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Dedication

With great honor I would like to dedicate this work to:

My beloved parents, Ahmed Rida & Nadjia who gave me the complete support to complete this work.

My brothers, Khaled, Hocine, and Zaki.

My perfect sister, Noussaiba.

My sister in law, Rima

My cheerful and dearest friends, Hana, Ibtissam, Razika, Kaouthar.

To all whom I love and respect.

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Abstract

Each society has its own traditions and customs which are reflected through literature. Most writers try to mirror all aspects of their life through writings. The African writer Chinua Achebe is one of the main African writers that could describe Africa as it really was at the 19th century. His novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is the case study of this dissertation. This study aims at analyzing the Igbo proverbs used in this novel. In order to accomplish this study, a stylistic analysis has been done to understand the selected proverbs and help in classifying them. Chinua Achebe succeeded in reflecting the way of life of his society, and his use of proverbs is evidence that the Igbo society respects proverbs and they consider them an important part to enrich their conversations. At the end of this study, proverbs are classified according to their meaning; and the overuse of proverbs is evidence that the writer has used them as a stylistic feature in his novel.

Key words: African literature, Igbo society, Igbo proverbs, Igbo traditions.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Africa is a very large continent that consists of more than fifty nations and several hundred of languages and ethnic groups; each nation has its own history, culture, tradition and tribes.

Africa had a history before the colonization, but with the coming of the Europeans, it started changing. Africans who had been living in one society, were divided into subgroups, the notion of unity and continuity within the African groups were completely destroyed (Yves, 2014, 1).

Since Africans were divided into subgroups, there were a group of people called *the Igbos* who were the most known people in Africa. The Igbos were lived in small and isolated settlements in Nigeria, but most of them were lived in the East. The Igbo society encourages its members towards the individual achievements.

The Igbo language, also spelled *Ibo*, is one of the prominent languages in modern-day Nigeria. It gained global recognition thanks to a number of well-known writers, such as Chinua Achebe who is considered as the father of the African literature.

Chinua Achebe is one of the prominent writers in the African literature, his first novel *Things Fall Apart (1958)* portrays the reality of the Nigerian society and how it was before and after the colonization.

2. Motivation

The choice of the Igbo proverbs is based on the willing to know the contribution of the Igbo language to the African literature, and *Things Fall Apart (1958)* is a good example for this due to its richness with these proverbs.

3. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to move beyond the literal meanings of the Igbo proverbs to understand their connotation, and to find out to what extent the oracle contributes to the development of the African literature.

4. Statement of the Problem

The Igbo language is one of the main languages in Africa, and it gained global recognition thanks to Achebe's novels that most of them pictured the real life of the Igbo society.

-What is the aim of the writer behind using proverbs in this novel?

5. Research Questions

Seeking to reach the aim, this research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the forms of proverbs that are current in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958)?
- 2- To what extent did Achebe succeed to reflect his oral culture via the use of proverbs?
- 3- What are the effects of using proverbs in this kind of novels?

6. Literature Review

Modern African literature has gained recognition with such classics such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep Not Child* (1964). It was written in indigenous African language and in European languages (Ojaide, 1992, 43).

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is story about Igbo people and how extent could they preserve their culture, religion, customs and language from the European colonization, but at the end everything fall apart when these beliefs and customs disappear because of the white missionaries.

Chinua Achebe in his novel, portrays the real life of the Igbo society, it is the most authentic work ever written about life in Nigeria at the 20th century. One of his motivations to write this novel is that he believed that the African history was *mistold*.

On the other side, there are some writers such as Joyce Cary and Joseph Conrad who tried to describe Africa as dusty place dwelled by people with unexcitable and primitive minds.

7. Methodology

This research is conducted to analyze Achebe's proverbs in his masterpiece *Things Fall Apart* (1958) through a stylistic analysis.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

The present research consists of three chapters. The first chapter includes a historical background of Igbo people, origin, social system, and Igbo oracles. The second chapter provides a general overview about proverbs, definitions, classifications, and functions. The third chapter, the most important one, focuses on the analysis of proverbs used in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and their interpretation.

Chapter One

Historical Background

Chapter One :

Historical Background

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this study provides a historical background of Igbo people: their origin, their social system, their oracles, and their oral tradition. This study helps in analyzing Igbo proverbs in the upcoming chapters, it also will give the reader a general idea about the Igbo societies and how they are formed.

1.2 Background of *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) portrays the real life of a group of people called *Igbo* or *Ibo*. Amy (2010) points out that before the novel was published, a lot of novels were written by authors who also portrayed the Africans as savages who needed to be enlightened by the Europeans, but Achebe broke this idea by writing *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which shows the effect of colonialism from an African point of view (Cited in Adjendeh, 2014, 55). Chinua Achebe took the title of the novel from a poem written by William Yeats called *The Second Coming* which was published in 1921 (Brians, 1996, 01).

Achebe in his novel didn't only try to inform the outside world about the Igbo traditions and customs, but to keep in mind of his people that their traditions have much value and they should stick to them.

