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Colonialism and a history of oppression in Africa: Scenes from selected African novels

Hisham Muhamad Ismail

Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University, Bahrain

Email: Hisham.eltahawy@aou.org.bh

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8049-0457>

Abstract

Examining the African suffering during the colonialism period and describing the different miseries of the African people have been the core theme of almost all African and Western writers during the colonial age and post-colonial time. Undoubtedly, all of these writings fluctuate considerably between exaggeration and degrading the human sacrifices of those countries during this period. Then, the African writers started taking the responsibility of narrating their history and describing their suffering to correct many false ideas and assumptions, many false conceptions which were established in the minds of consecutive generations. Chinua Achebe is one of the prominent authors and thinkers who has received international recognition due to his creative style of telling the African story and has impacted African literature in different ways. Through his books, he exposed many of the negative colonial impacts on the African communities and how they did their best to invade these countries politically, economically, and culturally. Achebe tried to uncover their claims, like linking Christianity and commerce together, and the only way to African progress should be through the European gates. In his novel *Things Fall Apart*, he tried to expose the side effects of the colonizers' intentions to redesign the African communities up to Western standards. He assured that all colonial actions resulted in the colonizers' good interests and were against African people. On the other hand, Ngugi Thiogn'o is interested in examining the post-colonial impacts on the African nations and how the Western colonizers succeeded in producing loyal followers adopting their beliefs and concepts. Those followers replaced the foreign occupation with another type of occupation where the people's acceptance should be evaluated by their adaptability to the Western criteria in all life aspects. In his novel, *Petals of Blood*, Thiog'o narrated the impacts of using foreign languages to diffuse the indigenous culture and lose the African identity. Throughout the novel, he examined the political elite's corruption in African countries during the post-colonial period and how they continued colonial suppression of their nations.

Keywords: African suffering, colonialism, colonial subjects, lost identity, occupation



Public Interest Statement

This paper traces the sequence of African suffering during the colonial age to clarify the hidden facts about many fake claims promoted before about the genuine African culture and heritage. The author examines two main literary works to expose this suffering and elucidate the tremendous efforts paid to maintain the indigenous African character.

Introduction

African novels and stories are fertile literature source that offers readers glimpses into the complexities of African societies, cultures, and histories in addition to the most crucial stage in African history; the colonial age. African authors wrote these novels and explored various themes such as identity, colonialism, postcolonialism, feminism, and the struggle for independence to achieve two crucial objectives; the first was documenting this crucial period in their history. The second objective was to correct the false images and claims that Western writers and officials promoted.

One of the most prominent themes in African novels was the impact of colonialism on African societies. This theme was explored comprehensively in the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), where the protagonist, Okonkwo, struggled with the changes brought about by the arrival of European colonizers. Achebe's novel highlighted the tension between traditional African values and the encroaching influence of the West. Similarly, the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) examined the impact of colonialism on Kenya. The novel explored the struggles of four characters who were disillusioned with the promises of independence and the corruption of the post-colonial government.

Another theme explored in African novels was the struggle for independence and the fight against oppression. This struggle was evident in the works of authors such as the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, the South African author Nadine Gordimer, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. For instance, Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1962) was a satirical play that critiqued the Westernization of African societies and the importance of preserving traditional values. Gordimer's novel *July's People* (1981) explored the relationship between a white South African family and their black servant during the apartheid era. Gordimer's novel highlighted the tensions and contradictions of living in a society divided by race.

African novels also explored themes of feminism and the struggle for gender equality. This theme was evident in the works of authors such as the Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta, the Nigerian author Flora Nwapa, and the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) told the story of a woman who struggled to balance traditional gender roles with her desire for independence. Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) was a feminist novel that explored the life of a young Igbo woman who defied societal expectations and pursued her dreams. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) explored Nigeria's patriarchy and domestic violence themes.

So, the significance of African literature was maintaining the history alive and keeping all of these incidents existing to remind the readers of the massacres of the colonizers. All of these literary texts were written in English to be easily accessible to readers from different backgrounds and to approach the past colonizers with the same language. In other words, African writers used these literary texts to uncover the past's complexities and promote the African people's aspiration for the future (Duvignand, 2000, p. 67). These texts played an essential role in maintaining the African people's collective imagination to recharge their energies for the future (Caudwell, 1977, p.145).

