

Mask Symbolism and Igbo Cosmology: A Study of the Egwugwu in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

In many African societies, the mask occupies a central place in the spiritual and social order. It functions as a marker of cultural identity in societies where masking traditions are ritually and socially institutionalized. In line with this perspective, this article analyses the representation of *egwugwu* masks in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, in order to shed light on their essence, symbolism and functions in Igbo cosmology. By mobilizing an ethnocritical approach, the study shows that the *egwugwu*, beyond their ritual dimension, structure the relationships between the visible and the invisible, the individual and the community, tradition and social order. It thus appears that Achebe's text makes the mask a privileged mediator between the living, ancestors and deities. The article also examines the tensions generated by colonial intrusion and concludes that fictional novels, by showing the complexity of the Igbo mask, participate in the safeguarding and enhancement of African cosmologies in the world literary space.

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Introduction

In traditional African societies, the mask occupies a prominent place in the articulation between the physical and spiritual worlds. A quintessential ritual object, it goes beyond the aesthetic dimension to become an incarnation of higher forces, an important vector for regulating social life. Among the *Igbo*, one of the largest ethnic groups living in Nigeria, this major symbolic function of the mask reaches its most accomplished expression through the *egwugwu*, masked entities and living manifestations of the spirits of the clan's ancestors. The perception of *the egwugwu* and the various functions they assume according to the *Igbo*, a people originally rooted in tradition and characterized by a rigorous and well-structured socio-political organization, are reflected in the novel *Things Fall Apart* published by Chinua Achebe in 1958. Through this novel, Achebe highlights the cosmology of the *Igbo* people while revealing the symbolism of the mask. This way of talking about the knowledge of culture through literature seems very interesting to explore.

Several authors have taken an interest in it through publications addressing various aspects of the link between literature and culture. Among these writers is Marcel Ikechukwu Sunday Onyibor who, in his article "*Igbo Cosmology in Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God: An Evaluative Analysis*" (2016), looks at cosmology as a whole as a system of thought, which highlights the philosophical and critical aspect of literature. Jude Chudi Okpala, for his part, devoted the article *Igbo Metaphysics in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart"* (2002) to demonstrating that this novel is a philosophical support that allows us to understand the metaphysical conception of the *Igbo* people, a conception that presents man and the world as dualities integrating the visible natural and the spiritual. Many other authors have thought about specific aspects of *Igbo* cosmology or the relationship between African literatures and cultures, such as Emmanuel Obiechina, who has been interested in the influence of West African traditions on literary content in English (*Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* (1975)), Ayuk Ausaji Ayuk, whose doctoral thesis *A study of the contribution of Chinua Achebe's writings to the development of theology in the Ibo context* (1996) analyzes how Achebe's novels contribute to the Africanization of Christian theology. Finally, we can mention Donatus Ibe Nwoga who in *The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought* (1984) shares his vision on the notion of God among the *Igbo*. Compared to these studies, the present one is specific in that

it uses an exclusive cultural element, the egwugwu, as the key to Igbo cosmology, which is not the case with the others. Thus, the main question that this study aims to answer is the following: How does Achebe's representation of the egwugwu in *Things Fall Apart* reveal the ritual, judicial, political, and cosmological foundations of Igbo society before and during colonial disruption? This article argues that the egwugwu in *Things Fall Apart* function as ritual mediators, judicial authorities, and symbolic embodiments of ancestral power, thereby revealing the tripartite structure of Igbo cosmology and the fragility of indigenous institutions under colonial pressure.

The main objective of this study is to demonstrate the participation of written African literature in the knowledge of the worldview and cultural and religious realities of the Igbo people based on the observation and analysis of the *egwugwu* painted by Chinua Achebe in his novel. To achieve this, the study will be conducted from an ethno-critical perspective to examine the narratives centred on the *egwugwu* and to conduct an analysis of their behaviour as well as their relationship with the Igbo community in Achebe's text. The development of the work will be structured around the following points: the theoretical framework and methodology of the research, the functions of *egwugwu* developed in the novel and Igbo cosmology.

