is one of the back bones of Umuofia community. Like kinship, it equally has socio-economic benefits exemplified in Obierika’s action. The modern world probably will not have enough social space for such a sincerely mutual and innocent friendship. The exploitative tendency of the contemporary world has denied us of this goldmine which served as a social support system for the people of Umuofia. The desire in the hearts of many today is how to make more wealth and this creates unhealthy competitive environment that breeds enmity rather than true friendship.

Recognition and Respect of Other People’s Cultures Stabilizes Umuofia’s Social Systems

The tolerant attitude of the Umuofia community manifests in the way they respect the culture of other persons. This positive attitude toward the culture of others makes Okonkwo to exclaim that “The world is large”, that is why “...what is good in one place is bad in another place” (58). Uchendu, in another instance, literally repeated the above conviction when he said, “The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others” (112). Their conclusion is that different people have unique cultural practices. This respect for other peoples’ culture must have been reciprocated by others toward them and one of the end results of this is a positive sense of self which facilitates success and peaceful co-habitation. Beyond that, this understanding of the uniqueness of peoples and cultures helped the people of Umuofia to respect the rights and privileges of other climes, thereby maintaining a healthy world.

Conclusion

Beyond the few cultural products discussed above, Umuofia has other progress-facilitating social values that keep their society going. Among these are trust; passionate hunger and desire to earn the respect of the society through hard work; willingness to serve or come under the tutelage of those who have achieved success; genuine respect for the elders and those who by dint of hard work excel in their endeavours. The trust mentioned above is typified in the character Nwakibie, who out of trust gives Okonkwo yam seedlings to cultivate on the platform of share-cropping and this gives him the head start he needs in life. It is noteworthy that Okonkwo, irrespective of the vicissitudes of life, never betrayed that trust as he dutifully sticks to the terms of their agreement. Also, the ardent desire to earn the respect of the society is a driving force that impels them to succeed even against all odds. The narrator foregrounds this fact in these words, “Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth... Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings” (7). Okonkwo indeed ‘washed

his hands and, therefore, feasts on the king's table.' The people of Umuofia recognized the dignity of labour hence, they respect members of their society who attained greatness as this proverb depicts, "As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness" (15). The attitudes of Okonkwo and Umuofia towards Unoka's inability to delay gratification (3-4) shows that they have savings and investment culture that builds a healthy economy over time. And Okonkwo's lamentation that he did not inherit anything from his father is an indication that the Umuofia society has a positive culture that factors in the future in the present.

In all, this study carefully x-rayed the Umuofia community in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and showed that the cultural practices of that society empowered and sustained it. Some of these qualities embedded in their culture serve as rules that shape both an individual and the social consciousness. Such consciousness manifests in the attitudes of the people that prompt them to aspire to succeed in life and this translates to a self-sufficient society that Umuofia represents.

Achebe's creation of Umuofia's rich cultural dynamism is not only meant to counter the distorted image of Africans in European novels but could be seen as a big indictment on the cultural values of most contemporary African societies. Most of these core traditional cum social values extrapolated from *Things Fall Apart* by this study are no longer recognized among many African societies because of the influence of modernity. This study, therefore, advocates a meticulous reevaluation of our cultural heritage in order to tap into its potentials so as to rejig and reinvigorate our 'ailing' society.

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