

**The Question of Cultural Identity in Achebe's Novels  
*Things Fall Apart, a Man of the People, and Anthills of the  
Savannah***

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**Abstract**

With the emergence of cultural diversity as a new concept following the widespread of new communication technologies, the question of cultural identity increasingly becomes in the focus. The effect of colonization dominates almost every aspect of the conquered populations. In an attempt to have a close picture of the effect colonial power has on African cultural identity and social life, this paper aims, through Achebe's three postcolonial novels; *Things Fall Apart*, *a Man of the People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*, to reveal how African societies undergo the transformation in terms of culture and identity as a consequence of the British colonization. It investigates what cultural values Africans had before the arrival of the white man. The present article also exposes, depending on the way these novels are being read, Achebe's perception and views on cultural identity, reflected throughout the three selected novels, in the light of social and cultural events that took place in the aftermath of political independence. This study takes as a corpus written sentences and expressions collected from the three cited novels. Besides, it becomes prudent also to examine the author's various relevant written and oral comments about the subject in question.

**Keywords:** Cultural identity, African, Postcolonial, Achebe, Novel

الملخص:

أصبحت مسألة الهوية الثقافية في بؤرة الاهتمام وبشكل متزايد مع ظهور التنوع الثقافي كمفهوم جديد. ومع ان تأثير الاستعمار ثقافيا على شعوب البلدان المستعمرة يكاد يرى جليا لاسيما على المستوى الثقافي يهدف هذا البحث للحصول على تصور واضح عن تأثير القوة الاستعمارية على الهوية الثقافية الأفريقية. يعتمد هذا البحث في الدراسة على جمل مكتوبة وتعايير من روايات ثلاثة، للكاتب النيجيري تشينوا

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اتشيبى، "أشياء مبعثرة"، "رجل الناس"، و"كثيب النمل في السافانا". ويهدف من خلال الروايات الثلاثة الى إبراز الية التحول الثقافي الذي مرت به المجتمعات الأفريقية كنتيجة للاستعمار البريطاني و كذا مسألة الهوية. ينظر هذا البحث ايضا في القيم الثقافية التي سادت المجتمع الأفريقي قبل مجيء الرجل الأبيض كذا تصور تشينوا اتشيبى بشأن الهوية الثقافية في ضوء الأحداث الثقافية في أعقاب الاستقلال السياسي لنيجيريا.

الكلمات المفتاح: الهوية الثقافية، افريقيا، الاستقلال، أتشيبى، الرواية

## I. Introduction

The debate over the concept of postcolonial or post-colonial has since its first emergence not yet led to reach a consensus of opinion on one single definition. The same thing can be said about the period it actually covers. Nevertheless, this term is often used to denote an era when colonized countries gained their freedom from western colonization (Ashcroft et al, 1989). Some broaden it to join even the period that preceded independence. Among many different topics that constitute the literature produced in this particular time, identity in its cultural dimension has been contributing with a big share in this regard.

In social theory, the question of identity has widely been a controversial topic of dispute given the massive challenges that affect the way the concept itself has been perceived. Identity can be understood as the way we as individuals perceive and view ourselves with regard to others. As identities are instituted and altered through a continuing process of interaction on a small and large scale, and mostly in transitory situations, they are therefore considered as fluid and dynamic.

In an attempt to elaborate a comprehensive conception regarding identity, Bhugra (2004) proclaims that all of "...Racial, cultural and ethnic identities form part of one's identity, and identity will change with development at a personal as well as at a social level along with migration and acculturation". Culture in its turn has also been differently perceived, receiving therefore, as a universal concept, numerous definitions over time. It is often portrayed as '...shared features which encapsulate people together in a community' (Shah, 2003).

In any personal identity there is always a cultural dimension that determines the way he or she is being perceived by others. This feature is represented by cultural identity. This latter is a multifaceted concept. Therefore, it is much more complex to be confined to one single definition. Some refer to it as a sense of belonging to or being identified, based on gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, with one or more social or cultural categories where an individual shares customs, traditions, heritage, norms and language with this particular group (Fong and Chuang, 2004). In a social context, cultural identity is being defined with regard to other communities. Therefore, any kind of cultural identities can in fact create their place in the social scene only by acknowledging the right of other's existence. By means of communicative practices between different cultural groups, cultural identity as a natural outcome of intercultural encounters is today susceptible to be debated, challenged, and then maintained, or reformulated (Kim, 2007).