1. Theoretical framework and methodology

1.1 Theoretical framework

The study of *egwugwu* and their cosmological functions calls for ethnocriticism. This theory was developed more particularly by Jean-Marie Privat, and others authors such as Marie Scarpa, and Véronique Cnockaert. In a collective work, *The Ethnocriticism of Literature* (Privat, Scarpa and Cockaert, 2011) and articles such as "The Ethnocriticism of Literature" (Privat and Scarpa, 2020) and "The Ethnocriticism of Literature: Presentation and Situation" (Scarpa, 2013), these authors show that theory is a method of literary analysis that approaches works as facts of culture, studying them in the light of anthropology.

Ethnocriticism is interested in anthropological, cultural and symbolic dimensions of literary productions. Marie Scarpa stated that it "is an interpretative reading of literature which, to put it briefly, works to articulate the poetics of the text and the ethnology of the symbolic" (Scarpa 7-18). What must be understood by this assertion is that Ethnocriticism does not merely identify cultural facts in literature; it uses text as a support of analysis for ritual

and social life elements. It therefore analyses and shows how, through the literary text, the cultural facts that appear in it reveal the worldview of a human community. In a paper they co-authored, Scarpa and Privat point out that

If we narrow the focus and place ourselves at the level of the relations between anthropology (or ethnology) and literature, studies concerning the latter insofar as it allows the social scientist (in the broad sense) to advance in the knowledge he has of the societies he studies (literature documents or reveals in short) (Privat and Scarpa).

The knowledge of societies in question here is also their socio-political organization, their cultural values and their cosmology. In addition to those thinkers, others such as Mircea Eliade and Victor Turner have produced reflections on societies and their beliefs by showing the coexistence of the natural and the supernatural as well as the dynamism of ritual practices. Africans, including John MBITI, Wole SOYINKA and Chinua ACHEBE himself, have shared anthropological or ethnographic productions on African societies and their cultures, considering them in their specificities. Their work focuses on literature, the arts, the sacred and the profane in African societies.

Understanding the cosmology of a people and the mask, which is a fundamental element of traditional religion, therefore requires recourse to ethnocriticism which, by facilitating the understanding of the cultural facts carried by the literary text, sheds light on the worldview of the people in question. In this study, the relevance of this theoretical framework lies in the fact that it allows us to understand the social, religious and cosmological scope of the Igbo rituals and cultural objects represented in this study by the *egwugwu* in *Things Fall Apart*.

1.2 Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative textual analysis informed by ethnocentrism literary. It focuses on selected passages in which the *egwugwu* appear or are discussed, and examines their narrative, symbolic, ritual, and social functions within the structure of Igbo cosmology represented in the novel. Indeed, to achieve the expected results, an analytical reading of the novel *Things Fall Apart*, reedited by Presence Africaine in 1972, under the same title *Things Fall Apart*, which made it possible to understand the plot as a whole. Then, the approach allowed the identification and analysis of narrative passages centred on the *egwugwu*, the social organization of the Igbo of Umuofia, rites,

prohibitions and all the other cultural values taken into account in the unfolding of the events. These passages, which are found in chapters X, XIII and XXII of the text, have been chosen because they allow, through the portrait drawn, to know the morphology and spiritual value of the egwugwu. Similarly, we discover the different functions they assume as well as the cosmology of the Igbo people of Umuofia. This has facilitated the interpretation of the interactions between members of the Igbo community, between this community and the supernatural forces that are the ancestors and the gods.

2. *Egwugwu* and Igbo society

The Igbo masks referred to by the term *egwugwu* in *Things Fall Apart* are beings of great spirituality. They are distinguished not only by their morphology, but also by their sacral dimension by the functions they assume for the benefit of the community.

2.1 Presentation of *egwugwu*

The morphology of the *egwugwu* generally corresponds to that of the masks of most traditional African societies. Through the portrait designed by the narrator of *Things Fall Apart*, we can conceive them as being made up of two main parts: the sculpted head and the costume. The head is carved in wood in a naturalistic style. Even if the text is not very precise about the type of mask in question, Achebe's description suggests that the masks may be read as anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or anthropo-zoomorphic figures, as the following passage suggests: "He was frightening with his body of smoked raffia, his large wooden white-painted face except for his round eyes with empty eyes and his charred teeth as long as a man's fingers. He had two powerful horns on his head" (Achebe 71).