1.3 Origin of the Igbo

Igbo is a word that signifies language and people. According to Onuh (1991) "by way of definition, Igbo is both a language and the name of an ethnic group or tribe in Nigeria" (Cited in Kamu, Ikechukwa, 2014, 164). So Igbo are a group of 15 million ethnic people who lived in West Africa, exactly in Southern Nigeria. The Igbo language has several dialects, and they were divided into

groups, each group has its dialect but they share the customs and traditions (Ohadike, 1996, xix). Most of them are craftsmen, farmers and traders, and their most important crop is the yam (Guma, 2016, 4).

It is said that the Igbo people lived in small villages composed of mud huts with thatched roofs, there were no kings, and they were governed by their elders (Wee, 2017).

1.4 The Social System of the Igbo

Every nation had social system. Anysado (1975) states that the Igbo social system is based on two aspects which are religion and law. These two aspects are much influenced by the supernatural power that controls their lives in various ways (Cited in Onyeozili & Ebbe, 2012, 31). In order to know more about the Igbo social system, this study will provide an overview about the main aspects of this society which are Igbo religion, political system, and kinship system.

1.4.1 Igbo Religion

Religion is one of the main aspects of any nation. The majority of definitions of, and theories on religion have originated from western background. Even the whole existence of the term religion is seen as *eurozentrischen* (Eurocentric) term (Beyers, 2010, 1). The traditional Igbo societies are very religious; they consider religion as a way of life. Igbo traditional religion was transmitted from generation to generation by oral authority, which means that it is the role of the elders to tell their children about their religion:

Igbo religion is traditional according to Mbiti (1970), in the sense that it is rooted in their culture. It is received by oral authority by one generation and transmitted by the same process to subsequent generations and, thus, has effect of being widely diffused among its adherents and of deeply coloring their consciousness (Cited in Okeke et al, 2017, 2).

According to Odom and Amusan (2012), Igbo people profoundly believe in benevolent creator or the Supreme Being usually known as *Chukwu*, the God of the universe, who has several names, and

each name privileges certain attitudes. Igbo parents tend to name their children with their God's names, and this is pointed out in Okeke, Ibenwa and Okeke Gloria article:

The Igbo believe in the Supreme Being, who is the controller of the world and all that are in the world. Their firm belief in the Supreme Being is manifest in the names they give their children as Chukwuemeka (God has done much), Chukwuka (God is greater), Chukwuma (God knows), and so forth. (Okeke et al., 2017, 2)

Igbo people see their God *Chukwu* as the most powerful, the one who gives wealth, rain, and children. Each morning, the father of each family offers prayers to the supreme being. One of his praise names is "the one who is known but never fully known" (Gale, 2005). They also pray anytime, there are prayers for newly born child, during the puberty rites of individuals, prayers during marriage and funerals. (Adjendeh, 2014, 61).

Before the coming of the European colonization, Igbo people believe in spirits and life after death, they have a belief that when people die, their spirit will return to earth, except those who had done bad things or killed will not return because of their evils (Chinaka, 2018).

Another belief among the Igbos is the belief that the infant could be reincarnated, which means, the babies who often die after birth will soon come back again to the same parents, and they are called *ogbanje* means *who come and go* (Ohadike, 1996, xxxvi). Some women can lose five or more than five children and none of them live to witness the birth of the next child (ibid). As in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart (1959)* in which Enzima's mother lost nine of her children and she was afraid that Enzima will die too.

The Igbo religion is all based on the idea of birth, death and reincarnation. Ohadike (1996) states in his book *Igbo Culture and History*:

Like some other belief systems, the entire religious system of the Igbo people revolved around the idea of birth, death, and reincarnation. The Igbo believed that when elders died their spirits did not go away for good, but prowled unseen, looking after the welfare of the living members of the lineage. (Ohadike, 1996, xxxv-xxxvi).

After the colonization, most of Igbo people started practicing Christianity, they started worshipping churches and do celebratory dances and songs to praise God, but some of them still practice their traditional religion.

1.4.2 Igbo Political System

Since the Igbo society is a society that lived in a form of villages, most historians described them as a society that lived in fragmented form and their political system has no centralized form of government (Nwoye, 2011, 305).

The traditional political organization of the Igbos has no king or governor; they depend on their elders to solve most of their problems because they symbolize wisdom:

As a result, before the European era there has never been either in myth, legend or in history anybody known as the king of the Igbos for the Igbos say “Igbo enweEze” (Igbo have no king). (Ezenagu, n.d)

Igbo people organize themselves as kindred, villages and towns; they also give much importance to the family which is the smallest unit of their political system (Isidiemi, 2016, 02). The father of the family has the power to make meetings with all the members to solve issues that concerned his family, Kanu (2015) explains exactly the authority of the father, he states that:

The father was the leader of the household and was in possession of the family ofo; which is the symbol of authority, justice, law and uprightness. The father was responsible for directing the affairs of the family; however, it

was done in consultation with his sons and wives. (Cited in Isidiemi, 2016, 3).