In the frame of cultural identity, individuals are able to define who they are through their perception of the similarities with and differences from other categories (Livesey, 2004). The driving force in this regard is intercultural dialogue that creates a contested space which consequently plays a decisive role in both the process of redefinition and reconstruction of cultural identity. Identity in general and cultural one in particular is more likely to become a subject of dispute once it is in crisis. Otherwise, it does not in most of the cases raise questions or ignite debates "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Mercer, 1990).

In spite of the tremendous importance identity has in shaping our personalities, cultural identity embodied in gender, race, religiosity, and ethnicity (Young, 1990) has not been given the genuine value it actually deserves in social studies until the 1960s. It was first perceived as a stagnant and given feature of people's interaction. Afterwards, it turns to be a steady flux that is generated over time through renewable construction of its different constituents (Gibson, 2004).

Consequently, several studies have afterwards been conducted dealing with core issues considered as formal framework to understand different social phenomena such as group interaction, cultural diversity, and globalization in terms of culture. In the area of behavioral studies, many researches have been undertaken to determine the impact of cultural identity on crucial subjects such as judicial behavior, legal norms, and legal institutions (Segal and Spaeth, 1999).

Throughout the 1960s, in both the US and the UK, when civil rights movements have arisen, theoretical as well as empirical studies, about the new concept of cultural identity, have flourished in these multicultural societies (Dooley, 1998). The same situation newly independent societies with histories and legacies of modern Western ideological and cultural colonization have been witnessing.

With his new “theory of nigrescence”, Cross (1978) has paved the way for more interest in cultural identity studies. Throughout the five stage described in the theory, an individual’s internal perception shifts from having no reference frame for him or her being differently perceived by others on the basis of his or her skin color to the stage in which that sense becomes deeply realized and felt. This conception can be taken as a model to be applied on other relevant components such as gender, race, ethnicity or religion, based on which an individual is being culturally identified. Moreover, Cross’s view postulates that both positive and negative experiences do have a decisive role in shaping one’s cultural identity in the social context. However, in a multicultural social environment where cultures are constantly in permanent encounter that leads often to confrontation, preserving the community cultural identity as a distinct entity becomes a tremendous challenge that needs joint efforts along with better knowledge of the changing processes (Crenshaw, Peller, and Thomas, 1995).

From his side, Stryker (1987) adopts a sociological approach in this regard. He argues that the relationship between an individual and his or her society, in the frame of cultural identity, is much more reciprocal. It is manifested in the sense that the self does

influence society through creating associations, groups, institutions, and organizations. In return, society by itself has an impact on its members by enabling each of them, within its social category, to become an acting element via what it offers as shared meanings, codes, and languages (McCall & Simmons, 1978). These latter ensure, from one hand a possibility of interaction with other members of the group, and from the other hand enable a person to reflect upon him or herself. Such research outcomes have been widely used to understand relevant social phenomena dealing with issues of migration and integration particularly when cultural identity is at stake. With the purpose of better understanding regarding cultural identity, as part of the self-representing a core issue of study in this respect, further reflection on the society, in whose context the self is in perpetual interaction with others, is more than a necessity (Stryker, 1980).

Cultural identity has also been actively exploited in the area of judicial system. Both enacting and enforcement of law depend on people's own perception of the nature of relationship that should govern the way community deals with legislations. This perception forms in its turn part of the people's cultural identity. It is mainly about how the legal system should serve the community; which virtues this law must promote, and what social and political ambitions it is supposed to fulfill (Barzilai, 2003).

Language as a tool that makes possible communicating with others is an inseparable part of one's cultural identity. People who are known as bilingual or even multilingual while preserving their own culture of origin, being aware of whom they are and proud of that are more likely to behave in a smooth and appropriate way (Willmott, 1986). Acceptance of multilingualism should not in any way be taken as a mean to treat original languages with disdain. Moreover, it must be dealt with as a privilege to maintain self-respect and enhances multiculturalism.

The concept of cultural identity has thus widely been used by specialists in different social disciplines and humanities including linguistics, history, legislation, psychology, and regional studies. It is again often borrowed when referring to multicultural

societies while dealing with identity in terms of its relation to common issues such as socially marginalized groups based on language, race, ethnicity or religion. As both culture and identity are often in crisis, the concept continues to spark furious yet fruitful debates in a range of academic disciplines.