Figure 1 Carved head of an Igbo egwugwu. Source: African Art Gallery, www.art-masque-africain.com accessed on December 28, 2025

As for the costume, it is made of vegetable fibres, particularly palm fibres. It is out of a dense blackish weave and covers the entire body so that it is impossible to identify the one who embodies the spirit. In the story, the narrator who summoned the masks to the funeral of old Ezeudu speaks of them in these terms: "The spirit of an ancestor, or egwugwu, manifested itself from time to time (...) under the raffia that covered it entirely. (Achebe 94). The passage "... exclaimed the Egwugwu chief at the top of his voice, beating the air with his raffia arms" (Achebe 70) complements the previous one to indicate that the mask costume did not reveal any part of the body.



Figure 2: Image of an egwugwu on an outing. Source: Southern Illinois University, Jones archives, www.nairaland.com accessed December 28, 2025

2.2 The sacredness of Igbo masks

For the Igbo, masks are neither simple human disguises nor profane decorative objects, but sacred beings. They are so sacred that their appearance in public is circumstantial and always marked by a certain solemnity. This sacredness is recognized because for the Igbo, they are not natural beings but the embodiments of ancestral spirits of their ancestors. Several sequences in Chinua Achebe's story reveal to the reader the sacred character of the *egwugwu*. First, they are associated with a realm inaccessible to ordinary human perception. Although they emerge physically from the egwugwu house, their ritual identity is understood by the community as originating from the ancestral realm. Like the deities, they have a sanctuary that remains a sacred place strictly forbidden to the public. In the village, this sanctuary is located on the edge and faces the bush as the narrator explains:

The Egwugwu house from which they emerged was facing the forest and far from the crowd, who could only see the back with its many patterns and colour designs made at regular intervals by women specially chosen for it. These women never saw the inside of the hut. No woman should see him. They cleaned the exterior walls and made drawings and men watched them. If they imagined what was inside, they kept it to themselves. No woman ever asked a question about the clan's most powerful and secretive cult. (Achebe 70)

This relationship of the mask with the bush is shared by many other African societies such as the Bobo and *Mossé* of Burkina Faso, the *Senyfo* of Côte d'Ivoire, etc. Explaining, for example, the intervention of *mossé* masks in funeral rites, J-M. Durantel says:

They begin by gathering in front of the tomb of the dead and, in order of seniority, each one goes to strike the grave with his whip, which is the way of greeting proper to the mask; then the masks gather in the *kargo* located, theoretically, in the bush, at the edge of the village, hence the name of this rite, which comes from *weogo*, the bush. (Durantel 224).

These passages testify to the esotericism that surrounds the mask as well as its origins which, as for the Igbo that the *Moosé*, are located in the bush.

Then the *egwugwu* present themselves in a physical appearance that accentuates the mystery of which they are the object. They move in completely masked forms. The villagers are therefore faced with beings they cannot identify but who are looking at them. Indeed, they have faces of placid wood painted in white on which frightening features are drawn: hollow and empty eyes, mouths from which huge teeth spring out and in addition, they wear horns. Their voices are cavernous, deep, powerful and frightening, and seem to come from the beyond. Their exit respects a singular ceremonial and is carried out in a solemn manner. Their appearance is announced in the village by the gong and they arrive accompanied by a flute. They come from the world of the dead, as this passage confirms: "The Aru oyim de de de dei! filled the air while the spirits of the ancestors, just out of the ground, greeted each other in their esoteric language" (Achebe 70).

Finally, the sacredness of Igbo masks is highlighted by Achebe by the fact that the individual through whom the spirit unfolds in the mask no longer exists as a human. He no longer has an identity other than that of the ancestor

he embodies. During the appearance of the egwugwu, Okonkwo's wives and other women recognized him by his "elastic walk" (Achebe 71) but no one dared to mention his name because in front of them stood not Okonkwo but the spirit of an ancestor, and this is what the narrator observes to the women in these terms:

Okonkwo's wives, and perhaps other women, no doubt noticed that the second egwugwu had Okonkwo's elastic walk. And they may also have noticed that Okonkwo was not with the titled men and elders sitting behind the rows of egwugwu. But in this case, they kept their remarks to themselves. The elastic walk egwugwu was one of the clan's deceased fathers. This confirms what previous research on *lyéla masks*⁶ from Burkina Faso has shown: If it's forbidden to call the individual wearing the mask by his name, it is because he no longer exists as a human, but as the tangible incarnation of a spirit that must remain mysterious. Daring to recognize the person and say his or her name is to lack discretion and respect for the spirit of the mask, which cannot bear this. (Bationo 89)

The parallel drawn here between the Igbo masks and those of the Moosé and Lyéla people indicates that what ACHEBE shows from egwugwu, is not exclusive to the Igbo of Nigeria but is also valid for other African mask societies. Ultimately, for the Igbo people, masks are spiritual beings, that is why humans submit to their authority. They inspire fear and respect because of the influence they have on the living.