In conclusion, the African novel is an essential part of world literature that offers readers a unique perspective on African societies, histories, and cultures. These novels explore a wide range of themes and offer insights into the

complexities of African life. They testify to Africa's rich literary tradition and storytelling's enduring power. For concise research, this paper will examine two novels; *Things Fall Apart* and *Petals of Blood*, to explore the authors' perspectives on colonialism and its history in African communities and the struggle of African people against the Westernization of their cultural heritage.

Colonialism in Africa: A history of oppression

Before discussing the impacts of colonialism in Africa as portrayed in two important African novels, it is worth noting to talk about the definition of colonialism. The word colonialism can be explained generally as a group of foreigners who decided to settle in another demographic place to form a new community and use the new land's natural and human resources. This term is also defined as "the direct and overall domination of one country by another based on state power being in the hands of a foreign power (For example, the direct and overall domination of Nigeria by Britain between 1900-1960" (Piola & Usman, 2019, p. 110). In other words, this settlement or occupation of other lands was mainly derived from power expansion interests and economic objectives. The colonial history in every single part of the world proves these two points regardless of all claims that connect colonialism to the desire to civilize the people of these communities or develop them.

Specifically, colonialism in Africa was a period marked by European powers' domination and exploitation of African people. Colonialism in Africa refers to the process by which European powers took control of African territories, established colonies, and exploited resources for their benefit. During this period, which began in the late 19th century and lasted until the mid-20th century, African societies were subjected to various forms of subjugation, including forced labor, segregation, land dispossession, and forced migration. This period of colonial rule profoundly impacted African cultures, social structures, and economies and left a lasting legacy that continues to shape contemporary African societies.

From the early beginning of colonialism in Africa, the colonizers promoted the idea of the racial and cultural superiority of the Western countries and white people over any non-western countries. For instance, Britain claimed that their existence on the west coast of Africa was linked to Christianity and commerce. Moreover, they promoted that they brought civilization, progress, and enlightenment to Africa (Sadeghi, 2015, p. 295). On the other hand, many references described the colonizers' efforts to accelerate the physical, cultural, and political domination over certain countries to achieve their own good interests with an apparent negligence of the indigenous nations' interests or needs. So, the colonizers' ideology succeeded in forming colonial culture and context within these societies, making colonized persons who did not feel anything against colonizers and believing in their inferiority and others' superiority (Tyson, 2006, p. 421). Ironically, many cultural and literary productions worldwide enhanced this ideology and proved the falsity of their claims. These cultural and literary writings had many issues related to their accuracy and objectivity.

As mentioned before, the motivations behind European colonialism in Africa were primarily economic and political. European countries sought new markets for their goods and raw materials for their industries. Also, they wanted to establish strategic military bases and secure trade routes. In addition, and as per their claims, European powers believed they had a duty to civilize and modernize the African continent. Unfortunately, they claimed that this civilized mission was linked to Christianity and thought African people could not progress or move forward without contact with their cultures. In Europeans' eyes, African people were regarded as "primitive," "changeless," and "regressing" (Brown, 2008, p. 27). Overall, the conquest of Africa by the European powers was pushed by the appearance of the industrial revolution and its social, political, and economic consequences (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012, p. 47). Many Western and African scholars examined the reasons behind the colonialism of Africa from

different perspectives. One of those writers mentioned:

When Europe pioneered industrial capitalism, its demands on the world's resources increased tremendously. In addition to obtaining spices for her tables and workforce for her mines and plantations in the Americas, Europe set out to seize for her factories the mineral and agricultural resources of all the world. Her need to bring the African workforce to the Americas declined. She needed instead to put African labor to work in Africa, digging up for her the riches of African mines. (Chinweizu, 1978, p. 35)

Accordingly, the colonialism of Africa significantly impacted the whole continent and its people. European powers imposed their political and economic systems on African societies, displacing traditional African social, cultural, and political structures. Africans were forced to labor on European-owned plantations and mines, and their resources were exploited to benefit European economies. The European powers also imposed their languages, religions, and cultures on African populations, eroding local cultures and losing traditional knowledge and practices. Africans were subjected to racial discrimination and segregation, and their rights were often violated. Most importantly, The western colonial ideology succeeded in forming personalities with genuine feelings and belief in Western superiority and African inferiority. As a result, the African people became colonial subjects without any interest in standing against colonial subjugation (Tyson, 2006, p.421). One of the significant impacts of this period was the continent's political landscape. African countries were often divided and ruled by European powers, resulting in the creation of artificial borders that did not reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of African societies. This attitude led to conflicts and tensions between ethnic groups and nations.