Igbo people see the kindred as group of people related with each other, they are made up of different families, and they can't marry each other because they see themselves as one family, they have the same voice, the same attitudes, the same actions. The responsible of them is the eldest man

It is abomination to be accomplice against your fellow 'umunna' because he is your brother. They speak one voice. The head of the kindred is the eldest man; he is also in charge of the kindred's stuff of office (ofu umunna) (Isidiemi, 2016, 4).

Some kindred form a village, each village has its own square where they can meet and make festivals. The village is not different from the kindred except that the village is more extended than the kindred (Isidiemi, 2016, 5). Problems and issues that the kindred could not solve, is transferred to the priest, elders and titled men who form the village assembly:

There are rules and laws guiding the activities of each village. Any difficult case that could not be treated by the kindred is referred to the village assembly which is made up of the priest, elders and titled men (Isidiemi, 2016, 5).

As it was mentioned above, the kindred are a group of people related with each other, and they form their own village. Next, the highest level in the Igbo political system is the town. The town is a group of villages that comprises people from different villages, and they are bound together with the possession of one common market that is central. Other thing that could bind the town together is that they live in one territorial background (Isidiemi, 2016, p 06).The head of the town is made of people from different villages. Olisa (2002, 223) expresses that:

The town assembly is like the village council, an informal body and not regular constituted executive authority [] the summons to meeting is

usually, addressed to all adults, though sometimes to specific groups, such as age grades or titled men (Cited in Isidiemi, 2016, 6).

1.4.3 Igbo Kinship System

According to Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (1828), kinship is the system of social relationship connecting people in a culture who are or are held to be related and defining and regulating their reciprocal obligations. According to Salawu (2007), the term kinship has two aspects; the biological aspect and the socio-cultural aspect:

[]The term kinship has two aspects, namely; (a) The biological point of view in which kinship is a relationship which is obtained through two major means like blood or descent. (b) On the other hand, the socio-cultural aspect of kinship is manmade (Cited in Aniche, 2017, 247).

From the biological aspect point of view, two people are kinsmen if they are born from the same ancestor or ancestress, and from the socio-cultural aspect point of view, two people is kinsmen is the function of social and cultural practices in the society.

Kinship is considered also as universal phenomenon in the human societies, and it is very important in the formation of social groups. The kinship in Igbo societies is constructed through descent system, which means through the male (patrilineal) or female (matrilineal) line. But most Igbo societies followed the patrilineal system, where as others followed both systems (Ukpokolo, 2010).

Schwimmer (1995) had distinguished between both systems, he said that patrilineal, or agnatic, are relatives who are traced through male from the founding of male ancestor, and matrilineal, or uterine, are relatives who are traced through female from the founding of female ancestor.

1.5 Igbo Oracles

According to Ohadike (1996, xxxviii), oracles were religious shrines that is discharged from judicial and oracular functions and acted as centers for diviners. Each clan has similar oracles and

they are respected from all the country. Igbo people do sacrifices to the oracles if there was wrong in heir clan or if they need help. Most of the Igbo oracles are medicine men, diviners, traders, smiths, or carvers (O'Rourke, 2014).

According to Igbo people, it is said that the oracles were housed in secret groves, surrounded by thick bush, and none could see it except the chief priestess or priest. The words of the oracles were the final one, because the forces she represented were the highest than all the sacred powers.

Because of that, Igbo people put great confidence in their oracles. Ohadike (1996) pointes out this point:

The Igbo believed that their oracles would offer impartial decisions in judicial matters. So great was the confidence they reposed in their oracles that they would willingly pay large sums of money to consult them and accept whatever verdict they might pronounce (Ohadike, 1996, xxxviii).

1.6 Igbo Oral Tradition

Some online dictionaries and scholars had defined the oral tradition. According to Marriam Webster online dictionary, oral tradition is stories, beliefs that a group of people share by telling stories and talking to each other (Webster, 1828). Dictionary. com (2012) also defines oral tradition as a community's cultural and historical traditions passed down by word of mouth or example from one generation to another without written instruction. Uzoigwe (1977) also defines oral tradition as an aspect of history which is not written down, and its major characteristic is that it has no author as it passes to generation through tradition (cited in Dibia & Nwosu, 2014, 90).

There is also another scholar who had defined oral tradition as following:

Oral tradition is a story, tradition or practice that is shared orally or through speech- usually handed down from generation to generation. Oral tradition is usually eventually written down, but can tell us so much about the society

and the people who originated them and allowed history to be kept and shared by groups who do or did not have writing (Babatunde, 2015, 17).

1.7 Conclusion

To sum up, the Igbos are very religious people, they give great importance to their gods and oracles, they are also very related with each other and respect one another, especially the elders who are considered the leaders of the village. This chapter provides its readers with all the important aspect of the Igbo people, which are religion, political system, and their kinship organization.

Chapter Two

General overview

about proverbs

Chapter Two:

General overview about proverbs

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on proverbs, their definition, classification, origin and their function in the traditional African societies. It provides some examples from varied sources to enrich the work. Proverbs are used everywhere, but in our corpus they are overused.