## II. Cultural identity in *Things Fall Apart*

In a modern world characterized by multicultural societies, and diversity in terms of language and customs, still some cultural powers seem to have a hegemonic propensity and strong desire to obliterate any possible rebellious emerging voices. In former colonies, since early years of independence, a number of literary movements undertake the initiative to claim a cultural heritage for their communities shaped by a long history of existence. They are determined to meet the challenge of reviving the traditional identity deeply rooted in their ancient culture. Achebe actively engaged, as did many other prominent figures, to withstand against western stereotype on African traditional identity and culture. His views reflect unheard and unspoken stories of furious clash between African traditional cultures and European white colonial ideology.

Throughout history, no culture could survive without being altered. Realizing this fact, Achebe sketches in his first novel *Things Fall Apart* various cultural patterns of the indigenous Igbo people and depicts many facets of what was deliberately hidden from African traditional life in the pre-colonial era. It is a novel where the identity issue is represented as a cultural legacy the Igbo clan should have both the right and the honor to boast of. In one of his comments on the novel, Achebe states that "*Things Fall Apart* was an act of atonement with my past, the ritual return and homage of a Prodigal Son" (Achebe, 1964).

Given the universal status the novel has acquired as a literary work to encounter Western colonial domination, it therefore deserves to be called "resistance literature" (Harlow, 1987). Achebe reveals cultural patterns in the fictitious village of Umuofia and explores social structure of the Igbo society. Nevertheless, he also exposes a number of social schemes and cultural defects that affect mainly the political and social order

within the community. These flaws in terms of dealing with some aspects of Igbo's cultural identity are to be discussed later.

The Igbos enjoy a high standard of cultural and political identity. Three structural organizations along with a set of rules and laws that govern people's life are in charge of maintaining order and preserving social stability. This governing body is represented by Council of Masquerades known as (Egwugwu), traditional and cultural Council of Elders known as (Ndichie), and a Council formed mainly of Oracles and their Chief Priests. The whole community without exception must comply with the judicial system, as for those who breach the law they face inevitable consequences and severe punishment. It is a unique system of government the Igbos has for a long time adopted. According to Achebe's view, it was not because the Igbo people "didn't evolve to the stage to have kings and kingdoms" (Lindfors, 1997, p. 77). Rather, it is a question of an independent cultural identity and people's choice to opt for their own way to manage their social life.

Igbo's cultural identity is also premised on adherence to traditional values of personal strength and hard work. Yams are the symbol of richness, and wealth. Moreover, to them yams "the king of crops was a man's crop" (TFA, p. 16). Therefore, a respected and powerful man according to the prevailing view is someone "who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another". (TFA, p. 23). More wives and children are also a sign of power and strength. Manliness is defined according to the cultural system based on how much an individual earns and possesses, as well as on the number of family members who are in someone's custody.

Achebe deliberately tried in this novel to depict every single detail of Igbos' everyday life. Religion is considered to be a powerful source of enacting rules and law enforcement that every individual of the Igbo society abide by. This is what forms the cornerstone for the establishments of an ordered and civil community on all sides; cultural, economic, social, and political. Such plain narration of the Igbo social life is mainly meant to contest western claims of African societies as being primitive,

having no traditional culture, and no history. This idea is stressed by Simon Gikandi who argues that Achebe opted for this particular style of narrative writing in order to deny and expose the way Africans are represented “ in the novels of Conrad and Cary who have the propensity to represent the continent as either a blank space or a monstrous presence.” (Gikandi, 1991, p. 27).

Some of the social and cultural aspects people are to deal with can be often noticed in the spiritual and political leadership’s behaviors. In the village of Umuofia, the leadership is represented by the personality of Okonkwo. Even though he enjoys a very high reputation to be feared outside his community, he faces an intense internal struggle in terms of his individual identity. Besides, he is also confronted with many challenges in order to cope with some features of the Igbo’s cultural identity. This is purposely portrayed in the novel, manifested in a number of Okonkwo’s attitudes towards some cultural practices he could barely assimilate.

In another experience, and in contrast to Uchendu’s view about the killing of villagers in Abame, Okonkwo’s reaction clearly represents his narrow vision on the changing realities. His resistance to change emanating from his fear reflects his unwillingness to compromise. He replied “Abame people were weak and foolish. Why did they not fight back? Had they no guns and machetes?” (TFA, p. 124).

