

## "The Linguistic Structure of Funeral Rituals and Collective Mourning in *Things Fall Apart*"

Abbas Khan<sup>1</sup>, Syed Ali Ashir<sup>2</sup>, Ejaz Ur Rahman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar of City University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, email: [abbasliterature@gmail.com](mailto:abbasliterature@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar of Hangzhou Normal University [syedashi13@gmail.com](mailto:syedashi13@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>MPhil Scholar of Riphah International University, Islamabad. [ejazurrahman77@gmail.com](mailto:ejazurrahman77@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*The novel explores Igbo society deeply to bring forth how language maintains a culture in the doing of cultural activities that give great weight to social cohesion, spirituality, and resistance to any influence from colonization. Throughout the novel, linguistic representations of cultural rituals, such as those related to funerals and mass mourning, have been very evocative in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958). This paper explores how Achebe uses linguistic tools- such as symbols, proverbs, and orality- to picture funeral rites and communal grief. The study especially looks into the analytical perspectives of those concepts regarding reinforcements made in Igbo cultural values and critiques posed by colonial disruptions that threaten such traditions. The research design follows the textual analysis approach, informed by Gumucio's theory of Orality and Cultural Identity. By employing close reading, this study analyzes salient scenes of this nature, such as in the case of Ezeudu's funeral, to analyze the linguistic structures that achieve communal and spiritual meanings. Secondary sources contextualise Achebe's linguistic choices within Igbo cultural and postcolonial perspectives. Meanwhile, such an analysis reveals that Achebe's use of proverbs, chants, and symbolic imagery is one of preserving Igbo cultural values but simultaneously can be a way of criticizing colonial intervention. These linguistic features of speech emphasize continuity within social and spiritual bonds wherein the forces of colonialism have torn apart cohesion.. This study contributes to an ever-building repertoire of African literature that deploys language and ritual to maintain cultural memory and identity and shed light on the intersection of tradition and colonial disruption.*

### 1.Introduction

*Things Fall Apart* (1958), written by Chinua Achebe, is a significant work in African literature, for it is highly acclaimed for its profound exposition on Igbo culture and the influence of colonialism on African societies. The novel unravels Igbo life, traditions, and modern-day challenges a community faces amidst tussles with foreign influences. One of the deeper aspects of the novel is the significance it projects with funeral rituals or collective mourning of substantial parts of Igbo's social and cultural identity. Considering the rootedness of these rituals within Igbo society, one can only imagine the spiritual beliefs, social bonding, and respect for ancestors of the community being portrayed through those rituals (Irele, 2009). Through *Things Fall Apart* (1958) Achebe tells the story not only of Okonkwo and his people but also imparts some vital features of Igbo's cultural practices, in which linguistic features underpin and bring forth the meaning of rites of passage, such as burial and mourning.

Achebe (1958) work powerfully critiques and responds to the aspects of colonial narratives that had previously marginalized or misinterpreted African cultures. According to scholars such as

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), writers like Achebe from Africa are concerned with reclaiming African identity through literature by redirecting their interest toward indigenous languages and cultural practices. For instance, the rituals of burial in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) do not just take the form of conventions in society; they are part of the narration and are significant ingredients of Igbo life, exposing the spiritual and social consciousness of the community. The orality in these rituals, chants, and proverbs exposes a linguistic space where Igbo people communicate under a common concern for their ancestors through consolidated communal bonding and a collective display of emotion (Okpewho, 1992). Thus, the novel is an essential literary text considering how language represents and preserves African cultural heritage.