2.2 Definition of Proverbs

There are several definitions of proverbs which were suggested by various scholars. Omoera (2013) defines proverbs as “a symbolic expressions of people” (2013, 17). Umeasiegbu and Ihueze (2015) also define them as being “[]essential to life and language, and without them, the language will be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without a soul” (2015, 30). “It is also used to add color to every conversation” (Finnegan, 2012, 402). They are not only words but they are related to wisdom which is associated with old age.

Leslau (1962) says that “for many African cultures, proverbs are far more than quaint old sayings; they are tools of argument and debate” (1962, 1). Proverbs are used to deliver the exact meaning of what person wants to say, they are also used to disclose the conveyed message, and to give more power to the speech.

There are many definitions that bring out some features of proverbs. Finnegan (2012) points out in his book *Oral Literature in Africa* that:

The exact definition of ‘proverb’ is no easy matter. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by ‘shortness, sense, and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it. (Finnegan, 2012, 383).

Longman Online Dictionary of Contemporary English (2008) defines proverbs as “a short well-known statement that gives advice or expresses something that is generally true” (Longman, 2008).

Another scholar, Tchimboto defines proverbs:

Is all phrase fruit of human thought experience, quoted to express a wise judgment, a didactic teaching, and a meaningful warning. Therefore, the proverb is moreover an unquestionable statement, transmitted by tradition from generation to generation. (Tchimboto, 2015, 3)

From these definitions, it is important to note that proverbs should be short, wise and express a general truth. Also, proverbs are inherited from ancestors and they are orally told from generation to generation. Proverbs are mostly used by elderly men and this is because they are the keeper of proverbs. Finnegan Finnegan (2012) admits to this, he points out that "proverbs are most common in law cases; and men are the chief litigants, proverbs are seldom used by women" (2012, 403). It is evident in the fact that in *Things Fall Apart (1958)* there are no women who have used a proverb, and most of them are used by men and especially old men who maintain authority and power in their society. Generally saying, proverbs are used in every situation and occasion, and this is because each situation or occasion can be supported with the appropriate proverb.

Proverbs can be in various forms of figurative language which make them so appealing to listen to, and this is another important feature of proverbs (Adjendeh, 2014). Achebe in his book *Things Fall apart (1958)* pointed out that proverbs give power to the speech just as the palm-oil gives flavor to the food. He said, “Among the Ibo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1958, p5). This quote makes the readers understand that the proverbs are very important in the traditional African societies.

2.3 Classification of Proverbs

Proverbs in African societies had been expressed through several methods, literal statements, similes or metaphors, hyperbol and paradox. Pishbin and Niknasab have classified five types of figurative proverbs: synecdoche, metaphoric, metonymic, hyperbolic, and paradoxical proverbs.

2.3.1 Synecdoche Proverbs

A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is used to describe a whole or vice versa. Synecdoche proverbs are those proverbs in which the literal meaning is different from the figurative meaning.

Example: writing is my bread and butter (means writing was everything in his/her life).

2.3.2 Metaphoric Proverbs

A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes an object or an action in a way that isn't literally true (Underwood, 2019). Metaphoric proverbs are those proverbs that indicate another meaning.

Example: her voice is music to his ears (means her voice make him happy).

2.3.3 Metonymic Proverbs

A metonymic proverb is a type of proverbs in which a thing is used to refer to something else is associated with.

Example: the pen is mightier than the sword.

2.3.4 Hyperbolic Proverbs

Hyperbole is the unusual use of words. In other words, hyperbole is an exaggerated statement.

Example: He has thrown four hundred men. Has he thrown a hundred Cats? He has thrown four hundred Cats.

2.3.5 Paradoxical Proverbs

A paradox is a contradictory statement. According to Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, "paradox is a statement that is seemingly contradictory opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true" (Webster, 2019).

Example: this is the beginning of the end.

2.4 Source of Proverbs

Proverbs had appeared from centuries ago, they had neither exact date nor exact place. According to Marvin:

The origin of most proverbs is unknown. 'They were anterior to books', says Disraeli, 'and formed the wisdom of the vulgar, and in the earliest ages were the unwritten laws of morality'. As a nation's proverbs predate its literature it is impossible to trace them to their beginnings. They spring from unknown source, increase in volume as they roll on and are adopted by all as unconsciously as they have spring into existence. (Marvin, 1922, 3)

Other scholars such as Dabaghi, Pishbin and Niknasab pointed out in their article that:

Proverbs, like riddles, jokes, or fairy tales, do not fall out of the sky and neither are they products of mythical soul of the folk. (Dabaghi, et al, 2010)

Most of proverbs are formed through observation of the various aspects of the environment; each community forms their own collection of proverbs using their vocabularies. Each culture is defined by its language, and with the language proverbs are formed. Proverbs must have a beginning; they have been produced either orally or in written form.

