

### Book Review on “Things Fall Apart”

Chinu Achebe, the author of the fictional story called “Things fall apart”, was born in Nigeria in 1930. He was raised by Christian parents, which has affected his works. After he graduated from a university and worked for a radio broadcasting station, he became a professor and has been teaching at some universities in Nigeria and in the United States. At the same time, he has been writing books related to African culture. So far, he has published novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and children’s books. As he developed and spread modern African literature to the world, he was chosen as one of the “1,000 Makers of Twentieth Century.” The theme of “Things fall apart” is the colonization of Africa by white men and Christianity. The author does not take kindly to the way an African tribe accepts the Western culture by losing their cultural ethos. His purpose of this book is to make African people think what the important thing is to cope with problems that African countries are facing and to let the readers of this book know about the history of African colonialism and the culture of Africa. This book tells the readers not only how an African thinks about the colonialism and the culture of Africa but also how to utilize them to develop countries metaphorically and effectively.

In this book, Achebe mentions two points: colonisation of Africa and African culture. Achebe sounds an alarm bell to African people who just accept Western culture and lose their own cultural ethos. It is depicted in the story that villagers let white men escape from a scene that Okonkwo, the protagonist of this story, kills one of them. Knowing that the villagers have become Christians losing their own cultural ethos and do not want to fight against white men, Okonkwo is disappointed in them and hangs himself. Achebe’s disappointment toward African people can be inferred from the tragic ending. Also, he refers to African culture of the past and cites sexism or barbaric actions as examples. In the story, women have to follow what men say, and men kill people cruelly for gods or for themselves. Considering from the fact that he depicted the protagonist as a masculist and a brutal person, he does not necessarily affirm that

African culture is always right. Thus, Okonkwo's death means the disappearance of cultural ethos and weakening of bad aspects of African culture.

By critically reading and thinking about this book, a bad point can be found. It is that the author did not express his thoughts fully. According to a researcher, Achebe said, "I am not one of those who would say that Africa gained nothing at all during the colonial period....We gained a lot" (Gagliano 65). Although he gives a bad impression of white men in this book, he did not tell the benefit of accepting Western culture. However, there is a reason why he did not do it. According to Gagliano, this is not a whole story but a half part of it (64). This story is about the early stage of the village and the author focuses on talking about bad actions of white men breaking the villagers' traditional life by making them become Christians by building a church and establishing a new government. Moreover, it seems that he is causing a problem in Christianity by making a racist Reverend appear in this story. Even though the author understands the benefit of accepting Western culture, he did not mention it in this story. That is a bad part of this book because it is possible that the readers take the author's thoughts mistakenly. However, there are many good parts in this book. It is because that Achebe refers to the bad aspects of their culture. One of them is sexism. In this story, characters are in masculinist society, and men are high in position. They must not show weakness and have to be superior to women to control them. For example, boys are beaten when they are crying because the villagers think man should not cry. Also, they think men have to be strong and showing affection is regarded as a sign of weakness. Furthermore, there are some parts that women are looked down on. For instance, a man treats a woman with contempt saying that women's stories are silly. When a woman tries to bring a chair, she is said not to do men's job and is ordered to sit like a woman. Although the setting of this story is in the colonial period and this book was first written in 1959, there still have been gender problems all around the world. Now gender problems are severe, so this book is good to read to think about them. Also, as a good point, Achebe mentions a barbaric aspect of African culture as a bad point. In this book, people in the village sometimes become crucial before Christianity is spread. For

example, a child is sacrificed to their gods. Also, a goat is slaughtered when a baby is born as a custom. Moreover, the protagonist is depicted as a short-tempered person and kills a white man by cutting his head off. By showing cruel acts of an African tribe and the protagonist, the author seems to admit that there is a bad aspect of African culture. Thus, he faces and criticizes his own culture, and that is a good point of this book. Lastly, it is considered as a good point that the author gives a strong message to the readers metaphorically and effectively. In this story, a tribe accepts the Western culture by losing their cultural ethos. From the story, it is considered that the author thinks many African people who experienced Western culture do not try to protect their cultural ethos as Okonkwo tries to protect their own culture. Gagliano says that Achebe pays a compliment to Japan because he thinks Japan succeeded in recovering economically because of its cultural ethos (64). It seems that he wants African people to remember African cultural ethos so that they will also be able to deal with problems that African countries are facing now. Therefore, this book tells not only what happened in the past but also how to face the future, which is a good point of this book.

This book is worth reading and recommendable. Reading only this book does not mean the readers can understand author's thought perfectly; however, this story gives them a strong message about the future metaphorically. Also, this book tells them how an African thinks about the colonialism and the culture of Africa effectively. Therefore, people should read this book to learn the past and think about the future.

#### Works cited

Gagliano, Annie. "Achebe, Head, Marechera: on power and change in Africa."  
Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000. Print.