

**THE PORTRAYAL OF IGBO LIFE IN CHINUA
ACHEBE'S NOVEL *THINGS FALL APART***

THESIS

BY

**HABIBI
NPM: 71200422005**



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Supervisor I,

Supervisor II,

Dr. M. Manugeran, M.A.

Purwarno, S.S, M.A.

Dean of Faculty,

Head of Department,

Dr. H. Purwanto Siwi, M.A.

Dr. M. Manugeran, M.A.

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

I, the undersigned, certify that the thesis entitled **THE PORTRAYAL OF IGBO LIFE N CHINUA ACHEBE'S NOVEL THINGS FALL APART** is the result of my own work and has never been submitted for any other degrees, professional qualifications or other purposes beyond the Degree of Magister Sastra at Master's Program in English Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Medan. No part of this thesis is quoted without specifying the sources. Anything pertaining to quotation or computer software application in writing this thesis or any other things tied to *Hak Atas Kekayaan Intelektual* (HAKI) 'Intellectual Property Rights' together with its legal consequences likely resulted, is upon my own responsibility.

Medan, February 2022

Habibi

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Medan, February 2022
The writer

Habibi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL SHEET	ii
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problem Identification	3
1.3 Objective.....	3
1.4 Scope	3
1.5 Significance	4
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Sociology of Literature	5
2.2 The Approaches of Sociology of Literature	8
2.3 Igbo Society	9
2.3.1 Social Life	10
2.3.2 Political Life	12
2.3.3 Economic Life	13
2.3.4 Religious Life	14
2.4 Review of Related Literature.....	15
CHAPTER III: METHOD OF RESEARCH	21
3.1 Research Design	21
3.2 Source of Data	22
3.3 Data Collection Procedure.....	23
3.4 Data Analysis Procedure	25
CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	26
4.1 Social Life	27
4.2 Political Life	37
4.3 Economic Life	41
4.4 Religious Life	42
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	51
5.1 Conclusion	51
5.2 Recommendation	53
REFERENCES	
APPENDIX	

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APPENDIX

CHINUA ACHEBE'S BIOGRAPHY

Early Years

Chinua Achebe (pronounced *Chee-noo-ah Ah-chay-bay*) is considered by many critics and teachers to be the most influential African writer of his generation. His writings, including the novel *Things Fall Apart*, have introduced readers throughout the world to creative uses of language and form, as well as to factual inside accounts of modern African life and history. Not only through his literary contributions but also through his championing of bold objectives for Nigeria and Africa, Achebe has helped reshape the perception of African history, culture, and place in world affairs.

The first novel of Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart*, is recognized as a literary classic and is taught and read everywhere in the English-speaking world. The novel has been translated into at least forty-five languages and has sold several million copies. A year after publication, the book won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize, a major literary award.

Achebe was born in the Igbo (formerly spelled *Ibo*) town of Ogidi in eastern Nigeria on November 16, 1930, the fifth child of Isaiah Okafor Achebe and Janet Iloegbunam Achebe. His father was an instructor in Christian catechism for the Church Missionary Society. Nigeria was a British colony during Achebe's early years, and educated English-speaking families like the Achebes occupied a privileged position in the Nigerian power structure. His parents even named him Albert, after Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. (Achebe himself chose his Igbo name when he was in college.)

Education

Achebe attended the Church Missionary Society's school where the primary language of instruction for the first two years was Igbo. At about eight, he began learning English. His relatively late introduction to English allowed Achebe to develop a sense of cultural pride and an appreciation of his native tongue — values that may not have been cultivated had he been raised and taught exclusively in English. Achebe's home fostered his understanding of both cultures: He read books

in English in his father's library, and he spent hours listening to his mother and sisters tell traditional Igbo stories.

At fourteen, Achebe was selected to attend the Government College in Umuahia, the equivalent of a university preparatory school and considered the best in West Africa. Achebe excelled at his studies, and after graduating at eighteen, he was accepted to study medicine at the new University College at Ibadan, a member college of London University at the time. The demand for educated Nigerians in the government was heightened because Nigeria was preparing for self-rule and independence. Only with a college degree was a Nigerian likely to enter the higher ranks of the civil service.