2.5 Function of Proverbs

The use of proverbs has social and literary significance, as they are an extraction from the human life experiences and observation, they benefit all social groups thus they have several functions. According to Adjendeh (2014, 35), proverbs have five functions which they are:

2.5.1 Aesthetic function

The use of proverbs make the speech or the communication more effective on the listeners, they add beauty through the use of rhyme, alliteration, repetition of sounds among others, and that is what

make the speech seem more poetic. Writers use proverbs in their writings in order to attract their readers and avoid boredom, and speakers use proverbs to attract their listeners and make their speech seem more fun.

2.5.2 Proverbs for Entertainment

Since proverbs are used to avoid boredom, they are also used to add fun and happiness to the speech and to the text to make it more interesting as well. In some African societies such as the Igbo, they usually use proverbs in their gatherings and even in their ceremonies to add happiness and joy to their meetings.

2.5.3 Reflective function

Each society has its language, and with their language they create their own proverbs according to their environment and circumstances. People use proverbs to reflect their culture and this is very obvious in African proverbs.

In most African societies, there are proverbs that reflect religion, values, marriage, kinship and other aspects of life, and this is very important for them to make other societies know about them.

2.5.4 The Role of Proverbs as Media of Instruction

Sometimes proverbs are used to remind people of their origin, their values and help them get back to their real life to know who they are. Some parents also use proverbs, riddles and folktales to instruct their children because proverbs are like advice and lesson that help them in their lives.

2.5.5 The Use of Proverbs in Adjudication Cases

In addition to the previous roles of proverbs in different aspects of the African society, proverbs are also very important in the traditional courts of African societies. Since the elders are considered the wisest men in the society, they use proverbs to judge most of cases. As Finnegan pointed out that:

Counselors and judges also use proverbs to comment obliquely on the conduct to those involved, often with implied advice or rebuke. (Finnegan, 2012, 396)

In African traditional courts also, they say to those who use proverbs to adjudicate cases as successful men who know their jobs. “According to Yoruba proverbs a counselor who understands proverbs soon sets matters rights” (Finnegan, 2012, 396).

2.6 Proverbs and African Literature

According to Fortes (2014), African literature was mainly oral, but after the 20th century, it could be divided into oral and written. Proverbs are considered as a sample of oral traditions that constitutes of a literary resource and a literary potential that carry out values, beliefs, and customs. Agu, Chimebere Agu and Olijeh (2018) point out in their article:

Proverb is an important aspect of indigenous Nigerian languages; it deals with all aspects of life. They are used to emphasize the words of the wise and are the stock in trade of old people, who use them to convey moral lessons and give advice to the young. It is a narrative technique that adds touches of pith to an author’s work, the judicious use of this style by an author is usually regarded as a sign of wit. Proverbs are figurative and at the same time poetic in nature and these qualities differentiate them from everyday discourse.(Agu et al, 2008, 2).

Most African writers used proverbs as one of the major styles in their writings. They became able to communicate with their readers through the use of proverbs, they can criticize whatever they want and justify actions of their characters (Agu et al, 2018, 5).

2.7 Conclusion

Proverbs are very important, interesting and complex. They play a significant role in African literature, and African society as well, especially the Igbo society. The Igbo proverbs have different meanings and a lot of functions. In order to understand what is a proverb, this chapter provided a general overview about proverbs by presenting different definitions from different scholars; within

these definitions, several features have been realized. It presented several classifications of proverbs, their functions, their origin, and its relation to the African literature. Through this chapter, it has been realized that proverbs present the wisdom of societies in which they are used by elders who are considered the most respected ones.

Chapter Three

Analysis of proverbs

in *Things Fall Apart*

(1958)

Chapter three:

Analysis of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

3.1 Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is the analysis of some proverbs that Chinua Achebe used in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Better to understand these proverbs, this chapter provides an interpretation of these proverbs, and then an analysis has been done to know how these proverbs reflect the real life of the Igbo society.

3.2 Interpretation of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Proverbs	Interpretation
“Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.” Chapter 1 p 4	Proverbs are very important, and everyone should know how to use these proverbs.
“If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings.” Chapter 1 p 6	In Umuofia society you can't be a man unless you are strong and rich. This proverb means that if someone makes wants to be great, he should be with those who are great.
“When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.” Chapter 2 p 7	This proverb has been said to describe the Umuofia clan at night. It means that the moon gives power to everybody in the tribe.
“A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness.” Chapter 3 p 14	A person should respect greatness to be great. In Umuofia, successful men are always great.
“Let the kit perch and let the eagle perch too, if one says no to	This proverb means that if someone is afraid of something, he should not give attention to it. This