On the other hand, this period of colonial rule left some positive impacts that apparently influenced the African people. Studies referred to four main points for example, the introduction of Western medical technology that improved the health of African society and increased the life expectancy of African society, the second was the establishment of formal education, the third was the legacy of Western infrastructure, and finally, the inheritance of Western "Christian" religious beliefs that were used as a spiritual and religious basis for African society (Khapoya, 2009, pp. 135-136).

It is proved that African societies had shown remarkable resilience and resistance to European domination. African leaders and intellectuals fought for independence and self-determination, and African cultures and traditions persisted despite all attempts to suppress them. From that time, African land was randomly divided and assigned between European countries that tried to eliminate authentic African cultural items to impose all components of their cultural heritage (Suleiman, 2015, p. 36). In short, describing the experience of colonialism in Africa was mentioned many times in different ways:

The aggressive European incursion and subsequent imposition of colonial domination on Africa had both traumatic and destructive consequences on the continent's political, social, and cultural situation. Africa did not only lose her political freedom but more fundamentally, the structures of political power were weakened, retarded, and even dismantled on some occasions and replaced with those of the metropolis that was considered more "enlightened" and "sophisticated" without any consideration whatever for the people's worldview. (Falaiye, 1997, p. 35)

So, resistance and struggle against the colonizers were recurring themes in many African literary works. African

writers have used literature to challenge colonialism's dominant narratives and assert African agency and sovereignty. African literature often reflected this theme in characters, plots, and settings. Some works, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), told the story of the colonial encounter from the perspective of a colonized African society. Also, losing the African identity was one of the essential themes examined in different African literary genres. Colonialism profoundly impacted African cultural identity due to keen European practices to impose their cultural, linguistic, and religious norms on African societies. African writers explored the complexities of African identity and challenged the notion of African inferiority compared to European cultures. Writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o advocated using African languages in literature to reclaim African cultural identity and challenge the linguistic hegemony of European languages.

Moreover, African literature examined the trauma theme resulting from the colonial period. The violence and exploitation of colonialism profoundly impacted African personality, and many writers explained the hazardous side effects of this traumatic experience. For example, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Bessie Head explored the psychological impact of colonialism on African individuals and communities.

One of the most important contributions of African literature was its role in shaping the discourse on post-colonial Africa. Many African writers used literature to engage with their societies' social, political, and economic realities. Writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Teju Cole explored contemporary African life's complexities and challenged the one-dimensional and often negative portrayals of Africa in Western media. In conclusion, colonialism in Africa profoundly impacted African societies' cultural, social, and economic structures. African writers used literature as a means of exploring and challenging the legacy of colonialism and of asserting African agency and sovereignty.

Chinua Achebe: An international recognized African voice

Chinua Achebe is widely regarded as one of Africa's most influential and talented writers. He is considered one of the most significant African authors of the 20th century and is credited with helping to establish African literature as a legitimate and essential part of world literature. The Christian nature of the African community had influenced Achebe's childhood in Nigeria during the late twentieth century on the one hand and, on the other hand, impacted by the rise of a new African political leader at that time, the former president of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah (Wren, 1995, pp. 100-103). During that time, Nigeria and other countries within the West Coast of Africa (Gold Coast), as known later, witnessed great social and political disturbance and fluctuation due to the first military encounter with the Western countries in general and Britain in particular. Prominently, these events, along with the Nigerian Civil War, deeply affected Achebe's personality, his political interests, and his writing career (Barksdale-Hall, 2007, pp. 9-10). Drawing on his experiences growing up in colonial Nigeria, Achebe's work explores themes of colonialism, traditional African culture, the clash between the two, and the struggle for African independence. Due to the variety of his themes, Achebe's writings can be considered a "tetralogy" that documented Nigerian history between 1890 and 1965 (Sadeghi, 2015, p. 296). Perhaps Achebe's most famous work is his debut novel, *Things Fall Apart*. The novel tells the story of Okonkwo, a respected leader in a Nigerian tribe who struggles to navigate the changing cultural landscape of colonialism. Through Okonkwo's story, Achebe critiques colonialism and how external forces eroded traditional African culture. In addition to *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe wrote several other novels, including *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*, as well as numerous essays and non-fiction works.