In the centrality of language, one also finds the means for evoking the importance of funeral rites and collective mourning. The proverbs, chants, and symbolic language that Achebe uses underline the place he reserves for Igbo culture and the oral nature of Igbo culture itself, which rests on the power of the spoken word (Finnegan, 1970). For example, the description of the ritualistic performance of Ezeudu's funeral, one of the most elaborate scenes in the novel, comes with detailed linguistic descriptions by the author to explain the ritualistic performance and the shared grief felt collectively within the community (Achebe, 1958, p. 123). This is a ritualistic passage of an individual, but it also reconfirms social cohesion and spiritual continuity in Igbo society. Attention to such linguistic features allows Achebe to emphasize orality and communal practices to maintain the social fabric of Igbo society against even colonial incursion (Lindfors, 1991).

Achebe's portrayal of mourning, for example, is not of individual personal losses; it is more of a cultural event in which speech, in the form of chanting and precursors to ancestors, prominently assumes the role of articulation and reinforcement of shared feelings (Irele, 2009). The mourning practices are portrayed as Igbo's contact moments with their past and ancestors, thus bridging the two spiritual realms into one. Achebe uses language in these scenes to underscore the continuous Igbo spirituality, which translates to the threat of encroaching colonialism, not disrupting such traditional practices. The rituals themselves are cultural performances and acts of resistance in and of themselves since they symbolize a community's adherence to its cultural heritage. (Okpewho, 1992).

The very linguistics of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) at funerals, in collective, continue to provide a rich area through which the intersections of language, culture, and identity can be investigated. While analyzing such elements, this paper intends to contribute to the general discussion about the role of African literature in using language as a tool for cultural preservation and resistance. Indeed, the minute and deliberate manner in which Achebe depicts the rituals of his people serves not only as a means of educating about Igbo ritual customs but also to invite readers deeper into the spiritual and social strata beneath African societies. In order to conduct a thorough analysis of how linguistic components in *Things Fall Apart* describe, preserve, and honour cultural diversity within the Igbo culture, this paper critically draws upon such scholarship.

Up to this point, the field's research has attempted to frame Achebe's language use as a kind of cultural recovery. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) identified how African writers deployed indigenous languages and oral traditions as acts of resistance against colonial erasure. Equally, Okpewho (1992) evidences the pivotal role of orality and symbolism within the African literary canon before underlining how such features serve as mnemonic devices for preserving and perpetuating African culture. Among such contributions, a significant research gap persists concerning the specific linguistic analysis of the funeral rituals and mourning practices in *Things Fall Apart*

(1958). At the same time, the role of proverbs and orality has received extensive attention, and the more detailed linguistic patterns Achebe uses to structure these particular cultures, especially within the context of mourning and funeral ceremonies, require deeper exploration. There is a further need to explore how these linguistic elements change with the community's experience of colonial disruption that altered the practice and meaning of the rituals.

### Objectives

1. To analyze the linguistic structure used in depicting funeral rituals and collective mourning in *Things Fall Apart* and its role in conveying Igbo cultural values and social cohesion.
2. To examine how Achebe's portrayal of funeral rituals reflects the impact of colonial influence on traditional Igbo mourning practices.

### Research Questions

1. What linguistic elements are used to portray funeral rituals and mourning in *Things Fall Apart*, and how do they reflect Igbo cultural values and social cohesion?
2. How does Achebe's use of language illustrate the impact of colonial influence on traditional Igbo funeral and mourning practices?

## 2. Literature Review

This literature review discusses the anthropological, linguistics and postcolonial dimensions of Igbo funeral rituals and collective mourning, as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). It indicates that by drawing on studies related to Igbo cultural practices, African literature, and postcolonial critiques, the paper comprehensively understands the importance of such rituals and how they are represented in the novel.

### 2.1 Previous Studies on Igbo Culture and Funeral Rituals

The symbolic meanings of Igbo cultural practices and funeral rituals are widely represented in anthropological and sociological literature. In Igbo culture, funerals are profoundly cultural and reiterate a community's values, social network and spiritual ideology rather than simply ritual grieving. Igbo people, according to Nwoye (2005), perform their death rituals in honour of their dead and reinforce the communal bonds that hold a society together. These ceremonies bring forth communal values and maintain social cohesion through complex rites of performances and invocations to ancestors.