<p>the other, let his wings break.”</p> <p>Chapter 3 p 14</p>	<p>proverb was addressed to Okonkwo because he was afraid of having the same end as his father.</p>
<p>“An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in proverbs.” Chapter 3 p 15</p>	<p>“An old woman” in this proverb means” a wise man”. A wise man can’t laugh about something that has been said and that affects his personality.</p>
<p>“The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneels under them” Chapter 1 p 6</p>	<p>Early people are more important than those who are still waiting for the sun to shine.</p>
<p>“Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching.” Chapter 3 p 11</p>	<p>People should respect what other people tried hard to make their work perfect.</p>
<p>“A proud heart can survive a general failure because such failure does not pick its pride.” Chapter 3 p 12</p>	<p>A person who is always proud of himself, failure can’t affect them.</p>
<p>“Looking at king’s mouth, one would think he never sucked his mother’s breast.” Chapter 4 p 19</p>	<p>This proverb has been said by an old man from the tribe to Okonkwo, it means that everybody is surprised about Okonkwo and how he was risen from poverty to one of the richest men in Umuofia.</p>
<p>“Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble.” Chapter 4 p 12</p>	<p>Lucky people should be humble, and do not criticize those who are less lucky.</p>

<p>“When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth.” Chapter 8 p 50</p>	<p>Children should follow their parents and learn everything from them. Parents should be a good example for their children.</p>
<p>“A baby on his mother’s back do not know the way is long.” Chapter 11 p 44</p>	<p>Whenever your parents are protecting you, you will never realize the seriousness of the problem.</p>
<p>“If one finger brought oil it soiled the others.” Chapter 13 p 54</p>	<p>A person should treat himself in his illness in order not to pass it to the others.</p>
<p>“There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts” Chapter 15 p 59</p>	<p>Someone who shouts can’t do any physical actions; therefore, we should not fear him.</p>
<p>“A child can not pay for his mother’s milk.” Chapter 19 p 119</p>	<p>Whatever children do for their parents, they can’t pay them back for what they did for them.</p>
<p>“Living fire begets cold, impotent ash.” Chapter 17 p 65</p>	<p>Someone who thinks so much about himself, the people around him will be useless.</p>
<p>“I cannot live in a bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle.” Chapter 19 p 84</p>	<p>Wealthy people should be generous to those who don’t have money to live.</p>
<p>“Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, know that something is after his life.” chapter 24 p 84</p>	<p>If someone behaves in unusual way, you will know that something wrong is going on with him.</p>
<p>“You can tell a ripe corn by its look.” Chapter 3 p 16</p>	<p>You can understand someone by his eyes.</p>

3.3 Analysis of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

According to Adjandeh (2014), proverbs are categorized into various sections such as cultural values, communal life of Africans, African tradition religion, kinship and others. These proverbs have been used by the writer to send several messages to his readers, also to make people aware of traditions and see the importance of proverbs in the Nigerian society.

3.3.1 Cultural Values

Values are beliefs which affect on how people make decisions, and on how people should behave in a good way. Nordhund (2009) refers to values as primitive beliefs that are regarded as core aspect of self-concept. Cultural values are behaviors that can't change with time; they are fixed in each society's culture. As Farooq (2014), a scholar, defined it, as the hereditary and form core of the culture. These values include respect, tolerance, kindness.

3.3.1.1 Gratitude

Gratitude is being thankful and shows appreciation to someone for doing a favor to you. In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), gratitude is one of its main themes, and it is obvious in the proverb said by Okonkwo:

"A child can't pay for his mother's milk" (Achebe, 119).

With this proverb, Okonkwo means that no matter what we do, we can't pay back our mothers for their love and affection. The Ibo put much emphasis on the elders and their role in society. It is their job to teach those fellows, who are under their responsibility. The Agbala are the ones that are the most respected, because they are the ones who "feed" the rest of the clan emotionally. (Treischmann, 2013)

In African societies, the act of showing appreciation is very important. Children are taught from infancy to say "thank you" to anyone who shows kindness (Adjandeh, 2014, 66). Expressing gratitude is one of the noblest qualities of human beings,

Instead, gratitude can be characterized as a moral and actively pro-social, emotive, concept, the expression of which has potential implications for life satisfaction and wellbeing. (Meade, 2010)

3.3.1.2 Tolerance

According to Marriam Webster Online Dictionary “Tolerance is the capacity to endure pain or hardship”. There are several proverbs which indicate that Igbo people are tolerant.

“Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other let his wings break” (Achebe, 14)

In this proverb, the kite and the perch are two symbolic objects that symbolize strength “eagle”, and weakness “kite”. The proverb gives message to its readers which is we should not be selfish, and we should give opportunities to the ones who are less powerful than us to do whatever they want. In Igbo society, everyone is equal, and everyone should be treated equally (Adjendeh, 2014, 67).

“Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn, nor a title nor a young wife” (Achebe, 13).

The quote indicates that Okonkwo was very poor in the past, and this is why he went to Nwakibi to lend him yam seeds in order to start his own business. Nwakibi is a good example of a powerful man who gave opportunity to Okonkwo who is less powerful than him.

From the above proverbs, we conclude that Igbo people are very tolerant with each other and with other people also, even when the white men came to their land and they didn’t accept or agree with their religion, yet they didn’t fight them (Adjendeh, 2014, 69).

3.3.1.3 Respect and Humility

Respect and humility are two of the noble characteristics that individuals should have in their personalities, and should take them into consideration, especially in Igbo societies.