2.3 The functions of *egwugwu*

Through the acts attributed to the *egwugwu* in *Things Fall Apart* and through the consideration they have in the eyes of the Igbo, Achebe informs the reader and teaches him the different functions that masks assume and that participate in the proper functioning of the community. Being recognized as spiritual entities invested with ancestral authority and thus symbolizing the active and regulating presence of the ancestors within the community, their power is legitimized and their roles accepted. In fact, in various parts of the text, these functions appear and here the most important ones will be retained.

⁶ The *Lyéla* are an ethnic group living mainly in central-western Burkina Faso

2.3.1 The funerary function

The first notable function of *egwugwu* is funeral. As spirits from the world of the dead, their role, when the life of a clan member comes to an end, is to lead him on the road to the afterlife. After paying tribute to him, they help him to begin the journey to the eternal home of his ancestors. Achebe highlights this role through the narration of the celebration of the funeral of old Ezeudu. While an *egwugwu* had come to pay tribute to the deceased by addressing him publicly, another, an old man, had come to stare at him in silence and had left "for the underworld" (Achebe 94). The mask thus plays a role of intermediary between the two spheres of existence, namely the world of the living and that of the dead, which reinforces the idea of continuity between life and death in Igbo cosmology. For the Igbo, therefore, man's existence has a double dimension: a physical and earthly dimension, and a spiritual dimension. Death, in this case, does not mark the end of life. It is a transition of the individual to his spiritual state. After the cessation of the vital breath, man returns to the neighbouring world of the ancestors from where he can return physically to the community by means of reincarnation. Once in the afterlife, he becomes a spirit, transcends the living and earns respect and veneration. He becomes the protector of his family who are still alive and participates in the maintenance of social order by taking flesh in an *egwugwu*.

2.3.2 The Judicial Function

The *egwugwu* guarantee social peace through their judicial role. Indeed, the novel shows that when two parties are opposed in a dispute, they are the ones who preside over the settlement of the case. At a public hearing, the parties appear before them in a solemn ritual setting. They listen to each side, question witnesses and retire to deliberate collectively. They then pronounce the sentence based on the laws of the community and the wisdom of the ancestors. Because they embody ancestral wisdom, their decisions are accepted without question. The judgment they render is less about punishment than about restoring order and social cohesion. Achebe illustrates this judicial function of masks by evoking the settlement of the marital conflict between Uzowulu and his in-laws. After listening to the protagonists, the *egwugwu* address Uzowulu through the oldest of them: "Go to your in-laws' house with a wine bottle and beg your wife to come back with you. There is no bravery in a man when he fights with a woman" (Achebe 73). They then

demanded this from Odukwe, Uzowulu's brother-in-law: "If your brother-in-law brings you wine, let your sister go with him" (74).

These passages show that *egwugwu* justice is moral and restorative, based on values and group cohesion rather than coercion. This clearly demonstrates the opposite of the Western conception of African societies: barbarian people without any institutional organization. By presenting this tribunal, ACHEBE points out that Igbo society is governed by institutions that are accepted by all because they operate according to a fair moral code.

2.3.3 The Social and Identity Function

The masks help protect the cultural identity of the Igbo. This is understandable because they embody the ancestors. It is therefore their responsibility to watch over the soul of the community, over its identity integrity. They are a compass that guides the common march, which is why we rely on them when there are important decisions to be made. The mask is a communal institution, as the novel illustrates. The confederation of Umuofia is made up of nine villages corresponding to the nine lineages founded by the nine sons of the clan's founding father. Each village had its own mask and all nine masks formed a college that consulted each other for major decisions. This reveals the collective nature of the masks which, by appearing and acting together during major ceremonies and trials while respecting a certain hierarchy, ensure the transmission of traditional values (justice, respect for customs and social hierarchy, tolerance, solidarity, cohesion). By appearing together, they form a concrete image of the political and cultural unity of the clan, showing that the Igbo identity is above all collective and communal. When necessary, they become the first actors in the fight against the transgression of customs and in the defence of traditions. Indeed, when Enoch, a zealous Christian convert, unmasks an *egwugwu*, the act is perceived as a grave desecration of Igbo religious authority.