Achebe's writing is noted for its clarity and directness. He often employs simple, straightforward language that belies the complexity of his ideas. His storytelling is vivid and engaging, drawing readers into the world he creates. However, Achebe's work has not been immune to criticism. Some have criticized his portrayal of women

in his novels, arguing that they are often relegated to secondary roles or portrayed in a negative light. Others have questioned the accuracy of his portrayal of African culture, suggesting that it may be overly romanticized. Despite these criticisms, Achebe's contribution to African literature cannot be overstated. He was a trailblazer, paving the way for future generations of African writers to tell their stories and explore their cultural identities. His work continues to be studied in classrooms worldwide, inspiring readers to think critically about the legacy of colonialism not just in Africa but throughout the world.

Things Fall Apart: Insights into the Nigerian Community

In his novels, Chinua Achebe exposed a remarkable portrayal of the African communities before unwelcoming newcomers and their invaders arrived. Throughout most of his novels, he traced the gradual decline in the traditional cultural heritage to be replaced by foreign values and traditions. *Things Fall Apart* was one of Achebe's cornerstones in exploring the impacts of the arrival of Christianity on the hands of the colonizers, and those invaders used religion as a tool to defuse the cultural and religious fabric of the African communities. Another entire shift into Western culture subsequently followed this shift into Christianity. Achebe examined the ways of embedding the feeling of inferiority in the minds of African people in general and the young generations in particular to become aimless and helpless subordinates to the colonizers.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was first published in 1958 and has since become a widely renowned work of literature in Nigeria, Africa, and worldwide. Achebe's novel can be considered a literary masterpiece that garnered critical acclaim and became a seminal work of African literature. The novel explored the impact of colonialism on African societies, specifically the Igbo people of Nigeria. *Things Fall Apart* had a profound impact on African literature and culture.

Achebe's novel was a powerful critique of colonialism and its impact on African societies. He portrayed the Igbo people as a complex and sophisticated civilization with its customs and beliefs. He showed how the arrival of the Europeans disrupted the balance of power and caused social upheaval. Throughout the novel, Achebe also explored themes of masculinity, family, and the power struggle. Okonkwo was a complex character who embodied many of these themes. He was a proud and powerful figure but also flawed and vulnerable. Despite the novel's heavy themes, Achebe's writing was beautiful and nuanced. His gift for storytelling made the novel engaging and accessible to readers of all backgrounds. Achebe's portrayal of the Igbo people, their customs, and their struggle for survival is both powerful and memorable. It remains a must-read for anyone interested in African literature, colonialism, or the human experience.

The novel told the story of Okonkwo, a hardworking and respected member of his Igbo community, who lived in a small village in Nigeria. Okonkwo was driven to succeed partly by his father's failure, so he became a successful farmer, warrior, and leader. However, Okonkwo's life worsened when white missionaries arrived in his village and began to convert people to Christianity. The arrival of these foreigners threatened the traditions and beliefs of the Igbo people, and Okonkwo struggled to hold onto his way of life while everything around him was changing. As the story progressed, Okonkwo's life continued to unravel. He was eventually exiled from his village after accidentally killing a man and was forced to leave behind everything he had ever known.

Through Okonkwo's story, Achebe narrated the story of his entire nation and justified many issues his country and other African countries faced during the period of colonialism. One of the most essential factors in penetrating the African communities was people's lack of experience. These communities were known as primitive oral communities. They failed to document their history and cultural matters. The colonizers thought that those African communities did not have religious codes or political systems. So, their practices and beliefs were quickly

challenged and changed to European standards. The colonizers wanted to redesign these communities as per Western tastes. Moreover, the indigenous black people's acceptance and maturity were assessed according to their adaptation to the new Western beliefs and cultural items. In this regard, Obierika said, "It is like the story of the white men who, they say, are white like this piece of chalk and who have no toes" (Achebe, 2002, p. 67).