“Looking at king’s mouth one would think he never sucked at his mother’s breast” (Achebe, 19)

The proverb was addressed to Okonkwo by an old man. When they were in a meeting, a man challenged Okonkwo who replied that *“this meeting is for men”* and this is because he knew that the man had no title, here Okonkwo has disrespected and underestimated the man in front of people, however, the men who were in the meeting didn’t like it because respect is one of their principles. This proverb has two sides, the first symbolizes authority and power “king”, the other symbolizes humility and weakness “mother’s breast”.

“A man who pays respect to the great paves way for his own greatness” (Achebe, 14)

This proverb was used by Okonkwo when he went to Nwakibi for yam seeds, he said *“I have brought you this kola.....I have come to pay respect and also to ask a favor”* (Achebe, 9). This means that Okonkwo gives respect to Nwakibi who is one of the greatest men in the clan and this is a good indicator for Okonkwo that he will be a great man someday. The proverb gives a clear message which is if we want to be great we should respect those who are great.

“Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble” (Achebe, 19).

This proverb can be considered as a response to what Okonkwo has said earlier to the man in the meeting. It represents an important value in Igbo society and in the African culture also. Successful people should not forget to be humble. In addition to that, this proverb suggests also that there are people who became successful through supernatural forces or spirits and those people should not underestimate those who are less successful than them.

3.3.1.4 Hardwork and Perseverance

Things Fall Apart (1958) provides its reader with a good example of hard work and perseverance, Achebe used several proverbs in order to emphasize this theme.

“If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings” (Achebe, 6)

The proverb emphasizes that a man can be a man from his childhood. If he works hard from his early age, he could be one of the greatest men of his society. Achebe (1958) wrote in his novel that *“As a young as eighteen he has brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the cat”* (1958,

1) .Okonkwo started to fight for his village and even treated one of the greatest wrestlers at the time, his achievements made him arrive at a position that his father couldn't achieve.

3.3.2 Kinship

Kinship is a system of social organization based on real or putative family ties (Crossman, 2018). Brown and Ford (1950, 3) defines the kinship as a system of marriage that can be looked at as an arrangement which enables people to live together and co-operate with one another in an orderly social life. However each one has his own success and failure. The following proverb expressed this:

“An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in proverbs” (Achebe, 15)

This proverb used to describe the situation of Okonkwo when Nwakibie talked about Obiako's failed father, who wanted to sacrifice a goat to the oracle. Okonkwo remembered his dead father who failed in constructing his life, and this indicates that the success or failure of parents reflect on their children. Achebe said in his novel:

“Unoka ...was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer, and they swore never to lend him any more money because he never paid back. But Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up his debts...when Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt “(Achebe, 4-6).

The quote above is evidence that whatever the parents do, their actions will reflect on their children or vice versa.

“When mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth.” (Achebe, 50).

This mean that parents are examples for their children, and children should follow the actions of their parents from their early age, especially if their parents were successful, which means that their children will be successful too, and since parents are the closest people to their children, they usually imitate their positive and negative attitudes of their parents.

3.3.3 Miscellenous

There are other proverbs that have been said through the observation of the environment, the people's culture, customs and values of the society.

"Proverbs are regarded as the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe, 5)

This proverb is about proverbs, in which proverbs are compared to palm-oil. In Igbo society, the palm-oil is very important in preparing food and so the proverbs are so important when doing a conversation to avoid boredom and make it more interesting.

"Eneke the bird says since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching." (Achebe, 16)

This proverb emphasizes the fact that people's behaviors can change according to the situation they are in. It also means that successful people should help those who want to be successful as well.

"You can tell a ripe by its look" (Achebe, 16)

This proverb said by Nwakibi to Okonkwo, he meant that Okonkwo was a confident man and everyone testified his confidence which was evident from his character.

"When the moon is shining the cripples becomes hungry for a walk" (Achebe, 7)

This proverb describes The Umuofia tribe at night when people go out in order to have fun, to stay with each other and exchange stories; this means that the Igbo society was not confined within their doors as most of today's European societies.

"The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines who kneels under them" (Achebe, 6)

This proverb was said when Unoka wanted to give back his cowries to people, which means that the people who have more debt will be the first than those who have less ones. In the example above, *"The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines"* means that the important people come first, *"who kneels under them"* are the less important people who will pay back the debt.

"I cannot live on a bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle" (Achebe, 199)

This proverb gives a clear message to the people who have money and wealth; it was said by Okonkwo when he made a festive in his mother's village which is symbolized by living on a bank

of a river. Okonkwo has made this festive not to show his wealth but to show appreciation to his people, and this is another characteristic that most of Igbo and African people have.

3.4 The Use of Proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is full of proverbs. Proverbs are considered as sacred words that have significance. The Igbo society is purely oral, and that's what makes proverbs more important.

Gogoi (2017) emphasized this:

The setting of *Things Fall Apart* gives Achebe ample opportunity to incorporate proverbs, myths, folktales etc. into the narrative. The society of *Things Fall Apart* is purely an oral society where people regarded words as sacred and hence their utterances bore utmost significance. (Gogoi, 2017, 53).