2.3.4 The political function

The *egwugwu* participate in the political management of the Igbo community. Indeed, each of them represents one of the nine villages of Umuofia and together, they embody a collective, non-centralized authority, specific to the Igbo political system. They contribute to the appeasement of social tensions and the maintenance of order. They thus prove that they are a key element in

the governance of the people. Achebe presents the Igbo political organization as decentralized but democratic. Power is shared between several entities that work in synergy for the collective well-being. Decisions about the community are made deliberatively by the nine *egwugwu* who symbolize the political plurality of Umuofia. Considering these functions, we realize that Achebe presents masks as indispensable elements for the harmonious life of the Igbo people and the survival of their culture.

3. The *egwugwu*: a revelation of Igbo cosmology

By unfolding the plot in *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe invites the reader to observe the Igbo people's conception of the world. Indeed, when he depicts the social and political organization of the village of Umuofia as well as characters like Okonkwo, when he evokes *egwugwu* and deities, he refers to a world with three inseparable components. One of the components, the world of the dead represented by the *egwugwu*, plays a key role because of its role as an intermediary between the other two.

3.1 The world of the living

The world of the living is the physical, geographically identifiable sphere populated by the human community. It occupies a central place in Igbo cosmology because it is there that the relationships between men, ancestors and deities are realized. It is a world based on community organization. In the community, the existence of the individual is linked to that of the other members: the family, the clan and the village. John Mbiti summarizes this communal ontology in the well-known formula, "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (108). In the Igbo community, for peace and cohesion to reign, laws are established to which everyone agrees to submit. Important decisions such as those concerning marriages, conflicts and rituals are made collectively, which ensures social cohesion. As for the cultural values of society, they are taught to young people through education and rituals. In this Igbo society of the living, social success is based on personal merit, unlike hereditary systems. Titles, prestige and respect are earned through hard work, courage and economic success.

In Achebe's text, Okonkwo embodies this norm through his rapid social ascension based on his personal efforts and bravery, unlike his father Unoka who is presented in chapters I and II as a lazy, indebted, poor, without

title, and despised man. The institution of egwugwu participates in the preservation and promotion of these social values. Only men have the right to represent the spirits of ancestors in masks and by this fact, ACHEBE accounts for the place of men in society: it is up to him, and not to the woman, although she also plays important roles, to govern, to embody authority and to protect the community. It is therefore understandable why when the masks, living symbols of power and supernatural forms approach, women and children flee. Okonkwo, thanks to his social success, has the privilege of embodying an ancestral spirit of the clan as an egwugwu. This is an expression of the community's recognition, which thus elevates him to a prestigious rank while recognizing his right to participate, with the other eight egwugwu, in the regulation of community life. In this Igbo society, therefore, it is advantageous to have merit and to possess titles because it raises the individual to an important social position. The world of the living is not sufficient in itself, however. Its survival and balance depend in part on supernatural forces, the ancestors and gods who permanently intervene in it.

3.2 The world of the dead

It is the invisible world, the one that the living join after their death. In this world, the protective ancestors of the clan live. While those who live there can access the world of the living in various forms, the opposite is not possible. For the Igbo, it is a spiritual world, a living and active world, directly influencing the world of the living. Its existence is indicative of the Igbo's conception of life and death. For them, death is the continuity of life. Man's existence therefore has two dimensions: life and death. This is why the link between the two worlds that form borders is close. As the narrator says,

The land of the living was not very far from that of the ancestors. There were many comings and goings between the two, especially during festivals and also when an old man died, because the old people were very close to the ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a succession of transitional rites that brought him closer and closer to his ancestors. (Achebe 94).