The growing nationalism in Nigeria was not lost on Achebe. At the university, he dropped his English name "Albert" in favor of the Igbo name "Chinua," short for Chinualumogo. Just as Igbo names in *Things Fall Apart* have literal meanings, Chinualumogo is translated as "My spirit come fight for me."

At University College, Achebe switched his studies to liberal arts, including history, religion, and English. His first published stories appeared in the student publication the *University Herald*. These stories have been reprinted in the collection *Girls at War and Other Stories*, which was published in 1972. Of his student writings, only a few are significantly related to his more mature works; short stories such as "Marriage is a Private Affair" and "Dead Man's Path" explore the conflicts that arise when Western culture meets African society.

Career Highlights

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1953, Achebe joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation as a producer of radio talks. In 1956, he went to London to attend the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Staff School. While in London, he submitted the manuscript for *Things Fall Apart* to a publisher, with the encouragement and support of one of his BBC instructors, a writer and literary critic. The novel was published in 1958 by Heinemann, a publishing firm that began a long relationship with Achebe and his work. Fame came almost instantly. Achebe has said that he never experienced the life of a struggling writer.

Upon returning to Nigeria, Achebe rose rapidly within the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. As founder and director of the Voice of Nigeria in 1961,

Achebe and his colleagues aimed at developing more national identity and unity through radio programs that highlighted Nigerian affairs and culture.

Political Problems

Turmoil in Nigeria from 1966 to 1972 was matched by turmoil for Achebe. In 1966, young Igbo officers in the Nigerian army staged a coup d'état. Six months later, another coup by non-Igbo officers overthrew the Igbo-led government. The new government targeted Achebe for persecution, knowing that his views were unsympathetic to the new regime. Achebe fled to Nsukka in eastern Nigeria, which is predominantly Igbo-speaking, and he became a senior research fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In 1967, the eastern part of Nigeria declared independence as the nation of Biafra. This incident triggered thirty months of civil war that ended only when Biafra was defeated. Achebe then fled to Europe and America, where he wrote and talked about Biafran affairs.

Later Writing

Like many other African writers, Achebe believes that artistic and literary works must deal primarily with the problems of society. He has said that "art is, and always was, at the service of man" rather than an end in itself, accountable to no one. He believes that "any good story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose."

Continuing his relationship with Heinemann, Achebe published four other novels: *No Longer at Ease* (the 1960 sequel to *Things Fall Apart*), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). He also wrote and published several children's books that express his basic views in forms and language understandable to young readers.

In his later books, Achebe confronts the problems faced by Nigeria and other newly independent African nations. He blames the nation's problems on the lack of leadership in Nigeria since its independence. In 1983, he published *The Trouble with Nigeria*, a critique of corrupt politicians in his country. Achebe has also published two collections of short stories and three collections of essays. He is the founding editor of Heinemann's African Writers series; the founder and publisher of *Uwa Ndi*

Igbo: A Bilingual Journal of Igbo Life and Arts; and the editor of the magazine *Okike*, Nigeria's leading journal of new writing.

Teaching and Literary Awards

In addition to his writing career, Achebe maintained an active teaching career. In 1972, he was appointed to a three-year visiting professorship at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and, in 1975, to a one-year visiting professorship at the University of Connecticut. In 1976, with matters sufficiently calm in Nigeria, he returned as professor of English at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with which he had been affiliated since 1966. In 1990, he became the Charles P. Stevenson, Jr., professor of literature at Bard College, Annandale, New York.

Achebe received many awards from academic and cultural institutions around the world. In 1959, he won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize for *Things Fall Apart*. The following year, after the publication of its sequel, *No Longer At Ease*, he was awarded the Nigerian National Trophy for Literature. His book of poetry, *Christmas in Biafra*, written during the Nigerian civil war, won the first Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1972. More than twenty universities in Great Britain, Canada, Nigeria, and the United States have awarded Achebe honorary degrees.

Achebe died on March 21, 2013 at the age of 82.

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