In the first five chapters, Achebe used a large number of proverbs in order to attract his readers and avoid boredom, and to present the whole image of Igbo society. The huge use of proverbs in the first chapters emphasize that proverbs are very important among the Igbos, and Igbo people use them in every gathering or situation. Then, the rate of proverbs had decreased in the next eleven chapters to rise again in the last chapters, and this is clear evidence that proverbs in the novel are used as a stylistic feature.

3.5 Conclusion

To summarize the above, the proverbs play an effective role in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). They make the text more vivid and funny. They also help the reader in understanding the different aspects of Igbo culture. The most important point in the use of proverbs is that Achebe wanted to reflect all the aspects of his society through proverbs. This chapter has presented some helpful examples of Igbo proverbs that have been said by the observation of the environment and by the Igbo people way of living.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is notable for being the first novel written by a West African to portray how life in African was before and after the Colonization. It is one of Achebe's significant achievements; he succeeded in depicting Umuofia as a sophisticated society with complex culture.

This study provides a number of answers for the previous research questions, as one could recognize that this work provides various definitions of proverbs by different scholars, and through these definitions the characteristics of proverbs were discussed. This study also has classified proverbs into metaphoric, metronomic...etc. Achebe has succeeded in reflecting his society through the use of proverbs. The Igbo society was purely oral, and they respect and sacred words, they use proverbs in every gathering and situation, and that's what makes any reader notice that proverbs are treasure, a treasure shared by the rich and the poor, maybe the only such valued treasure shared by both social layers. Through this novel, readers could notice that the Igbos very religious people and they defended their religion and culture against the European colonization. This work provides also an analysis of the proverbs used in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as well as their interpretation in order to make it understood for the readers. Through this analysis, there are proverbs used for kinship, respect and humility, perseverance, hardwork, and so on.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter gives a historical background about the Igbo, their origin which is still unknown for most of scholars. They have strong belief on their God and the supernatural forces. Igbo people also belief on the oracles; they even sacrifice to them if something went wrong in their clan. The second chapter presents an overview about proverbs, definitions, classification, function, and their relation to the African literature which are very important to reflect the African society especially the Igbo. The third chapter provides an analysis and interpretation for some of proverbs used in the novel. The reader will know how Achebe used proverbs in his novel from the first chapter till the last one.

Generally saying, proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) are used to give advice, warn, caution, and teach morals.

Appendix

Appendix

Kindred: is a group of related individuals, or one's relatives.

Kinship: the quality or state of being kin or related.

Patrilineal: relating to, based on, or tracing descent through paternal line.

Matrilineal: relating to, based on, or tracing descent through maternal line.

Uterine: born of the same mother but from different father.

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Résumé

Chaque société a ses propres traditions et costumes qui se reflètent dans la littérature. La plupart des écrivains ont essayé de refléter tous les aspects de leur vie à travers des écrits. L'écrivain africain Chinua Achebe est l'un des principaux écrivains africains qui pourrait décrire l'Afrique telle qu'elle était au 19ème siècle. Son roman *Things Fall Apart* (1958) est l'étude de cas de cette thèse. Cette étude vise à analyser les proverbes Igbo utilisés dans ce roman. Pour réaliser cette étude, une analyse stylistique a été effectuée pour comprendre les proverbes sélectionnés et les aider à les classer. Chinua Achebe a réussi à refléter le mode de vie de sa société, et son utilisation de proverbes est la preuve que la société Igbo respecte les proverbes et ils les considéraient comme un élément important pour enrichir leur conversation. À la fin de cette étude, le lecteur remarquera que les proverbes ont été classés selon leur signification, et l'utilisation excessive des proverbes est une preuve que l'écrivain les a utilisés comme une caractéristique stylistique dans son roman.

Mots clés : littérature africaine, société Igbo, proverbes Igbo, traditions Igbo.

ملخص

كل مجتمع له تقاليده وعاداته الخاصة التي تنعكس من خلال الأدب. يحاول معظم الكتاب عكس كل جانب من جوانب حياتهم من خلال كتاباتهم. الكاتب الإفريقي Chinua Achebe هو أحد الكتاب الأفارقة الرئيسيين الذين يمكن أن يصفوا إفريقيا كما كانت في القرن التاسع عشر. روايته "الأشياء تسقط" (1958) هي دراسة الحالة لهذه المذكرة التي تهدف إلى تحليل أمثال الإيبو المستخدمة في هذه الرواية. من أجل إنجاز هذه الدراسة، تم إجراء تحليل أسلوبى لفهم الأمثال. نجح شينوا أتشيبي في التعبير عن أسلوب حياة مجتمعه ، واستخدامه للأمثال هو دليل على أن مجتمع الإيبو يحترم الأمثال ويعتبرونهم جزءاً مهماً لإثراء محادثاتهم. في نهاية هذه الدراسة، تصنف الأمثال وفقاً لمعناها، والإفراط في استخدامها دليل على أن الكاتب استخدمها كميزة أسلوبية في روايته.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب الإفريقي، مجتمع الإيبو، الأمثال، تقاليد الإيبو