Due to the colonizers' arrival to the African lands, many individuals tried to follow European standards and Western dress, speech, and attitude habits. So, they changed their lifestyle to the extent of shaming their cultural objects. They believed in the better status of the European culture and their admiration of the more civilized and open practices and beliefs. Achebe explained that many African people sought a safe exit from the inferiority dilemma against the Western culture. Achebe mentioned that young black people found a way in Western education to help them be embedded in their culture. As a result, there was a significant difference between educated African young men and uneducated people. For example, Okonkwo had many difficulties understanding these differences and did not want to belong to his people. Also, Nwoye "was happy to leave his father. He would return later to his mother and brothers and sisters and convert them to the new faith" (Achebe, 2002, p. 139).

Due to the time and accumulative efforts of the colonizers, a new sector of the African people in these communities played to merge both backgrounds (African and Western) and to move in parallel with their traditional beliefs and benefit from the modern Western items. They wanted to live both worlds, practice both traditions, and benefit from both sides (Innes & Lindfors, 1979, p. 151). The Obi's example clearly represented the citizen of two worlds who was caught by the two forces; the old African culture of his village and the modern Western urban towns. This feeling of duality and double feelings resulted in the lack of identity and caused many new generations of African youth to lose their belonging and not feel to stand against the colonizers. Moreover, they accepted their lands' occupation and new ideas and beliefs.

While the novel was praised for its insightful portrayal of African culture and its resistance to colonialism, it was also the subject of criticism. Many critics highlighted Achebe's gender representation and how he represented them. The novel portrayed women as inferior to men and was criticized for perpetuating patriarchal values. Female characters were often relegated to subservient roles and were not given their agency or autonomy. Due to his belief in his country's crises and dark future, Achebe was criticized for providing a limited view of colonialism. The novel did not explore the experiences of other African societies or the broader political and economic context of colonialism.

Additionally, the novel was criticized for essentializing African culture and presenting it as unchanging and static. This view ignored the diversity of African cultures and their ability to adapt and change over time. However, the critics might decline the static and primitive status of many African communities at that time. They relied on their oral communication and were stuck to their religious and spiritual beliefs more than anything that happened outside their communities. Moreover, the critics shed light on the novel's historical accuracy, particularly in portraying the Igbo people. Some scholars argued that the novel presented a romanticized and idealized view of Igbo culture and failed to capture the complexities and contradictions of pre-colonial African societies. In this regard, many writings about the African culture and the period of colonialism might have several accuracy issues.

Generally speaking, *Things Fall Apart* was a groundbreaking work of African literature that was both praised and criticized. While the novel was celebrated for its insightful portrayal of African culture and its resistance to colonialism, it also had been criticized for its representation of gender, limited perspective, essentialism, and historical accuracy. Nonetheless, the novel continues to captivate readers and inspire critical discussions about African literature and colonialism.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a prominent Kenyan writer who wrote extensively on African literature, postcolonialism, and the political realities of his home country. Ngugi spent his formative years in colonial Kenya and witnessed firsthand the tumultuous transition from British rule to independence. He can be considered one of the most prominent African writers of the 20th century.

Ngugi's literary career spanned over five decades and included novels, plays, essays, and poetry. His early works were written in English, but he later switched to his native Gikuyu language to reclaim African cultural identity and challenge the English language's dominance in African literature. His decision to write in Gikuyu was primarily motivated by a desire to speak to the people in his community who did not have access to English literature. Through his novels, Ngugi explored themes such as African nationalism, social inequality, political corruption, and the impact of colonialism and neocolonialism on African societies. One of his most famous works was the novel *A Grain of Wheat*, which was published in 1967. The novel told the story of a group of Kenyan villagers during the period of the Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule. Another one of his acclaimed works was *Wizard of the Crow*, a satirical novel that explored the absurdities of post-colonial African politics.

In addition to his literary work, Ngugi was also a prominent intellectual and activist. He wrote extensively on African literature, language, and culture and was a vocal critic of the Western cultural hegemony in Africa. He was involved in various social and political movements in Kenya and has consistently advocated for democracy, social justice, and human rights. Ngugi's contributions to African literature and culture were widely recognized. He received numerous awards, including the Lotus Prize for Literature, the Nonino International Prize for Literature, and the Paul Robeson Award for Artistic Excellence. He was also the recipient of several honorary doctorates from prestigious universities worldwide.