The Igbo funeral rite is filled with symbolic actions that link the living and the spiritual world. Ilogu (1974) describes how this use of drumming, chanting, and processions during this rite of passage symbolizes the Transportation of the dead into the ancestral realm from the physical world. These acts are spiritual and social, serving to reaffirm the collective identity of the community and its continuity over generations. Indeed, the Igbo relationship with life and death cycles is not better manifested than in the symbolic use of funerals, and such a prime instance is the one that Achebe renders regarding the funeral of Ezeudu in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Here,

the Igbo community uses these ceremonies to manifest respect for the dead while establishing the social hierarchy and communal values.

However, collective mourning is another crucial ingredient of the Igbo funeral performances, which plays a vital role in maintaining social order and community identity. Turner (1969) writes that among African societies, mourning rituals are one avenue of common expression whereby the entire community shares a structure of feelings regarding loss to affirm social relationships and unity. Amadiume (1997) confirms that one should consider mass mourning ceremonies as a communal act that restores social balance after someone dies rather than an expression of grief for an individual character. Also, in Achebe's novel, the description of mass mourning is not confined to personal experience. However, it reflects how Igbo people come together due to experiences at the levels of emotional and spiritual characteristics. The wailing, drumming, and chanting that accompanied Ezeudu's funeral were communal; mourning was to be collectively done as a binding cultural factor (Achebe, 1958).

These studies illustrate that Igbo funeral rites and communal bereavement, respectively, are deeply saturated cultural and spiritual practices within the communal fold. They preserve social order, connect the living to the ancestral world, and strengthen collective identity. The nature of these practices is instructive on how Achebe has represented them in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and how they could be seen operating in sustaining Igbo culture in the face of colonial disruption.

## 2.2 Linguistic Analysis in African Literature

One of African literature's most attractive dimensions is its use of language, primarily while representing cultural and spiritual experiences. Many African novels use specific linguistic patterns, such as proverbs, orality, and symbolism, to show the depth of their culture in practices and beliefs. Finnegan (1970) elevates the status of oral traditions among African societies; orality, in that case, is not only a style but an essential attribute of cultural continuity and preservation. Proverbs, for instance, crystallize community wisdom and apply it to the guidance, teaching, and confirmation of societal norms.

In light of the linguistic patterns used by the author in his attempt to represent Igbo culture as authentically as possible, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has always been highly discussed. Okpewho (1992) points out that Achebe introduces proverbs and storytelling in this novel, which are typically considered cultural markers. These give the readers a vivid picture of Igbo life and ocular evidence of Igbo cultural and spiritual lives. Achebe's description of the funeral rites-of-passage, such as the proverbs and chants at Ezeudu's funeral, carries spiritual and emotional weight due to his use of language. Writing a story that sounds like the linguistic rhythm of the Igbo people, Achebe provided a window into the Igbo people's cultural and spiritual time dimensions.

Most discussions of Achebe's linguistic approach celebrate his genius in reconciling the potential Igbo oral traditions within an English-language text. Indeed, Lindfors (1991) and Ohaeto (1997) have discussed how Achebe tactically retains features introduced by Igbo speech patterns and orality. He bridges cultural contexts and conveys the Igbo worldview to an international

audience. It is a deliberate usage of the structure of Igbo oratory and symbolism to denote how Igbo conduct funeral rites in such an elaborate form. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, his use of chants and ritual language during mass bereavement shows how language works culturally and spiritually to bring the community closer to its ancestors.

Other linguistic studies of Achebe also show the performative elements in this author's works. The speech repetition and symbolic language characteristic of the ancestral spirits being summoned with drums is not a description but a device to invoke the oral performance that is a constituent of ceremonial Igbo (Achebe, 1958). This is in line with the views of Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), who argues that it is to the indigenous languages and practices that African literature must return as a source of resistance to colonial discourses. By casting Igbo oral traditions into the narrative structure of *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe preserves the cultural authenticity of those practices and involves readers in the spiritual and emotional experiences of the Igbo people.