The way women are treated is also an indicator of the whole community failure to keep up with social changes. In a society where manliness is highlighted as a sign of strength and feminine is seen as a symbol of weakness, it is not unusual for women to live always in the marge of their own society. In a ceremony, it can be easily noticed from “the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders” (TFA, p. 62). It will not be odd to see more women along with the outcasts and many other oppressed social groups converting to Christianity, embracing the new arrived culture of the white man as they feel it gives them more freedom, emancipating them from social

shackles that have for a long time prevented them from seeing themselves as full members of society.

Okonkwo fails to notice that the arrival of a new foreign culture has changed many of what was accepted as rules and traditions. After several years in exile Okonkwo finds himself unable to cope with different social and cultural circumstances. In an interview with Biodun Jeyifo, Achebe stresses two qualities; flexibility, and readiness for change. Once these two features are missed, they will be consequently replaced by exclusion and alienation that lead to the breakdown of the whole society. "Okonkwo is "betrayed" because he's doing exactly what the culture preaches. But, you see, the culture is devious and flexible because if it wasn't, it wouldn't survive" (Lindfors, 1997, p. 118).

In order to bring about social and cultural change, Achebe in this novel, where positive and negative features of the Igbo's culture are plainly displayed, proposes constructive reforms that lead to a new cultural identity be ultimately forged. People must free themselves from colonial burden that makes them always live with the feeling of inferiority. The invention and the reconstruction of a new identity on all sides should start with reviewing and reevaluating many of the cultural values and traditions that only bring bad reputation to the community, giving opportunities for voices of destructive criticism from outside.

### **III. Cultural identity in a *Man of the People***

In *Things Fall Apart*, before the arrival of the white man, the tribal traditional culture kept for a long time the social fabric of the Nigerian society cohesive as one entity. Colonial power with the new brought culture caused a huge split between members of the same society, disrupting people from each other. Throughout the period of Colonization, western education played a decisive role in making indigenous people more alienated from their ancestral values, shaping therefore a disintegrated cultural identity. Nevertheless, some tribal communities demonstrated an amazing tenacity in keeping a number of traditional values unaltered for decades in spite of these purposely planned attempts.

In the aftermath of independence, the travail of social and cultural life accompanying people's endeavor to forge an independent identity gave birth to some special circumstances that made Achebe write again about his own country. In *a Man of People*, he depicts cultural life of Nigeria in particular and most of African communities in general, portraying how tremendous was the challenge of dealing with the question of identity, reviving traditional culture, and making the country stand back on its own feet. It was so distressing mainly due to the political climate that follows the colonizer's departure, wherein both culture and identity are in crucial trial.

Western educated figures' greed for power along with the influence of notorious colonial cultural residues are of many other indicators that make the main narrator in the novel presented in the personality of Odili expects the way things are going to happen, elaborating a pessimistic and bleak vision on the country's future, and how ridiculous it becomes in the eyes of the world under such political circumstances. The whole situation is exhibited as a form of neo-colonialism. He says about Chief Nanga, the main character portrayed as one of the most corrupt figures from the political elite, "Just think of such a cultureless man going abroad and calling himself Minister of Culture. Ridiculous. This is why the outside world laughs at us" (MOP, p. 23). As a consequence, cultural identity is severely damaged, and Nigerian community loses most of political, social and cultural values that have for a long time been a source of pride that people used to boast of.

The disruption of many cultural values as a result of colonization is what clearly marks the events that took place in the novel when it comes to the way it deals with the opposite gender. The act of showing love and establishing relationship between males and females living together in the same society, as a natural social and human need, has been overturned. It shifts from being concealed within a matrimonial frame under Igbo's indigenous cultural practices to become plainly exposed. Chief Nanga's affair with Elsie driven by pure lust, and many other explicit scenes in the novel depicting sexual appetite in terms of gender relationship

reflect, in fact, a huge change of ethical values in the Nigerian society.

Some other images from the elite's social and cultural behavior help the reader understand the influence of colonization as to be the root cause of almost every trouble in all aspects of people's daily life. They show how huge the gap between those in power and ordinary people is in terms of dealing with the colonizer's legacy and common cultural values. Intellectuals and political elite's option for using English, the colonizer's language, when dealing with each other as well as in their own private life and taking it as a privilege clearly demonstrate their disdain for the native language. Ruling class' extreme passion for all what is western from private schools, house furniture, and means of transportation to even simple things such as coffee made in Europe reflects tremendous confusion these people find themselves in and a deep crisis of cultural identity. They are neither able to identify themselves as fully westernized, nor ready to accept the fact that they are after all Africans. It seems that Fanon's burden "black skin white masks" is repeating itself again, making them caught in-between. This is perfectly symbolized by Odili. He is labeled by Chief Nanga as a "black white-man" (MOP, p. 37). He used to show features of "westernization"; preferring to speak English, yearning for a degree from a university in the west, having a western-educated girlfriend, and admiring western values.