Like many African post-colonial writers and scholars, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o insisted on investigating the impacts of colonialism on African countries. In most of his fictional and non-fictional writings, Thiong'o questioned African status in general and Kenyan situation in particular in post-colonial ages and how those colonizers invaded these countries to make use of their fortunes and resources to support their economy regardless of the benefits that might go to the African people. Thiong'o concentrated on the diffusion of the original African culture and highlighted Kenya's political, social, and economic perspectives. For Thiong'o, the "post-colonial period was very likely to amount to the outset of neocolonialism because white colonizers were replaced with upper classes of the native population in order to initiate a new phase of exploitation. Thus, gaining political independence did not come to signify an anti-colonialist system; rather, it indicated a grim reality in which exploitative power passed into the hands of the native elites that worked at the white man's service" (Bay & Kargoz, 2020, p. 242).

Thiong'o had many sincere attempts to raise the people's awareness about the importance of regaining the national culture and having a solid and rigid social and language system to support the national identity. The point of using a foreign language was raised for a long time to identify effects and impacts. For Thiong'o, foreign language was a vital post-colonial tool to replace the colonizer's culture with a new, modified post-colonial culture led by citizens who accepted Western traditions and beliefs (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 4). Thiong'o perception challenged the emergence of the new elite class with their neo-colonial system without a minimum change to the people or the community. He asserted that the community control changed from the colonizers during the colonial age to the new bourgeoisie class, and in both cases, the people did not receive any of these benefits. His opinion was that the "new" colonizers wanted to maintain the colonial system as per the instructions of their white masters.

Despite his achievements, Ngugi's work was faced with controversy and censorship. In 1977, he was arrested and imprisoned without trial by the Kenyan government for his outspoken activism and criticism of the

regime. He later wrote about his political imprisonment in his memoir *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981). Today, Ngugi remains a leading voice in African literature and culture. His work inspired generations of African writers to reclaim their cultural identity and challenge the dominant narratives of Western literature. His legacy was a testament to the power of literature to create social change and promote cultural diversity.

Petals of Blood: Insights into Kenyan society

Petals of Blood by Ngugi wa Thiong'o was a complex work of post-colonial literature that explored themes of political corruption, social inequality, and personal transformation in contemporary Kenya. The story took place in the small town of Ilmorog, where four characters - Munira, Karega, Wanja, and Abdulla - came together under unusual circumstances. Munira was a wealthy businessman who returned to Ilmorog after many years in the city. Karega was a teacher and political activist who had been in prison for his beliefs. Wanja was a barmaid who dreamed of a better life. Abdulla was a former soldier who had lost everything. They were all outsiders, each struggling to find their place in society. However, as they began to build their community, they faced various challenges, including government corruption, ethnic violence, and economic exploitation.

As the story progressed, these challenges escalated, forcing the characters to confront their beliefs and motivations. They questioned the government's validity, the church's role, and the meaning of education. As the four characters came together, they began uncovering their town's rampant corruption and exploitation. They became involved in a plot to overthrow the local government and bring about change.

One of the novel's central themes was the idea of "decolonization." Thiong'o argued that true liberation cannot be achieved until people are free to reclaim their own culture and language. He critiqued the legacy of colonialism and how colonial powers used language and education to suppress African culture. In *Petals of Blood*, Thiong'o examined the consequence of using colonial language and literature and privileging them over African cultural items. He portrayed the schooling system and how it neglected national and historical achievements. For example, the black headmaster warned the teachers to pay more attention to offering sufficient English education; "teach them good idiomatic English" (Thiong'o, 1995, p. 173).

Through the novel, Thiong'o exposed the deep affection of the black elite class and neo-colonial defenders and how they usually praised the achievements of the Western culture, writers, and discoverers can be equally crucial as praising the Western conquerors; "Chaucer, Shakespeare, Napoleon, Livingstone, Western conquerors, Western inventors, and discoverers were drummed into our heads with even greater fury. Where we asked, was the African dream? (Thiong'o, 1995, P. 173)". With this stage, the educational system and children or the new age entered a new phase of colonialism without military or aggressive struggle. Thiongo presented the consequence of setting an educational system with the impact of the colonial language to create boundaries between the indigenous people and their national traditions and habits on the one hand and, on the other, the newly formed class of people with their colonial culture.