### 2.3 Postcolonial perspective

The postcolonial critiques have been vocal in highlighting how colonialism causes issues in the representation of African funeral, burial, and mourning. Scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) affirm that colonization procedures involve an imposition of political and economic dominance coupled with aggression to suppress and change the cultural and spiritual expressions of the people of Africa. In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the writer Achebe shows insight into the changes in culture that come from colonialism and how gradually, the old ways, such as those concerned with funeral rites, start to decline as the influence of colonialism increases. Even though the pre-colonial Igbo life is the centre of the novel, it alludes to the transformation and disruption that is to come with the onset of the colonial powers and their imposition of values.

Achebe's depiction of funeral ceremonies and mourning rituals in *Things Fall Apart* is thus an implicit criticism of colonialism's attempts to invalidate traditional African life. Eze (1997) characterizes such responses by African literature to the effects of colonialism as a highlighting of the resiliency of indigenous cultures by recovering repressed traditions. In particular, Achebe's close attention to details regarding funeral rites, with its heavy use of linguistic and cultural signs and symbols, is typical of this literary approach. In focusing on these rites, Achebe indicates the continuance and depth of Igbo culture in light of this threat of colonial disruption.

Other works corroborate how African writers, Achebe among them, use literature as a site for reclaiming their culture. As Chinweizu (1987) proposes, "*The African writer resists colonialist erasure by inflating the density of his cultural heritage, above all through the polysemy of indigenous language and traditional practices.*" Achebe's accent on the performative and communal attributes of language in the ritual of funeral enactment is part of this resistance. The detailed representation of these scenes serves to retain Igbo customs and challenge the colonial systems that seek to eradicate such expressions of culture.

Eminent work belongs to Achebe and is a significant example of how African literature becomes a tool for retrieving cultural identity through language. Having said this, as Nwankwo (2008) points out, African writers often reconstitute local narratives which colonialist discourses have

marginalized. Achebe's commitment to representing the Igbo phonological and cultural experience, with particular reference to the rituals of death, becomes an act of cultural preservation and resistance. His approach still emphasizes that literature is one of the main tools to retain and recover African culture.

## 2.4 Research gap

While the literature on Igbo funeral rituals and collective mourning is profound, there is a significant gap in the linguistic analysis of how Achebe elaborates on these rituals with language in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Previous works, like Okpewho (1992) and Finnegan (1970), have touched only the broader areas of orality, proverbs, and symbolism in African literature. While these two studies offer insights into the working of such linguistic elements in general, they are singularly unable to describe precisely how they work in Igbo representation of funeral rites, especially their communal and spiritual value in representing social cohesion. However, there is little research on how colonial disruption bears on such rituals' linguistic and performative features. Although the socio-cultural implications of colonialism have been discussed by scholars, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), little analysis is done on how Achebe's use of language shifts according to these influences and how such a shift could constitute a critique and portrayal of Igbo cultural identity in fragmentation. The research, therefore, tries to fill in this gap by providing an essential analysis of the linguistic structure of the funeral rituals in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and the transformation brought about by colonial encroachment.

## 3. Theoretical framework and methodology

This section discusses the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the present study to trace the linguistic representation of funeral rituals and collective mourning in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The research discusses how Achebe's use of language appropriates Gumucio's theory (2016) of Orality and Cultural Identity to preserve cultural heritage and critique colonial influence. It does so by taking a textual analysis approach through close reading, exploring Achebe's use of proverbs, chants, and symbolic language to reveal Igbo rituals' cultural and spiritual meaning in crucial scenes. This structured approach enables one to delve into the role of language in sustaining Igbo cultural identity vis-a-vis external pressures.

### Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework used in the study is by Gumucio (2016), *Orality and Cultural Identity*. The theory is contemporary in establishing orality to play a significant role in shaping and maintaining cultural identity, especially in ritualistic or communal contexts. Gumucio asserts that all these oral traditions, like proverbs, chants, and other forms of linguistics, are not only means of communication but also elements that keep and enforce cultural heritage. This is particularly relevant in the light of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) because it allows the investigation into how Chinua Achebe uses language to save Igbo cultural values and practices given colonial disruption.

This paper engages Gumucio's theory (2016) by practising that Achebe's portrayal of funeral rites and mass loss completely interlinks with orality both as a means of preserving culture and a means of resistance against colonial influence. This framework further supports the investigation of how Achebe's narration methods reinforce communal and spiritual bonds in the Igbo community and emphasizes the role of language as a tool in cultural and spiritual expression.

### Methodology

The methodology employed in this research is based on *textual analysis* through close reading, informed by the knowledge underpinning Gumucio's orality framework. The approach shall put into critical perspective the cultural and linguistic representation of funeral rituals and collective mourning in "Things Fall Apart" by going into as much detail as possible in a structured manner.

### **Textual Analysis and Close Reading**

#### **First and foremost strategy:**

Achebe's narration with close reading, paying particular attention to the proverbs, chants, and symbolic expressions in important funeral scenes, such as the picturing of Ezeudu's funeral. Emphasizing the importance of orality, as Gumucio (2016) stated, this paper examines how such linguistic features contribute to the Igbo people, representing their rituals and maintaining social cohesion to ensure cultural continuity.

#### **2. Data Collection and Sources:**

##### **Primary Source**

The source of information primarily utilized is Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), focusing on those passages of the novel that deal with the rituals associated with funerals and communal mourning. The research examines this material for evidence of those linguistic structures consistent with orality. Secondary sources refer to scholarly works that may provide Igbo cultural insight necessary to analyze Achebe's linguistic choices. Works from Nwoye (2005) and Ilogu (1974), which contextualize the ritualistic aspects, are presented side-by-side with recent literary analysis, as found in Okpewho (1992), to complement the use of Gumucio's theory.

##### **3. Limitations**

This clearly shows that the research is aware it may not stand to reflect actual Igbo burials due to overdependence on *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as a source of literature. Though Achebe's work is culturally authentic, reflecting a narrative rather than ethnographic documentation, the study is thus aware of the interpretive analytic framework it is based upon. By blending the textual analysis method with Gumucio's theory on orality, this approach will attempt to make a complete reading of exactly how those Igbo rituals, which Achebe has created linguistically, serve both as a means of preserving cultural heritage and as an indictment against colonial disruption.

#### **4. Analysis**

This paper discusses the linguistic structure of funeral rituals in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) with an essential analysis of scenes like the burial of Ezeudu. This paper discusses how Achebe positions orality, proverbs, and collectivity in mourning as solid tools that enable him to reach representations and preservations of Igbo cultural values yet simultaneously signal post-colonial ruptures. Achebe's narrative strategies emphasize the importance of such rituals and attack the cultural disintegration brought about by colonial influence.

##### **A. Linguistic Structure of Funeral Rituals in *Things Fall Apart* (1958)**

Achebe describes all the funeral rites as being full of linguistic patterns to expose Igbo culture's spiritual and social features. The novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) describes Ezeudu's funeral as essential in the novel, showing a complex combination of cultural and community values. Achebe said it was "*a warrior's funeral*" (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 122). This means that Ezeudu played a vital role and was in a high position in the clan. Because the elaborate description of the ceremony involves symbolic elements, such as drums and invocations of ancestors, the Igbo people show respect to the dead in a manner that reinforces communal ties. Drums represent the heart of Igbo's death culture and represent a connection between the physical and spiritual world. During Ezeudu's funeral, Achebe writes,

*"Ezeudu was a great man, so the clan was at his funeral. The ancient drums of death beat, and guns were fired, and cannons rent the sky. It was a warrior's funeral, and from morning till night, warriors came and went in their age groups."*

(Things Fall Apart, p. 123).