In this new society, honorable tribal titles are being substituted for western degrees. Yams are no longer sign of manliness, hard work, and success. Rather, it is now western education, social position, and political power that make a difference, bringing therefore more division, extra social stratification, and paving the way for new standards to take place. Odili comments saying that "a long American car driven by a white-uniformed chauffeur and flying a ministerial flag could pass through the eye of a needle" (MOP, p. 65).

Achebe's main duty is again to reveal cultural flaws and defects with a purpose to remind his fellow African citizens of the historical responsibility they undertake as people who inherited

political independence. It is after all a question of freeing the traditional cultural heritage from colonial legacy. Adopted social, ethical, political, and cultural values should observe people's aspiration for having a dignified life, incorporating their commitments of building a society where governing rules and laws are inspired by traditional values.

#### **IV. Cultural identity in *Anthills of the Savannah***

Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958. It was a clear response to some western literary works that portray Africa as a mysterious land and African people as primitive and savages. These European novels tried therefore to justify colonization as to be a source of enlightenment, bringing civilization to the continent. It was to remind the whole world of a rich cultural heritage Nigeria in particular and Africa as a whole had centuries before colonization. In *a Man of People* eight years later, Achebe's attention shifted from the social aspect of cultural identity to focus on some political features.

In 1987, *Anthills of the Savannah* depicts political events taking place in one of West Africa's fictitious state called Kangan. From its title that is clearly inspired by the proverb about "anthills surviving to tell the new grass of the Savannah about the last years bush fires", the novel bears an implicit message that stories which make sense to people can be transmitted through the means of narration. It centers mainly on a military officer called Sam, also known as His Excellency who took power by coup d'état soon after the colonizer left the country. This western educated man quickly became a dictator. Achebe tries by means of imaginary events in the novel, to revive some cultural values and awaken people's cultural belonging, reflecting his views on postcolonial Nigeria.

The novel receives greater attention on international literary scene. It came in some particular circumstances that were the gist of this fictitious literary work. It was Achebe's first novel after a civil war, commonly known as the Biafran war, which divided the country based on cultural background. Both social and political events in *Anthills of the Savannah* simulate almost every feature that colonialism exposed since its first arrival till independence.

Unlike *Things Fall Apart*, and *a Man of People*, Achebe tries in this novel to suggest some solutions to the ordeal newly-independent countries found themselves involved in at the critical period of postcolonial era. It marks the transitional critical period that follows independence where cultural identity is at stake with all challenges and potential effects of colonization that accompanied Nigerian ambition for a new era of freedom and prosperity. This idea is emphasized by Simon Gikandi when saying that the novel represents the “political and cultural crisis that marks the transition from the colonial system to a post-colonial situation” (Gikandi, 1991, p. 18).

The ruling leadership behaving as neo-colonial power relies on three crucial major personalities along with his Excellency. Ikem, Chris and Beatrice are figures who know each other well even since days of school. In this novel, Achebe seems to tackle the same problem faced in *a Man of People* but stating the situation more explicitly. This could be attributed to the fact that even after a quarter-century of independence still the same social and political troubles are recurring, and things are going from bad to worse on many levels.

Emphasizing the importance of role-model on the process of cultural identity shaping, the novelist tries to demonstrate how destructively decisive is to have a politically corrupt and morally bankrupt rulers. He also wonders about the kind of education these people in power should have in order to be qualified for the job they undertake. Ordinary people, according to him, tend by nature to look up to their superior’s action, and imitate the elite’s behaviors. In his book *the Trouble with Nigeria*, Achebe states that the leadership is “in the language of psychologists, role models. People look up to them and copy their actions . . . . Therefore if a leader lacks discipline the effect is apt to spread automatically down to his followers” (Achebe, 1987, p. 31).