Critically, the novel was structured in "epic proportions" (Palmer, 1979, p. 153) as it portrayed the most critical periods in African history; the colonial and post-colonial periods. Ngugi cleverly presented many issues in the Kenyan community during the post-colonial period, like manipulation of religion, unemployment, resistance against enslavement, and breaking family relations due to the love of money. Throughout the different incidents of this novel, Ngugi presents the shifting stages of the rural, primitive villages to modern urban towns. He sketched the betrayal of the entire nation at the hands of a few people from the ruling class. So, this novel can be considered a political novel about humanity concerned about different social, economic, religious, gender, and language matters. *Petals of Blood's* main concern was presenting a historical view that can be more accurate and relevant to real life,

not as documented by the Western people. Ngugi wanted to redefine the components of African history to reflect human and social sufferings. Ngugi justified his view about history as the past, present, and future should have consisted and interrelated to form a new version of the dynamic picture of society. The protagonist Karega says, "To understand the present...you must understand the past. To know where you are, you must know where you came from, don't you think?" (Thiong'o, 1995, p. 127-8). Ngugi's interest in redefining African history was firmly pushed by an intention to stand against colonial and post-colonial claims and fake propaganda. This intention enabled Ngugi and other African writers to form a solid stance to challenge these claims and to build nationalist awareness of the indigenous African culture.

In conclusion, the novel was a powerful and thought-provoking post-colonial literature. Thiong'o's exploration of social and political issues in modern Kenya was both nuanced and unflinching. Also, the novel was a critique of the corruption and exploitation that was (and still is) prevalent in many African countries. It was also a call to action, urging readers to work towards creating a more just and equitable society. Thiong'o used vivid language and imagery to bring his characters and their struggles to life. However, the novel's nonlinear structure and sometimes tricky language might not appeal to all readers.

Conclusion

African writers and their novels were the primary sources to know many hidden and ignored details of the African people suffering and sacrifice during the colonial age. Due to the primitive nature of these communities at that time, many fake and false images and claims were spread and enhanced by one-sided reports written by the colonizers to justify their occupation and exploitation of African resources. Due to their colonial interests, power expansion, and domination, the colonizers started their colonial journey in Africa by exploring the possible resources that might support their economy and serve their colonial objectives. The plenty of natural and human resources and the primitive nature of the African community encouraged them to declare their protectorate over a massive space of African lands. They falsely claimed that their existence in these lands was to teach them how to be good citizens and the good of Christian beliefs. Then, they connected Christianity with commerce. Implicitly, they deconstructed the solid fabric of the value system and enhanced the belief in Western superiority.

Consequently, replacing the rich African cultural heritage with Western culture and foreign beliefs was easy. This inferiority complex extended even after the independence of African countries and resulted in the practices of the ruling classes in these countries. They continued the same colonizers' policies but this time in the hands of African people. In other words, the colonizers secured their benefits from these communities even after getting their independence due to the loyalty of the ruling groups who were raised upon the concepts of Western superiority and African inferiority.

Through the first example in this article, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe examined all of these ideas and gave us a unique picture of African life before the arrival of the colonizers and the consequences of their existence. He explored the different impacts of their interaction in the African communities and how they successfully managed the transformation from the indigenous cultural and value system to the "imposed" foreign beliefs and practices. Through this novel, Achebe highlighted the systematic shift of the African minds and psychs from standing against foreign existence into adopting their lifestyle and imitating their beliefs and practices. In the outcome, Achebe played an essential role in raising awareness of maintaining the African identity. On the other hand, Ngugi Thiongo shed light on another factor in shifting the African identity and enhancing Western superiority. He examines the role of using colonial languages to deconstruct the nationalist minds of the African people, particularly the new generation. He suggested the possible disadvantages of utilizing the colonial languages to serve the colonizers'

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objectives in these communities and accomplish the shifting process. African people in later stage started to think about the advantages of getting the western education and culture to belong to this western superior status in their communities. The final and most influential stage of this process was replacing not only the local languages but also the national beliefs and values. The critical question that should be asked after many years of colonial existence in the African countries, did these countries and their people gain any benefits from the western encounter throughout these years?

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Biography

Dr. Hisham M. Ismail is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Arab Open University – Kingdom of Bahrain and Head of Training, Continuous Education, and Community Service. He holds Ph.D. Degree in English Literature – Campus Novels and MA in Ethnic Drama. Dr. Hisham is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy UK. He has more than 20 years of experience in academia and professional development. Currently, he is working on developing the employability skills of AOU graduates and the technological transformation during the post-pandemic period. His research interests are; ethnic literature, the reflection of campus life in literary texts, African literature, Ecocriticism, Children's literature and educational leadership.

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