The frenzied drumming and motions of the men reveal the deadliness of the occasion, signifying that the dead have now been transported into the ancestral world. The lexical choices like "drum," "death beat," and "guns" make for a solid audio-visual image, putting the reader inside an atmosphere of ritual completion. This perhaps reflects how well sound is a noise, but it is a spiritual language that united the people to their ancestors.

This ancestral invocation, popularly known as the key to continuity and respect towards the ancestors, further manifests in Igbo society. At the funeral, ancestral spirits are invoked, which helps bridge the gap between the living and the dead. Achebe describes,

*"the egwugwu, the masked spirits of the ancestors, appeared, moving like shadows among the crowd"*

(Things Fall Apart, p. 124)

To establish the ritualistic importance of these invocations. Achebe weaves the egwugwu into the fabric of this belief system within the narrative, rendering it a communal and spiritual texture wherein the presence of ancestral spirits is not symbolic but constituent to guiding and protecting the community. The language reinforces this as more than just a farewell; the funeral is a sacred act that unites the living with their spiritual guardians.

### **B. Function of Orality and Proverbs**

Orality and proverbs are essential parts of Achebe's narrative technique, as they both help him project his culture and broaden the bond between the community. The integration of Igbo oral traditions into the novel by Achebe enables readers to feel the cultural rhythms and wisdom inalienably woven into the community's way of life. In the scenes of funerals, these oral elements become more prominent as they speak volumes about the collective values and philosophies of the Igbo people.

Proverbs are described as *"the palm oil with which words are eaten"*; therefore, proverbs are essential to Igbo speech. The application of proverbs during burials serves to reiterate conventional wisdom and mores of the society. For example, the elders apply proverbs to caution the young members about their responsibilities regarding death during Ezeudu's funeral to ensure that the rites are performed as they should be. It is in these proverbs that cultural symbolism expresses the importance of keeping respect for ancestors and the passing of values.

Orality in Achebe reaches chants, calls, and community responses representing Igbo funeral scenes. In the case of Ezeudu's funeral, the community spoke a ritualistic series of chants and invocatory utterances, which make up an emotional and spiritual common experience. The hypnotic repetition of the chants here reinforces a sense of unity and togetherness among mourners. The oral utterances of the expressions in those scenes collectively are the language that, besides communicating grief, reinforces social cohesion. Achebe pays close attention to these oral elements in a manner that underlines how language is a cultural practice for ensuring continuity and cohesion within the community.

### **C. Collective Mourning and Language**

The aspect of Achebe's novel such as mass mourning is crucial for deciphering what funeral rituals mean for social cohesion among Igbo people. Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe



dramatizes mourning as an individual experience and a communal ritual that ties a community together. Ezeudu's funeral is a clan affair, and the story dramatically recounts the communal aspect of the event:

*"Amidst the wailing of women and the clash of machetes, the beating of drums reached a frenzy"*

(Things Fall Apart, p. 123)

Each of these sounds and depictions creates a scene of substantial participation by the community. Achebe uses repetition, chants, and other oral forms in these scenes to evoke a mass emotional response; the rhythms of wailing and drumming that repeat themselves constantly suggest unity in grief. The language evokes a powerful sense of shared emotions; mourning here is an event that reinforces social bonds. The chants and the presence of the egwugwu serve as representatives of the ancestral spirits, underlining the communal and spiritual dimensions of mourning. The language here conveys grief and reminds the community of its collective identity and its linkage with ancestors, reinforcing social cohesion and continuity.