Ancestors do not leave the living orphans. To remain physically close to them, they incarnate in *the egwugwu* through which they remain active within the community. The *egwugwu* are therefore the intermediaries between the two worlds. When read through Jean-Marie Privat's ethnocritical perspective, the

egwugwu appear as mediating figures between the visible and invisible worlds. Their ritual presence masks a cosmological authority, based on the presence of the ancestors in them and the guarantee of the symbolic balance of the Igbo world. As Privat lets us perceive through his work *Bovary Charivari. An essay in ethnocriticism*, literary meaning is not only located in what the text explicitly represents, but also in the underlying symbolic and ritual systems that writing hides (Privat).

The *egwugwu* dictate the will of the ancestors to the living and ensure the regulation of community life. Knowing the importance of the intervention of the ancestors in their lives at the time, the Igbo invoked them in their religious, agrarian and social activities. When an individual breaks the rules, he will have to offer them a sacrifice to avoid their wrath and reprisals against himself or the entire community. Achebe illustrates this principle through the fine imposed on Okonkwo by the priest of the Earth Goddess after he violates the Week of Peace:

“Listen to me,” he said, when Okonkwo had spoken. You are not a stranger to Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our ancestors commanded us never to plant anything in the ground until we had observed a week during which no man should speak a hostile word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellow human beings to honour our great Earth Goddess, and without her blessing our crops would not rise. You have committed a serious fault (...) Tomorrow you will bring to the altar of Ani a goat, a hen, a length of cloth, and a hundred cowrie shells (Achebe 27).

For the Igbo people, the world of the dead and the world of the living are inseparable. Their interdependence lies in the fact that the living need the favors and protection of their ancestors while the ancestors value the perpetuation and proper functioning of this society that they have shaped before passing into the spiritual world. John Mbiti concurs in stating that in traditional African societies, there is no strict distinction between the visible and the invisible world; the two constitute a single religious reality influencing all of life (Mbiti 82).

3.3 The World of Deities

Just like the world of the dead, the world of the gods is a spiritual world. It is in first place in the hierarchy of the three worlds of Igbo cosmology. It

represents the set of spiritual forces that regulate nature, morality and social life, in permanent interaction with the living and the ancestors. Chinua Achebe evokes several deities in his story. At the top is Chukwu, the supreme god, the one who created all things. He is so powerful that the Igbo rarely speak directly to him. Prayers are most often addressed to intermediary gods intervening in specific areas. Thus, Ani is the goddess of the Earth, Amadora the god of thunder and justice, Agbala the Oracle of the Hills and Caves consulted to know the will of the gods and Idemili the divinity of water. In addition to these deities, each individual has his or her personal god, his or her Chi, who guides his or her destiny.

All these deities intervene in the community of the living to maintain order. Some have sanctuaries, sacred places materializing their presence among men, others speak to the community through chosen members, their priests. Masks are not their equals despite their sacred nature. As ancestor spirits, they are mediators between humans and the divine order, responsible for enforcing the will of the gods. In view of this conception of the universe, we can conclude that Igbo cosmology is complex but logical. It is important to them when everyone knows that their life depends on the observance of the common rules established and that they are observed by spiritual forces capable of bringing them happiness but also of punishing them. This contributes a lot to the balance of society.

Conclusion

Through the *egwugwu*, Chinua Achebe highlights Igbo cosmology, based on a tripartite world where the balance is ensured between the visible and the invisible, between the physical and the spiritual. The *egwugwu* thus appear as mediators between the living and the dead, symbols of the preservation of cultural values. For Jean Laude, African masks, and therefore the *egwugwu*, play a role as mediators between the world of men and invisible powers, emphasizing their sacred and ritual character (1996). As physical representations of ancestral spirits, they occupy an important place in the lives of the Igbo through the various functions they assume. By portraying them in the story, Achebe's novel can therefore be read not only as a narrative of social change but also as a literary archive of Igbo ritual knowledge. This study did not focus on the destabilization of Igbo cultural values by colonization, but as the novel demonstrates so well, it can be noted that the arrival of Westerners

profoundly shook the foundations of African cultures. The traditional Igbo system of governance was replaced by the colonial administration, justice was now managed by the colonist, traditional religious practices were denied and fiercely challenged by the Christian religion, in short, traditional society collapsed. In view of the echo produced by Achebe's text, we can conclude that the study suggests that African literature may function as a powerful medium for the transmission, preservation, and reinterpretation of indigenous cultural knowledge.

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