Several behaviors in the novel reflect a defect in integrity of the whole community’s identity. Inequality in terms of dealing with women and people from lower classes gives a strong impression that things have not yet improved in the postcolonial era. In a time when indigenous people live in the marge of society, His

Excellency's ultimate goal is to please the west as "his major flaw was that all he ever wanted was to do what was expected of him especially by the English" (AS, p. 49 ). A language as a crucial component of people's cultural identity is also at stake. The ruling group yearns to be known as having the privilege of using English, admiring it "to the point of foolishness". Promoting the colonizer's cultural values at the expense of traditional heritage is another indicator of identity being in crisis. In a party, Sam displays a warm sign of welcome and hospitality to an American lady, while he refuses to visit the village of Abazon during the crisis, or even to receive the appointed delegation. It reflects clearly how the leadership tries by all means to distance itself from the people, craving at the same time to be much closer to the colonizer's life style.

Suggested solutions in the novel are represented in the desperate need of looking for a constructive and immediate change that must take place in highest levels of governance. In contrary to *a Man of People* where Achebe attempts to focus on the importance of personal initiative, incarnated in the character of Odili, to revive people's cultural identity through his attempts to influence an individual leader, he tend, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, to be more interested in making the whole group, which symbolizes the ruling and elite class, aware of the cultural, social, and political responsibility that is on their shoulders. The way the elite class and leaders tend to deal with the masses seems to repeat the same story of the colonizer; exploiting their own people, treating them with disrespect, and considering them as others. In order for them to bridge that social and cultural gap, they should, according to Achebe, remind themselves of the duty for their citizens "re-connecting themselves with the people and not living up there, unaware of their reality" (Lindfors, 1997, p. 156).

#### **V. Conclusion:**

Throughout all political, social and cultural events that take place in the three novels *Things Fall Apart*, *a Man of People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah* forming the corpus of this research study, Achebe reflects the question of cultural identity in Nigeria from the pre-colonial age to the crucial period of colonialism and

finally reveal on the critical post-colonial era. Plenty of cultural defects have been reported through fictitious events. Achebe wants his people to use their wisdom and reflect upon inherited values. They should, according to him, be flexible enough to deal with the new emerging circumstances and overcome imposed challenges.

A social environment wherein some cultural practices such as killing innocent victims, marginalizing a particular group of people based on gender or social status, political and educated elite isolating themselves from the masses, subjugating them, duplicating thereby the colonizer's policy of segregation, the baby named only by the father, and many other features of social and cultural inequality represent a mixture of inherited culture along with what is attributed to the influence of the of colonialism's ideology. This latter has for a long time pursued to instill in African subconscious mind, particularly of the so-called Western-educated elite, the burden of inferiority in terms of culture and values, making them constantly live in perplexity in terms of cultural identity; disdaining their own people, alienating themselves from ordinary citizens, hankering after power all their life, whereas craving to look like and behave as westerners, setting as their ultimate goal to please their masters. In Achebe's view, these practices are counterproductive and brought nothing but notorious reputation to the image of all Africans worldwide.

Positive traditional values embodied in the culture should be taken, according to Achebe, as a source of empowerment based on which an independent cultural identity from that of the colonizer is to be carefully forged. He points out to the significance of making good use of these traditional values along with many other worthy traditions in spite of current challenges. The constructional process should be mainly inspired by the idea of bridging the gap between different ages; bringing together the ancient past, currently lived present and aspirational future. Traditional myths, as in *Anthills of the Savannah*, reflect the importance of storytelling in making both culture and values pass from one generation to the next one as part of African cultural heritage. These myths are widely perceived and portrayed as

African culture's wisdom. They belong to all people regardless of their social group, gender or ethnicity as valuable assets. This importance is highlighted by Supriya Nair who describes storytelling as having a role of "guidelines to cope with the demands of one's environment", transmitting therefore different "group identity and history" (Nair, 1993, p. 117).

This paper comes to conclude that throughout all these worked-on novels, Achebe intends to stress two main issues. The first one lies in the importance of observing and preserving cultural traditional values, making them known as a long-time existing ancestral heritage. It is also a question of living up to ordinary people's aspiration amid perpetual colonial attempt to deliberately uproot these traditions mainly through education, substituting them for western standards. The second is emphasizing the desperate need for major and minor amendments of a number of flaws in some traditional values of inherited culture. Besides, stressing the necessity of total and positive shift of people in power's behaviors to invent their own independent cultural identity and meet their citizen's need for better cultural and economic change. As a proposed solution, and even though he does highlight the magnitude of group working mainly in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe confirms in many different ways the ability of personal initiative, as in *a Man of People*, to create new local values and forge an independent cultural identity that helps restore social and political order and bring about well-being and prosperity to the whole community.

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#### **Declaration**

I declare that this article represents my own works, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously published in any other means of publication.