#### **D. Post-colonial Tensions and Disruptions in Rituals**

Achebe's story also narrates Igbo's traditional life and death customs, which the coming of colonial influence has disrupted. As the forces of colonization begin, through time, to encroach upon Igbo society, the traditional rituals see more significant challenges, and Achebe traces that change through the stuff of the language and characters' actions. The coming of Christian missionaries brought a different belief system, as opposed to the traditional Igbo beliefs, which tended to change funeral practices and other rituals little by little.

These are the disruptions that Nwoye's experience illustrates throughout the novel. Attracted by the new religion brought by missionaries, he starts to question the traditional practices he has adhered to, even those touching on the funeral ceremonies. Achebe portrayed Nwoye's alienation from traditional rites as an internal struggle representing cultural tension between the old ways and the new influence of colonial Christianity. This is captured in the ancestral invocations and drumming, to which Nwoye becomes increasingly uneasy, growing to see these as incompatible with the new faith. Through this gesture, Achebe indicates through Nwoye how such colonialism began to break up the community's collective identity and spiritual practices.

On the other hand, the changes in the linguistic delivery also symbolize what occurred to the conventional life rituals as a consequence of colonization. With increasing colonial influence, the language employed in rituals becomes fragmented and speaks to the disintegration of cultural life patterns. Later in the novel, Achebe contrasts this incoherent use of proverbs and songs in traditional funerals with those earlier cases. The representation of such changes amounts to a criticism of the part played by colonialism in undermining the indigenous, for Achebe underlines that such a loss of primitives' rituals and speech elements means the more profound erosion of culture.

The story is thus a preservative of Igbo traditions and a commentary on the consequences of colonial disruption. Achebe presents tensions between keeping traditional practices of funerals and the imposition of new colonial values as indicative of more significant elements in what colonialism does to community identity and cultural heritage. The changes in the rituals of death indicates the gradual erosion of collective and spiritual life in the community, as it spoke volumes about how language and ritual go hand in hand in preserving cultural identity.

#### **Conclusion**

In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the Igbo funeral rituals are captured in Achebe's language, showing the depth of culture and spirit invested herein, while revealing the tensions that colonialism

brought. Through the focus on such elements as the funeral of Ezeudu, Achebe employs symbolism, proverbs, and orality in the flow of ritual to involve his readers and carry out a meaning of the role of rituals in Igbo communities as contributors to social cohesion and spiritual continuity. Achebe's particular use of language elaborates on how the ritual reminds Igbo of communal identity and respect toward ancestors' heritage so that Igbo cultural values can be retained. However, Achebe depicts how this colonial influence breaks such practices and how fragmentation and loss of these essential cultural expressions critique the disruptive nature of colonialism. Essentially, *Things Fall Apart* serves both as a repository of Igbo traditions and a commentary about the fragility of these traditions in the face of external pressure and a nuanced examination of how language and ritual sustain cultural identity through times of transformation.

### References

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann.
- Amadiume, I. (1997). *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*. Zed Books.
- Chinweizu. (1987). *Decolonising the African Mind*. Pero Press.
- Eze, C. (1997). *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Ezenwa-Ohaeto, N. (1997). *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*. James Currey Publishers.
- Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Gumucio, C. P. (2016). "Religious pluralism, popular religions and multiple modernities: a theoretical framework." *Ciencias Sociales y Religión*. Retrieved from <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/7179/717975887003/717975887003.pdf>.
- Ilogu, E. (1974). *Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Study of the Interaction of Christianity and Igbo Culture*. NOK Publishers.
- Irele, A. (2009). *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*. Oxford University Press.
- Lindfors, B. (1991). *Approaches to Teaching Achebe's Things Fall Apart*. Modern Language Association.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Heinemann.
- Nwankwo, I. N. (2008). *African Literature and Cultural Identity*. African World Press.
- Nwoye, G. (2005). *Funeral Rites Among the Igbo of Nigeria: The Impact of Colonialism*. University of Nigeria.
- Okpewho, I. (1992). *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity*. Indiana University Press.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine